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Safeguarding policy

Note: The structure and content of the policy has been written in direct response to recommendations from Barnardos' external review of safeguarding conducted in 2021 – 2.

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Introduction:

The Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A) is the world's leading museum of art, design and performance.

It is a public body regulated by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, and it is a charity exempt from registration under the Charities Act of 2011. It is governed by a Board of Trustees appointed by the Prime Minister.

It consists of the following sites in London:

- V&A South Kensington (open and fully operational)
- Young V&A (open and fully operational from summer 2023)
- V&A East (due to open in Summer 2025)



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1: Safeguarding Policy Statement

Everyone, whatever age, disability, gender, ethnicity, religion or belief, and sexual identity, has the right to protection from abuse.

The V&A is committed to the protection of children and adults at risk of harm and recognises safeguarding as everyone's responsibility. This policy therefore applies to all staff, as well as zero-hour workers, freelancers, contractors, volunteers, interns, work placements, and the board of trustees, and relates to V&A sites in London. It also includes guidance on how contractors and partners working at our sites must work with us to uphold this policy.

1.1 The purpose of this policy is:

- to outline the V&A's commitment to safeguarding and related procedures.
- to ensure those that those who work or volunteer with the V&A are aware of their obligations, the policies and procedures that guide our approach to safeguarding.
- to outline the steps we take to ensure that children, young people and adults at risk, are protected and safe from abuse or harm whilst visiting our site or participating in V&A activities.

1.2 Definitions:

- **Child:** A child, as defined in the Children's Acts, 1989 and 2004, is anyone, who has not yet reached their 18th birthday. 'Children' therefore means 'children and young people' throughout this document.
- **Adult at risk of harm:** An adult at risk of harm is defined as a person aged 18 and over who is or who 'may be in need of community care services by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness; and who is or may be unable to take care of him or herself, or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation' (definition from the Department of Health).

A further detailed definition of adults at risk is available in The Police Act 1997 (Enhanced Criminal Record Certificates) (Protection of Vulnerable Adults) Regulations 2002

1.3 In the safeguarding provision for children and adults at risk, the V&A will ensure that:

- All suspicions and allegations of abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately.
- The V&A Director for Learning, National Programmes and Young V&A has overall strategic responsibility to develop and support safeguarding.
- There is a Multi-Site Safeguarding Lead who works with a nominated Operational Safeguarding Officer (OSO) responsible for implementing safeguarding policy and procedure at each V&A site in London.
- All V&A staff and volunteers undergo a basic check through the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS). Staff working directly with children and young people in activity that qualifies under the Department for Education's definition of regulated activity, undergo enhanced DBS. Disclosures are renewed every three years.

- Basic training on safeguarding is available to all staff and volunteers, and it is included in new-starter inductions. Staff and volunteers with enhanced DBS checks and/or responsibility for safeguarding leadership and operations receive appropriate training.
- There is a clear risk assessment process for identifying safeguarding risks arising from new projects and activity across the V&A.

2: Procedures

2.1 Identifying abuse

Abuse of a child or adult at risk happens when physical, sexual or emotional harm is caused, or when neglect takes place. Individuals who experience abuse may struggle to speak out, so it's vital that anyone working with at-risk audiences/visitors is able to recognise the signs of abuse.

2.2 Disclosure

Disclosure is the process by which a child or an adult at risk will let someone know that abuse is taking place.

Abuse may be disclosed in one or more of several different ways, and is likely to be difficult and distressing for the individuals involved. It is therefore important to know how to support children and vulnerable adults through what is likely to be a distressing time.

- **Direct disclosure: you may be told something** – this is a specific statement made by an individual about the abuse that is happening to them.
- **Behavioural disclosure: you may see something** – through actions deliberate or inadvertent you may have a safeguarding concern relating to an individual's behaviour.
- **Non-verbal disclosure:** writing letters, drawing pictures or trying to communicate in any other way than verbal to let someone know that something is wrong.

2.3 Confidentiality and Data protection

The V&A's privacy notice outlines how and why we collect personal data.

Our general policy is not to intentionally collect personal data from anyone under 13 years old without ensuring we have explicit consent from the parent or guardian. Different rules apply to CCTV footage and these rules are set out in the V&A's privacy notice. However, in the case of safeguarding disclosures, which may involve the processing of what is called "special category data", we may collect this data without the explicit consent of the child/vulnerable adult or their parent or guardian. We will only collect and process special category data about a child or vulnerable adult where we meet the necessary requirements to do so under data protection law which include processing necessary for the vital interests of the child/vulnerable adult, in the context of legal claims, for reasons of substantial public interest and in the context of health or social care.

Safeguarding concerns must only be reported to an Operational Safeguarding Officer, and will only be shared, securely, with those who need to know. Records relating to safeguarding disclosures will be managed securely using password protected files, and a log will be kept to monitor access. Personal data relating to a child, young person or vulnerable adult, collected for safeguarding purposes, will not be used for any other purpose and will be held according to the V&A's retention schedules for the minimum time necessary before being securely destroyed.