

Child protection policy  
Date 24<sup>th</sup> March 2013 (reviewed August 2016)

Introduction

*In putting this policy together we have followed guidelines laid down by the Charity Commission and taken examples from the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) and Volunteering England.*

The Laughter Specialists Charitable Trust arranges regular visits of specialist professionals such as performers/entertainers known as laughter specialists (often referred to as clown doctors) to vulnerable, sick and special needs children and adults.

They use a variety of skills as performers, especially interaction and improvisation with the children. Other skills include puppets, magic singing and music.

Their Laughter Specialist characters are light hearted and fun, sometimes silly, playful, musical and gentle. They create magical moments and encourage children and adults to take part.

Our aim is to improve general well being and quality of life.

Our work with children

Laughter specialists visit hospitals, schools, hospices, care homes, youth groups, clubs and other institutions and groups.

They visit on a regular basis, all year round, during the day. Visits last for 1 or 2 hours. They may visit groups or individuals, always with other responsible adults in attendance or nearby, such as teachers, parents, hospital and other staff. They work in pairs and support each other.

They are adaptable and versatile, making their material and approach suitable for the situation and age appropriate as circumstances require.

They may spend a few minutes by the bedside of a child just saying hello and singing some rhymes or distract a child from boredom or pain for 20 minutes with music and silly dancing. They may visit 4 classes at a school with the children in each class for 40 minutes or more. They may provide distraction from medical procedures or bring humour to help aid difficulties such as walking, eating and fear of being in hospital. The benefits of their work are many and varied. *Please see separate document Benefits.*

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Code of behaviour

The Laughter Specialists Charitable Trust; its trustees, workers, volunteers and any contractors engaged as Laughter Specialists are committed to protecting children from harm and agree to follow the Trust's Child protection policy.

By agreeing that:

General points:

- 1) At all times the safety and needs of the children or vulnerable adults come first. Their welfare and well being is our priority.
- 2) We have a duty of care to all children and vulnerable adults with whom we come into contact with during the course of our work.
- 3) Our work must fit the description in the introduction above and in the rest of this document.
- 4) We only work with children and vulnerable adults once we have permission from them and/or their carers. When requested to leave and not interact with an individual or group Laughter Specialists always respect that request.

Working with others:

- 5) We value working in partnership and in collaboration with others (acknowledging and valuing different roles, knowledge and skills). We respect other professionals and staff such as doctors, nurses, plays specialists, teachers and others. We are aware not to get in the way of their tasks and be supportive. We are aware and accept the boundaries our work.

Confidentiality:

- 6) Confidential information supplied to us regarding any child or vulnerable adult will be kept confidential (unless disclosure is required by law). Any concerns we have about a child or vulnerable adult's welfare will be disclosed to their immediate carers, heads of department or the appropriate safeguarding officer as appropriate.
- 7) We do not keep or record personal details of the people we work with, only general details such as numbers of children seen, their ages and a brief record of work that day. The only exception to this may be if the children or adults are taking part in ethically approved research on the effect of our work or for media stories and images. In such cases we would take written consent from the individuals and carers/institutions involved.
- 8) As a consequence of the nature of our work parents and children often talk openly relating stories and concerns. We are happy to listen but do not get drawn into detailed discussions about treatment, management or individuals.

Being alone with a child:

- 9) Laughter Specialists do not work with a child when there is no other responsible adult present. If they find themselves alone with a child or vulnerable person they ensure this is only for a short period and make sure another responsible adult or their working

The Laughter Specialists - make a difference

17 Crawley Hobbs Close Saffron Walden

Essex CB11 4GD

[www.thelaughterspecialists.com](http://www.thelaughterspecialists.com)

Tel: 01799 510918 [fun@thelaughterspecialists.co.uk](mailto:fun@thelaughterspecialists.co.uk)

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partner is present or nearby. They would not allow themselves to be in a room with a closed door alone with a child or vulnerable adult.

10) They do not spend excessive amounts of time with children away from others and when working with children keep as visible as possible.

#### Physical contact:

11) Physical contact: Sometimes a child or vulnerable adult may wish to hug a laughter specialist or hold hands or when we are playing a dancing game hold hands and dance. We would never allow this contact to last an inappropriate time or to become too close. Sometimes a laughter specialist may gently touch a child or adult on the hand or arm as a reassuring gesture or help to support a child to stand, walk, take part in an activity (such as playing an instrument) or sit when they need help.

#### Equality:

12) We believe in equality and respect diversity of race, religion, culture and disability. *Please see our Equal rights policy.*

#### Safeguarding training/CRB checks:

13) Laughter Specialists must have a satisfactory disclosure certificate from the CRB. Their CRB certificate is available for submission to any hospital or centre authority. CRB certificates are issued via Essex County Council.

14) The Laughter Specialists need to be trained up to safeguarding children level 1 a recognised NFE (Exam board) qualification. This training may be received through suitably qualified/ trained/experienced persons via approved organisations. As we are based in Essex we come under the scrutiny of The Essex Safeguarding Children's Board which is part of The Essex and area Children and Young People Strategic Partnership, a statutory body. They offer training through workshops, or online at a recognised Internet learning site, established by the Essex Safeguarding Board.

15) Appropriate training in child and vulnerable adults' protection will be undertaken and kept up to date by the team.

16) All laughter specialists must have received training and gained experience in working in special needs, hospital or caring situations with children and vulnerable adults. *(For a list of the kind of training subjects undertaken please see separate document 'Training').*

#### Concerns/disclosure made to The Laughter Specialists:

17) The Laughter Specialists will follow the procedures set down by the health trusts, hospitals and centres with whom it works and any concerns about a child will be reported to the appropriate person (e.g. child protection Safeguarding officer, ward manager, head teacher).

18) It is important that all safeguarding agencies are informed and information is passed on to all the connected agencies (e.g. social services, schools, police etc).

19) We will be aware that someone might misinterpret actions no matter how well intentioned.

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20) We never draw any conclusions about others without checking the facts.

21) We never allow ourselves to be drawn into inappropriate attention seeking situations such as tantrums or crushes.

22) We never exaggerate or trivialise child abuse issues or make suggestive remarks or gestures about, or to a child or young person, even in fun.

Concerns from organisations:

23) Any concerns that this policy or the guidelines have not been followed by anyone connected with the Trust should be reported to the Laughter Specialist trustees or to the appropriate person at any of the places of work (for example; hospitals and schools) of the trust.

Sign:

24) All representatives of the trust (Trustees, workers, volunteers,) must sign to agree to the child and vulnerable adult's protection policy.

#### **Disclosure:**

If a child or adult discloses something to you and you have concerns there are important points to follow and consider.

Never guarantee absolute confidentiality as Child Protection takes precedence over any other issues.

Listen to the child, rather than question him or her directly.

Offer him/her reassurance without making promises and take everything the child says seriously.

Allow the child to speak without interruption, accept what is said – it is not your role to investigate or question, do not overreact.

Alleviate feelings of guilt and isolation, while passing no judgement.

Advise that you will try to offer support but that you must pass the information on.

Explain what you have to do and whom you have to tell.

Use the child's words or explanations – do not translate into your own words in case you have misconstrued what the child was trying to say.

Contact the appropriate child safeguarding officer/person at the organisation/group/institution where you are working for advice/guidance.

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The safeguarding person may then discuss the concern/suspicion with the relevant organisation and if appropriate make a direct referral.

Record any discussions or actions taken within 24 hours.

#### **PROCEDURE FOR REPORTING ALLEGATIONS OR SUSPICIONS OF ABUSE**

In any case where an allegation is made, or someone has concerns, a record should be made.

Details must include, as far as practical:

Name of child or young person

Age

Home Address (if known) or hospital ward/school address and class details

Date of Birth (if known)

Name/s and Address of parent/s or person/s with parental

Responsibility (if Known)

Telephone numbers if available

Is the person making the report expressing their own concerns, or passing on those of somebody else? If so, record details

What has prompted the concerns?

Include dates and times of any specific incidents

Has the child or young person been spoken to?

If so, what was said?

Has anybody been alleged to be the abuser?

If so, record details

Who has this been passed on to, in order that appropriate action is taken?

Has anyone else been consulted?

If so, record details and detail action.

#### **Reporting procedure:**

Step 1) Laughter specialist, trustee, volunteer, representative has concerns.

Step 2) Record and report to the appropriate safeguarding person in organisation/group/school/hospital or/and social services or police.

Step 3) Inform the Laughter Specialist Trustees and minute the fact at the next trustee meeting that the report has been made. (Details should be kept confidential).

Step 4) The secretary of the trustees should take steps to follow up with the appropriate agencies and organisations to ensure the report of the concerns have been acted on.