

Museums Policy on the Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults

The safety of children and vulnerable adults is paramount and all, without exception, have the right to protection from abuse. All suspicions and allegations of abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately. All University Collections staff and volunteers have a responsibility to report concerns.

Note: This policy complements the University of Oxford's Code of Practice on the Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults.

1. Background

1.1 This Museum is part of Oxford University Museums and Collections. The Museums are a teaching and research resource for University students and visitors; and are open for the wider public to enjoy. They are funded by Oxford University. Education and volunteer activities are funded by the Museums Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) and the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE).

We also run community education activities. These include: family drop-in events, schools and college education visits, as well as outreach visits such as tours for community groups and off-site visits to venues such as the hospital schools and community centres. There are also a number of events during the year which aim to attract a wider audience to the Museums.

Volunteers support both education activities and help behind the scenes with the collections. They are a vital support to the Collections, and are recruited from within and outside the University. Occasionally, freelancers also support education activities.

2. To whom does this policy apply?

2.1 This policy applies to children and those vulnerable adults of any age identified to the museum when visiting, taking part in activities or volunteering.

This policy, in accordance with University of Oxford's Code of Practice on the Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults, uses the following definitions:

- A child is anyone under the age of eighteen.
- A vulnerable adult is 'a person aged 18 or over whose ability to protect him- or her-self from neglect, abuse, or violence, is significantly impaired on account of disability, illness, or otherwise.'

2.2 Visiting groups are asked to identify vulnerable adults or children with specific support needs to us.

To enable us to best support and respond to the needs of vulnerable adults and children, this policy is signposted to all group leaders (teachers, support workers, parents and carers) when a booking is made. A notice is displayed in the Museum entrance requesting visitors with support needs, or those accompanying them, to contact the front desk.

3. Visitor access to the Museum

3.1 The Museum is open to the general public and is wheelchair accessible at sign posted entrance points. At the Museum of the History of Science provides partial access for wheelchairs.

The majority of educational visits and family friendly activities take place in the parts of the museum open to the general public, and the education rooms which are accessible.

3.2 Spaces closed to the public, such as offices, are accessible only by arrangement with staff. Visitors to these areas, including volunteers, tutees and tour visitors must sign in the visitors' book at the start and end of their visit.

3.3 The Museum requires all children and vulnerable adults taking part in staff- or volunteer-led education or family activities to be accompanied by responsible adults. Information noting this will be sent out with all booking forms to group leaders. Signs stating this will be visible at all family-friendly events.

3.4 All family–friendly sessions are supervised by either a member of museum staff or volunteer with a CRB enhanced disclosure.

3.5 Children visiting unaccompanied

Children visiting alone are admitted on the understanding that their parents, guardians or carers have allowed them to come unattended.

3.6 Visitor behaviour

Guidance for visitor behaviour is displayed at the entrance to the Museum. If there are concerns about visitor’s behaviour then it is our policy to draw to this to their attention and to ask them to agree that they will observe all signs, rules and regulations of the Museum and respect people’s right to enjoy the collections in quiet contemplation.

This policy also applies to adults and any visitor deemed not to be behaving appropriately. Those causing disturbance or offence to staff or visitors or acting in a way that could cause damage to the collections will be asked to leave.

4. Staff and volunteers - recruitment and screening

4.1 Staff-

Staff are recruited in accordance with the Oxford University Integrated Equal Opportunities Policy.

4.2 Volunteers working with children

Applicants register online to become a Museums volunteer. All applicants are interviewed, usually by the Volunteer Coordinator or Volunteer and Outreach Assistant, before starting to volunteer. They are asked to bring photographic identification to confirm identity. Volunteers are required to provide two references. Only in exceptional circumstances, as detailed in the Volunteer Policy, will one reference be accepted. Applicants can begin to volunteer only after appropriate positive references are received and placed on file. Records are kept in accordance with the Oxford University Policy on Data Protection.

Guidelines for volunteers working with children are part of our Health and Safety policy. They are discussed at interview, and volunteers are asked to sign their consent to abide by these guidelines.

All volunteer-supported education activities are supervised by education staff with an enhanced CRB disclosure.

4.3 Freelance Workers-

All education activities supported by freelance workers are supervised by education staff with a CRB enhanced disclosure.

4.4 CRB checks

Any staff or volunteers that have regular or substantial contact with children or vulnerable adults are required to undertake an enhanced disclosure through the Criminal Records Bureau and the employer’s copy is received by the museum.

5. Reporting

5.1 Any concerns can be reported to the acting Child Protection Officers. Names and contact details for them are held on front desk and are noted in the Appendices of this document.

5.2 Child Protection Officers are trained by NSPCC approved trainers. Staff who may work with children or vulnerable adults receive Child Protection Awareness Training in accordance with NSPCC guidelines.

5.3 It is our policy to deal with problems privately and discreetly. Every problem will be dealt with seriously, documented and dated and, where necessary, passed on to the appropriate authorities.

5.4 Visiting group leaders are made aware of this policy so they know that, in case of a concern about a child or vulnerable adult, they can speak to any member of staff and s/he will be able to direct them to the child protection officer on duty.

5.5 Oxford University's policy on Public Interest Disclosure applies for any member of staff wishing to report concerns about another member of staff. <http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/ps/staff/codes/pid.shtml>

6. Photographs and other recordings

6.1 Written consent of parents or guardians will be sought for the taking of and use of photographic images.

6.2 If an event is being photographed or filmed, it is Museum policy to make visitors aware that this is happening, so that they can move away if they do not wish to be included.

7. When and how often is this policy reviewed?

This policy is reviewed annually by the Education Steering Group and CMSC

The next date for renewal is January 2009.