

online safeguarding policy for children and adults at risk

1. Purpose and Scope

This Online Safeguarding Policy sets out the Design Museum's mandatory requirements for safeguarding children, young people and adults at risk in all online, digital and remote activity. This policy applies to all trustees, employees, freelancers, volunteers, agency staff, contractors, mentors, designers and partner organisations working with or on behalf of the museum.

The policy covers all online or digitally facilitated activity organised, delivered or endorsed by the museum, including live and recorded sessions, mentoring, work experience, social media activity, email and messaging communication.

This document must be read alongside the main Child & Adults at Risk Safeguarding Policy; however, it contains the operational procedures required for immediate action in online contexts.

2. Statement of Commitment

The Design Museum has a duty of care to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and adults at risk in all settings, including online environments.

Online harm - including grooming, exploitation, coercive behaviour, cyberbullying and the sharing of inappropriate content - will be treated with the same seriousness as in-person safeguarding concerns.

All staff and partners are required to:

- Maintain professional boundaries at all times
 - Act immediately on any safeguarding concern
 - Follow the procedures set out in this policy without exception
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3. Definitions

A child is any person under the age of 18.

An adult at risk is any person aged 18+ who:

- Has needs for care and support; and
- Is experiencing, or at risk of, abuse or neglect; and

- Is unable to protect themselves as a result of those needs

Online activity includes all digital communication, platforms and environments facilitated or endorsed by the museum.

The Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO) and Deputy DSO (DDSO) have overall accountability for safeguarding in online and onsite contexts.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO)

The DSO is responsible for:

- Oversight of all online safeguarding incidents
- Decision-making and escalation to external agencies
- Reviewing safeguarding records and trends

Deputy DSO (DDSO)

Supports the DSO and acts in their absence.

Head of IT

Responsible for:

- Approving digital platforms used
- Configuring safety settings (waiting rooms, chat controls, access permissions)
- Ensuring appropriate monitoring systems are in place

Staff and Partners

All staff and partners must:

- Follow this policy
 - Report concerns immediately
 - Maintain professional conduct online
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5. Safe Platforms, Access and Monitoring

Only approved platforms may be used.

Platforms must be configured to include:

- Waiting rooms or controlled access
- Restricted screen sharing and chat settings
- Disabled recording for participants unless authorised

Access links must be shared securely and only with authorised participants.

All online activity delivered through museum systems may be monitored. Any flagged content or behaviour must be reviewed within one working day and escalated immediately to the DSO where safeguarding concerns arise.

6. Supervision Requirements

Online sessions must not proceed unless appropriate supervision arrangements are in place:

- Ages 0–7: A responsible adult must be present and visible throughout
- Ages 8–13: A responsible adult must be in the same room or immediately available
- Ages 14–18: A responsible adult must be aware of the session and contactable

If supervision requirements are not met, the session must not proceed.

7. Staff Conduct and Communication

Staff and partners must:

- Use only museum-approved communication channels
- Use organisational accounts (not personal accounts)
- Maintain clear professional boundaries at all times

Staff and partners must not:

- Use personal phone numbers or email addresses
 - Communicate via private or encrypted messaging apps
 - Engage in 1:1 online sessions without approved safeguards
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8. Online Sessions and Events

At least two adults must be present during live sessions.

If an exception is required, a written risk assessment must be approved by the DSO.

Session hosts must:

- Set and communicate behavioural expectations
- Control access and platform features
- Act immediately on inappropriate behaviour

If safeguarding concerns arise during a session, staff must:

1. Take immediate steps to protect the individual (pause/remove participants if needed)
2. Preserve evidence (do not delete messages or content)
3. Report the concern immediately to the DSO

All incidents must be recorded on the Safeguarding Incident Form within the same working day.

9. Mentoring and 1:1 Contact

Online mentoring presents increased safeguarding risk and must follow strict controls:

- A parent/carer must be informed of all sessions in advance
 - Where possible, a parent/carer should attend
 - Sessions must take place on approved platforms
 - A second adult must be able to access or oversee sessions where required
- 1:1 sessions must not take place without documented approval and safeguarding controls.
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10. Digital Content and Social Media

All content involving children or adults at risk must be:

- Moderated by staff before publication
- Reviewed for safeguarding risks

Participants must use organisational accounts where content is created on behalf of the museum.

Any concerning content must be reported immediately.

11. Data Protection and Privacy

Personal data must be:

- Collected lawfully and only where necessary
- Stored securely
- Accessed only by authorised individuals

Images, recordings or identifiable material must not be captured or used without informed consent and appropriate risk assessment.

12. Recognising and Responding to Concerns

All safeguarding concerns must be treated seriously.

Immediate Action

Staff must:

- Remain calm and listen
- Do not promise confidentiality
- Do not ask leading questions

Reporting Procedure

1. Record the concern accurately
2. Report immediately to the DSO or DDSO
3. Submit a safeguarding incident form within the same working day

Escalation

If there is immediate risk of harm (e.g. grooming, sexual content, threats or coercion):

- Contact police or social care immediately
- Inform the DSO as soon as possible

All records must be stored securely in line with safeguarding procedures.

13. Training

All staff and partners must complete safeguarding training:

- At induction

- Annually thereafter
 - With additional training for roles with specific safeguarding responsibility
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14. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed annually by the DSO and updated in response to:

- Changes in legislation
 - Emerging online risks
 - Learning from safeguarding incidents
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15. Compliance

Failure to comply with this policy may result in disciplinary action, termination of contract, and referral to relevant authorities.

This policy forms part of the Design Museum's commitment to safeguarding and must be followed at all times.

Approved: June 2026

Next review: June 2027