

SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE *and* VULNERABLE ADULTS POLICY

For all questions and concerns please contact our designated child protection officer:	support@gameacademy.co
National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) child protection helpline (24/7 service):	0808 800 5000 help@nspcc.org.uk
Victims of abuse can seek support from the National Association for People Abused in Childhood (NAPAC):	0808 801 0331

It is widely accepted that it is the responsibility of every adult to safeguard the wellbeing of children and vulnerable adults. Abuse can arouse strong emotions in those facing such a situation and it is important to understand these feelings and not allow them to interfere with your judgement about any action to take.

Abuse and poor practice can occur within many situations including the online. Some individuals will actively seek employment or voluntary work with children or vulnerable adults in order to harm them. Everyone working at Game Academy either in a paid or voluntary capacity, together with those working in affiliated organisations has a role to play in safeguarding the welfare of children and vulnerable adults and promoting good practice.

A community team may have regular contact with children and be a very important link in identifying cases where an individual may be at risk or in need.

Game Academy recognises that they have a responsibility to:

- Safeguard and promote the interests and well-being of children and vulnerable adults with whom it is working
- Take all reasonable practical steps to protect them from harm, discrimination, or degrading treatment
- Respect their rights, wishes and feelings.

Child and vulnerable adults protection procedures:

- Help to maintain the professionalism and the standards of practice that are associated with the members of Game Academy.

We recognise that any procedure is only as effective as the ability and skill of those who operate it. **We are committed to:**

- Proper recruitment policies
- The provision of support and appropriate training
- Clear processes for recognition and responding to concerns
- Working together with parents/carers and other organisations to ensure that the needs and the welfare of all remains paramount.

PRINCIPLES

- The child's welfare is paramount, as is that of the vulnerable adult
- All users whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious belief and/or sexual identity have the right to protection from abuse
- All suspicions and allegations of abuse will be taken seriously; and responded to swiftly and appropriately
- Anyone aged 18 years or under should be considered as a child for the purposes of this document.

Working in partnership with children and their parents/carers is essential for the protection of the children.

Recognitions

ABUSE

Even for those experienced in working with child abuse, it is not always easy to recognise a situation where abuse may occur or has already taken place. Game Academy acknowledges that their staff, whether in a paid or voluntary capacity, are not experts at such recognition. It therefore expects them to report any concern they may have about the welfare of a child immediately with the Board of Directors.

It is the responsibility of these people to ensure that appropriate advice is obtained from the local social services department or the NSPCC. If people in charge are not available, or the concern is about the person in charge, the person in receipt of the information will contact the social services directly.

Indications That a Child or Vulnerable Adult is Being Abused

- The child describes what appears to be an abusive act involving him/her
- Someone else — a child or adult, expresses concern about the welfare of another child
- Unexplained changes in behavior — e.g. becoming very quiet, withdrawn, or displaying sudden outbursts of temper
- Inappropriate sexual expression
- Engages in sexually explicit behaviour in games
- Is distrustful of adults, particularly those with whom a close relationship will normally be expected
- Has difficulty in making friends
- Is prevented from socialising with other users

It must be recognised that the above list is not exhaustive and the presence of one or more of the indicators is not proof that abuse is actually taking place. It is not the responsibility of those working at Game Academy to decide that child abuse is occurring, but it is their responsibility to act on any concerns.

The NSPCC updates its definitions and signs of online abuse, and the full information can be found at www.nspcc.org.uk. Below is a summary of the most recent publication, relevant to Game Academy:

Bullying and Cyberbullying	Cyberbullying is bullying that takes place online. Unlike bullying in the real world, online bullying can follow the child wherever they go, via social networks, gaming and mobile phone.
Emotional Abuse	Emotional abuse is any type of abuse that involves the continual emotional mistreatment of a child and this can happen both on and offline.
Grooming	Grooming is when someone builds a relationship with a child so they can sexually abuse, exploit or traffic them. Children and young people can be groomed online or face-to-face by a stranger or by someone they know.
Sexting	Sexting is when someone shares sexual, naked or semi-naked images or videos of themselves or others, or sends sexual messages. It's online abuse if a child or young person is pressured or coerced into creating or sending these types of images.
Sexual Abuse	Sexual abuse is when a child or young person is forced or tricked into sexual activities. Sexual abuse can happen online - for example, a child could be forced to make, view or share child abuse images or videos or take part in sexual activities on conversations online.

Sexual Exploitation	Child sexual exploitation is a type of sexual abuse. When a child is sexually exploited online they may be persuaded or forced to create sexually explicit photos or videos or have sexual conversations.
---------------------	---



Abuse in all its forms can affect a child or vulnerable adult at any age. The effects can be so damaging, that if not treated, they may follow an individual into adulthood. For example, an adult who has been abused as a child may find it difficult, or impossible, to maintain a stable, trusting relationship; may become involved with drugs or prostitution; may attempt suicide, or may abuse a child in the future and find successful parenting difficult.

There have been a number of studies which suggest children with disabilities are at increased risk of abuse through various factors such as stereotyping, prejudice, discrimination, isolation, and a powerlessness to protect themselves, or to adequately communicate that abuse has occurred. Children from ethnic minorities, who may also be experiencing racial discrimination, may be doubly powerless.



If a child says or indicates that he or she is being abused, or information is obtained which gives concern that a child is being abused, the person receiving this information should:

- React calmly so as not to frighten the child
- Tell the child they are not to blame and that it was right to tell someone
- Take what the child says seriously, recognising the difficulties inherent in interpreting what is said by a child who is very young, has a speech disability and/or differences in language
- Keep questions to the absolute minimum necessary to ensure a clear and accurate understanding of what has been said
- Reassure the child, but do not make promises of confidentiality which might not be feasible in the light of subsequent developments
- Make a full record of what had been said, heard and/or seen as soon as possible.

Responding to Suspicions ALLEGATIONS OF CHILD ABUSE

It is not the responsibility of a member of the Game Academy to take responsibility or to decide whether or not child abuse is taking place. There is however, a responsibility to report concerns so that appropriate agencies can then make inquiries and take any necessary action to protect the child.

Whilst Game Academy acknowledges the importance of the role of statutory agencies involved in children's welfare (social services, police, NSPCC), it

appreciates that there may be some reluctance to report direct to these agencies, especially if the person reporting is unclear as to whether abuse has occurred. As a result of this, Game Academy have a Lead Child Protection Officer (LCPO), who should be contacted at the earliest possible time after the event or allegation. The LCPO can then liaise directly with statutory agencies and assist the organisation that made the report.

The social services department has a statutory duty under the Children Act 1989 to ensure the welfare of a child. When a child protection referral is made its staff have a legal responsibility to investigate. This may involve talking to the child and family and gathering information from other people who know the child. Inquiries may be carried out jointly with the police.

What to Do If There Are Concerns

1. There is always a commitment to work in partnership with parents or carers where there are concerns about their children. Therefore, in most situations, it would be important to talk to parents or carers to help clarify any initial concerns. For example, if a child seems withdrawn, they may have experienced bereavement in the family.
2. However, there are circumstances in which a child might be placed at even greater risk where such concerns to be shared, e.g. where a parent or carer may be responsible for the abuse or not able to respond to the situation appropriately.

3. In these situations, or where concerns still exist, any suspicion, allegation, or incident of abuse must be reported to the person in charge as soon as possible, and recorded.
4. It is the responsibility of the person in charge to inform the social services department without delay. If a person in charge is not available, the person discovering or being informed of the abuse should immediately contact the social services department or the police. If you're not sure about what to do, you can [contact Game Academy's Lead Child Protection Officer and/or the NSPCC's child protection helpline.](#)

Recording *and* INFORMATION

Information passed to the social services department or the police must be as helpful as possible, hence the necessity for making a detailed record. The information should contain the following:

- The nature of the allegation
- The child's account, if he or she can give them, of what has happened and how any bruising or other injuries occurred
- Any times, dates, or other relevant information
- A clear distinction between what is fact, opinion, or hearsay

Reporting the matter to the police or social services department should not however be delayed by attempts to obtain more information. Once an allegation

or concern has been raised with the police, social services or the NSPCC then the concern must be passed on to Game Academy via the LCPO. Wherever possible, referrals telephoned to the social services department should be confirmed in writing within 24 hours. A record should also be made of the name and designation of the social services member of staff or police officer to whom the concerns were passed, together with the time and date of the call, in case any follow-up is needed.

Allegations of Abuse MEMBERS OF GAME ACADEMY

This would include anyone working with children in a paid or voluntary capacity.

Abuse can and does occur outside the family setting, including online. Although it is a sensitive and difficult issue, abuse has occurred within gaming and learning communities. Recent inquiries indicate that abuse, which takes place within a public setting, is rarely a one-off event. It is crucial that those involved in community management are aware of this possibility and that all allegations are taken seriously and appropriate action taken.

The person in charge may be informed of situations where they are unsure about whether the allegation constitutes abuse or not, and are therefore unclear about what action to take. There may be circumstances where allegations are about poor practice rather than abuse. In this instance, those responsible should always consult Game Academy's LCPO and avoid discussions with colleagues as there is a need to protect human rights of all concerned, including the individual against who the allegation is made.

Do not hesitate to gain advice from social services, or the NSPCC where there is any doubt. This is because this may be just one of a series of other instances which together cause concern. It is acknowledged that feelings generated by the discovery that a member of staff or volunteer is, or may be abusing a child, will raise concerns among other staff or volunteers, including the difficulties inherent in reporting such matters. However, it is important that any concerns for the welfare of the child arising from abuse or harassment by a member of staff or volunteer should be reported immediately.

Game Academy would like to assure all staff and members that it would fully support and protect anyone who, in good faith, reports his or her concern that a colleague is, or may be, abusing a child.

Where there is a complaint of abuse against a member of staff, there may be three types of investigation:

- A criminal investigation
- A child protection investigation
- A disciplinary or misconduct investigation.

The results of the police and social services investigation may well influence the disciplinary investigation, but not necessarily.

- If, following consideration the allegation is clearly about poor practice, then Game Academy will deal with this as a misconduct issue
- Any suspicion that a child has been abused by a member will be reported to a person in charge who will take such steps as he or she

considers necessary to ensure the safety of the child in question and any other child who may be at risk

- The designated person will refer the allegation to the social services department who may involve the police
- The parents or carers of the child will be contacted as soon as possible following advice from the social services department
- The person in charge should also notify Game Academy's LCPO
- Every effort should be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned
- If the person in charge is the subject of the suspicion/allegation and is a member of Game Academy, the report must be made to LCPO who is then responsible for taking the action outlined above
- Irrespective of the findings of the social services or police inquiries, Game Academy must assess all individual cases under the appropriate misconduct/disciplinary and welfare procedures, to decide whether a member should be reinstated and how this can be sensitively handled. This may be a difficult decision, particularly where there is insufficient evidence to uphold any action by the police. In such cases, the Game Academy will reach a decision based upon the information that is available which could suggest that on a balance of probability it is more likely than not that the allegation is true. The welfare of children should always remain paramount.
- Consideration should be given to what support may be appropriate to children, parents and members of staff.

Prevention

All people have a right to be safe and to be treated with dignity and respect.

Basic guidelines will help safeguard both children, staff, volunteers and the organisation concerned and reduce the risk of allegations being made. These are listed below.

Recruitment and Selecting Staff and Volunteers

Anyone may have the potential to abuse children in some way and it is important that all reasonable steps are taken to ensure that unsuitable people are prevented from working with children. It is essential the same procedure is used consistently whether staff be paid or unpaid in part-time or full-time occupation.

When undertaking pre-selection checks the following should be included:

- All volunteers and staff working should complete an application form
- Application forms should be designed to elicit information about an applicant's past career (including any gaps), and to establish any criminal record
- Consent should be obtained from applicants for police and social services checks

- Game Academy should have effective measures in place to ensure the confidentiality of information received in relation to applicants is treated with the strictest of confidence
- Key employees working with children and vulnerable adults should be checked with the following organisations who maintain information about individuals who are deemed unsuitable to work with children:

In England and Wales	<u>Disclosure and Barring Service</u>
In Scotland	<u>Disclosure Scotland</u>
In Northern Ireland	<u>Data Protection Unit</u>
Game Academy can act for you as an umbrella body for the purpose of	<u>obtaining DBS disclosure on yourself, employees and volunteers</u>

Supervision

Managers should be sensitive to any concerns about abuse or not adhering to good practice as set out below, and act on them at an early stage. They should also offer appropriate support to those who report concerns.

Good Practice in the Care of Children

You can reduce situations for the abuse of children and help to protect staff and volunteers by promoting good practice.

Where cases arise where it is unavoidable that these things do happen, they should only occur with the full knowledge and consent of someone in charge in the organisation, or the child's parents.

And you should never:

- Engage in rough, physical or sexually provocative games
- Allow children to use inappropriate language unchallenged
- Make sexually suggestive comments to a child even in fun
- Let allegations a child makes go unrecorded, or not acted upon
- Do things of a personal nature that children can do for themselves

It may be sometimes necessary for staff or volunteers to do things of a personal nature for children, particularly if they are young or are children with disabilities. These tasks should only be carried out with a full understanding and written consent of parents and of the children involved. There is a need to be responsive to a child's reactions and if a child is fully dependent upon you, talk with them about what you are doing and give them choices where possible.