

Page to Stage - Safeguarding Policy and Procedures

Purpose and Scope

The purpose of this policy statement is:

- to protect all Page to Stage members from harm and abuse.
- to provide staff and volunteers, as well as members and their families, with the overarching principles that guide our approach to protection.

We believe that Page to Stage members, for the full and harmonious development of their personality, should grow in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding (adapted from UN Convention of the Rights of the Child). Whilst it is not possible to fully protect all members, Page to Stage has policies and procedures in place to respond to concerns of 'physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s)' or any other person who comes into contact with the child. (Article 19, UN Convention of the Rights of the Child)

We recognise we have a duty of care and we are committed to the protection and safety of everyone who comes into contact with our organisation; including children and adults at risk involved as visitors and as participants in all of our activities both on and off site. We also have a duty to safeguard and support our staff and volunteers.

This policy applies to anyone working on behalf of Page to Stage, including the board and committee, paid staff, volunteers, sessional workers, agency staff and students.

As an association located in Switzerland, we comply with Swiss Federal and Cantonal laws pertaining to child protection.

What is Safeguarding?

Safeguarding is a broad term that refers to protecting persons from harm and abuse, including verbal, non-verbal, physical or other discriminatory behaviours. Safeguarding entails a framework response to ensure that such behaviours can be dealt with in a manner that the reporting person's well-being and safety are prioritised and protected.

Policy

Policy Statement

We believe everyone has a responsibility to promote the welfare of all children and adults at risk of harm, to keep them safe and to practice in a way that protects them. The association operates within a culture of openness and recognises that mistreatment can occur in any situation, including at home and in educational settings. We have a zero tolerance approach to abuse. We also believe we have a responsibility to treat each other, and everyone we interact with, with dignity and respect. This also means appreciating diversity, whether that diversity exists because of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation or any other difference. Respect is fundamental to performance and engagement. We recognise the need to protect children and adults at risk from harm both in person and/or from cyber/virtual risks. We ensure all of the organisation's operations and activities are designed and delivered with effective safeguarding in mind to protect adults and children from abuse. At Page to Stage, any suspected and all proven cases of abuse of students must be reported.

Values and Guiding Principles

We are guided by and adhere to the values of empowerment, prevention, protection, proportionality, partnerships, integrity and accountability in our work and behaviour. This applies to all our relationships, within our team and with regard to all partners and other third parties that we work with. We expect all people in scope to demonstrate courtesy and respect in all their dealings with each other, with everyone with whom they work, and in the communities in which they operate. We respect, and encourage respect for human rights and the principles of diversity, solidarity and equal opportunity. We do not tolerate any forms of bullying, harassment, discrimination, exploitation, abusive behaviour or intimidation, including sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment. We expect all partners with whom we work to conduct themselves in this same manner.

We fulfil these responsibilities by:

- Recruiting people who are suitable and appropriate for working with children and who have a positive attitude towards protection.
- Providing training to all employees on the procedures described in this policy.
- Creating an atmosphere of positivity and trust where members feel secure and are encouraged to talk and ask for help when they need it.
- Encouraging members to discuss safeguarding and protection issues confidentially with the board and/or committee to ensure they are confident in their own abilities to identify and handle risks and cases of mistreatment appropriately.
- Offering required support to members, their families, and volunteers.
- Ensuring the association operates in a culture of openness, trust and transparency in which any concerns about the conduct of staff, volunteers, other adults, and fellow members will be shared and dealt with appropriately and sensitively.
- Ensuring that individuals who report cases of child protection are protected from discrimination and reprisal.

Procedures

Reporting

Anyone who experiences, observes or suspects any of the above, is encouraged to report the concern/incident. To report such an incident, one may directly contact any current committee or board member who will bring it to the attention of a Safeguarding Officer. One may also report a concern or incident via email to pagetostage.ch@gmail.com. All these channels allow for anonymous and non-anonymous reporting, and either type of report will be treated equally. Page to Stage encourages non-anonymous reporting as this increases the chances of successfully addressing concerns that have been raised and facilitates the investigation and remediation of the concern raised. Any disclosure, including potential reports against a Page to Stage member, will be taken seriously and follows internal procedures. At all times, the safety of the at-risk member will be kept at the highest priority whilst maintaining the reputation and integrity of the individual concerned.

Handling

Any safeguarding matter reported will be handled with the highest degree of confidentiality. Upon receipt of a report through any of the afore-listed channels, the Safeguarding Officer will seek to resolve the concern raised in the report to the best of their abilities, in line with the principles, standards and objectives set in this Policy and in line with applicable Swiss law and international best practice. The Safeguarding Officer may seek further clarification from the reporting person and will always endeavour to keep the reporting person informed of the evolution of the case if the reporting person has revealed their identity. The Safeguarding Officer may in this process, at their discretion, involve other - though strictly only non-involved / non-concerned – persons, if it can assist in remedying the concern raised. The protection of the reporting person is of utmost importance throughout the investigation and remediation process.

Page to Stage committee members and staff must always listen to a child or adult who wants to talk. If a member talks to a committee member or employee in terms that indicate suspected mistreatment at the very least, the committee member or employee must:

- Find a quiet place where the conversation will not be interrupted but within sight of others.
- Be attentive and willing to listen even if it is not the right moment. The member may have had to take a lot of courage to approach the committee member or employee and may change their mind about speaking.
- Try to reassure the member and make them feel comfortable (they have done nothing wrong by talking to you).
- Listen carefully and attentively, take the member seriously.
- Only ask questions to clarify and understand the situation.
- Tell the member what will be done with the information they have given you and what will happen next.
- Seek help if the child is distressed.
- Note what has been said as soon as possible and forward all information at the earliest opportunity to the reporting channels afore-mentioned.

If a member talks to a committee member or employee in terms that indicate suspected mistreatment at the very least, the committee member or employee must not:

- Promise confidentiality if the member is in danger as this may not be in the member's best interests.
- Ask leading questions.
- Show disgust, shock or anger.
- Ask them to repeat their account.
- Interrupt them.
- Give an opinion on what is being said.
- Inform the member's parents before reporting the case.
- Look at any pictures or take photos of injuries, physical marks, etc.
- Suggest that the child is to blame.

If emergency assistance is required, the committee member or employee must immediately contact the Safeguarding Officer. They should remain judgement-free. They should guarantee that they will not tell anyone who does not have a clear need to know and that they will pass on information in confidence only to the people who must be informed to ensure that appropriate action is taken. If the member asks for confidentiality and is told that it cannot be guaranteed, and consequently refuses to say anything, the handler must report the case immediately.

Confidentiality

Page to Stage committee members and employees should never guarantee confidentiality to children or adults wishing to tell them about something serious as this may ultimately not be in the best interests of the affected party. They should guarantee that they will not tell anyone who does not have a clear need to know and that they will pass on information in confidence only to the people who must be told in order to ensure that the appropriate action is taken. All those involved will also take whatever steps they can to protect the informant from any retaliation or unnecessary stress that may occur after a disclosure has been made. The Safeguarding Officer is duty-bound to inform the member's parents/legal guardian of all issues regarding the protection of their child unless doing so puts the child in danger.

Documentation

It is the duty and responsibility of those involved and ultimately the President's to document (electronic and/or paper, as required) the case, ensuring the information is accessible when required and protected from unauthorised access and/or damage. Such a record must include details of the person(s) involved, if this information has been revealed in the report, the nature of the concern as well as the consequential actions and decisions taken, including the reasonings for these. The President keeps an independent secure file of child protection cases arising in the association which is checked against every new child protection case that comes up.

Whistle Blowing

All adults have a responsibility to report any concerns about poor or unsafe practice, including in relation to the care and protection of children. If a member believes that best practice in this area is not being adhered to or that practice may put other members at risk, they should in the first instance report their concern to the President. If their concern relates to the President, they should report their concern to the Safeguarding Officer.

No one will suffer a detriment or be disciplined for raising a genuine concern about unsafe practice, provided that they do so in good faith and following the whistleblowing procedures. Also, no member may be harassed for whistleblowing or in any way subjected to personal or other disadvantages.

Complaints or reports made with malicious, slanderous or abusive intent, without any basis in fact, are exempt from this rule. Abuse of the right to lodge complaints or of the reporting channel will result in disciplinary measures including sanctions, warnings, termination without notice or expulsion.

Revision

Review

Page to Stage Safeguarding Policy and Procedures will be reviewed and/or amended according to developments yearly at the Annual General Meetings, unless earlier revisions are deemed necessary.

History

Version No. / Date	Section	Description of Change(s)
1.0 / May 2025	N/A	New policy adopted by Board