



MINISTRY OF STORIES

Workshop Volunteer Handbook

Name

Why volunteers are so important

Welcome to the Ministry of Stories!

Volunteers are very important to the Ministry of Stories. MoS is a charity and it could not work without many people, like you, generously giving their time, so we are very grateful that you are choosing to join us as a Workshop Volunteer. You're about to become trained in one of the most important roles – **Writing Mentor** - someone who gives their time and attention to help young people with their writing.

This Handbook will mainly focus on the mentoring techniques and obstacles related to the role of Writing Mentor but there is a section further on in the Handbook which gives more details on other Workshop Volunteer opportunities such as Illustrator, Publisher and the Chief. These roles are really important to our workshops as well, and we hope you're willing to help out from time to time. If you're interested in one of these roles and would like to arrange a one to one training session please get in contact.

You may be worried about what being a Writing Mentor involves. You may not be a writer yourself, or not have experience of working with children and young people. We hope that this handbook resolves any worries, guides you in how to start and then how to deal with any problems that might come up. If you have questions, don't be afraid to ask us. We believe that the more you volunteer, the more you learn and the more confident that you will become. We also make time after every workshop for Writing Mentor and other Workshop Volunteers to share their experiences of what went well (or not so well) so that we can all learn from this.

We think our volunteers like being Writing Mentor not just because they are giving their time to help young people, but also because it's fun. We hope that you enjoy it too.

Contact information

Enquiries about workshops and volunteering: volunteers@ministryofstories.org
Phone: 020 7729 4159
Address: 159 Hoxton Street, London N1 6PJ

www.ministryofstories.org
www.monstersupplies.org

www.twitter.com/mini_stories
www.twitter.com/monstersupplies

www.facebook.com/ministryofstories

Contents

The Story of the Ministry of Stories	p. 4
Volunteer Agreement	p. 5
Our Workshop Programme	p.6
Being a Writing Mentor	p. 7
Taking Your Role Further	p. 12
Other Ways You Can Volunteer	p 13
Other Guidelines	p.15
Child Safeguarding	p.16
Child Safeguarding Flow Chart	p.19
Volunteer Code of Conduct	p. 20
Learning Journal	p.22

About the Ministry of Stories

The writer Nick Hornby, Lucy Macnab and Ben Payne co-founded the Ministry of Stories in November 2010. It is a creative writing and mentoring centre for young people in Hackney, Tower Hamlets and Islington. We use storytelling to inspire young people aged 8-18, in the belief that writing unleashes their imaginations and builds their confidence, self-respect and communication.

Children and young people come on school trips to Ministry of Stories for writing workshops. Local children can also sign up to come to our weekly writing workshops in their own time after school or on Saturdays. All our workshops are free of charge.

We are interested in all kinds of writing. We also think it's important that young people have a goal to work towards with their writing. This goal could be seeing their writing published in a book or newspaper or seeing the script that they've written acted by actors. Writing Mentors are there at every stage to give young people the one-to-one attention that we believe makes the difference. So, as a mentor, you are at the heart of everything we do.

And Hoxton Street Monster Supplies?

Ah yes, the monster shop. Ministry of Stories also runs **Hoxton Street Monster Supplies**. It's a real shop, but all products in it have been created with monsters in mind. We hope that the shop helps to spark young people's imaginations. Sometimes the world of the shop inspires them to write stories about monsters, but sometimes they come up with completely different ideas. The shop welcomes customers from near and far and they can also buy our products through an online shop www.monstersupplies.org. All the money we raise from the shop goes back to the charity. This helps to keep our workshops free of charge to schools and local young people. There is a section further on this Handbook on how you can get involved in volunteering at Hoxton Street Monster Supplies.



Above are three simple rules for both adults and children at Ministry of Stories based on three values which are at the heart of everything we do: Respect, Courage and Imagination.

We also believe ...

- that every piece of writing and all kinds of writing have potential.
- that we work best when we work as a team and listen to each other.
- in respecting all kinds of people and ideas and taking every one seriously.
- that it's very important to be reliable. For example, we respect young people and other volunteers by turning up for the sessions that we have signed up for, and by being on time for them, except in genuine emergencies.

Expectations

Throughout your experience as a Writing Mentor, the workshop leader and Ministry staff team are there to support you, answer any questions, and help you find the right path for you. We regularly observe our volunteers mentoring, and may offer you advice or suggestions to improve what you do. If we feel that you would benefit from particular feedback, we will ask you for a 1:1 meeting to address our concerns, and find ways to help you progress. If we remain concerned about your practice after the process of improvement, we may ask you to consider other forms of volunteering with us, as an alternative.

By signing our volunteers' book at the end of this session, you are agreeing to follow the guidelines in this Handbook and our Volunteering Agreement. This includes our Safeguarding Code of Behaviour because it is essential that children and young people are safe whilst they are at Ministry of Stories.

Our workshop programme

We run a variety of workshops at the Ministry of Stories. Here are some examples:

Storymaking

This is a one-off, 2 hour workshop that we run for primary school classes of up to 30 children. They arrive at the Ministry of Stories with nothing but their imaginations and leave as published writers. In the first half of the workshop the class collaborate to create the beginning of a story and in the second half they write their own individual endings. Writing Mentors encourage and support children throughout the whole process. By the end of the workshop, each child leaves with their own personalised book containing the group's beginning, their own individual ending and illustrations based on the children's ideas by one of our brilliant Illustrators.

Primary School Writing Workshops

We also run workshops of 4 or 6 weekly sessions during term-time. Whether pupils create a publication of work, a performance or an exhibition, every project has a strong purpose. Sessions will usually be led by one of our workshop leaders, sometimes working together with a professional writer. Our Writing Mentors are there to help each child with each step in the process, first encouraging them to explore their ideas and then to complete their project. The publications that are made this way are sometimes put on sale in the shop.

Secondary School Writing Workshops

These are also writing projects usually of 4 or 6 weekly sessions during term time. The workshops will usually be led by one of our Creative Learning Team or a workshop leader. These workshops aim to give young people a real insight into what it's like to be a professional writer, including writing to deadlines, working as a team and working with editors. Examples of past workshops include TV scriptwriting, copywriting and spoken word. Writing Mentors play a vital role in developing writers' confidence and skills, helping to channel pupils' ideas and energy into their writing.

After School Writing Clubs

These are for local children and young people who want to do more writing in their own time. They take place after school during the week or on Saturday mornings and children attend each week. Projects in the past have included anthologies of short stories and poems and creating a story map of Hoxton. As with the schools projects, Writing Mentors support young people each week and help with editing and producing the finished piece of work. Sometimes, we choose to explore one particular form of a writing in a big project, which is a great chance to see an idea through from the beginning to the finished article – like our album of songs with lyrics by children, produced with Communion Records: www.ministryofstories.org/sharemoreair

Holiday Writing Projects

We also run projects that take place during half-term or the holidays. Young people may sign up for a project that lasts between three days to two weeks. Here, children will work together with Writing Mentors to produce a publication. An example of this is *Hoxton AM*, a local newspaper written by young people which reached ten thousand readers.

Being a Writing Mentor

This section contains some guidance on how new recruits can become great writing mentors. As your experience grows, so will your techniques and confidence and we encourage you to track the process by using the learning journal enclosed at the end of this handbook.

What happens during a workshop?

Each workshop is different, but they all take the same basic shape, which is outlined below.

1. You will arrive half an hour before the workshop begins for a briefing (briefing times are included in the times published on the online calendar). The workshop leader will explain what the task for the session will be, give information about the size of the expected group together with information about any children with learning difference.
2. The children will begin to arrive and put away their belongings.
3. The workshop leader will talk to the group about today's task.
4. The task will begin, with the workshop leader reminding children how much time they have left and when they need to pack away. The workshop leader will be on hand to support Writing Mentors with any questions or problems they have during the workshop.
5. There will usually be time for the children to share work at the end of the workshop.
6. Children will collect their things and file out and the workshop leader will complete a register.
7. There will be a half an hour debrief. This is where we share our experiences of the session and offer suggestions to others. Writing Mentors will also complete a report for the main child/children they worked with and have time to update their learning journal.

Tips for helping a child who is struggling to get started

1. Get them to draw a picture/storyboard of what they want to write, adding a few words or sentences as they work. Even if they end up spending most of the session on this, it will offer a sense of achievement and if they are returning, they have something to work from next time.
2. Talk through any ideas the child may have and suggest you draw a brainstorm or series of bullet points using their ideas.
3. At times, it can be helpful to encourage two or three children who are all finding getting started difficult to discuss their ideas with each other for 5 minutes.
4. Ask the child to talk about any writing they have done recently, or in the past that they are very proud of. Suggest incorporating aspects of previous work into the task at hand.

5. Suggest a couple of ideas and encourage the child to add to or change them. Sometimes a starting point is needed and once offered, the task becomes less scary.

Tips for working with a group

1. If one child requires more attention than the others, give it to them and don't feel guilty. Checking in with the rest of the group every few minutes will reassure them of your presence and remind them that you are still supporting them.
2. Encourage whole group or paired discussion if you feel they will benefit from hearing different ideas, but give a time limit.
3. If you feel one child is causing problems in the group, suggest you work with them on the carpet, bench or sofa for a while. Avoid the child feeling they are in trouble by explaining you want to hear what they have been doing and work with them on their ideas.
4. Suggest to other Writing Mentors working with your group that you divide the group up, so all children are given attention, and you all feel less overwhelmed.

How to approach different working styles

1. If a child is confident and happy to work independently, do not feel you have to sit beside them, waiting for them to ask for your help. Remind them that you are there if they need you, check in occasionally and make a point of asking how the session has been for them when it is nearing a close.
2. If a child becomes frustrated whilst writing, encourage them to take a break. Talk them to about what they have written so far by asking open questions such as:
 - How does that character feel when x happens?
 - What do you think that character could do next?
 - Have you ever felt like that character? What did you do when x happened?
 - Where is your story set? Where might your characters go next?
 - Do you think this story will end happily, sadly or at a cliff-hanger? Why?
3. It can also help children who are becoming frustrated to offer to write for them (often called scribing). You could take turns to write, or if it seems appropriate you could write for the majority of the task, allowing them to focus on their ideas. Make sure that you only write their words, avoiding the temptation to add your own ideas.
4. Encourage all writers to read through their work aloud, or to themselves. Instigate reflection; 'are you happy with what you have written? Which part are you most pleased with? Is there anything you would like to change or add?'

Other important writing tips

1. Try to remain positive, even if a child is struggling to engage in the task. Find one thing they have done and praise them- 'I love the way you have...I was really surprised when your character... I thought it was funny when'- Taking an interest in specific parts of the story will boost a child's confidence and encourage them to keep going with their writing.
2. Encourage children to use the dictionaries and thesauruses on our bookshelves if they are looking for new vocabulary or wish to check spelling.
3. If a child reads their work back to you, or asks you to read through it, offer suggestions. How could the writing expand? 'I love the idea of a rabbit suddenly jumping in through the window, what does the rabbit look like?'
4. Occasionally a child may want to write about an inappropriate subject. For example, their story might be very violent. Trust your instincts here. If you feel that it's not right, then it probably isn't. Offer an alternative subject, and let the child know their chosen one is not right for the space. They may be testing boundaries because this is a different space in which to work. If a child has written or spoken about something particularly disturbing, let the workshop leader know.

Behaviour

You will find that behaviour is not often a problem, but should you encounter any difficulties in this area, here are some techniques to try.

1. The child cannot focus

This is by far the most common problem. If you are encountering a child struggling to engage, do not blame yourself!

- Firstly, check the child understands the set task. Explain it to them slowly and allow them to ask any questions they may have.
- Have a little chat! Sometimes, a child cannot focus because they are a bit nervous. Ask them about their day so far, smile and make a joke, let them know you're there to help.
- Sometimes a child may begin very focused and become distracted. Encourage them to read their work to you and offer lots of praise and suggestions.
- Suggest a break or glass of water - hydrate the brain – and then get them back to the writing task.
- Suggest sharing their work with a friend who may have finished or by taking a break before encouraging them to continue.
- Giving children a relaxed deadline can motivate them. 'Great, get those ideas down and I'll come back to check how it's going after x minutes.'

2. It's just B-O-R-I-N-G!

Sometimes a child may not like the sound of the set task. Discuss aspects that they don't like the sound of and help them to find their own version of it that they can engage in.

3. The child has a learning difference.

We work with lots of different children here at the Ministry. If there is a child with a particular learning difference, the workshop leader will make everyone aware during the briefing and give you any information you might need so that you feel equipped to make the session enjoyable and fulfilling for them. The key is adapting to their style of working and finding an activity or pace that is right for them. Should specific needs arise as part of a long-term project, Writing Mentors will be invited to attend a training session in advance.

4. The child has English as an additional language

- Use clear, simple language; be careful not to use too much slang.
- Encourage informal conversation before any writing takes place.
- Try scribing for them, listening carefully to their ideas and helping them structure sentences.
- Encourage the child to draw or storyboard their ideas if they are finding expressing a particular idea with words difficult.
- Do not tell a child what they have said or written is incorrect. Demonstrate the appropriate English by repeating back what they have said or writing it down.
- Praise them! Speaking a new language can be difficult and frustrating, so let them know how well they have done.

5. The child is unruly

Sometimes children may behave in a manner that is disruptive and/or offensive. This can be for a variety of reasons, perhaps they are finding the task difficult, they are tired, something has happened recently to upset them, or there is a problem at school or home.

- Let the child know that their behaviour is unacceptable with statements such as:

‘You could hurt yourself or someone else by doing that, I need you to stop.’

‘You are using language that does not belong here. Please stop.’

- If a child is being disruptive at a table, try suggesting some quieter time working alone with you at another desk, on the carpet, bench or sofa.
- If you feel certain children are not getting along, let the workshop leader know and perhaps they can reshuffle the room.
- When we are sharing work, children should listen to each other and avoid talking or fidgeting. Gently remind children that we need to be respectful of others by listening carefully.
- Model positive behaviour by listening when the workshop leader or other children are speaking.

If bad behaviour escalates, let the workshop leader know and they will intervene. Staff members will talk with the child away from the group, reminding them of values and rules of the Ministry. If a child’s behaviour continues to be a problem, their parent or guardian may be contacted and they would be asked to leave, though this is not a situation we have seen happen often.

Lastly...

We are really pleased that you want to become a Writing Mentor. We want you to enjoy the experience as much as the children. Remember that it's ok to make mistakes and it's good if you have lots of questions. Talk to your workshop leader and to other Writing Mentors. Use the debrief session as a safe place to share ideas and worries. Like anything else, getting confident often takes time. The more you volunteer, the easier it will become.

Taking Your Role Further

Once you've been trained as a Writing Mentor, we ask you to sign up for a minimum of 6 sessions, over 6 months.

Please use the briefing and debrief time before and after the workshop to develop your skills and understanding, reflect on how you did, share what works best and talk through any issues. We believe that we improve the experience of children and young people through reflection and learning.

If you wish, you can also have a 5 minute one-to-one meeting with your workshop leader. This is time for you to discuss a specific issue, question or idea, with the support of an experienced educator. Please book this in advance by emailing volunteers@ministryofstories.org

You may want to develop your skills and levels of responsibility in workshops at Ministry of Stories. Some people who start as Writing Mentors go on to become workshop leaders or workshop deputies. If you are interested in developing your skills and experience, you can consider any of the following roles after you have completed 10 sessions as a Writing Mentor, and shown us written reflections of your experience. Equally, it's fine if you don't want to take on more responsibility and just continue volunteering and growing in experience.

1 Expert Volunteer

Attend our Introduction and Training session for new volunteers, and help deliver role-plays for new trainees, talk about your own experience as a Writing Mentor and answer questions.

2 Storymaking Workshop Leader

Learn how to deliver this popular school field trip, with a training session that covers how to engage a whole class, draw out ideas, and how to play the Chief. You will team-teach elements of this with more experienced workshop leaders, to practice your new skills.

3 Workshop development

You may have an idea for a new writing project that the Ministry of Stories could do. Are you a journalist, scriptwriter, comic book artist, or interested in how children learn? We may be able to work with you to develop your idea into a writing workshop or project for the Ministry. If you have an idea, please talk to a member of MoS staff.

We hope that your initial training is useful, and encourage you to use the learning journal in this handbook to record your thoughts and reflections. We will also be offering a series of additional training and refresher sessions throughout the year. Once you have attended your first 6 workshops, you are welcome to sign up for these training sessions which will be advertised via the website and in our e-newsletters.

Other ways to get involved as a Workshop Volunteer

The Ministry of Stories is a growing charity with many roles for volunteers to contribute their time and skills. If you are interested in getting involved in any of the areas outlined below, and have not already done so please let us know. You can email volunteers@ministryofstories.org for more information.

Illustrator

We need experienced illustrators to help bring young people's imaginations to life. Illustrators are an essential part of our Storymaking workshops. Working closely with the Writing Mentors, illustrators help young writers to leave the Ministry as published authors with their very own storybook, complete with marvellous illustrations.

You don't need to have worked on children's illustrations before, you just need illustrative experience and the confidence to transform words into images. Basic training is provided by way of a shadow session with an experienced Illustrator. There are also opportunities for illustrators in different types of workshop such as comic book writing and design projects.

Publisher

Our top-notch publishers transform children's stories and the illustrator's drawings into brilliantly bound books during our weekly Storymaking workshops. It's a vital job that requires speed and planning to print and bind up to 30 books in a session ensuring all participants walk away with their very own published work.

We offer full training by way of a shadow session. Good organisation is essential as are basic computer skills. Becoming a Publisher doesn't mean you can't volunteer in another capacity. You could be a Writing Mentor too and publish books once every couple of months.

The Chief

From the comfort of a private office (never leaving it while at work) our Chief gives orders to the Junior Ministers, demanding the next bestseller over the tannoy. During our Storymaking workshops classes are invited to write fantastic stories with the help of our wonderful Writing Mentors and to disprove the Chief's assumption that children cannot write great stories.

We need Chief impersonators who can feign the bad temper of the genuine article. Of course, one can never quite match the grumpiness of the real Chief. But if you can follow a script, chit-chat with authority and come up with encouraging and original feedback to unexpectedly brilliant stories then you'll be perfect as the Chief's double.

Without the Chief the workshop simply would not work. We know that most volunteers who come through our doors want to work individually with children but we rely on our Writing Mentors to help out and play the Chief. Of course, we only expect this every once in a while, and it goes without saying we accept ladies and gentlemen for the role.

Getting involved at Hoxton Street Monster Supplies

HSMS Shopkeeper/Postmaster Helper

On Hoxton Street there is a shop like no other, purveying quality goods to Monsters of every kind. Open since 1818 to Monsters, we first opened our doors to humans in 2011. Hoxton Street Monster Supplies needs volunteers to help run the shop and keep Hoxton's monster population stocked up with their daily essentials.

Hoxton Street Monster Supplies is our open door to our community and a really important way of drawing in prospective young writers and volunteers. It's also a crucial source of financial support for MoS. We are open Tuesday - Friday, 1pm - 5pm and Saturday 11am - 5pm and you will agree your volunteer hours with the shop manager. We ask for a minimum of six sessions in six months.

You don't need retail experience to volunteer in the shop. As with being a Writing Mentor, we offer full training and support. And you'll become an expert in our products like Olde Fashioned Brain Jam, Cubed Earwax and our range of Tinned Fear.

HSMS can provide valuable work experience for any volunteers looking for paid employment in the retail or charity sector. Long term, dedicated and punctual volunteers can be supplied with references if the need arises.

HSMS Online Fulfilment

Some of our human and more gruesome customers have recently been purchasing our dreadful monster products online. We need a few volunteers to help us sort, pack and send the orders, especially around Christmas and Halloween. It could be a box of cubed earwax, a jar of organ marmalade or any other item from our wide range of monster supplies. We provide full training on what to do and we provide volunteers with the odd cup of witches brew to see you through the shift.

Other Ways to get involved at the Ministry

Events

We enjoy a good party here at the Ministry of Stories and we organise regular events to thank our volunteers, make new friends or raise money for the charity. We sometimes need volunteer support for coordination and promotion of events or on the night itself as helpers. Talk to a member of staff or email volunteers@ministryofstories.org if you're interested in helping at the next event

Specialist Skills

If you have specialist skills which you think could benefit the Ministry of Stories that you have not already let us know about at the you & volunteering stage, then please get in touch. This could include events management, IT, fundraising, workshop leading, photography or filmmaking. We may not always be able to put your talents to use straight away but it's good to know people who are willing to donate their time and skills if the Ministry were to come calling.

Other guidelines

Dress Code

Ministry of Stories is an organisation that works with children and young people. During working hours, we expect volunteers to dress appropriately. We don't expect you to wear suits or ties, but please make sure that you don't wear clothes with inappropriate words or images on T-shirts. Even in hot weather, skimpy or see-through clothes are not acceptable.

Inappropriate behaviour

Some of this may seem obvious – and it is all covered in the safeguarding guidelines at the end of this handbook – but it's important that we're clear about what is inappropriate behaviour around the children.

A good rule to follow is if you think that their parents would be uncomfortable if they were present, then you're in inappropriate territory. This means no swearing and no talking about sex, drugs or violence, unless the conversation relates directly to the writing the young person is doing at MoS. Also there should be no talking about children within earshot of other children. You must not set up appointments with any children outside the centre. Never give your personal telephone number or allow a child to contact you directly through email. All child communication must go through a MoS staff member. If you ever feel uncomfortable in a situation with a child, speak to a staff member immediately.

Mobile phones

Please avoid using your mobile when working with children. The young people deserve your undivided attention. If it's necessary to take a call, please excuse yourself and take the call in a place away from the children.

Email

Once you join the MoS team, you'll be getting lots of emails from us; information on sessions both at the centre and in schools, on opportunities such as refresher training or one-off, masterclasses, about fundraising drives and social activities. We suggest that you create a separate folder in your email application just for Ministry of Stories emails. You don't have to keep all our emails, but if there's an opportunity you're interested in, hold on to the email. As soon as you know you can participate in an activity, sign up online and let us know you are going to be there. Then keep that email. We promise it will be helpful when you are wondering when or where you have committed yourself.

In an emergency

The most important thing is the safety of the children, volunteers and staff. There are exits at the front of the building through the shop and at the back into the yard behind MoS. Please use the exit that's closest and/or safest to you, gather outside Olive, the cafe across the street and follow all instructions given by MoS safety marshals.

Expenses

We're unable to pay expenses for volunteering other than in exceptional circumstances. If childcare or travel costs are prohibitive however, please speak to a member of staff.

Finally

Enjoy yourself – or else!

Child Safeguarding Guidelines

By volunteering, you agree to abide by these guidelines and our Child Safeguarding Policy.

We expect everyone working with children and young people, whether a volunteer or staff member to work according to the following guidelines at all times and to take every possible precaution to avoid situations that could be misunderstood. The guidelines are supported by our safeguarding element of your volunteer training session and help to protect children as well as staff, volunteers, visiting teachers and group leaders.

As a volunteer, you should:-

- Respect a child's right to personal privacy.
- Encourage children and adults to feel comfortable enough to point out attitudes and behaviour they do not like.
- Ensure that language, conversation and materials are appropriate when working with, talking to or within hearing distance of children or young people. Remember that the young person might not understand the background to a joke or anything else that you say.
- Always treat children and young people equally and with respect and dignity.
- Recognise that caution is required for one-to-one situations, even in sensitive situations such as dealing with bullying or when children are very upset.
- Avoid being left alone with a single child or young person. Plan your time with them to be in open plan space, or with other colleagues and avoid private or unobserved situations.
- Do not initiate any physical contact with children or young people. If a child or young person initiates any physical contact (e.g. approaches you for a hug) deflect them where possible (e.g. offer them a hand to shake)
- Only physically restrain a child or young person if it becomes absolutely essential in order to prevent the infliction of injury to the child or young person or others.
- Do not make sexually suggestive comments even in fun.
- Never shout at a child or young person.
- Avoid being drawn into inappropriate attention-seeking behaviour, such as tantrums or crushes.
- Avoid showing favouritism to any individual.
- Avoid doing things of a personal nature that children could do for themselves. If you have to, make sure another adult is present.
- Do not permit abusive youth peer activities such as bullying.
- If you suspect that a child or young person is being abused in any way (including if they make a disclosure of abuse to you, or you suspect abuse) immediately report this to a member of MoS staff.
- Do not give your personal mobile phone number or other personal details, or exchange social networking contacts (e.g. Facebook friends).
- The MoS may have signed permissions to photograph / record certain children or young people within good practice guidelines. Please refer to a member of staff if you are considering this.
- The MoS has a structured way of keeping contact with children and young people and volunteers will not need to contact them directly. If a child or young person makes contact with you, or you want to get in touch with them, please discuss this with MoS staff first.

The above guidelines apply equally to any offsite visits or activities with children and young people.

Designated Responsible Persons

If there is a safeguarding issue you must contact our Designated Responsible Persons (DRP) – Emily Webb is our DRP's at the Ministry.

Recognising abuse and how to deal with a disclosure

Recognising abuse

Children and young people can be abused either through someone inflicting harm, or failing to act to prevent harm. Any child from any culture, faith or background can be at risk from abuse. Abuse can take place in a family, in an institution or community setting, by telephone or on the internet. Abuse can be carried out by someone known to the child or by a complete stranger.

What to do if a child discloses abuse

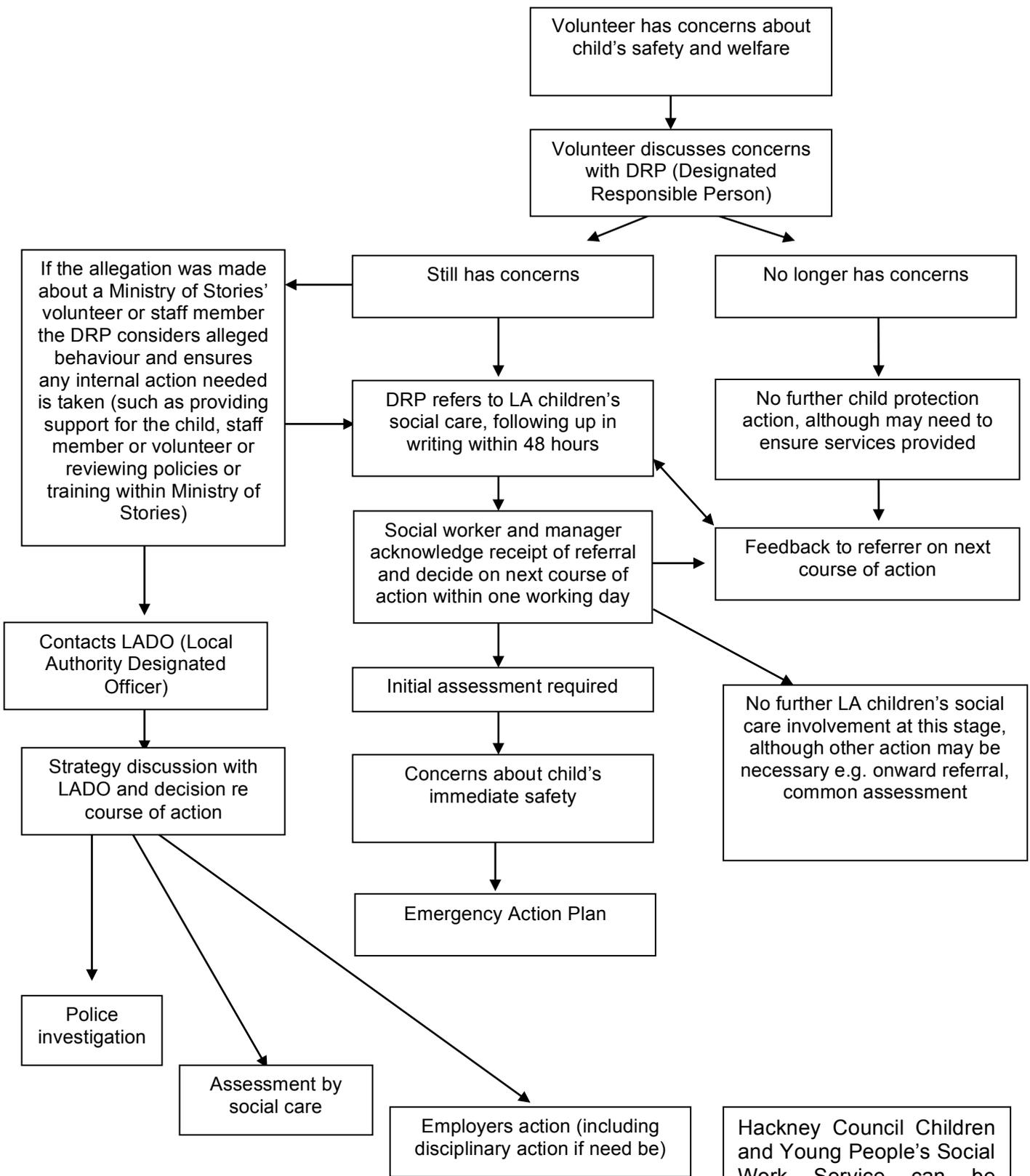
- Keep calm
- Look at the child directly.
- Listen to the child and closely observe their presentation and behaviour.
- Accept what the child says.
- Be aware that the child may have been threatened.
- Reassure the child and tell them they are not to blame.
- Do not press for information.
- Reassure the child they are right to tell you and that you take what they say very seriously.
- Do not attempt to question or interview the child as this could jeopardise a police investigation.
- Do not promise to keep the information they have disclosed a secret.
- Let them know what you are going to do next, who you are going to tell and why, and roughly what will happen.
- Finish on a positive note.
- As soon as possible afterwards, make hand written notes of exactly what the child said and the date and time and sign this record. You can use the Incident reporting form.

Action to be taken

- Do not delay
- Do not act alone
- Do not start to investigate
- Inform the DRP of your concerns immediately.
- The Designated Responsible Person will consult with the relevant bodies to discuss what action should be taken
- A meeting with you and the DRP will take place and a written record of the facts will be noted.
- The DRP will then inform social services of the disclosure, who will liaise with the relevant departments on a need-to-know basis and will, if appropriate, inform the police. It is the responsibility of the authorities to determine whether abuse has occurred.

In the event that any member of staff, trustee or volunteer suspects any other member of staff, trustee or volunteer of abusing a child or young person, it is their responsibility to bring these concerns to the Designated Responsible Person.

The next page contains a flow diagram showing actions to be taken in the event that a child discloses something of concern to a volunteer or if a volunteer has developed concerns about a child's safety and welfare.



Hackney Council Children and Young People's Social Work Service can be contacted on 020 8356 5500 (9am-5pm) /020 8356 2710 (Emergency Out of Hours Team). Hackney LADO is Janet Lamb: 020 8356 4569 or in an extreme emergency dial 999 for the Police.

Workshop Volunteer Code of Conduct

As a volunteer you can expect;

- full introduction and training; a volunteer handbook; an introduction to the layout of the building; MoS's key staff within it, including key contacts; and guidelines for MoS's smooth running, including the Health and Safety policy.
- an "open door" policy following introduction and training. Volunteers are actively encouraged to ask questions or register any concerns with us about their volunteering or the organisation in general.
- clear and specific roles within MoS. Volunteers will not be expected to take part in any training which is not relevant to this role.
- optional specialised training for volunteers wanting to develop specific further skills and/or to increase their level of responsibility in workshops. Having completed 6 sessions and completed the reflection log in the volunteer handbook, a volunteer can become a specialised volunteer and train to become a workshop leader. Volunteer workshop leaders are only used in relation to specific workshops and they are always supervised by a member of staff.
- a fair and objective performance management process as to help you improve your performance or work towards an objective such as a specialised volunteer.
- valuable career paths into arts education, literacy development or writing for young people. We can provide employment references for long term, dedicated and punctual volunteers.
- in return for a volunteer's contribution, we'll provide great opportunities and events that are creative, fun and sometimes a bit out of the ordinary by way of saying thank you for their contribution to our work.

Ministry of Stories expects;

- a commitment to follow safeguarding policy and procedures as set out earlier in the handbook.
- volunteers to commit to a minimum of six sessions in six months.
- volunteers to self-manage the time they donate to The Ministry. Volunteers can sign up for shifts via the online shift calendar and cancellations must be made by telephone call.
- volunteers to show up when they say they will, in good time, ready – and appropriately dressed - for their session. We think it's better not to sign up at all if there is any likelihood of a volunteer not being able to attend, of being late or having to leave early. If someone consistently breaks these guidelines, we reserve the right to end their volunteering relationship.
- volunteers to wash and clean up after themselves. We are pleased to be able to provide volunteers with kitchen facilities, beverages and biscuits. We just ask that the Ministry is kept clean and tidy.
- our volunteers to keep in mind that our primary focus is the benefit to children. A Writing Mentor may have a particular interest in creative writing or storytelling but it is essential that volunteers remember that it's about the children's imagination and not their own ideas.
- volunteers to contribute towards post-session feedback and evaluation sessions as appropriate to their role. We are committed to the personal and continued professional development of volunteers and are happy to discuss how volunteers might take on different responsibilities or take on new challenges as the work of MoS develops.

- to provide the highest quality experience for young people attending our workshops that we can. If a volunteer's performance is unsatisfactory and does not improve with support from MoS staff we reserve the right to end their volunteering relationship with us. In cases where a volunteer is judged to not be fulfilling their role adequately or appropriately, the following process will be adhered to:

1. A separate feedback session with the workshop leader where areas for improvement are clearly identified and agreed upon. The volunteer is referred back to handbook to help with this improvement.
2. A second meeting will be held to review the volunteer's progress after an appropriate time. Improvements will be recognised and any other further issues resolved.
3. If these improvements are not apparent by this agreed time, a further session with the workshop leader and/or the Creative Learning Manager or Co-Director will be held after which MoS can decide either to extend the period in which to improve or to end the volunteer's relationship with MoS.

Other important notes on MoS Volunteer Policy

- If it appears that certain aspects of volunteering for MoS are not appropriate for or beneficial to an individual volunteer, we use our best endeavours to find alternative opportunities for the volunteer within the organisation, though we cannot guarantee this.
- We reserve the right to dismiss a volunteer and, if appropriate, take further action if it is established that he or she is in breach of any fundamental part of our volunteer or other organisational policy or procedures.
- The Code of Conduct relates to The Ministry of Stories Volunteer Policy, which documents in greater detail volunteer expectations, guidelines and principles. This is available upon request from a member of staff or by emailing volunteers@ministryofstories.org. The policy acknowledges the importance of volunteers to MoS and also covers our health and safety, training and how we will deal with problems or complaints.
- We recruit from as wide a range of backgrounds and experience as possible to all our posts, including the Board of Trustees. We have policies on equal opportunities and diversity and employing ex-offenders and copies of these policies are also available on request.
- In line with our Child Safeguarding Policy, we apply for an Enhanced CRB check for each volunteer for which the volunteer is not charged. Sensitive information is securely stored and accessed.

Learning Journal

Please use this journal to reflect on your training and work as a Writing Mentor at the Ministry of Stories. It will enable you to track your progress and capture what you've learnt as a Writing Mentor. It will also act as evidence of your time with us, should you choose to progress to a workshop leader or expert volunteer role.

Was there anything that surprised you about the training or anything that you had not expected?

What skills of yours do you expect to be developing further during your role as a Writing Mentor?

What new skills do you expect to be learning?

Is there anything that you feel you may need further training for in order to be a successful Writing Mentor?

Do you have any questions or worries that you would like to resolve before you begin?

Use this space for taking notes during your training session, or for broader reflections concerning the role of the Writing Mentor.

Workshop Reflections	Workshop I
	Date: Workshop type:
<p>What were your achievements during this workshop? For example, did you: Ask open questions/praise frequently/listen carefully to young writers/help to refocus a child/adapt a task to suit the child/deal with a difficult situation positively/contribute towards a young writer building their confidence up...</p>	
<p>What were the challenges of this workshop? For example, did you find that a child was distracted/felt negatively about a task/found a task difficult/bickered with other children/didn't want to share their work with you...</p>	<p>What steps did you take to meet these challenges?</p>
<p>What steps, if any, do you need to take before your next workshop?</p>	

Workshop Reflections	Workshop 2
	Date: Workshop type:
<p>What were your achievements during this workshop? For example, did you: Ask open questions/praise frequently/listen carefully to young writers/help to refocus a child/adapt a task to suit the child/deal with a difficult situation positively/contribute towards a young writer building their confidence up...</p>	
<p>What were the challenges of this workshop? For example, did you find that a child was distracted/felt negatively about a task/found a task difficult/bickered with other children/didn't want to share their work with you...</p>	<p>What steps did you take to meet these challenges?</p>
<p>What steps, if any, do you need to take before your next workshop?</p>	

Workshop Reflections	Workshop 3	
	Date:	Workshop type:
<p>What were your achievements during this workshop? For example, did you: Ask open questions/praise frequently/listen carefully to young writers/help to refocus a child/adapt a task to suit the child/deal with a difficult situation positively/contribute towards a young writer building their confidence up...</p>		
<p>What were the challenges of this workshop? For example, did you find that a child was distracted/felt negatively about a task/found a task difficult/bickered with other children/didn't want to share their work with you...</p>	<p>What steps did you take to meet these challenges?</p>	
<p>What steps, if any, do you need to take before your next workshop?</p>		

Workshop Reflections	Workshop 4
	Date: Workshop type:
<p>What were your achievements during this workshop? For example, did you: Ask open questions/praise frequently/listen carefully to young writers/help to refocus a child/adapt a task to suit the child/deal with a difficult situation positively/contribute towards a young writer building their confidence up...</p>	
<p>What were the challenges of this workshop? For example, did you find that a child was distracted/felt negatively about a task/found a task difficult/bickered with other children/didn't want to share their work with you...</p>	<p>What steps did you take to meet these challenges?</p>
<p>What steps, if any, do you need to take before your next workshop?</p>	

Workshop Reflections	Workshop 5
	Date: Workshop type:
<p>What were your achievements during this workshop? For example, did you: Ask open questions/praise frequently/listen carefully to young writers/help to refocus a child/adapt a task to suit the child/deal with a difficult situation positively/contribute towards a young writer building their confidence up...</p>	
<p>What were the challenges of this workshop? For example, did you find that a child was distracted/felt negatively about a task/found a task difficult/bickered with other children/didn't want to share their work with you...</p>	<p>What steps did you take to meet these challenges?</p>
<p>What steps, if any, do you need to take before your next workshop?</p>	

Workshop Reflections	Workshop 6
	Date: Workshop type:
<p>What were your achievements during this workshop? For example, did you: Ask open questions/praise frequently/listen carefully to young writers/help to refocus a child/adapt a task to suit the child/deal with a difficult situation positively/contribute towards a young writer building their confidence up...</p>	
<p>What were the challenges of this workshop? For example, did you find that a child was distracted/felt negatively about a task/found a task difficult/bickered with other children/didn't want to share their work with you...</p>	<p>What steps did you take to meet these challenges?</p>
<p>What steps, if any, do you need to take before your next workshop?</p>	

Developing Further as a Writing Mentor

Once you have completed your first 6 sessions as a Writing Mentor you might like to think towards the future and your progression. There is not obligation to take on more responsibility as a volunteer; Writing Mentors are incredibly valuable and without them workshops at the Ministry of Stories would not be possible. However, if you would like to explore the possibility of becoming a workshop leader or expert volunteer, you are required to complete ten sessions as a Writing Mentor and show us written reflection on these workshops.

Workshop Reflections	Workshop 7
	Date: Workshop type:
What were your achievements during this workshop?	
What were the challenges of this workshop?	What steps did you take to meet these challenges?
What steps, if any, do you need to take before your next workshop?	

Workshop Reflections	Workshop 8
	Date: Workshop type:
What were your achievements during this workshop?	
What were the challenges of this workshop?	What steps did you take to meet these challenges?
What steps, if any, do you need to take before your next workshop?	

Workshop Reflections	Workshop 9
	Date: Workshop type:
What were your achievements during this workshop?	
What were the challenges of this workshop?	What steps did you take to meet these challenges?
What steps, if any, do you need to take before your next workshop?	

Workshop Reflections	Workshop 10	
	Date:	Workshop type:
What were your achievements during this workshop?		
What were the challenges of this workshop?	What steps did you take to meet these challenges?	
What steps, if any, do you need to take before your next workshop?		

Great! You have completed your first ten workshops as a Writing Mentor for the Ministry of Stories. If you would like to pursue becoming a workshop leader or expert volunteer, book yourself a chat with the workshop leader at your next session. Make sure you bring your learning journal to show them and have a think in advance about what role might suit your skills best.