



MINISTRY OF STORIES

Volunteer Writing Mentor Handbook

Name

Contact information

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volunteers@ministryofstories.org

Enquiries about Hoxton Street Monster Supplies volunteering:

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Social media: www.monstersupplies.org
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www.instagram.com/monstersupplies/

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About Ministry of Stories

Ministry of Stories was founded in 2010 by the writer Nick Hornby, Lucy Macnab and Ben Payne. We are a creative writing and mentoring centre in east London (hidden behind a secret door in the Hoxton Street Monster Supplies shop!). Local young people (aged 6 to 15) come to writing workshops after school each week or on Saturdays. All our workshops are free of charge. Our writing sessions encourage young writers to explore their creativity, build their confidence and find their voice. We also deliver innovative writing projects in primary and secondary schools across Hackney, Tower Hamlets and Islington.

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 they've written performed by professional 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 local young people. There is a section further on this Handbook on how you can get involved in volunteering at Hoxton Street Monster Supplies.

Our Guiding Principles

Children and young people first - everything we do, and the decisions that we make, are always in the best interests of the children and young people we work with.

Young voices matter - we respect children and young people as writers, and collaborate, create and conspire with them to unlock their big ideas and produce the writing *they* want to write.

Proud to be Hackney, proud to be East London - our work is rooted in our local area and we take time to understand the needs of our families, schools and the wider community. We value and respect the creative talent and potential of our local area.

Our Values:

IMAGINATION - we wake up imaginations and revel in mischief and playfulness, bringing a bold creative ambition to our work.

BELONGING - we create a powerful sense of belonging, working together to achieve something special.

OPTIMISM - we focus on people's strengths, and encourage all our people to use theirs to build a better society.

Why volunteers are so important to us

Volunteers are vital to 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 Writing Mentor. 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 volunteering opportunities. 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 wondering what being a Writing Mentor involves. You may not be a writer yourself, or have any experience of working with children and young people. We hope that this handbook resolves any worries, guides you in how to start and gives you advice on dealing with any problems that might come up. If you have questions, please 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 Mentors to share their experiences of what went well (or not so well) so that we can all learn from this.

Volunteering as a Writing Mentor is incredibly rewarding, at times challenging but mostly a lot of fun! Our work at Ministry of Stories is based on three values which are at the heart of everything we do: Respect, Courage and Imagination.

YOUR RESPECT

Show care and respect for other people, their belongings and the environment

YOUR COURAGE

Be brave. Try something different. Learn from others

YOUR IMAGINATION

Try your best to be the best

WILL BRING YOU VICTORY

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.

Volunteer Environmental Responsibilities

At Ministry of Stories we are committed to environmental responsibility and care. As a volunteer you are a part of upholding this culture, especially including and encouraging our young writers in certain practices. For example:

Recycling bins - We have two mixed recycling bins, one in the kitchen and one in the Chiefs office, for paper, plastic and cans.

Food waste - We have a food waste bin on the counter in the kitchen, this is taken to a local community garden for composting so it can contain fruits, vegetables, breadsticks and tea bags.

Scrap paper - We have a scrap paper drawer for children to use when they want to draw or sketch out ideas not into their notebooks.

Low energy usage - Please turn lights off in empty, unused rooms such as the kitchen and bathroom.

We encourage everyone to walk or cycle to sessions or if this isn't possible to take public transportation.

Our Writing Programmes

We run a variety of workshops in our writing centre on Hoxton Street and in schools across Hackney, Tower Hamlets and Islington. Here are some examples:

Community Writing Labs

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 Saturdays and the same children attend each week and can stay at Ministry from when they're 6 to 18. 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 writing in a big project, which is a great chance to see an idea through from the beginning to the finished article. Past projects include an audio soap opera, a playable escape room and poetry shared around Hoxton in surprising ways.

School Projects

We also run writing projects at Primary and Secondary schools in Hackney, Tower Hamlets and Islington. Whether pupils create a publication of work, a performance or an exhibition, every project has a strong purpose. Sessions are led by one of our Writing Facilitators who are also poets, playwrights and theatre-makers and practitioners. All our projects are tailored to the schools' interests and needs. Our Writing Mentors are there to support the Facilitator and 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.

One-Off Workshops

We run a variety of exciting 2 hour one-off workshops for visiting school groups. All our one-off workshops are led by Writing Facilitators and supported by mentors. If you have a busy schedule, this is a great opportunity for you to still get a taste of the Ministry magic.

Comic Books

Young writers explore the weird and wonderful world of comic book creation! With mentors' help, children develop a character together, devise a narrative and create sketches for a comic strip of their own.

Storymaking

Young writers 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 first chapter 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.

Gothic Fiction

Young writers explore the quirky and spooky world of Hoxton Street Monster Supplies. Using inspiration from the shop and gothic props, they'll be challenged to write their own gothic fiction stories.

Rebel Girls

From mums and aunties to Malala and Michelle Obama, pupils are inspired by the book *Good Night Stories for Rebel Girls*. During the workshop, pupils are given the opportunity to think about their own female heroes and write a short story inspired by them.

Poetry Makers

Young writers are recruited to help our poet laureate who has run out of ideas for poems. They explore and experiment with key elements of poetry making working collaboratively to create poems. By the end of the workshop young writers feel confident to write and perform poetry in front of their peers.

Being a Writing Mentor

This section contains some guidance on how you can become a great writing mentor. 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 at MoS?

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

1. Volunteers arrive half an hour before the workshop begins for a briefing (briefing times are included in the times published on the online calendar). The Writing Facilitator will explain the session plan and give any relevant information about the expected group.
2. The Writing Facilitator welcomes the children at the front door.
3. Mentors greet the children as they arrive into the space and put away their belongings.
4. Mentors sit with small groups of children at pre-assigned tables and facilitate the starter task
5. The Writing Facilitator talks to the group about today's main writing task.
6. The group will go back to their tables to begin the task supported by Writing Mentors. The Writing Facilitator will be on hand to support Writing Mentors with any questions or problems they have during the workshop.
7. Towards the end of the workshop, the Writing Facilitator will invite the young writers to share their work.
8. Children collect their things and leave.
9. Mentors help to tidy up the space.
10. There is a half an hour debrief with the Writing Facilitator and mentors. This is where we share our experiences of the session and offer suggestions to others.

Tips for helping a child who is struggling to get started

1. Suggest they 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 spider diagram 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 disrupting 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 to them 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. If a child has written or spoken about something particularly disturbing, let the Writing Facilitator 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 that 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 Writing Facilitator 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 disruptive or offensive

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 Writing Facilitator know and perhaps they can reshuffle the room.
- When we are sharing work, children should listen to each other and avoid talking. Gently remind children that we need to be respectful of others by listening carefully.
- Model positive behaviour by listening when the Writing Facilitator or other children are speaking.

If challenging behaviour escalates, let the Writing Facilitator 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.

Please bear in mind...

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 Writing Facilitator 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.

Expectations

Throughout your experience as a Writing Mentor, the Writing Facilitator 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' safeguarding agreement, 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.

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 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 Writing Facilitator. 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. Occasionally people who start as Writing Mentors go on to become Writing Facilitators. If you are interested in developing your skills and experience, you can consider any of the following roles. 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

If you have completed 10 or more sessions. 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 Trainee Writing Facilitator

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 facilitators, 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 illustrators to help bring young people's imaginations to life. Illustrators are an essential part of some of our one-off 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.

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

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 2010. 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 to 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 purchase our dreadful monster products online. We sometimes need 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

Admin volunteers

We often have ad-hoc admin tasks that we need remote support with. This could be anything from typing up our Young Writers' handwritten work to proofreading our anthologies. If you're interested in helping with admin tasks, let us know and we'll reach out when there's tasks available.

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 for Volunteers

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.

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 or social media. 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

We ask that you don't use your mobile phone during the writing workshops.. 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.

MoS volunteers calendar

Once you have completed your shadow session. You will have access to our [Volunteers' Calendar](#). This is where you can find and sign up to all our upcoming volunteer sessions.

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.

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 high five)
- 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 . Do not photograph/ record children on your own personal devices.

- 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 off-site 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) – Rob Smith is our DRP's and Laura Perkins is our Deputy DRP 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. Ask the DRP or Writing Facilitator for an 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.

Below are the 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.

SUMMARY OF THE COURSE OF ACTION

If there are any concerns that a child may be at risk of immediate harm, the police should be contacted by dialling 999.

In all other instances, the course of action is:

1. Record Incident or Concern (see Appendix 3 in Safeguarding Policy)

Who? > Staff member, freelance contractor, volunteer or intern

2. Report incident to Designated Safeguarding Lead (School or Community)

AND Designated Safeguarding Lead (Ministry of Stories - Rob Smith, Director)

Who? > Staff member, freelance contractor, volunteer or intern

3. Contact the Hackney Council? - MASH (020 83565500) or that of the relevant Local Authority

Who? > Designated Safeguarding Lead (School, Community or Ministry of Stories)

4. No further action required OR advised to refer to relevant body (Social Services, Police, Health Professional etc)

Who? > Designated Safeguarding Lead (School, Community or Ministry of Stories)

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.
- ⇒ A fair and objective performance management process 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.
- ⇒ Access to our employee assistance programme.

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 email or telephone (if last minute).
- ⇒ 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 Writing Facilitator where areas for improvement are clearly identified and agreed upon. The volunteer is referred back to the 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 Writing Facilitator and/or the 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 DBS check for each volunteer for which the volunteer is not charged. Sensitive information is securely stored and accessed.