

Evacuation, Invacuation and Lockdown Policy and Procedure

Introduction

InterAct is committed to protecting the health, safety, wellbeing, and security of everyone who works for, volunteers with, or accesses the Charity's services.

The Charity delivers services from its head office and from a wide range of community venues across Essex, including schools, community centres, village halls, leisure facilities, activity centres, outdoor spaces, and other premises owned or managed by third parties.

InterAct recognises that the safety and security arrangements required will vary depending upon the location, nature of the activity, and individuals involved.

This policy establishes the Charity's arrangements for responding to security incidents, including lockdown situations, violent or aggressive behaviour, suspicious activity, terrorism-related incidents, and other emergencies where there may be a risk to the safety of individuals.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- protect the safety, wellbeing, and security of staff, volunteers, trustees, service users, families, visitors, contractors, and others involved in the Charity's activities;
- provide a clear and proportionate framework for responding to security incidents and emergencies;
- ensure staff and volunteers understand their responsibilities before, during, and after an emergency;
- support effective communication with emergency services, venue operators, parents/carers, and other relevant organisations;
- ensure emergency procedures take account of the needs of children, young people, vulnerable adults, and individuals with disabilities, neurodivergence, communication needs, or other additional needs;
- minimise the impact of security incidents and support the safe continuation or suspension of activities where appropriate;
- promote learning following incidents to continually improve the Charity's emergency preparedness; and
- ensure that, where activities take place at third-party venues, InterAct works in partnership with venue operators and follows applicable emergency procedures, security arrangements, and lockdown plans.

Scope

This policy applies to all trustees, staff, volunteers, contractors and others working on behalf of InterAct, together with all service users, families, visitors and others attending the Charity's activities.

Legal and Regulatory Framework

This policy has been developed with reference to:

- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974;
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999;
- Occupiers' Liability Act 1957;
- Occupiers' Liability Act 1984;
- Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015;
- Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Act 2025 (Martyn's Law), where applicable;
- Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 (RIDDOR), where applicable;
- Health and Safety Executive (HSE) guidance;
- National Counter Terrorism Security Office (NaCTSO) guidance;
- ProtectUK guidance;
- Charity Commission guidance; and
- other relevant legislation and best practice relating to health, safety, safeguarding, emergency planning, and protective security.

Roles and Responsibilities

Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees has overall responsibility for ensuring that appropriate arrangements are in place to protect those who work for, volunteer with, or access the Charity's services, and will:

- ensure appropriate policies, procedures, and risk assessments are in place;
- review significant security incidents and lessons learned where appropriate;
- ensure sufficient resources are available to support emergency preparedness; and
- promote a culture of safety, safeguarding, and continual improvement.

Chief Executive Officer

The Chief Executive Officer is responsible for the day-to-day implementation of this policy and will:

- ensure appropriate emergency arrangements are maintained;
- ensure suitable risk assessments are completed;
- ensure staff and volunteers receive appropriate information, instruction, and training;
- ensure security incidents are appropriately managed and investigated;
- liaise with emergency services, venue providers, regulators, and other agencies where necessary; and
- ensure lessons learned are reflected in future planning.

Managers and Activity Leaders

Managers and activity leaders are responsible for:

- implementing this policy during activities under their control;
- ensuring venue-specific emergency arrangements are understood before activities commence;
- ensuring appropriate activity risk assessments are completed, considering the needs of service users who may require additional support during an emergency;
- ensuring emergency contact information is available;
- reporting incidents promptly; and
- supporting post-incident reviews.

Staff and Volunteers

Everyone working for or on behalf of InterAct has a responsibility to contribute to the safety and security of those attending the Charity's activities, and must:

- familiarise themselves with this policy and any venue-specific emergency procedures before activities begin;
- remain vigilant and report suspicious behaviour, suspicious items, unsafe conditions, or security concerns immediately;
- follow the instructions of emergency services, venue management, or the designated person in charge during an incident;
- participate in emergency training and briefings where required; and
- report all security incidents, near misses, and concerns.

Policy

Planning and Risk Assessment

InterAct recognises that effective emergency management begins with good planning.

Suitable and sufficient risk assessments will be completed for the Charity's premises, activities, events, and visits, taking account of the nature of the activity, the venue, the individuals attending, and any reasonably foreseeable risks.

Risk assessments should, where appropriate, consider:

- the type and location of the activity;
- venue-specific emergency arrangements;
- fire safety procedures;
- lockdown, invacuation, and evacuation arrangements;
- emergency exits and assembly points;
- communication methods;
- first aid arrangements;
- transport arrangements;
- lone working;
- the needs of children, young people, vulnerable adults, and individuals requiring additional assistance;
- weather or environmental hazards for outdoor activities;
- security risks identified by the venue or local authorities; and
- arrangements for contacting parents/carers where appropriate.

Where activities take place at third-party venues, staff and volunteers should familiarise themselves with the venue's emergency arrangements before activities commence and ensure they know:

- how to raise the alarm;
- who is responsible for managing emergencies;
- the location of emergency exits;
- evacuation and lockdown arrangements;
- assembly points;
- first aid arrangements; and
- how to contact venue staff during an emergency.

Where no venue-specific procedures exist, InterAct's own emergency arrangements and activity risk assessments should be followed.

Preventing Security Risks

InterAct recognises that most security incidents can be prevented or their impact reduced through good awareness, effective communication, appropriate supervision, and proportionate security measures.

The Charity will seek to:

- promote a culture where staff and volunteers remain vigilant to potential security concerns;
- encourage the prompt reporting of suspicious behaviour, suspicious items, or unsafe situations;
- ensure staff and volunteers understand their responsibilities during emergencies;
- manage access to Charity premises where appropriate;
- ensure emergency contact information is readily available during activities;
- support effective communication between staff, volunteers, venue operators, and emergency services;
- review incidents, near misses, and emerging risks to identify improvements;
- implement additional security measures where increased risks are identified; and
- keep emergency procedures under review to ensure they remain appropriate and effective.

Everyone working for or on behalf of InterAct should report any security concerns, however minor they may appear. Early reporting enables the Charity to assess risks promptly and take appropriate action before concerns escalate.

Supporting Individuals with Additional Needs During Emergencies

InterAct recognises that many of the children, young people, and vulnerable adults who access its services may have disabilities, neurodivergence, communication needs, sensory needs, mobility difficulties, mental ill health, anxiety, or other additional support needs.

Emergency responses should therefore remain person-centred wherever possible whilst ensuring the safety of everyone present.

Staff and volunteers should, where appropriate:

- remain calm and provide reassurance;
- use clear, simple, and accessible communication;
- consider individual communication methods or support plans;
- provide additional assistance where required;
- consider sensory needs when selecting safe locations;
- avoid causing unnecessary distress or confusion;
- ensure individuals are appropriately supervised throughout the incident; and
- take account of any Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPs) or other individual support arrangements where these exist.

Staff should also recognise that some individuals may not fully understand the situation or may react differently during an emergency. Patience, reassurance, and clear communication are essential.

Responding to a Security Incident

InterAct will respond to security incidents in a proportionate manner, taking account of the nature of the threat, the advice of the emergency services, venue-specific procedures, and the needs of those affected. Staff and volunteers should follow the relevant procedures contained within this document.

Communication Between Staff

Sometimes, it is not appropriate to make it known that there is an emergency! For example, if there is a violent individual nearby, a suspected intruder, a person behaving aggressively, or another situation where openly raising the alarm could increase the risk to staff, volunteers, service users, or others. In these circumstances, and where it is safe and appropriate to do so, staff and volunteers should communicate discreetly to minimise unnecessary alarm or escalation.

This may include:

- agreed code words or phrases;
- mobile phones or radios where available;
- discreet verbal communication;
- agreed hand signals; or
- other communication methods appropriate to the activity or venue.

Any code words or signals used by the Charity should be simple, understood by all staff and volunteers involved in the activity, and included in staff briefings where appropriate.

Where activities take place at third-party venues, staff should familiarise themselves with any emergency communication arrangements used by the venue.

Communicating with Service Users During an Emergency

InterAct recognises that some service users may not immediately understand what is happening during an emergency or may respond differently to unexpected situations because of their age, disability, neurodivergence, communication needs, sensory needs, mental ill health, anxiety, or previous experiences.

During an emergency, staff and volunteers should communicate calmly, clearly, and in a manner appropriate to the age, understanding, communication needs, and abilities of those they are supporting.

Where appropriate, staff should:

- use simple, reassuring language;
- give clear, short instructions;
- avoid unnecessary detail that may increase anxiety or confusion;
- use visual prompts, symbols, Makaton, or other communication methods where appropriate;
- reassure individuals that they are safe and that staff are there to help;
- provide additional support to those who may struggle to understand or respond quickly; and
- maintain appropriate supervision throughout the incident.

Where time allows, explanations should be honest and age/ability-appropriate. However, where there is an immediate threat to life or safety, staff should prioritise taking protective action rather than providing lengthy explanations.

Charity Communication

Where appropriate, InterAct will communicate with:

- the emergency services;

- venue management;
- staff and volunteers;
- parents, carers, or emergency contacts;
- the Board of Trustees;
- partner organisations; and
- regulators or other agencies where required.

Only authorised individuals should provide information to the media or make public statements on behalf of the Charity.

Staff and volunteers must not speculate about incidents or share confidential or sensitive information on social media or with unauthorised persons.

Communication with parents, carers, and families should be timely, factual, and proportionate, taking account of advice provided by the emergency services and any ongoing investigations.

Following an Emergency

Following any security incident or emergency, the safety and wellbeing of everyone involved will remain the Charity's priority.

Once the immediate risk has passed, InterAct will, where appropriate:

- account for all staff, volunteers, service users, and visitors;
- ensure anyone who requires first aid or medical attention receives appropriate assistance;
- provide reassurance and support to those affected;
- notify parents, carers, or emergency contacts where appropriate;
- report safeguarding concerns in accordance with the Charity's Safeguarding Policies;
- preserve evidence where requested by the emergency services;
- complete the Charity's Incident Report Form;
- review whether the incident is reportable under RIDDOR or to any regulator;
- consider whether support or counselling may be appropriate for those affected;
- review the effectiveness of the emergency response; and
- identify any lessons learned or improvements required.

Where appropriate, the Charity will update risk assessments, procedures, or training following an incident.

Staff Training

InterAct recognises that effective emergency preparedness depends upon staff and volunteers understanding their responsibilities and knowing how to respond appropriately during an incident.

All staff and volunteers will receive information, instruction, and training appropriate to their role. This may include:

- induction covering this policy and emergency procedures;
- familiarisation with emergency arrangements at venues used by the Charity;
- recognising and reporting security concerns;

- responding to security incidents;
- lockdown, invacuation, and evacuation procedures;
- emergency communication arrangements;
- safeguarding responsibilities during emergencies;
- supporting children, young people, vulnerable adults, and individuals with additional needs during emergencies; and
- any additional training identified through risk assessment or organisational learning.

Where appropriate, staff and volunteers may participate in emergency exercises, tabletop scenarios, or venue-specific briefings to ensure they remain familiar with emergency arrangements.

Procedures

Armed Attack and Terrorism-Related Incidents

Although the likelihood of such incidents affecting InterAct activities is low, the Charity recognises the importance of being prepared for foreseeable security threats.

Where an incident involves an armed attacker or a suspected terrorist attack, staff and volunteers should follow the nationally recognised **Run, Hide, Tell** principles, taking account of the circumstances and the needs of those they are supporting.

This means, where appropriate:

Run

If it is safe to do so:

- leave the area immediately;
- encourage others to leave where possible;
- do not stop to collect personal belongings; and
- move to a place of safety.

Hide

If it is not safe to leave:

- move to the safest available location;
- lock or barricade doors where possible;
- remain quiet;
- silence mobile phones where appropriate;
- stay out of sight; and
- remain where you are until instructed otherwise by the emergency services.

Tell

When it is safe to do so:

- call 999;
- provide your location;
- explain what has happened;
- follow the instructions of the emergency services.

Staff and volunteers should never place themselves at unnecessary risk and should always prioritise preserving life.

Watch the Run, Hide, Tell video from Counter Terrorism Policing here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gx0d6W-QeUQ>

Office Lockdown Procedure

This procedure applies to InterAct's offices and any premises occupied or managed directly by the Charity.

If a Security Incident Occurs

If you become aware of a security incident:

- remain calm;
- assess the situation quickly;
- if there is an immediate threat to life or serious injury, call 999 immediately;
- notify the Chief Executive Officer or the senior person present;
- where appropriate, initiate a partial or full lockdown.

During a Lockdown

Where it is safe to do so:

- secure external doors and accessible entrances;
- move everyone away from doors and windows;
- switch off lights if appropriate;
- remain quiet;
- silence mobile phones where appropriate;
- do not allow anyone to enter or leave unless instructed by the emergency services;
- continue to reassure others; and
- remain in the secure location until advised by the emergency services that it is safe to leave.

Evacuation

If instructed by the emergency services or where remaining inside presents a greater risk:

- evacuate calmly using the safest available route;
- proceed to the designated assembly point or another place of safety;
- account for everyone present;
- do not re-enter the building until authorised to do so.

Community Activities and Off-Site Emergency Procedure

This procedure applies to all activities delivered at community venues, schools, leisure facilities, community centres, residential facilities, visitor attractions, sports facilities and other public venues and any premises not managed directly by InterAct.

Note: Many of the venues used by InterAct will have their own emergency procedures, security arrangements, and lockdown plans. Some venues may also have protective security measures and response procedures in place in accordance with the Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Act 2025 (Martyn's Law) or other legal and regulatory requirements.

Before Activities Begin

The activity leader should ensure they:

- understand the venue's emergency procedures;
- know how to contact venue staff;
- know the evacuation routes and assembly points;
- understand any lockdown or invacuation arrangements;
- have access to emergency contact information;
- consider any participants requiring additional assistance during an emergency; and
- ensure all staff and volunteers understand their roles.

If an Emergency Occurs

Remain calm and quickly assess the situation.

If the venue has established emergency procedures:

- follow the instructions of venue staff;
- follow the venue's lockdown, invacuation, or evacuation procedures;
- cooperate fully with the emergency services.

Where there are no venue procedures, or immediate action is required:

- move participants to the safest available location as determined by the most senior staff member on duty*;
- continue to assess the situation;
- contact the emergency services where required;
- follow their instructions.

*Where appropriate, implement the Invacuation or Lockdown Guidance contained in Appendix A.

In all circumstances:

- keep the group together wherever possible;
- provide reassurance using clear and appropriate communication;
- account for everyone as soon as practicable; and
- notify the Chief Executive Officer or appropriate manager as soon as practicable.

Monitoring and Review

InterAct is committed to continually improving its emergency preparedness and security arrangements.

The Charity will monitor the effectiveness of this policy through:

- review of security incidents and near misses;
- incident investigations;
- staff and volunteer feedback;
- lessons learned following emergencies or exercises;
- review of risk assessments;
- changes in legislation or national guidance; and
- periodic policy reviews.

This policy will be reviewed periodically, or sooner where there are:

- significant changes to the Charity's activities;
- changes to legislation or national guidance;
- significant security incidents;
- recommendations arising from investigations or audits; or
- organisational learning requiring changes to emergency arrangements.

Appendix A: Invacuation and Lockdown Guidance

An **invacuation** is the process of bringing people inside a building, or moving them to a safer internal location, because there is a risk or hazard outside.

An invacuation may be appropriate where there is:

- violent or aggressive behaviour outside the venue;
- suspicious activity nearby;
- a police incident;
- severe weather;
- an escaped animal;
- civil disturbance; or
- any other external hazard where remaining outside presents a greater risk than remaining indoors.

The aim is to move everyone quickly to a place of relative safety whilst further information is obtained or until the risk has passed.

During an Invacuation

Where it is safe to do so, staff and volunteers should:

- remain calm and reassure those they are supporting;
- immediately bring everyone inside the nearest suitable building or move them to the designated safer area (e.g., a room or space designated by the venue);
- account for all service users, staff, volunteers, and visitors as soon as practicable;
- call the emergency services where immediate emergency assistance is required or where this has not already been done;
- close external doors and windows where appropriate;
- if the nature of the incident presents a risk from windows or external visibility, move people away from windows and external doors and be prepared to implement a lockdown if necessary;
- remain alert to information from venue staff or the emergency services;
- continue activities calmly where this helps to reduce anxiety;
- avoid leaving the building until advised that it is safe to do so; and
- be prepared to implement a lockdown if the situation escalates.

A **lockdown** is implemented where there is an immediate or imminent threat to the safety of those inside a building, and it is safer to remain inside than to evacuate.

Examples may include:

- an armed attacker;
- a violent intruder;
- a suspected terrorist incident;
- an individual attempting to gain unauthorised entry; or

- any other situation where emergency services advise that people should remain secured inside.

The primary objective of a lockdown is to preserve life until the threat has passed or emergency services arrive.

During a Lockdown

Where it is safe to do so, staff and volunteers should:

- remain calm and reassure those they are supporting;
- immediately move everyone to the safest available room or area - where possible, choose a room that can be locked or otherwise secured from the inside;
- lock doors immediately or secure them using other suitable means where locks are not available;
- barricade doors only where it is safe and necessary to delay an immediate threat;
- close windows, blinds, or curtains where appropriate;
- switch off lights if remaining unseen is likely to improve safety;
- move everyone away from doors, windows, and areas of visibility;
- remain as quiet as possible;
- silence mobile phones and other devices where appropriate;
- do not open doors until it is safe to do so or until instructed by the emergency services;
- if safe to do so, call 999, provide your location, describe the situation, and follow the instructions given; and
- remain in the secure location until the emergency services or venue management confirm that it is safe to leave.

Notes:

- Staff and volunteers should never place themselves or others at unnecessary risk and should always prioritise preserving life.
- If moving to the most secure room would cause significant delay or place service users at greater risk, staff should use their professional judgement to move everyone to the nearest available place of safety. The immediate preservation of life should always take priority over reaching an ideal location.

Version Control

Author: Policy Pros

Policy Owner/Contact Email:

Document classification: Internal

Version Number: 3

Change history

Version 1 [Unknown] Initial issue

Version 2 [September 2023] Amended

Version 3 [September 2026] Reviewed and updated. Referenced relevant legislation and added practical guidance.

Approved Date: Sept 2026

Approved By: Vickie Perkins (CEO) and Caroline Clements (Chair)