

Health and Safety Policy

Document Owner: Rachel Richardson

Role: Health and Safety Lead

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Policy Statement

Open Voice Lab is committed to ensuring, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of all persons who may be affected by our activities, including directors, associates, clients, participants, contractors and members of the public.

As a mobile organisation without fixed office premises, Open Voice Lab delivers services across a range of environments including home working, client premises, community venues, public spaces and temporary event locations. We recognise that these varied settings require proportionate and practical health and safety arrangements.

We are committed to:

- Providing safe systems of work
- Identifying hazards and managing risks appropriately
- Preventing injury, ill health and unsafe situations
- Ensuring those delivering work are competent and prepared
- Maintaining safe equipment and working practices
- Promoting dignity, wellbeing and respectful behaviour
- Reviewing incidents and continuously improving our approach

Health and safety is integrated into the planning and delivery of all Open Voice Lab activities.

Scope

This policy applies to:

- Rachel Richardson and Alexia Mitton, as directors of Open Voice Lab
- Any associates, freelancers or contractors engaged by Open Voice Lab

All Open Voice Lab business activities, including:

- Home working
- Meetings
- Training delivery
- Workshops and events
- Community engagement activity
- Street-based outreach or consultation
- Travel undertaken for work purposes

Responsibilities

Rachel Richardson – Health and Safety Lead

Rachel Richardson has overall responsibility for health and safety within Open Voice Lab and will:

- Maintain and review this policy and appendices annually
- Ensure suitable risk assessments are completed
- Monitor incidents, near misses and safety concerns
- Ensure adequate insurance cover is maintained
- Ensure equipment is suitable and safe for use
- Ensure appropriate arrangements are in place for contractors or associates
- Review controls following changes to work activities or incidents

Alexia Mitton is the designated first aid lead for Open Voice Lab and will:

- Maintain an appropriate current first aid qualification
- Provide first aid assistance where safe and appropriate to do so
- Support planning for first aid provision during events and activities
- Ensure first aid supplies carried by Open Voice Lab are checked and replenished as required
- Record and report any first aid incidents to Rachel Richardson for review and follow-up

Directors, Associates and Contractors

Anyone undertaking work on behalf of Open Voice Lab must:

- Take reasonable care for their own health and safety and that of others
- Follow this policy and any relevant codes, procedures, methods, instructions, and risk assessments outlined in the appendices
- Report hazards, incidents or concerns promptly
- Use equipment safely and as intended
- Behave professionally and respectfully in line with our code of practice
- Stop work where conditions present unacceptable risk

Risk Management

Open Voice Lab will assess risks proportionately to the nature of the activity.

Risk assessments may be completed for:

- Training sessions and workshops
- Public engagement activity
- Street-based consultation or outreach
- Use of unfamiliar venues
- Activities involving vulnerable groups
- Lone working situations
- Events involving significant footfall or equipment transport

Risk assessments will consider, where relevant:

- Venue suitability (more on this below)
- Access and egress
- Fire safety
- Manual handling
- Slips, trips and falls
- Electrical safety
- Public interaction risks
- Aggressive or challenging behaviour
- Weather and environmental conditions
- Accessibility requirements
- Safeguarding concerns
- First aid arrangements

Dynamic risk assessments will also be undertaken on arrival at venues or in changing environments.

Home Working and Display Screen Equipment

As Open Voice Lab operates without a fixed office base, administrative work is primarily undertaken from home.

We will ensure that home working arrangements are safe and suitable by:

- Setting up workstations to support good posture
- Positioning screens and laptops appropriately
- Taking regular breaks from prolonged screen use
- Managing lighting, ventilation and workspace comfort
- Keeping walkways free from hazards
- Purchasing equipment according to business need, suitability and safety
- Visually checking electrical items before use

Where needed, suitable items such as monitors, laptop stands, keyboards or office seating may be purchased to support safe working.

Equipment, Transport and Manual Handling

Open Voice Lab uses portable equipment, materials and resources when delivering work.

We will minimise manual handling risks by:

- Avoiding unnecessary lifting or carrying
- Using wheeled cases or bags where practical
- Splitting loads into manageable sizes
- Planning loading and unloading activity
- Using safe lifting techniques
- Seeking assistance where required
- Not lifting items beyond individual capability

Equipment will be transported securely and stored safely when not in use.

Defective or damaged equipment will not be used.

Venue-Based Delivery

When delivering activity in hired or third-party venues, Open Voice Lab will take reasonable steps to ensure the environment is safe.

This includes:

- Checking venue access arrangements
- Identifying fire exits and emergency procedures
- Ensuring routes are unobstructed
- Assessing room layout and capacity
- Checking for obvious hazards such as damaged furniture or spillages
- Ensuring tables and chairs are positioned safely
- Managing cables to prevent trip hazards
- Storing bags, boxes and materials safely
- Considering accessibility and participant needs

A full Venue Suitability Assessment (Appendix F) will be completed prior to the use of any new venue used by Open Voice Lab. This will ensure activities are delivered in environments that are safe, accessible and appropriate, but will not replace the venue's statutory responsibilities.

While building-wide safety remains the responsibility of the venue provider, Open Voice Lab remains responsible for how it uses the space.

Public-Facing and Street Engagement Activity

Open Voice Lab recognises that outreach, consultation and engagement in public spaces may present additional risks.

Before commencing such work, consideration will be given to:

- Location and local environment
- Time of day
- Footfall and crowding
- Visibility and escape routes
- Weather conditions
- Nature of the engagement topic
- Likelihood of conflict or disruption
- Availability of support nearby

Such work will be undertaken by two people rather than alone, unless assessed as appropriate by exception.

Activities will not proceed where risks cannot be managed to a reasonable level.

Personal Safety and Lone Working

Where lone working cannot be avoided, appropriate precautions will be taken. See associated procedure in Appendix B.

These may include:

- Sharing schedules and locations
- Keeping mobile phones charged and accessible
- Maintaining regular contact arrangements
- Using reputable travel arrangements
- Avoiding isolated or unsafe areas
- Leaving immediately if personal safety is compromised

Individuals are empowered to withdraw from any situation where they feel unsafe.

Managing Aggressive or Challenging Behaviour

Open Voice Lab recognises that some members of the public or participants may become distressed, frustrated or hostile.

Those delivering work will:

- Remain calm and professional
- Use respectful communication
- Maintain personal space
- Avoid confrontation
- De-escalate where possible
- End engagement where behaviour becomes unacceptable
- Seek support from venue staff, security or emergency services if required

Open Voice Lab has zero tolerance for:

- Threats
- Harassment
- Abuse
- Violence
- Discriminatory behaviour

Any serious incident will be recorded and reviewed. See Appendix B4 for Aggressive Behaviour Procedure.

First Aid and Emergencies

For activities delivered externally, Open Voice Lab will seek to identify available first aid and emergency arrangements at the venue or location.

Where appropriate, a basic first aid kit may be carried.

In the event of an emergency:

- Prioritise immediate safety
- Contact emergency services where required
- Notify venue management or relevant authority
- Inform Rachel Richardson
- Record the incident following the event

See procedures outlined in Appendix B for more information.

Equality, Inclusion and Accessibility

Open Voice Lab is committed to ensuring that health and safety arrangements are inclusive and do not create unnecessary barriers to participation.

We will, where reasonably practicable:

- Select accessible venues
- Consider mobility and sensory needs
- Make reasonable adjustments
- Use respectful and inclusive communication
- Create safe and welcoming environments for all participants

Wellbeing

Open Voice Lab recognises that engagement and facilitation work can be demanding.

We will support wellbeing through:

- Sensible workload planning
- Adequate breaks during delivery days
- Debriefing after difficult sessions
- Reviewing workloads and pressures regularly

Insurance

Open Voice Lab maintains appropriate business insurance relevant to its activities, including where applicable:

- Public Liability Insurance
- Professional Indemnity Insurance
- Employers' Liability Insurance (if legally required in future)
- Insurance arrangements will be reviewed periodically.

Incident Reporting and Review

All accidents, near misses, aggressive incidents or health and safety concerns will be recorded and reviewed.

Where appropriate, Open Voice Lab will:

- Investigate causes
- Identify lessons learned

- Update risk assessments
- Improve working practices

Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed annually or sooner if:

- Work activities significantly change
- New risks emerge
- An incident indicates review is necessary
- Legal or contractual requirements change

Approval

Signed: Rachel Richardson

Position: Health and Safety Lead

Date: 16 April 2026

Appendix A – Code of Practice

All Open Voice Lab representatives are expected to:

Professional Conduct

- Behave respectfully and professionally at all times
- Follow client site rules and venue requirements
- Dress appropriately for the environment and activity
- Maintain confidentiality where required

Safety Conduct

- Take reasonable care of personal safety and that of others
- Report hazards immediately
- Keep exits and walkways clear
- Use equipment only for intended purposes
- Follow risk assessments and instructions

Public Engagement Standards

- Treat all participants with dignity and respect
- Use inclusive communication
- Avoid escalating conflict
- Withdraw from unsafe situations when necessary

Zero Tolerance

Open Voice Lab will not tolerate:

- Violence
- Threats
- Harassment
- Discrimination
- Abuse of staff, associates or participants

Appendix B – Procedures

B1 Incident Reporting Procedure

Purpose

To ensure that all accidents, incidents, near misses, and instances of aggressive or unsafe behaviour are recorded, reviewed, and used to improve safety arrangements.

Scope

This procedure applies to all Open Voice Lab activities, including home working, venue-based delivery, and public engagement.

Where an incident occurs:

- Ensure the area is made safe (where possible)
- Provide or seek first aid if required (Alexia Mitton or venue first aider)
- Contact emergency services if there is immediate danger to life or serious injury
- Remove ourselves and others from ongoing risk if necessary

As soon as reasonably practicable:

- Inform the venue contact or responsible person (if applicable)
- Inform Rachel Richardson (Health & Safety Lead)
- Escalate to emergency contacts if required
- Complete our incident reporting form

Our Lead for Health and Safety will:

- Review all incident reports
- Identify root causes where appropriate
- Determine whether changes to procedures are required
- Update risk assessments if necessary
- Record any corrective actions

This procedure applies to:

- Accidents or injuries (minor or major)
- Near misses
- Aggressive, abusive or threatening behaviour
- Equipment failure or unsafe conditions
- Any situation where safety was compromised

B2 Lone Working Procedure

Purpose

To reduce risk to staff when working alone or without immediate support during travel, venue visits, or engagement activity.

At all times, personal safety takes priority over delivery of activity or completion of work tasks.

Definition of Lone Working

Lone working includes any situation where an individual is:

- Working alone at a venue
- Travelling alone for work purposes
- Arriving or leaving a location independently
- Delivering engagement activity without direct colleague support

Before any lone working activity:

- Confirm destination, purpose, and expected timings
- Identify known risks associated with the location or activity
- Share itinerary or schedule with the other director (where appropriate)
- Ensure mobile phone is fully charged and accessible
- Ensure emergency contact information is available

While working alone:

- Maintain awareness of surroundings at all times
- Avoid entering or remaining in environments that feel unsafe
- Position yourself with awareness of exits where possible
- Do not place yourself in isolated or high-risk situations unnecessarily
- Trust professional judgement and withdraw if concerns arise

Where appropriate, agreed check-in arrangements will be used, which may include:

- Text or call on arrival
- Update after session start
- Confirmation of departure from site
- Confirmation of safe arrival home

At the end of any lone working activity:

- Confirm safe completion of visit or activity with the other director (Rachel Richardson or Alexia Mitton)
- Confirm safe departure from venue/location
- Confirm safe arrival home or at next destination where appropriate
- Close any agreed check-in communication loop

This ensures that all lone working activity is actively closed and accounted for.

If safety concerns arise:

- Leave the situation immediately if safe to do so
- Contact emergency services if required
- Inform the other director as soon as possible
- Record the incident where relevant under the Incident Reporting Procedure

B3 First Aid Procedure

Purpose

To ensure prompt, appropriate and safe response to injury or illness occurring during Open Voice Lab activities.

Immediate assessment:

- Assess the situation quickly and calmly
- Identify any ongoing or immediate danger
- Do not place yourself or others at further risk

Ensure scene safety:

- Make the area safe where possible
- Move others away from danger if required
- Do not intervene beyond your level of training or competence

First Aid response

- Seek assistance from Alexia Mitton (First Aid Lead) where available
- Alternatively, request support from venue-designated first aider or staff
- Provide assistance within level of competence and training

Emergency services

- Call emergency services (999) if the situation is serious or life-threatening
- Follow instructions provided by emergency operators

- Ensure clear access for emergency responders where possible

Notification and escalation

- Notify Rachel Richardson (Health & Safety Lead) as soon as practicable
- Where relevant, Rachel Richardson will inform the contracting organisation or venue lead
- Provide factual information only at this stage

Recording the incident

- Complete an incident report as soon as reasonably possible
- Include details of the injury/illness, actions taken, and outcome
- Record any first aid provided and by whom

B4 Aggressive Behaviour Procedure

Purpose

To provide a clear and safe approach to managing verbal or physical aggression, abuse, or threatening behaviour during Open Voice Lab activities.

No engagement activity takes priority over personal safety. All staff are empowered to disengage immediately where they feel unsafe.

Stay calm and maintain control:

- Remain calm and professional at all times
- Avoid escalation in tone, language, or behaviour
- Do not engage in confrontation

Positioning and personal safety:

- Maintain a safe distance from the individual
- Ensure you have a clear and accessible exit route
- Do not allow yourself to be blocked in or isolated

De-escalation:

- Use calm, respectful and neutral communication
- Acknowledge concerns without agreeing to inappropriate behaviour
- Avoid arguing, challenging or matching aggression
- Attempt to de-escalate where safe and appropriate

Ending engagement:

- If behaviour continues or escalates, end the interaction

- Clearly and calmly disengage from the situation
- Withdraw to a safe area or exit the location if required
- Do not remain in an unsafe environment

Escalation to support

- Seek support from venue staff, security, colleagues, or others where available
- Contact emergency services (999) if there is immediate risk of harm or violence
- Prioritise physical safety over continuation of activity

Reporting the incident

- Report the incident to Rachel Richardson (Health & Safety Lead) as soon as practicable
- Record details factually, including what occurred, triggers (if known), and actions taken
- Ensure incidents are logged under the Incident Reporting Procedure

Appendix C – Method Statement

C1 Venue Workshop / Training Delivery

Scope

Delivery of training, facilitation or engagement sessions in indoor venues.

Safe Method

- Arrive and sign in if required.
- Speak to venue staff to confirm if there are any planned fire alarms or other matters to be aware of.
- Identify fire exits and emergency arrangements.
- Inspect room for hazards.
- Set up tables/chairs safely.
- Secure cables and equipment.
- Deliver session professionally.
- Monitor room safety throughout.
- Pack down safely.
- Remove all equipment and waste.

Key Risks Controlled

- Trips
- Poor room layout
- Manual handling
- Fire exit obstruction
- Participant injury

C2 Public / Street Engagement

Scope

Consultation, outreach or engagement in public spaces.

Safe Method

- Assess location on arrival.
- Confirm team roles.
- Position safely away from traffic or hazards, and maintaining easy exit routes.
- Keep valuables secure.
- Engage respectfully.

- Cease activity if environment becomes unsafe.

Key Risks Controlled

- Aggression
- Traffic/environment hazards
- Lone working
- Public disorder
- Weather conditions

C3 Transport and Setting Up Equipment

Safe Method

- Plan load before travel.
- Use wheeled cases where practical.
- Lift safely using legs not back.
- Split heavy loads.
- Store equipment securely in transit.
- Set up without blocking exits/walkways.

Appendix D – Work Instructions

D1 Safe Lifting of Tables and Equipment

Advise venue of layout needed ahead of event to minimise need to do any manual lifting. Where necessary:

- Check route first
- Test weight before lifting
- Bend knees, keep back straight
- Hold load close to body
- Avoid twisting
- Ask for help if awkward/heavy

D2 Cable Safety

- Route cables away from walkways
- Use tape or covers where needed
- Avoid overloading sockets
- Remove damaged leads from use

D3 Venue Arrival and Safety Check

- Exits identified
- Toilets located
- Room free from obvious hazards
- Furniture stable
- Enough space for participants
- Accessibility considered

D4 Dynamic Risk Check for Outdoor Work

- Is the area calm and safe?
- Is there a clear exit route?
- Any crowding or disorder?
- Safe weather conditions?
- Mobile phone available?
- Safe to proceed?
- If no, stop or relocate.

Appendix E – Risk Assessment Template

Activity	Hazard	Who is at risk	Existing Controls	Further Action	Owner

Appendix F – Venue Suitability Assessment

This assessment is completed prior to the use of any new venue used by Open Voice Lab. It ensures that activities are delivered in environments that are safe, accessible, and appropriate for participants, staff, and the public. It does not replace the venue provider's statutory responsibilities for building compliance, including but not limited to fire safety and water hygiene management.

Section 1 – General Information

Venue name:

Contact person:

Room(s) to be used:

Maximum number of participants:

Arrival instructions / Access routes:

Activity type:

Section 2 – Venue Compliance and Safety Assurance

- ☐ Fire Risk Assessment is in place and appears current
- ☐ Fire exits are clearly marked, accessible, and unobstructed
- ☐ Fire alarm system is present and appears operational (where applicable)
- ☐ Evacuation procedures are available or confirmed with venue staff
- ☐ Assembly point identified and understood
- ☐ General building condition appears safe and well maintained
- ☐ No obvious structural or environmental hazards identified

Comments:

Section 3 – Welfare facilities

- ☐ Drinking water is available, accessible, and appears to be from a maintained supply
- ☐ Welfare facilities (including toilets) are clean, safe, and operational
- ☐ Handwashing facilities are available and usable
- ☐ Venue has confirmed there are no concerns regarding water hygiene or stagnation (e.g. unused or visibly unmaintained outlets)

☐ Venue has confirmed adequate heating and/or ventilation is available for safe and comfortable delivery

☐ Suitable space is available for breaks and participant wellbeing where required

Comments:

Section 4 – Physical Environment Safety

☐ Room size is suitable for the planned activity and number of participants

☐ Floors are clean, dry, and free from slip or trip hazards

☐ Furniture is stable, safe, and in good condition

☐ Walkways can be kept clear during activity

☐ Lighting is adequate for safe delivery

☐ Electrical systems appear safe (no visible overloading or unsafe cabling)

☐ Room layout allows safe movement and facilitation

Comments:

Section 5 – Access, Accessibility and Inclusion

☐ Safe and accessible entry route to building

☐ Step-free access available where required

☐ Lifts available if needed

☐ Accessible toilet facilities available

☐ Room layout can be adapted for accessibility needs

☐ Consideration can be given to sensory needs (lighting/noise levels)

☐ A quiet, private or low-stimulation space is available or can be identified where reasonably practicable to support wellbeing, reflection, prayer, or sensory regulation needs

Comments:

Section 6 – Emergency and Security Arrangements

☐ Venue staff or responsible person is available on site

☐ Fire exits and evacuation routes are clearly identified

☐ First aid arrangements are in place or confirmed

☐ Emergency procedures are understood

- ☐ Safe access and exit routes are available at all times
- ☐ Environment appears secure for staff and participants
- ☐ Emergency services access is possible if required

Comments:

Section 7 – Manual Handling and Equipment Considerations

- ☐ Equipment can be safely transported into the venue
- ☐ No excessive lifting required
- ☐ Safe route from entry point to room identified
- ☐ Assistance available if required
- ☐ Space available for safe setup of equipment

Comments:

Section 8 – Health and Safety Concerns / Actions

- ☐ No immediate concerns identified
- ☐ Any hazards identified have been reported to venue staff
- ☐ Risks can be managed safely with reasonable adjustments
- ☐ Activity may proceed safely

Comments:

Section 9 – Overall Decision

- ☐ Venue is suitable for planned activity
- ☐ Venue is suitable with adjustments
- ☐ Venue is NOT suitable for delivery

Comments:

Section 10 – Sign-off

Assessed by:

Date:

Appendix G – Incident Reporting Form

Incident Reporting Form

Date:

Location:

Reported by:

Type of Incident:

(Accident / Near Miss / Aggression / First Aid / Other)

Details:

Persons Involved:

Immediate Action Taken:

Further Action Required:

Reviewed by: