# INDEPENDENT LISTENER POLICY

| Policy Owned By: | Melanie Bloor-Black – DSL/Director of Pastoral Care | 10th February 2023 |
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| Reviewed By: | Leadership Team | 27th February 2023 |
| Approved By: | Ben Gudgeon - Head | 27th February 2023 |
| Governor Review By: | Not required | |

Date of Next Review: Spring 2023:

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## Revision History

| Date | Revision |
|---|---|
| February 2019 | New Policy |
| Spring 2021 | Changes in nomenclature and typographical corrections |
| Spring 2023 | No material changes |

## Abbreviations, Acronyms and Definitions

| Abbreviation / Acronym | Definition |
|---|---|
| DSL | Designated Safeguarding Lead |
| LADO | Local Authority Designated Officer |
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## Aim / Objective / Statement of Intent

This policy sets out the role of the Independent Listener at The Yehudi Menuhin School and should be read in conjunction with Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy.

## Introduction

1. At the Yehudi Menuhin School we provide equal opportunities through a supportive environment in which each individual is valued and encouraged to develop their own personality and talents, while learning to live as part of a community.

2. We aim to ensure that this community is one in which there is no place for harassment, discrimination or bullying.  Each pupil has a number of different adults available for advice and support including members of the Leadership Team, the Boarding House staff, and other trusted staff members.

3. All are made aware that the School Nurse is available to see in confidence and is present five days a week.  The School Counsellor comes to School every Monday.

4. We place great emphasis on Pastoral Care and feel that the systems in place to support the welfare of the pupils are robust.  We also recognise that there may be occasions when a pupil wishes to speak with someone who understands the school and any associated pressures, but is completely impartial, and can therefore listen without prejudice.

5. The National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools (May 2022) states that a school must: "Identify at least one person other than a parent, outside the staff, and those responsible for the leadership and governance of the school, who boarders may contact directly about personal problems or concerns at school".

6. The Yehudi Menuhin School has an Independent Listener who acts in this capacity.  Our current Independent Listener is David Ireland – available on talk@menuhinschool.co.uk

7. This contact detail is displayed on Boarding House noticeboards, alongside other organisations that can support pupils, including Childline, the Children's Commissioner and Youngminds.

## Role of the Independent Listener

8. The Independent Listener will act as a confidential and supportive adult to pupils in the School who wish to discuss concerns or worries.  In a similar way to any member of staff, including the School Counsellor, confidentiality cannot be maintained in a case where there is a concern for the welfare or safety of the pupil (or others) as a consequence of any discussion with the Independent Listener.  In these situations, the Independent Listener should inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead, or, in specific situations as detailed in Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, the Surrey LADO team or the Police.

9. Other than as set out above, there is no requirement for the Independent Listener to report to the School any of the conversations they have with pupils. However:-

   a) The Independent Listener, with explicit agreement from/at the request of a pupil, may contact the School to share specific details or raise concerns.

   b) At their discretion, the Independent Listener can report to the Director of Pastoral Care or the Head with generic information such as the number of calls they receive.

10. The Independent Listener will visit the Boarding Houses on occasion, have lunch or tea with the students and familiarise themselves with the Boarding Houses on an informal basis.

11. The independent listener will be invited to attend morning meetings and may occasionally speak directly to pupils and staff about the service provided.

12. There will be no expectation that the Independent Listener makes themselves available in person for face-to-face meetings with the pupils.

## Appointment of the Independent Listener

13. The following procedure is to be followed in appointing the Independent Listener:

   - The School will follow its normal recruitment policy in line with current legislation, National Minimum Standards for Boarding, ISI regulations, KCSIE guidance, including appropriate checks with the Disclosure and Barring Service;
   - The Independent Listener will be included in the Single Central Register;
   - The Independent Listener will be subject to relevant school policies including Safeguarding and Child Protection, Prevent Duty and Whistleblowing Policy;
   - The School will make it clear that the position, which is an unpaid and voluntary role, is to support the boarding pupils, and lies outside the School Management Structure;
   - To avoid conflicts of interest, the School will be aware of the Independent Listener's other roles and experience (e.g. Police Officer, Governor, Doctor, Vicar, Counsellor, Local Dignitary etc.);
   - The School will be aware of the Independent Listener's own other professional expectations and codes (e.g. religious, medical, counselling);
   - The School will make clear to the Independent Listener the rules on confidentiality – especially their duty to breach confidentiality if informed of a safeguarding risk to pupils, including under the Prevent Duty.

## Change to the Independent Listener

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14. Any change to the person carrying out the role of Independent Listener will be advised to the pupils as soon as possible.  In exceptional circumstances, the School reserves the right to ask the Independent Listener to step down from the role and a replacement sought by the School.

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