



Safeguarding Children Policy

Introduction

Next Chapter acknowledges the duty of care to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and is committed to ensuring safeguarding practice reflects statutory responsibilities, government guidance and complies with best practice and Next Chapter requirements.

We believe everyone has a responsibility to promote the welfare of all children and young people to keep them safe and to offer support in a way that protects them.

Purpose and Scope

Next Chapter provides safe accommodation and outreach support to women and their children who have suffered or are suffering domestic abuse. The purpose of this policy is:

- To protect children and young people who receive Next Chapter's services from harm. This includes the children of adults who use our services.
- To provide staff and volunteers, as well as children, young people, and their families, with the overarching principles that guide our approach to child protection.

This policy applies to anyone working on behalf of Next Chapter, including senior managers and the board of trustees, paid staff, volunteers, sessional workers, agency staff and students.

Legal Framework

This policy has been drawn up on the basis of legislation, policy and guidance that seeks to protect children in England. A summary of the key legislation is available from <https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/> It is intended to support staff working within Next Chapter and is supplementary to the Southend, Essex and Thurrock (SET) Safeguarding and Child Protection Procedure [set-procedures-may2022.pdf](#)

Next Chapter also works in accordance with the following key legislation and guidance in relation to safeguarding children:

- Children Act 2004
- Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims (Amendment) Act 2012
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Serious Crime Act 2015
- Children and Adoption Act 2006
- Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003
- Sexual Offences Act 2003
- Children and Families Act 2014
- Children and Young Persons Act 2008
- Protection of Children Act 1999
- The Crime and Disorder Act 1998
- Data Protection Act 2018 Regulations 2022
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006

- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. (Adopted and opened for signature, ratification, and accession by General Assembly Resolution 44/25 of 20 November 1989. Entry into force 2 September 1990). <https://www.unicef.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/unicef-convention-rights-child-uncrc.pdf>
- Child Abuse concerns: guide for practitioners, HM Government, March 2015 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/419604/What_to_do_if_you_re_worried_a_child_is_being_abused.pdf
- Working together to Safeguard Children, HM Government, July 2018 [Working together to safeguard children 2023: statutory guidance](#)
- Effective Support for children and Families in Essex, Essex Safeguarding Children Board, October 2021 [ESCB - Home](#)

We believe that:

- Children and young people should never experience abuse of any kind.
- We have a responsibility to promote the welfare of all children and young people to keep them safe and to practise in a way that protects them.

We recognise that:

- The welfare of children is paramount in all the work we do and in all the decisions we take.
- All children, regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation have an equal right to protection from all types of harm or abuse.
- Some children are additionally vulnerable because of the impact of previous experiences, their level of dependency, communication needs or other issues.
- Working in partnership with children, young people, their parents, carers, and other agencies is essential in promoting young people's welfare.

Definitions

Child

A child is any person under the age of 18.

Significant Harm

A key concept in child safeguarding work is 'Significant Harm'. The statutory definition in the Children Act 1989 states that 'harm' means ill-treatment or impairment of health and development. Ill-treatment includes sexual abuse and forms of ill-treatment which are not physical, thus including emotional abuse. Physical abuse itself is not explicitly included, but this is taken as read. 'Health' includes both physical and mental health, and 'development' includes physical, intellectual, emotional, social and behavioural development. To assess whether health or development are being significantly impaired the Act tells us to compare the health or development of the child in question 'with that which could reasonably be expected of a similar child'.

The definition of harm also includes 'impairment suffered from seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another'.

The impact of harm upon a person will be individual and depend upon each person's circumstances and the severity, degree and impact or effect of this upon that person. The concept of Significant Harm is therefore relative to each individual concerned.

Child Abuse

- **Physical** abuse including causing actual physical harm; fabrication or inducement of illness; female genital mutilation.
- **Emotional** abuse including conveying to a child that they are worthless or unloved; having inappropriate expectations; overprotection or limitation of opportunity for learning or social contact; seeing or hearing the maltreatment of another; serious bullying; corruption or exploitation, forced marriage, belief in spirit possession.
- **Neglect** including failure to protect from harm or danger, or to provide adequate supervision; persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development; substance misuse during pregnancy.
- **Sexual** abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities (penetrative or non-penetrative), including non-contact activities such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, or encouraging them to behave in a sexually inappropriate manner, online abuse and sexual exploitation. Perpetrators may be male or female. Children under 16 cannot consent to sexual activity and this is an offence. Penetrative sex under the age of 13 is classed as rape.

As part of our Safeguarding Policy, Next Chapter will:

- Promote and prioritise the safety and wellbeing of children and young people.
- Ensure everyone understands their roles and responsibilities in respect of safeguarding and is provided with appropriate learning opportunities to recognise, identify, and respond to signs of abuse, neglect and other safeguarding concerns relating to children and young people.
- Ensure appropriate action is taken in the event of incidents/concerns of abuse and support provided to the individual/s who raise or disclose the concern.
- Ensure that confidential, detailed, and accurate records of all safeguarding concerns are maintained and securely stored.
- Prevent the employment/deployment of unsuitable individuals.
- Ensure robust safeguarding arrangement and procedures are in operation.

The policy and procedures will be widely promoted and are mandatory for everyone involved with Next Chapter. Failure to comply with the policy and procedures will be addressed without delay and may ultimately result in dismissal/exclusion from the organisation.

As part of our Safeguarding Policy, Next Chapter employees and associates will:

- Follow the safeguarding policies and procedures at all times and be alert to the potential need for early help for a child.
- Participate in safeguarding children training and maintain current working knowledge.
- Be familiar with the SET Procedures and Effective Support for Children and Families in Essex.
- Discuss any concerns about the safety of a child with their line manager or Designated Safeguarding Lead.
- Contribute to actions required including information sharing and attending meetings.
- Work collaboratively with other agencies to safeguard and protect children.
- Recognise the impact that diversity, beliefs, and values of people who use our service has.

It is important that everyone in Next Chapter is aware that the member of staff who first encounters a case of alleged or suspected abuse is not responsible for deciding whether or not abuse has occurred. That is a task for the statutory child protection agencies following a referral to them.

Managing Safeguarding Concerns

Every adult who works with or on behalf of Next Chapter is aware of the contents of this policy and understands what the reporting procedures are if there are any part of the service that may be unsafe or may present a risk of harm, or if the child or young person (or their parent(s) / carer(s)) makes a disclosure of abuse or an allegation against an adult working with them. Such disclosures or allegations will be taken very seriously to ensure that the child is protected.

Any Next Chapter staff member who suspects abuse MUST follow the procedures and guidance that supplement this policy. These clearly outline how Next Chapter expects all staff to recognise possible abuse and what actions to take, including reporting concerns to the Local Authority Children's Social Care and Police. All staff have a duty to share concerns appropriately; this includes discussing concerns with a relevant manager, liaising with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), referring to Police, LADO, Children's Social Care or Early Help Services.

Immediate action must be taken to safeguard where significant harm has occurred or is likely to occur, this includes calling emergency services on 999.

Important Contacts

Next Chapter has a Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) who is the appointed individual with responsibility for safeguarding. In their absence operational members of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) including the CEO will always be available for staff to consult with. The named persons for Safeguarding within Next Chapter are:

- Justine Musk, Children and Young Persons Service Manager (reporting to CEO)
Contact: 07945 408308 justinem@thenextchapter.org.uk
- Sally Harrington, Director of Adult Services (reporting to CEO)
Contact: 07495 408303 sallyh@thenextchapter.org.uk

In the case of allegations made against a staff member:

- Justine Musk, Director of Children and Young people services justinem@thenextchapter.org.uk or
Beverley Jones CEO – beverleyj@thenextchapter.org.uk

Charity trustees in the UK are required to take steps to protect everyone who comes into contact with their organisation from harm (Charity Commission for England and Wales, 2019; Charity Commission for Northern Ireland, 2019; Scottish Charity Regulator, 2018).

This includes:

- ensuring safeguarding policies, procedures and measures are fit for purpose and up-to-date
- making sure everyone in the organisation is aware of their safeguarding responsibilities and knows
- how to respond to concerns
- having a lead trustee for safeguarding and child protection

- challenging any decisions which adversely affect anyone's wellbeing
- managing allegations of abuse against someone involved in the organisation
- reporting serious incidents as necessary

Designated safeguarding Trustee Champion:

Sandra - Trustee

Other Key Contacts

In an emergency including where **LIFE IS AT RISK**, CONTACT POLICE on 999 - this includes threats of suicide and threats to harm another person.

Contact	Times Available	Number
Police	24 hours	999 emergencies 101 non emergencies
Children's Social Care - Essex	Monday-Thursday 9am-5pm Friday 9am-4.30pm All other times	0345 603 7627 Advice 0345 603 7630 Immediate 0345 606 1212 Out of Hours
NSPCC Child Protection Helpline	24 hours	0808 800 5000
ChildLine	24 hours	0800 1111

Information Sharing and Confidentiality

Information sharing is vital to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people. Many serious case reviews (SCRs) have identified failure by practitioners to record information, to share it, to understand its significance and then take appropriate action as a key concern.

The seven golden rules to sharing information.

1. Remember that the Data Protection Act 1998 and human rights law are not barriers to justified information sharing but provide a framework to ensure that personal information about living individuals is shared appropriately.
2. Be open and honest with the individual (and/or their family where appropriate) from the outset about why, what, how and with whom information will, or could be shared, and seek their agreement, unless it is unsafe or inappropriate to do so.
3. Seek advice from other practitioners if you are in any doubt about sharing the information concerned, without disclosing the identity of the individual where possible.
4. Share with informed consent where appropriate and, where possible, respect the wishes of those who do not consent to share confidential information. You may still share information without consent if, in your judgement, there is good reason to do so, such as where safety may be at risk. You will need to base your judgement on the facts of the case. When you are sharing or requesting personal information from someone, be certain of the basis upon which you are doing so. Where you have consent, be mindful that an individual might not expect information to be shared.

5. Consider safety and well-being: Base your information sharing decisions on considerations of the safety and well-being of the individual and others who may be affected by their actions.
6. Necessary, proportionate, relevant, adequate, accurate, timely and secure: Ensure that the information you share is necessary for the purpose for which you are sharing it, is shared only with those individuals who need to have it, is accurate and up to date, is shared in a timely fashion, and is shared securely.
7. Keep a record of your decision and the reasons for it – whether it is to share information or not. If you decide to share, then record what you have shared, with whom and for what purpose.

For people to feel safe in sharing their concerns, confidentiality is an important principle particularly when requesting support. However, the right to confidentiality is not absolute. Where there are concerns about the safety of a child, the sharing of information in a timely and effective manner between organisations can reduce the risk of harm. Fears about sharing information cannot be allowed to stand in the way of the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

Whilst the Data Protection Act 1998 places duties on organisations and individuals to process personal information fairly and lawfully, it is not a barrier to sharing information where the failure to do so would result in a child or adult at risk being placed at risk of harm. Similarly, human rights concerns, such as respecting the right to a private and family life would not prevent sharing where there are real safeguarding concerns.

Wherever possible informed consent to share information should be obtained from the parent/carer of the child who the concern is about unless seeking such consent increases the risk of significant harm to the child or young person, causes a delay in the sharing of information which in turn may increase the risk of harm to the child or young person or is likely to impede a criminal investigation e.g. lead to the loss of evidential material. If in doubt, we will consult with the relevant Local Authority.

Consent can be either verbal or in writing, although it's better to get written consent. This is to avoid any future dispute. A person can withdraw consent at any time. Be open and honest. Ensure the person being asked to provide their consent understands what information will be shared and why it needs to be shared. They should be informed of who will see the information and what the information will be used for.

It is important to respect the wishes of any person who doesn't consent to the sharing of confidential information. If consent is refused, unless there's a statutory duty or a court order to share information, professional judgement will need to be applied to decide what is likely to happen if the information is shared, against what is likely to happen if it isn't. Concerns about sharing information cannot be allowed to stand in the way of the need to promote the welfare and protect the safety of children.

All staff and volunteers should be familiar with our safeguarding procedures for raising concerns. If they are in any doubt about the legality of sharing information and/or are unsure whether a safeguarding referral would be appropriate they should in the first instance consult their manager or the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Record keeping

Sufficient records are essential to good safeguarding practice. Next Chapter is clear about the need to record any concern held about a child or children within our organisation.

Any member of staff receiving a disclosure of abuse or noticing signs or indicators of abuse, will make an accurate record as soon as possible (using the Cause for Concern form – Appendix 3). All records will be dated and signed and will include the action taken. The concern should be discussed with a manager and then be presented to the DSL by email. Any further advice or action to be taken will be given. SLT will be able to advise in the absence of DSL.

Photographic Images

We recognise the need to protect the identity of all individuals who are accessing our service. As an organisation it is our policy to only take photographs with consent of the individuals concerned, the exception to this is where there is a specific need due to safeguarding.

Risk Assessments

Risk assessments should be carried out by a person with adequate knowledge of the work activity and the workplace when there is an environmental or staffing change and for each new project undertaken by Next Chapter.

If the project being undertaken will involve children or adults at risk, or the new worker is a child under the terms of this policy, consideration must be given to any additional risks that may be present as a result of this. For example, appropriate level of work for a member of staff of that age i.e., no lone visits by staff under 18.

Supporting Staff

We recognise that staff working at Next Chapter who have become involved with a child who has suffered harm or appears to be likely to suffer harm may find the situation stressful and upsetting. We will support such staff by providing an opportunity to talk through their anxieties with their line manager and to seek further support as appropriate. Staff can access a range of support; this is detailed in Next Chapter's Clinical Supervision Policy.

Training

Next Chapter is committed to ensuring that everyone who works for us understands their safeguarding responsibilities and are equipped with the knowledge and awareness that will enable them to recognise and respond to safeguarding concerns.

All staff must complete an induction online safeguarding training package before they work on the frontline. All non-frontline staff must complete this training within the first month of their start date. External Refresher safeguarding training will take place every two years for all staff, internal refresher training will take place every year.

Frontline staff will engage in ongoing training to ensure that they understand their legal and moral responsibility to safeguard those at risk of harm, abuse, and exploitation. This training will assist staff to work to the standards that are detailed within this policy and procedure and work at all times towards maintaining high standards of practice.

Safer Recruitment

All recruitment is carried out under the remit of the HR & Payroll Officer with the recruiting Manager. Appropriate checks are carried out on all new staff and volunteers by the HR & Payroll Officer. These checks include identity checks, references, and Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service check. Their induction into the organisation will include basic safeguarding training and a briefing on this policy and procedure.

Next Chapter has in place a Safer Recruitment Policy to ensure the safe recruitment of all staff. Key staff involved in recruitment attend safer recruitment training every three years.

Visitors and Contractors

Next Chapter will ensure that all visitors and contractors sign in and complete a Confidentiality Agreement form.

We will ensure that contractors providing a service on behalf of Next Chapter will be required to work within the guidance of this policy. The contractor must ensure that they meet with the standards and guidance set out in this policy. In addition, we will also ensure all visitors and contractors providing services directly to our clients or their children have an up-to-date DBS. Any visitor or contractor who visits a site and does not have a DBS will be always supervised by a staff member.

Allegations Against Staff

All staff are aware of our Code of Conduct; guidance about conduct and safe practice will be given at induction.

All staff should take care not to place themselves in a vulnerable position with a child. It is always advisable for work with individual children to be conducted in view of other adults or in an area with CCTV.

All staff should be aware that abuse is a serious matter that can lead to a criminal conviction. Any member of staff suspected of abuse will be subject to disciplinary procedures. All staff have a duty to report suspected or actual abuse and failure to do so is a serious abdication of responsibility and will also incur disciplinary action.

In these circumstances we will follow the Local Authority procedures for managing all such allegations. How this is dealt with is set out in Appendix 6.

If you receive an allegation against a member of staff you must make a confidential written record (including what the person making the allegation said in their own words) including time, date and place of incident and what was said. Report the allegation immediately to the CEO. In the absence of the CEO, then report to a member of SLT. If the allegation is about the CEO or member of SLT, then the Chair of the Board of Trustees must be informed. The senior member of staff managing the allegation will inform the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) and follow the procedures set down by the relevant Local Safeguarding Children Board.

It is essential that all information is kept strictly confidential between yourself and the senior member of staff managing the allegation. Disclosure to other parties will be considered a disciplinary matter. Where necessary the senior member of staff will share the information with the wider SLT.

Monitoring

This policy will be reviewed every three years, or in the following circumstances:

- Changes in legislation or government guidance
- As required by the Local Safeguarding Children Board
- As a result of any other significant change or event

Appendices

1.	Procedure for responding to safeguarding children concerns
2.	Flowchart for procedure for safeguarding children concerns

3.	Cause for Concern Form
4.	Body Map
5.	Procedure for making a referral to Essex Children's Social Care
6.	Procedure for raising concern regarding a member of staff
7.	Additional themes pertaining to safeguarding children
8.	Caldicott Principles
9.	Essex Statutory Contacts
10.	National Contacts

Supporting Policies and Procedures

The following policies should also be read alongside this document:

Policies	Forms
Code of Conduct	
Compliments, Comments and Complaints Policy	
Data Protection Policy	
Disciplinary & Grievance Policy	
Safeguarding Adults Policy	
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy	
Safer Recruitment Policy	Safer Recruitment Procedure
Information Sharing Policy	

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