



For a brighter future,  
free from abuse.

# Child Safeguarding Policy

## Introduction

Safe Steps provides support for adults, children and young people affected by violence or exploitation. We also provide training and awareness raising for professionals to increase their understanding and knowledge of the issues affecting the children who use our services.

This work requires Safe Steps' safeguarding arrangements to be robust and comprehensive. We are committed to safeguarding children in line with national legislation and relevant national and local guidelines.

Safe Steps works to prevent and address the impact of violence and exploitation on young people and their families. We believe every young person should be able to enjoy a life where they feel safe and free from an ever-present threat of harm.

We are committed to safeguarding and protecting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.

Safe Steps is committed to best safeguarding practice and believes that children and young people should never experience abuse or maltreatment of any kind.

This extends to recognising and reporting harm experienced anywhere, including within our activities, within other organised community or voluntary activities, in the community, in the person's own home and in any care setting.

## 1. Policy Statement

Safe Steps recognises that the welfare of a child is paramount.

Safe Steps is committed to creating and maintaining a safe and positive environment and an open, listening culture where people feel able to share concerns without fear of retribution. All children have a right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse, regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation

Safe Steps acknowledges that safeguarding is everybody's responsibility and is committed to prevent abuse and neglect through safeguarding the welfare of all children involved.

Some children may be considered to be more at risk due to the impact of previous experiences, their level of dependency, communication needs or other issues, including being a member of a minority ethnic group, having a disability, being very young (infants are at higher risk) or a young carer (since this group is often isolated as well as protective of those they are caring for)

Safe Steps recognises that there is a legal framework within which services need to work to safeguard children and will act in accordance with the relevant safeguarding children legislation and with local statutory safeguarding procedures. Actions taken by Safe Steps will be consistent with the principles of child safeguarding ensuring that any action taken is prompt, proportionate and that it includes and respects the voice of the child concerned wherever possible.

## 2. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to demonstrate the commitment of Safe Steps to safeguarding children and to ensure that everyone involved in Safe Steps is aware of:

- Their role and responsibility for safeguarding adults
- The legislation, policy and procedures for safeguarding children
- To provide parents, staff and volunteers with the overarching principles that underpin our approach to safeguarding and child protection
- What Safe Steps will do to keep children safe and respond to concerns by setting out clear commitments and expectations, lines of accountability and roles and responsibilities.

### 3. Scope

This policy applies to anyone working for or on behalf of Safe Steps including managers, paid staff, volunteers – including Trustees, agency staff and students. This policy applies to all work with children aged up to 18. For those aged 18 and over please refer to Safe Steps' Adult Safeguarding Policy.

This policy does not form part of Safe Steps' contract of employment and the charity reserves the right to change the policy at any time when considered necessary. However, failure to comply with this policy may result in disciplinary action.

### 4. Legislation

Safe Steps seeks to ensure that its staff members work in line with national legislation and local Safeguarding Children policies and procedures as set by the Southend, Essex and Thurrock (SET) guidelines.

Additionally, this safeguarding policy complies with the following:

[The Children Act, 1989](#) specifically Section 17 - provision of services for children in need and Section 47 - local authority duty to investigate

[The Children Act, 2004](#) creation of Local Safeguarding Children Boards, Working Together and information sharing

[Keeping Children Safe in Education 2019](#)

[What to do if you're worried a child is being abused](#)

[Disabled Children United Nations Convention on The Rights of the Child](#) Voice of the child

[The Sexual Offences Act, 2003](#)

[Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018](#)

[Domestic Abuse Bill 2019 – Change to Domestic Abuse Act 2021](#)

[The Data Protection Act, 2018](#)

[The General Data Protection Regulations 2018](#)

[UN Convention on the Rights of the Child \(1989\)](#) specifically Article 12 – right to express and have their views taken into account on all matters that affect them and Article 19 – right to live free from all forms of violence

[Voyeurism Offences Act 2019](#) - Legislation against the practice of 'Upskirting' (Voyeurism (Offences) Act 2019) is also applicable where this activity involves a child as either the victim or perpetrator of this activity.

The law provides a framework for good practice in safeguarding that makes the overall well-being of the child at risk a priority of any intervention.

Safe Steps acts in accordance with the principles set out within the SET Safeguarding and Child Protection Procedures. We will:

- Be alert to potential indicators of abuse or neglect
- Be alert to the risks which individual abusers, or potential abusers, may pose to children
- Share and help to analyse information so that an assessment can be made of the child's needs and circumstances
- Contribute to whatever actions are needed to safeguard and promote the child's welfare
- Take part in regularly reviewing the outcomes for the child against specific plans
- Work co-operatively with parents unless this is inconsistent with ensuring the child's safety.
- Have in place effective ways to identify emerging problems and potential unmet needs for individual children and families
- Support assessments of the need for early help
- Provide targeted services to address the assessed needs of a child and their family/carers which focuses on activity to significantly improve the outcomes for the child

## **5. Safeguarding**

Is the process of promoting the welfare of children and protecting them from harm, whether caused by deliberate abuse, neglect or accidents. It also includes considering issues such as bullying, prejudice or failures to enable them to take part in activities open to most children

This means:

- Protecting children and young people from abuse and maltreatment
- Preventing harm to children's health or development
- Ensuring children grow up with the provision of safe and effective care
- Taking actions which enable all children to achieve the best possible outcomes.

Safe Steps will seek to keep children safe by:

- Valuing, listening to and respecting them
- Adopting child safeguarding and protection best practice through our policies and procedures for staff and volunteers
- Providing effective management of staff and volunteers through supervision, support and training
- Recruiting staff and volunteers safely, ensuring all necessary checks are made
- Recording and storing information professionally and securely
- Sharing information about safeguarding and good practice with children, their families, staff and volunteers via one-to-one discussions, group work, leaflets and other channels
- Using our child safeguarding procedure to share concerns and relevant information with professional partners who need to know and involving children, parents/carers and families appropriately
- Using our procedures to manage any safeguarding allegations against staff and volunteers appropriately
- Providing a welcoming and friendly environment in which to welcome children, young people and their families and to inspire trust
- Creating and maintaining an anti-bullying environment and ensuring that we have policies and procedures in place to help us deal effectively with any bullying that does arise
- Ensuring that we have effective complaints and whistleblowing procedures in place
- Ensuring that we provide a safe physical environment for the children we work with, by applying health and safety measures in accordance with the law and regulatory guidance
- Ensuring that our staff and volunteers (including Trustees and student placements) are aware of how this policy should be implemented
- Ensuring our work is anti-discriminatory and anti-oppressive, and recognises the possibility of unconscious bias.

## 6. Definitions of Child Abuse

This may include:

- **Physical abuse:** This may include hitting, shaking, kicking, throwing, smacking, hair-pulling, burning, scalding, biting, choking, poisoning, mutilating, suffocating or drowning. This may also include abuse through a parent's fabricated or induced illness or physical punishment
- **Sexual abuse:** This involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities. This includes inappropriate touching, genital stimulation, penetrative acts, watching sexual acts or encouraging a child to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, including grooming behaviour through visual media such as the internet, television, magazines and images on a mobile phone, social media, etc.
- **Emotional abuse:** This is the emotional ill treatment of a children. It may include causing a child to feel frightened, excluded; verbal abuse, racial abuse, humiliation, shouting, swearing, threatening or imposing inappropriate expectations. A child witnessing the abuse or violence of another is also recognised to cause significant harm.
- **Neglect:** This is the persistent failure to meet the essential needs of a child/young people or protect a child/young people from danger. This may include failing to provide warmth, clothing, food, consistent care, education or medical needs
- **Harmful Religious or Cultural Practices:** Whilst we recognise the importance of valuing diversity and a wide range of religious and cultural beliefs and customs, this cannot override the importance of child safeguarding and protection practices. Customs such as female genital mutilation (FGM), children marriage and ritualistic abuse, are understood as being harmful to children and young people and therefore are recognised as forms of child abuse.
- **Domestic Abuse:** The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 legally recognised children as victims of domestic abuse if the child sees, hears, or experiences the effects of the abuse, and is related to, or falls under 'parental responsibility' of the victim and/or perpetrator of the domestic abuse. As a result, domestic abuse has a significant impact on children and young people.
- **Risks from outside the home:** Vulnerable to abuse and exploitation from outside their families (included in the SET guidance – relevant to recent Jay review re child exploitation)

## **7. Roles and Responsibilities**

- 7.1. Safe Steps is fully committed to safeguarding and child protection, and all staff (in any capacity) have a duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, regardless of whether their role involves direct contact with children
- 7.2. It is the responsibility of all staff to ensure that they read and understand this policy
- 7.3. The CEO and senior management team are responsible for ensuring that it is adhered to and to take appropriate action where a staff member is found to have acted in a way that is contrary to this policy
- 7.4. The CEO has overall accountability for all matters concerning safeguarding and child protection, and promoting children's welfare. Their role oversees safeguarding arrangements which includes:
  - Ensuring relevant policies and procedures are in place and reviewed and updated
  - Supporting staff with concerns in consultation with line managers as needed
  - Supports managers, if need be, around when to refer to social care
  - Dealing with any escalations within local authorities if needed due to lack of response or an inappropriate response
  - Analysing performance around safeguarding referrals
  - Developing and delivering training to promote safe practice
  - Reviewing and sharing the outcomes of Serious Case Reviews and internal safeguarding reviews
  - Preparing a self-audit annually to monitor Safe Steps' safeguarding arrangements and identifies actions for improvement.

Child Protection is part of the safeguarding process and focuses on protecting individual children who are identified as suffering or likely to suffer significant harm. Safe Steps Child Safeguarding Procedure sets out how to respond to any concerns a staff member or volunteer may have about a child or young person.

## **8. Recording and Information Sharing**

Safe Steps is committed to compliance with Data Protection Act (DPA) and the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).

Information about concerns or abuse includes personal data. It is therefore important to be clear as to the grounds for processing and sharing information about concerns or abuse.

Processing information includes record keeping. Records relating to safeguarding concerns must be accurate and relevant. They must be stored confidentially with access only to those with a need to know.

Sharing information, with the right people, is central to good practice in safeguarding. However, information sharing must only ever be with those with a 'need to know'. This does NOT automatically include the persons spouse, partner, adult, child, unpaid or paid carer. Information sharing should only be shared with the consent of the child unless the overarching priority of safeguarding requires information sharing to help keep them safe.

The purpose of Data Protection legislation is not to prevent information sharing but to ensure personal information is only shared appropriately. Data Protection legislation allows information sharing within an organisation. For example:

- Anyone who has a concern about harm can make a report to an appropriate person within the same organisation.
- Case management meetings can take place to agree to co-ordinate actions by the organisation.

The circumstances when we need to share information without the child's consent include those where:

- It is not safe to contact the child to gain their consent i.e. it might put them or the person making contact at further risk.
- It is necessary to contact the police to prevent a crime, or to report that a serious crime has been committed.

When information is shared without consent of the child this must be explained to them, when it is safe to do so, and any further actions should still fully include them.

If you are in doubt as to whether to share information, seek advice e.g. seek legal advice and/or contact the Local Authority and explain the situation without giving personal details about the person at risk or the person causing harm.

Any decision to share or not share information with an external person or organisation must be recorded together with the reasons to share or not share information.

## **9. Multi-Agency Working**

Safeguarding Children legislation and national guidance identifies statutory and other agencies responsible for working together to safeguard children.

Safe Steps staff may be required to cooperate with the Local Authority and the Police including to:

- Provide more information about concerns raised.



- Provide a safe venue for the child to meet with other professionals e.g. Police/Social Workers/Advocates.
- Attend safeguarding and other associated meetings.
- Coordinate internal investigations (e.g. complaints, disciplinary) with investigations by Police or other agencies.
- Share information about the outcomes of internal investigations.

## **10. Safer Recruitment and Selection Procedures for Staff and Volunteers**

Safe Steps will ensure that appropriate checks are applied to all staff and volunteers (including Trustees) who may work with/encounter children. References will be obtained and previous employment history verified.

The Charity takes great care in the recruitment of staff, carries out all possible checks and recruits to ensure that staff are of a high standard. The Charity ensures new employees undertake Enhanced Disclosure and Baring Service (DBS) checks, prior to the commencement of their employment.

## **11. Training**

As part of their induction programme, all staff and volunteers receive training in both adult and child safeguarding. This includes recognising abuse and carrying out their responsibilities under this policy. Staff and volunteers also undertake relevant training courses delivered by the Local Authority, either in person or online, on an annual basis.

As Safe Steps is commissioned by Southend City Council and Essex County Council for most of its services; all staff must make themselves aware of the SET Safeguarding and Children Protection Procedures (version May 2022), which are included within the Safe Steps policy and procedures file.

## **12. Related Policies and Procedures**

This document should be read alongside the following relevant policies and procedures:

### **Internal:**

- Child Safeguarding Procedure
- Safeguarding of Vulnerable Adults Policy
- Data Protection Policy – Clients
- Information Sharing Without Consent Procedure
- Safer Recruitment and Selection Policy
- Induction Policy
- Training Policy
- Communication and IT Usage Policy

- Disciplinary and Grievance Policy
- Volunteer Policy

**External:**

- Southend Essex and Thurrock (SET) Safeguarding and Child Protection Procedures
- Children’s Act 1989 and Amendment 2004
- Local Safeguarding Children’s Board (LSCB) guidance
- Working Together to Safeguard Children statutory guidance

### **13. Policy Review and Approval**

This policy will be subject of annual review. In addition, further changes may be made at other times, such as in response to legislative and procedural changes or safeguarding incidents.

Policy Owner: Safe Steps

Policy approved by: Safe Steps Safeguarding Sub Committee

Independent Review: Completed

Date Policy approved: 18 August 2024

Next review date: Every 12 months or if change occurs