



Sen Talk CIC Safeguarding Policy

This policy applies to all staff, including the management committee, trustees, paid staff, volunteers, students and anybody working on behalf of Sen Talk CIC.

The purpose of the policy is:

- To protect children and young people who receive Sen Talk CIC support services and programmes.
This includes the children of adults who use our services.
- To provide staff and volunteers with the overarching principle that guides our approach to safeguarding.

Sen Talk CIC believes that a child or young person should never experience abuse of any kind. We have a responsibility to promote the welfare of all children and young people and to keep them safe. We are committed to practice in a way that protects them.

Legal framework

This policy has been drawn up on the basis of law and guidance that seeks to protect children, namely:

- Children Act 1989
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 1991
- Data Protection Act 1998
- Sexual Offences Act 2003
- Children Act 2004
- Protection of Freedoms Act 2012
- Relevant government guidance on safeguarding children

We recognise that:

- the welfare of the child is paramount, as enshrined in the Children Act 1989
- all children, regardless of age, disability, gender, racial heritage, religious belief, sexual orientation or identity, have a right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse
- some children are additionally vulnerable because of 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

what is abuse:

Physical abuse

deliberately hurting a child causing injuries such as bruises, broken bones, burns or cuts.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

is defined as comprising all procedures involving partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs whether for cultural or non-therapeutic reasons (WHO, 1997)

Emotional abuse

Children who are emotionally abused suffer emotional maltreatment or neglect. It's sometimes called psychological abuse and can cause children serious harm.

Sexual abuse

A child is sexually abused when they are forced or persuaded to take part in sexual activities. This doesn't have to be physical contact, and it can happen online.

Neglect

Neglect is the ongoing failure to meet a child's basic needs. It's dangerous and children can suffer serious and long-term harm.

We will seek to keep children and young people safe by:

- Valuing them, listening and respecting them
- Adopting child protection practices through procedures and a code of conduct for staff and volunteers
- Developing and implementing an effective e-safety policy and related procedures
- Providing effective management for staff and volunteers through supervision, support and training
- Recruiting staff and volunteers safely, ensuring all necessary checks are made
- Sharing information about child protection and good practice with children, parents, staff and volunteers
- Sharing concerns with agencies who need to know, and involving parents and children appropriately

What to do if abuse is suspected:

All staff and volunteers should feel able to act in good faith to take immediate, common sense steps to protect a child, young person or vulnerable adult but they should immediately discuss their concerns with their Line Manager, other senior staff member or the Safeguarding and Child Protection Officer (Annaliese Boucher).

There are several circumstances in which staff or volunteers might suspect abuse. These include a:

- Child or vulnerable adult 'disclosing' abuse – telling someone s/he is being or has been abused
- Child or vulnerable adult having an injury for which there is no satisfactory explanation, or a few explanations are given
- Child's or vulnerable adult's behaving or appearing in such a way as to give rise to concern
- Member of Sen Talk staff or volunteer been seen abusing a child or vulnerable adult
- Parent, child or family member perpetrating abuse

Obstacles to reporting abuse

Children and vulnerable adults are sometimes reluctant to talk about abusive experiences because they:

- Are anxious about the consequences (they may have been threatened)
- Wish to protect the abuser
- Are worried that they will be removed from home
- They have a learning or communication need that prevents them from doing so

Staff and volunteers may be reluctant to recognise or report abuse because they:

- Are worried about getting it wrong
- Believe that things will get better or the abuse was a 'one-off' and will not continue
- Are anxious about what will happen to the child, vulnerable adult or their family
- Do not know what to do and are unfamiliar with child and vulnerable adult protection procedures

Children/ adults with disabilities

- attitudes and assumptions – e.g. a reluctance to believe disabled children are abused; minimising the impact of abuse; and attributing indicators of abuse to the child's impairment

- barriers to the disabled child and their family accessing support services
- issues related to a child's specific impairment – e.g. dependency on several carers for personal or intimate care; impaired capacity to resist/avoid abuse, difficulties in communicating; and an inability to understand what is happening or to seek help
- limited opportunities for disabled children to seek help from someone else
- a lack of professional skills, expertise and confidence in identifying child protection concerns and the lack of an effective child protection response.

How to respond when a child discloses abuse

- Never promise to keep a secret or not to tell anyone else
- Listen and only ask questions to clarify information
- Do not ask leading questions
- Try not to appear shocked
- Accept what the child or vulnerable adult says
- Be aware that the child or vulnerable adult may have been threatened
- Do not pass judgement
- Tell the child or vulnerable adult that they are not to blame
- Do not press for information
- Answer any questions the child or vulnerable adult asks – if you don't know the answer, tell the child or vulnerable adult that you will try to find out for them
- Reassure the child or vulnerable adult that they are right to tell you and you believe them
- Let them know what you are going to do next, who you are going to tell and why, and loosely what will happen
- Finish, if possible, on a positive note
- Do not discuss disclosures/suspensions with anyone other than those specified below
- Make handwritten notes as the child or vulnerable adult is talking, or if this is not appropriate, as soon as you can afterwards.
- It is important to record exactly what was said and the date and time. Keep all notes, even if they are subsequently typed up.

If any abuse is disclosed or suspected, the volunteer or staff member must verbally inform their supervisor or line manager **IMMEDIATELY** and in a confidential manner. This is essential so that a qualified person can decide about whether a child and/or sibling is at immediate risk of harm. The relevant person at Sen Talk is Safeguarding and Child Protection Officer (Annaliese Boucher) and she must be informed as soon as possible if they are not already dealing with the case. The only agencies that have the statutory power to investigate child or vulnerable adult abuse are the local authorities or the police. All investigations should be undertaken by appropriate professionals.

Immediate risk of harm

If a staff member with responsibility for child or vulnerable adult protection believes that the child/sibling is in immediate risk of harm (for example they have been badly injured by a parent/carer), then they should take whatever action is necessary to secure the child's safety (without putting themselves at risk). They should then call the police or social services to report their concern. They should inform their Line Manager, as well as the parent or carer that this action has been taken straight away unless they believe that this action will put the child or another person (including themselves) in increased danger. The child or vulnerable adult should be reassured and looked after in a safe, confidential place until further support arrives. Direct contact details for statutory service taking responsibility for the child or vulnerable adult should be taken, and instructions for sending further written information and/or contacting the parents/carers if this has not already been done.

Follow-up to immediate risk of harm

Once the police or social services has taken responsibility for the child or vulnerable adult, the Project Co-ordinator or Safeguarding and Child Protection Officer will support the volunteer or staff member to whom the disclosure was made to complete a Child or Vulnerable Adult Protection Record Form, including a body map if appropriate (see below). Written evidence should be provided to police or social services within 24 hours or as per instructions given.

Longer-term follow-up to immediate risk of harm

The Safeguarding and Child Protection Officer should remain in contact with police or social services to keep up to date with the situation. The Lead Trustee for Safeguarding and Child Protection should be informed (Faye Martin). Clear records must be kept of any concerns or actions taken. Staff and volunteers involved should be updated and debriefed. A support plan for supporting the family should be drawn up if appropriate.

A child or vulnerable adult for whom there is concern (but not immediate risk of harm)

If a staff member with responsibility for child or vulnerable adult protection believes that abuse may be taking place, but that the child or vulnerable adult is not in immediate danger of harm, they will need to inform their Line Manager and the Safeguarding and Child Protection Officer (Annaliese Boucher) so that a decision can be made as to whether to refer to social services. The Safeguarding Officer could seek advice from Children or Adult Social Services anonymously or with a hypothetical situation if necessary.

Decision to refer to social services

If it is agreed to refer a child or vulnerable adult to social services, parents/carers will always be informed unless this might increase the risk to the child. In this instance, advice will be sought from social services. Verbal referrals of possible child or vulnerable adult abuse to local authorities must always be confirmed in detail in writing within 24 hours. The staff member dealing with the case will be supported by a senior staff member to complete a Child or Vulnerable Adult Protection Record Form and body map if appropriate. Clear and detailed records will be kept of all decisions and actions taken. If following referral to social services, the authority decides not to investigate and the person who made the original report disagrees with this view, they should discuss the situation with the Safeguarding and Child Protection Officer.

Follow-up to social services referral

The senior staff member responsible for making the referral will remain up-to-date with the case and will inform and debrief relevant staff and volunteers without breaching confidentiality. A supporting action plan for the family will be drafted if appropriate. Continuing support for the child or vulnerable adult will be provided in line with social services' guidance. The case will be reviewed within 6 weeks.

Decision not to refer to social services

If it is agreed not to refer a child or vulnerable adult to social services, the staff member or volunteer will still need to complete a Child or Vulnerable Adult Protection Record and body map if appropriate (see below). These will be filed, with a report of any actions and decisions taken. A supporting action plan for the child and/or family will be drafted, with actions to be taken if any further suspicions of abuse are raised. Various other actions may be taken to promote the safety of the child or vulnerable adult, including speaking or writing to an appropriate family member or arranging a more formal meeting with an appropriate family member. It might also be agreed to allocate a key worker to monitor any further indicators of abuse. The case will be reviewed within 6 weeks.

A child who is subject to a child protection plan

A child who is on the child protection register will be subject to a child protection plan. Our project may or may not be aware of this. If the service is aware it is important to share this information appropriately within the service without breaching confidentiality. This information should only be shared with paid staff.

Case management in a section 47 enquiry

If the case is taken up by social services, an enquiry will be carried out. Investigations are usually carried out by the police and social services working together but may be single agency. If a Child Protection Conference is called, an appropriate person from Sen Talk could be asked to attend, and to provide a report in accordance with London Child Protection Procedures guidelines.

The purpose of an enquiry will be to establish not only whether significant harm has occurred or is likely to occur, and whether protective action is necessary, but also to assess the ongoing level of risk and whether families would benefit from support services.

It is possible that a member of staff may be asked to attend a Child Protection Conference of a child known to Sen Talk, even if the abuse was not disclosed to them. Involvement in a child protection enquiry can be challenging and stressful. In the unlikely event that this was to happen Sen Talk will ensure that appropriate support and advice is available for any member of staff or volunteer involved.

Allegations against staff or volunteers / Whistleblowing Procedures

It can be very difficult to report concerns about a member of staff or volunteer, but all staff and volunteers have a duty to do this. In order to ensure safety for both children and staff or volunteers, the Supervision of Activities and Code of Conduct should always be followed. Sen Talk will ensure that all staff and volunteers are aware of, and understand these issues, and know who to ask if they have any questions or concerns.

It is important that any concerns for the welfare of the child or vulnerable adult arising from suspected abuse or harassment by a member of staff or volunteer should be reported **immediately**. Staff or volunteers who have become aware of anything which causes them to feel uncomfortable should talk to their line manager about it immediately. All discussions must be recorded in writing by the line manager and an action plan put in place where necessary.

Any member of staff or volunteer observing practice by another that they feel is unsafe, potentially or abusive must immediately pass on their concerns to their line manager. All necessary steps will be taken to fully support anyone who in good faith reports his or her concerns that a colleague is or may be abusing a child or vulnerable adult. Furthermore, it is important to note that a whistle blower is a witness, not a complainant. A separation must be made between the message from the messenger.

Allegations of abuse against a member of staff or volunteer should be fully recorded and, if possible, witnessed, and reported appropriately. Every effort should be made to maintain

Amended and agreed 24th March 2020

confidentiality for all concerned, and consideration will be given to what support may be appropriate to children, parents, members of staff and volunteers.

Responding to suspicions or allegations that a child or vulnerable adult may have been abused by someone employed to care for them is a complex process which may encompass child or vulnerable adult protection, a police investigation and disciplinary procedures.

Any allegation made by a child or vulnerable adult against a member of staff or volunteer must always be viewed seriously and dealt with as quickly as possible. Expert advice must be sought where necessary and a referral made to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO). Any investigation that proceeds from this will take precedence over all other possible actions.

Notwithstanding the outcome of the investigation, the employer (Sen Talk) may wish to take disciplinary action against the staff member. If the relevant person is a volunteer, temporary suspension of duties may be appropriate.

If there is alleged abuse, the relevant Project Co-ordinator, Sen Talk Safeguarding and Child Protection Officer (Annaliese Boucher) and the Lead Safeguarding Trustee (Faye Martin) will decide as to what action they should take about the member of staff, or, in the case of a volunteer, whether they should continue to have contact with children in the service.

Being subject to an allegation is highly stressful. In order to avoid any risks to children or vulnerable adult and themselves, it may mean that a member of staff or volunteer must be suspended from the service; and that they do not have contact with the other service workers whilst the investigation is under way. The Director/CEO will ensure that appropriate supports are in place for the member of staff or volunteer and will need to take advice as to best practice in this situation.

Safe recruitment of staff, volunteers and trustees

DBS checks (formerly known as CRB checks)

All prospective staff, trustees and volunteers having regular contact with children, or holding a 'trusted position' with children, at Sen Talk must complete an Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service check. If volunteers or trustees have a satisfactory disclosure issued within the last two years, this will be adequate. A copy will be filed, and it will be renewed two years after it was issued. All prospective staff must have a DBS check specific to their employment at SEN TALK. All DBS checks must be renewed every three years.

Volunteers may begin working with children or vulnerable adults before the Disclosure has been received, providing other recruitment criteria have been satisfactorily met, and providing a leader or member of staff who has a verified DBS check is present at all times.

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Staff and volunteers will be exempt from the provisions of Section 4(2) of the Rehabilitation and Offenders Act 1974 by virtue of rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exemptions) Orders 1975 and 1986.

a) Application procedure

All staff and volunteers working with children at Sen Talk must fill in an application form and have an interview of some kind, based on a written description of roles and duties.

As part of the application form, all staff and volunteers are asked to sign a declaration stating that there is no reason why they would be unsuitable to work with children or vulnerable adults. In particular, all applicants are required to declare any past criminal convictions and cases pending against them. This will include offences which for other purposes are 'spent' under the provisions of the above-named Act. This information must be kept confidential and consideration should also be given to previous incidents involving children or vulnerable adults which cause concern for the safety of children or vulnerable adults.

References for all staff and volunteers are taken up in writing. One of the referees should be a person who has first-hand knowledge of the applicant's previous work with children or vulnerable adults. All staff and volunteers must provide some additional form of identification (e.g. passport, birth certificate) which gives their full name, date of birth and current address together with signature and/or photograph.

b) Previous convictions or other concerns

If previous cautions or convictions are disclosed from the DBS, a concerning reference is received, or concerning attitudes are detected at interview, each case will be individually considered by the Safeguarding and Child Protection Officer, in collaboration with other relevant staff or trustees. Expert advice will be sought where necessary. A written report of any decision-making process will be produced, which will be shared with the applicant if appropriate.

c) Induction

All staff and volunteers should be given details of this policy as part of their induction. Staff and volunteers should also have the health and safety procedures detailed to them as part of their induction. There will be an induction procedure for all staff and volunteers that includes training in knowledge and awareness of this Safeguarding Policy, and basic awareness about potential abuse.

d) Training

All Sen Talk staff and volunteers must attend safeguarding training by a recognised provider within their first 6 months at work. Staff and volunteers should receive guidance on how to respond to disclosures of abuse by their Line Manager as part of their induction.

Information regarding this policy should be disseminated to all involved in projects and groups e.g. young people, parents and carers knowing there is a policy in place and how to utilise this. It should be the role of staff and volunteers to ensure this happens. The Project Co-ordinators and Safeguarding Child Protection Officers must attend regular higher level training in order to offer appropriate advice and assistance within the service.

Access to Child or Vulnerable Adult Protection Record Form and other relevant policies (including body map)

- A hardcopy of this Safeguarding Policy is kept in the Sen Talk office and is accessible for all staff and volunteers
- An electronic copy of this Safeguarding Policy is available via the website. www.sentalk.org
- All staff and volunteers are given a copy of all Sen Talk policies including the 'Safeguarding Policy and Procedures' and are encouraged to read these documents and sign the relevant staff policy during their induction period
- A Child or Vulnerable Adult Protection Record Form is available for staff and volunteers at every session and stored within the relevant session admin folder

Safeguarding Child Protection contact details

Agency	Names person	Telephone number:
Sen Talk Safeguarding and Child Protection Officer	Annaliese Boucher	020 7223 1694 (W) 0787 247 5272 (M)
Sen Talk Safeguarding and Child Protection Lead (Trustee)	Faye Martin	020 7223 1694 (W) 0770 8428 922 (M)
Wandsworth Borough Council, Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)	Duty Social Worker	020 8871 6622 020 8871 6000 (out of hours)
Wandsworth Borough Council, Adult Social Services, Safeguarding Team	Duty Officer	020 8871 5855
Metropolitan Police Child Protection Team, Wandsworth and Merton		020 8247 7843 020 7230 2061 (out of hours)
NSPCC – national helpline	Advisors Counsellors	0808 800 5000
Child Line – national helpline	Advisors Counsellors	0800 1111

Appendix 1: Sen Talk's Child or Vulnerable Adult Protection Report

(Please use block letters)

Name of Person reporting:	
Date and Time:	Place:
Name of Child/Vulnerable Adult:	Age:
Name of Parent(s):	
(1) Are you expressing your own concerns or passing on those of somebody else?	
(2) Nature of Concern. Any physical signs? Behavioural signs? Indirect signs? Please use attached body map if appropriate (see below).	

(3) Have you spoken to the child or vulnerable adult about it? If so, when did you speak to them and what was said? (Use additional sheet if necessary)

(4) Have the parent(s) been contacted? If so, when did you speak to them and what was said?

(5) Who have you spoken to about your concerns? (please specify)

Line Manager

Senior staff

Safeguarding Officer

Social Services

Any others

(6) Any other comments:

Name of person reporting:

Signature:

Date:

Name of Line Manager:

Signature:

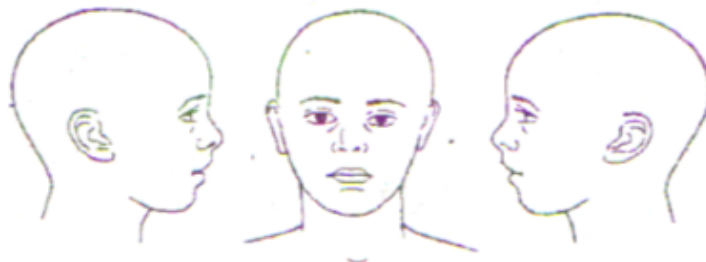
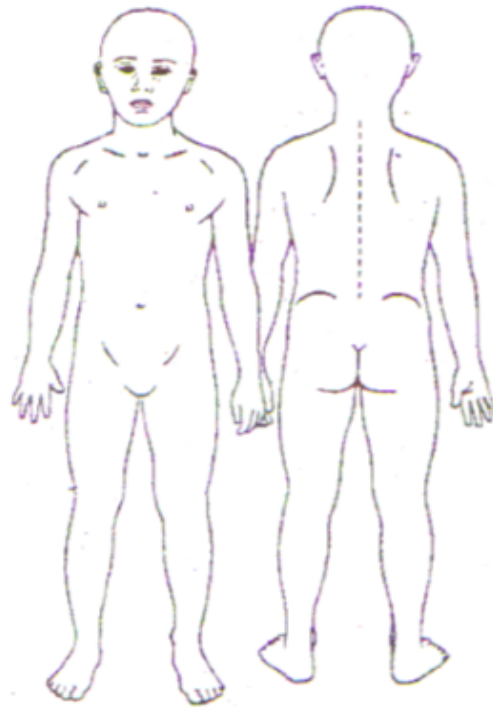
Date:

ACTION TO BE TAKEN (To be completed by Safeguarding Officer)

Please return this form to your Line Manager / Safeguarding Officer

Appendix 2: Body Map (to accompany the Sen Talk's Child or Vulnerable Adult Protection Report)

Please mark location of any injuries:



This policy has been approved and agreed by the Trustees Board and the CEO of Sen Talk and has been signed below.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Annaliese Boucher'.

Director
Annaliese Boucher