

WILDERNESS

FOUNDATION UK

Safeguarding Child Protection and Vulnerable Adults Policy

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**SAFEGUARDING IS EVERYONE’S RESPONSIBILITY; ALL STAFF, TRUSTEES
AND VOLUNTEERS ARE EXPECTED TO SPEAK UP IF THEY HAVE ANY
CONCERN ABOUT A SAFEGUARDING ISSUE.**

**CERTAINTY IS NOT REQUIRED BEFORE SPEAKING UP – IF THERE IS ANY
CONCERN OR WORRY, OR IF ANYONE IS UNSURE OF WHAT TO DO,
SPEAKING WITH THE PERSON RESPONSIBLE FOR SAFEGUARDING (OR
ANYONE NAMED IN THE LIST OF CONTACTS, SEE APPENDIX 4) IS THE
FIRST STEP.**

SPEAKING UP AND SHARING ANY CONCERN IS ALWAYS A PRIORITY.

1. Statement

Wilderness Foundation UK (WFUK) is committed to safeguarding all its staff, volunteers, Trustees, Friends and members of the public who use WFUK's sites, services, and facilities, and to protecting children, young people and vulnerable adults from abuse and harm. We are committed to practices that protect everyone and consider that safeguarding of all is everyone's responsibility.

Our policy is:

- To protect children, young people and vulnerable adults who use all and any services and facilities of WFUK.
- To provide staff and volunteers with the overarching principles that guide our approach to safeguarding and child protection.
- To ensure full commitment to the principle that Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults is everyone's responsibility.

2. Statutory and Legal Framework

In order to fulfil our commitment, WFUK will operate in accordance with the following legislation and guidance:

England & Wales:

Children Act 1989 (as amended 2004)
 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 1991
 Data Protection Act 2018
 The Children and Social Work Act 2017
 Section 175 of the Education Act 2002
 Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006
 Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026
 Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026
 Equality Act 2010
 Human Rights Act 1998
 Sexual Offences Act 2003
 Protection of Freedoms Act 2012
 Children & Families Act 2004
 Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice 2014
 Information Sharing Guidance 2018
 Care Act 2014
 Care & Support Statutory Guidance 2020
 Mental Capacity Act 2005
 Charity Commission Safeguarding Guidance 2019
 Serious Crime Act 2015
 Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003
 Modern Slavery Act 2015
 Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015

Scotland:

Where responsibility is devolved to the Scottish Government, the following legislation also applies:

National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland
 Children (Scotland) Act 1995
 2014 Protection of Vulnerable Groups (Scotland) Act 2007
 Children's Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011

Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014
 Sexual Offences (Amendment) Act 2000
 Data Protection Act 2018
 GIRFEC Principles

Review

The Safeguarding Policy will be reviewed annually and updated accordingly. All staff and volunteers will be informed of any changes.

3. Aims of this Policy

This policy aims to:

Leadership & Governance

- Support the health, development and protection of all children, young people and vulnerable adults in ways that will foster security, confidence, and a systematic means of monitoring those known to be or thought to be at risk of harm, including through radicalisation.
- Ensure that WFUK contributes to assessments of needs which includes referral to early intervention services if they are in need of specialist support services.
- Develop a structured procedure within WFUK which will be followed by all members of WFUK in cases of suspected abuse.
- Ensure WFUK has robust systems in place for ensuring that true and accurate records of events are kept and appropriately stored, and to ensure that any such records clearly differentiate between fact and opinion.
- Develop and promote effective working relationships with other agencies, including the Police and Social Care, including in relation to preventing terrorism.
- Ensure that all staff and volunteers participating in WFUK have been checked as to their suitability, including verification of their identity.

Environment & Culture

- Provide an environment in which all children, young people and vulnerable adults feel safe, secure, valued, and respected, and feel confident and enabled to approach adults if they are in difficulty, believing they will be effectively listened to regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, religion, or belief.
- Emphasise the need for, and promote, good levels of communication between all members of staff.
- Advise staff and volunteers to maintain an attitude of “it could happen here” wherever safeguarding is concerned and always to act in the interest of the child, young person or vulnerable adult.

Learning & Development

- Raise the awareness of all staff of the need to safeguard children, young people, or vulnerable adults and of the responsibility incumbent on every member of staff to identify and report promptly possible cases of abuse to the relevant agency and to enable everyone to have a clear understanding (through our procedures) of how their responsibilities should be carried out.
- Raise awareness through ongoing training, information sharing, ensuring staff are made aware of the indicators of abuse and the action to take if such an action is suspected.
- Develop a robust system of continuous learning, through reflective practice, lessons learned from case management reporting, feedback from staff and volunteers via a safeguarding forum, collaboration with external agencies, and strong communications across WFUK.

We recognise that:

- The welfare of the child, young person or vulnerable adult is paramount, as legislated for in the Children Act 1989 (amended) and the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006.
- Children, young people, and vulnerable adults regardless of age, religion or belief, race, disability, sex, gender, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, or marital status have a right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse.
- Some children, young people or vulnerable adults may be additionally vulnerable due to the impact of previous experiences, their level of dependency, communication needs or other issues.
- Working in partnership with other agencies is essential in promoting welfare and safeguarding.

We recognise that some children are at greater risk of harm, including:

- Children in Need
- Children with Child Protection Plans
- Children in Care
- Children requiring mental health support
- Children with SEND

4. Policies

This policy should be read alongside the following policies:

- Anti-bullying
- Complaint Handling
- Data Protection & GDPR
- Equality
- Health & Safety
- Lone Working
- Sexual Harassment
- Whistleblowing

5. Types of Abuse / Specific Safeguarding Issues

The four main types of abuse are:

- **Physical:** a form of abuse causing physical harm – this includes where an adult fabricates or deliberately induces illness in someone vulnerable
- **Emotional:** persistent emotional maltreatment, such as attempting to cause severe and adverse effects on the person's emotional development
- **Sexual:** forcing or enticing a person to take part in sexual activities (through actual physical or online contact)
- **Neglect:** the persistent failure to meet a person's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of their health or development

Child-on-child Abuse

WFUK recognises that some young people or vulnerable adults may abuse their peers and any incidents of peer-on-peer abuse will be managed in the same way as any other protection concern and will follow the same procedures. We will seek advice and support from other agencies as necessary and ensure that appropriate agencies are involved when required.

Peer-on-peer abuse can manifest itself in many ways. This may include bullying (including cyber bullying), online abuse, gender-based abuse, 'sexting', or sexually harmful behaviour. We do not

tolerate any harmful behaviour and will take swift action to intervene where this occurs. We encourage youngsters to tell a trusted adult if someone is behaving in a way that makes them feel uncomfortable. WFUK understands the different gender issues that can be prevalent when dealing with peer-on-peer abuse.

All staff and volunteers should be able to recognise the indicators and signs of peer-on-peer abuse and know how to identify it and respond to reports in line with this policy. WFUK understands that even though peer-on-peer abuse/harmful sexual abuse may not be reported, it may still be likely that it is occurring, and we are clear there is a zero-tolerance approach to inappropriate or abusive behaviour. We understand the barriers which may prevent a young or vulnerable person from reporting abuse and work actively to remove these.

Staff should understand the importance of challenging inappropriate behaviours between children that are actually abusive in nature. Downplaying certain behaviours, for example dismissing sexual harassment as “banter”, “just having a laugh”, “part of growing up”, or “boys being boys” can lead to a culture of unacceptable behaviours, an unsafe environment, and in worse case scenarios a culture that normalises abuse leading young people to accepting it as normal and not coming forward to report it.

We will never make anyone feel ashamed for reporting abuse, nor that they are creating a problem by doing so.

Children absent from education

All children, regardless of their age, ability, aptitude, and any special education needs they may have, are entitled to a full-time education. WFUK recognises that a child missing education is a potential indicator of abuse or neglect, and we shall notify relevant authorities when it came to our attention.

Contextual safeguarding

We understand that safeguarding incidents and behaviours can be associated with factors outside WFUK. All staff are aware of contextual safeguarding and the fact they should consider whether wider environmental factors present in a person’s life are a threat to their safety and/or welfare. We always consider relevant information when assessing any risk and share it with other agencies when appropriate to support better understanding of a young person or vulnerable adult and their family.

Domestic abuse

Domestic abuse can involve a wide range of behaviours and can include intimate partner violence, abuse by family members, teenage relationship abuse, and child to parent abuse. We understand that anyone can be a victim of domestic abuse, and that it can take place inside or outside of the home.

WFUK recognises that exposure to domestic abuse (either by witnessing or experiencing it) can have a serious, long-term emotional and psychological impact. We work with other key partners, and we receive/share relevant information where there are concerns that domestic abuse may be an issue or be placing anyone at risk of harm.

Harmful sexual behaviour

We understand that children’s sexual behaviours exist on a continuum, ranging from age-appropriate / developmental to inappropriate/problematic/abusive. We also understand that harmful sexual behaviour and child on child abuse can occur between children of any age and gender, either in person or online. We recognise that children who display harmful sexual behaviour may have experienced their own abuse and trauma, and we will support them accordingly.

WFUK has a 'zero-tolerance' approach to harmful sexual behaviour of any kind, and any inappropriate behaviour is challenged and addressed. We work in accordance with all statutory guidance in relation to such behaviours and with other agencies as appropriate. The Department for Education (DfE) publishes statutory guidance for all education settings: [Keeping children safe in education](#) (DfE, 2025). Part 5 of this guidance sets out how education settings should manage reports of child-on-child sexual violence and harassment (harmful sexual behaviour).

Online safety

We recognise that our young people and vulnerable adults are existing in an increasingly complex world, living their lives on and offline. Whilst this presents many positive and exciting opportunities, we recognise it also presents challenges and risks, in the form of:

- **content:** being exposed to illegal, inappropriate, or harmful material; for example, pornography, fake news, suicide, racist or radical and extremist views.
- **contact:** being subjected to harmful online interaction with other users; for example, peer to peer pressure, commercial advertising as well as adults posing as children or young adults with the intention to groom or exploit them for sexual, criminal, financial or other purposes.
- **conduct:** personal online behaviour that increases the likelihood of, or causes, harm; for example, making, sending and receiving explicit images, or online bullying.
- **commerce:** risks such as online gambling, inappropriate advertising, phishing and / or financial scams

WFUK does not deliver any programmes or workshops which require participants to use computers or have log ins while they are participating with us.

Serious Violence

All staff are aware of the risk factors and indicators which may signal that young people and vulnerable adults are at risk from or involved with serious violent crime. These may include increased absence from school/programmes run by WFUK, a change in friendships or relationships with older individuals or groups, a significant decline in performance, signs of self-harm or a significant change in well-being, or signs of assault or unexplained injuries. Unexplained gifts or new possessions could also indicate that a person has been approached by, or is involved with, individuals associated with criminal networks or gangs.

Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE)

All staff recognise that children and young people may be at risk of Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE), where they are manipulated, coerced, pressured or deceived into involvement in criminal activity. This may include county lines activity, drug supply, theft, violence, money laundering or other offences. Exploitation may occur through grooming, threats, violence, debt bondage, gifts or other forms of coercion, and children may not recognise themselves as victims.

Community Risks

All staff recognise that children and young people may be exposed to safeguarding risks within the communities in which they live, attend education, socialise or travel. These risks may include criminal or sexual exploitation, county lines activity, gang-related activity, violence, substance misuse, radicalisation, trafficking, serious youth violence and other forms of harm or exploitation.

Mental Health

We recognise that mental health and emotional wellbeing are important aspects of safeguarding and that children and young people may experience difficulties that affect their safety, development, education and relationships. Staff should remain alert to changes in behaviour, mood, presentation, attendance, communication or engagement, including signs of anxiety, low mood, withdrawal, self-harm or thoughts of suicide.

Radicalisation

We recognise that children and young people may be vulnerable to radicalisation and extremist influence through exposure to individuals, groups, online content, social media or other forms of communication. Radicalisation is the process by which a person may come to support extremist ideas or be encouraged to participate in activities that could cause harm. Staff should remain alert to changes in behaviour, language, attitudes, relationships or online activity that may indicate a child is being influenced or exploited.

Honour-Based Abuse

The organisation recognises that children and young people may be at risk of honour-based abuse (HBA), including forced marriage, female genital mutilation (FGM), coercion, threats, violence, isolation or other controlling behaviour carried out to protect or maintain perceived family or community 'honour'. Such abuse may involve multiple perpetrators and can place children at significant risk of harm. Staff should remain alert to indicators such as fear of family or community members, restrictions on movement or friendships, sudden withdrawal from education, concerns about travel abroad, discussions about marriage, unexplained injuries or other changes in behaviour or presentation.

6. Our Commitment to Delivery

We will deliver on our commitment to safeguarding children, young people, and vulnerable adults by:

Leadership & Governance

- Appointing a DSL, DDSLs, and a Designated Safeguarding Trustee.
- Establish a Safeguarding Action Team (SAT) with DSL and DDSLs, to undertake case management, reflective learning and monitoring and reporting to Board via DSL.
- Adopting and applying protection and safeguarding practices through robust procedures and a Code of Conduct for staff and volunteers.
- Providing effective management for staff and volunteers through supervision, support, training, and quality assurance measures.
- Recording and storing all information securely.
- Developing and implementing effective Information Technology Policy and Data Protection & GDPR Policy.
- Abide by our legal responsibility to report all and any safeguarding concerns.
- Maintaining confidentiality regarding all incidents and concerns, ensuring they are only shared with the CEO, DSL, DDSLs, or nominated Safeguarding people (at sites), and relevant external agencies. All reporting will adhere to the principles of GDPR and in partnership with site owners.
- Sharing concerns with relevant agencies, involving children, young people and vulnerable adults and families as appropriate.
- Creating and maintaining an anti-bullying environment and dealing effectively with any bullying that may arise.

Environment & Culture

- Valuing them, listening to, and respecting them.
- Establish SAT with all sites represented, to maximise communications and embed a culture of safety at WFUK.
- Undertaking DBS/PVG checks and implement safer recruitment procedures (Appendix 2) at the appropriate level for roles that work/volunteer with, or oversee those who work with, children, young people, vulnerable adults and other staff within WFUK.
- Encouraging? The reporting of concerns.
- Ensuring that a safe physical environment is in place for all by applying health and safety measures in accordance with law and the regulatory guidance.
- Enabling a culture of openness and honesty where people can be challenged and where unacceptable behaviour is reported (following due procedure).
- Applying robust recruitment procedures to ensure safe recruitment through verifying all checks have been completed.

Learning & Development

- Training staff, volunteers and Trustees to an appropriate level (see Appendix 1), recording this information, and maintaining training up to date with regular refresher courses.
- Sharing Safeguarding guidance through updates, training, one-to-ones, via SAT, Local Safeguarding Boards.
- Developing a robust system of continuous learning through reflective practice, Lessons Learned from case management reporting, feedback from staff and volunteers via the safeguarding forum, collaboration with external agencies, and strong communications across WFUK.

Inter-agency Working

We are committed to effective inter-agency working to ensure children and young people receive timely co-ordinated and appropriate safeguarding support. We will work in partnership with any relevant agencies including:

- Police
- Children's social care
- Health services
- Education providers
- Local safeguarding partnerships
- Other specialist services

7. Key Roles

All adults working with or on behalf of young people have a responsibility to protect them and to provide a safe environment in which they can learn and achieve their full potential. WFUK has three members of staff with specific responsibilities who are all DSLs. Details of which can be found at the start of this policy. However, the primary safeguarding lead is Jo Roberts (jo@wilderessfoundation.org.uk / 07932 944077).

Despite this, we are clear that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and that all who come into contact with our young people and vulnerable adults have a role to play and we have training in place for everyone.

Governance - Board of Trustees

The **Board of Trustees (BoT)** is responsible for:

- The BoT operates in accordance with the Charity Commission Safeguarding Guidance 2019, ensuring that effective Safeguarding policies and procedures are in place, with a Code of Conduct applicable to all staff and volunteers.
- The Governance Committee is responsible for the approval of all new and reviewed policies and procedures relating to Safeguarding, including a review of the effectiveness of procedures and their implementation.
- It is the responsibility of the Governance Committee to be aware of all specific safeguarding issues; the DSL is responsible for upward reporting and will do so through monthly meetings with SAT, reporting to Board quarterly.
- Approve amendments to Safeguarding arrangements with regard to changing legislation and recommended best practice.
- Consider the roles of the DSL and DDSLs to ensure they have sufficient time, funding, supervision, regular training, and support to carry out their duties and responsibilities.
- Trustees prioritise safety and safeguarding of children, young people, and vulnerable adults at WFUK and contribute to a culture of safety whereby staff are confident to challenge anyone, including senior leaders, over safeguarding concerns ensuring we have in place safer recruitment procedures (Appendix 2) that help to deter, reject, or identify people who might abuse young people or vulnerable adults.
- The BoT ensures that the policies, procedures, and training in WFUK are effective and comply with the law at all times. They ensure that all required policies relating to safeguarding are in place, and that the child protection policy reflects statutory and local guidance and is reviewed at least annually.
- The BoT ensures WFUK contributes to inter-agency working, in line with statutory and local guidance. It ensures that information is shared and stored appropriately and in accordance with statutory requirements.
- The BoT ensures that all staff/volunteers in WFUK who work with our young people and vulnerable adults undergo safeguarding training at induction as appropriate, and that it is regularly updated. All staff members receive regular safeguarding updates, at least annually, to provide them with the relevant skills and knowledge to keep our children and vulnerable adults safe.

Safeguarding Action Team (SAT)

The SAT is responsible for:

- Handling all safeguarding cases at WFUK.
- Reviewing the procedure(s) and efficiency after each safeguarding incident, and making recommendations for improvement from key lessons learnt. This is to ensure any deficiencies or weaknesses in safeguarding arrangements at WFUK are amended without delay.
- Evaluating safeguarding related policies and their implementation.
- Ensuring we meet statutory responsibilities to check staff/volunteers working with young people and vulnerable adults have recruitment and selection procedures in place (Appendix 2)
- Ensuring volunteers are appropriately supervised.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) & Deputy Safeguarding Lead (DDSL)

The DSL takes lead responsibility for managing child and vulnerable adult protection referrals, safeguarding training, and raising awareness of all safeguarding policies. They ensure that everyone at WFUK is aware of these policies and that they are followed at all times. They act as a source of advice and support for all staff/volunteers on safeguarding matters and ensure that timely referrals to Essex Children's Social Care (Children and Families Hub) are made in accordance with current SET (Southend, Essex & Thurrock) procedures. They work with the local authority and other agencies as required.

The two DDSLs are trained to the same standard as the DSL. If for any reason the DSL is unavailable, one of the two DDSLs will be designated to act in their absence.

Our staff will always reassure young people and vulnerable adults who report abuse/victims of abuse that they are taken seriously and that they will be supported and kept safe. We will never make anyone feel ashamed for reporting abuse, nor make them feel they are causing a problem.

The **DSL** and **DDSLs** are responsible for:

- Ensuring all staff/volunteers are briefed through appropriate and varied means of communication on the relevant content of statutory guidance and procedures, including the briefing of new staff as part of induction.
- Receiving reports of alleged or suspected abuse within WFUK and taking the appropriate action. The DSL and DDSLs will share responsibility for ensuring appropriate availability to cover operating times at WFUK in order to discuss safeguarding concerns. Emergency contact arrangements are agreed between the DSL and DDSLs, and communicated throughout the organisation.
- Sharing responsibility for convening and chairing the SAT meetings, which will be held monthly.
- Following up safeguarding incidents and concerns, including the production of 'lessons learnt' reporting.
- Supporting communication and embedding a culture of safety throughout WFUK.

All staff

Everyone at WFUK has a responsibility to provide a safe environment. All staff are aware of the types of abuse and safeguarding issues that can put young people and vulnerable adults at risk of harm, so we are able to identify those who may need help or protection. We understand that behaviours linked to issues such as drug taking and/or alcohol misuse, missing education, and consensual/non-consensual sharing of nudes and semi-nude images can be signs that they are at risk. In addition, we recognise that any young person or vulnerable adult may benefit from additional help and all staff members are aware of the local early help process and our role in it.

Staff understand that, if they have any concerns about welfare, they must speak with the DSL (or DDSLs) immediately – we do not assume that others have taken action.

Our staff understand that young people and vulnerable adults may not always feel able or know how to tell someone that they are being abused, perhaps because they are embarrassed, or they may not always recognise that they are being abused. We recognise there are many factors which may impact on our welfare and safety and understand safeguarding in the wider context (contextual safeguarding). We also understand that abuse, neglect, and safeguarding issues are rarely 'stand-alone' events and that, in most cases, multiple issues will overlap.

All staff are responsible for:

- Disseminating information on safeguarding throughout WFUK, to build on a culture of safety and ensure sharing of knowledge and understanding regarding practices and processes.
- Representing colleagues at SAT meetings, where issues pertinent to a safe working environment are shared – such as changes/updates in legislation and identified need for additional or specific training for example – and that information is then communicated across teams.
- Sharing safeguarding knowledge and information at meetings, to have a good understanding of WFUK's policies and to be aware of the key contacts and the processes for reporting any concerns, issues or worries. Their role is a supporting one, where they can be approached by anyone with a concern or worry – with a view to directing concerns to the DSL or DDSLs; all issues and concerns should be directed through the DSL or DDSLs.

8. Reporting (Appendix 5)

It is imperative that ALL suspected incidents and/or concerns – regardless of their apparent significance or otherwise – are reported to and investigated by the DSL, or a DDSL in the absence of the DSL.

There is no requirement for ‘certainty’ when concerned or worried about a safeguarding issue; the important thing is to speak up as soon as possible and practical.

Current safeguarding contact information is provided on the cover page of this policy, WFUK website and displayed in the female / male lavatories at WFUK office and storage barn.

a) For situations require **immediate action**

In the event of a life-threatening situation (where someone is at immediate risk of harm), which goes beyond a concern or worry, this should be reported directly to the Police, immediately by any witness.

b) For safeguarding concerns/incidents, suspected concerns/incidents which require **immediate response**:

You must share your concern with the DSL or a DDSL **at the earliest opportunity and within 4 hours**.

In the highly unlikely event that none of the DSL or DDSLs are available, the concern must be emailed to info@wildernessfoundation.org.uk with the subject title **FAO DSL/DDSL URGENT SAFEGUARDING CONCERN P&C**.

c) For safeguarding concerns/incidents, suspected concerns/incidents which is **not a life-threatening situation** requiring immediate action/reporting to the police:

You should report this at the earliest opportunity directly to the DSL or a DDSL, complete a Safeguarding Incident Form (**Appendix 6**) and email the completed form to info@wildernessfoundation.org.uk with the email subject **FAO DSL/DDSL URGENT SAFEGUARDING CONCERN P&C**.

The Safeguarding Incident Form will be held securely and confidentially at WFUK and shared where appropriate with the relevant authorities.

Investigation

It is the sole responsibility of the DSL (or DDSL in the absence of the DSL) to investigate every safeguarding concern reported. Upon receiving a written report of an incident or concern, the DSL will categorise the report as follows, taking the appropriate action:

Category		Action
A	Immediate concern. If the incident includes a (suspected or actual) criminal offence it will automatically fall into this category. An allegation against a member of staff/volunteer may fall into this category (see Allegation against Staff and/or Volunteers or Contracted Staff below).	Incidents/concerns will be investigated immediately , at the earliest opportunity and notified to the relevant authorities. An Action Plan will be produced on completion of investigation, with clear timescales for achieving outcomes.
B	Incident will require further investigation and actions may be required to resolve, retrain, amend practices, report to external bodies/agencies/authorities. An allegation against a member of staff/volunteer may fall into this	Incidents/concerns requiring further investigation will aim to be completed within 5 working days, following immediate initial investigation. An Action Plan will be produced on completion of investigation,

	category (see Allegation against Staff and/or Volunteers or Contracted Staff).	with clear timescales for achieving outcomes.
C	Staff/volunteers may fall into this category (see Allegation against Staff and/or Volunteers or Contracted Staff below).	incidents/concerns will be recorded within 5 working days, following immediate initial investigation.
D	Concern has been raised and recorded. No further action required.	

Completed Incident Forms and Action Plans will be stored securely for 30 years.

Reporting Timescales

Indicative timescale for reporting is the **same day** for all and any incidents or concerns.

On weekdays, investigation will commence within 24 hours of report received for all categories. On weekends, bank holidays or during office closure, investigation will commence within 24 hours of the next working day, unless danger is apparent. In which case, the DSL and DDSs will be available and crisis team and/or the police should be contacted when required.

All investigations will be reported to the SAT at the monthly SAT Meeting

For **Category A** and **B**, further safeguarding action(s) will be determined by the **SAT** to ensure appropriate and necessary measures are taken to assess each case, to prevent similar incidents occurring, and to establish the effectiveness (or otherwise) of existing safeguarding practices, making recommendations for improvement where required. The SAT is not responsible for implementing any formal processes, however recommendation may be given to the relevant member of SMT/HR.

Quarterly report on all safeguarding issues will be given to the CEO or Safeguarding Trustee for upward reporting to the Board.

Allegation against Staff and/or Volunteers or Contracted Staff

An allegation covers any concern that relates to a member of staff, volunteer or contracted member of staff working with children, young people, or vulnerable adults whereby they may have:

- Behaved in a way that has harmed, or poses a risk of harm, to a child, young person or vulnerable adult;
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against, or related to, a child, young person or vulnerable adult; or
- Behaved in a way that indicates unsuitability to work with children, young people or vulnerable adults.

The DSL will contact the Essex Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) within 24 hours who will advise on action required.

It is not WFUK'S responsibility to investigate an allegation against staff, volunteers or contracted member of staff related to safeguarding incidents or concerns. The relevant statutory authority will investigate the allegation and report back to WFUK regarding the outcome and the next steps. WFUK may, separately to the safeguarding process, take action (e.g. disciplinary) against a member of staff, or volunteer, as appropriate.

Appendix 1 - Safeguarding Training

1. All those with Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDL) and Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL) responsibility will undertake:
 - a. Safeguarding Level 3 training (mandatory) (every 2 years)
 - b. **Prevent awareness training (mandatory) (every year)**
2. Those with Governance and WFUK responsibility (Board Safeguarding lead, CEO and Designated Safeguarding Trustee) will undertake:
 - a. Safeguarding Level 2 training (mandatory minimum requirement) (every 1 year)
 - b. Leadership-specific Safeguarding training
3. Level 1 or 2 training:
 - a. All staff, freelancers and volunteers

The 2025 update of the statutory guidance, Keeping Children Safe in Education stipulates staff should also update their knowledge and skills at regular intervals, stating that all staff should receive safeguarding updates '**at least annually**'.

Summary and Frequency of Training:

	Role	Level	Frequency
1	Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead/s (DDSLs)	3	Every 2 years
2	Those with Governance and WFUK responsibility (Board Safeguarding Lead, CEO, Designated Safeguarding Trustee), freelancers who are going to work with IPES referrals	2	Every year
3	All staff, volunteers and freelancers who are going to work with any referrals apart from IPES	1	Every year

Appendix 2 - Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) & Protecting Vulnerable Groups (PVG) for Scotland / Safer Recruitment

At WFUK the following safeguarding protection steps are taken:

- a) No direct work with children and vulnerable adults can begin without safer recruitment in place, receipt of two satisfactory references and enhanced DBS (England and Wales) / PVG (Scotland) clearance of staff freelancers, volunteers working directly and alone with children.
- b) Enhanced DBS (England and Wales) / PVG (Scotland) check is carried out for all WFUK staff and enhanced DBS will be updated on a three yearly basis or on a 'live' basis for those registered with the DBS update service.
- c) WFUK provides supervision for counsellors and outdoor facilitators every six weeks.

Safer recruitment

The safety and wellbeing of our participants will be paramount in any decisions about recruitment. We will adhere to the "Thirteen steps for safer recruitment" for volunteers and staff.

All potential recruits will be asked to supply two referees for character reference check.

A full employment history will be obtained and verified, with any gaps or omissions examined and justified.

In all cases at least two members of the WFUK will be involved in the selection and interview process.

Enhanced DBS/PVG checking of staff and volunteers.

Enhanced DBS/PVG checks are designed primarily for people entering a position that will involve "substantial unsupervised access" to the Under 18's or "vulnerable adults".

Therefore, all staff and volunteers who will have come into direct contact with the young people on WFUK education and youth programmes are required to be DBS/PVG checked to the enhanced level. Other vetting checks may also be required in line with government regulations and guidance. These may include the verification of:

- Personal identity and aliases used.
- Qualifications
- All professional and personal references
- Registration with any regulatory body

WFUK will ensure that any newly appointed person being engaged to work with children and young people pending the outcome of an enhanced DBS/PVG should not be allowed unsupervised access to children.

During employment, all staff members will be obliged to inform WFUK if they receive a reprimand, final warning, caution or conviction by the police or courts. If required, WFUK will inform clients, schools, partners, referrers, and parents and reserve the right to terminate the employees' contract with immediate effect, should any such discrepancy arise.

13 steps to Safer Recruitment

We will follow the 13 steps below to make sure that we recruit only the most suitable candidates to work with children and young people.

Before we release the post:

1. Ensure that we have an up-to-date recruitment policy that describes the process and roles before we begin.
2. Ensure that WFUK has a safeguarding policy and that a statement about the Organisation's commitment to safeguarding is included in all recruitment and selection materials.
3. Ensure that we have an up-to-date job description and person specification for the role(s) we wish to recruit, that have been agreed with the recruiting manager.
4. Ensure that we have an appropriate job advertisement prepared that contains all necessary Information about the role, timetable for recruitment and our commitment to safeguarding.

Before we interview:

5. Ensure that each application received is scrutinised in a systematic way by the recruiting manager before sending invitations to interview, **including online search for due diligence on the candidates.**
6. Ensure that all shortlisted candidates receive the same letter of invitation to interview, supplying them with all necessary information.

Before we select our preferred candidate:

7. Ensure that a face-to-face / zoom / teams interview is conducted for ALL shortlisted candidates based on an objective assessment of the candidate's ability to meet the person specification and job description.
8. Ensure that all specific questions designed to gain required information about each candidate's suitability have been asked, including those needed to address any gaps in Information supplied in the application form.

Before we formally appoint:

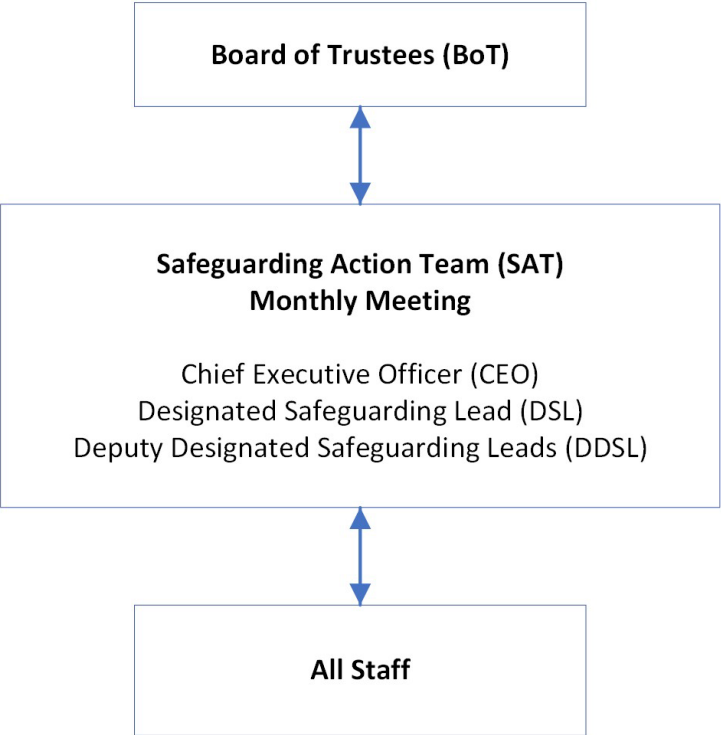
9. Ensure that we are able to make a confident selection of a preferred candidate based upon their demonstration of suitability for the role.
10. Ensure that the preferred candidate is informed that the offer of employment (including volunteer positions) is conditional on receiving satisfactory information from all necessary checks.

Successful appointments

11. Ensure that all appropriate checks have been undertaken on appointed candidate.
12. Have an appropriate probationary period and a statement stating that confirmation of appointment is conditional on receiving satisfactory references and a satisfactory enhanced DBS/PVG.
13. Full induction (including Safeguarding training) has been satisfactorily completed before or shortly after the employee starts within their role.

Appendix 3 - WFUK Safeguarding Framework

NB: Please see Appendix 4 for details of standard agenda items.



Appendix 4 - Safeguarding Action Team (SAT) Meetings – Standard Agenda Items

Template Agenda Items:

Safeguarding Action Team (SAT) Meetings – Monthly

Chair: Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

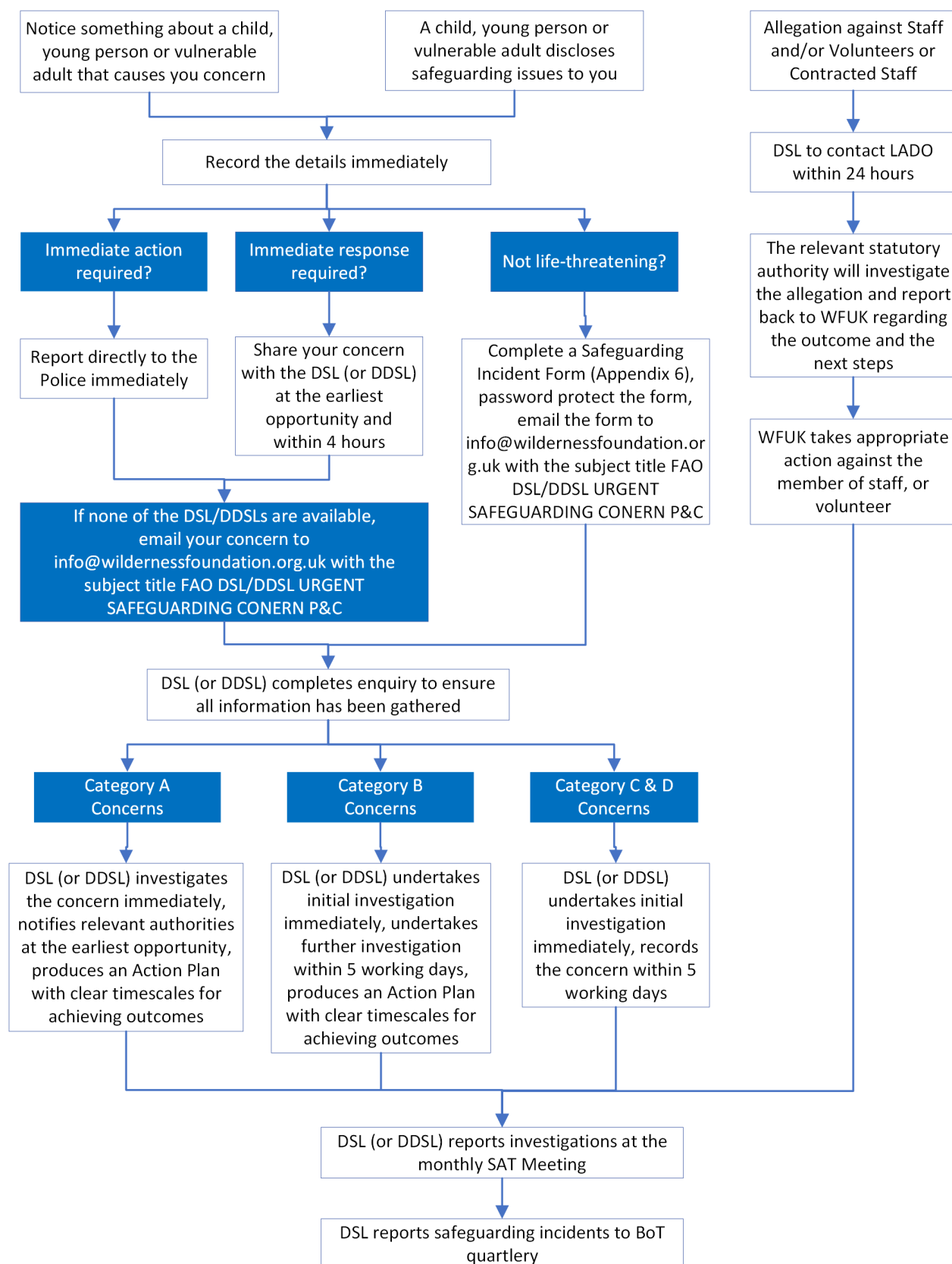
Attendees:

- Chief Executive Officer (CEO)
- Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads (DDSLs)

Quorum - Minimum number 3:

	Item	Lead
1	Introductions, apologies for absence, housekeeping	
2	Information sharing and confidentiality	
3	Minutes and actions from last meeting	
4	Update on reported incidents and investigations	
5	Any other business	

Appendix 5 – Reporting Flowchart



Appendix 6 – Safeguarding Incident Form

Only complete this form when safeguarding concerns/incidents, suspected concerns/incidents is not a life-threatening situation requiring immediate action/reporting to the police.

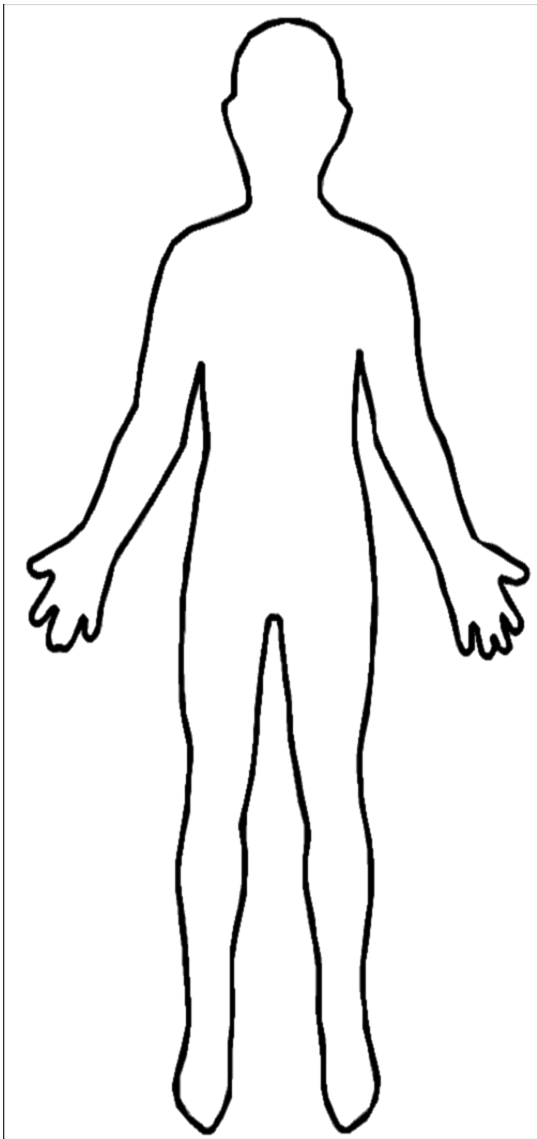
The completed form should be emailed to info@wildernessfoundation.org.uk with the email subject **FAO DSL/DDSL URGENT SAFEGUARDING CONCERN P&C**.

The completed Incident Form **must** be password protected, with the password shared *separately* in a second email.

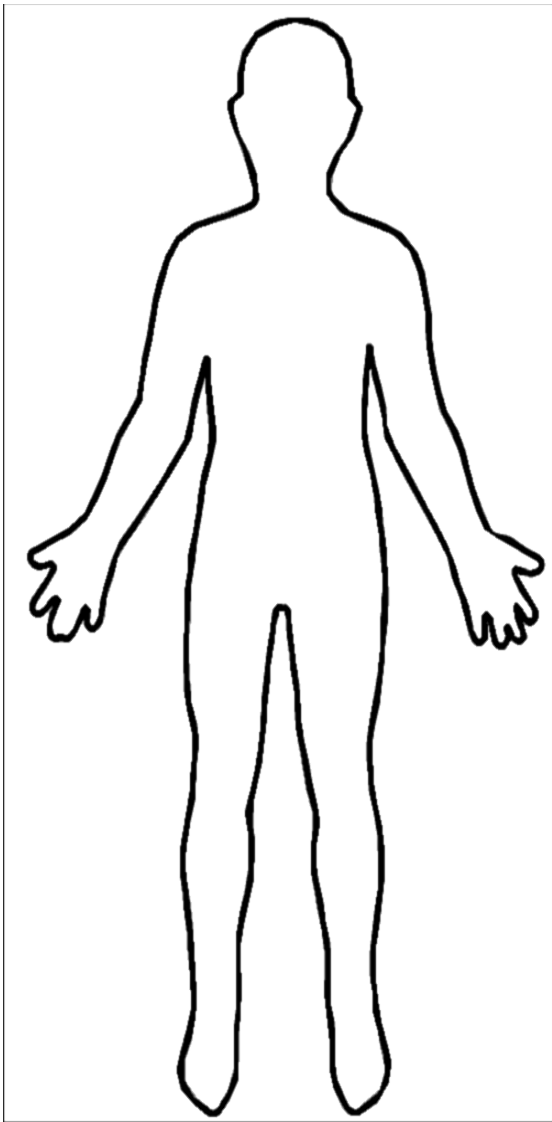
Details of the person raising the concern	
Name of child, young person or vulnerable adult that is subject of concern	
Nature of concern <i>(Ensure that these are relevant facts and not personal opinions. If using opinion, make sure to note this is clearly opinion)</i>	
Date, time and location of disclosure	
When did the incident happen, when was it first disclosed and to who	
Name and details of any witnesses, if any	
Name of staff member if this is a concern about staff	
Supporting evidence – physical signs of abuse to be marked on the Body Map sheet, any texts or social media messages to be kept by subject of concern, any clothing to be kept by subject of concern as they may be evidence	

Body Map

Front



Back



If a child, young person or vulnerable adult discloses or you notice signs of physical abuse, it is helpful to mark these on the body map. Remember not all bruises are signs of abuse.

Please sign and print your name below:

Signed:	
Print name:	
Date:	

Appendix 7 – Guidelines for staff/volunteers relating to Safeguarding

Staff and volunteers are required to report any incident of abuse or cause for concern which arises in the course of their work with young people. In all instances this policy must be followed, and the following general principals should be acknowledged and adhered to by all staff and volunteers:

- Children have a right to protection
- Everyone working in contact with children has a responsibility for their protection
- Responsibility relating to concern for a child's safety must be shared
- Child protection depends on all staff/volunteers and all agencies working together
- Child protection overrides confidentiality, relationships with the family and agency hierarchy and objectives
- Child protection issues are to be regarded as top priority and staff and volunteers are reminded that it is the welfare of the children that is of primary concern and it is their duty to follow the safeguarding children procedure
- If staff or volunteers, in the course of the project, have a child protection issue brought to their notice, observe an incident of abuse themselves, or have a cause for concern, they must treat this as a priority over other work and address the issue immediately
- If staff or volunteers wish to seek guidance with regard to a specific incident or area of concern, advice can be sought from the designated child protection coordinator
- Staff and volunteers should be aware that if a referral to Child Social Care is the appropriate course of action then this needs to be done without delay
- Staff and volunteers should not collude with a parent or child to keep concerns secret in the area of child protection

In order that behaviour is not misinterpreted staff and volunteers should always work to the following guidelines:

- Conduct all conversations in a public place
- Avoid unnecessary physical contact with children
- Treat all participants in with appropriate respect
- Avoid transporting one child only in a car unless express permission is gained from parents/social worker

Induction

All newly appointed staff members and volunteers will receive an induction that includes familiarisation with safeguarding procedures including child protection procedures, safeguarding responsibilities, boundaries of behaviour in relation to all work or volunteering with children and young people and the appropriate use of the organisation's whistle-blowing policy.

WFUK has systems in place for monitoring staff performance and/or staff supervision (volunteers included) that includes compliance with the organisation's policies and procedures for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.

All staff and volunteers undertake at a minimum online safeguarding training.

Taking photos whilst working with groups

There are times that photos are taken to share with the group or for the WFUK marketing purposes. No photo is to be taken without express permission given – either by the adult or the responsible adults working with young people.

If you have photos on your own personal device these must be shared with our marketing head within 3 days of taking the photographs and you must remove them from your personal device, not share them or store them elsewhere.

Collection of Young People from Site

In the event of an unexpected person collecting a child or young person from site at the end of the day, a duty staff member must call the parent/guardian to obtain permission for the child or young person to be released from our care.

Appendix 8 – Indicators of Abuse

For Children and Young People:

Possible indicators of **Physical Abuse**

Abusive injuries tend to involve softer tissue and be in areas that are harder to damage through slips, trips, falls and other accidents. This may include:

- upper arm
- forearm (defensive injuries)
- chest and abdomen
- thighs or genitals
- facial injuries (cheeks, black eyes, mouth)
- ears, side of face or neck and top of shoulders ('triangle of safety')
- back and side of trunk

Abusive injuries may be seen on both sides of the body and match other patterns of activity. They may not match the explanation given by the child or parent/carer and there may also be signs that injuries are being untreated, or at least a delay in seeking treatment.

Possible indicators of **Sexual Abuse**

- Bruising, particularly to the thighs, buttocks and upper arms and marks on the neck
- Bleeding, pain or itching in the genital area
- Difficulty in walking or sitting
- Sudden change in behaviour or school performance
- Displays of affection that are sexual or not age-appropriate
- Use of sexually explicit language that is not age-appropriate
- Alluding to having a secret that cannot be revealed
- Bedwetting or incontinence
- Reluctance to undress around others (e.g. for PE lessons)
- Infections, unexplained genital discharge, or sexually transmitted diseases
- Unexplained gifts or money
- Self-harming
- Poor concentration, withdrawal, sleep disturbance
- Reluctance to be alone with a particular person

Possible indicators of **Emotional Abuse**

- Concerning interactions between parents or carers and the child (e.g. overly critical or lack of affection)
- Lack of self-confidence or self-esteem
- Sudden speech disorders
- Self-harm or eating disorders
- Lack of empathy shown to others (including cruelty to animals)
- Drug, alcohol or other substance misuse
- Change of appetite, weight loss/gain
- Signs of distress: tearfulness, anger

Possible indicators of **Neglect**

- Excessive hunger.
- Inadequate or insufficient clothing.
- Poor personal or dental hygiene.
- Untreated medical issues.
- Changes in weight or being excessively under or overweight.
- Low self-esteem, attachment issues, depression or self-harm.

- Poor relationships with peers.
- Self-soothing behaviours that may not be age-appropriate (e.g. rocking, hair-twisting, thumb-sucking).
- Changes to school performance or attendance.

Disguised compliance

A parent's or carer's behaviour can make it difficult to recognise abuse or neglect at an early enough stage or delay reporting it. Disguised compliance involves care-givers presenting an appearance of being co-operative and supportive in order to avoid scrutiny, suspicion or concern. These behaviours may include:

- Misdirecting
- Dominating discussions
- Giving accounts that are different to a child's
- Being critical of other professionals
- Hard to engage
- Doing 'just enough'

For Vulnerable Adults:

Possible indicators of Physical Abuse

- No explanation for injuries or inconsistency with the account of what happened.
- Injuries are inconsistent with the person's lifestyle.
- Bruising, cuts, welts, burns and/or marks on the body or loss of hair in clumps.
- Frequent injuries.
- Unexplained falls.
- Subdued or changed behaviour in the presence of a particular person.
- Signs of malnutrition.
- Failure to seek medical treatment or frequent changes of GP.

Possible indicators of Domestic Violence or Abuse

Domestic abuse can encompass a wide range of behaviours and may be a single incident or a pattern of incidents. That abuse can be, but is not limited to, psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional. Children can be victims of domestic abuse. They may see, hear, or experience the effects of abuse at home and/or suffer domestic abuse in their own intimate relationships (teenage relationship abuse). All of which can have a detrimental and long-term impact on their health, well-being, development, and ability to learn.

- Low self-esteem
- Feeling that the abuse is their fault when it is not
- Physical evidence of violence such as bruising, cuts, broken bones
- Verbal abuse and humiliation in front of others
- Fear of outside intervention
- Damage to home or property
- Isolation – not seeing friends and family
- Limited access to money

Possible indicators of Sexual Abuse

- bruising, particularly to the thighs, buttocks and upper arms and marks on the neck
- torn, stained or bloody underclothing
- bleeding, pain or itching in the genital area
- unusual difficulty in walking or sitting
- foreign bodies in genital or rectal openings
- infections, unexplained genital discharge, or sexually transmitted diseases
- pregnancy in a woman who is unable to consent to sexual intercourse
-

- the uncharacteristic use of explicit sexual language or significant changes in sexual behaviour or attitude
- incontinence not related to any medical diagnosis
- self-harming
- poor concentration, withdrawal, sleep disturbance
- excessive fear/apprehension of, or withdrawal from, relationships
- fear of receiving help with personal care
- reluctance to be alone with a particular person

Possible Indicators of Emotional Abuse

- an air of silence when a particular person is present
- withdrawal or change in the psychological state of the person
- insomnia
- low self-esteem
- uncooperative and aggressive behaviour
- a change of appetite, weight loss/gain
- signs of distress: tearfulness, anger
- apparent false claims, by someone involved with the person, to attract unnecessary treatment.

Possible indicators of Financial Abuse

- missing personal possessions
- unexplained lack of money or inability to maintain lifestyle
- unexplained withdrawal of funds from accounts
- power of attorney or lasting power of attorney (LPA) being obtained after the person has ceased to have mental capacity
- failure to register an LPA after the person has ceased to have mental capacity to manage their finances, so that it appears that they are continuing to do so
- the person allocated to manage financial affairs is evasive or uncooperative
- the family or others show unusual interest in the assets of the person
- signs of financial hardship in cases where the person's financial affairs are being managed by a court appointed deputy, attorney or LPA
- recent changes in deeds or title to property
- rent arrears and eviction notices
- a lack of clear financial accounts held by a care home or service
- failure to provide receipts for shopping or other financial transactions carried out on behalf of the person
- disparity between the person's living conditions and their financial resources e.g. insufficient food in the house
- unnecessary property repairs.

Possible indicators of Modern Slavery

- signs of physical or emotional abuse
- appearing to be malnourished, unkempt or withdrawn
- isolation from the community, seeming under the control or influence of others
- living in dirty, cramped or overcrowded accommodation and or living and working at the same address
- lack of personal effects or identification documents
- always wearing the same clothes
- avoidance of eye contact, appearing frightened or hesitant to talk to strangers
- fear of law enforcers

Possible indicators of Discriminatory Abuse

- the person appears withdrawn and isolated
- expressions of anger, frustration, fear or anxiety
- the support on offer does not take account of the person's individual needs in terms of a protected characteristic.

Possible indicators of Organisational or Institutional Abuse

- lack of flexibility and choice for people using the service
- inadequate staffing levels
- people being hungry or dehydrated
- poor standards of care
- lack of personal clothing and possessions and communal use of personal items
- lack of adequate procedures
- poor record-keeping and missing documents
- absence of visitors
- few social, recreational and educational activities
- public discussion of personal matters
- unnecessary exposure during bathing or using the toilet
- absence of individual care plans
- lack of management overview and support

Possible indicators of Neglect or Acts of Omission

- poor environment – dirty or unhygienic
- poor physical condition and/or personal hygiene
- pressure sores or ulcers
- malnutrition or unexplained weight loss
- untreated injuries and medical problems
- inconsistent or reluctant contact with medical and social care organisations
- accumulation of untaken medication
- uncharacteristic failure to engage in social interaction
- inappropriate or inadequate clothing

Possible indicators of Self-Neglect

- very poor personal hygiene
- unkempt appearance
- lack of essential food, clothing or shelter
- malnutrition and/ or dehydration
- living in squalid or unsanitary conditions
- neglecting household maintenance
- hoarding
- collecting a large number of animals in inappropriate conditions
- non-compliance with health or care services
- inability or unwillingness to take medication or treat illness or injury

Appendix 9 – Missing Child Protocol

Definition of Missing

The definition of missing used in Essex is ‘anyone whose whereabouts cannot be established will be considered as missing until located and his or her well-being confirmed’. (*College of Policing Authorised Professional Practice Guidance*)

1. Introduction

This guidance sets out the procedures to follow when children go missing from schools and other educational settings, hereafter referred to as educational settings.

Missing children are among the most vulnerable in our community. Sometimes children go missing from educational settings; when this occurs, it is important that action is taken quickly to address this, and in line with local procedures.

This document should be read in conjunction with the educational setting’s Child Protection Policy, and the Southend, Essex and Thurrock Child Protection Procedures (SET Procedures).

- Essex Schools Infolink – for the model Child Protection Policy and other resources
- Essex Safeguarding Children Board – for the SET Procedures and other resources

A child going missing could be a ‘one-off’ incident that, following investigation, does not need further work. However, a child going missing frequently could be an indicator of underlying exploitation or other forms of child abuse.

Educational settings should consider missing episodes like any other child protection concern and take action as appropriate, for example, by contacting parents/carers, the Children & Families Hub consultation line, and in an emergency, the priority line or the police. It may be appropriate to use the Early Help Procedures (including holding a Team Around the Family meeting) to address the issues and prevent escalation. Advice should be sought and concerns should be escalated if there is no improvement.

Where children missing frequently are open to Children’s Social Care, a Missing Prevention Plan may be in place. Where this is the case, the educational setting may be set actions as part of the Missing Prevention Plan and should receive a copy if consent has been provided.

2. When a child goes missing

When it is suspected that a child is missing from an educational setting this must be addressed immediately. Active steps to locate the child should be taken, for example, searching the premises and surrounding areas, contacting the child by phone, text, and social media, and contacting their parents/carers. If none of these actions locate the child, then they must be reported missing to the Police by dialling 101, **or 999 if there is a belief that the child is immediately suffering significant harm**. It is important that the police are informed of any checks already completed as it may save time and prevent duplication of tasks set by the police to locate a child.

Staff at the educational setting must inform the child’s parents/carers that the child has been reported missing. Where there is a Social Worker allocated to the child, they should also be informed.

After a child has been reported missing, any further information should be communicated to the police by telephoning 101 and quoting the incident number that the police would have provided following the initial report. Further information must be passed to the police as soon as possible, as officers will continue to search for the child until informed of their return.

3. When the child is found

If the child is found by educational setting staff, or if the child returns to the premises of their own accord, the police must be notified immediately by dialling 101 or 999 if the matter is an emergency. It is important that this action is prioritised, as the child will remain classified as a missing person until seen by the police.

4. Essex Police

On receiving a report of a missing child, Essex Police will classify the child as missing and will respond based on the level of risk involved.

Essex Police will conduct a vulnerability interview for all children who have been missing and have returned. It may be that the child refuses to engage or speak with police. On these occasions the parents/carers can assist by reporting to officers their observations on the child's return, for example, did the child shower, have gifts, appear unwell or under the influence of any substance etc. The setting may also be able to contribute to this process and should provide the police with any relevant information or observations.

Each child that returns from missing will be offered a 'missing chat' (an independent return from missing interview) by a person not involved in their care. This will be facilitated by the Local Authority with responsibility for the child. Missing chats are offered to all children from Essex who go missing.

5. Report

All missing or near missing incidents should be recorded on the Near Miss Record Book within reasonable time after the incident.

Useful contacts:

Shane Thomson, ECC Missing Co-ordinator: shane.thomson@essex.gov.uk

Lucy Stovell, ECC Missing Chats: lucy.stovell@essex.gov.uk

Appendix 10 – Unacceptable Behaviours

It is **unacceptable** for staff, volunteers, or trustees to:

- Allow or engage in making suggestive remarks, gesture or touching.
- Take photographs of a child, young person, or vulnerable adult without written or continued agreement from participants. Consent must also be sought from the child – in writing if the child is aged 13 or above.
- Strike a child in any way or administer any corporal punishment. Corporal punishment is defined as any physical punishment intended to cause pain.
- Take part in or play rough games.
- Hold a child in any way that causes them pain.
- Distress anyone by shouting at them or calling them derogatory names.
- Smoke or be under the influence of any drug or alcohol whilst around children, young people or vulnerable adults, whether in a supervisory capacity or not.
- Swear or use explicit or suggestive language or allow it to go unchallenged if others do so
- Seek or agree to meet children, young people, or vulnerable adults anywhere beyond formally organised activities.
- Engage in or tolerate bullying in any form or performed by anyone, whether adult or child
- Offer a lift to a child or young person without consent from parent/guardian.
- Exchange personal details such as home address, phone number(s) or social networking information.
- Engage in or allow any sexually provocative games involving or observed by children, young people or vulnerable adults, whether based on talking or touching.
- Show favouritism or exclusion to individuals.
- Allow the use of mobile phones or cameras in areas where activities may be taking place (NB Photographs may be taken for reporting purposes with a WFUK camera, but this may only be performed by staff who are familiar with and following the relevant Education specific procedures).
- Promise to keep a secret about anything – particularly regarding sensitive information. Guidance on Confidentiality and Information Sharing must always be followed (See **Appendix 12** – Confidentiality and Safeguarding Information Sharing).

Appendix 11 – Lesbian, gay, bi, or trans (LGBT)

The fact that a child, a young person or a vulnerable adult may be LGBT is not in itself an inherent risk factor for harm. However, a child, a young person or a vulnerable adult who is LGBT can be targeted by others. In some cases, a child, a young person or a vulnerable adult who is perceived by others to be LGBT (whether they are or not) can be just as vulnerable as being identified as LGBT.

Risks can be compounded where children, young people or vulnerable adults who are LGBT lack a trusted adult with whom they can be open. Therefore, it is vital that staff endeavour to reduce the additional barriers faced, and provide a safe space for them to speak out or share their concerns with members of staff.

Appendix 12 – Confidentiality and Safeguarding Information Sharing

WFUK is committed to confidentiality and keeping sensitive information confidential, sharing only with express consent and in accordance with General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and Data Protection Act 2018.

In some circumstances – for example, with a safeguarding concern – obtaining consent may not be possible, and may even be detrimental to the child, young person or vulnerable adult. It may then be necessary and appropriate to share information without consent. The **Seven Golden Rules of Information Sharing** provides the necessary guidelines to support in sharing information appropriately.

Information Sharing – Seven Golden Rules

The seven golden rules of information sharing are applicable to all professionals with responsibility for sharing information, including child protection scenarios. These are available at:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/721581/Information_sharing_advice_practitioners_safeguarding_services.pdf

A summary follows:

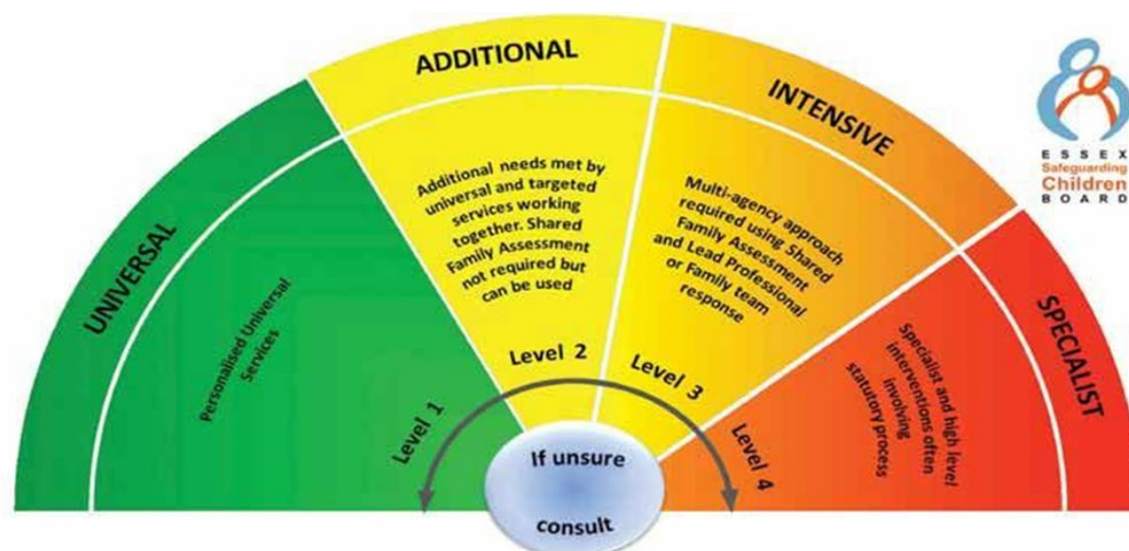
1. **The General Data Protection Regulations, the Data Protection Act 2018 and Human Rights laws are not a barrier to sharing information** but provide a framework to ensure personal information is shared appropriately.
2. **Be open and honest** from the outset about why, what, how and with whom information will be shared and seek their agreement, unless it is unsafe or inappropriate to do so.
3. **Seek advice** if you have any doubt, without disclosing the identity of the person if possible.
4. **Share with 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, that lack of consent can be overridden in the public interest. You will need to base your judgements on the facts of the case. When you are sharing or requesting personal information from someone, be clear regarding the basis upon which you are doing so. Where you do not 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 person and others who may be affected by their actions.
6. **Necessary, proportionate, relevant, accurate, timely and secure** – ensure that the information you share is necessary for the purpose for which you are sharing it, that it is shared only with those people who need to have it, it is accurate and up to date, is shared in a timely fashion and is shared securely.
7. **Keep a record of your concerns, the reasons for them and the decisions** – 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.

Appendix 13 – Advice and Support

- 1) **Essex Social Care** (request support for children or young people:
<https://socialcareportal.essex.gov.uk/s4s/FormDetails/FillForm?formId=1>)
- 2) **Centre of Expertise on Child Sexual Abuse** (<https://www.csacentre.org.uk/>)
- 3) **Staff/children ratio** recommended by NSPCC (The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children):

No. Adult to Children	Age of Children
1 adult to 3 children	0 – 2 years
1 adult to 4 children	2 – 3 years
1 adult to 6 children	4 – 8 years
1 adult to 8 children	9 – 12 years

- 4) **Essex Windscreen of Need and levels of intervention**



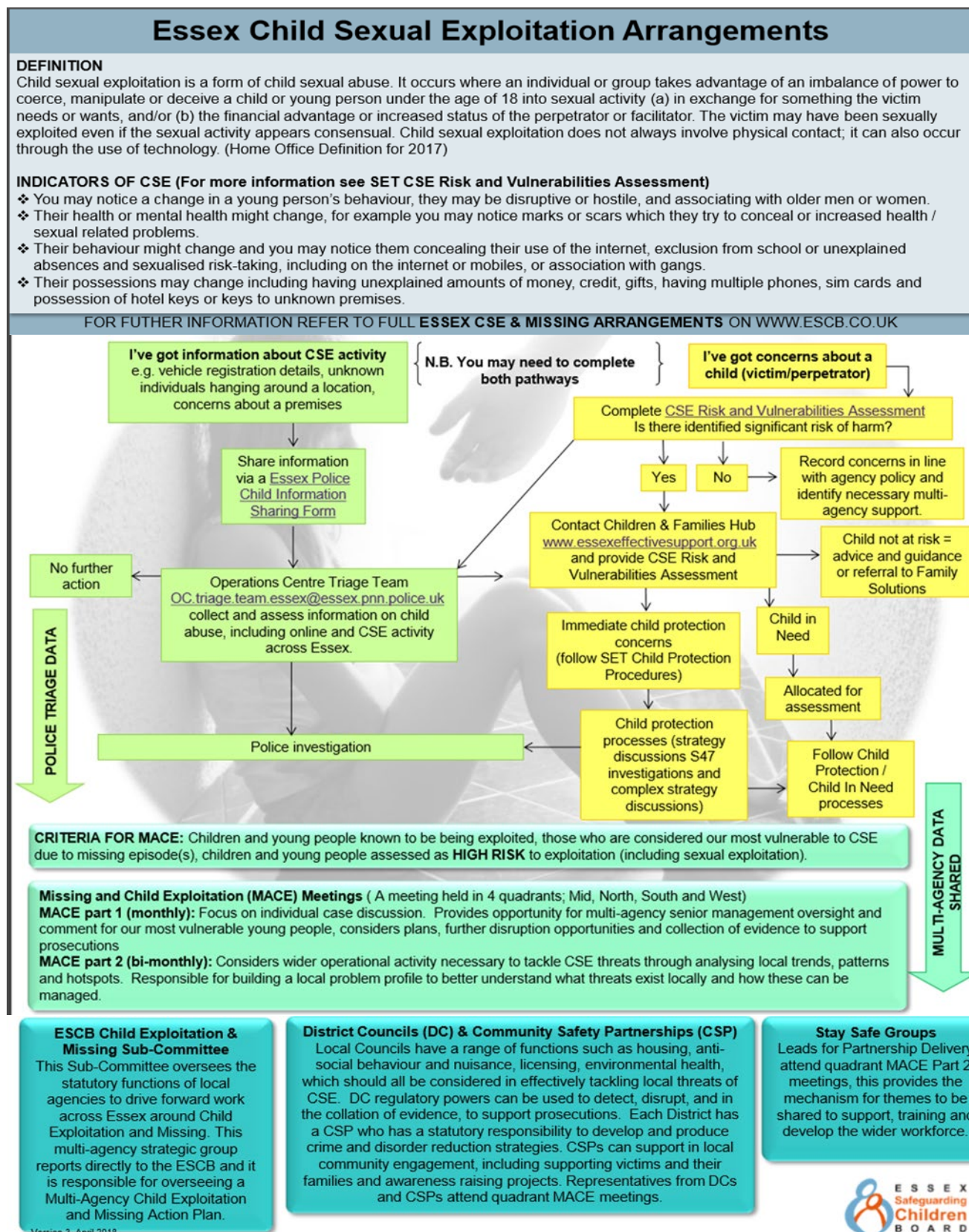
All partners working with children, young people, vulnerable adults, and their families will offer support as soon as we are aware of any additional needs. We will always seek to work together to provide support to at the lowest level possible in accordance with their needs.

Children with **Additional** needs are best supported by those who already work with them, such as Family Hubs or schools, organising additional support with local partners as needed. When an agency is supporting these children, an Early Help Plan and a Lead Professional are helpful to share information and co-ordinate work alongside the child and family.

For children whose needs are **Intensive**, a coordinated multi-disciplinary approach is usually best, involving either an Early Help Plan or a Shared Family Assessment (SFA), with a Lead Professional to work closely with the child and family to ensure they receive all the support they require. Examples of intensive services are children's mental health services and Family Solutions.

Specialist services are where the needs of the child are so great that statutory and/or specialist intervention is required to keep them safe or to ensure their continued development. Examples of specialist services are Children's Social Care or Youth Offending Service. By working together effectively with children that have additional needs and by providing coordinated multi-disciplinary/agency support and services for those with intensive needs, we seek to prevent more children and young people requiring statutory interventions and reactive specialist services.

5) Essex Child Exploitation Arrangements



Last reviewed: 26/06/2025 by board

Internal review 17.6.2026

Approved by board of trustees: 25/06/2026

WFUK Safeguarding Child Protection and Vulnerable Adults Policy/2025

