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**Safeguarding policy.**

This policy sets out the safeguarding standards we expect of our staff when concerns are reported, and how we look to continuously learn and improve our safeguarding practice.

This policy is underpinned by the following legislation and guidance

* The Children Act 1989 and 2004
* Counter terrorism and Security Act 2015 -Prevent Duty
* Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003
* Serious Crime Act 2015
* The Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974
* Schedule 4 of the Safeguarding Vulnerable groups Act 2006
* Keeping Children Safe in Education 2022

This policy is supported by Shropshire Supports Refugee’s policies on

* Staff Behaviour Policy
* Staff Well-being Policy
* Safe Recruitment of staff Policy

The policy owner is the Director of operations Amanda Jones, who is also the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) The job description for this role is in appendices A

The Deputy Safeguarding Lead is Emma Hughes (DDSL)

Definitions.

When we refer to staff, we mean all adults who work for the organisation in an employed or voluntary position and Trustees. Please see appendix B Organisation chart and Board of Trustee details.

When we refer to children, we mean all children who are service users. We consider children and young staff to be under 18 years of age.

When we refer to adults, we mean all adults who are service users and or are vulnerable

When we refer to everyone, we mean staff, adults, children, vulnerable adults and trustees

When we use the term abuse, we include harm which may be;

* Verbal
* physical
* sexual
* emotional
* neglect
* peer on peer abuse
* bullying
* child sexual exploitation
* domestic violence
* drugs and or substance abuse
* fabricated or induced illness
* faith abuse
* female genital mutilation
* forced marriage
* gang and youth violence
* criminal sexual exploitation
* private fostering
* radicalisation
* relationship abuse
* sexting
* trafficking
* cyber bullying
* online abuse
* homophobic abuse
* racist abuse
* disability abuse

**What we believe.**

We believe that everyone who engages with us has a right to be safe from harm and abuse. This policy is focused on the adults and children we seek to help and includes, regardless of race, age, disability, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, and religion, who has contact with us, including through our partners.

Safeguarding is at the heart of what we do at Shropshire Supports Refugees. This policy is crucial to delivering on the commitment to provide a safe and secure environment; and dictates the actions we take when concerns are reported.

Child abuse is defined as any form of maltreatment of a child. This can be abuse or neglect of a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting, by those known to them or, more rarely, by others. Abuse can take place online, or by using technology to facilitate offline abuse. Children may be abused by an adult or adults, or another child or children. Adult abuse is the violation of an individual’s human and civil rights by any other person or persons. We take safeguarding adults to mean upholding the rights of adults to live in safety, free from abuse and neglect. To achieve this, we may take or prompt action to minimise risks, prevent and/or stop abuse and/or neglect.

Our safeguarding arrangements promote the adult’s wellbeing. Being safe is only one of many things that adults want for themselves, and it can be challenging to balance safety and freedom in a way which protects and fulfils human rights. We must work with each adult to establish what being safe means to them and how that can be best achieved. We do this by ensuring that the staff who work with adults are well-trained and well placed to meet the adult’s needs. All new staff are provided with basic Child Protection training before having face-to-face contact with service users.

Safeguarding adults is the term we use to describe all the work we (and others do) to help adults at risk to make their own informed safeguarding decisions and to prompt or take action to protect adults who are not able to protect themselves.

We strive to ensure that anyone who engages with us does so in safety. This policy focuses on the adults and children we seek to help directly and through our partners, our retail customers, and members of the public.

The welfare of staff is addressed in the Staff Well-being Policy.

We are committed to being transparent in our safeguarding work and strive for the highest standards of safeguarding through policy, training and induction of staff.

We expect our staff, and our partners, to understand their responsibilities, and to know how to respond when they have a safeguarding concern, or when a safeguarding concern is raised. We ensure that staff are inducted and have Safeguarding training prior to undertaking any face-to-face work with service users. All staff and partners are provided with a copy of this document.

We are committed to the highest safeguarding standards throughout all stages of humanitarian response to the prevailing refugee situation.

High safeguarding standards help to ensure a culture where exploitation and abuse is not tolerated, and swift action is taken when a report is made. We are committed to working with all partners, and public authorities, to support this objective.

**Our commitment to children.**

We believe that everyone who comes into contact with a child has a responsibility to safeguard and promote the child’s welfare, and to protect them from all forms of harm and abuse. Child abuse is never acceptable. We understand our responsibility to ensure the safety of all the children who have contact with us.

We have limited contact with children in a number of different contexts and we believe that they all have an equal right to protection irrespective of

* Gender
* Disability
* Ethnicity
* Sexuality
* Religion

**The impact of abuse**

The impact of abuse should not be underestimated. Many children do recover well and go on to lead healthy, happy and productive lives, although most adult survivors agree that the emotional scars remain, however well buried. For some children, full recovery is beyond their reach, and the rest of their childhood and their adulthood may be characterised by anxiety or depression, self-harm, eating disorders, alcohol and substance misuse, unequal and destructive relationships and long-term medical or psychiatric difficulties. In endorsing this policy, we commit to putting the protection of children who have suffered or are at risk of suffering abuse firmly on the organisation’s agenda and the organisation further commits to ensuring that staff share information with other agencies. Staff should not use confidentiality or data protection as a reason for not sharing. All suspicions or allegations of abuse will be recorded and reported in line with this policy.

**Adults.**

We have significant contact with adults in a number of different contexts and we believe that they all have an equal right to protection irrespective of their gender, disability, ethnicity, sexuality, religion or age. This policy will be applied to all adults without discrimination. We will support adults to make their own informed safeguarding decisions in line with this policy, the local authority safeguarding adult’s policy.

In line with our Safer Recruitment Staff Policy, we seek to recruit, support and manage all staff who work with us.

The Board of Trustees, in partnership with the Director of Operations and the DDSL, are deeply committed to providing a safe and secure environment for our staff and everyone who engages with us and are responsible for ensuring that the organisation has appropriate policies and arrangements in place. This includes ensuring we uphold the organisational values, and that the adults and children we help are at the heart of what we do.

**Staff.**

We expect all of our staff to act with integrity as professional representatives of the organisation. We also expect our staff to understand how their personal behaviour affects the adults and children who use our services; particularly in the context of working with children and adults at risk. All staff are given a copy of the Staff Behaviour Policy which sets out the standards of conduct we expect from our staff. The Staff Behaviour Policy confirms we will not tolerate harassment, bullying or abuse and staff know how and in what circumstances whistleblowing is the right cause of action. There are further details about whistleblowing, later in this document and in the Staff Behaviour Policy.

**Taking action**

Key points to remember for taking action are:

* Where an adult or child is at risk of great harm, take the action necessary to prevent further harm to the adult or child, for example, you may need to call 999.
* Report your concern to the DSL immediately if the DSL is not able to be contacted report the concern to the DDSL. If you are unable to report your concern you may need to take action and report the concern to the relevant Local Authority Safeguarding children to Adult Board. Numbers for both of these are at the end of this document.
* Where there is an allegation or suspicion of sexual abuse about a staff member staff must not start your own investigation, contact the LADO.
* Only share information on a need-to-know basis, however, be aware that paedophiles and others who commit acts of abuse rely on others to keep their acts confidential or secret.
* Use the correct documentation to record your concern, see **Appendix C Concern Reporting Form.**

**If you suspect a child is at risk of harm**

There will be occasions when you suspect that a child may be at serious risk, but you have no ‘real’ evidence. The child’s behaviour may have changed, or you may have noticed other physical but inconclusive signs. In these circumstances, you should try to give the child the opportunity to talk. The signs you have noticed may be due to a variety of factors and it is fine to ask the child if they are alright or if you can help in any way. Staff at Shropshire Supports Refugees have been made aware of the Shropshire [Children Reporting Concern guidance](http://www.shropshirelg.net/services/safeguarding/schools-and-early-years/early-years-schools-safeguarding-policies-guidance/). Use the **Appendix C Concern Reporting Form** to record these early concerns. If the child does begin to reveal that they are being harmed, you should follow the advice in the section below ‘If a child discloses information to you’.

If, following your conversation, you remain concerned, you should discuss your concerns with the designated person.

**If a child tells you that they’ve been abused**

It takes a lot of courage for a child to tell someone that they are being neglected and or abused. They may feel ashamed, particularly if the abuse is sexual, their abuser may have threatened what will happen if they tell, they may have lost all trust in adults, or they may believe, or have been told, that the abuse is their own fault.

If a child talks to you about any risks to their safety or wellbeing you will need to let them know that you must pass the information on – you are not allowed to keep secrets. The point at which you do this is a matter for professional judgement. If you jump in immediately the child may think that you do not want to listen, if you leave it till the very end of the conversation, the child may feel that you have misled them into revealing more than they would have otherwise.

All staff should be able to reassure victims that they are being taken seriously and that they will be supported and kept safe. A victim should never be given the impression that they are creating a problem by reporting abuse, sexual violence or sexual harassment. Nor should a victim ever be made to feel ashamed for making a report. Abuse occurring outside of our agency that does not involve our staff or adults will be dealt with in the same way. Staff should not make promises that the abuse will end or that children wont have to see the abuser again as this may not happen right away.

**During your conversation with the child:**

Allow them to speak freely.

* Remain calm and do not overreact – the child may stop talking if they feel they are upsetting you.
* Give reassuring nods or words of comfort – ‘I’m so sorry this has happened’, ‘I want to help’, ‘This isn’t your fault’, ‘You are doing the right thing in talking to me’.
* Do not be afraid of silences – remember how hard this must be for the child.
* Under no circumstances ask investigative questions – such as how many times this has happened, whether it happens to siblings too, or what does the child’s mother thinks about all this.
* At an appropriate time tell the child that to help them you must pass the information on.
* Do not automatically offer any physical touch as comfort. It may be anything but comforting to a child who has been abused.
* Avoid admonishing the child for not disclosing earlier. Saying ‘I do wish you had told me about this when it started’ or ‘I can’t believe what I’m hearing’ may be your way of being supportive but the child may interpret it that they have done something wrong.
* Tell the child what will happen next. The child may agree to go with you to see the designated person. Otherwise let them know that someone will come to see them before the end of the day.
* Report verbally to the designated person.
* Write up your conversation as soon as possible on **Appendix C Concern Reporting Form.**
* and hand it to the designated person.
* Seek support if you feel distressed.

It is a sad fact that children may abuse their peers and this abuse may take many forms but must not be considered as; ‘normal, just banter, growing up.’  We understand that peer on peer abuse may be gender related and could include girls being touched or sexually abused by boys or forced into initiation rituals. Peer and peer abuse may include

* Physical abuse
* Sexual abuse
* Sharing confidences without permission
* Homophobic, sexist, derogatory language about disabled people and racist language

* + Involve the parents of the children involved if and when appropriate
* Support the victim

There are many safeguarding issues, affecting adults and children, other than those documented here, that may present in children and or their families. Staff can go to GOV.UK for help and guidance for these specific topics.  These include

* Bullying, including cyberbullying
* Physical abuse
* Neglect
* Sexual abuse
* Emotional abuse
* Children missing education
* Child missing from home or care
* Child sexual exploitation
* Domestic violence/abuse
* Drugs/substance abuse
* Fabricated or induced illness
* Faith abuse
* Female genital mutilation
* Forced marriage
* Gangs and youth violence
* Gender-based violence/violence against women and girls
* Hate
* Mental health
* Missing children and adults
* Criminal and sexual exploitation
* Private fostering
* Preventing radicalization/extremism
* Relationship abuse
* Sexting
* Trafficking

**Managing allegations of abuse made against staff**

As part of our approach to safeguarding, Shropshire Supports Refugees will ensure that we promote an open and transparent culture in which all concerns about all adults working with us are dealt with promptly and appropriately.

There are two levels of concern;

* + Allegations that may meet the harms threshold.
  + Allegation/concerns that do not meet the harms threshold – which may be referred to as ‘low level concerns’.

Allegations which might indicate that a person would pose a risk of harm to children if they continue to work in regular or close contact with children in their present position will be taken seriously. Staff must report their concerns to the DSL in the first instance. The DSL will contact the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) for advice and guidance and will follow the advice. We have a duty to inform the local Authority of any serious allegations made against a person which suggests he or she has:

* Behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child;
* Possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child; or
* Behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates he or she would pose a risk of harm to children; or
* Behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children.

We also have a duty of care towards our staff. We provide support for anyone facing an allegation and provide employees with a named contact if they are suspended. It is essential that any allegations of abuse made against members of staff or volunteers are dealt with very quickly, in a fair and consistent way that provides effective protection for the child and at the same time supports the person who is the subject of the allegation.

If there are concerns about a staff member, then this should be referred to the Director, who is also the DSL. In the event of allegations of abuse being made against the Director then allegations should be reported directly to the Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL) the DDSL may consider discussing any concerns with the trustee with responsibility for safeguarding, however, this process must not inhibit or delay the natural process of responding to an allegation.

Where staff identify that a child has been harmed and or there may be an immediate risk of harm to a child or if the situation is an emergency, they should contact children’s social care and as appropriate the police immediately. There are two aspects to consider when an allegation is made:

Looking after the welfare of the child - the designated safeguarding lead is responsible for ensuring that the child is not at risk and referring cases of suspected abuse to the local authority children’s social care.

Investigating and supporting the person subject to the allegation - the case manager should discuss with the LADO, the nature, content and context of the allegation, and agree a course of action.

The LADO may ask for additional information, such as previous history, whether the child or their family have made similar allegations previously and the individual’s current contact with children. There may be situations when the LADO will want to involve the police immediately, for example if the person is deemed to be an immediate risk to children or there is evidence of a possible criminal offence.

The initial sharing of information and evaluation may lead to a decision that no further action is to be taken regarding the individual facing the allegation or concern; in which case, this decision and a justification for it will be recorded by both the Director and the LADO, and agreement reached on what information should be put in writing to the individuals concerned and by whom. The Director will then consider with the LADO what action should follow both in respect of the individual and those who made the initial allegation.

If further action is required, we will follow the advice of the LADO and co-operate with any investigations.  We will follow instructions about what can be disclosed to the accused and whether he/she should be suspended whilst further investigations take place. This is not an indication of admission that the alleged incident has taken place but is to protect the staff as well as children and families throughout the process. Clear advice will be given to workers on the process of investigation by other agencies.  We will follow advice about how to inform families about the allegation.

If the member of staff/volunteer is found to be a risk to children and vulnerable adults, the Disclosure & Barring Service will be notified.  The DSL or the DDSL will make the referral. If we are aware of the details of a child who has or may have been harmed by a member of staff or volunteer, we will contact Compass to make a referral to seek support for the child.

**There is a legal requirement for employers to make a referral to the DBS where they think that an individual has engaged in conduct that harmed (or is likely to harm) a child; or if a person otherwise poses a risk of harm to a child.** [**Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006**](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/47/pdfs/ukpga_20060047_en.pdf)

**Whistleblowing**

Whistle blowing is a mechanism by which adults can voice their concerns in good faith, without fear of repercussion.  Any behaviour by colleagues that raises concern regardless of source will be recorded and reported to the DSL who will make a decision about the course of action. See further notes on Whistleblowing, which is outlined in the Staff Behaviours Policy.

**Safe Recruitment of Staff Policy** (For further details see Safe Recruitment of Staff policy)

We maintain a central register of details of all staff. This includes the details and results of the check we make before employment commences. All offers of employment are on condition of satisfactory references and clear checks being returned.

**Adults at Risk.**

We use the Definitions of ‘adult at risk’ when making a referral to a local authority team (safeguarding adults or adult social care) It’s important to know before the call is made if the adult, you’re concerned about meets the statutory definition of an adult at risk. This definition differs from country to country. In England the safeguarding duties in the Care Act 2014 apply to an adult who:

• Has needs for care and support (whether or not the local authority is meeting any of those needs); and:

• Is experiencing, or at risk of, abuse or neglect; and;

• As a result of those care and support needs is unable to protect themselves from either the risk of, or the experience of abuse or neglect.

An adult may be a risk of harm or abuse because of personal characteristics, which may include, but are not limited to

* Age,
* Disability,
* Special educational needs,
* Illness,
* Mental or physical frailty or impairment of, or disturbance in, the functioning of the mind or brain.