Safeguarding Policy

DOCUMENT HISTORY

ACTION	DATE APPROVED
New document version1.0	23 July 2013
Reviewed version 2.0	March 2014
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Reviewed version 4.0	17 March 2016
Reviewed amended to include updated definition for CSE and replaced CRB with DBS. Version 5.0	17 March 2017
Removal of Information and Data Management sections to a separate policy. Version 6.0	11 June 2018
Reviewed and amended to include flow chart, related policies, glossary and child friendly version. Version 7.0	7 July 2020
Reviewed and amended to include UK GDPR, DPA 2018, child-friendly statement and online safety policy statement. Version 8.0	20 July 2021
Version 9.0 Significant review. Updated designated safeguarding lead role in absence of CEO, location of files, related policies	28 July 2022
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Version 12.0	31 July 2025
Version 13.0 Reviewed and updated safeguarding training, staff technology use, overseas reporting, allegations process, safer recruitment and WTSC references. (poster updated)	13 July 2026

Next review date: July 2027

Signature of Chair:

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MCF Commitment

For the purposes of this document:

- A child is defined as that of being under 18 years of age.
- A vulnerable adult is defined as someone who is over 18 years of age and is receiving, or in need of help and services to live in the community. A vulnerable adult may be unable to take care of themselves and/or be unable to protect themselves from harm or exploitation by other people.
- Reference to a child(ren) throughout this report, requires the same actions that would apply to a vulnerable adult.
- Reference to staff incorporates the same actions that would apply to trustees, volunteers, consultants, members of LEG and MCF representatives.

MCF are committed to ensure all children are safe and well and have the ability to reach their full potential. Therefore all staff must follow this Safeguarding Policy:

- Following Safer Recruitment processes when appointing staff, trustees, volunteers (including the Lived Experience Group) and representatives of MCF, including undertaking all appropriate checks.
- All staff will receive safeguarding awareness training every 2 years.
- Undertaking risk assessment of work carried out with children.
- Responding to accidents, complaints, disclosures of abuse or where abuse is discovered.
- Ensuring adequate insurance cover for any activity.
- Ensuring our Safeguarding Policy is accessible to children.
- Reviewing all safeguarding incidents through the bi-annual risk management meetings.

1.0 WHAT IS SAFEGUARDING

1.1

- Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children - Defined for the purposes of this guidance as:
- providing help and support to meet the needs of children as soon as problems emerge
- protecting children from maltreatment, whether that is within or outside the home, including online
- preventing impairment of children's mental and physical health or development 246 Children Act 1989Section 105 166

- ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care
- promoting the upbringing of children with their birth parents, or otherwise their family network through a kinship care arrangement, whenever possible and where this is in the best interests of the children
- taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes in line with the outcomes set out in the Children's Social Care National Framework.

Working together to safeguard children (2026)

1.2 MCF Designated Safeguarding Lead

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) for MCF is the Chief Executive Officer (CEO). On occasions when the CEO is unavailable, or where safeguarding allegations are made in reference to CEO then, this role will be delegated to the Director of operations (DoO).

1.3 Responding to a child protection concern.

If a child or young person is in immediate danger or injured, emergency services must be contacted by dialing 999.

All concerns must be raised as a priority with the DSL and the procedures outlined in the flow chart detailed in **Appendix 1 Responding to a Safeguarding Concern** must be followed.

The reporting of concerns to statutory agencies must be seen as a priority and responded to promptly, if contacting children social care, it will be the local authority where the child lives.
Recording should include:

- What the child or young person has said.
- How the worker has responded.

- Any discussions with the DSL or the DoO or any other agencies.
- Any relevant information about the child or young person's physical appearance or behaviour.
- The child may have written or drawn material from the child (these items will need to be retained)
- Details of the police/professional the concerns were reported to.

Remember that your records may be used as evidence in any criminal proceedings, and referring concerns may need to be submitted on the format required by the receiving agency.

1.4 Storing of safeguarding concerns

Concerns will be recorded on the child's records on Charity Log. Any physical evidence must be stored securely and handed to statutory agencies as soon as practical.

1.5 Responding to concerns when overseas

There are occasions when MCF staff or volunteers, associates or consultants acting on MCF's behalf are deployed overseas to support host countries develop safeguarding practices. MCF recognises its responsibility towards safeguarding children whilst abroad and will highlight it to the local police force and also to UK police. Alternatively if staff are unable to report the concerns they must still notify MCF DSL and can report their concerns on Don't Look Away Report and ensure MCF records reflect that this has been done.

1.6 Responding to concerns from a third party

Other professionals and members of the public should be advised that you will pass on child protection concerns to statutory agencies. Members of the public are entitled to report concerns anonymously directly to Children's Social Care or the police.

1.7 Confidentiality and children's consent to information sharing

Confidentiality can never be a barrier to sharing safeguarding concerns. As we work with children and their families within the voluntary sector we are covered by the Information Commission Office as likely to have 'legitimate interest' to share safeguarding concerns.

1. Be open and honest with the individual (and/or their family where appropriate) from the outset about why, what, how and with whom information will, or could be shared, and seek their agreement, unless it is unsafe or inappropriate to do so.
2. Seek advice from the DSL, if you are in any doubt about sharing the information concerned.
3. Share information with consent, where possible, however you may have to share information without consent if you are concerned for a child or vulnerable adults' welfare.

Further information can be found at A 10 step guide to sharing information to safeguard childrenICO

1.8 Working jointly with other agencies

The sharing of information amongst practitioners working with children is essential. In many cases it is only when information from a range of sources is put together that a child can be seen to be in need or at risk of harm. Therefore, it is the policy of MCF to appropriately share information and assist in assessments with statutory authorities.

1.9 Allegations against staff

The DSL will deal with safeguarding allegations against staff, in consultation with the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO). Where the allegations are against the CEO then staff need to report their concerns to the DoO who will notify the Chair of the Trustee Board and will keep them updated on any investigation. Members of staff who are the subject of an allegation will be suspended immediately on full pay pending an investigation. During the period of suspension, the staff member will not come onto MCF premises unless specifically instructed and must not have any contact with children and families connected to MCF work, MFC staff except for line manager and senior members of the MCF team, and access to MCF IT system will be blocked during this investigation period.

Staff under investigation will be supported through their line manager and will be provided with additional support through discussions with that staff member. investigations into allegations will be robust and timely and will not cease even if the staff member resigns. MCF will not enter into a compromise agreement with any staff member and all investigations will continue to be completed.
The DSL must inform the Chair of the Trustee Board regarding any allegations made against staff members.

Staff use of technology

Staff must not use their personal mobile phones or personal communication devices to carry out any work-related contact with children or vulnerable adults. This includes phone calls, text messages, messaging apps, social media, or any other form of digital communication. All contact must be made only through approved organisational systems and devices. Staff must not store, share, or access any work-related information about children on personal devices. Personal phone numbers must never be shared with service users.

2.0 SAFER RECRUITMENT

All staff, volunteers and MCF representatives are subject to safer recruitment. This includes

- A current DBS check (as per our disclosure and barring policy) at a level appropriate to their role
- The provision of two references covering the last five years of employment or study.
- Disclosure of previous convictions - failure to disclose convictions that are subsequently identified will result in that individual being disqualified from being part of the organisation or serving as a trustee.
- Asking prospective workers, volunteers and trustees if they are or have been subject to disciplinary procedures.

For general guidance the following principles will apply where staff do have convictions:

- offences relating to violence and of a sexual nature, Will disqualify a person form being involved with the organisation.
- Other offences will be considered on a case-by-case basis by the CEO and Chair of the Trustee Board and decision will be recorded as the to the outcome of any of these meetings.

2.2 Supervision and Monitoring

Any staff member or MCF representative who fails to apply appropriate safeguarding measures in their practice will receive additional advice guidance and training through their line manager. Ongoing concerns regarding safeguarding practice, or a significant safeguarding failing, will be the subject of disciplinary procedures and their employment may be terminated.

2.3 Whistleblowing

Staff or MCF representatives may have concerns regarding current MCF personnel or organisational practice. In these cases, the person must highlight these concerns to the DSL. Further information on escalating concerns or poor practice can be found in the Whistle Blowing Policy.

3.0 Accessibility Statement

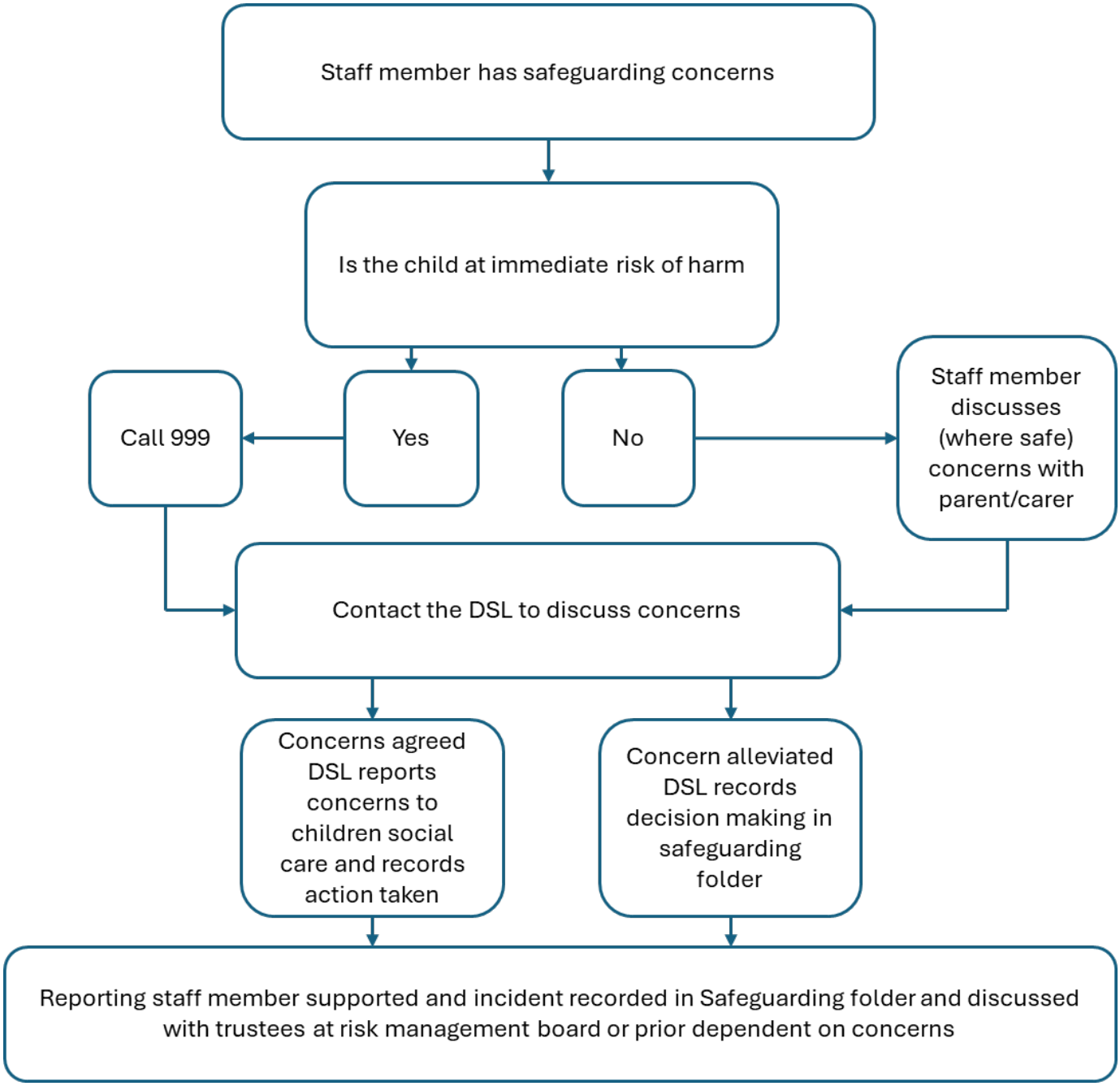
This policy will be provided in different formats, such as an accessible PDF, audio recording, large print or alternative languages on request.

4.0 Related Policies

This policy is to be read in conjunction with the following policies:

- Case Management Policy
- Data Management and Privacy Policy
- DBS Policy, including Appendix 2, Recruitment of Ex-Offenders Policy
- IT Policy
- Disciplinary Policy
- Grievance Policy
- Retention of Case Records Policy
- Performance Management Policy
- Social Media Policy
- Staff Handbook
- Whistleblowing Policy

APPENDIX 1: Responding to a safeguarding concern - Staff or MCF representatives must not investigate concerns



APPENDIX 2: Definitions of abuse

Sexual abuse

Involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts, such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing, and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse. Sexual abuse can take place online, and technology can be used to facilitate offline abuse. Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children. (WTSC 2026)

Neglect

The persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy because of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to:

- provide adequate food, clothing, and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment)
- protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger
- ensure adequate supervision, including the use of appropriate caregivers
- ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment
- provide suitable education
- It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs. (WTSC 2026)

Emotional abuse - The persistent emotional or psychological maltreatment of a child so as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to a child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them, or making fun of what they say or how they communicate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond a child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyber bullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone. (WTSC 2026)

Physical abuse - A form of abuse which may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child. (WTSC 2026)

If you have any concerns about the welfare of a child, you must discuss these concerns with the DSL.

Child Sexual abuse - Involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts, such as 159 masturbation, kissing, rubbing, and touching outside of clothing. They may

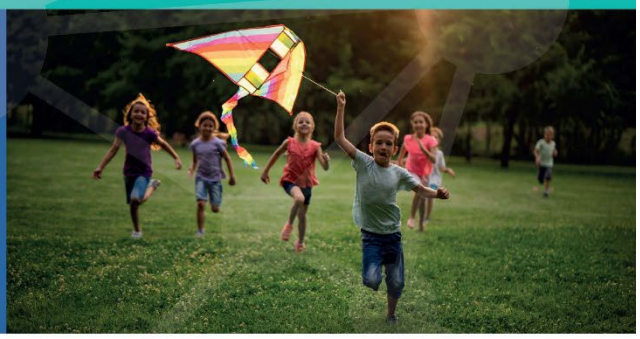
also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse. Sexual abuse can take place in family settings, in institutional settings, online, and technology can be used to facilitate offline abuse. Child sexual abuse material available online may have been generated in a family environment. Online abuse can also take the form of cyber grooming or self-generated sexual content under coercion. Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children. A child of any age or gender can be a victim of sexual abuse.

Child sexual exploitation – Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.

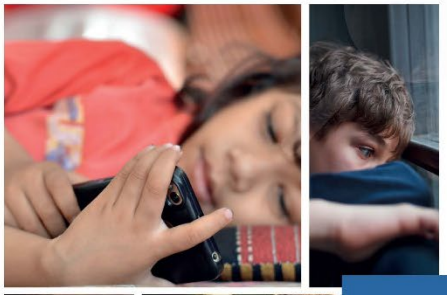
APPENDIX 3: Child-friendly Safeguarding Statement

HELP US TO KEEP YOU SAFE

Marie Collins Foundation wants to make sure that you are safe



People should never hurt you





Some people might hurt you. This can happen anywhere including on your mobile phone, game console, tablet or computer.

It is never your fault

if someone is hurting you

If something is worrying you or you are worried about a friend you can tell us at the Marie Collins Foundation or talk to a grown-up you trust (like your parent or a teacher). Email us at help@mariecollinsfoundation.org.uk, or you can call Childline on 0800 11 11.

MCF Marie Collins Foundation

Supporting recovery from technology-assisted child sexual abuse

If you are in danger **NOW**
call the police on 999

Company No. 7657115 Charity No. 1144355