

SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AND ADULTS AT RISK

A POLICY FOR AFFILIATED LOCAL DEAF CHILDREN'S SOCIETIES

September 2025

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This policy supports local deaf children's societies to safeguard the children, young people and adults at risk that they are in contact with.

It provides guidance on what to do if anyone has any concerns and also what support is available to help them.

We understand that effective safeguarding needs people to work together and we are committed to supporting the members of local deaf children's societies to be able – and feel confident – to respond to any concerns.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The National Deaf Children's Society aims to provide safe and secure services for children, young people and adults at risk through proactive safeguarding. **This extends to our partnerships with local deaf children's societies (DCS) and our support for those running these groups to ensure children, young people and adults at risk are safe and well supported.**
- 1.2 The following policy, and the guidance that goes with it, are of upmost importance. They must be understood and followed by everyone who is working for and on behalf of the organisation, **including those running affiliated local deaf children's societies.** The National Deaf Children's Society will make sure that everyone who works for or on behalf of the organisation will achieve the standards set out by this policy.
- 1.3 This policy outlines our commitment to safeguarding and duty of care; it includes definitions of safeguarding and child/adult protection, deaf specific considerations and how to use and apply the procedures and guidance.
- 1.4 The National Deaf Children's Society is the leading charity dedicated to creating a world without barriers for deaf children and young people. All children, young people and adults at risk have a right to live safely, free from abuse and neglect. Affiliated local deaf children's societies also share and support this aim.
- 1.5 Our Safeguarding policy and procedures ensure that the organisation, **and affiliated local deaf children's societies,** fulfil their safeguarding responsibilities, respond to concerns correctly and provides the framework to support this.
- 1.6 The National Deaf Children's Society is committed to making sure everyone in the organisation and **affiliated deaf children's societies** make a positive contribution to the wellbeing of individuals and communities. Our commitment to statutory requirements and best practice makes every effort to protect all children, young people and adults at risk from harm, abuse, neglect and/or exploitation.
- 1.7 The National Deaf Children's Society **and affiliated local deaf children's societies,** will promote safe environments, where children's and adults' welfare is a priority; abuse and neglect is prevented and where there is an awareness of the signs, symptoms and impacts of abuse and neglect.
- 1.8 **All staff and volunteers** will work together to develop and build upon a belief which embraces difference and diversity and respects the rights of all children, young people and adults.
- 1.9 Children, young people and adults can only be safeguarded properly if everyone involved with them **works together effectively.** It is everyone's responsibility to safeguard children, young people and adults at risk, whether you work directly or indirectly with them.

- 1.10 The National Deaf Children's Society, **and affiliated local deaf children's societies**, will make sure that concerns or allegations of abuse can be **raised and appropriate action taken**. Those who neglect the safety and well-being of deaf children, young people and adults at risk will be held accountable.

2. Definitions and scope

What is safeguarding?

- 2.1 This is a joint policy including children and adults as it represents our duty of care as an organisation. There are similarities in many of the actions needed to safeguard children and young people, and adults at risk. However, The National Deaf Children's Society recognises there are distinct differences between these groups which are reflected in this policy and supporting guidance.
- 2.2 Safeguarding is a term which is broader than 'child protection' or 'adult protection' and relates to the action taken to promote the welfare of children and adults at risk and protect them from harm. Safeguarding is defined in statutory guidance affecting safeguarding children and adults at risk as: (each UK nation has their own version, but share the same principles)
- a) protecting from maltreatment
 - b) preventing impairment of health
 - c) wellbeing and development
 - d) ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care
 - e) taking action to enable everyone to achieve the best outcomes

What is child protection?

- 2.3 The term 'child protection' refers to preventing and responding to violence, exploitation and abuse against children – including commercial sexual exploitation, trafficking, child labour and harmful traditional practices, such as female genital mutilation and child marriage.
- 2.4 Safeguarding duties apply to an adult who:
has the need for care and support and is experiencing, or at risk of, abuse or neglect. This applies whether or not the Local Authority is meeting any of those needs. As a result of those care and support needs the adult is unable to protect themselves from either the risk of, or the experience of, abuse, harm, exploitation and/or neglect. Safeguarding adults includes:
- a) protecting their rights to live safely and free from abuse and neglect
 - b) organisations working together to prevent the risk and stopping abuse and/or neglect from happening
 - c) ensuring the wellbeing of every individual is promoted, taking their views, wishes, feelings and beliefs into account

Child/children

- 2.5 The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child defines a child as everyone under the age of 18. There are however a number of different laws across the UK that specify age limits in different circumstances such as child protection, age of consent and age of criminal responsibility. In child protection guidance, in all of the UK countries, a child is defined as a person under the age of 18 years. In Scotland, in some circumstances, a 16- or 17-year-old is considered a 'vulnerable adult'.

Adults at risk/vulnerable adults

- 2.6 England uses the term adults at risk, Scotland uses adults at risk and protected adult, whilst Wales and Northern Ireland use the term vulnerable adult. Each nation provides its own definition for each, for the benefit of this policy and procedure, 2.4 cites England's definition. However, all four nations share the same principles.

Abuse/harm

- 2.7 Abuse is any action by another person that causes significant harm, there does not have to be an intention to cause harm such as neglect. Harm is the result of abuse and includes ill treatment, causing or not stopping avoidable deterioration in mental health, and causing impairment in any aspects of a person's development.
- 2.8 The National Deaf Children's Society and affiliated local deaf children's societies are committed to promoting the seven key themes found in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child:
- a) being healthy
 - b) staying safe including being free from abuse, victimisation and exploitation, accidental death or injury, bullying, discrimination, crime and anti-social behaviour
 - c) having a nurturing place to live
 - d) enjoying, learning and achieving
 - e) making a positive contribution and being listened to
 - f) achieving economic well-being
 - g) security, stability, and a respect for the human rights of children
- 2.9 The National Deaf Children's Society staff and volunteers will all play their part in the achievement of these objectives.
- 2.10 The National Deaf Children's Society recognises that the welfare of all children, young people and adults at risk is the most important thing and any actions taken must be in the best interest of the individual.

3. Proactive safeguarding

- 3.1 Deaf children, young people and adults at risk must be proactively safeguarded to assist them in achieving the best possible outcomes. Most parents/carers take very good care of their deaf children and adult relations; however, where care is not good enough the impact of neglect and/or harm can have a very significant impact on their health and well-being. For example, if a deaf child's language and communication development is

persistently neglected in childhood, this can lead to life-long damaging consequences which cannot be reversed.

- 3.2 Deaf and disabled people are particularly vulnerable to abuse, so it is especially important to keep a watchful eye for signs of abuse or neglect. "Abuse can happen to anyone, but deaf and disabled children are over three times more likely to be abused or neglected than non-disabled children" (Jones et al, 2012).
- 3.3 "Research indicates that disabled children are significantly more likely to experience abuse than their non-disabled peers. Evidence suggests increased vulnerability for children with communication impairments, behavioural disorders, learning disabilities and sensory impairments (compared to disabled children as a whole)" Stalker and McArthur, 2012.
- 3.4 Deaf children, young people and adults at risk can unfortunately be particularly at risk of abuse for a number of reasons, such as; those who have limited communication may have learned to do what others want without asking why, deaf people can miss out on some key information regarding personal safety and they may also be isolated or feel lonely, which makes them easier targets for abusers.
- 3.5 Limited communication also makes it harder for deaf people to tell anyone about abuse. Someone may be more likely to abuse a deaf person because they know they will have increased difficulty communicating what has happened. Deaf people may also only be able to communicate with family members or others who look after or care for them. If the abuser is also a family member, caregiver, or teacher, the person may not feel safe telling anyone.
- 3.6 Therefore, it is imperative and the duty of all staff, volunteers and local deaf children's societies to be vigilant in monitoring the welfare and well-being of all.

4. Equality

- 4.1 Safeguarding is the responsibility of all staff, volunteers and local deaf children's societies whether salaried or voluntary, whatever your role or status.
- 4.2 The policy, and guidance apply to all the people we work with regardless of age, gender identification, sexual orientation, marital or civil partner status, pregnancy or maternity, religion or belief, disability, race, ethnic or national origin.
- 4.3 The policy, procedures and guidance stress the importance and responsibility of everyone to be alert to the signs of abuse. They provide an effective reporting procedure should abuse be suspected or disclosed, regardless of the setting the abuse has taken place in.

5. What you should do if you have any concerns

- 5.1 Every local deaf children's society has a Designated Person responsible for safeguarding. The Chair and members of the Committee should all be able to support members of the

group to discuss and raise concerns. The National Deaf Children's Society has designated staff to talk through any concerns you may have.

What to do if you're worried about a child or adult at risk

Guidance for anyone involved in a local deaf children's society

You have a concern or someone shares a concern with you

Are they - or someone else - in immediate danger?

Yes

Call the Police on 999 / text 999 if you are deaf

Record any information you can about the concern

Inform the Chair and Designated Person in the group

If you still have the concern, contact the Local Authority Safeguarding Team who will support you in discussing it and will advise you if you need to complete a referral

You can also contact the NSPCC to ask their advice

Share the information with the NDCS' Head of Safeguarding or Designated Safeguarding Officer. We can support you to make a referral or manage the process and feed back to you

No

Share your concern with the Chair of the group or the Designated Person or another committee member

Record any information you can about the concern

Seek further support from NDCS Designated staff if required

Share the information with the NDCS' Head of Safeguarding or Designated Safeguarding Officer

You can also contact the NSPCC to ask their advice

Let us know what response you

and useful contacts

NSPCC 0800 800 5000 help@nspcc.org.uk For any concerns or to get advice.

Don't wait until you're certain, it's always good to discuss it. You can also use Sign Video to contact the NSPCC

My group's Designated Person is..... tel/text.....

NDCS Local Groups Designated Safeguarding Officer

Mia Wray mia.wray@ndcs.org.uk 07811591460 (Video call or SMS/TEXT)

NDCS Head of Safeguarding

Andrew Richardson andrew.richardson@ndcs.org.uk 07966 341 024 (SMS/TEXT)

What to do if a child or adult tells you about abuse or if you are concerned about a person's welfare?

The meaning of 'tell' is very broad in this context. Often, it is not what a child/adult says or signs, but what s/he does, or does not do, that alerts you. An individual may be frightened to talk or sign about what is happening at home. Sometimes, communication difficulties have made speech or sign impossible. An individual may display sudden or strange changes of behaviour, for example angry outbursts or complete withdrawal. A child/adult might become unusually dirty or dishevelled, may lose weight dramatically or look exhausted. Changes in behaviour or appearance that worry you must be passed on. It may be that what is happening has nothing to do with child or adult protection, but there may still be a need for support in other ways. For this reason, the agencies that can offer this help need to be alerted.

Listen/watch carefully. Most people find it difficult to talk about abuse. If they have summoned up the courage to talk or sign to you, it is because they believe you can help. Now is not the time to be working out whether what you receive is true or not.

Let them lead the pace. Try not to ask questions. Don't jump in to fill pauses. Keep the conversation going with encouraging nods, attentive eye contact and repetitions (for clarity) of what has been said or signed.

Once is enough, however. Once you know you will have to report what you have been told, don't ask the person to repeat what s/he has said. Make sure they know that s/he is not alone, and that you are taking what they say seriously. Reassure them that you will be getting help from someone who knows what to do in this kind of situation.

Be honest. Answer their questions as honestly as you can; if you don't know the answer, say so, but say you will try to find out.

Don't investigate, don't confront. Your job will be to pass on the information, not to investigate. Don't confront the alleged abuser; this will not be helpful and may cause difficulties for any investigation.

1. **Remember the boundaries of confidentiality.** Never promise total confidentiality if you are told about possible abuse. You will almost certainly have to share the information in order to help keep the person safe. If somebody wants to tell, but wants a promise of confidentiality first, tell them that if you believe that they or anyone else might be harmed, you cannot keep it secret or confidential. If they are not able to say anything more, you can help them find some privacy and a telephone to contact Childline (0800 1111 or via SignVideo) or Samaritans (call 116 123 or email jo@samaritans.org).
2. **Seek advice.** Explain to the person that this kind of thing happens to a lot of people; that's why you are able to talk to people who know what to do to help. Your Designated Person will support you in making a confidential report. Even if the account that's given seems vague or you're uncertain, still take advice from the Children's or adults Social Care service in the area where they live. You can do this, if necessary, by discussing the situation without mentioning any names. Local Group Designated Persons can seek

advice from the NDCS Local Groups Designated Safeguarding Officer or the NDCS Head of Safeguarding (see p.16 or the above flowchart).

3. **Keep contact numbers handy.** Some general contact numbers are given at the end of this document and in the flowchart. It's also useful to have the numbers for your local police, social workers (including out of hours, duty, contact) and other useful organisations in your area ready to hand.
4. In conclusion, your job is to **listen, support and pass information on.** Then let the experienced professionals take over and cooperate with them in any way that you can to protect the child.

What to do if a child tells about abuse or you have concerns about a child's welfare when they are away from home (e.g. at a residential or an event without their parents present).

1. The immediate decision you will face is whether the child is safe to go home, for example, you will need to consider what to do if the alleged abuser is likely to be there. If you believe the risk to the child is serious and immediate, or the child does not feel safe to go home, call the local Children's Social Care/ Social Work service Emergency Duty/Out of Hours Team or the Police. Make clear that this is a child protection matter and take advice on what to do next. You can also seek advice from the NDCS Local Groups Designated Safeguarding Officer or the NDCS Head of Safeguarding **but do not delay taking action if you cannot contact them.**
2. As soon as possible after receiving the information or becoming aware of the concern: **Make a careful log of what has happened:** what the child told you (use the child's own words as closely as you can); what you saw and heard; when and where the alleged abuse took place; who was involved, when and where the child told you about it.
3. **Log any calls you make** e.g. to children's social care/social services team or the police. Put a full date and time on the log.
4. **Contact your Local Group Designated Person** to tell them what has happened and seek advice. Go over the log together to make sure it is clear, then give it to the Designated Person for filing in a secure place. It might be needed by other agencies.
5. **The Designated Person should call the appropriate Children's Social Services team¹ (local to the child's address),** if you have not already made an emergency referral. Make sure s/he has to hand the details of the child's name(s), address and date of birth on it.
6. **The Designated Person where possible should seek advice on whether or not to inform the parents or carers of the referral, and will:**
7. **Follow up the call with a written note** (s/he will be advised about what needs to be included in it by the social worker who takes the call).

¹ This will usually be called the children's social care team or children's social services and is part of the local Council, or in NI the Health and Social Services Trust. You need to speak to the Duty Child Protection Worker or Duty Social Worker.

8. **The Designated Person will keep a copy of your log, plus a log of any further action. They will also inform the Designated Safeguarding Officer at NDCS of the incident, sharing what is needed to know only. However, there may be times where they may need to intervene, in which case, further details may be shared to ensure the right outcomes are achieved.**
9. If your Designated Person is not available, and you believe the child is in imminent danger, contact the Police and explain that this is a child protection call. They will advise you on what to do next. You can also seek advice from the NDCS Local Groups Designated Safeguarding Officer or the NDCS Head of Safeguarding.

What to do if you have concerns about a child or young person who might be harming other children?

10. It is important to be aware that children can abuse other children. There is a range of behaviours, starting with normal childhood activity, which in the extreme can extend to bullying, violence or sexual assault. Sexual activity between children and young people under the age of consent can form part of normal childhood exploration, but in some circumstances can be abusive.
11. It is therefore important to understand the difference between consenting and abusive, and between appropriate and exploitative peer relationships. Staff should not dismiss some abusive sexual behaviour as 'normal' between young people and should not develop high thresholds before taking action.
12. Therefore, when a child or young person within or outside the family alleges abuse by another child, the child protection procedures must be followed in respect of both the victim and considered in relation to the alleged abuser.
13. It is not the responsibility of NDCS or Local Group members to make an assessment of the needs of either child, but to identify the level of concern and make appropriate decisions about immediate action and referral.
14. The principles of the child protection procedures as outlined above should be followed:
Listen Carefully: Let the Child Lead the Pace: Once is Enough: Be Honest: Don't Investigate, Don't Confront: Remember the Boundaries of Confidentiality: Seek Advice: Keep Contact Numbers Handy: and out of hours, make a Careful Log: Log any Calls: Contact the Designated Person.
15. In addition, it is important to follow these additional steps:
16. **Be Aware** of what is happening between children and young people. Good, but unobtrusive, supervision can prevent many problems from escalating.
17. **Don't Overreact.** However, distressing the situation, stay calm and keep your language and behaviour neutral. The outcome for both children can be affected by the way that adults respond.

18. **Gather Information.** It will be important to record the detail of what the alleged victim, the alleged perpetrator and any other children who were present have to say, without taking an investigative approach.
19. **Consider** whether there is a need to make **an immediate referral** to the Police and Children's Social Care. This might be important in the case of a very serious allegation of assault.
20. **Consider whether both children can remain at the activity/event.** This will depend to a large extent on whether both children can be kept safe. The views of the alleged victim (and their parents in the case of a young child) should be consulted and a risk assessment conducted.
21. **Consider**, with the Designated Person, **the need to report** the matter to Children's Social Care and the Police in respect of each child. If the alleged victim wishes a report to be made to the Police, then this is what should happen. If they express a wish for this not to happen, this should still be considered, in the interests of the alleged perpetrator and other children.

The needs of children and young people who abuse other children should be considered separately from the needs of their victims, and an assessment should be carried out by the statutory agencies in each case. They may also be in need of protection. The perpetrator of abuse should therefore also be referred to the statutory child protection agencies. Children who harm others should be considered as children in need but should also be held responsible for their actions.

6. Using this policy – procedure and guidance

- 6.1 This policy, and the guidance contained in it, should support your work in safeguarding children, young people and adults at risk. It will help you to develop good practice and adhere to our duty of care.
- 6.2 In order to do this effectively, you should also undertake basic safeguarding training. Online safeguarding training can be accessed via the Connecting Families Team. NDCS currently uses "Discovery Zone" – an online platform, offering a range of short, easy to access, courses. Individual accounts have been set up for each affiliated Local Deaf Children's Society. Committee Members and those involved in supporting children, young people and adults should be supported to complete the relevant courses. Contact connecting.families@ndcs.org.uk for your group's account details.
- 6.3 Throughout this document, certain words, phrases and names of policies are highlighted in order to help you find the information you need.
- 6.4 This policy tells you about our duty of care and the principles the organisation supports.

- 6.5 The procedures and guidance tell you what you must do if you have a concern about a child, young person or adult at risk, what your responsibilities are and how to respond even if it is out of hours.
- 6.6 The procedures and guidance also tells you how to respond if you think a child may be abusing another child and what to do if you think an adult working with children is unsafe to do so.
- 6.7 The procedures and guidance document contains some more detailed guidance including definitions and indicators of abuse and harm. There are some slight differences in the different parts of the UK in how harm is defined. These are explained but should not prevent you from acting if you are worried. There is also some information about some of the signs which might indicate that a person is suffering abuse or neglect. It explains the role of some other professionals in assessing and responding to concerns about abuse so that you know what is likely to happen after a referral is made.
- 6.8 The procedures and guidance gives some of the forms, flowcharts and contact information which should help you with your responsibilities. There is a form to help you record clearly any concerns about a child, young person or adult at risk and what you have done. There are flowcharts to explain:
- a) How to report concerns about possible abuse
 - b) What happens when the report is referred on by the Designated Safeguarding Officer or Head of Safeguarding to one of the statutory agencies dealing with safeguarding
 - c) How to report concerns about an employee or volunteer who may be harming a child and the process for managing allegations.
- 6.9 Any concerns about the safety or welfare of a child or adult must be reported to one of:
- 1. the registered person;
 - 2. a police officer;
 - 3. Ofsted;
 - 4. the local authority in whose area accommodation is being provided by the scheme;
 - 5. the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children
 - 6. Social care services.
- 6.10 You should also read the **Guidance for Safer Working Practice for Staff who Work with Children, Young People and Adults at Risk** document. It explains clearly how all staff are expected to conduct themselves in relation to children, young people and adults at risk. It must be used in the induction of new staff and volunteers and in the continuing supervision or appraisal of all staff and volunteers.
- 6.11 Each child, young person and adult at risk should be treated as an individual, encouraged to express their own needs and wishes, and be listened to.
- 6.12 Complaints and concerns from any child, young people or adults at risk should be taken seriously, and responded to promptly and appropriately.

- 6.13 The National Deaf Children's Society and local deaf children's societies will work co-operatively with all agencies who share responsibility for safeguarding.
- 6.14 All workers who have direct contact with children, adults at risk and their families will be recruited, trained and supervised to ensure that they are sufficiently equipped to:
- a) identify where there may be a concern
 - b) support the maintaining of a safe working environment
 - c) know how to obtain speedy and professional advice
 - d) refer concerns appropriately to specialist workers as necessary
 - e) protect themselves from allegations of abuse
- 6.15 The National Deaf Children's Society and local groups will ensure that those who work with children, adults at risk and their families are subject to the appropriate level of criminal records and other checks prior to their appointment.
- 6.16 The National Deaf Children's Society and its affiliated local groups are committed to respond to any allegations of abuse by staff or volunteers promptly and to implement the appropriate complaints, disciplinary and appeals procedures as necessary.
- 6.17 Information sharing will be compliant with current data protection, human rights legislation and guidance, such as [Working Together to Safeguard Children](#) (2023).
- 6.18 This policy and the procedures and guidance will be reviewed annually, by the Head of Safeguarding, for legislative changes and fully every three years.

7. Related policies and procedures

- 7.1 This policy should be read alongside the following NDCS policies and procedures (available from the Connecting Families Team):
- a) NDCS Safeguarding and Child Protection Procedures and Guidance
 - b) Safeguarding Allegations Against our Workforce Procedures
 - c) Code of Conduct Policy
 - d) Equality Diversity and Inclusion Policy for people who use our services
 - e) Whistle Blowing Policy
 - f) Data Protection Policy
 - g) E-Safety Policy

Appendix 1

This policy has been drawn up in the basis of UK and relevant international laws and guidance that seeks to protect children and adults (this list is not exhaustive):

International Legislation

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child 1991 (Article 19)
UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2008
European Convention on Human Rights

In the UK (not limited to)

Legislation
Children's Act 1989 and 2004
Children (Scotland) Act 1995
Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014
The Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults (Northern Ireland) Order 2003
The Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995
Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014
The Care Act 2014

Associated Legislation

Data protection Act 2018
Information Sharing Statutory Guidance 2015
Human Rights Act 1998
Sexual Offences Act 2003
Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003
Mental Capacity Act 2005
Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 (and other UK nations versions)
Children and Young Persons Act 2008
Equality Act 2010
Protection of Freedom Act 2012
Children and Families Act 2014
Community Care Act 2014
Serious Crime Act 2015
Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015

Government and Statutory Guidance (UK)

Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018)
National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland (2014)
Cooperating to Safeguard Children and Young People (Northern Ireland, 2017)
Working Together to Safeguard People (Wales, 2017)
Care and Support Statutory Guidance (as issued under the Care Act 2014) 2022) (and other UK nations versions)
Prevent Strategy (2011)
National Professional Standards and Regulatory Bodies (UK)
Ofsted
Care Inspectorate
Local Agencies (UK)
Local Safeguarding Children Board (currently transitioning to Local Safeguarding Partnerships)
Area Child Protection Committees
Safeguarding Board for NI

Useful contacts:

NDCS Local Groups Designated Safeguarding Officer

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mia.wray@ndcs.org.uk

NDCS Head of Safeguarding

Andrew Richardson

andrew.richardson@ndcs.org.uk 07966 341 024 (SMS/TEXT)