

Child and Adult Protection and Safeguarding policy

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1. Policy statement

- 1.1 National Deaf Children's Society, including its international arm Deaf Child Worldwide, believe that children and adults should never experience abuse of any kind and have Zero Tolerance to all forms of abuse of children and adults at risk.
- 1.2 All children and adults at risks have a right to equal protection from all types of harm, exploitation or abuse regardless of for example, age, disability, ethnicity, gender, religion, sexual orientation, language or social background.
- 1.3 We are committed to safeguarding children and adults at risk as an integral part of our Mission and Values. We will ***promote*** the welfare of children and adults at risk; work to ***prevent*** abuse occurring, seek to ***protect*** those who are risk of abuse or neglect; and ***respond*** as effectively as we are able to those who have been abused. We will take steps to identify those children and/or adults at risk.
- 1.4 Legal frameworks and procedures for dealing with safeguarding concerns vary from country to country, but we expect to see these fundamental principles applied wherever we are working.
- 1.5 Deaf and disabled children and adults may be particularly vulnerable to abuse, especially where they are more dependent on others due to the extent of their disability or have difficulty communicating. It is especially important to make sure all steps are taken to protect them from harm and to keep a watchful eye for signs of abuse, exploitation or neglect.
- 1.6 Safeguarding and responding to child/adult protection concerns is the responsibility of all staff, volunteers and representatives whether salaried or voluntary, whatever their role or status.
- 1.7 Promoting the welfare of children and adults at risk by working in partnership with them, their parents, carers and other agencies within the countries we operate is essential.

2. Scope

- 2.1 This policy applies to all Chapter Members, including Chapter Leads, Platform Leads, C-Suite, and the board of trustees, paidstaff, volunteers and sessional workers, agency staff, students or anyone working on behalf of the National Deaf Children's Society or its international arm Deaf Child Worldwide. The term 'staff' is used for simplicity throughout this document to refer to all the above.

3. Definitions

3.1 **Safeguarding** can be defined as:

- Protecting children and adults at risk from harm, exploitation and maltreatment
- Preventing harm which could result in the impairment of children's or adults' health or development
- Promoting the welfare of children and adults at risk and enabling them to achieve the best outcomes¹.

3.2 **Child/adult protection:** refers to the actions taken to protect children and/or adults who are at immediate risk of harm.

3.3 **Abuse:** Child/adult abuse, sometimes also referred to as 'maltreatment', is defined as all forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect, radicalisation, misuse of power, coercion or control over another person, commercial or other exploitation resulting in actual or potential harm to the child's/adult's health, development or dignity². Abuse is harm which is so severe or persistent that it's deemed "significant" and is likely to have a lasting effect on the health or development of the child or adult. This policy applies to all forms of harm, including harm which may be caused intentionally or unintentionally, and which may not reach the threshold of significant harm. Further definitions of harm/abuse can be found in the Procedures and Guidance documents.

3.4 **Child:** Although we recognise that the legal definitions of a child varies in different countries, for the purpose of this policy children are defined as all those who have not yet reached their 18th birthday in accordance with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child³. The guidance document sets out where there are legal definitions to consider within countries.

3.5 **Adults at Risk/vulnerable adults:** An adult at risk for the purpose of this policy, is "anybody 18 or over and

- 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."⁴.

The definition of an adult at risk varies from country to country. Some of our programmes and partners work with individuals aged 18-25 years. Accordingly, NDCS and DCW will respond to concerns regarding adults at risk that we support or come into contact within accordance to this policy and legislation applicable to the countries we operate in. We have a legal duty to apply safeguarding interventions when we identify an adult at risk.

3.6 **Vulnerable adults:** We also support or come into contact with other adults, who are not deaf themselves or related to a deaf child, through a range of services such as family events, helpline or Advice and Guidance Officers (AGO), local groups and family sign

¹ Adapted from the definition in Department for Education (2023) Working Together to Safeguard Children

² World Report on Violence and Health, WHO 1999 and 2002

³ UNCRC (1989) Guiding Principles. Available at: https://www.unicef.org/crc/files/Guiding_Principles.pdf

⁴ Care and Support Statutory Guidance, (as issued under the Care Act 2014) 2025

language sessions. All adults at some point experience vulnerability, for example through bereavement, relationship breakdown, job loss or due to characteristic factors such as living with disability, dementia and/or mental ill health. Whilst NDCS does not have a legal responsibility, NDCS and DCW will respond to adults identified as vulnerable, or experiencing a period of vulnerability, and in need of support by signposting them to other services such as their GP, social services or other relevant organisations, such as the Samaritans.

- 3.7 **Deaf:** We use the term ‘deaf’ to refer to **all levels of hearing loss in children, young people and adults**, including a partial, total or temporary loss of hearing. This includes those who may describe themselves as having a ‘hearing loss’, ‘hearing impairment’ or as ‘deaf’ and includes children/adults who have glue ear.

4. Principles

We will seek to keep children and adults safe by:

- 4.1 Valuing them, listening to and respecting them.
- 4.2 Through our work, supporting them to develop an awareness of unacceptable behaviour and what they can do about it.
- 4.3 Appointing a Head of Safeguarding and Assurance and a team of Designated Safeguarding Officers (DSOs) for NDCS and DCW.
- 4.4 Appointing a board member as Trustee Safeguarding Lead to have oversight of our safeguarding work.
- 4.5 Adopting safeguarding and child/adult protection practices through robust policies and procedures.
- 4.6 Making sure everyone understands their roles and responsibilities and providing effective management for staff through supervision, support, training and quality assurance measures.
- 4.7 Recruiting staff safely, ensuring all necessary checks are made.
- 4.8 Making sure that we provide a safe physical environment for children, adults and staff by applying health and safety measures in accordance with the country specific laws and regulatory guidance, and to any higher standards that may be set by us.
- 4.9 Recording and storing information professionally and securely, and sharing information about safeguarding and good practice with children and adults at risk, their families and staff via the most appropriate method to the country we are operating in.
- 4.10 Using our safeguarding procedures to share concerns and relevant information with agencies who need to know and who will manage it and respond appropriately.
- 4.11 Using our procedures to manage any allegation against staff or other service users appropriately, transparently and effectively, and to prevent the employment/ deployment of unsuitable individuals through effective due diligence.

- 4.12 Making sure that we have effective complaints and whistleblowing measures in place.
- 4.13 Making sure that we have effective escalations of concern processes in place.

5. Responsibilities and escalation

- 5.1 Safeguarding is the responsibility of everyone. This should be made explicit in every job or role description for staff, sessional workers and volunteers and referenced in agreements with partners and contractors.
- 5.2 The policy and procedures will be widely promoted and are mandatory for everyone involved in the National Deaf Children's Society and Deaf Child Worldwide.
- 5.3 Failure to comply with the policy and procedures will be addressed without delay and may lead to disciplinary process, ultimately resulting in dismissal/exclusion from the organisation.
- 5.4 We will make sure the charity has a dedicated team of DSOs who can provide advice on any safeguarding concerns or queries and escalate them where appropriate.
- 5.5 We will make sure there is clear internal escalation process to the Head of Safeguarding and Assurance, members of the C-Suite and Trustees, and clear external escalation to the relevant authorities responsible for child/adult protection, as well as within each country we operate. Our internal escalation process will support anybody who has concerns about how safeguarding concerns/issues are managed (or not), and any decision making, whether applied unsatisfactorily or not applied appropriately.
- 5.6 Our trustees will maintain an oversight of safeguarding within the organisation to make sure that those benefiting from, or working with the charity are not harmed in any way through contact with it. This includes having a nominated Trustee Safeguarding Lead, providing regular updates and annual safeguarding training for all trustees. The safeguarding responsibilities for trustees and for the Trustee Safeguarding Lead are set out in the trustees' role description.

6. Implementation

- 6.1 This policy is implemented through accompanying detailed procedures, specific to the UK or international context. The procedures contain all necessary forms, flowcharts and contact information. Guidance and training are also provided to help staff carry out their safeguarding and child/adult protection responsibilities.

In the UK

- Safeguarding Procedures and Guidance

Internationally

- DCW: Child/adult Protection and Safeguarding Procedures

7. Digital Safeguarding

7.1 Introduction

Social media and digital services have become an important part of everyday life. They are an exciting and engaging way of keeping in touch with friends and family, as well as groups and organisations.

We have increased our digital services so it is essential that service users are safeguarded from potential harm and abuse. We implement and regularly review appropriate safeguarding measures, monitoring and moderating systems.

7.2 We know that:

Many deaf children, young people, adults and their families use social media and online devices as a default of engagement with others due to various degrees of communication barriers.

There has been a rise in online abuse, inappropriate use of technology, the number of perpetrators of all ages, and the level of inappropriate contact, conduct and content. Online based abuse, radicalisation, bullying, grooming, exploitation for different purposes, harmful information and websites have increased significantly.

7.3 We will ensure that:

Our online services are designed and managed to the standards recommended by The Child Exploitation and Online Protection Command (CEOP) and the ICO Children's Code

We provide service users with information, advice and guidance on how to safely use our digital services.

We signpost to other organisations who may be more expert in guiding people on how to stay safe online.

Our staff are trained to follow and enforce our safeguarding processes so that our digital services provide safe, high quality environment our service users trust us to deliver.

Our safeguarding responsibilities are enforced when using devices (mobile, laptop, desktop etc.) and all digital platforms whether they are private conversations (e.g. WhatsApp) or public conversations (e.g. Facebook).

7.4 We will require all our staff to:

Conduct themselves professionally regardless of the method of communication with any child, adult or family.

Ensure they document online conversations, chats or interventions as they would via other means of offline communication, for instance face-to-face conversations. The same data protection and safeguarding protocols apply, such as seeking parental consent to record.

Follow all relevant safeguarding and data protection guidance when considering the use of digital equipment and securing consent to do so.

Only use the organisation's authorised devices, videos and cameras (including tablets, phones etc.) in order to take photos of service users. Under no circumstances are photographs or videos to be taken on personal devices. Secure written parental consent, or individual consent (if over 18 years old), before photographs or videos are created. The purpose of the photograph or video must be explicitly on the consent form and can only be used for that purpose. Images and videos should be captured on organisation's authorised devices that are shared, or which are temporarily loaned to them by the I.T. department for the purpose. Using organisation's devices assigned to staff permanently for their individual use should be avoided. You must discuss with your Chapter Lead or Sponsor and follow all requirements, such as risk assessments, secure parental consent, if this cannot be avoided. Written agreement from Chapter Lead or Sponsor is also required.

Understand they are not permitted to show any images from their work devices to anybody outside of the organisation.

Leave and securely store any devices not permanently assigned to individual staff that contains images of the people we support at one of the organisation's buildings, they may not be taken off-site.

7.5 Managing digital related concerns:

If the staff suspect that somebody is, or has been, subjected to harm or abuse through the use of social media or online devices, they must share their concerns with a Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO).

The DSO will also consider the best course of action, including contacting local police by calling 101 or 999 if there is a risk of immediate harm. Each police force has a dedicated unit for online investigations.

If the concern regards sexual abuse of child/ren or grooming of a child online, a referral may also be made to the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Command (CEOP), which is part of the UK's National Crime Agency (NCA).

Where a DSO cannot find a local police unit a referral to CEOP must be undertaken. CEOP will make arrangements with the relevant police force. CEOP works nationally and internationally to bring online child sex offenders, including those involved in the production, distribution and viewing of child abuse material to the UK courts. Referrals can be made at www.ceop.police.uk/ceop-reporting/. The DSO must take advice from the police and/or CEOP regarding delete and take steps to preserve or record evidence of online harm e.g. screenshots, but only if those authorities instruct to do so.

If the threshold for an allegation is not met and the threshold for any safeguarding considerations are not met, our Code of conduct policy, Complaints policy, Data Protection policy and/or disciplinary procedures, amongst others, will be considered and whichever takes prevalence will be applied as appropriate.

7.6 Our policies and conduct:

All policies and procedures are applicable and any breach will be treated the same whether it is online or offline. Inappropriate use of social media and/or online technology may breach our Safeguarding policy and procedures, and Safeguarding Allegations against

the Workforce procedure. These two documents are initially considered if any staff has breached safeguarding, data protection, safe and effective practice or conduct which may have, or did put any children or adults at risk.

In certain circumstances breaches may also result in reports to regulatory bodies, relevant Local Authorities and the police.

8. Further information and supporting documentation

- 8.1 A list of safeguarding personnel can be found in Appendix 1.
- 8.2 For further information or queries, including advice on implementing this policy and procedures, please contact any DSO.
- 8.3 This policy is supported by the additional following policies, rules, standards, forms and procedures. (The list is not exhaustive):
- Guidance for Safer Working Practice
 - Safer Recruitment and Vetting policy
 - Allegations Against the Workforce Procedures
 - E-safety policy
 - Confidentiality and Information Sharing policy
 - Lone Working policy and procedure
 - Serious Incident Reporting Guidance
- 8.4 Other related policies are:
- Complaints
 - Health and Safety
 - Equality and Diversity
 - Code of conduct
 - Whistleblowing
 - Data Protection
 - AI Policy
- 8.5 A list of relevant UK and international laws and guidance can be found in Appendix 2.

9. Revisions

- 9.1 This policy will be reviewed annually and additionally if a significant change is made to the laws, regulations, systems or processes related to this policy.

Appendix 1: Safeguarding personnel

The National Deaf Children's Society and Deaf Child Worldwide will have the following specific safeguarding roles:

- Trustee Safeguarding Lead
- Safeguarding Strategic Lead
- Head of Safeguarding and Assurance
- A team of 12 Designated Safeguarding officers for NDCS
- A Designated Safeguarding Officer dedicated to Deaf Child Worldwide, supported by two regional DSOs (one in East Africa and another South East Asia). The DSO is further supported by two Heads of Regions, and collectively overseen by safeguarding management personnel as cited above.
- Out of Hours coordinators (UK)

Questions and concerns may also be addressed to the Head of Safeguarding and Assurance:
email address: andrew.richardson@ndcs.org.uk

Names and contact details can be found as an appendix to the relevant procedures and guidance.

Appendix 2: Relevant laws and related guidance

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 1989

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

The Adults Support and Protection (Scotland) Act 2007

Associated Legislation (not limited to)

Data protection Act 2018 and accompanying GDPR

Human Rights Act 1998

Sexual Offences Act 2003

Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003

Mental Capacity Act 2005

Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006

Children and Young Persons Act 2008

Equality Act 2010

Protection of Freedoms 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) (not limited to)

Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023)

National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland (2021)

Cooperating to Safeguard Children and Young People (Northern Ireland, 2017)

Working Together to Safeguard People (Wales, 2017)

Prevent Strategy (2015)

Care and Support Statutory Guidance (England 2025)

The Adults Support and Protection (Scotland) Act 2007: Code of Practice 2014

Adult Safeguarding in Northern Ireland: Prevention and Protection in Partnership 2016

Information Sharing; Advice for safeguarding practitioners. (July 2018 updated July 2023)

National Professional Standards and Regulatory Bodies (UK)

Ofsted

Care Inspectorate

CQC

CIW

Local Agencies (UK)

Area Protection Committees

Safeguarding Board/Gateways for NI

Local Safeguarding Children Boards

Local Safeguarding Adult Boards

Local Safeguarding Children Partnerships

Local Safeguarding Adults Partnerships

In other countries where we work

Each country where we work has specific laws with which we will comply.