



SAFEGUARDING POLICY

PURPOSE

POPS aims to ensure the safe and secure provision of services for children, young people and vulnerable adults across all remits through effective inspection and regulation. The purpose of this policy is to outline POPS' **policy and associated procedures** in respect of identifying and responding to concerns regarding the safeguarding and protection of children, young people and vulnerable adults. Following such procedure will help to mitigate any further harm to children.

CHILD SAFEGUARDING COMMITMENT:

This policy is to ensure that POPS' staff, working operations and programmes cause no harm to children, that they do not expose children to the risk of harm and abuse, and that any concerns the organisation has about children's safety within the areas in which we work, are reported to the appropriate authorities, following the guidelines set out within this policy.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all POPS' employees, volunteers and trustees. Partner agencies will be made aware of this policy.

POPS' SAFEGUARDING LEAD: Stephen Sinnott. *The POPS' Safeguarding Lead is the focal point for staff to speak with initially when they identify a potential safeguarding matter, for advice and guidance.*

If the named Safeguarding Lead is not available, POPS' Operations manager or Head of Operations should be contacted.

POLICY

This policy, with the associated procedures, provides guidance for all staff who may come across concerns of this nature within the context of their work.

This Policy Should Be Used In Conjunction With:

- Confidentiality: Code of Practice
- Freedom of Information Act 2000
- The Common Law Duty of Confidentiality

- Data Protection Act 1998
- The Human Rights Act 1998
- The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 (section 115)
- Civil Contingencies Act 2000
- The Children Act 2004
- Protection of Freedoms Act 2012
- Sexual Offences Act 2003
- The POPS Safeguarding Procedure (HRP-16-21-01)
- The POPS Reporting Concerns About A Child or Vulnerable Adult Form (HRP-16-21-02)
- The POPS Internet and Email Policy (HRP-16-11)
- Relevant government guidance on safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults

This policy outlines the following:

- The principles guiding our staff and volunteers working with children and vulnerable adults.
- The systems we employ to protect children and vulnerable adults.
- The systems we employ to protect staff and volunteers working for POPS.

Key Principles

- Anyone under the age of 18 years should be considered a child for the purposes of this document.
- A vulnerable adult is any person over 18 years of age who perceives himself or herself as vulnerable or is vulnerable as a result of particular circumstances or characteristics (e.g. mental health problems).
- Every child is a 'rights holder' with non-negotiable rights to being protected.
- POPS recognises that the children and vulnerable adults with whom the staff and volunteers have contact are likely to have complex, contradictory, challenging and evolving needs and wishes arising from difficult developmental backgrounds.
- The welfare of children and vulnerable adults is a paramount consideration, to be balanced with the welfare and safety of staff and volunteers.
- All children and vulnerable adults whatever their age, culture, ability, gender, language, racial origin, religious belief and/or sexual identity have the right to protection from abuse.
- All suspicions and allegations of abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately.
- All staff, volunteers and trustees working with the families and friends of individuals in the criminal justice system will be made aware of the Safeguarding Policy.
- POPS recognises the statutory responsibility of Local Authority Children's Services Departments to ensure the welfare of children and is committed to working with Local Safeguarding Children Boards and to comply with their procedures.

Systems to Protect Children & Vulnerable Adults

- All staff and volunteers will be required to undergo an enhanced DBS check if they have regular unsupervised contact with children, young people and/or vulnerable adults.
- Knowledge of safeguarding (or being willing to attend safeguarding training) will be included in all POPS' job descriptions and advertisements.
- POPS will require at least two references for each new member of staff and safeguarding will be a standing item in all job interviews for POPS' roles.
- All new staff will be provided with a copy of this policy and will be required to sign to confirm they have read and understood the policy.
- Mandatory safeguarding training shall be provided to support staff and volunteers with their work with children and vulnerable adults upon induction and refreshed every two years or as legislation changes.
- Staff working with young people should do so on a 2:1 adult to child ratio.
- When working with vulnerable adults and/or children, staff will be expected to co-ordinate with and report to their line manager.
- Where concerns arise regarding the actions or behavior of a member of staff or volunteer, the POPS' Disciplinary Procedure will be implemented.
- POPS' Board of Trustees are responsible for overseeing POPS' safeguarding policy therefore safeguarding is a standing agenda item for meetings of the board. All members of the board will be provided with the safeguarding policy. When updates are made these will be provided to the board for approval.
- This policy will be accessible online via POPS' website and will also be summarised in a child-friendly format published with this document and in poster-format at POPS' project sites.

Systems to Safeguard Staff & Volunteers

- Mandatory safeguarding training shall be provided to support staff and volunteers with their work with children and vulnerable adults upon induction and refreshed every two years or as legislation changes.
- Staff working with young people should do so on a 2:1 adult to child ratio.

- POPS will provide staff with step-by-step guidance for reference, a disclosure reporting form template and flowchart (to include training and notes for accurate completion and what to do next) alongside training of how to complete these documents.
- Staff and volunteers who encounter difficulties or problems will be given the opportunity to “debrief” following direct work with children and vulnerable young adults. If appropriate, any recommendations or “feedback” will be passed on to the POPS Management Team.
- Safeguarding issues will be discussed during one-to-one sessions.
- All POPS’ staff involved in remote working (e.g., Family Support Workers) must contact their line manager before entering a non-POPS location, by text.

Data protection (GDPR)

- All research conducted solely or in partnership with others by POPS will adhere to the principles of the safeguarding policy, including:
‘Ensuring the rights and dignity of children and young people are upheld at all times’.
- Informed consent will be obtained for any interview after it has been explained to the child what this means. Informed consent will also be sought from their parent/career/guardian if the child is under 16.
- Use of photographs and images of children and vulnerable adults in POPS’ publications or marketing material will also require informed consent using the same process as above. They will be informed what they will be used for and for how long (3 years). Once the consent period has expired the photos will be archived and not used in any form of internal/external communications.
- Permission can be extended if the child or vulnerable adult, and their carer, if appropriate, agree and sign an additional time limited consent form.
- Children should only be interviewed with another person present, preferably someone whom the child is familiar with and if possible be a person of the child’s choice. They have the right to withdraw or stop the interview at any time without the need to justify their decision and can choose the gender of the person they are interviewed by.
- If notes are to be taken, either written or recorded in any other any, the reasons for this will be explained to the child and their permission obtained both verbally and in writing.

Confidentiality

It is the responsibility of the line manager or POPS Safeguarding Lead to determine whether or not issues need to be referred for investigation. Staff and volunteers may not make this decision. In the event that it is considered appropriate to make a referral, the appropriate agencies will be requested to investigate and take appropriate action to ensure the safety of a child or vulnerable adult.

Areas Where there May Be a Need to Break Confidentiality

- A child makes an allegation of abuse.
- A child tells you he/she is a victim of serious bullying by a child or adult.

- A child says that he/she is going to kill themselves or seriously self-injure.
- A child threatens to seriously harm another child.

Categories of Concern

Child abuse encompasses much more than physical injury. A broad framework of understanding is needed to make sense of the complex and varied issues entailed in this area of work. It is not easy to provide straightforward definitions. However, the following definitions encompass all national variations:

- **Physical Abuse**
Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. It includes fabricated illness whereby a parent or carer feigns the symptoms of, or deliberately causes, ill health in a child often through obtaining unnecessary or even dangerous medical treatment will also constitute physical abuse.
- **Emotional Abuse**
Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional ill-treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may involve 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 ill-treatment of a child, although it may occur alone.
- **Sexual Abuse**
Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative or non-penetrative acts. They may include noncontact activities, such as involving children in looking at pornographic material or watching sexual activities or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.
- **Neglect**
Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. It may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, failing to protect a child from physical harm or danger, or the failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. This may also include "Non-organic failure to thrive". It includes neglect of a child's basic emotional needs.
- **Acts of omission and commission**
A child may be abused by the direct commission of harm e.g. sexual abuse or by an omission to protect e.g. failure to supervise adequately. Children may be abused in a family or an institutional setting or more rarely by a stranger.
- **Sexual Abuse of Children and Young people via the internet and mobile phones**
This is a growing area of abuse. The Internet and Email Policy will be updated on a regular basis to cover this issue.
- **Employment exploitation**
Work that is illegal in terms of the child's age or exposes the child to danger

- **Grave concern**

Children whose situations do not fit into the above categories but for whom there is significant risk of abuse

Action on Occurrence or Suspicion of Child Abuse

Although POPS' staff and volunteers have no powers to investigate child abuse, all have a responsibility to take steps to protect children from abuse. Close cooperation between agencies is essential to protect children.

POPS' staff should feel able to act in good faith on their own initiative to take immediate steps and make common sense decisions to protect a child in immediate danger without fear of censure.

POPS' staff should always listen to and take seriously what a child is saying. The child may need to be reassured that they are right to be telling about their concerns. Do not attempt to question children without an agreement reached with specialist staff in the Local Authority and/or the Police. Failure to work in partnership in this task could result in future evidence being compromised. It is also abusive to the child for them to have to give distressing statements on more than one occasion.

Staff must follow agreed inter-agency information sharing protocols in reporting concerns and failure to do so could lead to disciplinary action.

Immediate Danger to a Child's Safety

Faced with a situation offering an immediate threat to a child a POPS staff member should:-

- Respond to secure the immediate safety of the child - this could include medical attention, contacting social services, police etc. - '999' if needed.
- Where possible consult with a senior member of staff but do not delay if this would place child at increased risk.
- Write down as soon as possible what was said and what was done.

Referring a Child for Whom There Is Concern

If a POPS' staff member believes to have witnessed possible evidence of child abuse they must follow the POPS' Safeguarding Procedure (HRP-16-21-01). By 'witness' is meant, for example:-

- Observing a suspicious mark on a child.
- Observing sexualised behavior.
- Relating something a child says to other recent events (i.e. putting 'two and two together') or discerning a pattern of concern from reading file record.
- Observing that a school age child has not been registered with a school or is persistently absent from school with no or an inadequate reason.

Information about possible child abuse must result in a decision about whether the information is evidence of abuse. If there is evidence of child abuse, the POPS Operations Manager must relay the information with the full background information and context to the appropriate local authority contact person or police.

Allegations against staff or volunteers

An allegation of abuse against staff, or volunteers must be dealt with under child protection procedures with the following additions:

- The POPS' Operations Manager or the Human Resources Manager must be informed of any allegations against a member of staff or volunteer.

An investigation into such an allegation would normally have 3 strands: a civil child protection investigation usually conducted by the police and social services, a parallel criminal investigation conducted by the police and an investigation conducted by POPS following the Disciplinary Procedure.

Confidential Reporting (Whistleblowing) Policy

POPS relies on the dedication, professionalism and skill of its staff. However POPS recognises there may be an occasion when there will be concern about a colleague's standard of practice including the possibility that a child may be being abused.

Staff at all levels should familiarise themselves with the Confidential Reporting (Whistleblowing) Policy. Staff should be aware of the ways by which they can express concern and take action.

Whilst whistleblowing may be an uncomfortable concept to embrace, it is integral to the safe management framework of POPS and staff should be aware of the ways in which they should express concern regarding suspected child abuse or poor practice which may lead to a child coming to harm by the actions of colleagues in the work setting.

Safeguarding Children in Specific Circumstances

Some groups of children are particularly vulnerable, or have additional needs and all those working with them should consider their circumstances with special care.

The following is a non-exhaustive list of categories that might require specific or additional consideration. There is additional information in nationally produced government guidance.

- Disabled children
- Children from minority ethnic groups or who do not have English as a first language
- Children living away from home in residential or other settings
- Social exclusion
- Domestic violence
- The mental illness of a parent or carer
- Bullying
- Female genital mutilation
- Children and young people with sexually problematic behavior
- Children abused through prostitution
- Substance Misuse
- Children and Families who go missing
- Complex or network abuse
- Forced marriage
- Fabricated or induced illness
- Migrant children
- Children of families living in temporary accommodation

Reporting a suspected safeguarding situation or incident.

If you witness or are made aware of a potential safeguarding incident, the following process must be followed.

- Contact POPS' safeguarding lead, Stephen Sinnott, immediately for guidance and advice
- Contact the local authority (LA) in the area the incident was witnessed/reported to you, follow the online Safeguarding reporting procedure
- Complete POPS' Safeguarding Report Form – forward by email to your line manager and POPS' Safeguarding Lead
- POPS' manager to check the incident has been reported to LA
- POPS' manager to place the completed safeguarding report form in Safeguarding folder on POPS' share drive.

REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed annually in line with the POPS Quality Cycle or sooner if legislative change prevails.