

SAFEGUARDING POLICY AND PROCEDURE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

This policy applies to anyone who has not yet reached their 18th Birthday

Policy Statement, Aims, Principles and Scope

Response is committed to safeguarding the welfare of children and young people who utilise or visit its services and to ensure seamless working in partnership to protect children at risk from abuse.

Response recognises its duty of care to safeguard children and young people as detailed under the Children Act 1989, along with the Children Act 2004 and the Children and Social Work Act 2017. The Children Act 1989 provides the foundational framework, focusing on the welfare of the child and the duties of local authorities and other agencies to protect children. The Children Act 2004 and the Children and Social Work Act 2017 further clarify and expand upon the responsibilities outlined in the 1989 Act. Working Together to Safeguard Children statutory guidance, was updated in December 2023, provides detailed information on the legal requirements and best practices for safeguarding children.

It encompasses a range of measures, including preventing maltreatment, safeguarding children's health and development, and ensuring they have safe and effective care. Safeguarding also involves taking steps to enable all children and young people to have the best possible outcomes.

Local safeguarding arrangements are led by three statutory safeguarding partners:

- the local authority
- the integrated care board (ICB)
- the police.

Working together with these and other relevant agencies, Response must ensure we work to protect and promote the welfare of children, including making arrangements to identify and support children at risk of harm.

This policy applies to all employees, volunteers, contractors, and anyone working on behalf of Response who may come into contact with children and young people at risk.

Definitions

Safeguarding children is defined as the actions taken to promote the wellbeing of children and protect them from harm. It encompasses a range of measures, including preventing maltreatment, safeguarding children's health and development, and ensuring they have safe and effective care. It also means ensuring children grow up in safe and effective environments and taking action to support them in reaching their full potential and to have the best possible outcomes. In essence, safeguarding is about creating a safe space for children to thrive and be free from harm.

Key Definitions Relevant to Safeguarding Children:

A child – is defined as a person who is aged under 18 and includes an unborn child.

A child at risk – is a child who:

- Is experiencing or is at risk of abuse, neglect or other kinds of harm.
- Has needs for care and support (whether or not the authority is meeting any of those needs).

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It is important to note that the use of the term 'at risk' means that actual abuse or neglect does not need to occur, rather that early interventions to protect a child at risk should be considered to prevent actual harm, abuse and neglect.

The two conditions necessary to demonstrate a child is at risk of abuse or neglect ensures that protection is provided to those with care and support needs who also require actions to secure their safety in the future. Risk of abuse or neglect may be the consequence of one concern or a result of cumulative factors.

Child Protection: Although part of safeguarding and promoting welfare, child protection refers to the activity that undertaken to protect specific children who are suffering, or are likely to suffer, significant harm.

Children with Disabilities: Any child with a disability is by definition a 'child in need' under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989. The Disability Discrimination Act 2005 (DDA) and the Equality Act 2010 define a disabled person as someone who has 'a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day to day activities'.

Research suggests that children with a disability may be generally more vulnerable to significant harm through physical, sexual, emotional abuse and/or neglect than children who do not have a disability. Disabled children may be especially vulnerable to abuse for several reasons (e.g., they may be at increased likelihood of being socially isolated with fewer outside contacts than non-disabled children). Where there are concerns about the welfare of a disabled child, they should be acted upon in the same way as with any other child.

Harm is defined as ill treatment; this includes sexual abuse, neglect, emotional abuse and psychological abuse. It also includes the impairment of physical or mental health (including that suffered from seeing or hearing another person suffer ill treatment) and the impairment of physical, intellectual, emotional, social or behavioural development (including that suffered from seeing or hearing another person suffer ill treatment).

Commitment

Response is committed to providing a service delivery environment which is free from abuse. Response will therefore:

- Recognise some children and young people are additionally vulnerable because of wellbeing and mental health difficulties, the impact of previous experiences, their level of dependency, communication needs or other issues including complex needs.
- Work in partnership with children and young people, their parents, carers and other agencies is essential in promoting children and young people's welfare
- Provide a setting where children with care and support needs feel listened to, safe, secure, valued and respected
- Ensure all those in a position of trust have been provided with up to date and relevant information, training, support and supervision to enable them to fulfil their role and responsibilities in relation to safeguarding
- Provide a clear procedure to follow when safeguarding concerns arise. All new staff will sign to confirm they have read the policy and procedure as part of their induction.
- Ensure effective and appropriate communication between all individuals in a position of trust
- Build strong partnerships with other agencies to promote effective and appropriate multi-agency working, information sharing and good practice.
- Appointing a Designated Safeguarding Lead and ensuring a clear line of accountability with regards to safeguarding concerns
- Assess the full range of risks faced and minimise those risks

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- Undertake checks on all staff and volunteers as per the Recruitment Selection and Appointment Policy at the recruitment stage, including professional references and the Disclosure and Barring Service
- Ensure that staff, volunteers, Board members and residents always maintain appropriate boundaries.
- Maintaining a record, detailing investigations and outcomes and action taken using the internal Safeguarding Panel process.
- Raise all safeguarding concerns with the relevant Local Authority Safeguarding Team and escalate safeguarding concerns with the NHS
- Operate confidential reporting systems so that anyone who suspects that abuse is taking place or is concerned about it can follow the procedures set out in Response's whistleblowing procedures.
- Ensure that there are appropriate risk assessments in place
- Protect, maintain and uphold the human rights of children and young people at risk
- Place safeguarding on the agenda of every continuous feedback session and team meeting

Principles

Response will adhere to the 6 key principles of safeguarding outlined in the Care Act 2022 which are relevant for all people including children, young people and adults:

- **Empowerment:** Supporting people in making their own decisions.
- **Prevention:** Taking proactive steps to prevent abuse.
- **Proportionality:** Responding to concerns appropriately and ensuring minimal intrusion.
- **Protection:** Providing support and representation for those in greatest need.
- **Partnership:** Working with other organizations to protect people at risk.
- **Accountability:** Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and accountability and having complete transparency in delivering safeguarding practice makes sure that everyone plays their part when it comes to safeguarding children and young people.

Roles and Responsibilities

Safeguarding is everybody's business, and everyone working with children and young people has a responsibility for keeping them safe and doing nothing is not an option. It is however important both individuals and organisations, are clear about their roles and responsibilities:

The Board of Trustees: Trustees should promote an open and positive culture and ensure all involved feel able to report concerns, confident that they will be heard and responded to. They carry the overall responsibility for ensuring that people are protected and that safeguarding responsibilities are met through this policy. This overall responsibility has been delegated to the Quality & Performance Committee (QPC). A quarterly report on incidents and safeguarding is submitted to the QPC. The Board of Trustees will have a delegated Safeguarding Lead who meets regularly with the Director of Adult Services & Safeguarding and the Quality Improvement Manager.

Lead Executive Director: The Director of Adult Services and Safeguarding is the identified Executive lead for this policy alongside the Associate Director of Children, Young People and Families and are responsible for ensuring that safeguarding issues are managed, and internal reporting and monitoring is in accordance with the policies and expectations laid out in any associated procedures. Safeguarding is an agenda item at the weekly Executive meeting and all Directors have a responsibility to oversee safeguarding issues within their department, using the organisation wide Panel Meetings to coordinate and plan work/responsibilities.

Managers are responsible for:

- ensuring the policy is accessible, read, understood, and adhered to by all staff within their teams/departments

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- day to day operational decisions and escalating issues as required and in line with this policy and associated procedures
- ensuring all safeguarding issues are managed in accordance with this policy and in line with the incident threshold matrix
- providing relevant management reports to their director to support continuous improvement and development
- ensuring Safeguarding Panel meetings are arranged.

All Staff must comply with the requirements set out in this policy and associated procedures. Where there are safeguarding issues that fall outside these services, or where there is any query, the final determination of who has lead responsibility for implementing this policy will be made on a case-by-case basis by the Director of Adult Services and Associate Director of Children, Young People and Families.

Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements and Learning from Serious Case Reviews

The Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (OSCP) Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements (MASA) report from December 2024 reflects key lessons learned from serious case reviews. The report emphasises the importance of multi-agency collaboration, timely information sharing, and early intervention—all of which are central to preventing harm and improving outcomes for children. It highlights that many serious incidents could have been mitigated through clearer communication between professionals, better recognition of risk factors (such as domestic abuse, neglect, and online harm), and more robust follow-up on concerns raised. This policy lays out a commitment to continuous learning and improvement in line with national guidance and local review outcomes

Contextual safeguarding

This is an approach to understanding and responding to young people's experiences of significant harm beyond their families. Contextual Safeguarding, therefore, expands the objectives of child protection systems in recognition that young people are vulnerable to abuse in a range of social contexts.

As well as threats to the welfare of children from within their families, children may be vulnerable to abuse or exploitation from outside their families. These extra-familial threats might arise at school and other educational establishments, from within peer groups, or more widely from within the wider community and/or online. These threats can take a variety of different forms and children can be vulnerable to multiple threats, including exploitation by criminal gangs and organised crime groups, such as county lines, trafficking, online abuse, sexual exploitation and the influences of extremism leading to radicalisation. Extremist groups make use of the internet to radicalise and recruit and to promote extremist materials. Any potential harmful effect to individuals identified as vulnerable to extremist ideologies or being drawn into terrorism should also be considered.

Practitioners working with children and their families should consider whether wider environmental factors are present in a child's life and are a threat to their safety and/or welfare. Children who may be alleged perpetrators should also be assessed to understand the impact of contextual issues on their safety and welfare.

Interventions should focus on addressing these wider environmental factors, which are likely to be a threat to the safety and welfare of a number of different children who may or may not be known to local authority children's social care. Assessments of children in such cases should consider the individual needs and vulnerabilities of each child. They should look at the parental capacity to support the child, including helping the parents and carers to understand any risks and support them to keep children safe and assess potential risk to child.

Abuse

In line with the M.A.S.H. Safeguarding Children Teams, Response Children & Young People's Teams recognise four main categories of abuse. The following definitions are taken from Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018:

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- Physical abuse
- Neglect
- Sexual Abuse
- Emotional Abuse

In addition to the types of abuse outlined in Safeguarding Children 2018, workers need to be aware of the following risks to children and young people:

- Child Sexual Exploitation
- Forced Marriage
- Female Genital Mutilation
- Domestic Abuse
- Bullying
- Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking
- Radicalisation
- Child criminal exploitation and County Lines
- Modern Slavery
- Self-Harm & Suicide.
- So called Honor based violence
- Financial Abuse
- Institutional/organisational abuse
- Mate crime
- Children exposed to extreme ideology
- Peer on peer abuse
- Children missing from care, home or education
- Prevent - extremism

NB detailed definitions are provided in **Appendix 1**

Online and Digital Safeguarding

We are committed to ensuring children's safety in the digital world by promoting responsible technology use, educating children and staff about online risks, and engaging parents with practical guidance. Our approach includes secure filtering and monitoring systems, clear reporting procedures for online concerns, and regular training using trusted resources such as those provided by the NSPCC. Online safeguarding is integrated into our broader child protection framework, recognising that digital safety is as vital as physical safety.

Mental Capacity Act 2005

All actions taken under this Policy and the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Procedure must have full regard to the Mental Capacity Act 2005 and the accompanying Code of Practice in relation to work with young people aged 16 & 17 years of age. All provisions within the Mental Capacity Act 2005 (with just four exceptions) apply to 16 & 17-year olds.

Those four exceptions are:

- You must be 18 before you can grant someone Power of Attorney or be an Attorney
- You must be 18 before you can make a legally binding advanced decision to refuse medical treatment
- You must be 18 before the Court of Protection can make a statutory will
- You must be 18 before a Supervisory Body can authorise a deprivation of your liberty in a care home or hospital. However, the Court of Protection can authorise deprivation of liberty in domestic settings from the

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age of 16 and from 1 October 2020 when Liberty Protection Safeguards are due to replace Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards the age will be 16+ in all settings.

Although the Mental Capacity Act is primarily adult legislation for those aged 16+, there are two situations where the Act can apply to younger children. These are as follows:

- If a child is subject to abuse/neglect not because of their age but vulnerability caused by other challenges such as mental health problems or complex needs the criminal offences in the Mental Capacity Act can be used.
- If a matter being dealt with by the Courts needs a decision that will extend beyond a child's 18th birthday it may be more appropriate to take this to the Court of Protection rather than the Family Court.

The Act sets out 5 key statutory principles for those aged 16+:

- The presumption of capacity – every adult has the right to make his/her own decisions and must be assumed to have the capacity to do so unless it is proved otherwise.
- The right of individuals to be supported to make their own decisions – people must be given all appropriate help before anyone concludes that they cannot make their own decisions. If a lack of capacity is established, it is still important to involve the person as far as possible in making decisions.
- Unwise decisions – a person is not to be treated as unable to make a decision merely because it is considered to be unwise.
- Best interests – anything done for or on behalf of a person without capacity must be in their best interests, and
- Least restrictive alternative – anything done for or on behalf of a person without capacity should be the least restrictive of their basic rights and freedoms including how they would have chosen to live if they could still have made this specific decision.

All decisions and actions taken directly affecting the person at risk must, where possible, take full account of their wishes. Where decisions have to be made on behalf of a person who lacks capacity full account must be taken of their best interests and the least restrictive option as outlined within the Act.

However, in some circumstances the wishes of the person may be overridden where there is agreed to be a serious risk of harm or there is a risk to other vulnerable people. This relates particularly to the sharing of information with other agencies. Reference: Mental Capacity Act 2005 – Joint Oxfordshire Policy

Confidentiality

Children have a right to confidentiality under Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights. It's important to respect the wishes of a child or any person who doesn't consent to share confidential information.

If you're not given consent to share information, you may still lawfully go ahead if the child is experiencing, or is at risk of, significant harm.

Child protection concerns, disclosures from children or safeguarding allegations made against a person in a position of trust must not be discussed across the workforce. This information should be shared solely with Designated Safeguarding Leads, Children's Social Care and/or the Local Area Designated Officer (LADO) as appropriate.

Personal information which is shared by the child or young person on a 1:1 level, such as sexual orientation or gender identification, should not be disclosed to the workforce.

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If staff and volunteers wish to discuss situations with colleagues to gain a wider perspective, this should be done on an anonymous basis with names and other identifying information relating to the child and their family remaining strictly confidential.

NB additional guidance can be found in appendix 2

Reporting abuse

Anyone who suspects or knows that abuse is taking place must raise their concerns immediately with your line manager or, if they are not available, your managers manager. You can also raise a concern following the procedure set out in the Whistleblowing policy and procedure.

If you are a contractor, contact a member of staff or the Project Manager as soon as possible, If the police need to be contacted urgently use 999, do not delay.

Where a child believed to be at risk of abuse is encountered or if they disclose or discuss potential abuse with you, it should be recognised that they may be describing abuse, albeit not explicitly.

If there is concern that a child is being abused or if they report abuse and/or neglect you should:

- Listen
- Take their allegation seriously
- Reassure them that action will be taken to keep them safe

Do not attempt to prompt or encourage the individual to make a statement, however it is important to write down as soon as possible anything that is disclosed when offering safety and general support.

The Safeguarding Lead must be informed immediately of any safeguarding concerns and further action will depend upon the circumstances of the case, the seriousness of the child's allegation and the local multi-agency safeguarding arrangements in place. If the child is in immediate danger or is at risk of harm a referral should be made to children's social care and/or the police.

The child should be kept informed of any action being taken, but, although it is important to maintain confidentiality, no promises should be made to keep the information a secret as this may need to be shared for their protection. It is then the role of social workers and/or the police to investigate cases and make a judgement on whether there should be a statutory intervention and/or a criminal investigation. If following this, there are then further signs of abuse and neglect, this should be reported and referred again. Following referral to a social worker a response should be received within one working day to confirm what further action may be needed.

Any safeguarding decisions should form a child-centered approach, with the aim of keeping the child in focus and, where possible, working in partnership with them and their families.

Advice and assistance can also be sought from the NSPCC helpline: 0808 800 500.

When an alleged crime has been committed, we are duty bound to make a report to the police. This information should be sensitively shared with the individual at risk. The decision to proceed and press charges will remain with the individual or with the court of protection or other responsible person should issues of capacity be found.

Be aware of the possibility of forensic evidence if the disclosure refers to a recent incident. If there is a possibility that forensic evidence exists, preserve the evidence. Do not clean it up.

Staff will have been considered to have reasonably met their duty of care when:

- all reasonable steps have been taken

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- reliable assessment methods have been used
- information has been collated and thoroughly evaluated
 - the risks of an intervention/action to an individual or others have been balanced with the risks of non-intervention or alternative action
 - the risk of increasing risk to the individual or others over time have been assessed
- decisions have been recorded, communicated and thoroughly evaluated
- policies and procedures have been followed
- actions are proactive and facts are confirmed.

Process flow chart and key steps can be found in **appendix 3**

Raising a Concern with the Safeguarding Team

This procedure must be followed, and the appropriate forms completed by the manager. This procedure has 3 stages to be completed:

- The Alert should be completed and submitted to the relevant Local Authorities Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) within 1 working day by completing the on-line alert form found at: <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/business/information-providers/adult-social-care-providers/referring-child>
- Before you complete a MASH referral form you must have read the Threshold of need matrix (pdf format) in reference to the case.
- You will need to have:
 - decided the level of risk related to the case
 - determined it to be level 3 or 4
 - inform the parents or carers using the MASH leaflet (unless informing parents/carers may increase the risk).
 - consider if the child or young person's needs can be met by services from within your own agency, or by other professionals involved with the family already

In all cases Response staff will confirm they are raising a formal safeguarding concern which Response believes might require an enquiry, tell M.A.S.H. how to contact Response to invite them to the strategy meeting and if a crime may have been committed confirm if M.A.S.H. will contact the police or wish Response to do so. Response staff will confirm if M.A.S.H. wish Response to make the initial enquiries or plan to take the lead in responding to the concern raised.

If the police need to be contacted use 999 or 101 as appropriate.

Initial Safeguarding/Child Protection enquiries should be completed and reported to M.A.S.H. within 24 hours. If M.A.S.H. ask Response to conduct these rather than proceeding with the enquiries themselves. Any assessment & safeguarding/protection report should be completed and reported to M.A.S.H. within 20 days.

Where it is unclear whether a concern requires a safeguarding response, refer to the Response Threshold of Needs matrix. If after consulting the Threshold of Need, Response still has concerns, but they do not require an immediate safeguarding response, contact will be made with the Locality and Community Support Service (LCSS) requesting a 'no names' consultation. The LCSS will advise Response on what to do next. If a referral needs to be made LCSS will advise Response of this.

One of the other key relationships for working with children and young people may be their school. This is particularly pertinent for teams working directly in schools (such as the Mental Health Support Teams).

Each school will have a Designated Safeguarding Lead alongside their specific policy for Safeguarding. In instances where Safeguarding concerns are raised with Response in schools, it is important that we include the school in the process. The schools will also hold more information on the child or young person which may inform our position.

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The only exception to this may be if an allegation is made about the school and school staff, where it would follow that in the first instance, we would go to the MASH team directly and inform the school leadership at the appropriate stage.

Additional guidance on information required when reporting a concern is detailed in **appendix 2**

When should the safeguarding procedure be initiated?

The responsibility for making the decision to initiate the Safeguarding Procedure lies with the Director of Department or delegated Safeguarding Lead. They will make this decision in consultation with the relevant manager and in conjunction with the relevant staff at M.A.S.H. It is the responsibility of Response staff and managers to make sure that one of the delegated Safeguarding Leads (or the person deputising in their absence) is informed promptly of concerns about potential abuse so that they have the necessary facts to make this decision. However, all staff have the right to raise an alert directly with M.A.S.H. should they feel the need to do so, following the procedure set out in the Response Whistleblowing Policy.

When the safeguarding concern is prompted by an incident occurring in a Response service, the manager is responsible for ensuring that the Response Incident Form is completed, relevant people are informed, and the form is forwarded to the delegated Safeguarding Leads. The full Safeguarding Procedure should only be initiated if the delegated Safeguarding Leads confirms that this is necessary.

All safeguarding alerts and incidents are recorded centrally on Inform providing full details of the alleged events which can be monitored through the investigation to outcomes and action taken. The central system is monitored by the Corporate Governance and Compliance team.

Investigation officers, managers and senior managers are responsible for ensuring actions are followed through in accordance with this policy and associated processes/timeframes.

It is the responsibility of the in liaison with the Designated Safeguarding Leads to review these on a regular basis (at least bi-monthly). Information will be included in the Quality Performance Committee report including trends and the lessons learned and advising the organisation on any actions needed.

4.5 Authority contact details:

Oxfordshire

Email: Mash-children@oxfordshire.gov.uk.

M.A.S.H. team can be contacted on **0345 050 7666** - office hours

Emergency Duty Team on **0800 833 408** – out of hours

LCSS Central: 0345 241 2705

LCSS North (including Banbury, Witney, Bicester, Carterton and Woodstock): 0345 241 2703

LCSS South (including Abingdon, Faringdon, Wantage, Thame, Didcot and Henley): 0345 241 2608

West Berkshire

[Report a concern about a child or young person - West Berkshire Council](#)

Email: child@westberks.gov.uk

CAAS: **01635 503090** – office hours

EDS: **01344 351999** – out of hours

Bath and Northeast Somerset

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[Safeguarding children | BCSSP \(bathnes.gov.uk\)](#)

Children's Social Work Services: office hours **01225 396111** or **01225 477926**,
out of hours **01454 615165**

Bristol City Council

[Keeping Children Safe \(bristol.gov.uk\)](#)

Advice lines: North: 0117 352 1499

East/Central: 0117 3576460

South: 0117 9037770

North Somerset

[Child protection and safeguarding | North Somerset Online Directory \(n-somerset.gov.uk\)](#)

Child protection team: 01275 888808

Supporting children

If/when a child reports they are suffering or have suffered significant harm through abuse or neglect, or have caused or are causing physical or sexual harm to others, the initial response from all professionals should be to listen carefully to what the child says and to observe the child's behaviour and circumstances to:

- Clarify the concerns
- Offer re-assurance about how the child will be kept safe
- Explain what action will be taken and within what timeframe

The child must not be pressed for information, led or cross-examined or given false assurances of absolute confidentiality, as this could prejudice police investigations, especially in cases of sexual abuse.

If the child can understand the significance and consequences of making a referral to children's social care, they should be asked for their views. It should be explained to the child that whilst their view will be taken into account, the professional has a responsibility to take whatever action is required to ensure the child's safety and the safety of other children

Advocacy

Children and young people using services offered by Response are entitled to the use of advocacy to assist them in making an allegation of abuse.

For those aged 16+, the Care Act states that where the adult involved in the safeguarding process would have 'substantial difficulty' in engaging in the safeguarding process they are entitled to a Care Act advocate if there is no other suitable adult (e.g., appropriate family member) to represent them. If the adult lacks capacity, they are eligible for an Independent Mental Capacity Advocate (IMCA) whether they have suitable family/friends. In Oxfordshire, both the IMCA service and Care Act advocacy services are run by Oxfordshire Advocacy so there is a single access point for obtaining the relevant advocate Tel: 01865 741200 Website: www.gettingheard.org

Allegations against members of staff, volunteers or management, committee members, trustees and contractors

- If serious allegations of abuse are made against a member of staff, they will be suspended with pay as soon as practical following discussion and agreement where possible with M.A.S.H. and/or police regarding the timing of suspension so that the allegations can be thoroughly investigated using the disciplinary action policy and procedure. Volunteers and management committee members in this position will also be suspended as soon as practical following discussion and agreement where possible with the M.A.S.H. and/or police regarding the timing of suspension and be subject to the disciplinary action policy and procedure.

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- Should the investigation determine that there is a case to answer, the staff member, volunteer or management committee member will be subject to disciplinary action. The police may also be contacted to pursue legal action against them.
- Should the investigation determine that there is no case to answer, the staff member, volunteer or management committee member will be offered additional support and supervision to assist them in returning to work.

Allegations against a child or young person using a service at Response

- If allegations of abuse are made against another child or young person using a service at Response, they may need to be withdrawn from a service where they pose a risk to other children or young people, until an investigation has been carried out. Depending on the nature of the alleged abuse and its seriousness, enquiries may be conducted by M.A.S.H. or Response staff if advised to do so. The child or young person concerned will be offered support during this time if at all possible.
- Should the investigation find that there is a case to answer, Response will liaise with M.A.S.H. on the best way forward. If the child or young person is not able to remain in receipt of the service concerned, Response will make reasonable attempts to assist them to find alternative support.

Staff Conduct, Training and Support

Response will not tolerate any staff member, worker or other person engaged to support or provide services to, or on our behalf to have:

- behaved in a way that has harmed, or may harm, an at-risk adult
- possibly committed a criminal offence against, or related to, an at-risk adult
- behaved towards an at-risk adult in a manner that may indicate they are unsuitable to work in a position of trust.

Any staff member identified to behave in such a way as to indicate one or more of the above statements, either within their work or as a consequence of actions within their personal life, may be subject to disciplinary action. Identification of such incidents can come from various different sources. Response will take prompt action to investigate any allegations made and will take any actions necessary to protect individuals and those that work with us, for us, and on our behalf.

Resulting actions can/may include a staff member being suspended and possibly dismissed.

Additionally, Response has a duty to refer staff member(s) to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) if they have:

- Satisfied the harm test, i.e., that the Company believes that the staff member(s) may:
 - harm a child or vulnerable adult
 - cause a child or vulnerable adult to be harmed
 - put a child or vulnerable adult at risk of harm
 - attempt to harm a child or vulnerable adult or incite another to harm a child or vulnerable adult.
- Received a caution or conviction for a relevant offence.

A relevant offence for the purposes of referrals to DBS is an automatic inclusion offence as set out in the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 (Prescribed Criteria and Miscellaneous Provisions) Regulations 2009 and the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups.

Broadly speaking these offences include all sexual offences, all offences involving children, most prostitution offences and murder. If you are unsure, contact the HR Department for guidance.

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For contractors, partners and suppliers, Response will raise concerns with the organization at a senior level and take advice from the relevant safeguarding team.

Staff Training

All staff and volunteers working with service users receive mandatory training in relation to the role and level of responsibility and accountability from Safeguarding Level 1 and 2 for front line workers to levels 3 and 4 for managers and senior managers/directors, the Mental Capacity Act, Deprivation of Liberty/Liberty Protection Safeguards and the Prevent Agenda. All training must be completed annually.

Trustees may receive specialist training on their safeguarding governance duties and safeguarding leads will attend management level training for both adults and children's services where required.

Discussion of safeguarding issues will form part of regular support and continuous feedback sessions as set out in the policy and procedure on Support and Supervision.

Appropriate Boundaries for Employees

All staff and volunteers must follow the guidance on appropriate professional boundaries that are set out in a separate document entitled Appropriate Professional Boundaries.

Undertaking recruitment checks

- Response has a Policy for the safer Recruitment Selection and Appointment of Staff, under which candidates for all posts with Response will be asked suitable questions at interview to assess their understanding of safeguarding and be required to provide two professional references and undergo a check by the Disclosure and Barring service every 3 years. New employees will not be allowed to work unsupervised until such a check has been successfully completed.
- Volunteers will be subject to the same checks and safeguards above as described in the Volunteer policy
- For contractors, Response will:
 - Undertake due diligence on all new contractors
 - ensure assurance regarding recruitment checks is provided by the contracting organisation on at least a bi-annual basis

Equality and Inclusion

We are committed to promoting equality, diversity, and inclusion in all aspects of our safeguarding practice. Every child, regardless of their background, identity, or ability, has the right to feel safe, valued, and respected. We actively challenge discrimination and ensure our policies and procedures are inclusive and accessible to all. Our staff are trained to recognise and respond to the diverse needs of children and families, fostering an environment where everyone is treated fairly and with dignity.

Other Legislation and Guidance

International Legislation

- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 1991

UK Legislation

- Children Acts' 1989 amended 2004
- Children and Families Act 2014
- Sexual Offences Act 2003
- The Mental Capacity Act 2005 & DoLS
- Equality Act 2010
- Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998

SAFEGUARDING POLICY AND PROCEDURE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

- Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Act 2013
- Data Protection Act and General Data Protection Regulations 2018

UK Guidelines and Best Practice

- Special educational needs and disability (SEND) code of practice: 0 to 25 years
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018
- What to do if you are worried a Child is being Abused 2023
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2016 amended 2019

Local Authority Policy, Procedures and Guidelines

- Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board guidelines
- Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board multi-agency policy and procedures

Response Policy and Procedure

- Whistle Blowing Policy and Procedure
- Recruitment and Selection Policy and Procedure
- Disciplinary Policy and Procedure
- Volunteers Policy and Procedure
- Complaints Policy and Procedure
- Incident Reporting Procedure

Review

If you require assistance in order to read or understand this policy, please let your manager or HR know as translation, interpretation, Braille or a signing service can be made available.

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|----------------|---|--------------|------------|
| Directorate: | Associate Director of Children, Young People and Families | | |
| Lead Officer: | Jamie Douglas | | |
| Approved by: | Policy Group and copy sent to Quality & Performance Committee | | |
| Approval Date: | 16.04.2025 | Review Date: | 25.02.2025 |

Change History

| Version | Issue Date | Originator/Modifier | Reason for Change |
|---------|------------|-------------------------------|---|
| 1 | 09.11.2021 | Angelo Fernandes | Annual Review |
| 2 | 09.11.2022 | Louise Packer | Revision to include clarity on roles and responsibilities, process and authority contact details |
| 3 | 09.11.23 | Louise Packer | Annual review – no amendments required. |
| 4 | 02.04.24 | Angie Gallagher | Change of Lead Officer and escalating responsibilities |
| 5 | 16.04.25 | Jamie Douglas and Anne Clarke | Annual review |
| 6 | 08.07.25 | Jamie Douglas | Additional sections added: digital safeguarding, equality and inclusion, and learning from safeguarding reviews |