



Safeguarding Children Policy

Aim of the Policy

The aim of this policy is to provide members of the Staffordshire Parent Carer Forum (hereafter referred to as StaffsPCF) Steering Group with clear guidance about their role and responsibilities in safeguarding children, and to provide information for parents and carers about the safeguarding measures that StaffsPCF employs to ensure that it meets its responsibilities to promote the welfare of, and safeguard children and young people.

Designated person for safeguarding

The designated safeguarding lead for StaffsPCF Steering Group is **Jayne Huxley-Steadman**.

The role of the nominated officer is to:

- To provide a point of contact between StaffsPCF and adult social care and the police.
- To offer consultation and advice about safeguarding concerns pertaining to the activity of StaffsPCF

Legislation and guidance that underpins this policy

Relevant legislation and guidance relating to the safeguarding of children are reflected in this policy, including:

- Children's Act 1989 (Section 17 and Section 47)
- Sexual Offences Act 2003
- Children's Act 2004
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026
- Domestic Abuse Act 2021 (Part 1, Section 3, Children as victims of domestic abuse)
- Staffordshire Safeguarding Children's Partnerships (SSCP) & Policies and Procedures

The Principles Behind the Safeguarding Children Policy

In today's world all agencies and individuals now share the responsibility to protect children from harm or the risk of harm. We live and work in a climate where we, as adults, *"have a duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children"*

The application of StaffsPCF Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and Procedures is based on the following key principles:

- The welfare of the child is paramount.
- All children, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious belief and/or sexual identity have the right to protection from abuse.
- Whilst it is not the responsibility of this organisation to determine whether or not abuse has taken place (this is undertaken in liaison with external child protection professionals), it is everyone's responsibility to report any concerns in relation to children to the relevant authority.



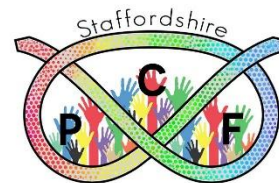
- The StaffsPCF Steering Group does not have direct contact with children and young people; however by the nature of the organisation we work directly with parents and carers of disabled children and young people. Therefore it is essential that we have robust policies and procedures.
- All Steering Group members are expected to be familiar with, and comply with this policy, and its procedures.
- Staffs PCF will review and update our policy and good practice annually

Policy

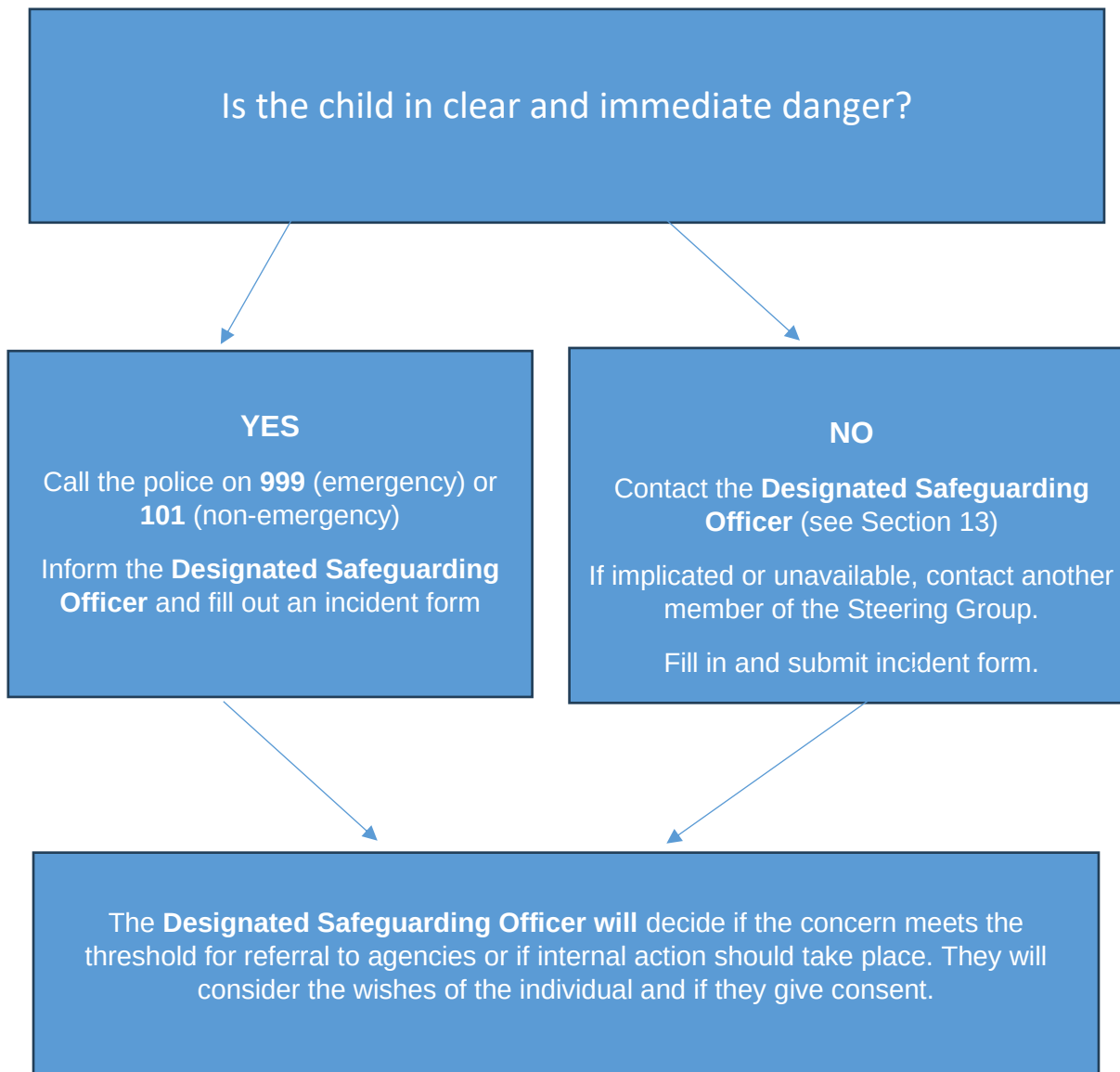
- Parent/carers of children who attend or are members of StaffsPCF need to be aware that any concerns that a child or vulnerable adult has, or may be experiencing harm, which comes to the attention of Steering Group members may be referred to children's social care.
- That Steering Group members, and any staff employed by StaffsPCF will be recruited using safe recruitment practices (including the taking of references and a DBS check if necessary) to **ensure** they are suitable individuals to take on a role which puts them into contact with large numbers of parent carers.
- Steering Group Members and staff will be asked to carry out training and undertake an Induction to assist them to fulfil their duties

Procedures

- This guidance applies to any safeguarding concern, including where the alleged abuser may be a member of staff or volunteer.
- Whilst recognising that the StaffsPCF Steering Group will have little direct contact with children and young people, its work with parent carers means that they may indirectly have contact with children and young people and certainly have contact with parent carers who often live in particularly challenging situations.
- Therefore these procedures are designed to support the recognition of abuse of children, and provide clear guidance about what processes and actions should be taken if this is identified to ensure that children are safeguarded and protected.



Reporting Flowchart



Safeguarding Disabled Children and Young People

There is clear evidence that disabled children and young people have an increased vulnerability to being abused, and that the presence of multiple impairments further increases their vulnerability. There are many reasons for this, and it is important that all those who work with disabled children and young people have some understanding of these reasons while ensuring that they offer appropriate support to any child or young person who discloses abuse



Dealing with Cases of Abuse

1. Recognising and Responding to Abuse

There are many potential indicators and signs of abuse, most of which may also be signs of other forms of injury or ill health. Those working with adults at risk should familiarise themselves.

2. Definitions and types of Abuse

Abuse may be defined as the wrongful application of power by someone in a dominant position. It involves an imbalance of power and exploitation without a full and informed consent. Abuse can take several different forms and may be a single act or repeated acts.

These definitions are based on those from Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026

Physical abuse

- Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child.
- Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer feigns the symptoms of, or deliberately causes ill health to a child whom they are looking after. This situation is commonly described as factitious illness, fabricated or induced illness in children or “Munchausen Syndrome by proxy” after the person who first identified this situation. A person might do this because they enjoy or need the attention they get through having a sick child.
- Physical abuse, as well as being the result of a deliberate act, can also be caused through omission or the failure to act to protect.

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 making a child feel or believe they are worthless or unloved, inadequate or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of the other person.
- It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. It may also involve causing children to feel frequently frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of a child.
- Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill treatment of a child, though 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, or consents to, what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative acts such as rape, buggery or oral sex, or non-penetrative acts such as fondling.
- Sexual abuse may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, pornographic material or watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.
- Boys and girls can be sexually abused by males and or females, by adults and by other young people. This includes people from all different walks of life.

Neglect

- Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. It may involve a parent or a carer failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, leaving a young child home alone or the failure to ensure that a child gets appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.
- It is accepted that in all forms of abuse there are elements of emotional abuse, and that some children are subjected to more than one form of abuse at any time. These four definitions do not minimise other forms of maltreatment.

Domestic Abuse and the Abuse of Children

- Prolonged or regular exposure to domestic abuse can have a serious impact on a child's development and emotional wellbeing, even when a parent tries to protect their children.
- The negative impact of domestic abuse is made worse when combined with alcohol, drug misuse or poor mental health.

Online Abuse

- Online abuse is any type of abuse that happens on the internet, using any device connected to the web, e.g. computers, tablets and mobile phones.
- Online abuse might involve cyber-bullying, emotional abuse, grooming and sexting. It can also involve online Artificial Intelligence (AI) imagery where children are making images, abusing one another.

Note

Recent guidance notes other sources of stress for children and families, such as social exclusion, the mental illness of a parent or carer, or drug and alcohol misuse. These may have a negative impact on a child's health and development and may be noticed by an organisation caring for a child. If it is felt that a child's well-being is adversely affected by any of these areas, the same procedures should be followed.



3. Responding to a child making an allegation of abuse

- Stay calm, listen carefully to what is being said and take it seriously
- Find an appropriate early opportunity to explain that it is likely that the information will need to be shared with others - do not promise to keep secrets
- Allow the child to continue at his/her own pace, never stop a child who is freely recalling
- Ask questions for clarification only, and at all times avoid asking questions that suggest a particular answer
- Reassure the child that they have done the right thing in telling you
- Maintain focus on what is in their best interest
- Tell them what you will do next and with whom the information will be shared
- Record in writing what was said using the child's own words as soon as possible, note the date, time, any names mentioned, to whom the information was given and ensure that the record is signed and dated

Helpful statements to make

- I believe you (or showing acceptance of what the child says)
- Thank you for telling me
- It's not your fault
- I will help you

Do not say

- Why didn't you tell anyone before?
- I can't believe it!
- Are you sure that this is true?
- Why? Who? When? Where?
- Never make false promises

Do not

- Take photos of injuries
- Examine marks and injuries
- Ask the child to remove clothing
- Get the child to write anything down
- Give your opinion or talk about your own personal experiences

4. Should we tell parent / carers if we are going to make a referral?

It is good practice to be as open and honest as possible with parent carers about any concerns and if you need to make a referral to social care, you should normally discuss this with the parent carer before you do. However, inability to inform parent carers should not prevent a referral being made. It



would then be a joint decision with Children's Social Care about how and when the parents should be approached and by whom.

However you should **NOT** discuss your concerns with parent carer in the following circumstances

- Where sexual abuse or sexual exploitation is suspected
- Where organised or multiple abuse is suspected.
- Where Fabricated or Induced Illness (previously known as Munchausen Syndrome by Proxy) is suspected
- Where Female Genital Mutilation is the concern
- In cases of suspected Forced Marriage
- Where contacting or discussing the referral would place a child, yourself, or others at immediate risk.

5. Guidance on how to respond to a parent carer disclosing abuse

Do

- If you enter into a discussion with a parent carer who you believe may begin to disclose information which leads you to believe that a child has suffered, or may suffer harm, make sure they know as soon as possible that you will not be able to keep this information to yourself.
- Treat any allegations extremely seriously and act at all times towards the parent carer as if you believe what they are saying.
- Tell the parent carer they are right to tell you.
- Be honest about who you have to tell and why.
- If a referral needs to be made to safeguarding, encourage the parent carer to make the referral themselves. Support them if necessary – however be clear that if they won't do this you will have to do this.
- Make sure you are clear (if possible) where the child / young person is at the current time, and consider their immediate safety.
- If you have to make the referral, do tell the parent carer what you are doing and when, and keep them up to date with what is happening.
- Write down everything said and what was done.

Do not

- Don't make promises you can't keep – e.g. tell people they can tell you things in confidence.
- Don't interrogate the parent carer – it is not your job to carry out an investigation – this will be up to the police and Children's social care, who have experience in this.
- Don't do nothing – make sure you tell your nominated Safeguarding Children person (Jayne Huxley-Steadman) immediately – they will know how to follow this up and where to go for further advice.



6. Reporting Procedures – DO NOT DELAY

Emergency Situations

- If emergency medical attention is required this can be secured by calling an ambulance (dial 999) or taking a child to the nearest Accident and Emergency Department.
- If a child is in immediate danger the police should be contacted (dial 999) as they alone have the power to remove a child immediately if protection is necessary, via their powers to use Police Protection

Other situations

- It is vitally important that any disclosure made in confidence is recorded factually as soon as possible; this is whether or not the matter is taken to another authority.

An accurate account should be made of:

- Date and time of what has occurred and the time the disclosure was made
- Names of people who were involved
- What was said or done by whom
- Any action taken by the group to gather information and refer on
- Any further action, e.g. suspension of a worker or volunteer
- Where relevant, reasons why there is no referral to a statutory agency
- Names of person reporting and to whom reported

The designated member of the StaffsPCF responsible for Safeguarding Children (Jayne Huxley-Steadman) should then use the appropriate reporting systems for the situation. This may be reporting the matter to children's social care or the police. This is why recording all information impartially and accurately is vital as this could be used for evidence for later use.

The Local Safeguarding Children's Board will be able to provide you with Inter-Agency referral forms to report a concern, or you may wish to devise your own form. Completed forms and any written information regarding Safeguarding Children issues concerning individual's needs to be kept in a safe locked place to ensure confidentiality. Refer to appendix 1 for important contacts.

7. Allegations against Adults who work with Children

If you have information which suggest an adult who works with children or young people (in a paid or unpaid capacity) has

- Behaved in a way that has harmed or may have harmed a child
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against, or related to a child
- Behaved towards a child/ren in a way that indicated s/he is unsuitable to work with children, you should speak immediately with the designated safeguarding lead
- The designated safeguarding lead will consult with / make a referral to the children's social care.



8. Recruitment selection and Vetting Process

- Any employees, (including self employed) will be subject to a rigorous recruitment process, which may include a vetting process with a DBS check if necessary, and references sought as well as a formal interview process.
- Steering Group members will also be vetted to ensure that they are suitable individuals to take on a role which places them in contact with a large number of parent carers. This will include the taking of references, if necessary.
- Steering Group Members and staff will be provided with training and induction to assist them to fulfil their duties.

9. Code of Conduct

StaffsPCF has a Code of Conduct which all Steering Group members are expected to comply with.

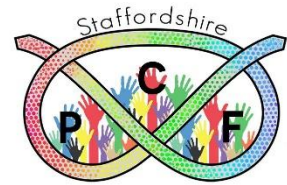
The Code of Conduct has a clear section in relation to action taken should a safeguarding issue be raised in relation to a member of the Steering Group.

Steering Group members must inform the Chair about any personal difficulties that might affect your ability to exercise your responsibilities appropriately or risk bringing the name of StaffsPCF into disrepute.

The following are examples of types of circumstances in which a member of the Steering Group may be asked to step down:

- Any allegation that an individual may have committed, or is being investigated in relation to having committed a crime
- Any child protection or safeguarding concern relating to children and / or vulnerable adults.
- Any significant challenge between individuals and Government agencies (e.g. where individuals may end up in a litigious relationship with a central or local Government Department)
- Other similar circumstances

In these situations, it will be standard practice to ask the Steering Group member to temporarily stand down until the issues are resolved. This is a neutral and non-judgemental position, designed to protect the organisation and the individual, and to ensure the individual involved is able to focus all of their attention on the issue at hand.

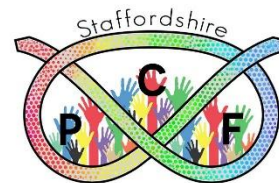


10. Prevent Duty

Staffs PCF is committed to the principles of the Prevent Duty under the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015, namely to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism. We will ensure that all relevant staff and volunteers:

- Understand what radicalisation is and why people may be vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism
- Are aware of extremism and the relationship between extremism and terrorism;
- Know what measures are available to prevent people from becoming drawn into terrorism and how to challenge the extreme ideology that can be associated with it;
- Obtain support for people who may be exploited by radicalising influences by referring into the Staffordshire Police Prevent Team.

Adopted: 05/10/22
By: PCF Steering Group
Reviewed: 13/05/2025, 02/06/2026
Next Review: 02/06/2027



APPENDIX 1

Important contacts outside the organisation

Staffordshire County Council – Staffordshire Children’s Advice & Support (SCAS) formerly known as First Response Team. Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)

Telephone: 0300 111 8007 or 0800 1313 126 (Mon – Thurs 8.30am – 5.00pm) (Fri 8.30am-4.30pm)

Online: [Child protection and safety | Staffordshire County Council](#)

A trained member of staff will be available to help you during the above times (excluding Bank Holidays). To report a concern outside of these hours, please contact the Emergency Duty Service (Out of Hours Service)

Telephone: 0345 604 2886

Mobile: 07815 492613

Email: eds.team.manager@staffordshire.gov.uk

Stoke-on-Trent City Council – Safeguarding Referral Team.

Children’s Advice & Duty Service (CHAD)

Telephone: 01782 235100 (Mon – Fri 8.30am – 6.00pm)

To report a concern outside of these hours please contact the Emergency Duty Team (Out of hours)

Telephone: 01782 234234

Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent - General enquiries

Telephone: 01785 277151

Email: sscb.admin@staffordshire.gov.uk

Staffordshire Safeguarding Children Board, 1 Staffordshire Place, Stafford, Staffordshire. ST16 2DH

Prevent

- [National Prevent referral form.pdf \(PDF, 213.93 KB\)](#)
- [Police Prevent Team](#) website

Other numbers

Staffordshire Police, non Emergency 0300 123 4455

Crimestoppers 0800 555 111

NSPCC Helpline 0808 800 5000

Staffordshire Together for Carers Service 0300 303 0621 (firstcontactcarers@staffordshire.gov.uk)

National Police Prevent Advice Line 0800 011 3764

Integrated Offender Management Gangs Unit – 01785 233281 or 233236

**If you believe someone is at immediate risk of harm you should
call the emergency services on 999
or 101 (Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub)**