

SAFEGUARDING POLICY 2024

Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults (CYPVA)

CONTENTS	
1	Introduction
2	Safeguarding Policy – (Prevent)
3	Scope of the policy
4	What is significant harm?
5	Procedure for protecting children from harm including dealing with discovery and disclosure of abuse
6	Code of Behaviour for staff and volunteers
7	Safeguarding Officers
8	Staff and volunteer’s recruitment procedures
9	Monitoring the policy and procedures
Appendix A	The legal framework
Appendix B	Roles requiring Disclosures (criminal record checks)
Appendix C	Useful contacts
Appendix D	Incident reporting form
Appendix E	Procedure for dealing with allegations of child abuse
Appendix F	Policy on the handling of and safekeeping of Disclosure Information
Appendix G	Categories and signs of child abuse
Appendix H	Code of Behaviour
Appendix I	Responsibilities of Safeguarding Officers

Appendix J	COVID 19
-------------------	-----------------

Accountable Officer: Wendy Oparah

Change control register			
Revision no.	Comment	Owner	Date
V1	Original	Stella Oparah	May 2021
V2	version control added & document format amended	Stella Oparah	May 2022
V3	version control added & document format amended	Wendy Oparah, Adline Nwankwo Bokesa & Proscovia Kasozi	January 2024
V4			

KEY CONTACTS

JS Consult Safeguarding Consultant - Stella Oparah

JS Consult Designated Leads- Proscovia Kasozi, Adline Nwankwo Bokesa

SAFEGUARDING Officer/s

Wendy Oparah

If you have any safeguarding concerns you can speak to our safeguarding team mention above or can contact us via email safeguarding@jsconsultltd.com

1 SUMMARY OF CONTENTS

Chapter 1 Introduction

JS Consult Limited values children, young people and vulnerable adults highly as equal partners on all projects. The word 'child' generally refers to young people up to 18 years of age. We also value the young people and parents with which we work. We aim to ensure that our work with them

promotes their emotional and mental health, welfare and development and we work to make sure that they are kept safe from harm while in our care.

Chapter 2 Safeguarding Policy

We guide those staff and volunteers who work with children so that they show respect for children's and young people's welfare in all that they do. This Policy has been written to ensure that all children, young people and vulnerable adults who are involved in the work undertaken by JS Consult are safeguarded and protected and that staff and volunteers on the project are guided through this policy in relation to how that can be ensured and maintained through their actions.

Chapter 3 Scope of the policy

The policy covers all staff and volunteers (paid and unpaid). We recognise that the degree to which staff and volunteers interact with children, young people and parents will vary according to the nature of their work but even those not directly working with children, young people or parents might have access to sensitive information or come across concerns. Those who work directly with service users are subject to stringent selection and management procedures whilst those who might occasionally be asked to engage with children, young people or parents on behalf of JS Consult will be expected to have a thorough knowledge of and adhere to a Code of Behaviour. Agencies through which JS Consult works are also expected to show that they operate stringent child and vulnerable adult protection procedures, and we will work in partnership to ensure that the needs of children, young people and vulnerable adults are always of paramount importance.

Chapter 4 What is significant harm?

The Children's Act 2004 introduced the concept of significant harm as the threshold that justifies compulsory intervention in family life in the best interests of the child/young person. The Children Act 2004 is an Act of the Parliament of the United Kingdom. The Act amended the Children Act 1989, largely in consequence of the Victoria Climbié inquiry. Whilst the definition of significant harm is open to interpretation, it is most often a compilation of significant events, which interrupt, change or damage a child's or young person's physical and psychological development. There are four commonly identified categories of abuse, which constitute significant harm.

Chapter 5 Procedures for protecting children, young people and vulnerable adults from harm, including dealing with discovery and disclosure of abuse

Staff and volunteers working for JS Consult should strive to prevent abuse occurring. All complaints and allegations of abuse should be reported without delay. A situation may occur where abuse is discovered or suspected by an individual or where a child or young person takes a member of staff or volunteer into their confidence, revealing that s/he has been abused. This chapter covers procedures for reporting abuse and a brief outline of what will happen next. The simple steps are: **LISTEN, REASSURE, REPORT, RECORD**. There is also a JS Consult Child Protection Procedure available which will give you a step-by-step guide of what to do in an emergency or when a disclosure has been made.

Chapter 6 Code of Behaviour for staff and volunteers

Every member of staff and volunteer who works with children or young people either on a regular or occasional basis needs to be aware of their roles and responsibilities and to have clear guidelines under which to operate. One way of achieving this is to have a Code of Behaviour, which clarifies what is acceptable and what is not acceptable.

Chapter 7 Safeguarding Officers

JS Consult will ensure that relevant members of staff are designated Safeguarding Officers (SOs). They will be responsible for ensuring that the policy and procedures are followed, for taking action

where the Code of Behaviour is breached, and for reporting abuse to the statutory authorities. One SO will adopt strategic responsibility for safeguarding issues at JS Consult.

Chapter 8 Staff and volunteer recruitment procedures

JS Consult will thoroughly check the suitability of all staff and volunteers recruited to work regularly with children or vulnerable young people. This will include requesting DBS checks where appropriate. Volunteers in regulated roles will be required to attend a compulsory training programme and regular supervision. The policy details the various steps in the recruitment processes for staff and volunteers. Although these processes are similar, it should be noted that volunteers do not hold the same employment status as members of staff.

Chapter 9 Monitoring the policy and procedures

JS Consult is committed to monitoring the effectiveness of the Safeguarding Policy and procedures to ensure that they achieve their objectives. The monitoring will take two lines of approach: internal and external review.

Appendix A - The legal framework

The most relevant current legislation in the context of the charity's work in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland are outlined. JS Consult will review this document periodically to ensure that it is kept up to date.

Appendix B – Roles requiring Disclosures

A list of roles requiring enhanced and standard Disclosures and/or documentation confirming that an understanding of and adherence to the Code of Behaviour.

Appendix C – Useful contacts

List of useful telephone numbers and addresses is given.

Appendix D – Incident reporting form

Is a form on which details of each incident of suspected child abuse or disclosure must be recorded in order to ensure consistency of approach and retention of detail.

Appendix E – Procedure for dealing with allegations of child abuse against a member of staff or volunteer

The procedure is for detailing actions to be taken and areas of responsibility in the event that an allegation of child abuse, is made against a member of staff or volunteer.

Appendix F – Policy on the handling of and safekeeping of Disclosure information

Policy detailing how disclosure information will be handled, stored and destroyed.

Appendix G – Four categories of child abuse and abuse of vulnerable adults

Definitions of the recognised categories of abuse are given as well as possible signs of abuse.

Appendix H – Code of Behaviour

The full Code of Behaviour described in Chapter 6 is provided.

Appendix I – Responsibilities of Safeguarding Officers

Appendix J – COVID 19

2 JS CONSULT SAFEGUARDING POLICY

Policy Statement

JS Consult values children, young people and vulnerable adults, we recognise that whilst some children, young people and vulnerable adults are more vulnerable than others, all have equal rights to protection. We aim to ensure that our work with children, young people and vulnerable adults promotes their health, welfare and development and we recognise our duty to make sure that they are kept safe from harm while in our care. We guide those staff and volunteers who work with children, young people and vulnerable adults so that they show respect for the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults in all that they do, and in doing so, we also protect the welfare of our staff and volunteers and the good reputation of JS Consult.

JS Consult will endeavour to safeguard children, young people and vulnerable adults by:

- 1 Making sure that our staff and volunteers who work regularly with children, young people and vulnerable adults are carefully selected, trained and supervised and have clear roles.
- 2 Expecting staff and volunteers who have contact with children, young people and vulnerable adults to abide by a clear Code of Behaviour, and to report any breaches of the code by colleagues.
- 3 Advising parents, carers, children, young people and vulnerable adults, staff and volunteers of the organisation's Safeguarding procedures including details of how to report any concerns.
- 4 Working collaboratively with parents, carers, children, young people and vulnerable adults, wherever possible when concerns are raised. However, the safety of a child will always be of paramount importance and there may be times when it is necessary to seek advice and guidance with statutory agencies before informing parents, carers, children, young people and vulnerable adults of actions and concerns.
- 5 Reviewing our policy and practice at regular intervals.
- 6 Ensuring the presence of Safeguarding Officers, whose role takes primary responsibility for any child protection concerns.

Definition of 'child'

For the purposes of this document, the word 'child' generally refers to young people up to 18 years of age. It is important to remember that young people over 18 may still be deemed vulnerable in certain circumstances.

Why we have a Safeguarding policy

There is an increasing awareness of the fact that some adults, through charity and voluntary work, specifically target children, young people and vulnerable adults in order to abuse them. Abuse is often committed within communities by both family members and people that they know and trust. As a general guideline, anyone who works with children, young people and vulnerable adults, whether paid or unpaid, is expected to act as a careful parent would.

JS Consult specifically works with young people between the ages of 16 up to the age of 25 yrs. However, through outreach and conferences we will also be engaging with children, young people and vulnerable adults under 16 and parents of children, young people and vulnerable adults with mental health problems who may themselves be vulnerable. We have a responsibility to ensure we are aware of the needs of vulnerable adults as well as young people and take their needs into account.

JS Consult 's Safeguarding Policy aims to protect children, young people and vulnerable adults from harm while in our care and is complemented by a number of other policies and procedures within the charity, as detailed below. In developing this policy, we have followed the advice of specialist childcare agencies and regulations laid down by government.

This policy will periodically be brought to the attention of all new and existing staff and certain volunteers regardless of whether or not they hold or are applying for roles that are identified as having regular contact with children, young people and vulnerable adults, for example through an annual staff briefing.

This policy has been written to ensure our safeguarding arrangements comply with statutory requirements and current good practice and pays particular regard to the Department of Health ('Keeping Children Safe in Education' 2020, Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015 – Amended February 2017, Protection of Freedom Act 2012, 'Co-operating to Safeguard Children' 2003 and 'No Secrets' 2000). See also Appendix A.

OTHER RELEVANT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Equal Opportunities Policy.

JS Consult recognises that discrimination does occur and can affect anyone regardless of factors such as gender, race, colour, nationality, ethnic origin, disability, long term medical conditions, age, sexual orientation, religion or belief and social class. We acknowledge that children, young people and vulnerable adults have equal rights to protection from harm and although all children, young people and vulnerable adults may be vulnerable to abuse some will be more so than others (e.g., children, young people and vulnerable adults with disabilities).

There may also be certain difficult barriers to reporting abuse that staff and volunteers working with children, young people and vulnerable adults will need to be aware of, including race and issues relating to faith.

Disciplinary Procedures for staff and volunteers.

These procedures create a system for regulating behaviour and provide clarity for staff, volunteers, parents and children, young people and vulnerable adults regarding what action will be taken in the event that the safeguarding policy and Code of Behaviour are not adhered to.

Health and Safety & Well Being Policy.

As well as adhering to the charity's own health and safety policy, it is essential that the policies of other organisations whose services we use (e.g. venues for meetings) are checked for consideration of standards of premises, equipment, fire precautions, etc. This will be done by the manager responsible for the activity.

Public interest disclosure ('Whistleblowers') Policy.

It is important that staff and volunteers feel that they are able to share in confidence concerns that they have about a colleague's behaviour. If consistently ignored, this behaviour may cause a culture to develop whereby staff, volunteers and young people are 'silenced'. JS Consult 's Complaints/ Whistleblowers Policy provides support and protection to Whistleblowers in an attempt to remove some of the barriers to reporting concerns about colleagues where there are suspicions of child abuse.

Recruitment of ex-offenders Policy.

Anyone applying for a job with JS Consult, including those with past convictions, will be given a fair and equal opportunity with regard to gaining employment. At the same time, the project has an obligation to make every effort to protect the health and welfare of children, young people and

vulnerable adults, with whom certain staff and volunteers have regular contact. This policy outlines procedures for checking the suitability of applicants, which must be followed throughout the recruitment and selection process for specific posts.

THE PREVENT STRATEGY

Prevent is part of a Government initiative to develop a robust counter terrorism programme, CONTEST. The Prevent strategy seeks to:

- Respond to the ideological challenge of terrorism and aspects of extremism, and the threat we face from those who promote these views.
- Provide practical help to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism and ensure they are given appropriate advice and support.
- Work with a wide range of sectors where there are risks of radicalisation which needs to be addressed, including education, criminal justice, faith, charities, the internet and health

Prevent covers all forms of terrorism and extremism and some aspects of non-violent extremism. The Home Office works with local authorities, a wide range of government departments, and community organisations to deliver the Prevent Strategy. The police also play a significant role in Prevent, in much the same way as they do when taking a preventative approach to other crimes.

Prevent uses a range of measures to challenge extremism including:

- Supporting people who are at risk of being drawn into terrorist or extremist activity through the Channel process, see the “What is Channel” section to find out more about this
- Working with and supporting community groups and social enterprise projects who provide services and support to vulnerable people
- Working with faith groups and institutions to assist them in providing support and guidance to people who may be vulnerable; and
- Supporting local schools, local industry and partner agencies through engagement, advice and training.

Prevent is measured locally and nationally to make sure the Prevent programme provides value for money.

3 SCOPE OF THE POLICY

The policy covers staff and volunteers who come into contact with children, young people and vulnerable adults to varying degrees through their work. This includes those positions described as ‘regulated’ under the Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000. The Act defines a regulated position as one whose normal duties include caring for, training, supervising or being in sole charge of children, young people and vulnerable adults. Staff and volunteers whose roles fall into this category will qualify for a criminal record check, known as a Disclosure under the Police Act (1997) Part V. The extent of contact that a role has with children, young people and vulnerable adults will determine whether the Disclosure required is enhanced or standard.

Certain members of staff and volunteers might occasionally be asked to engage with children, young people and vulnerable adults on behalf of JS Consult and these people will be expected to have a good knowledge of and adhere to the Code of Behaviour described in Chapter 6 and set out in Appendix H and to declare information about themselves that might affect their involvement with JS Consult.

It is possible that anyone working on behalf of JS Consult (e.g., at a JS Consult project) may come into contact with children, young people and vulnerable adults and therefore be subject to disclosures or

information that raises concerns about abuse. It is therefore important that all staff and, where appropriate, volunteers are made aware of the key issues outlined in the policy and carry out a duty to report any infringements of the policy or Code as well as any disclosure or suspicion of abuse.

Appendix B identifies paid and voluntary roles within the charity currently requiring an enhanced or standard Disclosure along with those where a thorough knowledge of and adherence to the Code of Behaviour is required and those where staff and volunteers are required to complete a self-declaration listing past convictions, cautions and other relevant information.

When new posts are created, they must be checked by the Human Resources department at JS Consult who will determine whether they fall into one of the categories requiring an enhanced or standard Disclosure. The same process will be followed for volunteer roles, which should be checked by the Child Protection Officer. Managers are required to inform the HR Department should a staff or volunteer role for which they have responsibility evolve to the extent that it falls into one of these categories. This will ensure that the organisation is able to invoke the relevant procedure relating to Disclosures.

Work with children, young people and vulnerable adults through agencies

At JS Consult, we sometimes work through third parties in pursuit of our aims, for example, working with other adults at participation conferences, we will require written assurance that the adults directly involved with the children, young people and vulnerable adults have gone through checks that are comparable with those used by the charity in relation to its staff and volunteers.

Gaining such reassurances is the responsibility of the relevant manager or member of staff organising the activity, with guidance from a Safeguarding Officer if necessary.

JS Consult will ensure that lead agency participants in such activities are informed by the member of staff responsible about our safeguarding policy and that the key points are highlighted, including the requirement that none of our staff or volunteers should ever be left alone with a child and contact details for those at JS Consult with responsibility for child and young people's protection issues. Consent to abide by the charity's policy by the third-party agency will be stated on entering into a contract with JS Consult Limited.

4 WHAT IS SIGNIFICANT HARM?

The term significant harm, introduced under the Children's Act 2004, relates to the threshold that justifies compulsory intervention in family life in the best interests of a child and gives local authorities a duty to make enquiries to decide whether they should take action to safeguard or promote the welfare of a child who is suffering, or likely to suffer significant harm. Whilst the definition of significant harm is open to interpretation, it is most often a compilation of significant events, which interrupt, change or damage a child's physical and psychological development – certain factors, such as the degree and extent of physical harm and the frequency and duration of abuse and neglect, will be taken into consideration to determine whether this is the case. This is not to say that a single traumatic event, e.g., a violent assault, may not constitute significant harm.

Sometimes children, young people and vulnerable adults are abused by other children, young people and vulnerable adults or by adults who are trusted by them, or placed in a supervisory position in relation to them e.g., a teacher, foster carer, staff member at a children's home etc.

Child protection professionals identify four categories of abuse, contributing to significant harm. In reality, the experience of many children, young people and vulnerable adults who have suffered significant harm will include more than one aspect of abuse.

The four main categories are:

- Physical Abuse
- Neglect
- Sexual Abuse
- Emotional abuse

In addition, No Secrets has identified the following categories of abuse of vulnerable adults:

- Psychological abuse,
- Financial or material abuse
- Neglect and acts of omission
- Discriminatory abuse

Further details about each category are included in Appendix G.

It may happen that a child or young person feels able to tell one of our staff or volunteers about abuse they are suffering - this is known as 'disclosure'. Guidelines on dealing with disclosures can be found in Chapter 5.

3 PROCEDURE FOR PROTECTING INDIVIDUALS FROM HARM INCLUDING DISCOVERY AND DISCLOSURE OF ABUSE

Also refer to JS Consult Safeguarding Procedures, which is a step-by-step guide of what to do in a safeguarding situation and gives clear timescales about what should happen at each stage.

In terms of Child Protection, the paramount duty and responsibility of staff and volunteers for JS Consult is to prevent abuse occurring and report any abuse that is discovered, suspected or disclosed. Therefore, if a member of staff or volunteer receives a complaint about a colleague, an allegation about themselves or a disclosure of abuse from a child or young person, they should report their concerns without delay as outlined below. These guidelines apply equally to any member of staff or volunteer who suspects that a child or young person in their temporary care is suffering abuse of any kind. Details of possible signs of child or young person abuse are outlined in Appendix G.

It is not the responsibility of our staff or volunteers to investigate or to decide whether a child or young person is being abused – merely to report discovery or suspicion of abuse, following the procedures given in this document.

What to do to report abuse

There are simple rules about reporting abuse and dealing with disclosures. The fundamental rule is that prompt action is paramount – doing nothing is not an option when any kind of abuse is suspected or disclosed. A list of useful contacts for reporting purposes or for further advice is given in Appendix C. Steps to take before reporting abuse:

- LISTEN / OBSERVE
- REPORT
- RECORD

Steps to take if a child or young person discloses to a JS Consult member of staff or volunteer:

- LISTEN
- REASSURE
- REPORT

- RECORD

LISTEN / OBSERVE (and LISTEN)

Where a child or young person discloses to a member of staff or volunteer, the following important points should be remembered:

Do not:

- Interrogate. Accept the child or young person's disclosure calmly, do not interrupt and listen closely.
- Make false promises. At the outset, clarify that the information provided by the child or young person cannot be kept secret and must be passed onto an appropriate person.
- Allow yourself to be left alone with a child or young person. Even if a child or young person requests privacy to disclose something, there should always be always two people visible.

Do:

Be honest. Tell the child or young person that they may need to repeat the disclosure within the course of a child or young person protection investigation.

- Gather contact details where possible. Staff and volunteers who are given information from someone they suspect may be guilty of abusing a child or young person in their care (e.g., Adviceline calls from parents or carers) should attempt to gain the individual's contact details.
- Take notes. Comprehensive notes should be taken either during or immediately following any conversation, using an incident reporting form, which can be found in Appendix D.

REASSURE

Where a child or young person takes a member of staff or volunteer into their confidence, they should be reassured calmly and gently that the confidence has been heard, and that they have done the right thing in speaking to someone. They should be told what will happen next, i.e. that people who can help the child or young person will be informed. Once again, no promise of confidentiality should be made.

REPORT

1. Action to report suspected abuse or disclosures should be taken immediately. Information should be recorded using an incident reporting form to ensure consistency (Appendix D).
2. The incident should be reported to a Safeguarding Officer (SO) and the incident report form forwarded to the SO within 24 hours. The form will normally be completed by the person reporting the incident.
3. Once a member of staff or volunteer has reported suspected abuse or a disclosure to a Safeguarding Officer, the latter will make the decision whether to inform Social Services (equivalent in Scotland and Northern Ireland) and the involved parents (depending on the nature of the incident).
4. On the occasions where it is appropriate to approach the child or young person, parents or carer to clarify the situation, the approach must be made by someone trained in child protection and fully aware of all the issues. In most circumstances, parents or carers will be informed of the charity's decision to contact social services, unless it is thought not to be in the best interests of the child or young person to do so. In all cases, advice from the relevant social care authorities will be sought before contact with parents or carers is made.
5. JS Consult makes every effort to ensure that a Safeguarding Officer is contactable by telephone, however if none of the Safeguarding Officers are available, the local Social

Services department Child Protection Team or for an over 18-year-old the local POVA team should be contacted direct - prompt action is paramount. If, the matter is of a criminal nature, the local police station should be contacted. Some useful contact details can be found in appendix C.

No promises of confidentiality should be made if suspected abuse is being reported to a JS Consult member of staff or volunteer by a third party as action must be taken to report the information to the relevant authority.

Other than this action, however, the information should be kept confidential and under no circumstances be discussed with others.

RECORD

A full written record of what was said, heard and/or seen should be made right away using an incident reporting form (Appendix D). The actual words spoken by a third party or a child or young person should be used as much as possible, rather than an interpretation of what was said. Specific facts relating to named people, dates, places etc. should be recorded accurately. Records can be typed or handwritten but must be signed and dated by the person hearing the disclosure.

What will happen next

Each Local Authority has interagency arrangements to deal with child or vulnerable adult protection. These primarily include specialist staff of the Local Authority Social Care Department, the Police and specialist Community Child Health doctors. A referral to Social Services will be dealt with through these arrangements. Social Care departments have staff on duty round the clock. Professionals in these agencies have special training in the issues and work closely together, so that a referral to one of the agencies will be shared with the others.

The investigating Social Care department may wish the person reporting suspected abuse to attend meetings either with or without the child or young person concerned. JS Consult Safeguarding Officers will offer advice and support to the member of staff or volunteer who has reported the suspected discovery of abuse. Safeguarding Officers will also endeavour to feed back to the member of staff or volunteer who made the initial report on what actions have been taken by JS Consult.

In the event that allegations made in the form of a disclosure by a member of staff or volunteer are shown by the investigation to be unfounded, and to have been malicious, disciplinary action will be taken immediately against the person(s) involved under the charity's disciplinary procedure. However, those who have genuine concerns relating to a child or young person or the behaviour of others should not feel deterred from reporting these for fear they may be unfounded. JS Consult Public Interest Disclosure Policy provides information on the protection provided to people who report genuine concerns requiring investigation.

Although the way in which allegations of child abuse against a member of staff or volunteer are partly dealt in this section of the policy, a detailed procedure for dealing with such allegations is detailed in Appendix E.

6 CODE OF BEHAVIOUR FOR STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

Every member of staff and volunteer who works with children, young people and vulnerable adults needs to be aware of their role and responsibilities and have clear guidelines under which to operate. One way of achieving this is to have a Code of Behaviour, which clarifies what is acceptable and what is not acceptable. All staff and volunteers who work with children, young people and vulnerable adults, whether on a regular unsupervised or occasional supervised basis will be required to sign a copy of the Code of Behaviour to confirm that they have received it and understand their responsibilities under it. Appendix B contains a list of staff and volunteers who are required to sign the Code of Behaviour and

those who are required to have an Enhanced, Standard Disclosure or Disclosure and Barring Service Certificate.

All agreements and Codes of Behaviour will be stored securely by the charity for a period of five years following the termination of employment or volunteer relationship, which is the current legal requirement. The JS Consult's Code is based on the following principles:

- everyone is treated with respect
- boundaries between staff/ volunteers and young people must be respected and maintained (e.g. no exchanging of personal details, no contact outside of a working relationship, no contact on social networking sites etc.)
- the best interests of the child or young person are paramount over any other concern
- our environment must be such that children, young people and vulnerable adults feel safe and valued
- adults should be sensitive to child protection issues in all that they say and do
- no infraction of the safeguarding policy and procedures will be tolerated
- all staff and volunteers should protect JS Consult 's good reputation by following these procedures at all times.

Separate guidance in relation to specific activities run by JS Consult (e.g., Participation Conferences or Focus Groups) is issued to staff, volunteers, parents, carers and children, young people and vulnerable adults when appropriate.

Breaches of this code will be dealt with through JS Consult's Disciplinary Procedures for staff and volunteers.

The Code of Behaviour guidelines in Appendix H should be followed at all times.

7 SAFEGUARDING OFFICERS (SOs)

JS Consult will ensure that relevant members of staff are designated Safeguarding Officers (SOs). The aims of the SOs are to safeguard the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults in the care of JS Consult and protect the reputation of the project and its personnel by ensuring that the Safeguarding Policy and Procedures are followed. Their responsibilities along with relevant contact details are listed in Appendix I.

One SO will take strategic responsibility for safeguarding issues and as such will normally be a member of the Executive Team. This SO will have an additional responsibility for ensuring that safeguarding is considered where relevant in relation to organisational developments and activities, for being the liaison between the monitoring group and for facilitating appropriate organisational support for the other SOs, keeping them up to date with changes in legislation and Best Practice.

SOs ideally will not be employed in positions where regular work with children, young people and vulnerable adults is a feature, although they will undergo the most stringent checks, including an Enhanced Disclosure. They will also receive relevant training to enable them to carry out their role.

There will be a minimum of two SOs at all times; this number to be reviewed from time to time to reflect adequately the numbers of staff, volunteers, children, young people and vulnerable adults and activities. SOs may work through other members of staff, for example, the Participation Manager or other members of human resources, in order to carry out their role.

Guidelines for Safeguarding Officers

SOs are responsible for keeping abreast of developments in relation to Child Protection and Safeguarding so that they can provide accurate, appropriate advice to others on these issues. At JS Consult a key part of their role is deciding when a child abuse referral to the authorities is required; not all requests for their help will necessitate referral to the authorities, as in minor breaches of the Code of Behaviour.

The SO should not undertake any direct investigation into the matter with the child(ren) concerned. They should receive information, refer as necessary and be guided by the authorities. If there is any doubt about whether to pass a concern to the authorities, SOs should err on the side of making the referral. In cases where a referral is to be made, the duties of the SO will generally be:

- to contact the Social Care department of the Local Authority in which the child lives, asking to discuss a child protection issue and following up in writing within 48 hours
- to record the name of the person to whom the report is given
- to give a full report, without filtering, interpreting or withholding anything
- to be guided by the social care authorities with regards to continued communication and any action that needs to be taken
- to prepare a confidential file, recording carefully all conversations and actions taken since receipt of the allegation or disclosure
- to support the person reporting the abuse within guidelines given by the social care authorities
- In certain circumstances, i.e., where a criminal activity is identified or suspected, it may be more appropriate for the SO to refer to the police (or equivalent in other parts of the UK). The guidelines above will apply irrespective of the authority to which referral is made.

Please see Safeguarding Procedure for details of JS Consult current SO's.

8 STAFF AND VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT PROCEDURES

Policy Statement

When recruiting staff and volunteers who will be working with children, young people and vulnerable adults, JS Consult will thoroughly check the suitability of all successful applicants.

Procedures

These procedures aim to ensure that:

- potential abusers are deterred from joining the project and the risk of harm to children, young people and vulnerable adults in our care is therefore reduced
- applicants are well informed about posts and about child protection and safeguarding issues
- children, young people and vulnerable adults and their parents and carers can have confidence in our staff, whether paid or voluntary
- JS Consult can make a fair assessment of the applicants' suitability for the post
- JS Consult complies with regulations and agreed good practice.

Recruitment publicity

From the outset, job and volunteer applicants will be informed if the role that they are interested in involves contact with children, young people and vulnerable adults and associated checking procedures. This will enable them to make an informed choice as to whether to pursue their interest

and, in the case of potential job applicants, apply for the post, being aware of the checking procedures with which they will be asked to comply.

The pack for job applicants will contain the job profile and selection criteria, such as the skills, knowledge and experience required to perform the job. The pack for volunteer applicants will contain details about the responsibilities of the volunteer role and the selection criteria, such as the skills and personal traits required to perform the tasks. Information on the charity's safeguarding and recruitment of ex-offenders' policies will also be sent where relevant.

It is not JS Consult's policy to recruit volunteers under the age of 16 whose role it will be to give talks in the community unless venues are restricted to the volunteer's own school, youth or community group. Young people aged between 16 to 18 years will be permitted to give talks at a variety of venues on the condition that they are chaperoned by a responsible adult (i.e. parent or guardian). These restrictions will be explained in relevant recruitment publicity.

Application details

Job and volunteer applicants will be asked to supply their full name, current and recent addresses, date of birth and a full account of their employment history alongside any voluntary experience. Job applicants will be asked to give details of posts held and reasons for leaving or intending to leave. This information will be collected on application and self-declaration forms. All forms must be signed and dated confirming that the information supplied is true.

Declaration of criminal convictions

Regulated positions, such as those where normal duties include caring for, training, supervising or being in sole charge of children, young people and vulnerable adults, are exempt from the provisions of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974. Those applying for a regulated position will be asked to complete a form listing all convictions and cautions, and whether any child they have been responsible for has been placed on a Child Protection Register or has been the subject of a court order imposing restrictions relating to contact with a child or young person. This form must be returned with the application form but should be in a separate envelope marked 'confidential' and addressed to the Managing Director so that any disclosures can be treated in strict confidence. Such disclosures will not necessarily disqualify the person from being considered for a job vacancy or volunteering as the context will be considered.

The Managing Director will make a decision as to whether any information disclosed is relevant to the role. Applicants will have the opportunity to speak to the Managing Director in confidence about this aspect of the recruitment process should they wish to.

Staff and volunteers whose work is likely to involve occasional contact with children, young people and vulnerable adults will also be asked to complete a self-declaration (as described above) in relation to any convictions, cautions or disqualifications from working with children, young people and vulnerable adults. Completed self-declarations from these individuals should be returned in a sealed envelope marked private and confidential to the Managing Director.

Interviews for job applicants

Shortlisted candidates for roles involving regular work with children, young people and vulnerable adults will be interviewed following satisfactory clearance through the above procedures. Interviews will be conducted by a panel, one member of which will have been trained in child protection and safeguarding issues. Applicants will be asked about previous experience of working with children, young people and vulnerable adults and about their attitude towards this type of work. They will be asked to account for any gaps on their application forms and to give details of what they were doing if not in employment or volunteering. The remainder of the interview will focus on the job profile,

person specification and the application form and will include discussion of the Charity's Safeguarding Policy.

Verification of Identity

Job and volunteer applicants for regulated roles or safeguarding positions must bring photographic proof of identity and documents which confirm their full name, date of birth, current address and signature to their interview or meeting with a JS Consult representative. Where relevant, qualifications should also be verified through the provision of certificates, diplomas, degrees etc.

References

At least two references will be required in respect of both job and volunteer applicants for regulated positions. JS Consult reserves the right to repeat references for volunteers who periodically work for them in regulated roles every three years. Referees will be informed that the role is exempt from the provisions of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act and asked for their views on the candidate's ability to undertake work with children, young people and vulnerable adults including whether they have any knowledge of an applicant's previous convictions or know of any other reasons why the candidate is unsuitable to work with children, young people and vulnerable adults.

It will be made clear on the application form or in guidance notes that JS Consult may contact any previous employers or voluntary organisations mentioned on the form.

Job applicants

References will be taken up once a provisional offer of employment has been made. One referee should be the candidate's present or last employer if they have been working.

Volunteers

References from family members will not be accepted. Where possible, referees should be a person in authority from either a current or recent employer, school or voluntary group with which the prospective volunteer has been involved. One referee should have first-hand knowledge of the potential volunteer's previous contact with children, young people and vulnerable adults.

Disclosures (criminal record checks)

During the referencing process, successful job and volunteer applicants for regulated roles or safeguarding positions will be asked for their consent for a check to be undertaken via the Disclosure and Barring Service (England and Wales), Disclosure Scotland (Scotland) or the Protection of Children Service (Northern Ireland), where relevant, to disclose any convictions or cautions.

The DBS are responsible for:

- processing requests for criminal records checks
- deciding whether it is appropriate for a person to be placed on or removed from a barred list
- placing or removing people from the DBS children's barred list and adults' barred list for England, Wales and Northern Ireland

The **Enhanced** Disclosure applies to posts involving greater contact with children, young people and vulnerable adults or vulnerable adults and contains the same information as a standard disclosure along with non-conviction information from local police records if deemed relevant to the position by Chief Police Officers. Applications for Enhanced Disclosures must be countersigned by a registered person on behalf of a registered body.

Checks on addresses outside of the UK will be possible through the National Criminal Intelligence Service link to Interpol.

Comprehensive information about Disclosures, the process for undergoing one and guidance notes on completing Disclosure application forms are sent to all potential employees and volunteers with offer/acceptance letters. There are four levels of DBS checks, Basic, Standard, Enhanced and Enhanced with barred list checks. This information is available from human resources on request.

A refusal to give consent for these checks will jeopardise the offer of a job or a voluntary role with JS Consult.

JS Consult Limited has an Equal Opportunities Policy and a policy on the recruitment of ex-offenders and only convictions of relevance to the responsibilities of the role will preclude a job applicant or potential volunteer from being accepted. While each case will be considered on its merits, offences considered to be relevant will include sexual offences against adults, crimes of violence and those identified in Schedule One of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act.

Consideration will also be given to when the conviction took place and what has happened since then. Advice will be sought from professionals who are/were involved in the case when the risk is being assessed.

The cost, if any, of the Disclosure will be met by JS Consult.

Where a Disclosure reveals that a job or volunteer applicant has a relevant conviction, that person will be informed that they are unacceptable for a specific post or chosen voluntary role with JS Consult. Staff and volunteers who require a Disclosure and have applied for one that has not been returned before the commencement of an activity involving children, young people and vulnerable adults will be allowed to attend on the condition that they have provided a satisfactory self-declaration form and are supervised at all times. This is also conditional on all paperwork being in order (including, where relevant, an application form, references and signed Code of Behaviour) and on attendance at a relevant training event.

When working with other organisations that supply their own volunteers to carry out work on behalf of the charity (e.g., youth organisations), it is essential that the key points of JS Consult's Safeguarding Policy are highlighted, including contact details for staff at JS Consult with responsibility for child protection issues. A copy of the organisation's Child Protection or Safeguarding Policy should be requested by the relevant manager or member of staff and reassurance sought that Disclosures on the volunteers in question have been carried out where relevant within an appropriate time frame to enable them to carry out a specific role.

Audit

JS Consult Limited will repeat Disclosures yearly to ensure that information remains up-to-date. Following guidance issued by the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS), Disclosures undertaken whilst the individual is working for another employer will no longer be accepted regardless of how recently these have been undertaken. Where a role has changed or an individual has increased access to children, young people and vulnerable adults, a new Disclosure should be sought.

Any member of staff or volunteer who acquires a relevant conviction is expected to disclose this to the charity. The actual circumstances will dictate whether it is appropriate for JS Consult to try to redeploy the person in another role; the utmost care will be taken, and specialist advice sought, e.g. from a person who has an understanding of the behaviour associated with the conviction in question.

In circumstances where an existing member of staff is unsuitable for a post which has evolved, every effort will be made to redeploy them except where a deliberate attempt to deceive JS Consult has been made. In that case, the relevant disciplinary procedure will be invoked which will normally result in the individual's employment or voluntary association with the charity being terminated.

JS Consult acknowledges that, while obtaining Disclosures is a valuable tool in identifying unsuitable people, it is not fool-proof since, for example, many sex offenders have never been convicted, and those who have can find ways of avoiding detection, e.g. by giving a false name. Disclosures therefore form only part of the thorough selection process for staff and volunteers.

Confidentiality and data protection

In order to protect individuals' civil liberties, the charity undertakes to keep Disclosures securely and to dispose of them after use according to the regulations in force. JS Consult's policy on the handling and safekeeping of Disclosure information, which can be found in Appendix F of this policy, provides guidelines concerning the correct and safe handling, storage, retention and disposal of this type of information.

Probation for staff members

A provisional offer of employment will be made to successful interview candidates, but will not be confirmed until all checks, including Disclosures, have been completed. JS Consult operates a six-month probationary period, and this will be extended if necessary until all checks are complete. During this time, the post-holder will be closely supervised and duties, especially access to children, young people and vulnerable adults, will be restricted. JS Consult will revoke a provisional offer of employment if the outcome of a Disclosure reveals relevant offences.

Restricted duty for volunteers

The voluntary role may only commence with close supervision by an experienced and fully screened person until all checks, including Disclosures, have been completed. JS Consult will revoke a provisional offer of voluntary work if checks reveal relevant offences.

Supervision and training

Consideration of child protection issues will be included in training sessions for members of staff once an applicant has been offered a post that involves working with children, young people and vulnerable adults. Compulsory training programmes that include consideration of child protection issues, will be provided for volunteers who will also have the opportunity to discuss and review child protection compliance at periodic supervision sessions.

Supervision sessions with the line manager or supervisor will monitor understanding of and adherence to the Safeguarding Policy. Failure to comply with safeguarding procedures, or to provide the required level of care and attention to children, young people and vulnerable adults are grounds for disciplinary action and may ultimately lead to dismissal or termination of any volunteering arrangements. Employees and volunteers will be able to use JS Consult's existing staff or volunteer grievance procedures to contest decisions.

9 MONITORING THE POLICY AND PROCEDURES

JS Consult Ltd is committed to monitoring the effectiveness of the safeguarding policy and procedures to ensure that they achieve their objectives. The monitoring will take two lines of approach: internal and external review.

Internal review

Each objective of the policy is reviewed regularly as follows:

- 1 *Making sure that our staff and volunteers are carefully selected, trained and supervised and have clear roles:*

- A register is kept (Appendix B to this policy) of all posts identified by the Director/ HR as including work with children, young people and vulnerable adults and therefore subject to the safeguarding procedures.
 - A checklist is created for each successful applicant for a post that has been so designated to ensure that each stage of the recruitment procedure is completed. This is the responsibility of the Human Resources Department.
 - All posts classified as 'regulated' will have a job profile or volunteer role description, which is periodically reviewed.
 - Training levels are agreed with the manager/supervisor responsible for the post-holder or volunteer and reviewed at least annually by the SOs.
 - All staff and volunteers will be informed of their responsibilities including the extent of their involvement with children, young people and vulnerable adults so that the expectations of the individual concerned and the charity are clear.
- 2 *Expecting staff and volunteers who have contact with children, young people and vulnerable adults to abide by a clear Code of Behaviour and to report any breaches of the code by colleagues.*
- All relevant staff and volunteers are provided with a copy of the Code and sign to testify that they have one in their possession.
 - Familiarity with the Code of staff and volunteers fulfilling regulated positions is checked during their induction period and regularly at annual appraisal or during refresher training / supervision sessions.
 - Senior managers, including SOs, work to consolidate a culture where the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults is treated as paramount.
 - Anyone who observes a breach of the Code of Behaviour will bring this to the attention of an SO or relevant volunteer supervisor. In certain circumstances, the volunteer supervisor or SO may decide that the individual breaching the code requires further guidance or clarification over appropriate/inappropriate behaviour, followed by observation to ensure that the behaviour has improved. If no improvement is seen, or the breach seems of a serious nature, the person will be reported to an SO. Action appropriate to the severity of the infringement must be taken; for example, the person responsible undergoes a training session and is closely supervised for a defined period; serious infringements will cause the relevant disciplinary procedure to be invoked. It is important that all breaches of the Code are reported to an SO to enable monitoring information to be accurate.
- 3 *Telling parents, children, young people and vulnerable adults, staff and volunteers how to report any concerns to us.*
- Information about the Safeguarding Policy is provided to all staff and volunteers working in regulated positions.
 - Parents, children, young people and vulnerable adults and carers are sent guidance notes about the Safeguarding Policy in relation to specific activities. The full policy is available to them in easy access format, with particular attention on how to contact the SOs.
 - The knowledge of those staff and volunteers who work in regulated positions is checked through the appraisal system / volunteer supervision.
- 4 *Reviewing our policy and practice at regular intervals.*

- A safeguarding monitoring group exists, chaired by the Managing Director and consisting of the SOs and other relevant staff where necessary. This group meets quarterly to oversee monitoring arrangements and reports to the Company Directors.
- SOs participate in periodic reviews of the Safeguarding Policy to ensure it is up-to-date and complies with regulations and good practice.
- SOs will have the opportunity to feed into a review of incidents to check that these have been dealt with appropriately and to flag the need for improvements where relevant so that prompt action can be taken. Constructive feedback is given where procedures were not followed accurately.
- Information is monitored, e.g., how many staff or volunteers were rejected at the screening stage etc. Implications for future procedures are clarified.
- central register of complaints, incidents or concerns as documented on the incident report form, is maintained by the Managing Director and discussed as and when new concerns arise by the safeguarding monitoring group on a quarterly basis. A summary of incidents will be given to the Lead Safeguarding Officer, Company Secretary or Operations Manager and Managing Director.

External review

Independent review of the Safeguarding Policy and Procedures by a specialist external agency is carried out at least every three years. Revisions will also be made intermittently in accordance with changes in legislation and best practice.

Other JS Consult Activities

Staff involved in developing activities or events that have a direct impact on children, young people and vulnerable adults will consult with the SOs in order to ensure compliance with the ethos of the safeguarding policy and procedures.

APPENDIX A – The legal framework

Anyone working with children, young people and vulnerable adults, whether paid or voluntary, is under a legal duty of care to act as a careful parent would. Children, young people and vulnerable adults are also protected by the general law of assault. The Human Rights Act, introduced in October 2000, also impacts on a child's right to protection and on agencies' responsibilities towards children, young people and vulnerable adults.

Government has introduced a range of legal measures to protect children, young people and vulnerable adults, including a facility to check criminal records by means of Disclosures. Being able to check the background of job and volunteer applicants enables organisations to establish whether someone has a history that would make them unsuitable for specific posts.

LEGISLATION

This policy has been written to ensure our safeguarding arrangements comply with statutory requirements and current good practice, and pays particular regard to:

- Keeping Children Safe in Education September 2020
- The Children Act 1989
- The Children Act 2004
- UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
- Data Protection Act 1998
- Sexual Offences Act 2003
- Protection of Freedom Act 2012
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015 – Amended February 2017
- Equality Act 2010

The Children Act 2004, the **Children (Scotland) Act 1995** and the **Children (NI) Order 1995**. These acts resulted from a wide recognition that various pieces of legislation concerning the welfare of children needed to be updated and brought together. They deal, among other things, with the requirements applying to those who act as child minders or provide day-care facilities. Part V of the Children Act 2004 relates to the protection of children and says that in addition to social services, only the police and the NSPCC have the legal right and responsibility to investigate concerns about child abuse.

The Children Act 2004 provides further legislation aimed at encouraging local authorities and their partners to undertake integrated planning, commissioning and delivery of services for children. This will aid the delivery of 'Every Child Matters: Change for Children', a government programme aimed at transforming children's services across England.

Every Child Matters Policy. This was an outcome of the Children Act 2004. Every Child Matters covers children and young adults up to the age of 19, or 24 for those with disabilities and is based on the idea that every child should have plenty of support throughout their life – regardless of their individual circumstances or background. Everyone who works with children in any capacity - teachers, social workers, social services, foster carers, hospitals, children's homes, the police and voluntary groups or charities who work with children – should remember and put into action the principles of the policy.

A helpful acronym to remember the five parts is SHEEP - Every child shall be: Safe, Healthy, Enjoy/Achieve, Economic, Positive contribution.

Five Outcomes

The five outcomes are universal ambitions for every child and young person, whatever their background or circumstances. They are mutually reinforcing e.g. children and young people learn and thrive when they are healthy, safe and engaged; and the evidence shows clearly that educational achievement is the most effective route out of poverty

1 Be Healthy

- Physically healthy
- Mentally and emotionally healthy
- Sexually healthy
- Healthy lifestyles

- Choose not to take illegal drugs

Being healthy is not just about eating lots of fruit and drinking 8 glasses of water each day. It's about young people enjoying a healthy lifestyle, feeling good about themselves and having good emotional and mental health.

2 Stay Safe

- Safe from maltreatment, neglect, violence and sexual exploitation
- Safe from accidental injury and death
- Safe from bullying and discrimination
- Safe from crime and anti-social behaviour in and out of school
- Have security, stability and are cared for

3 Enjoy & Achieve

This outcome is about enabling learners to make good progress in their work and personal development and to enjoy their education (Guidance for Inspectors of Schools).

- Ready for school
- Attend and enjoy school
- Achieve stretching national educational standards at school
- Achieve personal and social development and enjoy recreation

4 Make a Positive Contribution

- Engage in decision making and support the community and environment
- Engage in law-abiding and positive behaviour in and out of school
- Develop positive relationships and choose not to bully and discriminate
- Develop self-confidence and successfully deal with significant life changes and challenges
- Develop enterprising behaviour

5 Achieve Economic Wellbeing

- Engage in further education, employment or training on leaving school
- Ready for employment
- Live in decent homes and sustainable communities
- Access to transport and material goods
- Live in households free from low income

The Sex Offenders Act 1997, this Act requires persons convicted of certain sexual offences, particularly against children and women, to register their name and address, and any changes to these, with the police. The Act came into force on 1 September 1997.

Sex Offenders Orders, introduced in 1998, is aimed at sex offenders living in the community. If they seem to pose a significant threat, they are prohibited from doing whatever is causing concern and required to register their whereabouts with the police.

Under the **Sexual Offences (Amendments) Act 2000**, it became an offence for a person aged 18 or over who is in a position of trust over someone who is under 18 years of age to engage in sexual activity with or directed towards that person. The **Sexual Offences Act 2003** represents a major overhaul in the sexual offences framework and gives children the greatest possible protection against sexual abuse. The aim of the act is to protect the rights and interests of young people and to make it easier to prosecute people who pressure or force others into sexual activity. Whilst the legal age of consent remains 16, specific provisions have been introduced to protect young people between the ages of 16 and 18. The Act also increases the effectiveness of notification requirements (register of

sex offenders) under the Sex Offenders Act 1997 with the intention of assisting the police and probation services in the management of sex offenders and those who pose a risk of sexual harm.

Under the ***Protection of Children Act 1999, the Protection of Children (Scotland) Act 2003***, and the ***Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000***, it is an offence for any organisation to offer employment in relation to a regulated position (i.e. one whose normal duties include caring for, training, supervising or being in sole charge of children and a manager or supervisor of someone in a regulated position) to anyone who has been convicted of certain specified offences, or included on lists of people considered unsuitable for work held by the various relevant authorities throughout England, Wales and Scotland. It is also an offence for people convicted of such offences to apply for work with young people. Employers are therefore required to take sufficient steps to check an employee/potential employee working with children.

The ***Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974*** (in Scotland, the ***Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exclusions and Exemptions) (Scotland) Order 2003*** and in Northern Ireland, the ***Rehabilitation of Offenders (NI) Order 1978***) is designed to protect the rights of those who have been convicted of criminal offences. It limits their duty to disclose convictions when applying for paid or voluntary work. In particular, after specified periods of time have elapsed, convictions are considered to have been 'spent' and generally do not need to be disclosed thereafter. Regulated posts, however, are exempt from the provisions of the Act. Employers may therefore require applicants for positions that involve regular work with children to disclose any previous cautions or convictions, including those that have been spent.

The Human Rights Act 1998, which came into force in October 2000, gives people a clear, legal statement of their basic rights and fundamental freedoms. Children, young people and vulnerable adults living away from home have additional rights under the Act to ensure that they are being treated fairly and their needs are being met. For example, Article 3 states that the best interests of the child or young person must be a primary consideration when decisions concerning them are being made. The Act is also concerned with the way those suspected or convicted of crimes are treated.

Information on the act can be found on the Department of Trade and Industry web site (www.dti.gov.uk).

The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), regulate what information about people may be kept by an organisation and with whom this may be shared. All records are required to be kept securely with access by certain people only. If any information held relates to a child protection concern, it cannot be withheld as this would not be acting in the best interests of the child.

The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 gives all organisations a legal responsibility to prevent injuries and ill health to employees and others, including members of the public.

APPENDIX B – Roles requiring Disclosures (criminal record checks)

Guidance has been issued by the Home Office enabling organisations to identify which level of Disclosure is most appropriate for different members of staff or volunteers whose roles involve working with children, young people and vulnerable adults. **Anyone whose role does or is likely to involve working with children, young people and vulnerable adults will be asked to complete a code of behaviour and a self-declaration relating to criminal convictions, cautions and disqualification information.**

Standard Disclosures

Those roles that have regular or occasional supervised contact with vulnerable adults, children, young people and vulnerable adults and require the post holder to have a **Standard** Disclosure are:

- Additional staff running focus groups involving children, young people and vulnerable adults
- Members of the Press/Comms/ Media Team

Enhanced Disclosures

The criteria used at JS Consult to identify positions requiring Enhanced Disclosures are as follows:

- Does the position involve one-to-one contact away from the vulnerable adult/child's home?
- Is the position unsupervised?
- Is the situation an isolated one, i.e., the vulnerable adult, child or young person is away from their family?
- Is there regular contact with the same vulnerable adult /young person?
- Is the adult in a counselling role with the vulnerable adult /child or young person?
- Does the role include a responsibility to act as a safeguarding officer?

At the present time, the roles within JS Consult that qualify as involving regular work with children, young people and vulnerable adults and/or require the post holder to have an **Enhanced** Disclosure are:

- Staff and volunteers working in the Participation team
- Staff who are designated safeguarding officers

Code of Behaviour and Self-declaration form

Those roles that have occasional contact with children, young people and vulnerable adults and do not require the post holder to have a Disclosure but do require a thorough awareness of child protection issues acknowledged by submission of a **signed Code of Behaviour and Self-declaration**.

APPENDIX C – Useful contacts

The following contacts are sources of support for staff and volunteers as well as Safeguarding Officers when unsure of what action needs to be taken. Please note, as a member of staff or volunteer, your first point of contact will always be one of JS Consult's Safeguarding officers, who will be responsible for liaising with social services local to the child/ young person's home.

JS Consult Safeguarding Consultant Stella Oparah

JS Consult Designated Leads

Proscovia Kasozi , Adline Bokesa

Safeguarding Officer/s

Wendy Oparah

Hamzah Amjad

Stella Oparah

In writing:

JS Consult

FAO: Safeguarding Officer/s

Stella Oparah

Adline Bokesa

Proscovia Kasozi

Wendy Oparah

Hamzah Amjad

Office Number: 020 8470 4219

Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)

- Croydon 020 8726 6464
- Waltham Forest 020 8496 2310
- Redbridge 020 8708 3885
- Tower Hamlets Tel: 020 7364 5006 option 3
Extensions: 5606/5601/5358/7796
- Newham 020 3373 0440
- Barking & Dagenham 020 8227 3811
- Romford 01708 433 222

Social services contact details for London:

Child Protection Advice Line: **020 7364 3444** (9.00 – 17.00)

Outside office hours - **EMERGENCY ONLY:** Children's Social Care Emergency after 17.00: **020 7364 4079**

Other charities (24 hours/7 days a week):

NSPCC Helpline (for adults with concerns about children) 0808 800 5000

NSPCC whistle-blowing helpline: 0800 028 0285

Childline (help for children, young people and vulnerable adults) 0800 11 11;

<http://www.childline.org.uk>

Appendix D - Incident Reporting form

Please complete in your own handwriting and pass to the relevant person		
Name of person/child/young person :		Address:
Date of birth:	Age:	
Name of parent(s) / carer(s):		Telephone number:
Disability:		First language:
Yes / No If yes please provide details:		
Are you reporting your own concerns or passing on those of someone else? Please give details:		

	Brief description of what has prompted the concerns (including dates, times of any specific incidents):
	Are there any physical, behavioural or indirect signs? (please refer to section 4 of the child protection policy for further information if necessary)
	Have you spoken to the child? If so please give details of what was said:
Have you spoken to the parent(s) / carer(s)? If so please give details of what was said:	
Has anyone been alleged to be the abuser? If so please give details:	

Have you considered that the abuser could be someone else? If so please give details:	
To whom was the incident reported?	Date of reporting:
Name of person completing the form:	Position:
Signature of person completing the form:	Today's date:
Further action (if any) taken by a Safeguarding Officer:	

APPENDIX E – Procedure for dealing with allegations of abuse

Procedure for dealing with allegations of abuse against a member of staff or volunteer

- Member of staff receives the allegation and reports it to the Safeguarding Officer (SO). The SO reminds member of staff of the need to maintain confidentiality. The individual's line manager will be informed of the situation so that they are able to offer support as appropriate.
- The SO informs other SOs, relevant members of the Executive Team and other relevant staff to convene an emergency meeting within 24 hours. The relevant staff will include staff member responsible for managing the person against whom the allegation has been made and a representative of the communications team. The meeting should nominate one SO who will be the main point of contact for the following process.
- A strategy meeting should be scheduled within one week of receiving the allegation.
- The nominated SO contacts, social services for their advice before, or attendance at, the strategy meeting
- The strategy meeting will be chaired by the nominated SO – the meeting should be split into 3 areas
 1. Possible internal and/or disciplinary investigation into the volunteer/member of staff
 2. Possible police investigation where we are in process of deciding if a criminal offence has been committed
 3. Possible child protection investigation

The meeting should also cover:

- The allegation and how it was referred to the charity
- The volunteer or member of staff background
- Advice from the social services child protection team and whether, if not involved already, the police need to be informed
- What are the next steps in dealing with the allegation following the Safeguarding Policy. This includes getting legal advice in dealing with the allegation*
- Agree action points which are to be discussed at the next meeting
- Preparing a draft external press release and a draft internal release (as appropriate)
- Who should be made aware of the allegation internally and how**
- How and where minutes of the meeting and actions taken should be stored
- How to keep involved members of staff up to date with the incident – through a weekly meeting and email or ad-hoc briefings when necessary

* The investigation should be carried out with the advice from social services and where appropriate the police

** It is recommended that if the Executive Team become involved that they should contact each other directly rather than through their administrators

- Relevant staff carry out their action points agreed at the meeting and report back to the meeting attendees. A second meeting may need to be called.

- Continue to hold weekly review meetings, agree action points and feedback until the incident is closed.
- Once the incident has been closed:
 - Hold a review meeting to discuss ways of improving the procedure.
 - Feedback to the member of staff who took the initial allegation referral
 - Inform the accused volunteer or member of staff of the investigation and its findings.
 - Where inappropriate behaviour under the safeguarding policy has been found, the disciplinary procedure may be invoked. In these circumstances, the individual concerned will be informed of the relevant process to be followed and of their right to appeal.

APPENDIX F – Policy on the handling of and safekeeping of disclosure information

Policy on the handling of and safekeeping of Disclosure information

1 Policy statement

- 1.1 JS Consult is committed to complying with the DBS Code of Practice and GDPR 2018 concerning the correct and safe handling, use, storage, retention and disposal of Disclosures and Disclosure information.
- 1.2 This policy sets out the procedure for handling, using, storing, retaining and disposing of Disclosure information relating to the recruitment and selection process or current members of staff and volunteers.

2 Storage and Access

- 2.1 Disclosure information will be held separate from an applicant's application form or on an employee's or volunteer's personal file. It will be kept separately and securely in lockable, non-portable storage containers.
- 2.2 Access to Disclosure information will be strictly controlled and limited to those who are entitled to see it as part of their duties.

3 Handling

- 3.1 In accordance with the Police Act, 1997, Disclosure information will only be passed to those who are authorised to receive it in the course of their duties.
- 3.2 A record of all those to whom Disclosures or Disclosure information has been revealed is kept by human resources and JS Consult acknowledges that it is a criminal offence to pass this information to anyone who is not entitled to receive it.

4 Usage

- 4.1 Disclosure information is only used for the specific purpose for which it was requested and for which the applicant, employee or volunteer's full consent has been given.

5 Retention

- 5.1 Once a recruitment or other relevant decision has been made, JS Consult will not keep Disclosure information for any longer than is absolutely necessary. This is generally for a period of up to 6 months, to allow for the consideration and resolution of any disputes or complaints.
- 5.2 If, in very exceptional circumstances, it is considered necessary to keep Disclosure information for longer than 6 months, the Managing Director will consult the relevant authorities and will give full consideration to the Data Protection and Human Rights of the individual subject before doing so.

- 5.3 During this process, the usual conditions with regards to safe storage and strictly controlled access will apply.

6 Disposal

- 6.1 Once the retention period has elapsed, JS Consult will ensure that any Disclosure information is immediately suitably destroyed by secure means (i.e. shredding, pulping or burning).
- 6.2 While awaiting destruction, Disclosure information will not be kept in any insecure receptacle (e.g. waste bin or confidential shredding tray).
- 6.3 The charity will not keep any photocopy or other image of the Disclosure or any copy or representation of the contents of Disclosure. However, a record may be kept of the date of issue of a Disclosure, the name of the subject, the type of Disclosure requested, the position for which the Disclosure was requested, the unique reference number of the Disclosure and the details of the recruitment decision taken or in the case of existing employees and volunteers, whether or not the outcome was satisfactory.

7 Breach of policy

- 7.1 Any member of staff or volunteer who is found to have breached the policy will be taken through JS Consult 's Disciplinary Procedure.
- Members of the Press/Comms/ Media Team

Code of Behaviour and Self-declaration form

Those roles that have occasional contact with children, young people and vulnerable adults and do not require the post holder to have a Disclosure but do require a thorough awareness of child protection issues acknowledged by submission of a **signed Code of Behaviour and Self-declaration**.

APPENDIX G – Categories and signs of abuse

The term 'abuse' is used to describe a range of ways in which people harm children, young people and vulnerable adults. Abuse may be carried out by an adult or adults or another child or children, young people and vulnerable adults.

The context of abuse

Family Circumstances: Domestic Violence

Where there is domestic violence the implications for a learner or for younger children in the household must be considered. People from families with a history of domestic violence often have behavioural difficulties, absenteeism, ill health, bullying, and drug and alcohol misuse.

Drug and alcohol abuse

There is an increased risk of violence in families where this occurs. A young person may have to take on responsibilities for younger children in the family.

Modern Slavery

Modern slavery is the recruitment, movement, harbouring or receiving of children, women or men through the use of force, coercion, abuse of vulnerability, deception or other means for the purpose of exploitation.

Forced Marriages

Forced marriage is an entirely separate issue from arranged marriage. Forced marriage is abuse of human rights and falls within the Crown Prosecution Service definition of domestic violence. Young people at risk of a forced marriage are usually experiencing physical and/or emotional abuse at home.

Mental Health Issues

- i. Self-harming and suicidal behaviour
- ii. Self-harm, suicide threats and gestures by a young person or adult at risk must always be taken seriously and may be indicative of a serious mental or emotional disturbance. The possibility that self-harm, including a serious eating disorder has been caused or triggered by any form of abuse or chronic neglect should not be overlooked

Abuse by peer group: bullying, racism and abuse

- i. Bullying is a common form of deliberately hurtful behaviour, usually repeated over a period of time, when it is difficult for the victims to defend themselves.
- ii. It can take many forms, but the three main types are physical (e.g. hitting); verbal (e.g. threats); and emotional (e.g. isolating the individual).

- iii. It may involve physical, sexual or emotional abuse including homophobic, sexual, racial or religious harassment, or behaviour which is offensive to those with learning or physical disabilities.
- iv. Severe harm may be caused by the abusive and bullying behaviour of their peers. The damage inflicted by bullying is often underestimated and can cause considerable distress. In extreme cases it can cause significant harm, including self-harm.
- v. Initiation or hazing type violence occurs in a range of group situations such as gangs, sport teams. The initiation rites can range from relatively benign pranks to protracted patterns of behaviour that rise to the level of abuse or criminal misconduct.

There are four commonly recognised categories of abuse, each of these is outlined below along with some of the signs that children, young people and vulnerable adults who are suffering from abuse might display.

Physical Abuse

The physical injury to a child, or a failure to act to prevent physical injury or suffering, e.g. hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, drugging, burning. This also includes situations where the injury may not be visible, e.g. drowning and fabricated induced illness (previously known as Munchausen syndrome) by proxy where a parent or carer feigns symptoms or deliberately causes ill health to a child in their care. Recognising this possibility is particularly important where children, young people and vulnerable adults are receiving medication or have an illness, disorder or disability.

Signs of physical abuse include:

- Unexplained injuries
- Inadequately treated or untreated injuries
- Injuries on parts of the body where accidental injuries are unlikely
- Cigarette burns, bite marks or scalds

Neglect

Neglect is defined as the persistent or severe neglect of a child, or the failure to protect a child from exposure to any kind of danger, including cold, starvation and lack of supervision. It can also mean an extreme failure to carry out important aspects of care, resulting in a significant impairment of the child's health or development including "non-organic failure to thrive" (the failure to develop physically, emotionally or mentally for reasons other than disability). For example, providing them with an inadequate diet and clothing or denying proper health care, natural love and affection.

Signs of neglect include:

- Constant hunger, loss of weight, consistent fatigue, stealing food
- Inappropriate clothing considering the weather
- Untreated medical conditions

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child, or young person over the age of consent, to take part in sexual activities that are inappropriate to their age, that they do not truly comprehend and to which they are unable to give their informed consent. Activities may be physical or non-contact, such as looking at or producing pornographic material, watching sexual acts or encouraging a child to behave in sexually inappropriate ways. Signs of sexual abuse include:

- Stomach pains or discomfort when a child is walking or sitting down

- Bruising or other injuries on areas of the body that are not normally seen
- Overtly sexual behaviour (e.g., using language inappropriate to their age) and/or inappropriate relationships with adults/peers

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse exists where a child is persistently denied proper love and affection or where actions or omissions are likely to have a severe adverse effect on the emotional and behavioural development of the child. This may include situations where the child is constantly shouted at or verbally abused, or where s/he is overprotected, leading to retarded social and emotional development. It may also include racial and other forms of harassment that undermine a child's self-esteem and prevent them from developing a positive self-image.

Signs of emotional abuse:

- Delayed physical or emotional development
- Sudden speech disorders and/or compulsive nervous behaviour
- Reluctance to have parents contacted
- Lack of confidence and need for approval, attention or affection

Staff and volunteers should be prepared for the various ways in which they could become aware of the actual or likely occurrence of abuse, using the above information as guidance. The following points are also useful to remember:

- A child may tell or use alternative ways to communicate that they are being abused, such as drawing or acting out.
- Particular sensitivity is required where children, young people and vulnerable adults have a disability or where their first language is not English.
- There may be occasions where someone else may say that a child has told them, or that they strongly believe a child has been or is being abused. It may be that an adult or child has observed one child abusing another.
- Something disturbing about the behaviour of one of the adults or the way in which an adult relates to a child may alert you to the fact that abuse has taken place.

As well as these forms of abuse, vulnerable adults may be abused by a wide range of people including relatives and family members, professional staff, paid care workers, volunteers, other service users, neighbours, friends and associates, people who deliberately exploit vulnerable people and strangers. The types of abuse could include:

- sexual abuse, including rape and sexual assault or sexual acts to which the vulnerable adult has not consented, or could not consent or was pressured into consenting;
- psychological abuse, including emotional abuse, threats of harm or abandonment, deprivation of contact, humiliation, blaming, controlling, intimidation, coercion, harassment, verbal abuse, isolation
- or withdrawal from services or supportive networks;
- financial or material abuse, including theft, fraud, exploitation, pressure in connection with wills, property or inheritance or financial transactions, or the misuse or misappropriation of property,
- possessions or benefits;
- neglect and acts of omission, including ignoring medical or physical care needs, failure to provide access to appropriate health, social care or educational services, the withholding of

the necessities

- of life, such as medication, adequate nutrition and heating; and
- discriminatory abuse, including racist, sexist, that based on a person's disability, and other forms of harassment, slurs or similar treatment:
- physical abuse, including hitting, slapping, pushing, kicking, misuse of medication, restraint, or inappropriate sanctions.
- Children, young people and vulnerable adults who abuse other children, young people and vulnerable adults

It should be borne in mind that suspicious behaviour might equally arise when a child is being bullied by other children, young people and vulnerable adults. Children, young people and vulnerable adults have reported (e.g. Blue Peter survey, 2006) that they are sometimes bullied; when 'teasing' causes distress to a child, adults should intervene to protect the bullied child and to explain to the offender why the behaviour is unacceptable. JS Consult has a zero tolerance approach to bullying. It is important that children, young people and vulnerable adults who are suspected of abusing other children, young people and vulnerable adults are reported according to the procedures given in the policy as they are often victims of child abuse themselves and may require help and support.

The information given above is not exhaustive and aims only to give an indication of the types of behaviour, which may give rise to concern.

Furthermore, signs may be seen over a period of time and therefore raise concern cumulatively, making it important to report and record concerns however minor they may seem at the time.

Many children, young people and vulnerable adults will demonstrate one or more of the behaviours described above at some stage, so it is important not to jump to conclusions. Any member of staff or volunteer who is concerned in any way should ask for help and advice from one of JS Consult's Safeguarding Officers.

APPENDIX H – Code of Behaviour

No member of staff or volunteer will physically, sexually or emotionally abuse or neglect a child or young person or vulnerable adult and the following guidelines should be followed at all times:

- DO** respect a child or young person's right to personal privacy
- DO** ensure that boundaries between staff, volunteers and children/ young /vulnerable people are clearly defined and there is no contact outside of these roles
- DO** take seriously all allegations made by children, young people and vulnerable adults and act on suspicions immediately in accordance with Chapter 5 of the child protection policy
- DO** encourage children, young people and vulnerable adults to approach an independent person to discuss any problems they may be having
- DO** provide access for children, young people and vulnerable adults to talk to others about any concerns
- DO** abide by JS Consult's policies and guidelines at all times
- DO** encourage children, young people and vulnerable adults and adults to feel comfortable and caring enough to point out attitudes or behaviour they do not like
- DO** remember that someone else might misinterpret your actions, no matter how well intentioned
- DO** recognise that caution is required even in sensitive moments such as counselling, dealing with bullying, bereavement or abuse
- DO** plan activities so that they involve more than one person being present, or at least in sight or hearing of others
- DO** maintain the confidential information of the organisation and of its clients.

- DO NOT** contact children, young people and vulnerable adults outside the project or activity or swap correspondence or personal contact details
- DO NOT** permit abusive youth peer activities like initiation ceremonies or bullying
- DO NOT** allow or engage in inappropriate language, suggestive remarks, gestures or touching of a kind that could be misunderstood
- DO NOT** show favouritism to any individual
- DO NOT** allow yourself to be drawn into inappropriate attention seeking behaviour such as tantrums or crushes
- DO NOT** exaggerate or trivialise child-abuse issues
- DO NOT** deter a child from making allegations through fear of not being believed

DO NOT allow yourself to be left alone with a child or young person at any time

ALWAYS immediately share concerns on any of these matters with your manager/supervisor and Safeguarding Officer or if not contactable social services or, in the event that a criminal activity is suspected, the police.

I agree to adhere to the guidelines in the code of conduct, during my involvement in JS Consult's work.

Signed (Name):

Printed (Name):

Date:

APPENDIX I – Responsibilities of Safeguarding Officers (SOs)

The joint responsibilities of the SOs are:

Safeguarding Policy

- To ensure that the Safeguarding Policy is communicated throughout the organisation
- To ensure that the Safeguarding Policy is regularly reviewed and kept up-to-date
- To ensure that the Safeguarding Policy monitoring procedures are implemented

Cases of allegation or disclosure of abuse

- Take appropriate action to report complaints or disclosures to the authorities verbally and in writing and follow these up with the social care authorities as appropriate.
- To investigate breaches of the Code of Behaviour and take appropriate action
- To ensure that accurate records of any incident, disclosure or complaint in relation to child protection are maintained
- To act promptly to protect the reputation of the charity, in consultation with the other SOs, invoking disciplinary action where appropriate in accordance with procedure

Supporting staff and volunteers

- To ensure that staff involved in recruitment are aware of child protection issues
- To ensure that staff or volunteers reporting suspected abuse are appropriately advised and supported
- To provide support to staff and volunteers accused of abuse along with the individual's line manager and human resources, where appropriate
- In conjunction with the relevant line manager/supervisor and human resources, to assist staff and volunteers who have been the victims of malicious or false abuse claims to reintegrate into their team/voluntary activities
- To ensure that appropriate training is provided to staff and volunteers working with children, young people and vulnerable adults.

Safeguarding Register

Official Record of Meetings (To be kept by Lead DSO)

Date of Meeting:			
Venue:			
Start Time:		Finish Time:	
Staff-Person/s Present & Role:			
Learner Name:			
Concern/s:	Action to be taken:	Who will take action and date to be completed:	Update:
Other issues discussed:			
Date of next meeting:			

Signed:.....

Date:.....

Signed:.....

Follow up meeting date:.....

APPENDIX J – Safeguarding children and vulnerable young adults during the COVID-19 crisis

As a training organisation we are facing unprecedented challenges to support and safeguard vulnerable children and families, especially as we head into the new period of national lockdown. During this time of uncertainty, it is particularly important to safeguarding children who may be at an increased risk of abuse, harm and exploitation from a range of sources.

However, it is equally important to safeguard families, with parents facing significant pressures to continue to protect and promote the welfare of their children. These parents may already be struggling and so with additional pressure the likelihood of harm or significant harm may increase.

Risk factors

Poverty

We have long recognised the relationship between poverty and the safeguarding of children and families. Where families are unable to meet the basic needs of children, this can, in some cases, lead to an increased likelihood of abuse, neglect and harm. During the COVID-19 outbreak, where paid work is threatened or has been lost or where families are forced to isolate, this risk of poverty increases and challenges the ability of families to be able to follow Government health advice.

Taking action

Think about the children and families that you work with and how they are managing in the current context:

- Has anything changed within the family which may lead to financial concerns (for example, a family member may have lost their job and the family could be struggling to pay bills or buy food)?
- Do the family know how the latest Government plans could support them?
- Are the family having to isolate, and so unable to attend school or get supplies from shops?
- Are they aware of local mutual aid support networks and foodbanks?
- If children in the family would usually access free school meals, how is the school continuing to provide this (for example, through supermarket vouchers or food parcels)?
- How might children and families be maintaining their networks in the context of staying indoors?
- Do the family have access to the internet? The internet can be helpful in supporting citizens to stay connected with their loved ones. Using apps like [Houseparty](#), [Skype](#) and [Whatsapp](#) can enable virtual connection.
- Think about families who have limited networks, could they develop new networks in their neighbourhood? We have seen creativity and positivity in recent weeks with communities using technology to communicate and mobilise the support those who need it.
- Do families understand how to keep themselves and children safe online, including how to use parental controls, from the risk of exploitation, bullying and grooming?

Support networks

From experience, it is clear that children who are abused and harmed are often unseen and unheard. When we explore this in more depth it can become clear that the whole family system is isolated. Support networks provide help in being able to manage and overcome difficulties and challenges. Due to the current social distancing measures, the ability of children and families to access the usual range of traditional, face-to-face, social networks will be hampered and new means may need to be explored to retain contact as an important protective factor.

Taking action

Think about the children and families that you work with and how they are navigating these challenges in the current context:

- If a family are staying indoors in limited space, do they have a clear routine to each day? Children respond well to routines and boundaries; having a sense of how your time is going to be spent indoors will help a family manage the challenge of a lack of personal space.
- Are the family clear on Government guidance with regard to exercise? How are the family thinking about how daily exercise outside can provide stimulation and, potentially, health benefits?
- Where problems arise with the family's accommodation, are they aware of when and how to seek support or emergency assistance?
- Where problems with paying rent occur, are the family aware of their legal protections under emergency coronavirus laws?

Accommodation

Vulnerable children and families can often face challenges with their accommodation. They may have temporary accommodation or a lack of space, for example the sharing of one room. During the COVID-19 outbreak, the exposure of children and families to unsuitable accommodation will increase as adults may work from home and members of the household are unable to be outside. Whilst children should all be able to access school, this may not always be true of all children in the household who may be forced to self-isolate due to local outbreaks within their schools or school 'bubbles'.

Abuse and harm

Different types of abuse and harm are likely to be more prominent during this time. This does not mean that risk will definitely increase when working with pre-existing concerns. However, practitioners should show curiosity to explore how the risk may become exacerbated.

Domestic abuse

We know that conflict and violence can escalate when families face greater pressure and stress, and the order to limit social contact and stay home can cause anxiety for those at risk. The current situation disrupts routines and behaviours, both positively and negatively and it is important to be aware of how the tension can escalate to violence and abusive behaviours between families, parents and children.

If we have a concern of domestic abuse, consider how the current situation may further impact on relationships in the household and how effective any mechanisms to diffuse conflict are in the new context. For example, if a previous strategy involved leaving the family home to see or stay with friends or family, how can you support them to adapt and modify their strategies? Victims must also be aware that the order to stay at home during this second national lockdown does not apply to those escaping danger or harm, including domestic abuse and violence.

Substance abuse

Unhealthy coping mechanisms can involve a reliance on substances that provide relief and escapism by adults and children alike. Substances alter the behaviour of parents and create a lack of safety for children and young people. It is important to understand how families are managing the stresses that they face, which are likely to be exacerbated under the current pressures - with associated worries around employment, finances and health.

Where there is an existing dependency or use of substances in the household, it is important to consider how the current context may escalate use. If a parent or individual is reliant on prescription medication, how might stretched national resources affect their capacity to stay well and abstain from using dangerous substances?

Similarly, efforts in health promotion and education with children and young people on the risks of substance abuse remains of paramount importance.

Neglect

Isolation can place children at a greater risk of neglect. This is compounded by the increased economic challenges and poverty that families may be facing, and by the increased exposure of children to neglectful environments as they spend more time in the home. Even with schools remaining open, children may still have reduced contact with the usual range of professionals who may further limit the contact that children have with professionals who can identify the signs of neglect and take steps to intervene and report concerns.

Neglect may become a source of harm for children, even if not the initial reason for social care involvement. Practitioners should maintain a professional curiosity and keep a holistic view of the family and emerging risks.

Children with additional needs

We know that children and young people with additional needs and disabilities are up to three times more likely to be abused or neglected than non-disabled children, and less likely to disclose harm due to communication and other difficulties. Even though these children may have been able to access schooling throughout the pandemic, the availability of access to schooling provides an important safeguard for them. However, with localised outbreaks that affect the opening of schools or require self-isolation, families may still find increased time at home and additional caring responsibilities, where external support opportunities may be limited, a strain.

We should consider how we seek the voice of the child during these times, and whether online or telephone contact is enough to ensure their wellbeing and safety. This is especially important where communication difficulties make these means less effective.

Exploitation

Child exploitation and associated grooming comes in many forms. In times of crisis, those who might seek to exploit children and young people can be quick to act and prey on vulnerabilities facing fewer barriers to do so with a reduction in online moderators that work to keep children safe.

Online social media and gaming sites become a lifeline for parents and children adapting to spending more time at home and for addressing social isolation. However, this may come with reduced access to personal, social and health education on how to stay safe. Practitioners should consider if parents and families are able to monitor activity, recognise the signs of exploitation and take action, and what support they might need to promote good online safety and safeguarding through conversations and discussion with children.

Helping families to establish clear boundaries, controls and expectations with children about internet, mobile phone and social media usage can be a protective factor.

Whilst continuing to work to safeguard children and young vulnerable adults, local Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) may have ongoing changes to the way that support is accessed, including moving face-to-face appointments to telephone consultations and reducing community visits to only those deemed high-risk. Where concerns are held that a child or family need CAMHS review or support, the local team or key worker can be contacted in the first instance to seek advice and further discussion.

What can you do to help?

As a training provider we are the eyes and ears that may first pick up any signs of abuse, neglect and other harm. Here is a checklist of things you can do:

- Think about virtual relationship-based practice: how can you use technology to add value to your practice? Remember, however, this should not replace the statutory responsibilities you may have.
- Be proactive with children and families, speak with parents about your hypotheses about risk in a respectful way and include them in your planning to address this risk, where possible.
- Where domestic abuse and violence is a risk, try to assess the current situation and make sure that they know what support is available.
- Advocate for social connection and interaction where safe and possible for families. Encourage families to think about how they can mitigate against staying indoors to continue to interact with others.
- Empower and enable families to safeguard children by sharing advice and information that they can use. For example, signposting to online safety resources or support with boundary setting.
- Consider how you, families and children may be able to continue to access the local supports and safeguards around them, for example through schools, CAMHS and local outreach services.

DOCUMENT REVIEW

Date version approved:	19 th January 2023
Signed & approved by:	Proscovia Kasozi, Adline Nwankwo Bokesa & Wendy Oparah
Next review date:	19 th January 2025
Frequency of review	Yearly

