

Listening Ear

Safeguarding Adults Statement

Purpose and Commitment

At Listening Ear, safeguarding isn't simply a requirement — it is central to who we are. Every person who comes to us brings their own experiences, vulnerabilities, and strengths, and we recognise the trust they place in us when they share their story.

Our commitment is to ensure that each adult is safe, respected, and genuinely listened to. We understand that abuse and neglect can have a profound and lasting impact, and so our responsibility extends beyond noticing harm — we work actively to prevent it, to challenge it, and to respond confidently and compassionately when concerns arise.

We strive to foster a service culture where adults feel empowered, where difficult conversations are handled sensitively, and where staff feel confident to act. Safeguarding is not the job of a single person; it is the shared responsibility of everyone connected to Listening Ear.

We aim to:

- Provide a safe and supportive environment.
- Promote a culture where adults feel listened to and empowered.
- Ensure concerns are responded to promptly, proportionately, and effectively.
- Work in partnership with statutory agencies, communities, and other organisations.

Safeguarding is embedded in our values and is the responsibility of every staff member, volunteer, trustee, and student.

Scope of This Statement

Safeguarding at Listening Ear reaches across every corner of our organisation. Whether support is offered at our centres, in community venues, over the phone, or online, the same duty of care applies. Every adult who seeks counselling or postvention support is entitled to safety and dignity.

This statement applies equally to staff, volunteers, students, trustees, and anyone representing Listening Ear. It ensures that, regardless of setting or role, we respond consistently and uphold the same values and standards. The safeguarding principles in this statement underpin every interaction we have with adults who use our service.

Legal and Policy Framework

Our approach is shaped by legislation that sets out how adults should be protected and respected.

The Care Act 2014 provides the foundation for understanding adult safeguarding — highlighting the importance of wellbeing, the duty to prevent abuse, and the need for partnership working. The Mental Capacity Act 2005 reminds us that adults should be supported to make their own choices, even when those choices seem unwise, and guides us when capacity is in question. The Human Rights Act 1998 ensures that every action we take respects the fundamental rights of the people we support, and Data Protection legislation ensures that information is used responsibly and shared only when necessary to protect someone from harm.

Together, these frameworks guide our decisionmaking and ensure our safeguarding practice remains rooted in law, ethics, and respect.

Safeguarding Principles

At the heart of safeguarding are six principles that shape our culture and our actions:

- **Empowerment:** We believe that individuals are experts in their own lives. We listen, offer choices, and respect their decisions.

- **Prevention:** Early recognition of concerns can stop harm from escalating. We invest in training, awareness, and open conversations so that concerns don't go unnoticed.
- **Proportionality:** Not every situation requires the same response. We carefully consider what is appropriate and what will best support the person.
- **Protection:** Some adults have greater vulnerability or fewer protective factors. For those who need it, we step in and support them to stay safe.
- **Partnership:** Effective safeguarding is never done in isolation. By working closely with statutory agencies, we ensure the right support is put in place.
- **Accountability:** We operate transparently, with clear responsibilities, honest communication, and a culture where safeguarding practices are understood and upheld by everyone.

These principles shape how we think, respond, and reflect on our safeguarding practice

Types of Abuse

Abuse can take many forms and is not always obvious. Some adults may experience multiple types of abuse at once, or abuse that is hidden or disguised.

We recognise physical harm, emotional manipulation, sexual exploitation, financial exploitation, and neglect — including situations where a person struggles to care for themselves.

We also understand more complex and emerging forms of abuse such as cuckooing, online exploitation, domestic abuse, honour-based violence, and radicalisation.

Abuse can happen in private relationships, within institutions, or in community settings. It does not discriminate — and it can happen to anyone.

By being alert, curious, and compassionate, we aim to create an environment where adults feel safe to disclose concerns and where staff feel equipped to recognise early warning signs.

We recognise the following forms of abuse:

- Physical abuse
- Emotional and psychological abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Neglect and self-neglect
- Financial or material abuse
- Domestic abuse
- Organisational abuse
- Discriminatory abuse
- Modern slavery
- Exploitation (including cuckooing and criminal exploitation)
- Honour-based abuse and FGM
- Radicalisation and extremism

Roles and Responsibilities

Safeguarding works best when everyone understands their role.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead and Senior Management Team offer leadership, support, and expertise, but safeguarding is not their responsibility alone.

Staff and volunteers are often the first to notice when something doesn't feel right, and their actions can be the first step in keeping an adult safe.

Managers ensure good practice is embedded across the organisation, and trustees oversee our strategic commitment to safeguarding.

Together, we form a community of practice that places adults' wellbeing at the centre of our work.

Responding to Safeguarding Concerns

When a concern is raised:

1. We listen and take the adult's views seriously.
2. Assess immediate risk.(completed risk assessment if required)
3. Support involvement in decision-making.
4. Share information with statutory services when necessary.
5. Record concerns clearly and promptly.

Mental Capacity and Best Interests

Supporting autonomy is central to our work. Most adults we support will have capacity to make their own decisions, and we respect their right to do so — even when their choices are complex or risky. If there are concerns about capacity, we explore this carefully, always assuming capacity unless there is evidence to the contrary. We support adults to understand information, weigh up choices, and communicate their decisions.

When someone lacks capacity, we act in their best interests, ensuring our actions are the least restrictive option available.

We follow MCA principles:

- Adults are presumed to have capacity.
- Adults may make unwise decisions.
- Every practical step must be taken to support decision-making.
- Decisions for someone lacking capacity must be in their best interests.
- The least restrictive option must always be used.

Creating a Safe Environment

Safety is created through people, culture, and processes. At Listening Ear, we take steps to ensure that every part of our organisation reflects safe practice.

We recruit carefully, with robust checks in place. Training is mandatory and refreshed annually. Supervision provides a reflective space where staff can explore concerns and build confidence. Our settings — digital, physical, and community-based — are designed with safeguarding in mind.

Policies and procedures are regularly reviewed so that what we do remains current, effective, and informed by learning.

- Safer recruitment processes.
- Induction and annual safeguarding training.
- Ongoing supervision and support.
- Safeguarding measures across all service delivery settings.
- Regular policy review.

Culture of Openness and Accountability

We encourage a culture where concerns can be raised without fear. Adults using our service should feel comfortable sharing worries, and staff should feel confident to speak up if something doesn't seem right.

Professional curiosity is valued — asking questions, exploring inconsistencies, and looking beyond the obvious. We support whistleblowing and see it as an important part of safeguarding. Most importantly, we learn from experience, recognising that safeguarding practice is always evolving

We encourage:

- A culture where adults feel safe to speak up.
- Staff confidence to raise concerns.
- Use of whistleblowing procedures.
- Professional curiosity.

Review of this Statement

We revisit this statement each year to ensure it continues to reflect best practice, legislative updates, and learning from real safeguarding

cases. A living document, it grows and changes with the organisation and the needs of the adults we support.