

Listening Ear

Safeguarding Children Statement

Our Commitment to Safeguarding

At Listening Ear we are fully committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare, protection, and wellbeing of all children and young people who access our services.

Safeguarding is central to our values and embedded in every aspect of our work. We strive to create environments where children and young people feel listened to, supported, safe, and able to share any concerns with confidence.

Our organisation recognises its legal responsibility to ensure that children and young people are protected from harm, abuse, neglect, and exploitation. Our Safeguarding Policy aligns with Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023) and other national legislation and guidance.

All staff, volunteers, students and trustees share responsibility for maintaining a safeguarding culture. This includes identifying concerns, acting immediately when risks are identified, and contributing to multi-agency safeguarding processes.

Legal framework

Our safeguarding approach is shaped by the key laws and statutory guidance that protect children in England. We follow the principles set out in the Children Act 1989 and Children Act 2004, which establish the duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and to act when a child is at risk of significant harm. Our practice aligns with Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023), which defines how

agencies must work together, share information, assess needs and respond to concerns.

We comply with legislation addressing specific risks, including the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, which recognises children as victims in their own right, and the Prevent Duty under the CounterTerrorism and Security Act 2015, which requires vigilance to signs of radicalisation. Our work is further underpinned by the Sexual Offences Act 2003, the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003, and statutory guidance on child sexual and criminal exploitation, trafficking, harmful sexual behaviour, and online safety.

We also follow safer recruitment requirements under the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 and maintain strong confidentiality standards in line with the Data Protection Act 2018 and GDPR. Mental health safeguarding is supported through the Mental Health Act 2007, ensuring children receive safe, appropriate care when experiencing mental health crises.

These frameworks ensure that our safeguarding practice is robust, lawful, and centred on the safety, rights, and wellbeing of every child and young person.

Creating Safe Environments

We ensure children and young people feel secure, respected, and encouraged to talk. We maintain strong working relationships with parents, carers and professionals, and we promote safe practice and safeguarding throughout the organisation.

Clear Roles & 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.

Recognising Abuse & Harm

Listening Ear is committed to ensuring that every child we encounter is safe, protected, and supported. Recognising signs of abuse or harm is essential, as children often communicate their experiences not only through words but also through behaviour, emotions, and changes in presentation. Our approach is rooted in curiosity, sensitivity, and an understanding that safeguarding concerns can emerge gradually or suddenly.

We identify and respond to all forms of abuse, including:

Neglect

Neglect occurs when a child's basic physical or emotional needs are not met. This may include inadequate supervision, lack of appropriate medical care, poor nutrition, unsafe living conditions, or persistent failure to provide warmth, affection,

or stimulation. Neglect can be chronic or episodic and can be as harmful as other forms of abuse. Staff remain alert to patterns such as frequent hunger, tiredness, developmental delays, or unexplained changes in behaviour.

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse involves causing physical harm to a child. Signs may include bruises, burns, fractures, marks or injuries that are unexplained, inconsistent with the child's account, or in unusual locations. Staff understand that children may be reluctant or afraid to talk about physical harm, and so patterns of repeated injuries or changes in behaviour are taken seriously.

Emotional Abuse

Emotional or psychological abuse can be harder to identify but is equally damaging. It includes persistent criticism, rejection, humiliation, intimidation, or emotional neglect. Children experiencing emotional abuse may show signs such as withdrawal, anxiety, low self-esteem, difficulty forming relationships, or extreme behaviours (e.g. excessive compliance or aggression). We remain sensitive to changes in emotional wellbeing that do not have an obvious explanation.

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse includes any sexual activity with a child, whether physical or noncontact, including grooming, exposure to sexual content, or exploitation online. Signs may be behavioural (e.g. sexualised behaviour, secrecy, sudden changes in mood), physical (e.g. discomfort, infections), or emotional. Because sexual abuse often occurs in secrecy and through manipulation, we pay attention to subtle cues, the

dynamics of relationships around the child, and unexplained distress.

Exploitation

Child criminal exploitation (CCE), child sexual exploitation (CSE), and other forms of exploitation involve someone taking advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate, or deceive a child into engaging in activities against their will or best interests. Signs may include going missing, associating with older peers, unexplained gifts, increased secrecy, and heightened anxiety.

Domestic Abuse

Children living in households where domestic abuse is present can experience significant emotional and physical harm. Even if they are not directly targeted, exposure to controlling behaviour, coercion, violence, or conflict can negatively impact their wellbeing. Children may present as fearful, hypervigilant, withdrawn, or overly protective of a parent.

Online Harm

Children increasingly experience risk online through social media, gaming, and digital communication. Online harm may include cyberbullying, grooming, coercion, exposure to harmful content, or sharing of images. We remain alert to changes in mood, secrecy around devices, or distress linked to online activity.

Harmful Sexual Behaviour (HSB)

HSB refers to sexual behaviours expressed by children that are developmentally inappropriate, harmful, coercive, or abusive. Not all sexualised behaviour indicates abuse, but

some behaviour may suggest risk, trauma, or unmet needs. Staff respond calmly, avoid judgement, and follow safeguarding procedures to ensure safety and support for all children involved

Radicalisation

Radicalisation occurs when a child is encouraged to adopt extreme views or engage in extremist activity. Signs may include sudden changes in identity, language, friendships, online activity, or beliefs that promote intolerance or violence. Staff follow the Prevent duty guidance and respond proportionately.

Mental Health Related Safeguarding Concerns

Children may experience distress, trauma, or mental health challenges that place them at risk of harm. This includes selfharm, suicidal thoughts, severe anxiety, or behaviours that indicate a child is struggling to cope. While mental health difficulties are not in themselves abuse, they often intersect with safeguarding risks. We ensure children are supported and that concerns are shared with appropriate services.

Responding to Concerns

At Listening Ear, every concern raised about a child's safety or wellbeing is treated with urgency and respect. Staff understand that children may communicate harm in many different ways — through words, behaviours, emotions, or subtle signs. Because of this, we adopt a listening, calm, and childcentred approach.

When a concern arises, staff:

- Take all worries seriously, regardless of whether they are big or small, clear or uncertain.

- Listen attentively, giving the child space to express themselves without pressure, assumption, or judgement.
- Respond sensitively, offering reassurance without making promises of confidentiality.
- Record concerns promptly and accurately, using clear, factual language that reflects what was said or observed.
- Take urgent action when needed, especially if a child is in immediate danger.
- Make timely referrals to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and statutory services such as Children's Social Care or the police, where appropriate.
- Share information appropriately, following data protection principles but never allowing confidentiality to override child safety.
- We recognise that our role is not to investigate allegations ourselves, but to ensure concerns are passed to the right people at the right time.

Safer Recruitment

Listening Ear is committed to recruiting staff and volunteers who are safe, suitable, and committed to safeguarding children. Our safer recruitment practices are designed to deter unsuitable individuals and identify any potential risks early.

Our approach includes:

- Enhanced DBS checks, rechecks, and ongoing monitoring where required.
- Detailed application and interview processes that explore safeguarding attitudes, values, professional boundaries, and understanding of child protection.

- Verification of identity, qualifications, and employment history, including scrutiny of gaps in work history.
- Written references, verified for authenticity, that specifically address suitability to work with children.
- Mandatory safeguarding training for all new staff and volunteers as part of induction.
- A probation period to assess safe practice in real settings.

We ensure that safeguarding responsibilities are clear from the outset, and that every person joining Listening Ear understands their duty to protect children.

Safeguarding in Groups, Online, and in the Community

Children engage with Listening Ear in a variety of environments — group settings, community locations, digital platforms, and by phone. Our safeguarding standards remain consistent across all contexts, and additional measures are applied where needed.

Group Sessions

- Group boundaries and expectations are made clear from the start.
- Staff remain alert to group dynamics, peer influences, and disclosures that may arise.
- Children are supported sensitively when navigating difficult emotions or discussions.
- Online and Digital Spaces
- We follow online-safety principles, ensuring that digital communication is professional, secure, and appropriate.
- Staff remain aware of risks such as online bullying, grooming, harmful content, and digital coercion.

- Guidance is provided on safe online behaviour when children use technology to access services.

Community Settings

Risk assessments are carried out for all venues and activities.

Staff remain vigilant to contextual safeguarding concerns, including environmental risks or unsafe adults in community spaces.

Across every setting, safeguarding remains at the heart of planning, delivery, and review.

Supporting Staff and Volunteers

Safeguarding is demanding and emotionally complex work. Listening Ear recognises the importance of supporting staff and volunteers so they can carry out their roles confidently and safely.

We provide:

Regular safeguarding training, ensuring staff remain up to date with emerging risks, legislation, and best practice.

Reflective supervision, giving staff space to explore challenges, seek guidance, and process emotionally difficult situations.

Emotional and wellbeing support, recognising the impact that safeguarding concerns can have on those who respond to them.

Clear whistleblowing procedures, empowering staff to raise concerns about unsafe practice without fear of reprisal.

Accessible policies and guidance that clarify responsibilities and provide practical steps for responding to concerns.

By supporting our people, we strengthen our safeguarding culture and our ability to protect children effectively.

Our Culture of Safeguarding

Safeguarding is woven into every aspect of Listening Ear's work. We view safeguarding not as a task but as a value — a commitment that shapes how we think, behave, and make decisions.

Our safeguarding culture is built on:

Shared responsibility — every staff member, volunteer, trustee, and student plays a vital role.

Continuous improvement — we learn from experience, from reflective practice, and from external developments.

Regular training and supervision — ensuring our knowledge is current and our skills remain strong.

Openness and transparency — encouraging staff and children to speak up when something doesn't feel right.

Childcentred practice — prioritising the safety, wishes, needs, and voice of each child.

Routine policy review, making sure our approach stays aligned with national guidance and evolving safeguarding challenges.

By maintaining a culture of vigilance, compassion, and accountability, we ensure that children who come to Listening Ear experience a service where their safety and wellbeing are paramount.