

**SAFFRON WALDEN MENCAP SOCIETY**

**SAFEGUARDING POLICY - CHILDREN**

**Saffron Walden Mencap Society is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for children and young people and promoting a climate where children and adults will feel confident about sharing any concerns which they may have about their own safety or the well-being of others.**

This policy has been adopted by Saffron Walden Mencap Society through its Trustees Committee which remains responsible for its review.

Original signed version is kept at the SWMS Registered office.

Signed: Date: 8th July 2024

Chair of Trustees

Next review: July 2026

1. **Introduction**

Safeguarding children and young people is everyone’s responsibility. Everyone has a role to play ensuring children and young people are safe from abuse, exploitation and harm. Our charity is committed to safeguarding and aims to create a culture of vigilance.Our members’ welfare is our paramount concern. The trustees will ensure that we have adequate arrangements in place in order to identify, assess and support those children and young people who are suffering or likely to suffer harm. Saffron Walden Mencap Society is a community, and all those directly connected – staff members, trustees, volunteers, families and members – have an essential role to play in making it safe and secure for all.

1. **Scope of the policy**
* This policy defines a child as anyone under the age of 18 years.
* This policy applies to all members of staff, trustees, and volunteers.
* This policy applies to all members of Saffron Walden Mencap Society.

This policy is reviewed, endorsed and approved by the board of trustees annually, or when legislation changes.

1. **Purpose of this policy & procedure**

The purpose of this policy & procedure is to ensure that we prevent children and young people using our services from coming to harm, abuse or neglect and that we will always respond effectively if concerns are raised or observed.

 This policy and procedure helps us to achieve this by:

* Defining abuse and informing us what to do
* Ensuring we all work to the same policy and procedures
* Making sure we are accountable for what we do
* Being clear what roles and responsibilities we all have in safeguarding
* Letting staff and volunteers know what support/guidance they can expect.

This policy is informed by and supports our organisational purpose, and is how we comply with the Essex Safeguarding Children Board.

**4. Objectives of this policy**

To ensure that we provide -

* Safe organisational ethos
* Safe environment
* Safe processes for working with service users
* Safe collection and use of information, and ways of communicating
* Safe staff and volunteers

**5. Principles of this policy**

In support of these objectives, we will:

* Reach out to, and seek to protect children and young people who are at risk of or are being sexually exploited
* Promote the safety of children and young people in all our work, both directly and indirectly through our partnership and campaigning work
* Support the spirit and practice of Saffron Walden Mencap’s safeguarding ethos in all that we personally do .
* Have in place quality assurance processes that help us to ensure we are all safeguarding in practice.
* Ensure that children and young people, carers, parents, staff members and volunteers feel safe to express their concerns without fear.
* Treat all children and young people fairly in being able to access services which meet their needs, regardless of gender, ethnicity, disability, sexuality or beliefs

**To achieve a safe environment, we will:**

* Always ensure that the welfare and safety of children and young people is paramount in all of our activities
* Listen to service users and take account of what they tell us in making decisions about them
* Take all reasonable steps to protect service users from harm, discrimination, and degrading treatment
* Practice with respect for the rights, wishes and feelings of children and young people.
* Regularly assess and review safety risks which arise from premises, activities, equipment and travel arrangements, as outlined in our Health and Safety & Transport Policies.

**To achieve safe processes, we will:**

* Implement safeguarding procedures that are compliant with the expectations of Essex Safeguarding Children Board.
* Take all suspicions and allegations of abuse, from inside or outside the organisation, seriously, and respond to them promptly and appropriately
* Be clear about everyone’s roles and responsibilities
* Have in place clear arrangements for how we would implement safeguarding in practice.

**To achieve safe information, we will:**

* Be clear with service users how the things they tell us will be used
* Communicate promptly and clearly within Saffron Walden Mencap Society and with external agencies, and follow the requirements of information sharing protocols of Essex Safeguarding Children Board.
* Keep good records of our work with service users and also of our management of staff’s work
* Hold service users information with care, use it for agreed purposes only as set out in our Data Protection Policy, Privacy Statement and Confidentiality Policy.

**To achieve safe staff and volunteers, we will:**

* Recruit trustees, staff and volunteers with regard to their suitability for work with children and young people, including use of enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service checks
* Provide trustees, staff and volunteers with guidance and training in their safeguarding role, and ensure they have access to our policies and procedures
* Ensure everyone has access to advice on safeguarding at all times in the course of their work
* Be clear with everyone what their individual role and responsibility is in safeguarding ∙
* Support staff and volunteers to carry out their job with appropriate supervision.

**7. TYPES OF CHILD ABUSE**

Abuse is a violation of a person’s human and civil rights or dignity by any other person or persons. Abuse may consist of a single act or repeated acts. Anyone can carry out abuse or neglect, including relatives and family members, professional staff, paid care workers, volunteers, other users of services, neighbours, friends and associates or strangers. Abuse can happen anywhere and it is vital that we are vigilant on behalf of those people who are unable, or less able, to protect themselves. There are many kinds of abuse including:

**Physical**

Deliberately hurting a child or young person and causing physical harm. This includes hitting, shaking, slapping, kicking, spitting, misuse of medication, restraint or inappropriate sanctions.

**Sexual**

This doesn’t necessarily involve physical contact and can take place online. It includes any contact or non-contact sexual act to which the child or young person has not consented /could not consent/was pressured into consenting to.

This includes:

∙ sexual violence such as rape or physical sexual assault

∙ indecent exposure

∙ sexual harassment

∙ inappropriate looking or touching

∙ sexual teasing or innuendo

∙ sexual photography

∙ subjection to photography or sexual acts

 **Forced Marriage**

A forced marriage is one that is conducted without the full consent of both parties and where duress, threats or abuse is a factor. Forced marriage can amount to sexual and emotional abuse and put a child or young person at risk of physical abuse. In circumstances where there are concerns that someone is at imminent risk of a forced marriage urgent referrals should be made to Child and Adult Social Care.

**Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)**

Female genital mutilation is a collective term for procedures that include the removal of part or all of the external female genitalia for cultural or other non-therapeutic reasons. The practice is medically unnecessary, extremely painful and has serious physical and mental health consequences both at the time and in later life. The procedure is typically performed on girls of 4 -13 years but may be performed on new born babies or on young women. FGM can result in death.

FGM is a criminal offence (Prohibition of Female Circumcision Act 2003). Under the act it is an offence to arrange, procure, aid or abet female genital mutilation. Parents/carers may be liable under this act.

It is also an offence to allow the procedure to be undertaken in another country. Where agencies become aware that a girl is at risk of FGM a referral should be made to Children’s Social Care.

**Emotional**

The persistent emotional maltreatment of a child or young person which has a negative effect on their emotional development. This includes any activity which makes someone feel worthless, unloved or not good enough, ignoring their privacy and dignity, and teasing, shouting or threatening.

**Child on Child (or Peer on Peer) abuse** - children and young people are capable of abusing their peers. This can take many forms, including bullying and cyber bullying, sexual violence/harrasment, physical abuse, and use of photography/text/online images.

**Upskirting**: This is a criminal offence and typically involves taking a picture under a person’s clothing (not necessarily a skirt) without their permission and/or knowledge, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks (with or without underwear) to obtain sexual gratification, or cause the victim humiliation, distress or alarm. Anyone of any sex can be a victim.

**Self harm/self-neglect**

This covers a wide range of behaviours including neglecting care for one’s personal hygiene, health or surroundings and includes behaviours such as hoarding, physical self harm and drug/alcohol abuse.

**Organisational/Institutional.**

This includes neglect and poor care practice within an institution or care setting or to care provided at home and could be a one-off incident or ongoing ill treatment. It can be through neglect or poor professional practice as a result of the structure, policies, processes & practices within an organisation.

**Child Sexual Exploitation.**

A type of child sexual abuse. It occurs when an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance in power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person into sexual activity through bribery and/or for the gain of the perpetrator/facilitator of the abuse. This can take place in person, online or both.

**Child Criminal Exploitation**

This refers to the manipulation, coercion, or deception of a child or young person into committing crimes. It usually occurs when an individual, or group uses bribery, threats or violence to force a child or young person to ‘work’ for those who deal in controlled drugs, shoplifting, or other thefts, or to threaten other young people to do so.

 **Child Trafficking & Modern Slavery**

This type of abuse occurs when children are exploited, controlled or held captive and/or threatened or punished to stop them from escaping or reporting the circumstances. Anyone can be a target for modern slavery, but some people can be more at risk because of money, social or health issues, or because of their age, vulnerability or immigration status and may become victim to:

∙ Slavery

∙ Human trafficking

∙ Forced labour and domestic servitude

**Neglect**

This is the persistent failure to meet a child or young person’s basic physical and psychological needs. The four main types of neglect are:

* Physical neglect: not meeting a child or young person’s basic needs such as food, clothing or shelter; not supervising a child or young person adequately or providing for their safety.
* Educational neglect: not ensuring a child or young person has adequate education.
* Emotional Neglect: not meeting a child or young person’s needs for nurture and stimulation.
* Medical Neglect: not providing appropriate health care (including dental care) , refusing care or ignoring medical recommendations.

 **Discriminatory**

This includes racist or sexist behaviour or harassment based on a person’s ethnicity, race, culture, sexual orientation, or gender.

 **8. Indicators of abuse.**

Saffron Walden Mencap will be vigilant regarding notification of or witnessing any change in a person's behaviour, as specific behaviour patterns may indicate abuse. Whilst we should

not automatically assume abuse in such circumstances, as there may be other reasons, changes in a person's behaviour should always be taken seriously.

Indicators and signs of abuse may include:

* Unwillingness to be in the same room or place with a person/people ∙ Unwillingness to attend routine venues such as day centres/clubs/work placements ∙ Withdrawn or isolated behaviour
* Disclosure of missing possessions
* Being at risk of, or becoming, homeless
* Being easily distressed
* Damaged or damaging property
* Abnormally disruptive behaviour
* Change in attitude or behaviour
* Unexplained injury or illness
* Damaged/torn clothing
* Unexplained changes in material circumstances

It is important to be able to recognise the distinct multiple signs of **radicalisation,** which include when an individual:

* Develops views which are extreme regarding another section of society or government policy
* Becomes increasingly intolerant of moderate views and/or expresses a desire/intent to support extremist activity
* Is observed viewing, downloading or sharing extremist propaganda ∙ Becomes withdrawn and focused on one ideology
* Changes their appearance and/or becomes isolated from family/peers/social groups
* Suffers a deterioration in health or mental health

**9. Safer Recruitment**

This policy should be read in conjunction with our Safer Recruitment policy.

Our organisation is committed to safe recruitment in line with the relevant legislation and guidance from government and Regulatory Authorities for recruiting all staff, paid or unpaid. We do this by:

* advertising vacancies with a clear commitment required to safeguarding
* assigning all posts detailed job descriptions
* obtaining full personal details including fitness to work with children, young people and adults at risk by application form (not CVs) with particular relevance to previous work with children, young people and adults at risk
* when a candidate is selected for interview the relevant criminal declaration form will be sent for completion as set out by the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974, as amended
* always taking up two written references, one from the most recent employer or education establishment
* undertaking all interviews face to face, based on the job description ∙ ensuring at least one person on each interview panel will have undertaken Safer Recruitment training.
* having sound procedures and recording for interviewing to ensure we are satisfied, and can evidence that the applicant is appropriate and suitable

Any appointment will only be confirmed subject to:

* a satisfactory criminal records check at the appropriate level, a follow up of written references by telephone if necessary & relevant to the vacant post together with a check of essential qualifications & confirmation of the Right to Work in the UK where relevant.
* **10. PROCEDURE IN THE EVENT OF A DISCLOSURE**

This procedure must be followed whenever an allegation of abuse is made or when there is a suspicion that a child or young person has been abused. **Please refer to the final page of this document for guidance if a person chooses to speak to you directly.** The designated Safeguarding lead is **Steve Lee 07596023307**. He will be responsible for reporting the matter to the appropriate authority. A written record of the date and time of the report will be made and the report must include the name and position of the person to whom the matter is reported. The telephone report must be confirmed in writing to the relevant local authority department within 24 hours. **Dianne King** is designated Deputy Safeguarding Lead **07969026295**

 **Essex Children & Families Hub 0345 603 7627**

**Duty team out of hours emergency for adults and children 0345 6061212**

**If a child or young person chooses to speak to you directly**

| **Do** |
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| ∙ React calmly so as not to frighten the young person. ∙ Take what the person says seriously, recognising the difficulties inherent in interpreting what is being said by a person who has for example a speech impairment and/or differences in language. ∙ Avoid asking leading or direct questions other than those seeking to clarify your understanding of what the person has said. They may be subsequently formally interviewed by the Police and/or Social Care Services and they should not have to repeat their account on several occasions. The first person told may become a witness at court if they have asked/gained direct relevant information. ∙ Try to reduce any questions you may choose to ask to an **absolute minimum** and concentrate on listening to the person. Questions should never be leading and should only consist of Who ..? Where ..? When ..? What ..? ∙ Reassure the young person that they are right to tell and are not to blame. ∙ Explain to them that concerns will have to be shared with someone who is in a position to act. Do not make promises of confidentiality. ∙ Make a written record of what has been disclosed at the earliest opportunity. ∙ Discuss the incident report with the Designated Safeguarding lead or if not available, the Deputy Make a full written record of what has been said, heard and/or seen as soon as possible (preferably on the day that the concern/disclosure was first identified/made) using the incident report template. **This MUST BE dated and signed.**  |
| **Don’t** |
| ∙ Dismiss the concern ∙ Panic or try to resolve the issue yourself. ∙ Allow your shock or distaste to show. ∙ Probe for more information than is freely offered to open questions. ∙ Speculate or make assumptions about what may have happened. ∙ Make any comments about the alleged abuser. ∙ Make promises or agree to keep secrets. ∙ Ask the young person or any witnesses to sign your written information as this may be significantly detrimental to any subsequent police investigation. ∙ Take photographs of any alleged injuries. Any such recording must only be done by an approved medical or other practitioner, following referral. ∙ Discuss the issue with anyone other than the Safeguarding lead. |