



## Stepping Stones DS (“SSDS”) Safeguarding policy

### Principles and Values

Safeguarding is everyone’s responsibility. As such it does not rest solely with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (s) (DSL(s)) to take a responsibility in all of the areas covered within this policy.

All members, children and their siblings are able to talk to any member of staff, trustee, volunteer or service provider to share concerns or talk about situations which are giving them worries. The relevant individuals will listen to them, take their worries seriously and share the information with the DSL(s).

In addition, we may provide children and young people with information of who they can talk to within the community and with local or national organisations who can provide support or help.

SSDS will review this policy annually in conjunction with its Code of Conduct.

**If you are concerned about the immediate safety of a child or vulnerable adult, please call 999.**

**For any other safeguarding concerns, please call one of our DSLs, Josh McCormack (07557229695) or Kirsten Williams (07894339172). You can also email Josh (josh@steppingstonesds.co.uk) or Kirsten (kirsten@steppingstonesds.co.uk)**

Date Approved by Board of Trustees: \_\_\_\_December 2024\_\_\_\_\_

Date of next review: \_\_\_\_\_December 2025\_\_\_\_\_

## Definitions

Within this document:

**‘Safeguarding’** means protecting children and vulnerable adults from harm, abuse or neglect and ensuring the best circumstances for them to thrive. Our safeguarding practice applies to every child and vulnerable adult.

The term **Staff** includes all paid staff, volunteers and trustees.

**Child** refers to anyone who has not yet reached their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday.

**Young person** refers to all people between 18 and 24 inclusive.

**Vulnerable adult** refers to anyone over the age of 18 who for any reason is unable to fully take care of themselves or protect themselves from exploitation. This may be permanent or temporary.

**Parent** refers to birth parents and other adults in a parenting role for example adoptive parents, guardians, step-parents and foster carers.

**Service Provider** refers to any person or organisation providing services to or on behalf of Stepping Stones DS whether paid or voluntary.

## Key personnel:

The designated safeguarding leads for the charity are:

Kirsten Williams – [kirsten@steppingstonesds.co.uk](mailto:kirsten@steppingstonesds.co.uk)

Josh McCormack – [Josh@steppingstonesds.co.uk](mailto:Josh@steppingstonesds.co.uk)

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The safeguarding Trustee is:

Josh McCormack - [Josh@steppingstonesds.co.uk](mailto:Josh@steppingstonesds.co.uk)

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## **Background**

The purpose of this policy is:

- to protect children and young people who receive SSDS services;
- to provide any staff, sessional workers, trustees, service providers and volunteers with the overarching principles that guide SSDS's approach to safeguarding and child protection.

This Safeguarding Policy is for 'Stepping Stones DS' (**SSDS**).

SSDS seeks to mitigate safeguarding risks by requesting that a responsible adult remains on location while their child/young adult attends any out of school activity with SSDS.

SSDS is committed to the safety of its member families including children, young people with Down syndrome and any siblings. We have a responsibility to promote the welfare of all children and young people to keep them safe. The welfare of the child is paramount.

This policy applies to any paid staff, the board of trustees, volunteers, sessional workers, service providers and/or anyone working on behalf of SSDS.

## **Legal Framework**

This policy has been written on the basis of law and guidance that seeks to protect children and young adults including but not limited to:

- Children Act 1989
- Children Act 2004
- Children & Families Act 2014
- Care Act 2014
- Data Protection Act 1998

- Human Rights Act 1998
- Sexual Offences Act 2003
- Working together to safeguard children: A guide to interagency working (Department for Children, Schools & Families, 2018)

**We will seek to keep children and young people safe by:**

- valuing them, listening to and respecting them;
- appointing a Designated Safeguarding Lead for children and young people;
- recording and storing information professionally and securely;
- sharing information about safeguarding and good practice with children, their families, staff and volunteers;
- providing effective management for any staff and volunteers, including trustees through good support, training and any quality assurance measures;
- recruiting staff and volunteers safely ensuring all necessary checks are made;
- using our procedures to manage any allegations against staff and volunteers appropriately;
- creating and maintaining an anti-bullying environment;
- ensuring we have effective complaints and whistleblowing measures in place;
- using our safeguarding procedures to share concerns and relevant information with agencies who need to know, and involving children, young people, parents, families and carers appropriately;
- ensuring we provide safe physical environments for children, young people, staff and volunteers by applying health and safety measures in accordance with the law and regulatory guidance;
- providing clear and specific directions to staff and volunteers on how to behave online and offline through our Code of Conduct;
- supporting and encouraging parents and carers to do what they can to keep their children safe online;
- developing clear and robust procedures to enable us to respond appropriately to any incidents of inappropriate online behaviour, whether by an adult or a child/young person;
- ensuring personal information about the adults and children who are involved in our organisation is held securely and shared only as appropriate;
- ensuring that images of children, young people and families are used only after their written permission has been obtained, and only for the purpose for which consent has been given; and
- providing supervision, support and training for staff and volunteers about online safety where appropriate and relevant.

## **We will also seek to keep children and vulnerable adults safe by:**

- Supporting our service providers to ensure their staff and volunteers are adequately trained;
- Using our safeguarding procedures to share concerns and relevant information with agencies that need to know – not hindering any investigation;
- Using our safeguarding procedures to manage any allegations against any staff or activity provider appropriately; and
- Providing a safe environment for children and vulnerable adults both online and offline.

## **Training:**

- At least one staff member and one trustee will have attended Designated Safeguarding Lead training and completed NSPCC online 'Safer Recruitment' training or equivalent safeguarding training.
- All trustees, staff members and activity/ service providers will have completed NSPCC 'Child Protection: An Introduction' or equivalent safeguarding training.

Information related to safeguarding incidents will be held and processed in line with the principles of the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).

## **What is abuse?**

Types of abuse include, but are not limited to:

- Domestic Abuse: affecting parent and/or child(ren)
  - Physical, emotional, psychological, sexual, financial, coercive control.
- Teenage relationship abuse
- Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)
- Forced Marriage
- So-called 'Honour' based abuse
- Sexual Abuse
- Neglect/self-neglect
- Violence
- Trafficking, kidnapping

- Gangs and County Lines
- Cyber-bullying, sexting and grooming
- Bullying
- Prejudice-based abuse
- Radicalisation

Factors that increase the risk to the welfare of children and vulnerable adults include, but are not limited to:

- Disability
- Age (either under 18, or over 65)
- Homelessness
- Parent/carer mental ill-health
- Drug, alcohol and/or gambling addiction
- Radicalisation and extremism
- Requirement for intimate personal care
- Being in the care system (e.g. in foster care)
- Parent/carer in prison

***A child or vulnerable adult is more likely to experience abuse or neglect from someone they know than from a stranger.***

SSDS recognises that the best safeguarding is through prevention. We therefore run DBS checks for all staff and volunteers aged over 16. We also ask that our service providers ensure that their staff all have valid DBS checks.

Additionally all staff, trustees and service providers are also required to undertake NSPCC online Introduction to Safeguarding course or equivalent safeguarding training at least every three years to ensure that they are up to date with the latest requirements regarding safeguarding and child protection.

## **Raising a concern**

Concerns may come about in a number of ways including:

- A direct allegation made by a child or vulnerable adult;
- Someone witnessing abuse;

- Noticing a change in behaviour; and
- Noticing signs of abuse

**All allegations or suspicions of abuse will be taken seriously.**

Safeguarding concerns, allegations or suspicions of abuse may be reported to any member of SSDS staff, SSDS trustees, SSDS volunteers or SSDS service providers (“**Relevant People**”). Where a disclosure is made to one of these Relevant People they will ensure that they will not:

- promise to keep any secrets.
- begin or conduct any investigation into the concern.
- destroy any evidence.
- confront the alleged abuser.

Relevant People will also ensure that they do not make judgements or judgemental statements about the issue or issues being raised, should not ask leading questions in relation to the person making the disclosure or make decisions about the next steps in relation to the safeguarding concern without discussing this with one of the Designated Safeguarding Leads.

All disclosures of abuse will be handled by SSDS in the following ways:

- Calmly
- Objectively
- With compassion
- Safely
- With a written record of the disclosure (made afterwards if more appropriate) using the words of the person making the disclosure.
- With any evidence preserved.

We will ensure that any disclosures or safeguarding concern raised to SSDS through whatever means will be dealt with swiftly and in accordance with any relevant laws, policies and procedures and the SSDS Code of Conduct.

SSDS will also ensure that it maintains an easy read version of its safeguarding policies and procedure which will empower our members

and their families and ensure make sure they are aware of how to raise a safeguarding concern.

All safeguarding concerns will be reported to a DSL as soon as reasonably practicable who will keep a confidential record of any reports. The DSL will share, where appropriate and in accordance with all relevant law and procedures, information with relevant bodies such as Children's Services and the police as soon as reasonably practicable. All other actions that do not require an urgent response, but are important will take place within 3 working days of the concern being reported to the DSL.

### **Information about Safeguarding policies and procedures**

SSDS will ensure that it will maintain an up to date copy of its current safeguarding policy and safeguarding easy read on its website along with the contact details of its safeguarding leads so that any member of SSDS, volunteer, service provider or professional working with SSDS is able to contact SSDS if they have a safeguarding concern.

SSDS will ensure that all service providers receive copies of the updated safeguarding policies at the start of each academic year and/or when they begin working with SSDS members so that they are able to raise any safeguarding issues that they may encounter during their provision of services to SSDS as quickly as possible. They will also be required to adhere to the SSDS Code of Conduct when providing services to SSDS to ensure that the highest standards of safeguarding are maintained.

SSDS will also send information about its safeguarding procedures to its members annually so that families and young people are able to raise safeguarding concern swiftly should they need to.

### **Useful contacts:**

***In an emergency, always dial 999.***

Kirsten Williams (DSL): 07894339172; [kirsten@steppingstonesds.co.uk](mailto:kirsten@steppingstonesds.co.uk)



Josh McCormack (DSL and Safeguarding Trustee): 07557 229695;  
[josh@steppingstonesds.co.uk](mailto:josh@steppingstonesds.co.uk)

NSPCC: 0808 800 5000

Childline: 0800 11 11

### **Children's services:**

***Bracknell Forest:*** 01344 352005

Email: [mash@bracknell-forest.gov.uk](mailto:mash@bracknell-forest.gov.uk)

***Hampshire:*** 0300 555 1384

Email: [childrens.services@hants.gov.uk](mailto:childrens.services@hants.gov.uk)

***Surrey:*** 0300 470 9100

Email: [cspa@surreycc.gov.uk](mailto:cspa@surreycc.gov.uk)

For people with hearing or speech impairments:

- **Text line:** 07527 182861
- **[Sign Language Video Relay Service](#)**

During evenings, weekends and bank holidays, the **[Emergency Duty Team](#)** is available:

- **Phone:** 01483 517898
- **Email:** [edt.ssd@surreycc.gov.uk](mailto:edt.ssd@surreycc.gov.uk)

For people with hearing or speech impairments:

- **Text line:** 07800 000388
- **Text relay** (a speech-to-text translation service): 18001 01483 517898

### **Adult social care:**

***Bracknell Forest:*** 01344 351500

***Hampshire:*** 0300 555 1386

***Surrey:*** 0300 200 1005

**Textphone (via Text Relay):** 18001 0300 200 1005

**SMS:** 07527 182 861 (for the deaf or hard of hearing)