24/7 Support Line Safeguarding Policy

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1. Introduction

This policy sets out how safeguarding concerns are identified, assessed, manged and escalated within the 24/7 Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Line. The service operates as an anonymous and confidential support service. The organisation remains committed to protecting children, adults at risk, and others who may be experiencing abuse, neglect, exploitation or significant harm.

The policy provides a consistent framework for lawful, proportionate and trauma-informed safeguarding practice.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all Support Line Workers (SLWs), Managers, Partner Designated Safeguarding Leads (Partners DSLs), the RCEW Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and Volunteers. All staff and volunteers are required to adhere to this policy and act in accordance with safeguarding responsibilities at all times.

3. Legislation and Guidance

This policy is informed by relevant legislation and statutory guidance across England & Wales, including but not limited to:

- Care Act 2014 (England)
- Care and Support Statutory Guidance 2021 (England)
- Charity Commission Safeguarding Guidance 2019
- Children Acts 1989 and 2004
- Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015
- Data Protection Act 2018 (GDPR)
- Domestic Abuse Act 2021
- Equality Act 2010
- Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Information Sharing Guidance 202418
- Mental Capacity Act 2005

- Modern Slavery Act 2015
- Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022
- Protection of Freedoms Act 2012
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006
- Serious Crime Act 2015
- Sexual Offences Act 2003
- Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014
- The Online Safety Act 2023
- The United Nations Principles of Older Persons 1991
- UN Convention on the Rights of the Child 1991
- Wales Safeguarding Procedures 2019
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026
- Working Together to Safeguard People 2022 (Wales)

The organisation recognises that safeguarding responsibilities extend to individuals experiencing serious harm or exploitation, including those who may not meet strict statutory definitions of "adult at risk".

4. Key principles

Safeguarding practice within the organisation is underpinned by the following principles, which guide all decision-making and communication with individuals accessing the 24/7 Support Line.

4.1 Safety and Prevention of Harm

The safety and wellbeing of children and adults is the primary consideration in all safeguarding activity.

Where there is reasonable cause to suspect that a person may be experiencing or at risk of significant harm, the response must be proportionate to the risk presented. Safeguarding action must be taken where there is an immediate serious risk of harm and RCEW or the relevant partner can take action that could make a difference, subject to any legal duty to share information or act.

4.2 Respect for Autonomy

The service recognises that individuals have the right to make their own decision and to retain control over the information they choose to share.

Individuals may choose to remain anonymous and may decline to provide identifying information.

However, this right must be balanced with the organisation's safeguarding responsibilities. Where safeguarding concerns arise, Support Line Workers must take reasonable, proportionate and trauma informed steps to seek sufficient identifying information to enable protective action to be considered.

4.3 Proportionate Decision Making

All safeguarding decisions must be proportionate to the level of risk presented. Action taken must be necessary, justified and based on the information available.

Where the threshold for significant harm is not met, or where sufficient identifying information cannot be obtained despite reasonable efforts, the response must remain supportive without unnecessary escalation.

4.4 Trauma-Informed Approach

All interactions with individuals must be guided by a trauma-informed approach, recognising the impact of trauma on individual's behaviour, communication, and decision -making.

Support Line Workers must communicate in a non-judgmental and respectful manner, avoid re-traumatisation, allow individuals to share information at their own pace and avoid intrusive or coercive questioning.

Requests for identifying information must be made sensitively and in a manner that supports, rather than undermines, the individual's sense of safety.

4.5 Accountability and Recording

The organisation is accountable for all safeguarding decisions and actions.

All safeguarding concerns must be recorded clearly and accurately, based on factual information and supported by clear rationale.

Records must demonstrate how decisions were made, including, whether the safeguarding threshold was met, what steps were taken to obtain identifying information and why action was or was not taken.

Appropriate oversight will be provided by Partner Designated Safeguarding Leads and the RCEW Designated Safeguarding Leads.

5. Definitions

For the purposes of safeguarding, and in line with relevant legislation, we define children and adults at risk as:

5.1 Child

A child is anyone under the age of 18, regardless of their circumstances.

5.2 Adults at Risk

An adult at risk is a person aged 18 and over who has care and support needs and may be unable to protect themselves from abuse or neglect.

5.3 Significant Harm

For the purposes of this policy, significant harm refers to serious harm or the risk of serious harm to a child or adult, whether arising from a single incident or a pattern of behaviour over time.

In relation to children, this aligns with the definition set out in the Children Act 1989 and statutory guidance including ill-treatment or the impairment of health or development.

In relation to adults, this includes situations where an adult is experiencing, or is at risk of, abuse or neglect and is unable to protect themselves due to care and support needs.

Significant harm may include, but is not limited to:

- Sexual abuse, rape or sexual exploitation
- Physical abuse or assault
- Emotional or psychological abuse
- Neglect or acts of omission
- Domestic abuse or coercive control
- Exploitation, including trafficking or modern slavery
- Serious self-neglect where the individual is unable to keep themselves safe
- Risk to life, including suicide or serious self-harm
- Situations likely to result in serious impairment of health or development

Significant harm may arise from a single incident or from cumulative or escalating patterns of behaviour.

5.4 Sufficient Identifying Information

The organisation recognises that the service operates on an anonymous basis and that individuals may choose what information they disclose. However, there may be circumstances where sufficient information is held by the service to enable safeguarding assessment, information sharing, or protective action.

Sufficient identifying information is information which may reasonably enable another agency to identify, locate, or safeguard an individual, household, alleged perpetrator, or relevant setting.

This information may include:

-
- A telephone number or agreed contact method
- Partial or full names
- Location information, including town, area, school, workplace, institution or service
- Information relating to family members, carers, or associated individuals
- Contextual information regarding where harm may be occurring
- Information relating to an alleged perpetrator or person in a position of trust

The threshold for sufficient identifying information will depend on the nature and seriousness of the safeguarding concern, the immediacy of the risk, and whether another agency may reasonably be able to identify or locate the individual based on the information available.

6. Anonymity and Limits to Safeguarding Action

The service operates on an anonymous and confidential basis. Individuals accessing the service may choose what information they disclose and are not routinely required to provide identifying information to receive emotional support.

The organisation recognises the importance of anonymity in enabling individuals to access support safely and without fear of judgment or pressure.

However, anonymity does not remove the organisation's safeguarding responsibilities. Where safeguarding concerns arise, particularly where a child or adult may be experiencing significant harm, SLWs must respond in accordance with this policy and escalate concerns appropriately.

Where appropriate, SLWs may seek contact details for the purpose of arranging further contact from a Partner DSL. SLW's must explain sensitively:

- Why contact details are being requested
- That safeguarding decisions are made by a Partner DSL.
- That individuals are not required to provide information unless legal obligations to disclose apply (i.e. there is lawful justification to disclose information to prevent serious crime or protect others from significant harm).

SLW must not pressure individuals into disclosing personal information. A decision regarding whether safeguarding action is possible, necessary, or proportionate remans the responsibility of the Partner DSL

Where an individual chooses not to disclose identifying information, this should generally be respected unless:

- There is an immediate threat to life or serious harm
- Information sharing is required by law
- There is lawful justification to disclose information to prevent serious crime or protect others from significant harm (this is the decision of the DSL and Partner DSL.)

Even where external safeguarding action is not possible due to limited information, safeguarding concerns must still be assessed, escalated internally, and recorded appropriately.

All safeguarding decisions must be proportionate, clearly reasoned, and consistent with relevant legislation, statutory guidance, and organisational safeguarding responsibilities.

7. Types of abuse

Abuse, neglect and exploitation can take many forms, including physical, sexual, emotional, financial and domestic abuse as well as neglect, self-neglect, discriminatory abuse and institutional abuse.

Additional forms of harms include grooming, exploitation, trafficking, so called honour-based abuse, forced marriage and female genital mutilation.

The categories below are not exhaustive, and safeguarding decisions should focus on the presence of harm or risk and not strict categorisation.

The main categories of abuse, neglect and exploitation for children in England and Wales are:

Definition	Possible signs and indicators on the Support Line
Physical abuse	
This may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, pushing, burning or scalding or otherwise causing physical harm.	If a child contacts the support line, the indicators could include: • Disclosing physical abuse which either they or other children known to them have experienced. • Talking about injuries such as bruises, cuts, burns, marks and scratches. • Describing pain which has been caused by physical assaults. • Making sounds on the call which suggest they may be in physical pain such as crying, wincing, breathing quickly, saying 'ouch, it hurts'. If an adult is aware of children being physically abused, the indicators could include: • The caller disclosing the abuse they are aware is taking place to children known to them. • Demonstrating distress and concern on the call, crying, worrying etc.
Child sexual abuse	
Forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening.	A child may indicate sexual abuse by: • Disclosing sexual abuse directly which they may have experienced themselves or is known to have happened to others (siblings, school friends etc.). • Describing sexual acts which may have been experienced by themselves or others. • Discussing issues around pregnancy.

	• Using explicit language and terminology which suggests they have been subjected to abuse (but may not understand it as abuse). • Upset, crying, seem frightened, breathing quickly, experiencing panic attacks and flashbacks etc. • Making noises on the call which suggest they are in physical pain. An adult may indicate child sexual abuse by: • Describing the abuse which may be happening in the home; educational settings; religious environments; care homes etc. • The caller may be distressed on the call, disclosing how the situation has triggered their own memories of sexual abuse in their childhood. • The caller may share their feelings, becoming upset, displaying fear and concern etc.
Emotional abuse	
This may involve threats of harm or abandonment, humiliation, rejection, ignoring, bullying, blaming, and persistent maltreatment.	A child may indicate emotional abuse by: • Disclosing all forms of emotional harm caused by someone known to them i.e., a parent, sibling etc. • Demonstrating distress such as crying, long silences, actively suicidal on the call or describing plans to take their own life. An adult caller may: • Disclose the emotional harm of a child. • Demonstrate distress and concern on the call, crying, worrying etc.
Child sexual exploitation	
Where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate	• Describing experiences of being groomed by someone, or being controlled, manipulated, or coerced, into sexual acts, sometimes in

or deceive a child or adult at risk into sexual activity.	'exchange' for something for example, money, substances or items. • Demonstrating distress, hopelessness, fear, crying, having panic attacks, experiencing flashbacks, self-harming, suicide ideation or actively suicidal on the call/discussing plans to take their own lives etc.
Child criminal exploitation	
Where children are manipulated and coerced into committing crimes, which may involve being part of a gang which is linked to illegal activity.	• Describing current or past situations when they were groomed, controlled, manipulated into situations such as drug running etc. • Expressing distress, displaying feelings of fear, lack of control, powerlessness, anger, sadness, hopelessness, confusion, feeling intimidated.
Domestic abuse	
Children are victims of domestic abuse in their own right (Domestic Abuse Act 2021). Their experiences of domestic abuse may include seeing it, hearing it, seeing a parent's injuries, being hurt themselves, being drawn into abuse and/or becoming the subject of post-separation care and contact disputes/legal proceedings.	A child may indicate domestic abuse by: • Talking about home life and describing scenarios which suggest abuse is taking place at home. • Describing events which have been witnessed directly or indirectly. • Making noises on the call which indicate they may be in pain due to physical injuries which may have been inflicted on them or sustained during the course of violence taking place. • Adults who call the helpline may indicate domestic abuse affecting a child or children known to them by saying the following: • Describing scenarios of domestic abuse being inflicted or witnessed by children known to them. • Demonstrating concern and worry for the child/children. • Becoming upset on the phone, crying.

	• Possibly describing events which have taken place in their own lives or may be currently happening.
Financial abuse	
This may involve withholding money, theft of money or possessions, child's belongings sold or gone missing.	A child may indicate financial abuse they are affected by doing the following: • Talking about home life and describing scenarios which suggest that there is financial abuse taking place at home affecting either them or other children known to them. • Demonstrating distress on the phone, being very upset, crying. • Asking for help and support. An adult may call the helpline and: • Describe events they have witnessed where children known to them have been financially abused. • Demonstrate worry and concern.
Neglect	
Failing to care for a child's basic needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development.	A child who calls the helpline may say or do the following: • Discuss how they or other children known to them are being neglected at home for example, not being fed adequately, not having been washed or having their clothes changed etc. • Demonstrating sadness and distress. • Sounding tired or falling asleep on the phone, suggesting they may not have a normal sleep routine. • The child may say they are hungry. An adult calling the helpline may indicate the neglect of a child or children known to them by

	doing the following: • Describing scenarios they are aware of about a child or children known to them. • Demonstrating worry and concern.

Identifying abuse and neglect for adults

There are 10 common categories of abuse and neglect that adults may experience:

Definition	Possible signs and indicators on the Support Line
Physical abuse	
This may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, pushing, burning or scalding or otherwise causing physical harm.	• Describe injuries such as bruising, cuts, burns etc. • Make sounds which suggest they are in physical pain such as wincing, saying they are hurting etc. • Demonstrate distress and fear – crying, having panic attacks, asking for help etc. • Discuss the need for medical attention.
Domestic violence and abuse	
	• Describe their experiences of domestic violence and abuse including physical, sexual and/or emotional abuse, coercive control, isolation from sources of support etc. • Express or demonstrate feelings of low self-worth, use language about themselves that the perpetrator has used against them. • Display sadness, upset, fear, anxiety, crying, experiencing flashbacks, panic attacks, discussing self-harm, actively suicidal on the call, depressed, angry, hurt, confused, unsure of what action to take etc.
Sexual abuse	

Rape or any sexual act to which the adult has not consented or was pressured to consent.	• Describe acts of rape and sexual abuse. • Describe injuries. • Experience flashbacks and panic attacks on the phone. • Demonstrate distress – crying, sadness, fear, anxiety, self-harming on the phone, describing plans to take their own lives. • Long silences, apologising, saying "it's so difficult to talk about it". • Expressing feelings of shame and talking about feeling dirty. • Displaying anger, loss of confidence, unsure of whether to report to the police. • Asking for information on how to report to the police and engaging with the criminal justice system.
Emotional or psychological abuse	
This may involve threats of harm or abandonment, humiliation, rejection, ignoring, bullying, blaming, and persistent maltreatment.	• Describe their experiences of emotional or psychological abuse. • Displaying sadness, upset, fear, anxiety, crying, experiencing flashbacks, panic attacks, discussing self-harm, actively suicidal, depressed, angry, hurt, confused, unsure of what action to take etc.
Financial or material abuse	
Involves withholding money, coercion about finances, theft, fraud. Moving into a person's home without consent (cuckooing).	• Caller will disclose their experiences of financial abuse. • Discussing money worries, issues with debt, being unable to pay their mortgage or rent. • Displaying sadness, upset, fear, anxiety, crying, experiencing flashbacks, panic attacks, discussing self-harm, actively suicidal on the call, depressed, angry, hurt, confused, unsure of what action to take etc.
Modern slavery and human trafficking	
Involves the movement of people by the use of force,	• Caller will disclose their experiences which may include having been physically abused,

fraud, coercion or deception, with the aim of sexual, criminal or labour exploitation, including domestic servitude.	sexually exploited, made to work without being paid or paid very low wages, poor living conditions, fear of the perpetrators and authorities. • Displaying sadness, upset, fear, anxiety, crying, experiencing flashbacks, panic attacks, discussing self-harm, actively suicidal on the call, depressed, angry, hurt, confused, unsure of what action to take etc.
Discriminatory abuse	
Prejudicial treatment or harassment based on a person's race, religion, sex, national origin, sexual orientation, disability, age or other belief or characteristic.	• Describing experiences of hate crime – verbal and/or physical abuse, harassment etc. • Talking about injustice of the situation, displaying anger and frustration etc. • Distressed – crying, anxious, confused, unsure of what to do about it etc.
Institutional or organisational abuse	
Neglect and poor practices in organisations or institutions, such as schools, hospitals, residential and nursing homes.	• Caller describes scenarios where there is poor practice within organisations/institutions. • Caller is displaying anger, frustration, upset, distress etc. Caller may ask for information about complaints procedures and how to access specialist services.
Neglect	
Failing to care for someone's emotional or physical needs, including access to appropriate medical, health, care or education.	• Caller says they have been unable to care for people who need their help i.e., family members including older parents and their children. • Caller may share feelings of shame, guilt, helplessness, not knowing what actions to take next. • Caller may be distressed, crying - asking for help and information.
Self-neglect	

Covers a wide range of behaviours in which a person neglects to care for their own hygiene, heath or surroundings.	• Caller describes examples of self-neglect such as failing to wash or eat properly, hoarding, failing to access the GP or other services which they may need, failing to take their medication etc. • Caller demonstrates feelings of helplessness and hopelessness, tearful, suicide ideation, confused, unsure of what to do to help themselves, asking for help etc.

Additional types of abuse and neglect

The categories of abuse and neglect listed above are not exhaustive. Abuse and neglect are complex issues, and they can occur in many ways.

Definition	Possible signs and indicators on the Support Line
Grooming	
When someone seeks to build a relationship, create trust and emotional connection in order to manipulate, exploit or abuse them.	• Caller describes a situation where it appears they are being manipulated, controlled, duped (although they may not be aware of this). • If they are aware that they have been groomed, they may be distressed, feel angry, feel powerless, out of control, crying, be anxious, seem confused etc.
Radicalisation and extremism	
Where a person comes to support extremist ideologies, including being drawn into terrorism. The process may involve being groomed, manipulated, harmed or threatened.	• Caller describes being radicalised themselves or others known to them. • Demonstrate feelings of fear, loss of control, having been brainwashed, distress, unsure of how leave the situation, anxious, worried etc.
Honour-based abuse	

A crime or incident committed to protect or defend the 'honour' of a family or community. This can involve physical, sexual or domestic abuse, forced marriage, threats and isolation.	• Caller discloses their own experience or of others known to them. • Demonstrating feelings of being in fear, out of control, intimidated, loneliness, confused, anxious, being tearful, discussing mental health issues, self-harming, actively suicidal or describes plans of wanting to take their own lives etc. • Speaking about surveillance or being followed. • Having multiple perpetrators within their community.
Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)	
A range of procedure whereby a female's genitals are cut, injured, removed or changed without medical reason or other health benefit.	• Caller describes the procedure in detail – whether they experienced it themselves or know someone who has. • Caller talks about being 'opened up'. • Caller is tearful, expressing feelings of hopelessness, confusion, feeling alone, scared, intimidated. • Caller may be in pain and making sounds which indicate they are in pain. • Caller talks about experiencing pain during sex.

8. Self-harm and suicide

Disclosures relating to self-harm or suicide must be responded to sensitively, calmly and in a trauma-informed manner.

The organisation recognises that self-harm and suicidal thoughts exist on a spectrum and do not automatically require safeguarding referral or emergency intervention. However, safeguarding concerns may arise where there is reasonable cause to believe that an individual may be at immediate risk of significant harm, serious self-injury, suicide or other immediate danger.

SLWs must respond to all disclosures relating to self-harm or suicide in accordance with this policy.

The role of the SLW is to:

- Listen to and acknowledge the individuals' experiences and distress
- Assess whether immediate or significant risk may be present
- Provide emotional support appropriate to the role of the service
- Explain the limits of confidentiality where appropriate
- Escalate safeguarding concerns to a Partner DSL where safeguarding thresholds may be met
- Where appropriate, offer to arrange further contact from a Partner DLS.

SLW must not:

- Conduct detailed suicide risk assessment beyond the scope of the role
- Provide assurances regarding whether safeguarding or emergency action will occur
- Determine safeguarding thresholds or outcomes
- Undertake safeguarding investigations

Where individuals seek information regarding safeguarding processes or possible next steps, SLWs should explain that safeguarding decisions are made by a Partner DSL and may offer to arrange further contact where appropriate.

The organisation recognises the importance of respecting autonomy while also responding appropriately to risk of serious harm.

8.1 Assessment of Risk

SLW must consider the information disclosed, indicators or risk, and the immediacy of the situation in determining whether safeguarding escalation may be required.

Indicators that immediate or significant risk may be present include, but are not limited to:

- Expression of intent to end life
- Disclosure or plans, means or preparations for suicide
- Recent or ongoing suicide attempts
- Serious or escalating self-harm
- Severe emotional distress accompanied by indications of imminent danger

Where such indicators are present, the situation must be considered as presenting a risk of significant harm.

SLW's must apply professional curiosity and must not minimise risk due to incomplete information.

8.2 Responding to Disclosures

SLWs must respond to all disclosures of self-harm or suicide in a calm, non-judgmental, and trauma-informed manner. Individuals contacting the service should be listened to sensitively and treated with empathy and compassion.
SLWs should:

- Acknowledge the individual's feelings and emotional experience
- Encourage the individual to speak openly at their own pace
- Listen actively without interrupting or making assumptions
- Reassure the individual that they have been heard and taken seriously
- Avoid language or responses that may minimise, blame, shame, or discredit the individual's experience
- Explore whether the individual is safe at the time of contact and whether they are at any immediate risk of significant harm
- Encourage individuals at immediate risk to contact emergency services or other appropriate crisis support services where necessary
- Follow the organisation safeguarding policy where safeguarding risks are identified
- Maintain appropriate professional boundaries throughout the interaction

SLWs must not:

- Promise absolute confidentiality where there is a safeguarding concern or risk of serious harm
- Attempt to investigate, verify, or challenge disclosures
- Provide legal advice, or services outside the scope of their role
- Pressure individuals to share information they are not ready to disclose

Where safeguarding concerns are identified, SLWs must follow the organisation's safeguarding procedures and seek guidance from the Partner Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or deputy safeguarding lead as soon as possible.
Accurate, factual, and contemporaneous records of disclosures, concerns, actions taken, and advice provided must be completed in line with organisational recording procedures and data protection requirements.
Staff and volunteers responding to disclosures will receive appropriate safeguarding training, supervision and support to enable them to undertake their role safely and effectively. They will be supported through supervision, debriefing, and access to safeguarding guidance to promote safe practice and staff wellbeing.

8.3 Seeking Identifying Information

Where there is reasonable cause to suspect that an individual is at risk of significant harm, SLWs must take reasonable, proportionate, and trauma-informed steps to seek sufficient identifying information to support safeguarding action.

This may include seeking information such as:

- A telephone number or agreed contact method
- Partial or full names
- Location information, including town, area, school, workplace, institution or service
- Information relating to family members, carers, or associated individuals
- Contextual information regarding where harm may be occurring
- Information relating to an alleged perpetrator or person in a position of trust

The purpose of seeking this information must be explained clearly to the individual:

- Why the information is being requested
- How the information may be used
- The limits of confidentiality and that information may be shared with emergency services, safeguarding agencies or other appropriate authorities where necessary to protect life, prevent serious harm, or fulfil safeguarding obligations.
- Any request for identifying information must be made sensitively and without coercion. SLWs must take account of the individual's age, capacity, communication needs, lived experience, culture, and potential trauma responses.
- Information obtained must be limited to what is necessary for safeguarding purposes, recorded accurately, and handled in accordance with organisational safeguarding procedures, confidentiality policies, and applicable UK data protection legislation, including the UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018.
- Decisions to seek, use, or share identifying information outside the normal expectation of anonymity should be discussed with the Partner DSL on shift and appropriately documented, including the rationale for the decision taken.

8.4 Respect for Autonomy

Individuals have the right to choose whether to disclose identifying information. Where an individual declines to provide information, this decision must be respected unless there is a legal obligation to disclose or sufficient information already available to enable emergency action.

SLWs must balance respect for autonomy with the duty to protect from harm, ensuring that all reasonable steps to obtain relevant information have been taken.

8.5 Escalation and Action

Where the threshold for significant harm is met, the SLW must escalate the concern to a Partner DSL . Where sufficient identifying information is available and there is immediate

risk to life, emergency services may be contacted in accordance with organisational procedures.

Where identifying information is insufficient to enable external action, the SLW must continue to provide emotional support, encourage the individual to contact emergency services or trusted individuals, provide information about relevant crisis services, escalate the concern to the Partner DSL and record the concern and rational for decision making.

8.6 Recording

All disclosures relating to self-harm and suicide must be recorded accurately and as soon as practicable records must include:

- The nature of the concern
- The level of risk identified
- Any identifying information obtained or sought
- Action taken, including escalation
- The rational for decision, including where external action was not possible.

9. Confidentiality and information sharing

The Support Line is confidential, and information will not normally be shared without consent.
However, information may be shared without consent where:

- There is risk of significant harm to a child or adult at risk
- There is a serious threat to life
- There is a legal obligation to disclose information

Where possible, individuals will be informed before information is shared, unless doing so would increase the risk.

10. When We Take Safeguarding Action

Safeguarding action will be considered where there is reasonable cause to suspect that a child or adult is experiencing, or is at risk of experiencing abuse, neglect, exploitation or significant harm.

In deciding whether safeguarding action is required, consideration must include whether there is an immediate serious risk of harm and whether action by RCEW or the relevant partner could make a meaningful difference to the persons safety. This does not override any legal or statutory obligation to share information or take action.

Where the person at risk is a child, the welfare of the child is paramount. Where concerns relate to an adult at risk, consideration must be given to the individual's care and support needs, ability to protect themselves, mental capacity where relevant, level of vulnerability, and the nature and seriousness of the harm identified.

SLWs must respond to safeguarding concerns in a calm, proportionate, and trauma-informed manner.

Where safeguarding concerns arise, the role of the SLW is to:

- Identify and assess safeguarding concerns based on information disclosed.
- Explain the limits of confidentiality
- Provide emotional support
- Escalate safeguarding concerns to a Partner DSL.
- Where appropriate, seek contact details for the purpose of arranging further contact with a Partner DSL.

SLWs must not seek extensive identifying information for the purpose of safeguarding investigation or referral.

SLWs must explain sensitively:

- Why contact details are being requested
- That a Partner DSL may make further contact to discuss safeguarding concerns
- That safeguarding decisions are made by a Partner DSL and not by the SLW

SLWs must not provide advice, assurance or opinion regarding:

- Whether safeguarding referrals will be made
- Whether safeguarding thresholds have been met
- What action statutory services may take
- The likely outcome of safeguarding processes

All safeguarding decisions must be reviewed and determined by a Partner DSL . Where appropriate, individuals may be offered the opportunity to receive a return call or further contact from a Partner DSL. SLW's must not explore safeguarding referral options or provide advice regarding likely safeguarding outcomes or statutory agency responses.

Safeguarding action determined by a Partner DSL may include:

- Referral to Children's Services or Adult Services
- Contact with Police or emergency services
- Referral relating to allegations against individuals in positions of trust, including referral to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) where appropriate.
- Lawful information sharing to prevent significant harm or serious crime
- Internal safeguarding monitoring and risk management

All safeguarding decisions and actions must be proportionate, clearly recorded, and supported by an appropriate rationale.

11. When We Cannot Take Safeguarding Action

There may be occasions where insufficient information is available to enable external safeguarding intervention or referral.

Before determining that external safeguarding action is not possible, the concerns must be reviewed by a Partner DSL A determination regarding whether safeguarding action is possible remains the responsibility of the Partner DSL

Where safeguarding concerns remain but external action is not possible, SLWs must continue to provide emotional support in accordance with the role of the service.

This may include:

- Encouraging the individual to seek support directly from emergency services, statutory agencies, or trusted professionals where appropriate.
- Providing information regarding relevant support or crisis services
- Offering further contact with a Partner DSL where appropriate
- Supporting the individual to consider safe sources of ongoing support.

SLWs must not advise individuals that no safeguarding action will be taken. All safeguarding decisions remain the responsibility of the Partner DSL .

All safeguarding concerns meeting safeguarding thresholds must be escalated internally to a Partner DSL , regardless of whether external action is ultimately possible.

A safeguarding record must be completed which clearly documents:

- The nature of the concern
- The level of risk identified
- Any contact information obtained for Partner DSL follow-up
- Any support or information offered
- Internal escalation undertaken
- The rationale for decisions made
- Why external safeguarding action was or was not possible

All decisions must be proportionate, clearly reasoned, and recorded in accordance with organisational safeguarding procedures.

12. Safeguarding Process (SLW and Partner DSL Responsibilities)

Where a safeguarding concern is identified, a structured process must be followed to ensure that information is handled appropriately and decisions made consistently.

12.1 Safeguarding Advice and Further Safeguarding Support

SLWs must not provide advice, assurance or opinion regarding:

- Whether a safeguarding referral will be made
- Whether a concern meets safeguarding thresholds
- What action external agencies may take
- The likely outcome of safeguarding processes

All safeguarding decisions must be made by a Partner DSL. The role of the SLW is to:

- Identify safeguarding concerns
- Assess immediate risk
- Take reasonable and proportionate steps to seek sufficient identifying information
- Provide emotional support
- Explain the limits of confidentiality
- Escalate safeguarding concerns appropriately

SLWs must ensure that communication with individuals does not create false expectations or provide inaccurate reassurance.

12.2 Offering Contact with a Partner Designated Safeguarding Lead

Where a safeguarding concern is identified, SLWs should, where appropriate:

- Offer the individual the opportunity to speak further with a Partner DSL
- Offer to arrange a return call from a Partner DSL
- Explain that the Partner DSL will call from a withheld number and check with the individual whether it will be ok to leave a voicemail and ask for a safe time to call back.
- Explain that Partner DSL are responsible for safeguarding decision-making and can provide further information regarding safeguarding processes.

13. Support Line Workers

Where safeguarding concerns arise during a call or online contact, the SLW is responsible for responding promptly, professionally and in accordance with this policy.

The SLW must:

- Respond in a calm, respectful, and trauma-informed manner
- Explain the limits of confidentiality where safeguarding concerns arise
- Explain that the service is anonymous, but that identifying information may be required to take protective action.
- Take reasonable and proportionate steps to obtain sufficient identifying information where a child or adult may be at risk.
- Use open, non-leading questions for the purpose of clarification.
- Avoid oppressive, coercive or unnecessarily intrusive questioning.
- Consider whether there is an immediate risk requiring urgent action.
- Seek consent to share information where appropriate and safe to do so.
- Escalate safeguarding concerns promptly to the Partner DSL
- Complete safeguarding records in a timely and accurate manner.

Where concerns relate to a child or adult at risk, the SLW must demonstrate professional curiosity and must not assume that relevant information cannot be obtained solely because the service is anonymous.

13.1 Call Duration & Safeguarding

The primary role of the Support Line is to provide emotional support, signposting and safeguarding escalation within the scope of the service.

SLWs are expected to manage calls and chats in accordance with operational timeframes and service guidance. However, safeguarding concerns must take priority where there is concern that a child or adult may be experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, significant harm.

Where safeguarding concerns arise during a contact, SLWS may continue engagement beyond standard operational timeframes where this is necessary to:

- Assess whether there may be immediate or significant risk

- Provide immediate emotional support
- Explain the limits of confidentiality
- Escalate the concern to the Partner DSL
- Where appropriate, obtain contact details for the purpose of arranging further contact from the Partner DSL

Extended engagement for safeguarding purposes should remain focused on immediate support, escalation and where appropriate arranging further contact from a Partner DSL. Extended contacts must not be used for prolonged safeguarding investigation or detailed safeguarding assessment by the SLW.

SLWs must maintain appropriate professional boundaries throughout all safeguarding contacts.

The role of the SLW during safeguarding discussions is to:

- Listen to and acknowledge concerns disclosed
- Provide trauma-informed emotional support
- Assess whether immediate risk may be present
- Escalate safeguarding concerns appropriately
- Support engagement with safeguarding processes where appropriate

SLWs must not:

- Investigate safeguarding concerns
- Conduct detailed safeguarding assessments beyond the scope of the role
- Determine safeguarding outcomes or referral decisions
- Provide advice or assurance regarding what action statutory agencies may take

Where further safeguarding assessment or discussion is required, SLWs should explain that safeguarding decisions are made by a Partner DSL and may offer to arrange a return call or further contact from a DSO where appropriate.

All safeguarding concerns arising during calls or chats must be recorded accurately and escalated in accordance with this policy.

13.2 Managing Safeguarding Concerns Within Abusive or Disruptive Calls

Where an individual presents with safeguarding concerns whilst also engaging in abusive, discriminatory, or disruptive behaviour, the SLW must maintain professional boundaries while continuing to assess safeguarding risk where it is safe and practicable to do so.

The SLW may issue clear warnings regarding unacceptable behaviour while continuing to address safeguarding concerns.

A communication must not be ended solely because of general abusive behaviour where doing so may expose a child or adult to immediate harm, unless the behaviour prevents safe or effective continuation of the interaction.

Sexually abusive behaviour directed towards staff will not be tolerated. Where an individual engages in sexually abusive behaviour towards the SLW, the communication must be terminated.

Where safeguarding information has been disclosed prior to termination, that information must still be recorded and escalated in accordance with this policy.

13.3 Professional Standards and Communication

SLWs must ensure they do not make promises of confidentiality that cannot be upheld. Where safeguarding concerns arise, SLWs must clearly explain that there may be circumstances in which information needs to be shared without consent.

SLWs should use open and non-leading questions where clarification is required and should avoid asking “why” questions, which may feel intrusive or judgmental.

Where safeguarding concerns are identified, SLWs should, wherever possible, encourage the individual to seek help directly from relevant services, including emergency services or local safeguarding agencies. This is often the safest and most effective way for the individual to access support. Where appropriate, SLWs should explore whether the caller consents to information being shared on their behalf. If consent is provided and sufficient identifying information is available, this should be acted upon.

Following the call or webchat, where a safeguarding concern has been identified, the SLW must:

- Contact the Partner DSL on 0330 100 2940 to discuss the concern. If the Partner DSL does not answer immediately, keep trying to get through and send a direct message to the manager on shift in Slack.
- Provide a clear account of the concern, including any identifying information shared
- Record the safeguarding concern as soon as possible.

14. Partner Designated Safeguarding Lead (Partner DSL)

The Partner Designated Safeguarding Lead (Partner DSL) is responsible for reviewing, assessing, and determining the appropriate response to safeguarding concerns escalated by Support Line Workers (SLWs).

The DSO holds responsibility for safeguarding decision-making within the organisation and must ensure that all safeguarding decisions are lawful, proportionate, trauma-informed, and consistent with this policy.

SLWs must not make safeguarding decisions. Their role is to identify concerns, assess immediate risk, provide support, seek sufficient identifying information where appropriate, and escalate concerns to a Partner DSL.

14.1 Role of the Partner DSL

The DSO is responsible for:

- Reviewing safeguarding concerns escalated by SLWs.
- Assessing whether the threshold for significant risk is met.
- Assessing the immediacy and severity of risk.
- Determining whether sufficient identifying information is available to enable safeguarding action.
- Clarifying information where necessary.

- Determining whether external safeguarding referral or information sharing is appropriate.
- Providing safeguarding guidance and support to SLWs.
- Ensuring safeguarding decisions are clearly recorded with rationale.
- Ensuring concerns are managed in accordance with legislation, statutory guidance, and organisational policy.

The Partner DSL must apply professional judgment in all safeguarding decision-making.

14.2 Assessment and Decision Making

When reviewing a safeguarding concern, the Partner DSL must consider:

-
- The nature of the concern disclosed.
- The level and immediacy of the risk.
- Whether a child or adult at risk may be experiencing significant harm
- The vulnerability of the individual concerned.
- Whether there is a risk to others.
- Whether harm appears isolated, ongoing, cumulative or escalating.
- The reliability, consistency, and clarity of the information available.
- Whether sufficient identifying information is available to enable safeguarding action.
- Whether legal obligations to share information apply.

The Partner DSL must ensure that decisions are proportionate, evidence-based, and consistent with safeguarding thresholds.

14.3 Contact with Individuals Raising Safeguarding Concerns

Where appropriate, the Partner DSL may make direct contact with the individual who is the subject of the safeguarding concern.

This may include:

- Arranging a return call.

- Clarifying safeguarding concerns or risk.
- Explaining safeguarding processes and organisational responsibilities.
- Discussing consent and information sharing where appropriate/
- Supporting engagement with safeguarding processes.

Any contact with individuals must be undertaken in a trauma-informed, non-coercive and proportionate manner.

14.4 Safeguarding Referrals and Information Sharing

Where safeguarding thresholds are met and sufficient identifying information is available, the Partner DSL may:

- Make referral to Children's Services or Adult Services.
- Share information with the Police or emergency services.
- Make referrals relating to allegations against individuals in positions of trust, including referral to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) where appropriate.
- Share information where required by law or necessary to prevent significant harm or serious crime.

The Partner DSL must ensure that information sharing is proportionate, necessary, and consistent with legal and safeguarding obligations.

14.5 Partner DSL Follow-Up Contact

Where safeguarding concerns require further assessment, clarification, or safeguarding discussion, the Partner DSL may arrange return calls or further contact with the individual.

This may include, clarifying safeguarding concerns, discussing safeguarding processes, exploring consent and information sharing and determining whether safeguarding referral or escalation is required.

All Partner DSL follow-up contact must be proportionate, trauma-informed, and clearly recorded.

14.6 Situations Where External Action Is Not Possible

Where a safeguarding concern meets the threshold for significant harm, but sufficient identifying information is unavailable, the Partner DSL must:

- Review whether all reasonable and proportionate steps have been taken to obtain identifying information.
- Consider whether any safeguarding action remains possible based on available information.
- Ensure the concern is appropriately recorded.
- Ensure the rationale for decision making is clearly documented.
- Provide safeguarding guidance and support to the SLW where required.

A lack of identifying information may limit the ability to take external action but does not remove the organisation's responsibility to assess risk, escalate internally, and record concerns appropriately.

14.7 Recording and Accountability

The Partner DSL is responsible for ensuring that safeguarding records are:

- Accurate
- Clear
- Factual
- Timely
- Proportionate

Records must clearly demonstrate:

- The concern raised.
- The safeguarding threshold considered.
- What information was available.
- What steps were taken to obtain identifying information.
- What decisions were made.
- The rationale for those decisions.
- Any action taken or not taken.

The Partner DSL must ensure that safeguarding records are stored securely and managed in accordance with organisational procedures and data protection requirements.

14.8 Escalation and Oversight

Each delivery partner must have a named Partner Designated Safeguarding Lead (Partner DSL) who is responsible for final safeguarding decision-making for contacts delivered by that partner. Partners may determine how this responsibility is structured within their organisation, provided a named Partner DSL is identified and accountable for safeguarding decisions.

Rape Crisis England and Wales RCEW acts as the overarching Designated Safeguarding Lead for the 24/7 Support Line and retains overall safeguarding oversight, quality assurance, policy compliance and governance across the service. RCEW provides oversight and challenge where required, while final case-level safeguarding decisions remain the responsibility of the named Partner DSL within the relevant delivery partner.

Where necessary, the DSL may also liaise with external safeguarding agencies, statutory services, regulators, or partner organisations to ensure appropriate action is taken and risk is effectively managed.

15. Safeguarding Decision Outcomes

Following assessment, the Partner DSL will determine the most appropriate outcome, this may include:

-
- Deciding that no safeguarding concern is present.
- Determining that the concern does not meet the threshold for significant harm.
- Determining that the threshold is met but no action can be taken due to a lack of identifying information.
- Making a referral to relevant services where the threshold is met and sufficient information is available.
- Taking immediate action in emergency situations.

Where a referral is made, the Partner DSL will determine the appropriate agency and ensue that sufficient information is provided to enable that agency to appropriately respond.

All decision must be clearly recorded, including the rationale for the decision made.

16. Legal Obligations to Share Information

The organisation may be required to disclose information without consent where there is a legal duty to do so.

This includes disclosures relating to:

-
- A plan or credible intention to kill or seriously harm another person
- Information relating to terrorist activity or planned acts of terrorism.
- Information relating to money laundering or other offences requiring mandatory reporting

Where such information is received, the SLW must escalate the matter immediately to a DSO or manager and must seek sufficient identifying information where it is safe and proportionate to do so.

Where sufficient identifying information is available, appropriate disclosure must be made to the relevant authority.

Where it is safe and appropriate to do so, the individual should be informed that information may need to be shared.

17. Emergency Situations and Immediate Risk

Emergency safeguarding action may be required where there is reasonable cause to believe that an individual is at immediate risk of serious harm or death.

This may include situations where:

- An individual is at imminent risk of suicide or serious self-harm

- A serious assault or other violent harm is believed to be imminent
- A child or adult at risk is believed to be in immediate danger
- There is immediate risk arising from abuse, exploitation, coercion, trafficking or neglect.
- There is credible information indicating a serious threat to life or safety.

SLWs must respond to emergency safeguarding concerns in a calm, proportionate, and trauma-informed manner.

The role of the SLW is to:

- Assess whether immediate risk may be present
- Provide immediate emotional support appropriate to the role of the service
- Explain the limits of confidentiality where appropriate
- Escalate concerns immediately to a Partner DSL
- Where appropriate, seek safe contact details for the purpose of enabling urgent contact from a Partner DSL

SLWs must not undertake emergency safeguarding decision-making or provide assurances regarding what emergency action may be taken.

Where possible, individuals should be supported and encouraged to contact emergency services directly.

Where an individual is unable or unwilling to do so, and sufficient information is available, the Partner DSL may determine whether emergency services contact, or urgent safeguarding intervention is required.

All emergency safeguarding concerns must be escalated without delay and recorded in accordance with organisational procedures.

18. Further Contact Following Safeguarding Concerns

In some circumstances, further safeguarding contact may be required following escalation of a safeguarding concern.

Where an individual has voluntarily provided contact details for the purpose of safeguarding follow-up, the Partner DSL may make further contact where this is considered necessary and proportionate.

Further safeguarding contact may be undertaken for the purpose of:

- Clarifying safeguarding concerns or risk
- Assessing whether safeguarding thresholds may be met
- Discussing consent, confidentiality, or information sharing where appropriate
- Supporting engagement with safeguarding processes
- Determining whether safeguarding referral or escalation is required

SLWs must not undertake ongoing safeguarding assessment or follow-up beyond the role of the initial support interacting unless specifically directed in accordance with organisational procedures.

Any further safeguarding contact must:

- Be proportionate to the level of risk identified
- Be trauma-informed and professionally managed
- Respect the individual's rights, wishes and engagement choices wherever possible
- Be clearly recorded, including the purpose and outcome of contact attempts

Where contact is attempted but not established, the Partner DSL must determine whether any further safeguarding action is required based on the information available.

All decisions relating to safeguarding follow-up and further contact remain the responsibility of the Partner DSL.

19. Pregnancy and Safeguarding

Safeguarding considerations may arise where an individual is pregnant and there is reasonable cause to believe that a child may be at risk of significant harm following birth. Whilst a foetus does not hold separate legal personhood for safeguarding purposes, agencies may take protective action where there is evidence that a child is likely to suffer significant harm once born.

Indicators of concern may include:

- Domestic abuse
- Substance dependency likely to impact parenting capacity
- Stated intention to harm the child following birth
- Risk of female genital mutilation
- Ongoing coercion, exploitation, or unsafe living arrangements

Where such concerns arise, SLWs must seek relevant identifying information sensitively and follow the safeguarding procedures set out in this policy.

Any action taken must be proportionate, evidence-based, and mindful of the individual's circumstances and rights.

19.1 Allegations Against People in Positions of Trust and Referral to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)

Any allegation, concern, or complaint involving a person in a position of trust, including employees, volunteers, trustees, or anyone acting on behalf of the organisation, must be taken seriously and responded to promptly, fairly, and in line with safeguarding procedures.

This procedure applies where an individual working or volunteering with the organisation has:

- behaved in a way that has harmed, or may have harmed, a child or adult at risk;
- possibly committed a criminal offence against, or related to, a child or adult at risk;
- behaved towards a child or adult at risk in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm; or
- behaved in a manner that raises concerns about their suitability to work with vulnerable people.

Any member of staff or volunteer who becomes aware of such concerns must report them immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL). If the concern relates to the DSL, it must be reported to the Chief Executive, Chair of Trustees, or an alternative

senior safeguarding lead in accordance with the organisation's whistleblowing procedures.
The DSL will assess the information and, where the threshold is met, make a referral to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) or equivalent safeguarding authority within one working day. The organisation will fully cooperate with any external investigation or safeguarding process.

No internal investigation will commence until advice has been received from the LADO, police, or relevant safeguarding authority, as this could compromise external enquiries. Appropriate measures may be implemented to safeguard all parties during the investigation process, including temporary redeployment, supervision arrangements, suspension where necessary, or other proportionate risk management actions. Suspension is a neutral act and does not imply guilt.

Confidentiality will be maintained throughout the process in accordance with data protection legislation and safeguarding responsibilities. Information will only be shared on a need-to-know basis.

The organisation is committed to ensuring that:

- safeguarding concerns are managed promptly, fairly, and transparently;
- individuals subject to allegations are treated fairly and offered appropriate support;
- the safety and wellbeing of children and adults at risk remain paramount; and
- lessons learned from safeguarding incidents are used to strengthen practice, governance, and organisational learning.

19.2 Scope and Purpose

This section applies to safeguarding concerns involving individuals who work with, or have contact with, children in a position of trust. This includes but is not limited to:

- Teachers and school staff
- Healthcare professionals
- Youth workers

- Social workers
- Religious leaders
- Volunteers and support staff
- Any individual working or volunteering with children

Where a concern relates to a person in a position of trust, specific safeguarding procedures apply, including potential referral to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO).

19.3 Identification of LADO-Related Concerns

A concern may meet the threshold for LADO consideration where a person working with children is alleged to have:

- Behaved in a way that has harmed, or may have harmed a child
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child
- Behaved towards a child in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children
- Behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children

SLWs must be alert to such disclosures and must consider whether the information provided meet this threshold.

19.4 Responding to Disclosures

Where an individual discloses concerns relating to a person in a position of trust, the SLW must:

- Respond in a calm, non-judgmental, and trauma informed manner
- Acknowledge the seriousness of the concern
- Avoid making assumptions or expressing personal judgment
- Clarify the nature of the concern using, open, non-leading questions.
- Avoid any attempt to investigate or verify the allegation

The SLW must remain within their role of support and safeguarding.

19.5 Seeking Identifying Information

Where there is reasonable cause to suspect significant harm, SLW's must take reasonable, proportionate, and trauma-informed steps to seek sufficient identifying information, this may include:

- The name or role of the individual of concern
- The organisation, school, or setting
- The location where the concern occurred
- Details of the child or children affected
- Any other relevant contextual information

The purpose of requesting this information must be explained clearly to the individual, requests must not be coercive and must respect the caller's autonomy.

19.6 Escalation and Referral

Where the threshold for significant harm is met, and sufficient identifying information is available, the concern must be escalated immediately to a Partner DSL. The Partner DSL must:

- Review the information provided
- Determine whether the concern meets the threshold for LADO referral
- Make a referral to the appropriate LADO where required
- Ensure that information is shared in line with safeguarding obligations.

19.7 Recording

All LADO-related concerns must be recorded accurately and as soon as practicable, records must include:

- The nature of the allegation
- The role or setting of the individual concerned
- Any identifying information obtained or sought
- Actions taken, including escalation
- The rationale for decision, including where referral was not possible.

20. Recording, Accountability and Oversight

All safeguarding concerns must be recorded clearly, accurately, and in a timely manner.

Safeguarding records must:

- Be factual and avoid speculation
- Clearly distinguish between information provided and professional judgment
- Include relevant identifying information
- Record the decision made and the rationale for the decision.

The RCEW Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) is responsible for overall safeguarding oversight across the 24/7 Support Line. This includes reviewing safeguarding practice and records, providing oversight and challenge to Partner DSLs, identifying patterns or trends, monitoring policy compliance and supporting consistent safeguarding practice across the delivery partners.
Safeguarding records will be subject to a dedicated safeguarding record quality assurance framework. A sample of records will be reviewed on a monthly basis to assess the identification and documentation of risk, proportionality and rationale of decision-making, consideration of identifying information and survivor wishes, safeguarding action and follow-up, and the quality and accountability of recording. Findings, themes and learning will contribute to monthly safeguarding and quality assurance reporting and inform feedback, training, policy and service improvement.

The organisation is accountable for ensuring that safeguarding decisions are consistent, proportionate and in accordance with the safeguarding policy.

21. Safeguarding Concerns Outside England and Wales

The service may receive calls relating to safeguarding concerns outside England and Wales or outside the United Kingdom.

In these cases, the organisation will follow the same safeguarding principles and processes. However, it is recognised that the ability to act may be limited due to jurisdictional differences and access to appropriate services.

Where appropriate, individuals should be informed of these limitations, reminded of the service remit and empowered to seek support from local services within their area.

22. Concerns About Safeguarding Decisions or Practice

The organisation is committed to ensuring that all safeguarding concerns are handled appropriately, consistently and in accordance with this policy.

All staff and volunteers have a responsibility to raise concerns where they believe that a safeguarding issue has not been managed appropriately, or where they disagree with a safeguarding decision or outcome.

Concerns may arise in relation to:

- A decision not to take safeguarding action.
- The handling of a safeguarding concern during or after a communication.
- The conduct or response of a colleague.
- The application of safeguarding thresholds or processes.

Concerns should be raised as soon as possible with:

- A Partner Designated Safeguarding Officer
- A Support Line Manager
- The Designated Safeguarding Lead
- Rape Crisis England & Wales Senior Leadership Team

Staff and volunteers should feel able to raise concerns without fear of negative consequences. The organisation promotes a culture of openness and accountability in safeguarding practice.

22.1 Concerns Raised by Individuals

Individuals may express concerns about how their safeguarding disclosure or situation was responded to during their interaction with the service.

Due to the anonymous nature of the Support Line, it may not always be possible to identify or re-contact individuals who raise concerns. However, where concerns are raised during a communication, these should be taken seriously. Where an individual expressed dissatisfaction or concern, the SLW should:

- Respond in a respectful and non-defensive manner
- Acknowledge the individual's experience and concerns
- Provide clear information about the role and limitations of the service, including anonymity and safeguarding thresholds.
- Where appropriate, provide information on how to make a formal complaint or seek further support.

Where a concern relates to a safeguarding decision, this should be recorded and shared with a Partner DSL or manager for review.

22.2 Review of Safeguarding Decisions

Where a concern is raised by a member of staff, or an individual, the safeguarding decision or process will be reviewed where appropriate, this may include:

- Reviewing the safeguarding record and any related documentation
- Considering whether the safeguarding threshold and identifiability criteria were applied appropriately
- Assessing whether the response provided was proportionate and in accordance with this policy.

22.3 Review outcomes

Following review, the organisation may:

- Confirm that the original decision was appropriate
- Identify that further safeguarding action is required and take appropriate steps.
- Provide feedback, guidance, or additional support to staff or volunteers involved.
- Identify learning points to improve future practice.

22.4 Recording and learning

All concerns raised about safeguarding decisions or practice, including those raised by individuals, must be recorded. Records should include:

- The nature of the concern
- The outcome of any review
- Any actions identified and taken

This information will be used to support oversight by the DSL and to inform ongoing improvement in safeguarding practice.

23. Training and development

All staff and volunteers working on the 24/7 Support Line must receive safeguarding training as part of their induction programme before undertaking any unsupervised duties. Induction training will include the organisation's safeguarding policies and procedures, recognising signs of abuse or neglect, professional boundaries, confidentiality, information sharing, responding to disclosures, and reporting safeguarding concerns.

All Support Line Workers are required to complete:

- safeguarding induction training before commencing duties;
- the 24/7 Support Line safeguarding training module; and
- accredited Safeguarding Level 2 training appropriate to their role.

All Partner Designated Safeguarding Leads (Partner DSL) are required to complete:

- safeguarding induction training;
- the 24/7 Support Line safeguarding training module; and

- accredited Safeguarding Level 3 training to ensure they are competent to manage safeguarding concerns, risk assessment, escalation, multi-agency working, and safeguarding decision-making responsibilities.

Safeguarding refresher training must be completed every two years for all staff and volunteers, or sooner where there are significant changes to legislation, statutory guidance, organisational procedures, or identified safeguarding risks. Partner DSLs may also be required to undertake additional continuing professional development and specialist safeguarding updates relevant to their responsibilities.

Each partner organisation working on the support line will maintain accurate and up-to-date records of safeguarding training completed by all staff and volunteers and will monitor compliance to ensure safeguarding knowledge and practice remain current, effective, and consistent across the service.

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