

Safeguarding Children Policy

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Policy Statement

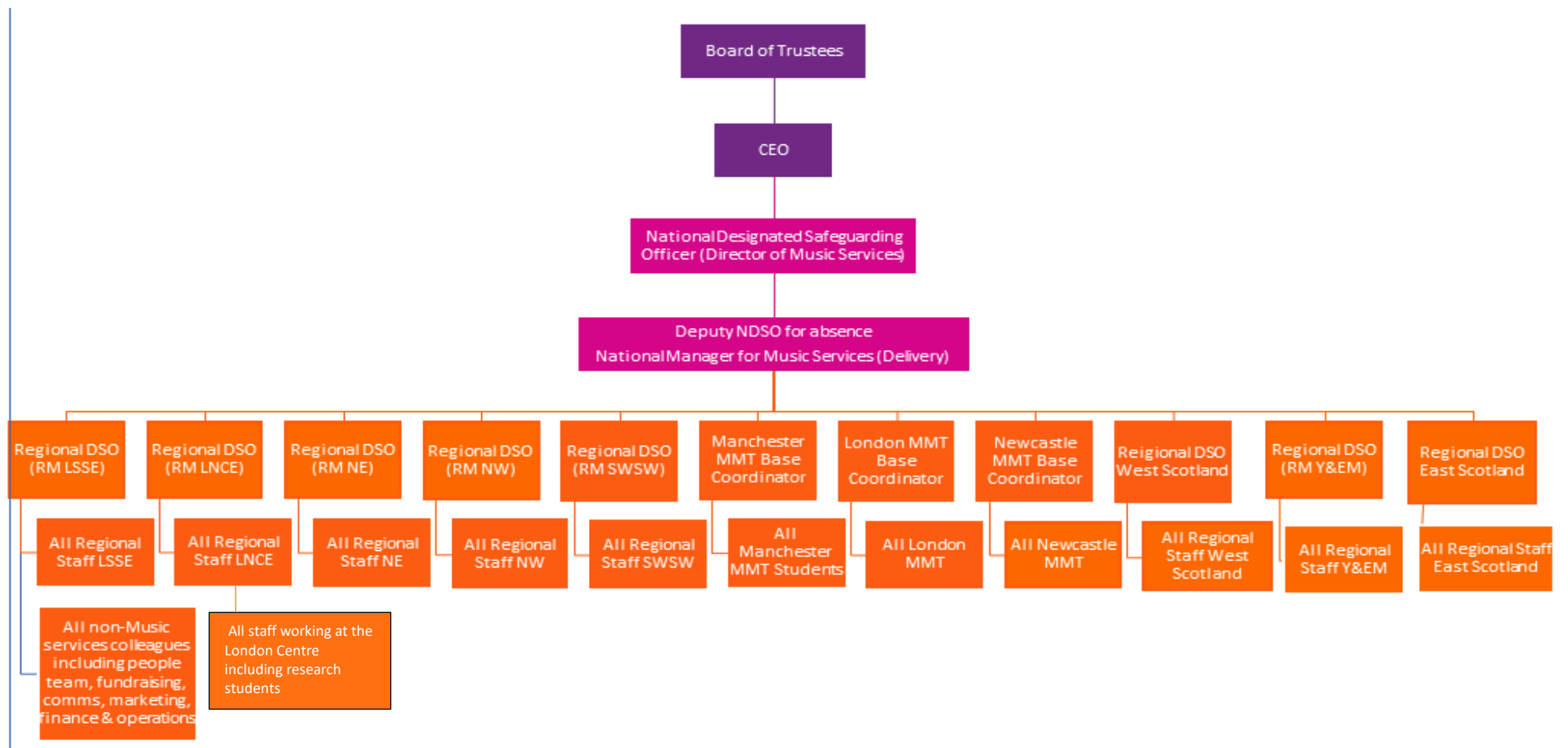
Nordoff & Robbins is committed to providing its services in a way that safeguards and promotes the welfare of children. This policy applies to all staff including the board of trustees, committee members, senior managers, paid staff, volunteers, students and sessional workers, agency staff, students, interns or anyone working on behalf of Nordoff & Robbins. The procedures document sets out what action staff or volunteers should take if they are concerned about the welfare of a child they come into contact with in the course of their work with Nordoff & Robbins. Our Trustees will proactively safeguard and promote the welfare of all beneficiaries of Nordoff & Robbins services and as such will take all reasonable steps to ensure that their beneficiaries, or others who come into contact with their charity do not, as a result, come to harm. There are separate policy and procedures documents for Safeguarding Adults at Risk.

Failure by any colleague or volunteer to follow this policy may be treated as a disciplinary matter and may result in disciplinary actions including dismissal.



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1. Organisational Safeguarding Responsibilities Diagram



1. Policy

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Protect children and young people who receive our services including the children of adults who use our services
- Provide staff, students and volunteers with the overarching principles that guide our approach to safeguarding and child protection.

The welfare of children and young people is of paramount importance, and all children and young people have a right to be protected from abuse, neglect and exploitation regardless of their gender, race, disability, sexual orientation, religion, belief or age. Through the application of policy, procedures, training and best practice, Nordoff & Robbins promotes the safety, welfare and well-being of all children and young people enabling them to participate in our music therapy and other activities in a meaningful, safe, inclusive and child-centred environment. This equally applies to the safety and security of those working with and who are responsible for any activities involving children and young people.

Nordoff & Robbins will report suspected cases of abuse perpetrated by staff, students, volunteers or any other party in accordance with legislative requirements and good practice. Suspected cases will be reported to local safeguarding children teams in a timely fashion and recorded securely on the child's notes. The organisation will provide staff, students and volunteers with the necessary support and guidance to encourage an environment where suspected or witnessed abuse will be dealt with in a timely and appropriate fashion. Nordoff & Robbins will ensure that staff and volunteers are supported appropriately during and following the process of reporting abuse.

Nordoff & Robbins is fully committed to:

- playing our part in safeguarding the welfare of all children by being proactively vigilant in noticing potential signs of abuse, and taking all reasonable steps to protect them from abuse, neglect and exploitation.
- taking appropriate action to address any concerns, working to agreed local policies, procedures in partnership organisations where our therapists are based and with other appropriate local agencies
- ensuring all staff, students and volunteers have knowledge of this policy and procedures document
- having systems in place for the appropriate recruitment and selection of staff, students and volunteers.
- recognising and removing as far as possible the barriers that those who encounter our services might face, and proactively challenging inequality and ensuring dignity, respect and equality in our treatment of others.

All employees, volunteers, students and workers are made aware of the policy and procedures through induction and where appropriate their work with children and young people will be supported by a comprehensive on-going safeguarding training programme. The Trustee welcome pack includes safeguarding information and Nordoff & Robbins shall keep a record of what safeguarding training our Trustees have undertaken. All staff will be required to read this policy and abide by the procedures as set out in this document. Refresher safeguarding training will be provided every year or earlier if required.

Our 'Code of Conduct' Policy provides staff with a framework which is designed to protect children and staff from situations which could be misinterpreted and lead to allegations being made against them. Failure to follow the procedures or acting contrary to the code of conduct/behaviours may lead to disciplinary action being taken. In addition, therapists must be registered with the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC), and abide by the HCPC's Standards of Conduct, Performance and Ethics¹.

As part of our safeguarding commitment, we will ensure the use of vigorous vetting procedures in line with our 'Recruitment and Safe Practices' Policy. This will include, where it is appropriate for posts, the use of Enhanced (or Basic where appropriate) checks with the Disclosure and Barring service (DBS) in England and Wales. In Scotland this is the Protection of Vulnerable Groups (Scotland) Act 2007 (2011) Scheme (PVG). PVG membership records are automatically updated if any new vetting information arises. All relevant staff and volunteers with client contact will be members of the PVG scheme, managed by Disclosure Scotland. All NR staff and volunteers in Scotland are required to disclose any criminal convictions whilst they are associated with or employed by the charity.

Nordoff & Robbins will also use references for Music Therapists which will ask for comments on an individual's suitability to work with children.

Definitions:

a. England and Wales

For the purposes of this policy and our procedures the terms 'child' and 'children' refer to children that have not passed their 18th birthday, including the unborn child as defined in Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023. 'Young person' or 'young people' are terms used as a courtesy to older children who may not wish to be referred to as children, although as terms they have no legal basis.

b. Scotland

A child can be defined differently in different legal contexts in Scottish legislation. In the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 a child is generally defined as someone under the age of 16. However, there are exceptions for the following children where they will be considered a child until their 18th birthday;

- Looked after children and children "in need"
- Children involved with children's hearings and child protection orders
- Young people between the age of 16 and 18 who are still subject to a supervision requirement by a Children's Hearing.

¹ <https://www.hcpc-uk.org/globalassets/standards/standard-of-conduct-performance-and-ethics/revised-standards-2023/revised-standards-of-conduct-performance-and-ethics.pdf>



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More detail on this is given in Appendix 1.

Safeguarding children and young people is defined as:

- Protecting children and young people from maltreatment;
- Preventing impairment of children or young peoples' health or development;
- Ensuring that children and young people are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care; and
- Taking action to enable all children and young people to have the best life chances.

Deaf and disabled children and young people

The Equality Act (2010) defines a person as disabled if they have a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long term (has lasted or is expected to last at least 12 months) adverse effect on one's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. This definition includes conditions such as cancer, HIV, mental illness and learning disabilities.

Deaf and disabled children and young people may be vulnerable to abuse for a number of reasons:

- Increased likelihood of social isolation;
- Dependency on others for practical assistance in daily living (including intimate care);
- Impaired capacity to resist, avoid or understand abuse;
- Speech and language communication needs may make it difficult to tell others what is happening;
- Limited access to someone to disclose to; and
- Particular vulnerability to bullying.

Looked after children and young people

Looked after (such as those living in foster care) children and young people may be especially vulnerable to abuse and neglect for a number of reasons:

- Experienced abuse and neglect previously;
- Living with people who are not their immediate family or friends;
- Less support networks; and
- Experiencing stigma for being in care.

Children and young people with disabilities may also feel less valued than his/her peers and poor care may be observed but tolerated by others. This might include such things as not speaking directly to the child or young person; not offering choices; not moving and handling them safely; not respecting his/her privacy and dignity; not treating him/her according to his/her age; allowing physical restraint to occur; or using derogatory language.

There is no single route to ensure that children and young people are protected, especially those with additional vulnerabilities. The safest environments are those that help children and young people to protect themselves by helping them to speak out and do their best to stop any abuse and neglect from happening and take responsibility for observing, challenging and reporting any poor practice and suspected abuse and neglect. Safe environments for children and young people with additional vulnerabilities are also safer for all children and young people.



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Child maltreatment includes physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse and neglect. More details on this are given in Appendix 2.

The Prevent Duty - radicalisation and extremism

Nordoff & Robbins is not a 'specified authority' organisation, but we work with and may enter into contracts or work with bodies - such as local councils or health and social care providers - that are bound by the Prevent duty. These organisations may place contractual or other obligations on Nordoff & Robbins which relate to those authorities' own compliance with the duty.

Radicalisation and extremism of children and young people is a form of emotional abuse. HM Government states that the aim of radicalisation is to attract children and young people to a particular extremist ideology. In many cases it is with a view to inspiring children and young people eventually to become involved with harmful or terrorist activities. Radicalisation can take place through direct personal contact, or indirectly through social media. Extremism is defined as vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs.

Maintaining a relationship of trust

Those who have responsibility for, and authority or influence over, vulnerable groups are in relationships of trust in relation to the vulnerable groups in their care. A relationship of trust can be described as one in which one party has power and influence over the other by virtue of their work or the nature of the activity. It is vital for all those in such positions of responsibility to understand the power they may have over those in their care, and the responsibility they must exercise as a consequence. . Furthermore, the HCPC states that music therapists must "recognise that relationships with service users, carers and others should be based on mutual respect and maintaining high standards of care even in situations of personal incompatibility" (standard 2.6). It also states that music therapists should, "recognise the power imbalance which comes with being a health care professional, and ensure they do not abuse this for personal gain" (standard 2.11)²

At Nordoff & Robbins this means that those in relationships of power and trust should always³:

- Take action to set and maintain appropriate professional boundaries with service-users, carers and colleagues
- Use appropriate methods of communication to provide care and other services related to their practice
- Ensure that existing personal relationships do not impact professional decisions
- Ensure that they do not abuse their position to pursue personal, sexual, emotional or financial relationships with service-users, carers or colleagues.
- Consider the potential impact that the position of power and trust may have on individuals in social or personal settings.

The position of trust is in part, exercised through the development of respectful, caring and professional relationships between our staff, students and volunteers and our service users as well as behaviour by all staff, students and volunteers that demonstrates integrity, maturity and good judgment.

² Wording taken from the 'HCPC Standards of Proficiency for Arts Therapists, updated 2023:
<https://www.hcpc-uk.org/standards/standards-of-proficiency/arts-therapists/>

³ The following expectations are taken from the revised HCPC 'Standards of Conduct, Performance and Ethics', September 2024 [Standards 1.8 – 1.12]

Duty of Care

Nordoff & Robbins has a duty of care towards our service users, staff, students and volunteers. Through our duty of care we will endeavour to take all reasonable steps to identify and reduce risks whilst people are in our services whilst respecting the individual's rights to make choices. With regard to safeguarding disclosures and reporting we will ensure our staff are supported through our line management structure.

Child Protection concerns

Safeguarding concerns are likely to arise as a result of:

1. **Alleged or actual harm to a child or children:** You may become aware of the actual or alleged harm to, or abuse of, a child through a variety of sources. For example, a child may tell you in person, you may be contacted by telephone, by e-mail or by letter or you may witness something in the child's behaviour that gives you cause for concern. However you receive the information you *must* act without delay. The procedures for the actions required are set out in this document.
2. **Alleged or actual risk posed to a child or children by an adult, another child or an organisation:** You may receive information alleging risk to a child or children posed by an adult, or by the actions or lack of actions of an organisation providing services or activities for children or you may witness something in the child's behaviour that gives you cause for concern. The procedures for the actions required are set out in our Guidance document.

Nordoff & Robbins Safeguarding Team

Nordoff & Robbins has a Safeguarding Team which covers all Regions and Directorates of the organisation. Each member of the team has a particular area of safeguarding responsibility:

- The CEO, briefed by the NDSO will ensure the Board of Trustees are kept up to date with any safeguarding issues
- National Designated Safeguarding Officer (NDSO) is responsible for strategic leadership on safeguarding, embedding safeguarding across all directorates at Nordoff & Robbins and supporting the DDSO and Regional Designated Safeguarding Officers (RDSO) with their duties in relation to implementation of safeguarding policy. The NDSO will update regularly on all safeguarding matters
 - the CEO formally monthly and ad hoc in addition as necessary.
 - the senior leadership team monthly
 - The Board of Trustees formally as part of its meeting cycle 3 times a year (through the Music services Committee) and at least twice via reports by the CEO out of meeting cycle. The Committee membership includes the Trustee with responsibility for Safeguarding.
- Deputy National Designated Safeguarding Officer (Deputy NDSO) is the first port of call for RDSOs for advice and support and will keep the NDSO updated with all safeguarding matters.
- RDSOs are the first point of call for Music Therapists, volunteers and students with regard to any safeguarding concerns. They inform the Deputy National Designated Safeguarding Officer (and copy in NDSO in all communications) about all safeguarding concerns raised within Nordoff & Robbins and seek their support where necessary.

For more information and contact details of all safeguarding team see the Safeguarding Children: Procedures document.

Responsibility for adherence to this policy and procedures

It is essential that all staff adhere to our safeguarding procedures. Failure to do so may be subject to disciplinary action. External associates, contractors or any others working on behalf of Nordoff & Robbins who fail to follow these procedures may be subject to loss of future contracts or any similar arrangements.

Storage of files

Records of safeguarding concerns must be kept confidentially and for the appropriate retention period. All concern forms raised should be uploaded by the RDSO to their Regional Safeguarding Concern folder which is stored securely in the NDSO's OneDrive. Staff involved should **not** keep records of safeguarding concerns on their own computers or Mac hard drives, and any copies of this form which they originally drafted should then immediately be destroyed. All hand-written notes should be scanned and submitted with the Safeguarding Concern Form. The RDSO will upload these to the NDSO's OneDrive safeguarding folder. The originals can then be shredded confidentially.

Safeguarding concern forms should be clearly stored with a title displaying year-month-date in 8-digit form, followed by the initials of the person for whom there is a concern arising, underscore, and then the initials of the person raising the concern. Therefore, a concern raised on the 13th October 2024 regarding a client named *Eden George* by a member of staff named *Lesley Davies* would have the file name: **20241013 EG_LD**.

Where other documents also need to be stored in relation to the same concern (eg referral to the Children's Social Care team or scanned-in handwritten notes in relation to a disclosure), a folder should be created with the name as above and all documents including the concern form saved within it. All concerns raised should also be noted on the National Safeguarding Log by the relevant RDSO.

Record retention

The period of retention for safeguarding concerns raised in relation to a child or adult at risk's welfare or safety in which a formal referral is made to the relevant local authority or Police is 7 years from the point of Nordoff & Robbins' last contact with the child or adult at risk. After this time, it must be deleted by the relevant RDSO. Where, after consultation with the relevant agencies (PO safeguarding team, NSPCC helpline, LA social care team etc), no formal referral by Nordoff & Robbins safeguarding team is deemed necessary, the period of retention for the original concern is 7 years post the concern form being raised. After this time, it must be deleted by the relevant RDSO.

When the concern is noted on the National Safeguarding Log, the deletion date for the file or folder should also be clearly noted in the appropriate column. If it is unknown as to whether this particular concern is going to lead



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to a formal referral to outside agencies, or a formal referral is indeed made and we are not sure when our last contact with the client will be, then the box should state "PENDING", and should be completed as soon as we have this knowledge. It is the RDSO's responsibility to ensure this information is kept up to date.

Process for the deletion of files: All safeguarding concerns that have reached the end of their retention period must be deleted by the relevant RDSO by the 15th December in the year when deletion should take place. For example, if a concern is raised on the 19th October 2024 and no formal referral by N&R safeguarding team is deemed necessary then the file must be deleted by the RDSO by 15th December 2031.

The DDSO will check the safeguarding log and folders following the 15th December of each year to ensure that deletion has taken place of all concerns that have reached the end of their retention period and alert the relevant RDSO if for any reason this has not been the case.

Confidentiality

Every effort should be made to ensure that confidentiality of safeguarding cases is maintained for all concerned. Information should be handled and disseminated on a need-to-know basis only which would not normally include anyone other than the following:

- The Nordoff & Robbins Safeguarding Team (consisting of the NDSO, DDSO, RDSO and HR Manager);
- The child or young person or the person raising the concern;
- The employee, worker, consultant, agency staff, students or volunteer who received the concern or disclosure;
- The parents/carers of the child or young person who is alleged to have been abused, where this is appropriate and they are not implicated by the concern;
- Local Authority and Police as appropriate.

Employees, workers, consultants, agency staff, students and volunteers may have access to confidential information about children and young people in order to undertake their responsibilities. In some circumstances, employees, workers, consultants, agency staff, students or volunteers may be given highly sensitive or private information. Confidential or personal information about a child or young person or his/her family should not be used for their own or others advantage.

The storing and processing of personal information about children and young people is governed by the Data Protection Act 2018.

Working with external partners

Nordoff & Robbins always ensures external partners and organisations we engage with promote the safety and welfare of children and young people and this is outlined in contracts and/or service level agreements. External partners and organisations are required to demonstrate competencies in safeguarding and we will assess this from time to time through safeguarding audits. Where organisations do not have their own satisfactory safeguarding arrangements, they will be expected to comply with Nordoff & Robbins' standards.



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Information sharing

Nordoff & Robbins abides by the 7 guiding principles as set out by HM Government on sharing information. Namely:

1. The Data Protection Act, GDPR Regulations and human rights laws are not barriers to justified information sharing, but provide a framework to ensure that personal information about children and young people is shared appropriately;
2. Openness and honesty with the child or young person (and/or their parents/carers or family where appropriate) from the outset about why, what, how and with whom information will, or could be shared, and seek agreement, unless it is unsafe or inappropriate to do so;
3. Advice is sought from our NDSO and Data Protection Lead if there is any doubt about sharing the information concerned, without disclosing the identity of the child or young person where possible;
4. Information is shared with informed consent where appropriate and, where possible, there is respect for the wishes of those who do not consent to share confidential information. Information will still be shared without consent if, in the organisation's judgement, there is good reason to do so, such as where safety may be at risk. Judgement will be based on the facts of the case;
5. Safety and well-being of the child or young person is always considered;
6. Information is only shared when it is necessary, proportionate, relevant, adequate, accurate, timely and secure to do so;
7. Records of the decision to share information in relation to any reported concerns, with whom and the reasons are always recorded on the Safeguarding Concern Form.

Nordoff & Robbins will share information with the relevant statutory agencies and the HCPC, where appropriate, in relation to safeguarding cases.

2. Monitoring and Review

2.1. Any breach of this policy may result in disciplinary action in accordance with the Charity's disciplinary procedure. Any serious breaches of this policy may result in summary dismissal.

2.2. This policy is periodically reviewed to ensure its continuing suitability and legality and has been communicated to all Nordoff & Robbins Colleagues and is endorsed by the Charity's Directors, Trustees and Management Team who take responsibility for the delivery of its aspirations.

Sandra Schembri
CEO



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3. Associated Policies and Procedures

- Recruitment and Safer Practices Policy
- Code of Conduct for staff and volunteers
- Data Protection Policy
- GDPR Updates
- Anti-harassment and Bullying policy
- Complaints Policy
- Safeguarding Procedures (children and adult documents)
- Whistle blowing Policy
- Drugs and Alcohol Policy
- Health and Safety
- Lone working policy and procedures
- Nordoff & Robbins Quality Assurance framework

Appendix 1: Definitions of a Child in Scottish Legislation

The Children's Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011 States a child means a person under 16 years of age. However, this Act also provides some exceptions to that general rule. Subsection (2) provides that for the purposes of referrals under section 67(2)(o) (failure to attend school), references in the Act to a child include references to a person who is school age. "School age" has the meaning given in section 31 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980. Additionally, children who turn 16 during the period between when they are referred to the Reporter and a decision being taken in respect of the referral, are also regarded as "children" under the Act. Children who are subject to compulsory measures of supervision under the Act on or after their 16th birthday are also treated as children until they reach the age of 18, or the order is terminated (whichever event occurs first). Where a sheriff remits a case to the Principal Reporter under section 49(7)(b) of the Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1995, then the person is treated as a child until the referral is discharged, any compulsory supervision order made is terminated, or the child turns 18.

The [Sexual Offences \(Scotland\) Act 2009](#) has extended the meaning of a child meaning to cover any person under the age of 18 in cases concerning: Human Trafficking; sexual abuse while in a position of trust (and the sexual exploitation of children under the age of 18 through prostitution or pornography ([Protection of Children and Prevention of Sexual Offences \(Scotland\) Act 2005](#)).

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child applies to anyone under the age of 18. However, Article 1 states that this is the case unless majority is attained earlier under the law applicable to the child. Under the [Children and Young People \(Scotland\) Act 2014](#), a "child" is defined for the purposes of all Parts of that Act, as someone who has not attained the age of 18.

Although the differing legal definitions of the age of a child can be confusing, the priority is to ensure that a vulnerable young person who is, or may be, at risk of significant harm is offered support and protection. The individual young person's circumstances and age will, by default, dictate what legal measures can be applied. For example, the Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Act 2007 can be applied to over-16s where the criteria are met. This further heightens the need for local areas to establish very clear links between their Child and Adult Protection Committees and to put clear guidelines in place for the transition from child to adult services. Young people aged between 16 and 18 are potentially vulnerable to falling 'between the gaps' and local services must ensure that processes are in place to enable staff to offer ongoing support and protection as needed, via continuous single planning for the young person.

Where a young person between the age of 16 and 18 requires protection, services will need to consider which legislation, if any, can be applied. This will depend on the young person's individual circumstances as well as on the particular legislation or policy framework. Special consideration will need to be given to the issue of consent and whether an intervention can be undertaken where a young person has withheld their consent.

Appendix 2: Definitions of Child Abuse

Abuse and neglect are forms of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child either directly by inflicting harm, or indirectly, by failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused in a family or in an



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institutional or community setting; by those known to them; or, more rarely, by a stranger. They may be abused by an adult or adults, or another child or children.

Definitions

The following definitions of child maltreatment are adopted in this document and correspond to those working together to safeguard children (2018).

There are four main types of child abuse defined in the UK Government's guidance *Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023* as follows:

1. Physical abuse
2. Emotional abuse
3. Sexual abuse, including child sexual exploitation
4. Neglect or acts of omission

Other forms of child abuse are recognised by the NSPCC but not defined as a form of abuse in *Working Together*. For this reason these categories have been included. More information is found on the NSPCC website: <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/child-abuse-and-neglect/>

5. Modern Slavery
6. Self Neglect
7. Financial or material abuse
8. Discriminatory Abuse
9. Organisational or institutional abuse
10. Domestic abuse
11. Online abuse
12. Female Genital Mutilation
13. Bullying and cyberbullying
14. Child trafficking
15. Grooming
16. Harmful Sexual behaviour

Physical abuse

Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child.

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond the child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyberbullying),



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causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person 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. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

Neglect

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development.

Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to:

- provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment);
- protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger;
- ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-givers); or
- ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.

It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

Exploitation

"The exploitation of children can take a number of different forms and perpetrators may subject children and young people to multiple forms of abuse at the same time, such as criminal exploitation (including county lines) and sexual exploitation"

The Home Office, 2019 .

This document also identifies a number of potential indicators of child exploitation, including:

- changes in emotional well-being and / or behaviour
- absences from school or going missing from school or home
- appearing with unexplained gifts, money or new possessions

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021



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Whilst children might not be the direct target of domestic abuse, there is a growing understanding of the significant harm to children who witness or hear domestic abuse within the family. The **Domestic Abuse Act 2021**⁴ broadened the legislation around this to recognise that children exposed to domestic abuse in anyway are themselves victims of abuse and should be treated as such.

Child-on-child abuse

As well as being at risk from adults, abuse can also take place between children, in schools and other educational organisations, in the community or at home. It is important to challenge inappropriate behaviours between children that are abusive or at risk of becoming abusive. Where behaviours between children are of concern, these should be reported as safeguarding concerns through appropriate procedure. It is important that they are not downplayed or dismissed, just because the person causing the concern is a child.

Child-on-child abuse is most likely to include but not limited to⁵:

- Bullying (including cyber-bullying and discrimination)
- Physical abuse – such as hitting, kicking, biting, hair-pulling, shaking or anything that causes or threatens physical harm.
- Sexual violence
- Sexual harassment
- Consensual or non-consensual sharing of nude or semi-nude images or videos
- Taking an intimate picture of another person without their consent
- Initiation/hazing type violence or rituals

Online world

Although the online world provides many benefits to children and young people, there are also a number of potential associated risks:

- Inappropriate language or images;
- Online grooming;
- Cyberbullying; and
- Sexting

⁴ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2021/17/contents/enacted>

⁵ Further information can be found in 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' Updated Sept 2023 (sections 32-35): https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1161273/Keeping_children_safe_in_education_2023_-_statutory_guidance_for_schools_and_colleges.pdf

Appendix 3: Signs and indicators of abuse

Recognising child abuse can be difficult particularly in view of many of the children and young people whom we work with at Nordoff & Robbins have additional vulnerabilities. It is not your responsibility to decide whether or not child abuse has taken place or if a child is at significant risk of harm from someone. You do, however, have both a responsibility and duty under Nordoff & Robbins procedures to act in order that the appropriate agencies can investigate and take any necessary action to protect a child.

The following information should help you to be more alert to the signs of possible abuse.

Physical Abuse

Most children will collect cuts and bruises as part of the rough-and-tumble of daily life. Injuries should always be interpreted in light of the child's medical and social history, developmental stage and the explanation given. Most accidental bruises are seen over bony parts of the body, e.g. elbows, knees, shins, and are often on the front of the body. Some children, however, will have bruising that is more than likely inflicted rather than accidental.

Important indicators of physical abuse are bruises or injuries that are either unexplained or inconsistent with the explanation given, or visible on the 'soft' parts of the body where accidental injuries are unlikely, e.g. cheeks, abdomen, back and buttocks. A delay in seeking medical treatment when it is obviously necessary is also a cause for concern, although this can be more complicated with burns, as these are often delayed in presentation due to blistering taking place sometime later.

The physical signs of abuse may include:

- unexplained bruising, marks or injuries on any part of the body
- multiple bruises - in clusters, often on the upper arm, outside of the thigh
- cigarette burns
- human bite marks
- broken bones
- scalds, with upward splash marks,
- multiple burns with a clearly demarcated edge.

Changes in behaviour that can also indicate physical abuse:

- fear of parents being approached for an explanation
- aggressive behaviour or severe temper outbursts
- flinching when approached or touched
- reluctance to get changed, for example in hot weather
- depression
- withdrawn behaviour
- running away from home.

Emotional Abuse



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Emotional abuse can be difficult to measure, as there are often no outward physical signs. There may be a developmental delay due to a failure to thrive and grow, although this will usually only be evident if the child puts on weight in other circumstances, for example when hospitalised or away from their parents' care. Even so, children who appear well-cared for may nevertheless be emotionally abused by being taunted, put down or belittled. They may receive little or no love, affection or attention from their parents or carers. Emotional abuse can also take the form of children not being allowed to mix or play with other children.

Changes in behaviour which can indicate emotional abuse include:

- neurotic behaviour e.g. hair twisting, rocking
- being unable to play
- fear of making mistakes
- sudden speech disorders
- self-harm
- fear of parent being approached regarding their behaviour
- developmental delay in terms of emotional progress.

Sexual Abuse

Adults who use children to meet their own sexual needs abuse both girls and boys of all ages, including infants and toddlers. Usually, in cases of sexual abuse it is the child's behaviour that may cause you to become concerned, although physical signs can also be present. It is important that the children are listened to and taken seriously.

It is also important to remember that it not just adult men who sexually abuse children – there are increasing numbers of allegations of sexual abuse of children against women and sexual abuse can also be perpetrated by other children or young people.

The physical signs of sexual abuse may include:

- pain or itching in the genital area
- bruising or bleeding near genital area
- sexually transmitted disease
- vaginal discharge or infection
- stomach pains
- discomfort when walking or sitting down
- pregnancy.

Changes in behaviour which can also indicate sexual abuse include:

- sudden or unexplained changes in behaviour e.g. becoming aggressive or withdrawn
- fear of being left with a specific person or group of people
- having nightmares
- running away from home
- sexual knowledge which is beyond their age, or developmental level
- sexual drawings or language
- bedwetting
- eating problems such as overeating or anorexia
- self-harm or mutilation, sometimes leading to suicide attempts
- saying they have secrets they cannot tell anyone about
- substance or drug abuse



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- suddenly having unexplained sources of money
- not allowed to have friends (particularly in adolescence)
- acting in a sexually explicit way towards adults.

Neglect

Neglect can be a difficult form of abuse to recognise but can have lasting and damaging effects on children.

The physical signs of neglect may include:

- constant hunger, sometimes stealing food from other children
- constantly dirty or unwashed
- loss of weight, or being constantly underweight
- inappropriate clothing for the conditions.

Changes in behaviour which can also indicate neglect may include:

- complaining of being tired all the time
- not requesting medical assistance and/or failing to attend appointments
- having few friends
- mentioning being left alone or unsupervised.

These definitions and indicators are not meant to be definitive, but only serve as a guide to assist you. It is important too, to remember that many children may exhibit some of these indicators at some time, and that the presence of one or more should not be taken as proof that abuse is occurring. There may well be other reasons for changes in behaviour such as a death or the birth of a new baby in the family or relationship problems between parents/carers. In assessing whether indicators are related to abuse or not, the authorities will always want to understand them in relation to the child's development and context.

Again, for these types of abuse and the others listed above please refer to the NSPCC website which has up to date information on signs and symptoms on all type of abuse affecting child and young people:

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/signs-symptoms-effects/>

Appendix 3: Legal and Organisational Framework for this policy

1: In England, Scotland & Wales

- [HCPC Standards of Proficiency for Arts Therapists](#)
- HCPC Standards of Conduct, Performance and Ethics (revised 2024)

2: In England and Wales

- [The Children Act 1989](#)
- [United Nations Convention of the Rights of a Child 1989](#)
- [Data Protection Act 2018](#)
- [General Data Protection \(Rights and Freedoms\) Regulations 2023](#)
- [Human Rights Act 1998](#)
- [Education Act 2011](#)
- [Sexual Offences Act 2003](#)
- [Children Act 2004](#) - this adds to *The Children Act 1989* (above) addressing gaps in child protection strategy and response
- [Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006](#)
- [Protection of Freedoms Act 2012](#)
- [Children and Families Act 2014](#)
- [Special Education Needs and Disability Act 2001](#)
- [Special education needs and disability \(SEND\) code of practice: 0 to 25 years](#) – statutory guidance for organisations which work with and support children and young people who have special educational needs or disabilities; HM Government 2014
- [Information sharing advice for safeguarding practitioners 2015](#)
- [Working together to safeguard children: a guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children: HM Government 2018 \(updated 2023\)](#)
- [Domestic Abuse Act 2021](#)
- [Keeping Children Safe in Education \(KCSIE\) \[England\] - 2024](#)
- [Keeping Learners Safe \[Wales\] – 2021](#) (Wales only)
- [The Social Services and Wellbeing \[Wales\] Act 2014 \(Wales only\)](#)

3: In Scotland

- [Children Act \(Scotland\) 1995](#): primary piece of legislation which provided the range and scope of local authority intervention in the lives of children and their families and their duties and responsibilities.
- [The Protection of Vulnerable Groups \(Scotland\) Act 2007](#): introduced the Protection of Vulnerable Groups (PVG) scheme to replace the former system of Disclosure for people working with vulnerable groups. It identifies categories of employment or contact (regulated work) where it is expected that a PVG check will be required and further provides the responsibilities of employers.



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- [Scottish Government \(2024\) National framework for child protection learning and development in Scotland 2024](#). [Edinburgh]
- [The Children's Hearing \(Scotland\) Act 2011](#): Scotland's approach to care and justice decision making for children and young people. Children and young people who offend and those who require care and protection are equally deserving to be considered as children in need - the system takes an integrated, holistic approach to care and justice, with the child's best interest as the paramount consideration.
- [The Police and Fire Reform \(Scotland\) Act 2012](#): lays down the duty of a Constable and the overarching policing priorities. The main purpose of policing is to improve the safety and wellbeing of persons, localities and communities in Scotland and, as such, the duty of a Constable includes:
 - Prevent and detect crime
 - Maintain order
 - Protect life and property
 - To take such lawful measures and make such reports to the appropriate prosecutor as maybe needed to bring offenders with all due speed to justice.
- [The Children and Young People \(Scotland\) Act 2014](#): covers a variety of areas relating to the wellbeing of Scotland's children and young people including early years and childcare, children's rights, Kinship care, GIRFEC and Named Person/Lead Professional.
- [Getting it Right for Every Child \(GIRFEC\) 2008: Updated 2022](#) - the Scottish government's approach to making a positive difference for all children and young people in Scotland. Its principles help to shape all policy, practice and legislation that affects children and their families. It provides a consistent way for people to support and work with all children and young people in Scotland. It aims to improve outcomes for children and make sure that agencies work together to take action when a child is at risk or needs support.
- [National Guidance for Child protection in Scotland](#): Updated 2023 – the National guidance for child protection in Scotland provides the current guidance and a national framework for anyone who could face child protection issues at work.



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