

SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AND ADULTS AT RISK

1. Introduction to the policy

Lotus Families ('Lotus') is committed to safeguarding and protecting the welfare of all who use its services. Our approach is rooted in a trauma-informed framework, recognising that safety and wellbeing are best promoted when people are treated with dignity, compassion, and respect.

We explicitly embed the **six pillars of trauma-informed practice** in all safeguarding work:

- **Safety**
- **Trustworthiness & Transparency**
- **Peer Support**
- **Collaboration & Mutuality**
- **Empowerment & Choice**
- **Cultural, Historical & Gender Awareness**

In delivering services, Lotus has a responsibility to:

- support the safety and wellbeing of children and adults at risk
- respond to safeguarding concerns with compassion and consistency
- share information responsibly with statutory partners
- contribute to a culture where safeguarding is understood as a shared responsibility across trustees, staff, and volunteers

Our safeguarding practice is informed by relevant legislation, including the **Children Act 1989/2004**, the **Care Act 2014**, and the **Domestic Abuse Act 2021**, alongside statutory and local safeguarding guidance.

Key principles:

- Individuals are supported to have control and choice wherever possible.
- Risks of harm or abuse are minimised through proactive, trauma-aware practice.
- Everyone can be confident that concerns will be listened to and acted on seriously.
- All involved with Lotus understand their safeguarding responsibilities.

Important note: Lotus does not have authority to investigate safeguarding concerns. Our role is to recognise concerns, respond with compassion, and refer responsibly to statutory bodies such as Children's Services, Adult Social Care, or the Police.

2. Contents

This policy comprises three sections plus appendices. It has been restructured to make information more **user-friendly, trauma-aware, and accessible**, while retaining all key procedural references.

- **Section A:** General provisions
- **Section B:** Safeguarding children
- **Section C:** Safeguarding adults

Appendices:

1. Contact details, roles and responsibilities
2. Safeguarding code of conduct
3. What to do if you are concerned about a child
4. What to do if you are concerned that a colleague poses a risk to children
5. Disclosure of current or historical abuse
6. Managing allegations of abuse against staff and volunteers
7. Relevant legislation, including the **Domestic Abuse Act 2021**
- 8.

SECTION A: GENERAL PROVISIONS

1. Purpose of the policy

This policy aims to:

- foster and maintain a culture where the **safety and wellbeing** of children and adults at risk is paramount
- protect people from harm through **respectful risk awareness and management**, recognising that individuals may be affected directly or indirectly by the work of Lotus
- contribute to a **multi-agency approach to safeguarding**, ensuring concerns are shared responsibly and in partnership with statutory services
- ensure staff, volunteers, and trustees understand their safeguarding responsibilities and have a clear guide to the appropriate procedures when concerns arise
- inform service users, families, and stakeholders of Lotus' position on safeguarding, its guiding principles, and the procedures that underpin practice
- ensure safeguarding policies and procedures are **regularly reviewed, reflected upon, and improved**, drawing on learning, lived experience, and best practice

This policy reflects key legislation including the **Children Act 1989 and 2004, the Care Act 2014, and the Domestic Abuse Act 2021**, which recognises:

- 16–17 year-olds experiencing intimate partner abuse as victims in their own right
- all children who see, hear, or experience the effects of domestic abuse as victims in their own right
- a wide definition of domestic abuse, including coercive control and economic abuse, which are highly relevant in safeguarding practice.

2. Scope of the policy

This policy must be observed by all who work with or for Lotus Families, including trustees, employees, volunteers, consultants, contractors, agency staff, and students.

It applies equally to all without discrimination based on age, ability, gender, race, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, or socio-economic status.

In balancing the needs and interests of service users, Lotus ensures its safeguarding approaches are **trauma-informed, culturally sensitive, inclusive, evidence-based, and aligned with best practice.**

3. Roles and responsibilities

Safeguarding is a **shared responsibility across the organisation.** Every staff member, volunteer, and trustee has a role in implementing this policy and ensuring that concerns are recognised, responded to with compassion, referred appropriately, and recorded transparently.

Appendix 1 sets out the detail of roles and responsibilities, including those with designated safeguarding responsibilities (Designated Safeguarding Lead, deputy, and trustee lead).

4. Breaches of the policy

Lotus treats any breach of this policy with the utmost seriousness. Failure to follow the principles and procedures of safeguarding children and adults at risk undermines safety and trust.

For staff, failure to uphold safeguarding duties may lead to disciplinary action, including dismissal. Trustees or volunteers who breach this policy may be asked to step down from their role.

All responses will be managed in a way that is **fair, transparent, and trauma-informed,** recognising both accountability and the need for safe organisational culture.

5. Allegations against staff and volunteers

Any concern that a child or adult at risk may have been harmed by the actions of a staff member or volunteer must be reported **immediately** to the Designated Safeguarding Lead or other relevant manager.

If a staff member or volunteer is implicated, they must raise the matter immediately with the trustee responsible for safeguarding.

During any investigation, staff may be suspended on full pay, and volunteers may be required to pause their duties until the matter is resolved.

These processes will be conducted in line with statutory safeguarding procedures and in a way that is **respectful, transparent, and trauma-informed,** ensuring fairness for all parties while prioritising the safety of those at risk.

Section B: CHILDREN

1. Guiding principles

The following principles guide and underpin the policy:

The **safety and wellbeing** of children up to the age of 18 years is paramount. Children will be treated with **dignity, respect, and fairness**, ensuring equal access to Lotus services without discrimination or favour.

Lotus will remain sensitive and responsive to the needs of children with **additional or exceptional vulnerabilities**, recognising the impact of cultural, historical, and gender factors on risk and resilience.

2. The 4Rs approach

The policy and its procedures are based on the **4Rs approach**, applied through a trauma-informed lens:

- **Recognise:** notice and acknowledge any concerns about a child with professional curiosity and compassion.
- **Respond:** act in ways that are timely, transparent, and sensitive to the child's feelings and circumstances, in line with Lotus policy and procedures.
- **Refer:** share concerns **respectfully and responsibly** with the appropriate statutory services. Referrals are made by the designated safeguarding/child protection lead after discussion with staff and others, always ensuring information is shared in a way that upholds trust and dignity.
- **Record:** ensure accurate, clear, and secure records of concerns and actions are maintained. Records may be used internally and by external agencies and must reflect a trauma-informed, transparent account.

3. Commitments

Lotus is committed to:

- placing the **wellbeing and voice of children** at the centre of everything it does
- implementing the articles and principles of the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child**
- appointing a nominated child protection lead, deputy, and lead trustee/board member to ensure accountability and oversight
- providing staff and volunteers with support and training so they can confidently and compassionately apply Lotus safeguarding procedures
- adopting safer recruitment practices that uphold the wellbeing of children, including DBS checks where appropriate
- sharing safeguarding information and good practice with staff, volunteers, parents, carers, children, and young people in accessible and culturally sensitive ways

- keeping accurate records in line with data protection legislation, ensuring they are stored securely, used professionally, and, when necessary, shared **responsibly and respectfully** with statutory agencies
- ensuring children, young people, and/or their families know how to seek help and guidance if they have concerns
- responding to and managing allegations against staff, volunteers, and trustees fairly and without delay
- maintaining effective complaints and whistleblowing procedures that feel safe to use
- providing safe and accessible environments for staff, volunteers, and children in line with legal and regulatory requirements
- fostering a culture where staff, volunteers, children, young people, and their families treat one another with respect and feel comfortable raising concerns without fear
- The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 recognises children who see, hear, or experience domestic abuse as victims in their own right. Lotus ensures these children are supported with the same seriousness and compassion as those directly experiencing abuse.

4. Definitions and guidance in identifying abuse and neglect

A **child or young person** is anyone who has not reached 18 years of age.

Child abuse and/or neglect refers to the ill-treatment of a child, either through actions or by failing to act to prevent harm. Abuse and neglect can occur in relationships of trust and can affect any child regardless of age, gender, race, disability, ability, sexual orientation, religion, or socio-economic status.

Children and young people may be harmed within families, in residential care, in the community, or online, and abuse may be perpetrated by people known or unknown to them.

Children with disabilities are at increased risk due to stereotyping, discrimination, communication barriers, isolation, or lack of accessible support.

Abuse may be **physical, emotional, or sexual**, and may also include Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), so-called honour-based abuse, forced marriage, trafficking, or exploitation.

Harm and significant harm refer to abuse or neglect that negatively affects a child's health or development. Health includes both physical and mental health; development includes physical, intellectual, emotional, social, or behavioural growth. Determining whether harm is "significant" is the responsibility of statutory services. Staff therefore must share all relevant facts transparently and respectfully to enable statutory bodies to make informed assessments.

Age of consent: In the UK, the legal age of consent for sexual activity is 16. Any sexual activity with a person under 16 is illegal and considered non-consensual.

Where staff become aware of sexual activity involving under-16s, decisions about action will depend on circumstances and service remit, but the **primary focus will always be the safety, wellbeing, and empowerment of the young person.**

Intimate partner domestic abuse and under-18s: When supporting young people under 18 who may be experiencing intimate partner violence, staff must use the **Young People’s DASH RIC** to identify risks and guide professional judgement. This tool helps identify cases suitable for MARAC review and referral to Children’s Social Care. For some clients under 25, this tool may also be more appropriate than the standard DASH RIC. Confidentiality and information-sharing must always be explained in advance, ensuring young people understand what will happen with their information. In most cases, relationship abuse involving a young person will constitute a safeguarding concern requiring referral to the safeguarding children team.

Staff must also recognise that **young people may interpret harmful behaviours differently** from adults. For example, a child may not identify physical abuse if it has been framed as “play.” Staff are encouraged to use scenario-based discussion and trauma-aware questioning to support clarity, safety, and understanding.

5. Roles and responsibilities

The protection of children is a **shared responsibility** across all trustees, staff, volunteers, and partners of Lotus. Everyone must understand and follow the Safeguarding Code of Conduct (Appendix 2).

No single agency or individual can hold the full picture of a child’s circumstances. Effective safeguarding depends on **collaboration and respectful information sharing** between practitioners, agencies, and services.

Staff, volunteers, trustees, and others at Lotus have a duty to exercise **professional curiosity** - to question, challenge, and raise concerns when something feels unsafe or inconsistent. Concerns must be escalated promptly to a manager or the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL). Details of designated roles are set out in Appendix 1.

6. Action to be taken in the event of concerns

The following procedures must be followed as closely as reasonably practicable:

- Concern about a child: Appendix 3
- Colleague potentially posing risk to a child: Appendix 4
- Disclosure of abuse (current or historical): Appendix 5
- Managing allegations of abuse against staff and volunteers: Appendix 6
- Legislation summary – Appendix 7

7 Sources of information

NSPCC <https://nspcc.org.uk/> or 0808 800 5000

Childline www.childline.org.uk or 0800 1111

CEOP Child Exploitation Online Protection www.ceop.police.uk/safety-crime
thinkyouknow - online safety education programme for CEOP www.thinkyouknow.co.uk

SECTION C: ADULTS AT RISK

1. Guiding principles

The following principles guide and underpin the policy:

Adults (people aged 18 years and over) have the right to:

- be treated with **dignity, respect, and compassion**
- have their possessions (including money) respected and protected
- receive support to remain safe and to protect their wellbeing and property
- be **empowered to make decisions** about how they wish to be supported if experiencing or at risk of abuse
- know that their wishes will only be overridden if it is necessary to prevent serious harm to themselves or others, and that such decisions will always be explained clearly and transparently
- be supported in sharing or reporting concerns about abuse in ways that feel safe and validating
- be supported in bringing a complaint under any existing procedure
- have any alleged, suspected, or confirmed cases of abuse identified through Lotus support addressed **promptly, respectfully, and in partnership with statutory services**

2. Commitments

Lotus is committed to:

- safeguarding and supporting adults at risk through **trauma-informed and culturally aware practice**
- having clear and accessible procedures for raising concerns about adults at risk
- maintaining accurate, respectful, and secure records of safeguarding concerns
- ensuring safer recruitment of staff, volunteers, and trustees, including DBS checks where appropriate
- having a transparent procedure for managing any allegation of abuse against staff, volunteers, or trustees
- training and supporting staff, volunteers, and trustees to apply safeguarding procedures confidently and compassionately

- recognising harms such as **coercive control and economic abuse**, as explicitly defined in the **Domestic Abuse Act 2021**
- handling personal information responsibly in line with **GDPR**, balancing privacy with the need for respectful information sharing to protect adults at risk

3. Definitions and guidance in relation to adults at risk

An **adult at risk** is an individual aged 18 years or older who:

- has a need for care and support
- is currently experiencing, or is at risk of, neglect or abuse
- is unable to protect themselves against neglect, abuse, or its risk

Examples of potential risk include:

- being elderly or frail
- having mental illness (including dementia)
- having a physical or sensory disability
- having a learning disability
- having a severe physical illness
- experiencing addiction or substance misuse
- being homeless or at risk of homelessness
- experiencing domestic abuse (including coercive control, as defined in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021)
- being a victim of modern slavery
- being sexually exploited or at risk of such exploitation by gangs or individuals
- being at risk of forced marriage
- being an asylum seeker or refugee

Examples of abuse include:

- physical harm
- domestic abuse, including coercive control and economic abuse
- sexual, psychological, or emotional harm
- financial or material harm
- modern slavery
- female genital mutilation (FGM)
- radicalisation
- unlawful discrimination
- organisational or institutional harm
- neglect and failure to protect
- self-neglect

4. Roles and responsibilities

All staff, volunteers, and trustees have a responsibility to **recognise and report concerns compassionately and promptly** when they believe an adult at risk may be experiencing harm.

Designated safeguarding leads and the trustee with safeguarding responsibility must be familiar with local authority reporting procedures and ensure Lotus always acts in line with these.

5. Disclosure of information

Lotus recognises the importance of sharing safeguarding information with statutory agencies to protect adults at risk, while also respecting individuals' rights to privacy and choice.

Normally, confidential information will only be shared with the express permission of the adult concerned.

Where disclosure is considered necessary for the person's safety or to protect others from serious harm, the adult will be kept informed of the intention to disclose unless this would increase the risk to them.

All information sharing will be handled in a **responsible, transparent, and trauma-informed manner**, in line with GDPR and local safeguarding procedures.

Lotus will maintain effective partnerships with statutory agencies and community organisations to ensure adults at risk receive the right support.

6. Action where there are concerns

The procedures in the appendices must be followed as far as reasonably practicable:

- **Concern about the welfare of an adult at risk:** must be addressed promptly (see Appendix 1)
- **Disclosure by an individual that they are being (or have been) abused:** information must be passed to the designated staff member or trustee without delay
- **Evidence of abuse or neglect of a child:** must be handled without delay (see Section B and Appendix 3)

7. Escalation procedure

If staff within Lotus believe that another agency's actions, inaction, or decisions do not adequately safeguard an adult at risk, they must act assertively to ensure the individual's welfare is protected.

- Concerns should first be referred to the relevant Lotus safeguarding lead (see Appendix 1).
- If differences cannot be resolved through discussion, the matter should be raised through the **Escalation of Professional Disagreement** procedures set out in local multi-agency safeguarding agreements.

This policy will be reviewed annually unless it becomes necessary to adjust during an intervening period.

The policy was reviewed, ratified and adopted by the Board in October 2025.

Declaration:

For the attention of staff, volunteers and trustees:

If you have been asked to sign this document, you are signing to confirm that you have read, understood, and agree to adhere to the policy contents and to follow the appropriate procedures.

You acknowledge your responsibility, in conjunction with everyone at Lotus, to protect children and adults at risk.

You confirm that you understand that a failure to comply with this policy and follow the appropriate procedures may result in suspension pending investigation. For staff this may result in disciplinary action and/or dismissal; trustees or volunteers who do not comply may be asked to leave Lotus.

Signature:

Name:

Role: (Trustee, staff, volunteer)

Date:

APPENDIX 1 – updated August 2025

CONTACT DETAILS, ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Lotus is committed to upholding the safeguarding of children and adults at risk through a trauma-informed lens. The roles below are responsible for embedding this commitment across the organisation. These designated leads foster a culture of safety, transparency, collaboration, and inclusion.

All designated staff and trustees:

- Model and promote trauma-informed safeguarding principles in all aspects of their work.
- Maintain respectful, factual, timely, and confidential records in line with Lotus guidance.
- Respond promptly and supportively to safeguarding concerns, ensuring individuals are heard, believed, and empowered throughout the process.
- Liaise with statutory services transparently and respectfully, sharing concerns where necessary to protect those at risk.

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

Name & Role: Clare Rowland (Services Manager)

Email: clare.rowland@lotus-families.org.uk

Telephone: 07837 136903

Responsibilities:

- Lead on safeguarding matters organisation-wide, maintaining a culture of safety and trust.
- Ensure all staff and volunteers understand safeguarding responsibilities and policies, embedding them into everyday practice through training and supervision.
- Collect and evaluate safeguarding data to identify risks, trends, and areas for continuous improvement.
- Provide trauma-informed guidance and support to staff, especially following a disclosure or serious incident.
- Ensure safeguarding responses empower those at risk and are culturally and gender-responsive.
- Coordinate referrals, liaise with external agencies, and ensure appropriate follow-up.

Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL)

Name & Role: Kate Lawrence Chief Executive

Email: kate.lawrence@lotus-families.org.uk

Telephone: 07505426130

Shares responsibility for safeguarding leadership and ensures a seamless trauma-informed response in the DSL's absence.

Designated Trustee Safeguarding Lead (TSL)

Name & Role: Vacant – full board currently responsible

Email:

Telephone:

Responsibilities:

- Provide non-operational oversight to ensure the charity's compliance with safeguarding law and best practice.
 - Offer safeguarding guidance and challenge through a trustee lens, ensuring decisions are trauma-informed and equitable.
 - Take a lead on whistleblowing concerns and ensure transparency and accountability.
 - Ensure all trustees receive regular safeguarding training and are confident in their oversight role.
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Other Safeguarding Contacts

- **Out Of Hours Safeguarding**

Service: East Sussex Safeguarding Adults Board

Telephone: 0345 60 80 191 (Select menu option 2 to connect to the Out of Hours Emergency Service)

- **East Sussex Safeguarding Children**

Service: SPOA (Single Point of Access)

Telephone: 01323 464222

To make a referral: <https://earlyhelp.eastsussex.gov.uk/web/portal/pages/home>

Out of hours, with serious concerns that cannot wait until the next working day, contact the Emergency Duty Service: 01273 335 906 or 01273 335 905

<https://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/children-families/professional-resources/spoa>

- **Children’s LADO referral**

Use this form to submit an allegation to the Children’s LADO about an adult who works with children. <https://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/children-families/professional-resources/allegations/referrals/form-lado-referral>

- **Brighton & Hove Safeguarding Children**

Service: Front Door for Families

Telephone: 01273 290400

To make a referral: <https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/families-children-and-learning/tell-us-if-you-are-worried-about-child>

Out of hours, with serious concerns that cannot wait until the next working day, contact the Emergency Duty Service: 01273 335905

Services Manager to ensure this list is maintained, accessible, and up to date.

Organisational Safeguarding Oversight

The Board of Trustees holds ultimate responsibility for safeguarding. Trustees ensure:

- The DSL, DDSL and TSL roles are filled by trained individuals.
- Safeguarding remains a standing item on trustee agendas.
- Policies are regularly reviewed with lived experience and trauma-informed insights.
- Organisational culture prioritises safety, transparency, empowerment, and inclusion.

APPENDIX 2 – Safeguarding Children Code of Conduct

This Code of Conduct is rooted in the six trauma-informed pillars and is designed to ensure that every interaction with children or families is safe, respectful, empowering, and free from harm.

To promote safety, trust and empowerment, staff and volunteers must:

- Proactively identify and manage risks to children and young people, always acting in their best interests.
- Respect children’s rights to privacy, dignity, and autonomy.
- Ensure records are accurate, respectful, and stored securely in accordance with data protection law.

- Engage with children and families using respectful, non-judgemental language.
- Avoid dual or blurred relationships that compromise professional boundaries.
- Never give or accept personal gifts, money, or services from service users.
- Communicate transparently and avoid any behaviour that could be perceived as favouritism, secrecy, or coercion.

To maintain professional boundaries, staff and volunteers must:

- Disclose any prior or current relationships with service users to their line manager.
- Avoid engaging socially with service users outside professional contexts unless this has been approved and recorded.
- Refrain from developing romantic or sexual relationships with service users or their family members.
- Understand and respect how culture, gender identity, history, and lived experience shape each person's interaction with services.

To promote collaboration and mutual respect:

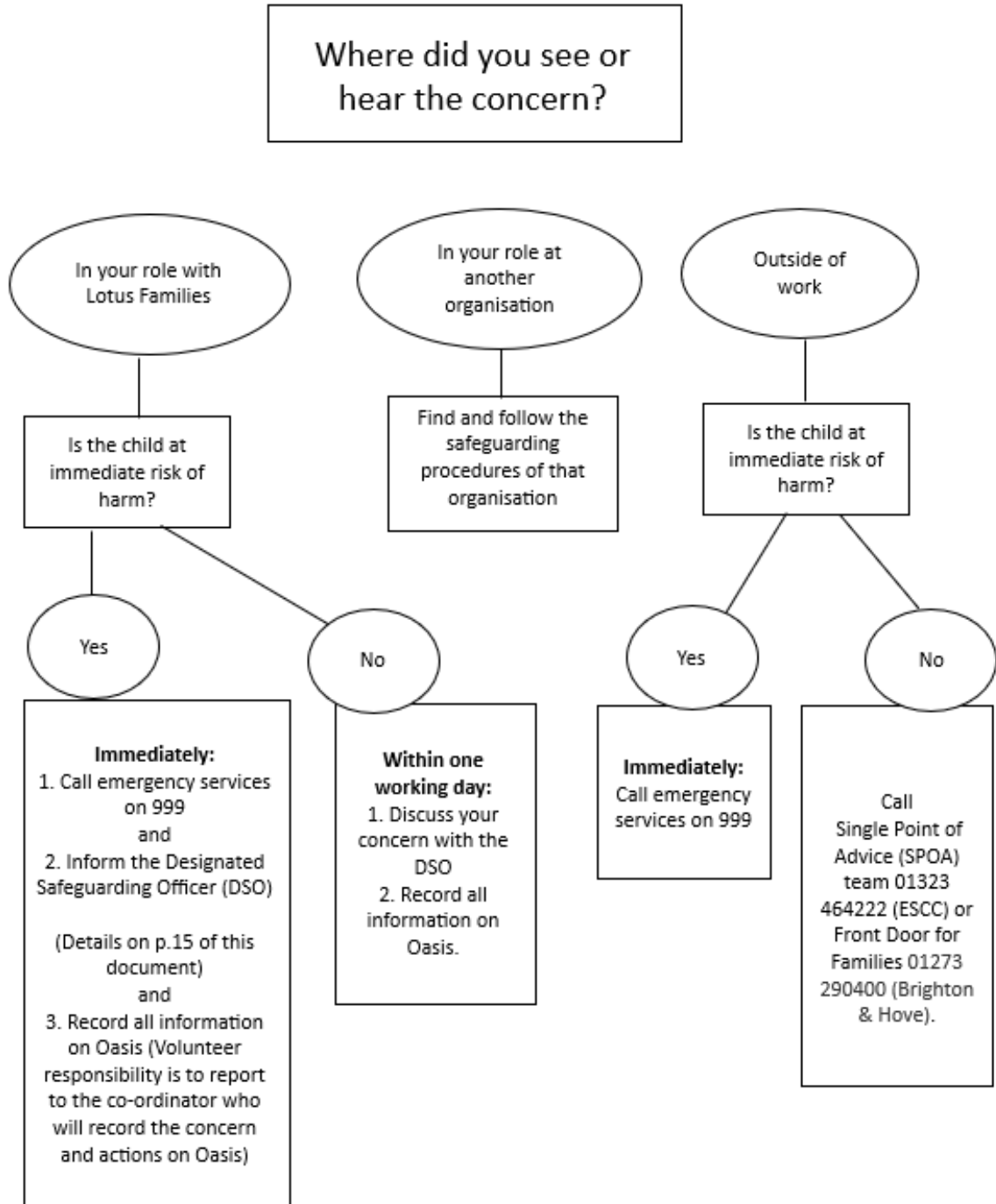
- Work together to support safe, inclusive environments for children and families.
- Watch out for each other's wellbeing and practice open, constructive challenge when needed.
- Be clear and kind when setting boundaries and expectations, always explaining the rationale behind decisions.

Declaration of Interests and Conflict Avoidance:

- If a staff member's friend, partner, or relative begins using Lotus services, this must be disclosed to their manager immediately.
- Staff should not be assigned to support individuals with whom they have a personal relationship. Any exceptions must be carefully managed and recorded.

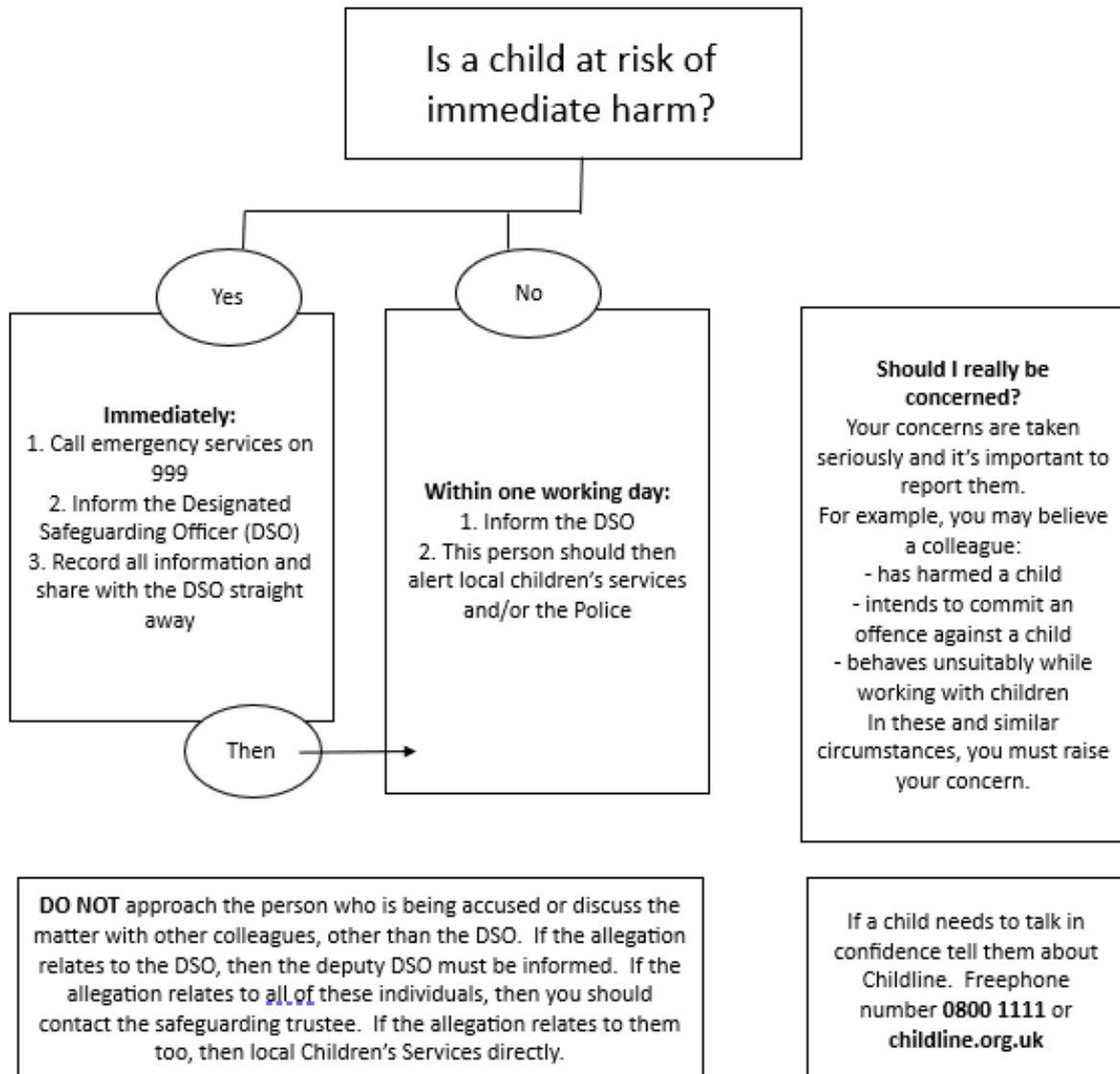
APPENDIX 3

What to do if you have concerns about a child



APPENDIX 4

What to do if you are concerned that a colleague poses a risk to a child or children



APPENDIX 5 – Updated January 2025

What to Do When a Child Discloses Current or Historical Abuse or Neglect

At Lotus, we recognise the courage it takes for a child to disclose abuse or neglect. How we respond can shape their recovery, trust in adults, and willingness to seek further help. This guidance ensures all staff, trustees, and volunteers respond in a way that upholds the child's safety, dignity, and rights, while meeting legal responsibilities.

A Trauma-Informed Response to a Disclosure

Disclosures can happen in many ways - through words, play, behaviour, or third parties. They may relate to current or past experiences. Each disclosure deserves a compassionate, non-judgemental, and legally appropriate response.

Responding in the Moment: Remember O.U.R.

OPEN UP – UNDERSTAND – REFLECT

- **Show them you care (OPEN UP):**
Offer your full attention. Keep your body language relaxed and open. Use gentle, affirming language like:
“You’ve shown such courage today.”
Let them feel seen, heard and believed.
- **Take your time (UNDERSTAND):**
Let them lead the pace. Respect silence or pauses. Don’t rush them, and avoid interrupting.
- **Reflect back (REFLECT):**
Repeat what they’ve said using their language. This helps them feel heard and confirms your understanding.

Important Principles for All Staff, Volunteers and Trustees

- **You are not responsible for investigating** — only for listening and reporting.
- **You cannot promise confidentiality.** Be clear and gentle: *“I may need to share this with someone who can help keep you safe.”*
- **Your calm, compassionate response matters.** It may be the first time a child has ever shared their experience.

If a Child Discloses Abuse

Always:

- ✓ **Affirm their feelings** and bravery.
- ✓ **Use open, non-leading questions.** E.g., “Can you tell me more about that?”
- ✓ **Avoid asking too many questions.** Ask only what’s necessary to understand what they are saying.
- ✓ **Refrain from making judgements** about the alleged abuser or what has happened.

- ✓ **Explain your next steps** in clear, age-appropriate language.
- ✓ **Reassure them** they will be supported and informed.
- ✓ **Record what they said**, using their exact words where possible.
- ✓ **Report immediately** to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or Deputy.
- ✓ **Look after yourself**. Disclosures can be emotionally difficult. Seek support.

Do not:

- ✗ Speak to parents/carers about the disclosure until advised by the DSL.
- ✗ Delay or wait for “more evidence.”
- ✗ Try to investigate or prove what has happened.

When Urgent Medical Help is Needed

If a child is injured or unwell:

- Call an ambulance or take them to A&E if needed.
- Provide first aid as appropriate.
- Notify the police and DSL immediately after ensuring the child’s safety.

If the Child Withdraws or Stops Talking

Let them know:

- *“It’s OK to stop. I’m here when you’re ready. You’re not alone.”*
- Offer them support options like **ChildLine (0800 1111)**.
- Let them know you still need to pass on their concerns to help keep them safe.

Escalation: If Concerns Are Not Being Acted Upon

If you believe:

- Safeguarding concerns are not being addressed by the DSL or appropriate agencies,
- A child remains at risk despite current action,

Then escalate the concern:

1. First to the **Designated Safeguarding Trustee**.

2. If unresolved, contact the **NSPCC helpline, external safeguarding advisor**, or local authority.
3. **Record** all concerns, actions, and conversations thoroughly.

At all times, **child safety comes first**. Disagreements between professionals must never distract from protecting the child.

Patterns of Concern and Cumulative Risk

Concerns may arise gradually through observations, disclosures, or service patterns. These include:

- Repeated missed appointments
- Unexplained injuries
- Parents/carers agreeing to support but not following through
- Behavioural indicators of harm

In these cases:

- Discuss with your manager or DSL.
- A **chronology of concerns** may be required to monitor emerging risks.
- Referrals based on patterns of concern should be made in discussion with the DSL and Local Authority.

A **chronology** is:

- A dated summary of key concerns, patterns and strengths.
 - Used to assess risk, inform decisions, and support protection.
 - Stored securely and used only by trained safeguarding professionals.
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Making a Child Protection Referral

- Inform your **manager** and **DSL** (see Appendix 1) as soon as possible.
 - If unavailable, follow your local procedures and ensure the concern is documented.
 - DSL will assess the concern and coordinate next steps, including referrals and support (see Appendix 3)
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Recording, Confidentiality and Information Sharing

Recording and sharing information must:

- Be **factual, timely, and respectful**.
- Reflect **what was said** (verbatim if possible) and your **observations**.
- **Distinguish between fact and opinion**.
- **Use inclusive and non-judgemental language**.
- Be stored securely and retained only for the legal retention period (7 years).

You may share information without consent **if**:

- A child is at risk of serious harm.
- There is a legal obligation.
- Seeking consent would place the child at greater risk.

Consent is rarely appropriate in child protection cases due to the **power imbalance** and the duty to act in the child's best interest.

Always consult the **Designated Safeguarding Lead** or **Data Protection Officer** if unsure.

In Summary:

- **Safety and wellbeing come first.**
- **Believe and affirm** what the child shares.
- **Act appropriately, not investigatively.**
- **Record clearly, report swiftly.**
- **Support yourself, too.**

APPENDIX 6: Managing Allegations of Abuse Against Staff and Volunteers

At Lotus Families, we are committed to ensuring that our safeguarding processes protect everyone, including clients, staff, and volunteers, and uphold the highest standards of trust, accountability, and transparency.

Raising and Managing Concerns

Any concern involving potential harm to a child, young person or adult, including poor practice, abuse, harassment, or a breach of professional boundaries by a Lotus Families staff member or volunteer, must be taken seriously and reported immediately.

Concerns should be shared with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or escalated to senior leadership if the DSL is involved. This includes any situation where a staff member or volunteer has:

- Behaved in a way that has harmed or may harm a child or adult.
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child or adult.
- Behaved in a way that suggests they may pose a risk of harm or be unsuitable to work with children, young people or adults at risk.

This process aligns with the trauma-informed values of safety, trustworthiness and transparency, and ensures that all concerns are handled sensitively and without delay.

Whistleblowing

We encourage an open and reflective culture where concerns are raised without fear of blame or reprisal. Staff and volunteers are often the first to notice concerns. It is vital they feel supported to speak up, even when concerns appear minor.

Anyone with concerns about wrongdoing should follow the **Lotus Families Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure**, or contact the **NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line**: 0808 028 0285.

Recruitment and Employment

We take all reasonable steps to prevent unsuitable individuals from working with children, young people and adults at risk. This includes:

- Following safer recruitment practices, including structured interviews, appropriate DBS checks, and verifying two references.
- Providing clear induction, supervision and ongoing development, in line with our **Recruitment, Supervision and Management of Volunteers Policy**.
- Ensuring contractors are informed of their safeguarding responsibilities and report concerns to their employer or directly to the DSL at Lotus.

Recruitment of Ex-Offenders

Lotus Families is committed to equality of opportunity. We will treat all applicants fairly and will not discriminate against those with a criminal record unless it is relevant to the role.

If a role requires a DBS check, this will be clearly stated. Where offences are disclosed, decisions will consider:

- The relevance of the offence to the role
- The seriousness of the offence
- The time passed since the offence
- Whether the person has a pattern of offending
- Any changes in circumstances since the offence

Those involved in recruitment will be supported to understand and apply our **Recruitment of Ex-Offenders Policy**.

Local Procedures and the LADO

If an allegation or concern is raised about a staff member or volunteer, local procedures must be followed, including notifying the **Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)**. The DSL is responsible for coordinating this process and ensuring appropriate support is in place for all involved.

Serious or Notable Incidents

Charities are required to report serious incidents to the Charity Commission. These include:

- Actual or alleged abuse or harm to a child or adult
- Significant loss of funds or assets
- Serious reputational harm
- Damage to property or services

Responsibility for reporting such incidents lies with the trustees. The DSL and CEO must be informed immediately of any event that could meet this threshold.

Learning and Development

All new staff, trustees and volunteers complete an induction, which includes safeguarding responsibilities. Refresher training is provided regularly and when roles change. This supports a culture of empowerment, transparency and shared responsibility.

Photography and Imagery

In line with our commitment to consent and safeguarding, written permission must be obtained before using any images or video of participants in Lotus Families activities.

APPENDIX 7: Relevant Legislation and Guidance

This policy is underpinned by the legal and statutory framework designed to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in England. It also reflects our responsibility to ensure trauma-informed, equitable, and proportionate responses to harm.

Key Legislation and Guidance Includes:

- **Children Act 1989**
- **Children Act 2004**
- **Children and Social Work Act 2017**
- **Domestic Abuse Act 2021**
- **Working Together to Safeguard Children** (Department for Education, 2018)
- **What to Do If You're Worried a Child Is Being Abused** (Department for Education, 2015)
- **Mandatory Reporting of Female Genital Mutilation** (Home Office, 2016)
- **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989**
- **Sexual Offences Act 2003**

Definitions

Who is a 'Child'?

The Department for Education defines a *child* as anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday. This definition applies regardless of a child's living arrangements, independence, education, or legal status.

What is Abuse?

We follow the categories of abuse set out in *Working Together to Safeguard Children* (2018). Abuse can be physical, emotional, sexual, or due to neglect. Children may be harmed by people they know or by strangers, and abuse may happen in person, online, or both.

Children and the Domestic Abuse Act 2021

The **Domestic Abuse Act 2021** recognises **children as victims in their own right** if they see, hear, or experience the effects of domestic abuse. This acknowledges the trauma

and harm caused to children who live in environments where abuse occurs, even if they are not the direct target.

At Lotus Families, we treat these children with the same duty of care and safeguarding consideration as any other child at risk of harm.

Types of Abuse

Physical Abuse

Deliberate physical harm such as hitting, burning, poisoning, or suffocating a child. It may also involve fabricated or induced illness.

Emotional Abuse

Ongoing emotional maltreatment such as making a child feel unloved, silencing them, or exposing them to frightening situations. It includes the emotional harm caused by witnessing domestic abuse.

Sexual Abuse

Any sexual activity involving a child, including contact and non-contact acts. This may involve grooming, exploitation, or online sexual harm. Both adults and other children can perpetrate sexual abuse.

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

A form of sexual abuse where children are manipulated or coerced into sexual activity, often in exchange for something (e.g. attention, money, status). It may happen online or in person.

Neglect

The persistent failure to meet a child's physical or emotional needs. This includes inadequate food, shelter, medical care, supervision, or emotional support.

Other Forms of Harm

Additional safeguarding concerns include:

- **Female Genital Mutilation (FGM):** A harmful cultural practice considered a form of child abuse and gender-based violence.
- **Honour-Based Abuse and Forced Marriage:** Abuse committed to protect perceived family honour; forced marriage occurs without full consent.

- **Child Trafficking:** The movement or control of a child for the purpose of exploitation.
 - **Criminal Exploitation (e.g., County Lines):** Manipulating or coercing children into criminal activity for the benefit of others.
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If You Are Unsure

Where there is concern about a child, but it is unclear if abuse has occurred, always consult the **Designated Safeguarding Lead**. If they are unavailable, contact the DDSL or:

- Local Authority Children's Services
- The Police (101 or 999 in an emergency)
- NSPCC Helpline: **0808 800 5000**

It is always better to raise a concern and be wrong than to miss a child or adult at risk. At Lotus Families, we are committed to creating safe, transparent and responsive environments for everyone.