

Child, Young People and Vulnerable Adult Safeguarding Policy and Procedures

Safeguarding Policy Statement

ACTS FAST recognises that children, young people, and vulnerable adults may be at risk from different forms of abuse and have the right to equal protection from all types of abuse. It is important all ACTS FAST staff personnel are aware of signs of abuse and this document sets out our policies and procedures in regard to safeguarding.

Aims of the policy

- To raise the awareness of all ACTS FAST personnel including trustees, staff, and volunteers of the importance of child protection and safeguarding our client base and of their responsibilities to do so and the procedures to follow.
- For identifying and reporting actual or suspected abuse, neglect or concerns of welfare immediately to the DSL (designated safeguarding lead).
- To promote effective liaison with other agencies in order to work for the protection of our clients.

This commitment stands regardless of race, religion, language, culture, sexuality, disability, medical or psychiatric condition.

Definitions

According to the children's act 1989/2004 a child is defined as a person under the age of 18 years, for the purposes of these procedures a child is defined as a person who is under 13 years and a young person is a person aged under 18 years. A vulnerable adult is a person aged 18 years or over who may be in need of community care services by reason of mental or other disability age or illness and who is unable to protect him/herself against significant harm or exploitation (Who Decides- Lord Chancellors Department 1997).

ACTS FAST team members are to be regularly trained to identify abuse and neglect.

Definition of abuse: A form of maltreatment of a child or vulnerable adult. Somebody may abuse by inflicting harm or by failing to act to prevent harm, an abuser can be anyone.

The children's act 1989/2004 introduced significant harm as the threshold that justifies compulsory intervention and defined significant harm as physical/sexual/emotional abuse and neglect. ACTS FAST aims to uphold and protect all individuals rights and safety under all current UK and applicable legislation.

What is abuse?

Abuse can be defined as:

A violation of an individual's human and civil rights by any other person or persons.

Abuse may consist of a single act or repeated acts. It may be physical, verbal, or psychological, it may be an act of neglect or an omission to act, or it may occur when a child or vulnerable person is persuaded to enter into a financial or sexual transaction to which he or she has not consented, cannot consent or gives non informed consent.

Types of Abuse

- **Physical abuse**

Physical abuse is the non-accidental infliction of physical force that results (or could result) in bodily injury, pain, or impairment. Signs might include burns, bruising, scratches, or accidents that cannot be explained, misuses of medication or forcing someone, for example, to stay in a care home against their wishes.

- **Neglect**

Neglect is when a child, young person or vulnerable adult does not have their basic needs met, such as adequate food or warmth or help with personal hygiene. Signs might include deteriorating health, appearance, or mood.

- **Financial abuse**

Financial abuse is when a child, young person or vulnerable adult is exploited for financial gain e.g. by a relative or door-to-door salesman. Often valuables will go missing in the home or there may be a change in financial circumstances that cannot be explained.

- **Sexual abuse**

Sexual abuse is direct or indirect involvement in sexual activity that the child, young person, or vulnerable adult has not or could not consent to or was pressurised or manipulated into. Signs can include changes in physical behaviour or physical discomfort. This would include child sexual exploitation.

- **Psychological abuse**

Psychological abuse is that which impinges on the emotional health and development of individuals. It might be emotional abuse such as threats of harm or abandonment, enforced isolation, blaming, or controlling behaviour, or verbal and racial insults. Signs may be fear, confusion, or disturbed sleep.

- **Discriminatory abuse**

Discriminatory abuse consists of abusive or derisive attitudes or behaviour based on a person's sex, sexuality, ethnic origin, race, age, or disability.

- **Professional abuse**

This is the misuse of a therapeutic power and abuse of trust by professionals and the failure to act on suspected abuse/crimes.

The [NSPCC](#) lists a very detailed expansion of these to also include:

- Cyber bullying
- Grooming
- Child trafficking
- Criminal exploitation gangs
- Domestic abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)
- Non-recent abuse
- Online abuse

Other areas for ACTS FAST trustees, staff and volunteers to be aware of:

- E Safety: using the internet and other technologies safely and appropriately, including personal mobile phones and electronic devices with communication capability
- Preventing Radicalisation: Radicalisation refers to the process by which a person comes to support terrorism and forms of extremism. This falls under the UK governments “Prevent” strategy. Further online training is available from the Home office.
- Honour Based Abuse & Forced Marriage (Forced marriage became a criminal offence in England and Wales in 2014)
- Violation of the Drug Trafficking Act 1994
- Violation of the Terrorism Act 2000
- Any risk of harm to self or others in addition those described here

Who can be abused or is at risk?

Any person can be a victim to abuse. Children, young people, and vulnerable adults (more commonly known as “adults at risk”) are however more vulnerable to being abused with those intending harm.

‘Adults at risk’ are always ‘adults with a care and support need’, with the exception of individuals who are victims of domestic abuse or modern-day slavery. The Care Act 2014 makes it clear that abuse of adult’s links to circumstances rather than the characteristics of the people experiencing the harm.

The Safeguarding duties set out in the Care Act 2014 apply to an adult who:

- Has needs for care and support (whether or not the local authority is meeting any of those needs); and
- is experiencing, or is at risk of abuse or neglect; and
- as a result of their care and support needs is unable to protect themselves from either the risk of, or the experience of abuse or neglect.

Who could carry out abuse?

People who abuse:

- Are often well known to their victims but can be strangers. Abuse can be perpetrated by anyone.
- Might be a relative, partner, son or daughter, friend, or neighbour, a paid or voluntary worker, or a health or social care worker
- Could be another vulnerable adult, service user or group member
- May not realise they are abusing and can sometimes act out of character and abuse because of the stress of caring

Where does abuse take place?

Abuse can take place almost anywhere and these include:

- The child’s, young person’s or vulnerable adult’s home
- Transportation, including a carer’s vehicle
- School or college
- A carer’s home
- A day centre

- A community centre
- A care home
- A hospital
- The workplace
- Educational institutions

Recognising the signs and indicators of abuse

Where abuse has occurred one or more of the following signs or indicators may have been present. None of these definitively suggest abuse, however, suspicions should be heightened if one or a combination of these indicators exists.

- Changes in a person's behaviour
- Unexplained changes in a person's circumstances
- Physical signs of abuse
- Withdrawal of verbal communication
- A person appearing withdrawn
- Unexplained reactions towards particular individuals or settings
- Dislike of being touched and flinching on being touched
- Disturbed sleep patterns
- Frequent or regular visits to the general practitioner or the accident and emergency department or hospital admissions
- Panic attacks
- Absconding / wandering
- Obsessive or challenging behaviour
- Self-harm
- History of domestic violence
- Increase levels of agitation
- Freezing behaviour when something is/isn't mentioned

What to do when a person is disclosing/reporting abuse to you:

In addition to safeguarding training with ACTS FAST, all trustees, staff and volunteers are expected to familiarise themselves with the following guidance on interaction with children and vulnerable adults when dealing with allegations or disclosures:

1. Stay calm when someone is disclosing something to you.
2. Do not give a guarantee of confidentiality or secrecy, let them know you may need to pass this information on to someone who can help (or because you have a legal duty to).
3. Listen carefully to what is actually being said, not what you think they *mean*.
4. Do not ask leading questions. Use the TED acronym to help you remember what to do: **T**ell me, **E**xplain to me, **D**escribe to me.
5. Do **not** interrogate the child, young person, or vulnerable adult, use TED instead.
6. Take the allegation seriously and try to demonstrate that you believe them.
7. As soon as possible after the disclosure, accurately record what was said (securely stored) and report this information to the DSL for further action and referral as appropriate.

In any event of an emergency or if someone is at imminent risk of harm, call 999 and speak to the relevant emergency service.

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

ACTS FAST has a designated permanent member of staff who is designated the safeguarding Lead (or “DSL”). This person is the go-to person for referring any safeguarding questions or matters, and they are responsible for ensuring any safeguarding enquiry is handled in a prompt and professional manner and referred to external agencies as appropriate.

Following a disclosure (see previous section), it is important for the DSL to be made aware of the information as promptly as possible in order to decide as to the next steps required to protect someone from harm. The DSL will listen to you, help with any recording of evidence, and will let you know what they are now going to do. You may not be kept informed of future steps or updates as the matter may be passed to an external agency.

Where appropriate or necessary, the charities clinical supervisor may also be contacted for advice, support or signposting.

The ACTS FAST DSL is:

Janis Dreosti | Janis.dreosti@actsfast.org.uk | 01202 797217 (not direct number)

Should an allegation or incident relate to the DSL, the CEO can be contacted instead:

James Druce | james.druce@actsfast.org.uk | 01202 797217 (not direct number)

Training and awareness

ACTS FAST will ensure an appropriate level of safeguarding training is available to its Trustees, Employees, Volunteers and any relevant persons linked to the organisation who requires it (e.g. contractors). For all employees who are working or volunteering with children or adults, this requires them as a minimum to have awareness training that enables them to:

- Understand what safeguarding is and their role in safeguarding children.
- Recognise a child potentially in need of safeguarding and take action.
- Understand how to report a safeguarding Alert.
- Understand dignity and respect when working with children.
- Have knowledge of the Safeguarding Children Policy.

This training may take place in a variety of forms relevant to the needs and their involvement with the charity at the time. This training may be provided in-house, online or through external training providers, as dependant on the relevant needs of the workforce at that time. Training should take place at least every 3 years, with refresher training provided as part of that schedule in order to update the workforce on new legislation or best practices.

Confidentiality and information sharing

ACTS FAST expects all employees, volunteers and trustees to maintain confidentiality. Information will only be shared in line with the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and the UK’s Data Protection Act 2018.

However, information should be shared with the Local Authority if a child or at risk adult is deemed to be at risk of harm or contact the police if they are in immediate danger, or a crime has been committed.

For further guidance on information sharing in relation to safeguarding, please see the ACTS FAST Confidentiality policy.

Recording information and record keeping

Keeping accurate records is a very important part of high-quality safeguarding. The charity must ensure that records are secure, factual, and accurately reflect events. ACTS FAST has a separate confidentiality and Data Protection policy which you can refer to for further details about record keeping. The principles of these policies include:

- Ensuring information is always kept securely, which means having minimal amounts of physical data or information which is more vulnerable to loss or damage.
- Ensuring all electronic data is stored behind encrypted and two-factor authenticated passwords. This helps to protect data from theft or corruption.
- All disclosures must be recorded as soon after it is made as possible, in order to assist in capturing an accurate record of events. Disclosures can be referred to the DSL by email, however a discussion should also be had with the DSL to ensure risks are appropriately assessed first.
- Any physical records should always be kept locked and as secure as possible, replaced by an encrypted digital version as soon as appropriately possible (or destroyed).
- All confidential physical information must be cross shredder shredded (destroyed) when no longer required.
- Only create or store the minimum amount of information necessary for the required task and purpose. The exception being when a disclosure is being made, as all information may be relevant and must be fully recorded to the best of your ability.

The following are helpful things to be aware of when recording disclosures and collecting relevant information:

- Name of child / adult at risk
- Ages/Date of Birth
- Any special factors or circumstances
- Name of parents / guardians / carer
- Home Address and available contact details
- Record whether the person making the report is expressing their own concerns or passing on those of somebody else.
- What has prompted the concerns? Include dates, times etc. of any specific incidents
- Signs – behavioural, physical, indirect?
- Has the child / at risk adult been spoken with? Record verbatim if possible
- Have the parents / carers been contacted?
- Record if anyone has been named the abuser
- Record if anyone else has been consulted – who, when, why, outcome etc.

Note: Some of the above may already be available in client records, so it will not be necessary to duplicate this information (for example a date of birth or address).

Further general guidance when supporting or engaging with children, young people, or adults at risk:

- Ensure that there is always appropriate supervision based on the persons abilities and needs. This will include never leaving a CYP or at-risk adult on their own whilst in the charities care (for example during a support session, with the exclusion of toileting which the charity does not provide). The supervising team member must have a plan for their appropriate supervision at all times and in relation to their parent/carer. Clear and agreed pickup/drop off times must be agreed, and another team member informed of departure/arrivals.
- Where possible, the best practice is for there to be at least 2 team members available (nearby) when a CYP or at-risk adult is in your support care. This could be that whilst a CYP or at-risk adult is receiving therapeutic support, another team member is available in a nearby room. This helps create an environment of integrity and can help reduce opportunities for false allegations or misunderstandings.
- Where a team member is providing support one-to-one without the physical proximity of another team member, it is imperative that that a secondary team member is contacted before and after a session in order to “check-in”. This can take place with a phone call, and should be agreed in advance of the appointment with details such as location and any other important circumstances discussed. This should only take place where a client is already known by the team member and deemed to be in a stable condition, where a low level of risk has been assessed.
- There is a strict policy that any team member (staff or volunteer) may not engage in any personal relationship or friendship with a client or person receiving care or deemed to be connected to a person receiving care. This is to help maintain professional boundaries and eliminate conflicts of interest.
- There must always be a signed agreement between a therapist/counsellor and the client, ensuring that both parties understand the nature of the work to be done and any costs involved. Where a CYP or at-risk adult is being supported in potential conflict of a guardian, a Gillick Competence assessment should be carried out to determine their capacity to understand and consent.
- All team members need to be aware that disabled CYP’s and at-risk adults are particularly vulnerable to abuse, and additional support may be required when dealing with disabled CYP’s or at-risk adults

Safer recruitment and selection

It is imperative that ACTS FAST recruits safely in order to help ensure only the highest quality of individuals are part of the team. This takes place through a recruitment process which usually involves basic information being collected as well as background checks, references, and an interview. Once this information has been established the application may proceed.

- Team members can be recruited from any source, however we look to build a skilled, safe and productive workforce for the benefit of our clients and the charities work.
- All new trustees, staff and volunteers will be given a copy of this Safeguarding policy as part of their induction into the charity and will be given the opportunity to ask any questions, at any time.
- The charity operates an open policy in its working practices and culture. Team members are actively encouraged to ask questions, appropriately share their views, and discuss any safeguarding concerns, at any time.
- ACTS FAST will carry out DBS checks, checks of identify, background information gathering, qualification checks and reference checks as necessary. The charity reserves the right to suspend or terminate any team member should detrimental information come to light at any stage of a person’s connection with the charity.
- New team members will be given more supervision and support in early stages of their work, which will adapt to their needs over time, as required.

DBS and background checks are all carried in line with the ACTS FAST recruitment policy, which is available as required.

Social media, mobile phones, laptops and electronic devices

Social media and electronic devices are now a daily part of our lives, but it is important that we have a clear boundary between our personal and professional relationships to help keep everyone safe.

- All team members agree to never search for or engage with a client's social media profile in order to avoid any sort of conflict of interest. Where a team member becomes aware on a previous friend connection, they must inform their line manager and discuss any concerns and the most appropriate way to proceed. Mitigating steps can be put in place to avoid any potential conflicts of interest or abrasion of professional boundaries.
- Personal phones or electronic devices must not be used to take images of or store a client's personal information or images. Separate devices, email addresses or SIM cards should be used where it is practically necessary for this information to be taken home or out of the office.
- Team members must ensure they primarily use charity devices for handling or storing information and this must always be two-factor password protected and encrypted where possible. Where necessary, a team member's own device may be used for handling data (such as reading an email or updating a Cliniko file) but all files must be stored securely and procedures checked with your line manager so that they are aware.
- Team members should never share their personal contact details with a client or their family, this is to avoid professional boundaries being broken and this is for everyone's benefit.

Whistleblowing

It is important that people within ACTS FAST have the confidence to come forward to speak or act if they are unhappy with anything. Whistle blowing occurs when a person raises a concern about dangerous or illegal activity, or any wrong-doing within their organisation. This includes concerns about another employee or volunteer. There is also a requirement by ACTS FAST to protect whistle-blowers and so they can come forward in confidence.

Should anyone suspect an illegal or immoral activity, they are encouraged in the first instance to contact their line manager where appropriate. Should the concern related to their line manager or be very serious in nature they are encouraged to speak to the CEO, or if more appropriate the Chair of Trustees.

This is without prejudice and whistle-blowers have special rights of protection under UK law. ACTS FAST will take any concerns raised seriously and following an investigation will usually inform you of the outcome. Where serious or illegal activity is suspected of taking place, team members are to refer their concerns or information to the relevant agency such as the police (999 for emergencies or 101 for non-emergencies).

When allegations are made against ACTS FAST team members or connected persons:

ACTS FAST primary concern is the safeguarding of children, young people, and at-risk adults. It is, therefore, essential that in all cases of suspected abuse by a trustee, staff member or volunteer that action is taken quickly and professionally.

In the event that anyone suspects a trustee, staff member or volunteer of abusing a CYP or at-risk adult, it is their responsibility to bring these concerns to the designated safeguarding member of staff (the DSL), except where they are the suspect of the abuse. In the event of allegations against the designated safeguarding member of staff, the concerns should be reported to the Chair of Trustees, or external agency as appropriate.

Transporting clients

Generally, ACTS FAST does not transport clients and they should have their own transport arrangements. Occasionally the need may arise and so follow this guide:

- Where possible, transporting clients in vehicles alone should be avoided as a general principle. This is to reduce opportunities for risk and helps keep everyone safe and avoids allegations.
- There may be exceptional circumstances however where it is necessary to transport a CYP or at-risk adult (for example if they require urgent medical treatment and other options are not available). In which case, best practice is to ensure that another team member is present, or if not possible, another member of team is telephoned to update them as to the circumstances. Appropriate plans should then be made to transport the person in the safest and most suitable way possible.
- In any eventuality, team members must ensure the vehicle being used has the appropriate insurances and other safety requirements as necessary.
- The DSL or CEO must be informed prior to any transportation taking (standard or urgent) in order to gain their authorisation, as they may have further information that may be pertinent to the decision-making process.

Conferences and special events

Special events and conferences are out of the ordinary activities that may present a range of different safeguarding matters that may require a more detailed or thought through approach under the special circumstances.

Conference and event planning will include a safeguarding risk assessment to agree safeguarding protocols and any necessary steps to mitigate and reduce risks to acceptable levels.

Personnel involved in the conference or event will consider who will take responsibility for safeguarding during the conference or event, including:

- Ensuring that there is a nominated person(s) present with responsibility for safeguarding
- Informing all participants of contact details for the designated safeguarding officer
- Securing consent for photographing or videoing participants, as appropriate

If an allegation/disclosure/concern of abuse comes to the attention of a trustee, member of staff or volunteer during a conference or event, the trustee, staff member or volunteer will adhere to ACTS FAST procedures for recording and reporting such information. The designated safeguarding officer will take responsibility for reporting to appropriate authorities as necessary.

Updates and access

This policy will be updated at regular intervals in reflection of changes to legislation and best practice. This will take place annually and any major updates to be communicated to all team members. Access to this policy should always be made available in electronic format on request and given to all new starters before they start working with clients.

Last updated: May 2022

Contact details for reporting concerns

Children and Young People

- **Dorset ChAD (Children's Advice and Duty Service) – for children who live in Dorset**
This is a new service combining early help and multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH)

Professionals phone number: 01305 228558

Families and members of the public number: 01305 228866

- **BCP Council First Response Hub – for children who live in the BCP council area**
This is combined service for BCP councils MASH and early help teams

One number for professionals and public: 01202 735046

Email: childrensfirstresponse@bcpcouncil.gov.uk

Out of hours service: 01202 738256

Email: ChildrensOOHS@bcpcouncil.gov.uk

Further information is available from the Pan-Dorset safeguarding Children Partnership:
<https://pdscp.co.uk/>

Adults at risk of harm

- **Dorset Safeguarding Adults Board – for adults who live in Dorset**

Phone: 01305 221016

Email: DSAB@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

- **BCP Council Adult Social Care Contact Centre – for adults who live in BCP council area**

Phone: 01202 123 654

Email: asc.contactcentre@bcpcouncil.gov.uk

In an emergency always call 999, for non-emergencies call the police on 101.

National Contacts for further help and information

The NSPCC Contact no: 020 7825 2500

Helpline no: 0800 800 500

Website: www.nspcc.org.uk

Childline UK Helpline: 0800 11111

Website: www.childline.org.uk

Samaritans Helpline: 116 123

Website: www.samaritans.org