

VOLUNTEERING MATTERS



Volunteering Matters Safeguarding Policy

Please note:

- This Policy replaces all the Safeguarding Policies and the Prevent Policy (2019)
- This Policy covers Volunteering Matters and all associated brands including but not limited to ProjectScotland, #iwill and Get The Gen.

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The Safeguarding Concern Form mentioned in this document is available in the Resources Channel on Teams.

Safeguarding Concern Form

This form is to be used by anyone who has a concern about the welfare of staff, volunteers, or beneficiaries, both when a disclosure has been made and when there has not, as well as when a third party raises a concern.

If you do not have all the information asked for please fill in the parts you can and pass it on to your line manager and safeguarding champion within the same working day as the concern has come to attention.

Please specify who the safeguarding concern relates to;
Vulnerable Adult Child / Young Person Staff Volunteer

Has a disclosure been made? Yes / No (delete as necessary)

1. Your details

Your name:	Email:
Position:	Telephone:
Region:	Line Manager:

1. Purpose and scope of the Policy

This document sets out how Volunteering Matters aims to keep people safe from harm, especially what it expects from our team to protect children and adults at risk of It includes our commitment to proactively prevent harm and respond well where harm occurs or is suspected, whether online or offline.

This Policy and its related procedures apply to and must be followed by:

- All team members engaged or acting on behalf of Volunteering Matters supported or directed activities.
- Third party organisations in a joint initiative where it has been mutually agreed that our Safeguarding Policy and associated procedures will be followed.
- External organisations, visitors, donors and partners when engaged in our activities.

Definitions used in this Policy include:

- **Adult at Risk:** anyone aged 18 or over who has needs for care and support and is experiencing, or is at risk of, abuse or neglect. As a result of those care and support needs, they may be unable to protect themselves.
- **Child:** anyone under the age of 18 years.
- **Team members:** employees, agency workers, secondees, Interns, those on work experience, volunteers, trustees, consultants, service providers and other contractors.
- **Line Managers:** as well as employees who manage other staff or volunteers; this also includes the team member who contracts with consultants or partners delivering services to us or on our behalf.

This Safeguarding Policy and its associated procedures always take precedence over all other internal organisational policies or frameworks. Where there is any conflict in Policy or procedure, the Designated Safeguarding Lead should be alerted and supply direction on next steps.

2. Legal Framework

We recognise and seek to meet all duties expected by our principal regulator, the Charity Commission for England and Wales for safeguarding and protecting people and protecting charities from abuse for extremist purposes.

In developing this Policy and any associated procedures and guidance, we have referred to key domestic legislation as expected by the Charity Commission including The Charities Acts 2006 & 2011, the Children Act 1989 & 2004, the Protection of Children Act 1999 and the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006, the Care Act 2014, the Data Protection Act 2018, Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998, the Equality Act 2010 and in light of the principles of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (as amended), Mental Capacity Act 2005, Human Rights Act 1998, the Modern Slavery Act 2015, the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 and the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

Volunteering Matters recognises its duties to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and adults at risk of harm affected by its work. Where we engage in such work, we will consider relevant statutory guidance including Keeping Children Safe in Education (2021), Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018), Care and support statutory guidance (2020) and Prevent Duty Guidance for England & Wales (2019). We shall consider this guidance proportionally considering the unique nature and structure of the organisation and respecting the duties of statutory agencies to protect children and adults experiencing or at risk of harm.

Volunteering Matters recognises its duties to safeguard and promote the welfare of those affected by its work online. We work in line with duties and principles of the Malicious Communications Act 1988, Communications Act 2003, Computer Misuse Act 1990, the Serious Crime Act 2015 and the Age appropriate design: a code of practice for online services (2020).

Volunteering Matters operates across the United Kingdom. The principles underpinning this Policy are developed with regard to UK legislation. They apply across the organisation, irrespective of location. However, specific legal obligations and context for our safeguarding activity will vary according to the nation in which we are operating. This includes, but not limited to:

- In relation to Scotland, the Children (Scotland) Act 1995, Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, Protection of Vulnerable Groups (Scotland) Act 2007, Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Act 2007, and its Code of Practice (2021), the Adults with Incapacity (Scotland) Act 2000, Mental Health (Care and Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2003, the Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018, and the National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland (2021).

- In relation to Wales, The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015, and the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. Working Together to Safeguard People (2019) and the Wales Safeguarding Procedures (2021).
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3. Policy statement

Our understanding of safeguarding

In this Policy, “safeguarding” refers to the range of measures in place to protect the people who come into contact with Volunteering Matters from harm, abuse, neglect and mistreatment of any kind. It includes a wide range of issues relating to an individual's welfare and their health and safety.

It includes issues related to preventing and responding to all forms of harm, including physical, emotional, sexual and financial harm and neglect. This includes harm arising from:

- The conduct of our team members
- The design and implementation of our programmes and activities
- Behaviour, actions or inactions caused by individuals themselves (e.g. suicide, self-harm, self-neglect)
- Behaviour, actions or inactions experienced outside of our activities but which our team members become aware of
- Our working environment
- Our digital interactions and engagement with those accessing our digital products

Our commitment to safeguarding

Protecting people and meeting our safeguarding responsibilities is a fundamental part of operating as a charity for the public benefit and a foundation of how we build stronger communities through the power of volunteering. We recognise that we have duties both to those who benefit from our work but equally to our team members, including our volunteers and others we come into contact with.

We are committed to ensuring that every team member and those who come into contact with us should be treated with dignity and respect and feel that they are in a safe and supportive environment that builds opportunities for them to thrive.

Our commitment to inclusion

Everyone has an equal right to be protected from all types of harm or abuse. We will seek to remove the barriers which exclude marginalised groups from equal protection from harm. Through our work we work with people to overcome society's most complex issues. This brings us into contact with people at a higher risk of experiencing harm. This includes:

- children. We will seek to protect children from maltreatment, prevent impairment of their health or development, ensure they are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care, and take action to enable them to have the best outcomes.
- adults at risk. We will protect the rights of adults to live in safety, free from abuse and neglect.

Through fulfilling our safeguarding duties, we will not stereotype, label or single out individuals based on their origins, ethnicity, faith and beliefs or any other characteristics protected under the Equality Act 2010.

Our commitment to a place based and risk-led approach to safeguarding

Our approach to safeguarding is set within a risk-led national framework. We have minimum expectations of safeguarding across all aspects of our activities. We will enable our team members to meet their duties and respond to the risks in their local area and in the context of their work. Understanding the places we work, the relevant legal and Policy context, and our local partners' approach to safeguarding is key to meeting the needs of those we seek to protect from harm.

Our safeguarding duties permeate all aspects of the organisation and all activities – whether in person or online. We will ensure that safeguarding is embedded within our programmes, operations, working environment, digital activities and culture across the organisation.

Our commitment to effective participation and engagement

Our safeguarding is most effective when we work with people, not on their behalf. When someone has experienced or is at risk of harm their views and wishes will be given due weight in our response; in light of their capacity for decision making. We will always treat them with dignity and respect; listening to what they have to say; taking their views seriously; and working with them collaboratively when deciding how to support them.

Our commitment to partnership

We work in partnership with a wide range of other organisations to meet our goals. We recognise and are committed to our responsibility to work with other organisations for safeguarding. We will be accountable to our partners and those they work with and expect the same in return.

Our commitment to learning

Our impact is greater and more people benefit when we share and adapt learnings. We will seek to gather evidence and learning about the effectiveness and impacts of our approach to safeguarding. We will be open about how we have learnt from our experiences of keeping people safe from harm.

Our commitment to act

We will always act on concerns of harm. Team members will act and respond appropriately to any concerns or allegations of abuse, harm or neglect. In doing so, the primary consideration should always be in the best interests of those at risk of or experiencing harm.

In situations where there are concerns of harm our role is not to investigate but to recognise and refer. As needed, we will support statutory agencies in investigation and assessment processes and will always proactively support police or prosecutors to fulfil their duties.

We will protect individuals' rights to privacy and confidentiality and only share information about them with other team members on a 'need to know' basis. All our team members must be aware that whilst they have duties to keep any information confidential, they also have a professional responsibility to share information with other agencies to protect people from harm and keep information in a safe, secure and lawful manner.

Our commitment to digital safeguarding

We will seek to protect all those in contact with the charity from harm in the online environment by implementing effective technical solutions, advice and support and procedures for managing incidents. This includes harm arising from behaviour online that may hurt a person physically or emotionally. This behaviour could be from digital

content (including text, images and audio) produced, promoted, generated or shared by Volunteering Matters team members or other users of our services or on platforms we use.

Our commitment to preventing people being drawn into terrorism and extremism

We will have due regard for the need to reduce or eliminate the risk of individuals from being drawn into terrorism. We will not knowingly risk or expose our assets, team members, those we work alongside and our reputation to risks from becoming drawn into or involved in extremism. A failure to challenge extremist views is not protecting individuals from potential harm. We will therefore prevent our assets and team members from promoting extremist ideas that may encourage terrorism, incite criminal acts or hatred, or breach equality law.

4. Roles and responsibilities for safeguarding

The failure to follow this Policy or the associated procedures will be swiftly addressed and may result in additional training, formal warnings, or dismissal from the organisation. The procedures for action will vary depending on the role of the team member.

4.1 Trustees

Our Board of Trustees has ultimate responsibility for safeguarding across the organisation. They have a duty to ensure that those who benefit from or work with the charity are not harmed in any way through contact with it. The Trustees have a legal duty to act prudently, and this means that they must take all reasonable steps within their power to ensure that such harm does not happen. Trustees are responsible for ensuring an appropriate framework of policies and procedures to manage safeguarding across the organisation.

The Chair will ensure that both the Lead Trustee for Safeguarding and the CEO has the required knowledge, skills, and experience or is supported to develop these.

Governance and oversight of safeguarding is managed through the Finance and Audit Committee. Safeguarding is a regular agenda item at their meetings and is included in the organisations' risk register.

The Lead Trustee will provide strategic leadership for safeguarding, support the Board to meet its responsibilities and support the team to fulfil their duties. The Lead Trustee accountable for safeguarding is Julie-Anne Jamieson.

4.2 The CEO and Executive Leadership Team (ELT)

The **Chief Executive Officer (CEO)** is the senior accountable individual for all aspects of safeguarding across the organisation. They must ensure that the leadership team are held accountable for safeguarding within their respective directorates and across the organisation.

The **Executive Leadership Team (ELT)**, led by the CEO, is responsible for ensuring that there is a strong culture of safeguarding across the work of the organisation and that there are clear reporting processes, structures, and line management accountability: especially for safeguarding children and adults at risk and for actively promoting safeguarding within day-to-day operations and role modelling best practice.

The CEO will ensure that a **Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)** and deputies are named with a clear role description, appropriately trained, and have the time and focus to effectively fulfil their duties.

4.3 Head of Human Resources

The Head of Human Resources is accountable for ensuring that the principles, commitments, and procedures referred to in this Policy are aligned with the recruitment policy (through safer recruitment processes), employee life cycle processes (including performance management, inductions, training, and exit interviews), and other key workplace policies (e.g. grievance, disciplinary).

They will take the lead on assessing roles for risks with Line Managers to understand **Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)** check requirements or the Disclosure Scotland checks requirements, including **Protecting Vulnerable Groups (PVG)** scheme. They will ensure the required level of check is completed for all team members.

They will work with the DSL or others overseeing and/or investigating safeguarding cases to provide strong employment law and employee relations advice and ensuring that all relevant policies and processes are followed correctly throughout the case management process.

4.4 Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) / Director of Delivery

The DSL is accountable overall for the direction and operational implementation of our safeguarding activity and communicating with the ELT and Board on all aspects of safeguarding. They will ensure that all policies, procedures and responsibilities are clear and embedded across the organisation. They will lead an at least annual review of safeguarding across the organisation, including revision to this Policy and associated Procedures. The DSL is Emma Thomas-Hancock.

They are the primary accountable individual for all aspects of managing individual safeguarding concerns across the organisation, including being the central contact point for all team members to discuss any safeguarding concerns. They will ensure a robust and timely response and referral to relevant agencies whilst maintaining a confidential recording system, including any actions or key learning.

Whilst specific functions and activities of the DSL may be delegated to the deputies, the overall direction and operational implementation of our safeguarding responsibility cannot be delegated.

4.5 Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads / Delivery Leads

The DSL will select, manage and support a range of team members as Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads. These functions are currently undertaken by Delivery Leads.

Deputy DSLs will provide advice and support to team members, partners and others connected with our work and embed a culture of safeguarding by raising awareness across Volunteering Matters and within their remit.

They can act as the first port of call for low level safeguarding concerns and, under the direction and supervision of the DSL, support robust and timely response to any concerns. They will proactively ensure that Project Managers identify and manage safeguarding risks and take steps to ensure that appropriate procedures, guidance, and training are in place.

The DSL may delegate specific functions to the Deputy, including to lead management of concerns (eg. whilst the DSL is on leave).

4.6 Project Managers

Project Managers will create a safe environment within their remit of responsibility and directly with the personnel they manage. This should ensure that team members and others are aware of their safeguarding responsibilities and feel able to raise concerns without fear of repercussions. They will actively address any concerns through appropriate means, including performance management about team members in their management line.

They will take the lead in operational identification and review of safeguarding risks within projects and ensuring effective implementation of mitigation measures.

4.7 Team members

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. All team members must play their full part in safeguarding the health and wellbeing of others and protecting them from all forms of harm, including abuse, exploitation, and violence. All those involved in our work should show a commitment to and understand the rights, safety, and welfare of others.

Team members have an obligation and responsibility for safeguarding and achieving the commitments in this Policy. They are responsible for the quality, efficiency and effectiveness of their safeguarding activity. They must report concerns related to protecting, safeguarding and promoting the welfare of anyone experiencing or at risk of abuse, harm or neglect. They will always respond to safeguarding disclosure, concern or allegation as soon as possible and appropriately following the relevant procedure. Failure to report will be considered a serious breach of our safeguarding procedures and may result in disciplinary action.

Team members must follow the Code of Conduct relevant to their role and responsibilities, recognising specific standards may apply when in contact with children or adults at risk.

Team members who have power and influence over others by virtue of their work or the nature of the activity/event they are engaged in have particular safeguarding responsibilities. They must be aware of the inherent power imbalance and ensure that their position and/or influence is not used for personal advantage, gratification, or as an opportunity for inappropriate contact or abuse.

5. Expectations on safeguarding across the organisation

5.1 Recruitment and selection

We will actively advertise our commitment to safeguarding throughout any recruitment process for a new role. We will have processes to ensure that those working with children and adults at risk to disclose any reason that may affect their suitability to undertake this work.

We set procedures for safer recruitment practices that must be applied consistently for any paid or unpaid role in the organisation. This outlines the steps to ensure that our team members are safe to undertake the work expected for their role. This will include ensuring that those recruited are appropriately qualified, trained, and have the relevant employment history and references for their role.

5.2 Criminal record checks

We will assess all roles, considering the working environment, determining if they are eligible for a criminal record check or PVG scheme membership and at what level. This assessment will take place for all roles; including those with contact with children and adults at risk and/or those who have access to data regarding these groups.

5.3 Raising awareness of safeguarding

We will provide all team members with information on their right to be safe and our safeguarding arrangements, including through structured induction, training, and by being provided with this Policy and associated procedures.

Managers are responsible for ensuring the planning and delivery of an induction period that provides information relating to their responsibilities for safeguarding, the remit of their role and that of their manager the DSL and Deputy DSLs. Managers are responsible for ensuring that all team members are aware of local safeguarding arrangements for children and adults at risk. This will include details of how individuals can report safeguarding concerns directly if they wish and the details of the Local Authority Designated Officer (where they exist). They must ensure that team members are aware of their right to whistleblow in the public interest in line with our Whistleblowing Policy & Procedures.

Managers will ensure that team members take part in an annual safeguarding update (through supervision sessions/regional hub meetings), including reminders of the organisation's Policy and procedures, any relevant changes to law and Policy, and topical safeguarding issues relevant to their locality or roles.

The DSL will act to ensure that we share information about safeguarding, including this Policy and how people can raise a concern to those affected by our work, including on our website. Managers must make arrangements to share information about safeguarding with those affected by their projects; including raising awareness of where to go for help if they have a concern.

5.4 Training

We will provide all team members with safeguarding training at a level appropriate to individual roles and responsibilities regardless of their background, safeguarding knowledge or experience. Managers have the responsibility for supporting team members to access and complete this training.

As a minimum, all team members will be trained on how to understand and recognise harm, respond and report effectively (including to disclosure), and work in a manner that proactively contributes to a safer culture.

Managers will ensure those team members who have designated safeguarding responsibilities or work in higher-risk roles, including children and adults at risk, participate in enhanced safeguarding training and other relevant training proportionate to their role.

The Chair of Trustees will work with the DSL to ensure that the Board of Trustees receives training on their safeguarding responsibilities.

The DSL will undergo appropriate and specific training to provide team members with the knowledge and skills required to carry out their role. The DSL and any deputy DSLs training will be updated formally every two years, but their knowledge and skills will be updated through a variety of methods at regular intervals and at least annually.

5.5 Setting and applying clear standards of practice and behaviour

The DSL will ensure a Code of Conduct that provides a framework of expected standards of practice and behaviour that contribute to a safe and inclusive environment and culture.

Where appropriate, we will be clear about our behaviour expectations of those engaged in our work and how we will respond if they are not met. However, team members are expected to always act in the best interests of those in contact with the charity, including children and adults at risk, and ensure that their safety, welfare and wellbeing is a primary consideration where no policy or guidance exists.

5.6 Managing risk when designing and delivering safer projects, environments and activities

We recognise that people can be harmed because of poorly designed programmes and projects, and related activities.

Managers responsible for programmes, environments or activities must ensure that safeguarding is a primary consideration at all aspects of design, delivery and evaluation; even for programme activities that do not explicitly engage children, or adults at-risk. They must ensure a risk assessment of potential hazards is undertaken at the planning phase to allow programmes and activities to be designed with safeguarding in mind, and regularly reviewed as part of monitoring activities. This includes whether the programme or activities are delivered online, offline or a mixture of the two.

All team members should be proactive in taking appropriate, proportionate, preventative steps to reduce the risk of, or perception of, harm occurring; especially concerning children and adults at risk. They will look to protect those at risk of being harmed and respond well to those who have experienced harm.

5.7 Managing risk when designing and delivering safer digital engagement

We recognise the specific risks of harm when working digitally. We will take technical solutions to reduce access to inappropriate content on devices owned or used by our team. We will regularly review and update our information systems' security, ensuring that appropriate filtering and monitoring systems are in place when team members or those we work with are accessing any systems or internet provision. We will always act on hateful and inappropriate content targeting our team members; such as reporting to platform provider or police as necessary.

Managers of projects and activities that use digital to engage with children and adults at risk will ensure that we adhere to best practice in digital safeguarding relevant to their age or context. We will identify appropriate approaches to educate and raise awareness of online safety to these groups relevant to our activities. They will examine and risk assess any social media platforms and new technologies before they are used within the organisation; especially when applied with children and adults at risk. When using third-party platforms/apps and social media, Managers must ensure compliance with their terms and conditions, but we will take reasonable steps to help mitigate risks and escalate and report any concerns.

5.8 Supporting, supervising and managing our team

We will supply effective management for team members through supervision, support and quality assurance measures. The ELT will ensure opportunities to discuss safeguarding within team meetings, 1-to-1s, appraisals and other forums across the organisation. The specific opportunities will flex by team and individual ensuring that it meets their specific needs as appropriate.

We will act when team members believe they are not receiving the support necessary to meet their safeguarding duties. Team members should raise this with their line manager as appropriate without fear of penalty or victimisation. They can always contact the DSL or Lead Trustee.

5.9 Acting on disclosures, concerns and allegations

Volunteering Matters strives to foster a culture that positively encourages and supports individuals to share their concerns about the safety or welfare of others. If we become aware of abuse, neglect or harm, we will provide support and make sure that our response takes the needs of the person experiencing abuse, any bystanders and our organisation as a whole into account.

The DSL is responsible for ensuring the design and implementation of relevant procedures, including maintaining a log of all known concerns. This log is only accessed by authorised staff who are appropriately trained.

Managers must ensure that team members are informed of how our Procedures must be followed alongside local inter-agency procedures, protocols & arrangements devised by Local Safeguarding Children Boards/Regional Safeguarding Children Boards/Child Protection Committees (as appropriate).

Team members will record all safeguarding concerns, discussions and decisions (and justifications for those decisions) promptly and appropriately in writing, recording and storing information professionally and securely and in line with established procedures. Team members will keep any information confidential and proactively share concerns and relevant information appropriately with agencies who need to know; especially concerning children, adults at risk, parents, families and carers. Team members who raise a safeguarding concern will be kept appropriately informed of action taken in response to their concern.

Where concerns relate to the behaviour of one of our team, the DSL will ensure we will meet our duty of care to those subject to concern. We will consider what support may be necessary to the individual; including assigning a suitable member of our team independent of any investigation to act as a supporter. Where necessary, we will appoint a suitably trained staff member and/ or external person to investigate disclosures.

The CEO with input from the DSL will ensure that serious incidents which require reporting to the Charity Commission (or OSCR as necessary) are identified, shared with the Board and referred to the relevant authorities promptly and with full frankness.

5.10 Embedding safeguarding in our partnerships

We recognise that our partners are primarily responsible for safeguarding and protecting those in contact with their organisation from harm. We expect all partners to fully implement and monitor the safeguarding measures set out in their policies and procedures. We will actively cooperate with them to meet their duties.

Managers who handle the relationship with a partner will be mindful of our safeguarding responsibilities when undertaking due diligence of the partner organisation; including ensuring that partners have their equivalent policies in place. They must consider the specific risks arising from the partnership and make the partner organisation aware of our commitment to safeguarding.

In any joint activities or initiatives with others, the Manager will agree and record in writing who has responsibility for safeguarding (i.e. the "safeguarding lead organisation") and which policies and procedures will be followed for the joint initiative. They must ensure they have contacts of the organisations designated safeguarding lead.

Where we are funding a partner organisation, Managers ensure that all **memorandums of understandings (MoUs)** and contracts include reference to safeguarding and clarity on whose safeguarding Policy and procedures apply to the related programmes and activities. Managers may set and communicate minimum expectations of safeguarding for all the organisations we fund to have in place to prevent harm and respond to safeguarding concerns.

We may suspend or withdraw funding in exceptional circumstances if the partner is unable or unwilling to meet their safeguarding responsibilities. The decision to end funding is never taken lightly, and we will always try and support our partners to address concerns rather than terminate funding. Any decision to suspend or end funding must be agreed with the DSL.

5.11 Review and continuous improvement

We are committed to continuous improvement and understanding how best to promote and protect the safety, welfare and wellbeing of those in contact with the organisation.

The DSL, in liaison with Deputy DSLs, must prepare regular updates on safeguarding to be presented to the ELT outlining an overview of concerns, implementation of risk mitigation measures (eg. participation in training, due diligence of partners, etc) and relevant changes in law and Policy.

The DSL will regularly assess the implementation and effectiveness of this Policy and all related procedures, training and guidance through annual reviews (or sooner where there are changes in legislation or statutory guidance, key functions or persons within the organisation, or after dealing with any safeguarding concern or allegation). The DSL will supply an annual report resulting from an organisational wide audit of safeguarding activity to the Board of Trustees and [Sub] Committee.

6. Other Relevant Policies and Procedures

This policy statement should be read alongside other organisational policies and procedures, as follows:

- Procedures for Managing Safeguarding Disclosures, Concerns and Allegations
- Recruitment Policy & Procedure
- Health & Safety Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy & Procedures
- Dignity at Work policy
- Complaints Procedure
- Diversity Policy and procedures
- Data Protection Policy and procedures
- Disciplinary Policy and procedures
- Employment references policy
- Grievance policy and procedures
- Volunteer Policy

Business Owner	Date Approved	Review Date
Emma Thomas-Hancock		

Safeguarding Action Flow Chart

