



SOWINGROOTS

Safeguarding Policy and Procedure

Approved January 2023

This policy is available on our website

A. Policy Statement

All staff and volunteers (including Trustees) are required to comply with this policy.

Sowing Roots (SR) believes that all human beings are of equal worth in the sight of God and aims to follow Biblical principles in all that we do.

Therefore:

- We commit ourselves to the nurture, protection, and general welfare of all - especially children and adults at risk of harm (see appendix for definition of this and other reserved terms). Keeping children safe is of paramount importance and the need to provide adequate care for children and young people is at the forefront of our activities.
- It is the responsibility of each one of us to protect children and adults at risk of harm from all forms of abuse and to report any disclosures of abuse in addition to suspicions, worries, or concerns.
- To achieve this, we are committed to supporting, resourcing, and training those who work with children and adults at risk of harm. We will provide appropriate supervision, recognise mutual accountability, and commit to a formal bi-annual review of our safeguarding policy, procedures, and practices.
- Policies for protecting people and safeguarding will also be reviewed after a serious incident or if the Charity changes the way we work (working in a new area or different way).
- In fulfilling our commitments, we will work, in partnership, as appropriate, with schools, parents, carers, statutory agencies and other organisations.

SR has adopted the above principles; all volunteers (including Trustees) and staff are presented with a copy and expected to undertake training and follow the procedures and guidelines as set out in this document.

B. Statutory Compliance for SR

The standards in this policy build on and incorporate legislation and government expectations for children, young people and adults at risk of harm. This includes HM Government 'Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018)' and new safeguarding duties under the Care Act 2014.

The guidance is for statutory agencies and voluntary organisations alike and covers all the expectations of government in relation to safeguarding children in England.

The Charity Commission require charities working with children, young people and adults who are at risk, to appoint a Safeguarding Lead, who is responsible for: ensuring the charity has a policy which is regularly reviewed; checks are conducted on trustees, staff and volunteers on recruitment; there is ongoing training, and that everyone understands their responsibilities. Although the Safeguarding Trustee is responsible for facilitating this, all Trustees are collectively responsible for protecting and safeguarding children and adults who are vulnerable.

NOTE: In most instances, SR's activities and events covered by this policy relate to work conducted with children, in some instances this work includes young adults at risk of harm. Throughout this document, safeguarding policy and procedures will be applied consistently to all cases unless otherwise stated irrespective of the age of the recipients.

We commit to the following standards:

- 1. Adopt a policy statement on safeguarding the welfare of children and young adults at risk of harm.**
The policy statement included in this document has been adopted following approval by SR's Trustees. It is reviewed biannually and is available for public scrutiny on our website.
- 2. Plan the work of the organisation to minimise situations where the abuse of children may occur.**
SR will ensure that when planning activities e.g. Christian Unions/Hubs, lessons, assemblies, workshops, all reasonable precautions are taken to make the event or situation safe.
- 3. Apply agreed procedures for protecting children to all paid staff and volunteers.**
We have established minimum training and procedures for all staff and volunteers (including Trustees).
- 4. Give all staff and volunteers clear roles.**
All paid staff have a written job description and person specification, and all volunteers are given a written role (job) description.
- 5. Use supervision as a means of creating a safeguarding culture across the organisation.**
All staff have a Trustee mentor who they meet with regularly. In addition, Trustees support staff in delivery of some school workshops, review examples of work (including lesson/workshop observations) and formally appraise staff. SR volunteers are always supervised by SR staff when working in schools. David Capener is the link Trustee for volunteers. Staff also report to the Trustees as part of the Trustee business meeting. All new projects must be brought to the Trustees for review (including assessment of risk and mitigation) and approval before commencement. A pro-forma is available for submission to the Trustees.
- 6. Treat all would-be paid staff and volunteers as job applicants for any position involving contact with children.**
We have comprehensive application and selection procedures for all staff, volunteers, and Trustees.

- 7. Take references from people who have experience of the applicant's suitability for the paid work or volunteering role.**
For staff we require a reference from at least two people for each applicant, seeking information which includes character and relationship assessment. For volunteers, including Trustees, we require one reference. We inform referees if work involves direct contact with children.
- 8. Explore all applicants' experience of working or contact with children in an interview before appointment.**
All staff, and volunteers are interviewed prior to appointment.
- 9. Find out whether an applicant has any conviction for criminal offences against children.**
Applicants for paid positions are asked to complete a self-disclosure prior to interview. Appropriate DBS and barred lists check are made for all applicants, staff, volunteers and Trustees. Trustees are required to sign the Charity Commission Declarations. See Safer Recruitment policy for further details.
- 10. Make paid appointments conditional on the successful completion of a probationary period.**
We have a system of specific induction for staff, leading into an initial six-month work review, and an on-going appraisal and review process
- 11. Issue guidelines on how to deal with a disclosure and/or concern of abuse.**
Comprehensive guidelines are established and reviewed bi-annually. Responsibility for ensuring implementation and review lies with Safeguarding Trustee.
- 12. Train paid staff, volunteers, and Trustees**
We provide training regarding the safe care of children, including increasing understanding of the prevalence of abuse, along with the signs and indicators of abuse, safeguarding for Trustees (for at least the Safeguarding Trustee) and safer recruitment (as appropriate for Trustees and staff to allow us to have at least one recruitment panel member with safer recruitment training).
- 13. Have a Code of Conduct for all staff, volunteers, and Trustees**
We have an agreed Code of Conduct. All staff, Volunteers and Trustees are asked to sign this after appointment.

C. Partnership working

Ethos of Partnership

Our commitment is to continually develop relationships of trust and partnership with schools and Christian communities.

Working in schools

When working on school premises SR staff/volunteers will refer to the school's safeguarding policy in addition to adhering to this policy and procedure.

Working in other settings

SR may partner with local Christian communities when delivering lessons, assemblies, or workshops in school. SR may also partner with Christian communities in their community work. Invitations to partner with SR will be through recognised Christian community contacts, usually by email. Partnership working will recognise mutual accountability. Any agreement to partnership will be overseen and authorised by the Trustees. SR Trustees will ask partners via staff contacts to provide, prior to commencement of the partnership working and at appropriate intervals afterwards:

- Assurance that appropriate DBS checks have been completed for all staff/volunteers that work in partnership with SR.

And for events outside a school setting:

- A copy of their safeguarding policy.
- The risk assessment covering the event.

The Safeguarding Trustee will provide SR staff with a standard letter to send to partner organisations.

SR staff (usually the team leader) will:

- Agree with partnership staff/volunteers what each party is expected to do while working in partnership, including the need for supervision in a school setting by school and/or SR staff.
- Keep a record of sessions delivered with partnership staff/volunteers (date, school or community location, session delivered).

For school's work, non-SR staff/volunteers will:

- Sign into the school on behalf of their Christian community (not SR).

When working in partnership with a Christian community in their community work (e.g., church holiday club, youth group) our staff/volunteers will refer to the safeguarding policy of the Christian community in addition to adhering to this policy and procedure.

D. Good practice expectations

General expectations

- Staff and volunteers will aim to work in groups and in public areas so that contact between children/young people and staff/volunteers is in sight of others.
- In a school setting, a member of school staff should also be in the classroom or activity space for the duration of the session. Any exceptions to this must be by prior arrangement and with the agreement of the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) of the setting.
- Digital or online communication will follow the appropriate policies.
- Mobile phones will be turned off or on silent while working/volunteering. Calls should only be taken in an emergency and staff/volunteers should leave the classroom/event space while taking the call. Appropriate ratios of staff/volunteers must be left in supervision while the call is taken. Please note some schools have a zero-phone policy (no phones in school). In these circumstances (e.g., for caring responsibilities), staff/volunteers may leave their phone with school reception staff in case emergency contact is needed.

- All staff, volunteers, and Trustees will avoid forming exclusive relationships or those which could be seen as showing favouritism to individual children/young people.
- It is normally inappropriate for adults to initiate physical contact with children/young people, and staff/volunteers should be cautious of contact initiated by children/young people, except in exceptional circumstances such as the need for medical attention or to prevent harm.
- The use of any corporal punishment is prohibited i.e., any form of physical discipline is not acceptable.
- Any physical contact with children in incident management will be purely in terms of an intervention which prevents the child/young person exercising violent, or other inappropriate, behaviour and/or from hurting themselves or others. Minimal force will be used, for the minimum time necessary, and witnessed by another staff member/volunteer where possible. A record of any such intervention must be made.
- Pastoral support should not be undertaken in a school setting without the full knowledge and consent of the DSL of that organisation. SR staff/ volunteers are not qualified counsellors.
- Wherever a team member finds themselves involved in a potentially lengthy counselling situation, they should seek to involve another member of the team at an early stage.
- Promises of confidentiality will be avoided and items shared with leaders or adults with relevant experience.
- Staff and/ or volunteers on mixed gender events outside of a school setting will include male and female members, and the organisation of activities within the events will reflect this balance wherever possible.

Activities outside of lessons or assemblies

These could include small groups in school during lesson time away from a whole class setting, lunch-, after-school or holiday clubs. They also include activities in Christian community venues as part of partnership working.

At least two adults must be present when working with or supervising children or young people. The adults may be SR staff + SR volunteers or SR staff + agreed partnership workers/volunteers. All adults must have an appropriate DBS check (see Ethos of Partnership).

The following adult to child ratios are the minimum recommended numbers to help keep children safe (NSPCC recommendations):

<https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/research-resources/briefings/recommended-adult-child-ratios-working-with-children>

- **4 - 8 years** - one adult to six children
- **9 - 12 years** - one adult to eight children
- **13 - 18 years** - one adult to ten children

Younger age group guidance is available through the weblink.

Depending on the needs and abilities of the children, and the nature of the activity, you may need to have more adults than the minimum.

If young people are helping to supervise younger children (this should only be in a Christian community setting) only people aged 18 or over may be included as adults when calculating adult to child ratios.

For children in early years- they should be in sight and hearing of staff/volunteers and must be within sight or hearing.

Visitors

At no time is an ad-hoc volunteer (e.g., parent, visitor) to be given unsupervised responsibility for a group of children.

E. Reporting Disclosures or Concerns

Disclosures

Whilst working staff or volunteers may be told about various personal situations which the children and young people they work with have experienced. Staff or volunteers also may be told matters which give concern about the mental health or general wellbeing of the child or young person. In most situations, being prepared to give the time to listen and care without being judgmental will be of great value and assistance.

It is possible that the nature of our work may increase the likelihood of children/young people disclosing an issue which puts them 'at risk' or suggest that they have been or are being abused. Such disclosures may cover a range of potentially harmful situations including physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, spiritual abuse, bullying and peer-to-peer abuse. Definitions of these terms are covered in Appendix B.

Whether the matter raised is a concern of disclosure of potential or actual abuse the staff member/volunteer must:

- Give the person time to talk freely but without fear of being overheard. Treat them with respect and acceptance. Always accept what is being said at this stage. Do not ask questions other than to clarify what is being said. Never put words into the person's mouth and be careful with your tone of voice so as not to appear shocked or angry or to show disbelief.
- Do not promise to keep the matter 'secret'. Explain that you must share the information with the DSL of the setting (e.g., school, church) who may in turn call upon other people who will be able to help.
- Stay with the person until you feel they have said all they want to say. Try to avoid leaving them in a distressed state.
- Make a written report of what happened as soon as possible (not in the child/young person's presence). Do not interpret, only record what was said as verbatim as possible (use the child/young person's exact words).
- Inform the setting's DSL of the concern or disclosure as soon as possible. Use the setting's reporting form if applicable.

Working in a school

If a disclosure is made, or staff have safeguarding concerns on school premises (including concerns about school staff), SR staff/volunteers will report to the school's DSL. They will also inform the SR Safeguarding Trustee that a report has been made (name of setting, name of DSL, date of report).

Working in a partnership setting

If a disclosure is made or staff have safeguarding concerns (including concerns about partnership staff or volunteers) during a partnership event with a Christian community, staff/volunteers will report to the Christian community's DSL. They will also inform the SR Safeguarding Trustee by email that a report has been made (name of setting, name of DSL, date of report).

After the disclosure

If contact with the person making the disclosure continues after the disclosure try to ensure that this is as 'normal' as possible and avoid drawing attention to the situation or repeatedly referring to it unless the person initiates further discussion.

Reporting concerns

Staff or volunteers may have concerns about the safeguarding or wellbeing of a child or young adult based on their observation of the child or young adult. These should be raised with the DSL of the setting as a note of concern. Indicators of abuse are given in Appendix D.

F. Allegations about staff, volunteers, or Trustees

Although SR is committed to Safer Recruitment and to the upholding of the Code of Conduct and the procedures described in this document, it remains possible that there may be individuals within our employed or volunteer workforce who may be a risk to children and young people.

If a staff member or a volunteer has concerns about a fellow worker, volunteer or Trustee, they should report them to the Charity's Safeguarding Trustee (David Capener).

The contact for external concerns is also the Safeguarding Trustee (David Capener).

If the concern relates to the Safeguarding Trustee, then one of our Trustees, Louise Coleman, should be contacted.

Staff, volunteers or Trustees who are concerned about the way an allegation or disclosure has been handled, should contact the Safeguarding Trustee (allegation) or local (school/setting) DSL (disclosure or concern).

G. Managing allegations about staff, volunteers or Trustees

The Charity will ensure that concerns, allegations and incidents and complaints are handled appropriately, should they arise, and prioritise the safety and dignity of the victims and survivors.

The Charity will hold those who have been involved in causing harm, or pose a risk of harm, to account through appropriate disciplinary processes and/or external reporting to relevant authorities to prevent further harm, disrespect or indignity to the victim/survivor or others affected.

The Safeguarding Trustee will follow the East Cheshire safeguarding procedure. [6.2 Managing Allegations of Abuse made against Adults who Work with Children and Young People \(proceduresonline.com\)](#) and the Charity commission advice on when to report an incident <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/how-to-report-a-serious-incident-in-your-charity> . A referral will also be made to the DBS if appropriate (link in references section).

The Safeguarding Trustee may also seek advice if needed (e.g., from the LADO, Thirtyone:eight) and the support of the Chair. The Trustees will have oversight of the incidents at an appropriate level of detail but not necessarily be privy to names or places if they do not need that information.

H. Processing of personal data

Information and personal data relating to safeguarding matters will be gathered, recorded, and stored in accordance with the Data Protection Act, 2018.

I. Responsibilities

The Trustees are responsible for the approval of SR's Safeguarding Policy.

A named Trustee (David Capener) is the designated lead for safeguarding. This includes oversight of DBS checks, reporting to the DBS, referrals to the LADO or other statutory agencies including the Charity Commission if necessary.

There will be at least one other designated Trustee for DBS checking (since the safeguarding Trustee must hold an appropriate DBS certificate).

Appendix A. Glossary

Adult at risk of harm	A person who is aged 18 or over and who has care and support needs as defined by the Care Act 2014 (England).
Child	Anyone under the age of 18.
DBS	Disclosure and Barring Service.

Appendix B. Definitions of abuse

**Children
Safeguarding issues**

All staff and volunteers should have an awareness of safeguarding issues that can put children at risk of harm. Behaviours linked to issues such as drug taking and/or alcohol misuse, deliberately missing education, and consensual and non-consensual sharing of nude and semi-nude images and/or videos can be signs that children are at risk.

Types of abuse

Information on these types of abuse can be accessed at [Types of Child Abuse & How to Prevent Them | NSPCC](#)

- Bullying and cyberbullying
- Child sexual exploitation
- Child trafficking
- Criminal exploitation and gangs
- Domestic abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Female genital mutilation (FGM)
- Grooming
- Neglect
- Non recent abuse
- Online abuse
- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse

Additional definitions:

Self-Harm

Self-harm is the intentional damage or injury to a person's own body. It is used as a way of coping with or expressing overwhelming emotional distress. Self-harm can be a physical act, such as cutting, or it can be less obvious such as a person putting themselves in risky situations or neglecting their own physical or emotional needs.

Radicalisation and the Prevent Duty

Radicalisation is illegal. It is when someone starts to believe or support extreme views. They could be pressured to do things by someone else. Or they might change their behaviour and beliefs.

This could happen if they feel:

- isolated and lonely or wanting to belong
- unhappy about themselves and what others might think of them
- embarrassed or judged about their culture, gender, religion or race
- stressed or depressed
- fed up of being bullied or treated badly by other people or society
- angry at other people or the government
- confused about what they are doing.
- pressured to stand up for other people who are being oppressed

Further details can be found on the Childline website <https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/safeguarding-child-protection/radicalisation>

Forced Marriage

Many cultures have arranged marriages. Where there is mutual consent, this is both acceptable and legal. However, it is an offence to force a person to marry against her/his wishes.

Modern Slavery

See child trafficking resource for further information.

Peer on peer/ child on child abuse

Children can abuse other children (often referred to as peer-on-peer abuse) and it can take many forms. It can happen both inside and outside of school/college and online. It is important that all staff recognise the indicators and signs of peer-on-peer abuse and know how to identify it and respond to reports. Peer-on-peer abuse may include:

- bullying (including cyber bullying and prejudice-based behaviours),
- gender based violence/sexual assault
- taking, collecting and sharing of naked or semi-naked images and upskirting
- physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm; initiating/hazing type violence and rituals

Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and college

Sexual violence and sexual harassment can occur between two children of any age and sex from primary to secondary stage and into colleges. It can also occur online. It can also occur through a group of children sexually assaulting or sexually harassing a single child or group of children.

We take sexual harassment and sexual violence seriously and do this by:

- not tolerating or dismissing sexual violence or sexual harassment as “banter”, “part of growing up”, “just having a laugh” or “young people being young people”;
- challenging behaviour (potentially criminal in nature), such as grabbing bottoms, breasts and genitalia and flicking bras and lifting skirts. Dismissing or tolerating such behaviours risks normalising them;
- understanding that all the above can be driven by wider societal factors beyond the school, such as everyday sexist stereotypes and everyday sexist language. Ensuring we have a whole school approach (especially preventative education).
- Will always act to report concerns to the relevant DSL.

Upskirting

The Voyeurism (Offences) Act 2019, which is commonly known as the Upskirting Act, came into force on 12 April 2019. ‘Upskirting’ is where someone takes a picture under a person’s clothing (not necessarily a skirt) without their permission and or knowledge, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks (with or without underwear) to obtain sexual gratification, or cause the victim humiliation, distress or alarm. It is a criminal offence. Anyone of any sex, can be a victim.

Adults

Adult at risk of harm

The Safeguarding duties apply to an adult who:

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

Organisations should always promote the adult’s wellbeing in their safeguarding arrangements. People have complex lives and being safe is only one of the things they want for themselves. Professionals should work with the adult to establish what being safe means to them and how

that can be best achieved. Professional and other staff should not be advocating 'safety' measures that do not take account of individual well-being, as defined in Section 1 of the Care Act.

Types of abuse

Information on these types of abuse can be accessed at [Types of abuse: Safeguarding adults | SCIE](#):

- Physical abuse
- Domestic violence
- Sexual abuse
- Psychological abuse
- Financial or material abuse
- Modern slavery
- Discriminatory abuse
- Organisational abuse
- Neglect and acts of omission
- Self-neglect

Spiritual abuse

Spiritual abuse is a form of emotional abuse. It is characterised by a systematic pattern of coercive and controlling behaviour in a religious context. The means of coercion and control may include manipulation and exploitation, enforced accountability, censorship of decision making, requirements for secrecy and silence, coercion to conform, control through the use of the Bible or teaching, requirements of obedience to the abuser, the suggestion that the abuser has a "divine position", isolation as a means of punishment, and superiority and elitism. (Dr L Oakley)

Appendix D. Indicators of abuse

Common signs

The NSPCC resource [Types of Child Abuse & How to Prevent Them | NSPCC](#) on types of abuse gives more detail on specific signs of abuse linked to types of abuse but common signs that there may be something concerning happening in a child's life include:

- unexplained changes in behaviour or personality
- becoming withdrawn
- seeming anxious
- becoming uncharacteristically aggressive
- lacks social skills and has few friends, if any
- poor bond or relationship with a parent
- knowledge of adult issues inappropriate for their age
- running away or going missing
- always choosing to wear clothes which cover their body.

These signs do not necessarily mean that a child is being abused, there could be other things happening in their life which are affecting their behaviour, for example the death of a family member, family crisis or exams. It also needs to be recognised that more than one type of abuse may be occurring, e.g., neglect, emotional and physical abuse.

You may also notice concerning behaviour from adults who you know have children in their care, which makes you concerned for the child/children’s safety and wellbeing (see section E: reporting concerns).

For signs of abuse relating to adults, the resource from SCIE has some indicators: [Types of abuse: Safeguarding adults | SCIE](#).

Appendix E. Useful contacts	
Local Safeguarding Board	Online referral to the Cheshire East Consultation Service (ChECS) https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/livewell/care-and-support-for-children/are-you-concerned-about-a-child/cheshire-east-consultation-service-checs/checs.aspx
Cheshire East LADO contact	https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/livewell/care-and-support-for-children/are-you-concerned-about-a-child/cheshire-east-consultation-service-checs/safeguarding-unit.aspx
Thirtyone: eight helpline:	Tel: 0303 0031111 option 2 email: helpline@thirtyoneeight.org
Childline	Tel: 0800 1111 www.childline.org.uk
National Whistleblowing Advice Line	Tel: 0800 028 0285
Non-Emergency NHS	Tel: 111
Charity commission	https://www.gov.uk/guidance/how-to-report-a-serious-incident-in-your-charity#contents
NSPCC	www.nspcc.org.uk
DBS referral form	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dbs-referrals-form-and-guidance

Appendix F. References

Charity Commission- <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/safeguarding-duties-for-charity-trustees> and [Safeguarding for charities and trustees - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Keeping Children Safe in Education 2021 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2>

Working together to safeguard children 2018

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/942454/Working_together_to_safeguard_children_inter_agency_guidance.pdf

Guidance on the Care Act 2014 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/care-act-statutory-guidance/care-and-support-statutory-guidance>