



CHILD PROTECTION & SAFEGUARDING POLICY

Talking Out Ltd

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Next review due: 12 months from date of update (or sooner if guidance changes)

This policy applies to all Talking Out Ltd activities, including the Talking Out Residential and Talking Out Online, and to all staff, students, volunteers and partner personnel engaged by or on behalf of Talking Out Ltd.

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1. Purpose, Values and Scope

Talking Out Ltd values children and young people as vital members of our community. We aim to provide safe, inclusive and empowering environments where children and young people who stammer can grow, participate and be heard across residential and online activities.

2. Definitions

Safeguarding:

- Protecting children from maltreatment.
- Preventing impairment of children's mental and physical health or development.
- Ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care.
- Taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes.

(Aligned with Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023 and Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025).

Child protection:

The processes and actions undertaken when a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm, including abuse, neglect and exploitation.

3. Legal and Guidance Framework

This policy is informed by the following legislation and statutory guidance (see full reference list at the end):

- Children Act 1989 (sections 17 and 47) and Children Act 2004 (section 11).
- Education Act 2002 (section 175) – safeguarding duties in education settings.
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (DfE, 2023).
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (DfE, 2025).
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006; DBS regime and filtering guidance.
- Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 and Exceptions Order 1975.
- Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR; ICO guidance.
- Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 and Prevent duty guidance (2023).
- Online Safety Act 2023; Ofcom codes and guidance.

4. Aims and Services

- Provide activities that support children and young people who stammer to develop confidence, participation and agency.
- Enable children and young people to express themselves and be active partners in decisions that affect them.
- Promote inclusion, celebrate diversity and safeguard welfare across all activities (residential and online).
- Services include the Talking Out Residential and Talking Out Online, and other projects delivered with partner organisations under this policy.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)/Child Protection Officer:

The Directors (Ben Bolton-Grant and Teresa Howarth) act as DSLs and first points of contact for safeguarding concerns.

Deputy DSLs may be appointed for specific events. Contact details for the DSL team are published in pre-event information and on the website, and shared with all staff and partners before delivery.

All staff, students and volunteers:

Shared responsibility for safeguarding

- must read this policy before work
- complete regular safeguarding training (at least every 2 years)
- know how to raise concerns
- follow information-sharing and record-keeping requirements.

6. Safer Recruitment and Vetting

- All Speech and Language Therapy staff, subcontractors, students and volunteers in regulated activity will hold an appropriate, valid DBS check at the correct level.
- Where work is delivered with/through partner organisations, Talking Out Ltd obtains written confirmation that appropriate safer-recruitment checks (including barred list where applicable) have been completed for all deployed staff.

- Eligibility for checks and handling of criminal records information will follow the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) Order 1975, DBS filtering rules, and relevant ICO data protection guidance.

7. Registration, Consent and Attendance

- Each child/young person must be registered via the online booking form with parental consent, emergency contacts and relevant medical/needs information.
- Attendance is recorded for every session (including online). Patterns of absence or non-engagement are monitored and may indicate safeguarding concerns. Unexplained absence from planned sessions will be followed up in line with this policy.

8. Early Help and Thresholds

We recognise that some children and families benefit from timely early help. Staff should discuss emerging needs or vulnerabilities with the DSL who may consult local Early Help services. Decisions and rationales are recorded. Early help does not prevent later child protection action if risk escalates.

9. Recognising and Responding to Concerns or Disclosures

If a child is at immediate risk of significant harm, call 999 and inform the DSL as soon as safe to do so. All actions and decisions must be recorded promptly and factually.

9.1 What to do

- Listen carefully
- take the child seriously
- avoid shock or disbelief.
- Explain you may need to share information to keep them safe
- do not promise confidentiality.
- Use open prompts
- avoid leading questions
- record the child's words verbatim where possible.
- Report to the DSL immediately and make a written record as soon as practicable.

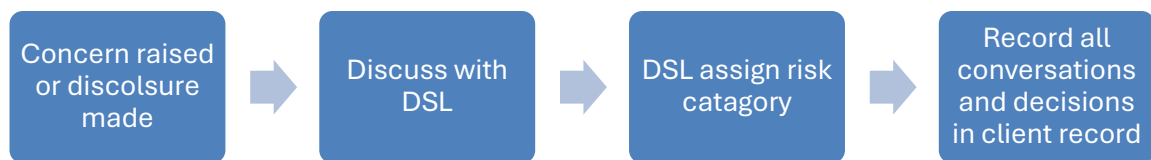
9.2 What not to do

- Do not investigate or interview beyond clarification.
- Do not discuss with others except the DSL/dep. DSL or statutory services as directed.
- Do not delay action if there is a risk of harm.

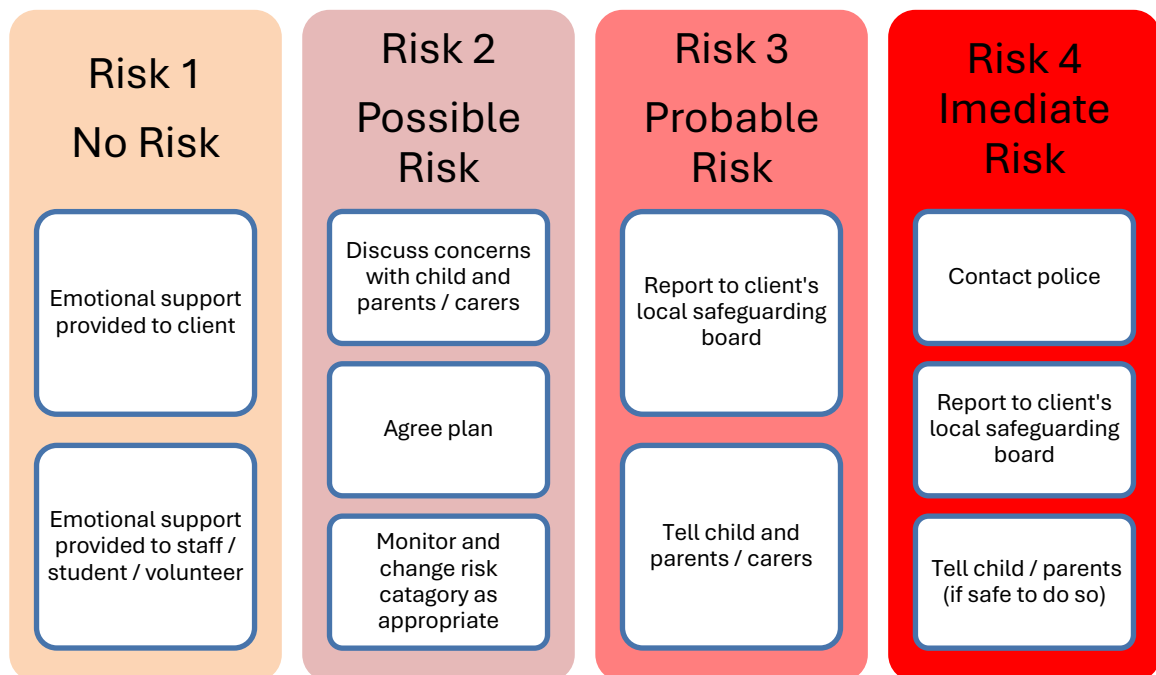
10. DSL Decision-Making Stages

All concerns or disclosures should be reported and documented by following the below procedures and principals. It is not the role of individual staff or volunteers to investigate the matter, but to follow the procedure below to report it to the appropriate person.

Stage 1



Stage 2



11. Allegations and Concerns about Adults

- All allegations that a person who works with children has harmed a child, may have committed a criminal offence against or related to a child, or behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm, must be reported to the DSL immediately and escalated to the relevant Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) without delay.
- Low-level concerns (behaviour inconsistent with the staff code of conduct but not meeting the harm threshold) must also be reported to the DSL. These will be recorded, reviewed for patterns, and addressed through support, supervision and proportionate action.

12. Information Sharing, Confidentiality and Record Keeping

- We share information where necessary to safeguard a child, in line with Working Together 2023 and data protection law (UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018).
- Safeguarding records are factual, timely and stored securely with restricted access. Retention follows statutory guidance and our Data Protection Policy.
- Parents/carers and children are informed about information sharing unless doing so would place the child at increased risk or impede a criminal/section 47 enquiry.

13. Online Safety (including Virtual Activities)

Risks to Children During Online Activities

Online delivery brings specific safeguarding risks, including:

- Bullying or trolling via chat or video.
- Inappropriate exposure (from a child or visible background).
- Indecent or unsafe content shared on screen.
- Offensive or harmful language in audio or chat.
- Pressure to share personal information (name, address, email, phone number, images).
- Exposure to harmful, discriminatory, extremist or abusive views.

How We Keep Children Safe Online

Talking Out Ltd applies clear safeguarding measures across all virtual sessions:

- Trained staff supervise all online spaces, including main rooms, breakout rooms and chat.
- Staff have full Host controls and can lock sessions, mute/remove participants, disable video, or place children “on hold”.
- Meetings are invite-only, accessed via personalised links, and locked after starting.
- No private chats between children; chat is monitored throughout.
- Children must identify themselves clearly using their name and initial.
- Families receive clear expectations and guidance before sessions.
- All activities are fully risk-assessed, and relevant guidance is shared with parents/carers.
- We maintain an incident log for any concerns arising during online delivery.
- Communication routes are open so children and families can raise issues at any time.

Guidance for Children and Families

To support safe participation, Talking Out Ltd will:

- Use invite-only sessions via Microsoft Teams.
- Allocate a named Event Leader responsible for online safety.
- Ensure trained staff supervise chat, video, and breakout rooms.
- Conduct thorough risk assessments for all online activities.

We ask families to:

- Not share meeting links or passwords with anyone.
- Ensure children use their real name and first initial.
- Provide a suitable, private space for participation.
- Make sure children are appropriately dressed.
- Offer appropriate supervision during the session.

14. Keeping Children Safe on Residential Trips and Outings

- All participants must return booking/consent forms (including medical and SEND information) before attendance
- documents are accessible to staff during the trip.
- Staffing ratios and supervision plans ensure children under 16 are not left unattended
- one-to-one situations are avoided wherever possible and, if necessary, are risk-assessed and time-limited with line-of-sight or open-door practice.
- First aid, incident reporting and emergency procedures (including fire) are briefed to all staff and participants

- at least one trained first-aider is always available.
- If a child cannot take part in an activity, they are supervised by appropriate staff in public/shared spaces where possible. Any periods of bed rest are recorded and supervised proportionately.
- Children may only be collected by an authorised adult or travel independently where written parental consent has been provided in advance.

15. Code of Conduct – Staff, Students and Volunteers

- Act as positive role models
- maintain professional boundaries
- avoid private contact with children outside sanctioned activities.
- Use only organisation-approved platforms/devices for communications
- no private messaging or social media contact with children.
- Never use degrading, discriminatory or abusive language and challenge and report such behaviour if observed.
- Follow the Digital/Online Safety guidance and Prevent duty expectations (where applicable).

16. Prevent Duty (Proportionate Application)

While Talking Out Ltd is not a specified authority under the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015, staff remain alert to indicators that a young person may be susceptible to radicalisation. Concerns are raised to the DSL who will follow local referral pathways and seek advice as appropriate.

17. Working with Partner Organisations and Venues

- Talking Out Ltd policies apply during commissioned activities. Partner organisations will be asked to share their safeguarding policies and provide written assurance of safer recruitment checks and training.
- Risk assessments are completed and reviewed jointly; roles for supervision, first aid, incident reporting and emergency response are confirmed prior to delivery.

18. Training, Supervision and Review

- All staff and volunteers complete safeguarding training at induction and at least every two years; role-specific training (e.g., online safety, Prevent awareness) is provided as needed.

- Safeguarding supervision is available to staff, students and volunteers; lessons learned from incidents are shared to improve practice.
- This policy is reviewed annually, or earlier if legislation/guidance changes, and after any significant safeguarding incident.

19. Complaints and Whistleblowing

Concerns about practice can be raised with the DSLs or via the organisation's complaints and whistleblowing procedures. Whistleblowers are protected under UK law and retaliation is prohibited.

20. Contacting Statutory Services

When a referral is required, the DSL will contact the child's local authority children's social care (MASH/Front Door) and/or the Police (999 emergency / 101 non-emergency). For Prevent-related concerns, the local Prevent team may be consulted via the local authority/Police.

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