

(Safeguarding Policy for Step to Shelter Merseyside)

Introduction

Step to Shelter Merseyside (hereafter referred to as "the Organisation") is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all individuals who engage with our services, particularly children, young people, and vulnerable adults. We recognise our duty of care and responsibility to create a safe and secure environment for everyone involved with the Organisation.

This policy outlines the procedures and guidelines that will be followed to safeguard individuals and ensure that all staff, volunteers, and partners understand their responsibilities.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Protect children, young people, and vulnerable adults who access our services.
- Ensure all staff and volunteers understand their roles and responsibilities in safeguarding.
- Provide clear procedures to follow in cases of suspected abuse or harm.
- Promote a culture of openness, accountability, and respect.

Scope

This policy applies to:

- All employees, volunteers, and trustees of Step to Shelter Merseyside.
- Any contractors, consultants, or third parties working on behalf of the Organisation.
- All individuals accessing our services, whether directly or indirectly.

Definitions

- **Safeguarding:** The actions taken to promote the welfare of individuals and protect them from harm.
- **Vulnerable Adult:** A person aged 18 or over who may be at risk of abuse or neglect due to their personal circumstances.
- **Child:** A person under the age of 18.
- **Abuse:** Includes physical, emotional, sexual abuse, neglect, exploitation, and other forms of harm.

Key Principles

1. **Zero Tolerance of Abuse:** The Organisation has zero tolerance for abuse or neglect.
2. **Individual Responsibility:** All staff and volunteers have a responsibility to act if they suspect abuse or harm.
3. **Empowerment:** We support individuals to make decisions and provide informed consent.

4. **Prevention:** Proactive measures are taken to minimise risks of harm.
5. **Confidentiality:** Information is handled sensitively and shared on a need-to-know basis only.
6. **Accountability:** All safeguarding actions are recorded and reviewed to ensure effectiveness.

Roles and Responsibilities

Trustees

- Ensure compliance with safeguarding legislation and best practices.
- Regularly review the safeguarding policy and procedures.

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

- Oversee the implementation of the safeguarding policy.
- Act as the first point of contact for safeguarding concerns.
- Provide training and support to staff and volunteers.

Staff and Volunteers

- Attend safeguarding training as required.
- Report concerns promptly to the DSL.
- Follow safeguarding procedures and maintain confidentiality.

Recognising Abuse

All staff and volunteers should be aware of the signs of abuse, which may include:

- Unexplained injuries or changes in behaviour.
- Signs of neglect, such as poor hygiene or malnutrition.
- Emotional distress or withdrawal.
- Reports of abuse from the individual or others.

Reporting Procedures

1. **Immediate Danger:** If someone is in immediate danger, contact emergency services by dialling 999.
2. **Reporting to the DSL:** Any concerns or suspicions should be reported to the DSL as soon as possible.
3. **Recording:** Complete a written record of the concern, including dates, times, and details of the incident or disclosure.
4. **External Reporting:** The DSL will liaise with local safeguarding boards or authorities as required.

Training

- All staff and volunteers will receive safeguarding training during their induction and refresher training annually.
- Specialist training will be provided to the DSL and any individuals with significant safeguarding responsibilities.

Confidentiality and Information Sharing

- Information will be shared in line with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and Data Protection Act 2018.
- Safeguarding concerns will only be shared with relevant authorities on a need-to-know basis.

Whistleblowing

Step to Shelter Merseyside encourages an open culture where concerns about safeguarding practices can be raised without fear of reprisal. Any concerns should be reported to the DSL or, if necessary, to external authorities.

Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed annually or sooner if there are changes to legislation or organisational needs. The review will involve consultation with staff, volunteers, and service users to ensure its effectiveness.

Contact Information

- **Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL):** Dylan Williams Email: Dylan.Williams@steptoshelter.co.uk
- **Local Safeguarding Board:** Wirral Safeguarding Adults Partnership Board
- **Emergency Services:** 999
- **NSPCC Helpline:** 0808 800 5000

Approved by the Board of Trustees on: 24/11/25