

Aspire Liverpool Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

(For children, young people and vulnerable adults)

Policy last reviewed: February 2026

Next review date: February 2027 (or sooner if statutory guidance changes)

1. Introduction

Aspire Liverpool is an educational charity providing programmes and activities to support students, primarily from partner schools in Liverpool City Region, to consider and apply to Oxford, Cambridge and other highly-selective universities. This includes in-school workshops, online activities, one-to-one support, mentoring and residential visits to universities.

Aspire Liverpool is an out-of-school/extra-curricular education provider and will have regard to the Department for Education guidance “Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025” (KCSIE), “Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023” and “After-school clubs, community activities and tuition: Safeguarding guidance for providers”, alongside local multi-agency procedures in Liverpool.

This policy applies to all trustees, steering-committee members, paid staff, sessional and temporary staff, students working on behalf of Aspire, and volunteers (including mentors and visiting speakers) in all Aspire activities, whether delivered in person, online or through partner organisations.

2. Legal and guidance framework

This policy is informed by the following legislation and guidance (England):

- Children Act 1989 and 2004.
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023.
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025 (KCSIE).
- After-school clubs, community activities and tuition: Safeguarding guidance for providers (and associated checklist).
- Out-of-school settings: safeguarding guidance for providers.
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 1991.
- Human Rights Act 1998 and European Convention on Human Rights.
- Sexual Offences Act 2003 (including expanded “position of trust” offences for 16–17-year-olds).
- Care Act 2014 (adult safeguarding).
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006.
- Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 and statutory Prevent Duty guidance.
- Statutory guidance on Female Genital Mutilation (FGM).
- Information sharing advice for safeguarding practitioners 2018.

3. Our safeguarding principles

Aspire Liverpool believes it is always unacceptable for a child, young person or vulnerable adult to experience abuse or neglect of any kind.

We recognise that:

- The welfare of the child is paramount (Children Act 1989/2004) and applies to all children regardless of age, disability, gender, race, religion/belief, sex, sexual orientation or socio-economic background.
- Some children are additionally vulnerable because of previous trauma, additional needs, disabilities, communication needs or other factors.
- Harm can occur in families, in education and community settings, in peer groups and online; contextual safeguarding and extra-familial harm must be considered.
- Working in partnership with children, young people, parents/carers, schools, universities and other agencies is essential to promoting welfare, early help and protection.

Aspire Liverpool will take reasonable steps, in line with DfE extra-curricular guidance, to keep children safe and promote their welfare in all activities we deliver or commission.

4. Definitions

For the purposes of this policy:

- **Children/young people:** anyone under 18.
- **Vulnerable adult:** a person aged 18 or over who has needs for care and support, is experiencing or at risk of abuse or neglect, and is unable to protect themselves because of those needs (Care Act 2014).
- **Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children** includes:
 - protecting children from maltreatment;
 - preventing impairment of health or development;
 - ensuring children grow up in circumstances consistent with safe and effective care;
 - taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes, including through early help and support.
- **Child protection:** actions taken to protect a specific child who is suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm.
- **Early help:** support provided to a child and family as soon as problems emerge, to prevent escalation.
- **Contextual/extra-familial safeguarding:** an approach that recognises children can experience significant harm outside the home (e.g. school, community, online, peer groups) and requires coordinated responses to those contexts.

5. Roles and responsibilities

5.1 Trustee Board and Steering Committee

The Trustee Board is responsible for ensuring appropriate safeguarding policies, procedures and training are in place and that Aspire Liverpool fulfils its legal and moral duties to safeguard children and vulnerable adults.

Trustees will:

- Appoint a Safeguarding Trustee with lead responsibility for oversight.
- Receive at least annual safeguarding reports from the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), including: number and nature of concerns, referrals, training compliance, DBS and safer-recruitment checks, incidents on residentials, and lessons learned.
- Review this policy at least annually and after any significant safeguarding incident.

5.2 Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

The Director of Aspire Liverpool is the DSL. The DSL has overall responsibility for safeguarding and child protection within Aspire Liverpool (this responsibility cannot be delegated, though some operational tasks may be).

The DSL will:

- Maintain and update safeguarding policies and procedures.
- Act as main point of contact for staff, volunteers, students and external agencies on safeguarding concerns.
- Ensure all safeguarding concerns are recorded, stored securely and, where appropriate, referred to the student's school DSL, Liverpool City Council's Careline (children's services/adult social care) and/or the police, in line with local procedures.
- Liaise with the Safeguarding Trustee, schools, universities, mentoring partners and other agencies as required.
- Ensure Aspire staff and volunteers receive appropriate induction and ongoing safeguarding training, including updates on KCSIE, Working Together and DfE out-of-school settings guidance.

A named Deputy (e.g. Safeguarding Trustee or nominated senior volunteer) will act as DSL in the Director's absence, including during residentials and out-of-hours activities; details will be shared with staff for each event.

5.3 All staff and volunteers

All staff and volunteers share responsibility for safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults.

They must:

- Be familiar with this policy and Aspire's code of conduct.
- Attend required safeguarding training and updates.

- Be vigilant to signs of abuse, neglect, exploitation, radicalisation and other safeguarding issues, including those arising online and in peer groups.
- Report any concern, suspicion or disclosure immediately to the DSL (or Deputy) and follow instructions; not investigate themselves.
- Record concerns accurately and promptly.

6. Recognising abuse and specific safeguarding issues

Aspire Liverpool recognises the four main categories of abuse: physical, emotional, sexual and neglect. We also recognise specific safeguarding issues highlighted in KCSIE and WT 2023, including:

- Child sexual exploitation (CSE).
- Child criminal exploitation (CCE) including county lines.
- Serious youth violence.
- Child-on-child (peer-on-peer) abuse, including bullying, sexual violence, sexual harassment and harmful sexual behaviour (both offline and online).
- Online abuse and harms (grooming, sharing nudes/semi-nudes, cyberbullying, extremist content).
- Radicalisation and extremism (Prevent duty).
- Domestic abuse.
- Honour-based abuse, including FGM and forced marriage.
- Mental health difficulties where there may be an underlying safeguarding concern.
- Children missing education or repeatedly missing sessions/trips.

Staff and volunteers will be trained to recognise indicators of these issues and to respond appropriately.

7. Early help, contextual safeguarding and multi-agency working

Aspire Liverpool will contribute to early help by:

- Sharing emerging concerns with the student's school DSL so they can consider early help assessments and support.
- Working with schools, families and other agencies to help children access appropriate support at the earliest opportunity.

We recognise that many risks to our students may arise in peer groups, schools, neighbourhoods, transport, residential settings and online spaces. Aspire staff will pay attention to patterns and locations of harm and share relevant information with schools and local partners as part of a contextual safeguarding approach.

8. Responding to concerns or disclosures

8.1 Immediate response

If a child, young person or vulnerable adult discloses abuse or a staff member/volunteer has concerns about their welfare, they must:

- Ensure the person is safe; in an emergency or where there is immediate risk of serious harm, call 999 for the police and, where relevant, inform Careline and the school DSL as soon as possible.
- Listen carefully without interrupting, not ask leading questions, and not promise confidentiality.
- Reassure them that they have done the right thing and that the information will be shared with people who can help.

They must then:

- Immediately inform the DSL (Director) by phone wherever possible.
- If the DSL is unavailable, contact the Deputy/ Safeguarding Trustee as named in current contact details.

8.2 Recording

The staff member/volunteer must make a written record as soon as possible, including:

- Date, time and place.
- Who was present.
- The child's/young person's/vulnerable adult's words as closely as possible.
- Observations of behaviour/injuries.
- Actions taken and who was informed.

Records will be stored securely, in line with Aspire's data-protection requirements and DfE guidance for out-of-school settings.

8.3 Referrals

The DSL will:

- Liaise with the student's school DSL to decide next steps and whether to refer to Careline (children's social care or adult social care) and/or the police, in line with Liverpool's local safeguarding procedures.
- Where appropriate, seek the views and consent of the child/young person and their parents/carers, unless doing so would place them at greater risk or hinder investigation.
- Ensure phone referrals are followed up in writing within 24 hours.
- Follow up to ensure required actions are taken in a timely way and outcomes are recorded.

9. Allegations and concerns about adults (including low-level concerns)

9.1 Allegations that meet the harm threshold

An allegation may relate to a person who works or volunteers with children who has:

- Behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child;
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against, or related to, a child;
- Behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children;
- Behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children, including behaviour outside Aspire activities.

Any such allegation against Aspire staff or volunteers must be reported immediately to the DSL; if the allegation is about the DSL, it must be reported to the Chair of Trustees (Safeguarding Trustee).

The DSL (or Chair where appropriate) will:

- Ensure the child/young person is safe and supported.
- Consult Liverpool's Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) via Carline within one working day and follow their advice on next steps, in line with KCSIE Part 4.
- Inform and work with the relevant partner school where the child attends.
- Consider suspension or alternative duties for the adult, pending investigation, where necessary.
- Keep detailed records and follow through any disciplinary or capability processes once external investigations are concluded.

9.2 Low-level concerns

Aspire Liverpool promotes a culture where all concerns about adults' behaviour are shared and addressed.

A **low-level concern** is any concern, no matter how small, that an adult's behaviour towards a child may be inconsistent with Aspire's code of conduct or professional expectations, but does not meet the harm threshold above (for example, over-familiarity, having "favourites", crossing professional boundaries, or unprofessional comments).

Staff and volunteers must:

- Report low-level concerns to the DSL (or Safeguarding Trustee if the concern is about the DSL).
- Understand that self-reporting is encouraged where they feel they may have behaved in a way that could be misinterpreted.

The DSL will:

- Record low-level concerns securely.

- Review concerns to identify any patterns or escalation and decide on appropriate action (e.g. additional training, supervision, or escalation to LADO if threshold is met).

No decision will be taken simply to cease using a volunteer/contracted staff member because of a concern without establishing the facts and, where appropriate, consulting the LADO.

10. Whistleblowing

Aspire Liverpool encourages staff and volunteers to raise concerns about safeguarding practice, organisational culture or the behaviour of colleagues.

If a member of staff/volunteer feels unable to raise concerns within Aspire or believes their concerns are not being addressed, they may contact:

- Liverpool City Council's Careline.
- The Local Authority Designated Officer (via Careline).
- The NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line.

11. Online safety and digital communication

Aspire Liverpool delivers online workshops, uses email, a Student Hub and other digital platforms, and partners with external mentoring providers.

We will:

- Maintain an online safety approach for all Aspire activities, consistent with KCSIE and DfE out-of-school settings guidance.
- Ensure staff and volunteers use Aspire-approved channels and accounts only, not personal social-media or private accounts, when communicating with students.
- Prohibit one-to-one online contact that is not pre-authorized, risk-assessed and recorded (e.g. mentoring sessions), and ensure such contact is transparent and in line with partner-organisation policies.
- Expect staff to report any online safeguarding concerns or harms disclosed (e.g. grooming, bullying, sharing of nudes/semi-nudes) using the same processes as other concerns.

Where Aspire activities occur on school premises or using school systems, the school's filtering and monitoring systems and online-safety policies apply, and Aspire staff will cooperate with them.

12. Safer recruitment and DBS checks

Aspire Liverpool follows safer-recruitment principles in line with KCSIE and DfE extra-curricular/tuition guidance.

We will:

- Advertise roles with clear statements about safeguarding responsibilities and the need for appropriate checks, including enhanced DBS and barred-list checks where the role is “regulated activity”.
- Require applicants to complete a declaration of criminal convictions and explain that any role is subject to satisfactory checks.
- Conduct interviews that include questions about safeguarding, motivation for working with children, and attitudes to equality and diversity.
- Obtain and verify written references (including from the most recent employer where applicable) and resolve any gaps or inconsistencies in employment history.
- Verify identity, right to work and qualifications where relevant.
- Ensure all paid staff and volunteers in regulated activity have an enhanced DBS (with barred-list check where appropriate) before unsupervised contact with children; until then, they will be supervised by someone with a satisfactory DBS.
- Require returning staff/volunteers to be treated as new joiners until satisfactory checks are confirmed.

Aspire will keep a simple Single Central Record (SCR) of checks carried out on staff and long-term volunteers (identity, DBS, barred list where applicable, references, right to work, qualifications where required), consistent with KCSIE principles.

Positive DBS disclosures will be risk-assessed by the DSL and Safeguarding Trustee, with documented decisions about suitability and any conditions attached.

13. Training and induction

All staff and long-term volunteers will receive safeguarding induction before undertaking unsupervised work with children, covering:

- This policy and related procedures.
- Role of the DSL and how to report concerns.
- Code of conduct and boundaries.
- Child-on-child abuse, online safety, Prevent and specific issues relevant to Aspire activities (e.g. residentials, mentoring).

Ongoing training:

- Refresher safeguarding training at least every two years, with annual updates to reflect changes in KCSIE, Working Together and DfE guidance for out-of-school settings.

- Enhanced training for the DSL and Deputy at least every two years, including multi-agency work and contextual safeguarding.

14. Code of conduct and behaviour

Aspire Liverpool will maintain and share a code of conduct for staff, volunteers and students, aligned with DfE expectations for extra-curricular and tuition providers.

Key expectations for adults include:

- Treating all young people with respect and maintaining professional boundaries at all times.
- Avoiding private, unrecorded one-to-one contact with students (in person or online) except where specifically authorised and risk-assessed.
- Not exchanging personal contact details or connecting with students via personal social-media accounts.
- Not using abusive, discriminatory or sexually suggestive language, nor humiliating or shaming children.
- Challenging and reporting inappropriate or unsafe behaviour by colleagues or students.

Students will receive a behaviour code for Aspire activities (including online workshops and residential), explaining expectations, anti-bullying and anti-harassment standards, and how to report concerns.

15. Child-on-child abuse and sexual violence/harassment

Aspire Liverpool recognises that children can abuse other children and that such incidents may occur in our activities, on trips/residential or online.

We will:

- Make clear that child-on-child abuse, including bullying, sexual violence, sexual harassment and harmful sexual behaviour, is never tolerated or dismissed as “banter” or “part of growing up”.
- Respond to incidents in line with KCSIE guidance, ensuring the immediate safety of those involved, and report to the student’s school DSL and, where necessary, Careline or the police.
- Support both the child who has experienced harm and, where appropriate, the child who has caused harm, working with schools and agencies to ensure proportionate responses.

16. Residentials, trips and health/safety

Aspire Liverpool organises visits to universities and other off-site activities, including overnight residentials.

For all off-site activities we will:

- Complete written risk assessments that consider safeguarding, health and safety, supervision ratios, travel, accommodation, emergency procedures, missing child procedures and specific individual needs, in line with DfE extra-curricular guidance checklists.
- Work with partner schools to identify students with additional needs or risks and, where necessary, prepare individual risk assessments.
- Ensure a senior leader/DSL (or Deputy) is contactable for the duration of the trip and that all staff know how to contact local police and Careline if a safeguarding concern arises.

For residentials:

- Ensure safe sleeping arrangements, separate by gender and age as appropriate, with suitable adult supervision and clear rules about access to rooms.
- Provide a written code of conduct for staff and students covering behaviour, free time, curfews, use of mobile phones and social media, and expectations about alcohol, smoking and substance use.
- Collect and securely store emergency contacts, medical information and consent forms; ensure plans are in place for managing medication, illness or emergencies.
- Consider and incorporate host university policies, while making clear that they do not replace Aspire's duty of care.

17. Partnership working and commissioned services (e.g. mentoring)

Aspire Liverpool partners with schools, universities and mentoring providers to deliver its programmes.

We will:

- Work only with partner organisations that have safeguarding arrangements consistent with KCSIE and DfE out-of-school/tuition guidance, including suitable staff/mentor checks and safeguarding training.
- Use written agreements or memoranda of understanding to clarify safeguarding responsibilities, information-sharing and escalation procedures, especially in relation to mentoring and online support.
- Ensure that concerns arising in partner-delivered activities involving Aspire students are shared promptly with Aspire and the students' schools and, where necessary, local safeguarding partners.

18. Information sharing, confidentiality and data protection

Aspire Liverpool will follow statutory information-sharing advice and local multi-agency procedures.

We recognise that:

- Safeguarding concerns provide a lawful basis for sharing information with relevant agencies without consent where necessary to protect a child.
- Practitioners should be open and honest with children and families about what information may be shared and why, unless doing so would put a child at risk.

Safeguarding records:

- Are kept securely with restricted access.
- Are factual, accurate, timely and kept in line with Aspire's retention schedule (typically until the young person is 25 unless partner schools request otherwise).

Data relating to students (including contact details, medical information, participation records and online-form responses) will be processed in line with UK data-protection law, using appropriate technical and organisational measures to keep information secure.

19. Photography, publicity and social media

Aspire Liverpool may use photographs, video or case studies from its activities for publicity, reports and social media.

We will:

- Obtain parental consent in advance for the use of images of children and young people under 18, specifying where images may be used (e.g. website, printed materials, social media).
- Respect non-consent by ensuring staff know which students cannot be photographed/filmed and managing this during events (e.g. lists, lanyards).
- Avoid publishing information that could identify or locate individual students (e.g. full name, school and image together) in ways that increase risk.

20. Safeguarding of vulnerable adults

Aspire Liverpool sometimes works with students who have turned 18 or other adults who may be vulnerable.

Where a concern arises that an adult with care and support needs is experiencing, or at risk of, abuse or neglect and cannot protect themselves, Aspire will:

- Respond to immediate risk, including contacting emergency services if needed.
- Consult with Liverpool adult social care via Careline, following local adult-safeguarding procedures, while also liaising with the person's college/university where appropriate.

- Record and share information lawfully, taking into account the adult’s capacity, wishes and consent in line with the Care Act 2014.

Where a student moves from under 18 to over 18 while in Aspire programmes, staff should be aware that adult-safeguarding frameworks may apply alongside education-setting responsibilities.

21. Monitoring and review

The DSL and Safeguarding Trustee will monitor the implementation of this policy, drawing on:

- Feedback from students, staff, volunteers and partner schools.
- Audits of records, DBS checks and training compliance.
- Lessons learned from any incidents, near-misses, complaints or allegations.

This policy will be reviewed at least annually, or sooner where there are significant changes to legislation, guidance (including KCSIE, Working Together or DfE out-of-school settings guidance) or Aspire’s activities.

22. Key contacts

Designated Safeguard Lead (DSL) Director of Aspire Liverpool – Harry Doyle	07494 158 111 harry@aspireliverpool.org.uk
Trustee with Safeguarding responsibility Chair of Trustees – Rachel Stalker	07714 649 714 r.stalker@ljamu.ac.uk
Liverpool City Council Careline / LADO	0151 459 2606
Merseyside Police	999 in an emergency; 101 for non-emergency.