



Alison Smith Counselling Safeguarding Adults and Child Protection Policy

Alison Smith Counselling fully recognises my responsibilities for safeguarding adults and child protection.

Policy adopted (date):	1 September 2024
Next review (date):	1 September 2025

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) – Alison Smith

Introduction

I am committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of my clients. I will ensure any professional working on my behalf adheres to working the expected safeguarding standards set out here.

I will fulfil my local and national responsibilities by following guidelines set out in the following key documents:

- Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (new - Sept 2024) (statutory for Alternative Provision Schools)
- The procedures of the Wiltshire Safeguarding Vulnerable People Partnership (SVPP)
- Safeguarding Adults at Risk in Wiltshire – Wiltshire Safeguarding Adults Board, Policy and Procedures (2019)
- Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage (2021)
- Information sharing - Advice for practitioners providing safeguarding services to children, young people, parents and carers (2018)

The aim of this policy is to ensure:

- all clients I work with are safe and protected from harm.
- safeguarding procedures are in place to help clients to feel safe and learn to stay safe.
- prospective and current parents and clients that I work with are aware of my responsibilities in relation to safeguarding adults and child protection.

Scope

Safeguarding children is defined as:

- ensuring that children grow up with the provision of safe and effective care
- acting to enable all children to have the best life chances
- preventing impairment of children's mental or physical health or development and • protecting children from maltreatment.

Safeguarding adults means protecting a person's right to live in safety, free from abuse and neglect.

Safeguarding covers a range of measures that includes child protection procedures. It encompasses a preventative approach to keeping children and vulnerable adults safe that incorporates client physical and mental health and safety; behaviour management and preventing bullying; supporting clients with medical conditions; social economic education; providing first aid and site security.

Consequently, this policy is consistent with my other policies and should be read alongside the following policies relevant to the safety and welfare of my clients:

- Equality Statement • Health and Safety • Safe Touch
- Full Risk Assessment

For the purposes of this policy:

- **Parent** refers to birth parents and other adults who are in a parenting role, for example step-parents, foster carers and adoptive parents.

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- **Child** refers to all children I work with and any child under the age of 18 who encounters our organisation. This includes unborn babies.

Any safeguarding concerns or disclosures of abuse relating to a client, during or outside of operating hours are within the scope of this policy.

Audit

I complete an annual safeguarding audit return to Wiltshire Council for monitoring purposes.

Mandatory Procedure

Professional Behaviour

I am committed to positive academic, social and emotional outcomes for clients underpinned by a strong safeguarding ethos and adhere to the highest standards of professional behaviour. I will not use my position to gain access to information for my own advantage and/or a client's or family's detriment.

I understand that:

- I am in position of trust in relation to all children (and clients over the age of 18). I ensure that the power imbalance is never used for personal advantage or gratification. I avoid behaviour which might be interpreted by others as an abuse of the position of trust. This includes sharing personal contact details with clients or families.
- I have a legal duty to protect the interests of children and vulnerable adults and accept the obligations inherent in that responsibility.
- I will not establish or seek to establish social contact with clients to secure a friendship or to pursue or strengthen a relationship.
- it is an offence (Sexual Offences Act 2003) for me to engage in **any** form of sexual activity with a child under the age of 18.

Certain behaviours are at odds with a position of trust. These include, but are not limited to:

- Harassment or discrimination based on any characteristic protected by the Equality Act 2010
- Loss of personal civility including, personal attacks or insults, displays of temper (such as throwing objects), unwanted physical contact (pushing, shoving, hitting) or the threat of the same.
- I will not swear, blaspheme or use offensive language in front of clients, nor use language which is discriminatory and demeaning in any way.

Communication with clients and parents, including social contact outside of the workplace I will use my professional judgement when requesting or accepting any social contact (including through social media). This means that I will:

- not accept any request from clients for contact via any social media platform.
- make a judgement about whether to maintain the connection in any cases where contacts were made before the client started to work with me.
- not engage in conduct outside work that could damage my professional reputation.

Occasionally, I contract with clients to allow them to make contact with me outside of our arranged counselling sessions. This is always done with the client's consent and best interests and the client is always made aware that I do not provide emergency contact. Sometimes it is helpful for a client to know they can contact me across the week and that I will read their message when I am able to and get back

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to them when I am able to. Alongside this, we would be considering what other forms of support are available to them.

I will not make sexual innuendos or any comments of a sexual nature to any client (other than in the context of sex and relationship discussions which may arise in the course of our counselling sessions, nor make any comments trivialising alcohol or drug abuse.

Occasionally, clients may develop an infatuation for a professional. In such situations, I will deal with these situations sensitively and appropriately to maintain the dignity and safety of the client. I am aware, however, that such infatuations carry a high risk of words or actions being misinterpreted and therefore make every effort to ensure that my own behaviour is beyond reproach.

I wait until after an ex-client's 18th birthday before accepting any request on social media. In the case of ex-clients who were adults while working with me, I will use my professional judgement about the potential risks to the client while making a decision.

I might give a small gift to a client as a reminder of our therapeutic relationship. This will be considered a transitional object that can be taken away from our sessions

Physical contact including intimate/personal care and behaviour management

It is not possible to be specific about the appropriateness of each physical contact, since an action that is appropriate with one client, in one set of circumstances, may be inappropriate in another, or with a different child or vulnerable adult. Any physical contact will be in response to the client's needs, of limited duration and appropriate to their age, stage of development, gender, background and any agreed support or care plan.

The use of physical intervention including the use reasonable force will always be in line with the following policies **Safe Touch Policy**

I understand that:

- on a daily basis, it may be entirely appropriate and proper for me to have physical contact with clients and that I do so in ways appropriate to my professional role and in relation to the client's individual needs.
- some clients are more comfortable with touch than others and/or may be more comfortable with touch from some adults than others. Whenever possible, I seek the client's permission before initiating contact and are sensitive to any signs that the client may be uncomfortable or embarrassed.
- I have a responsibility to ensure the way I offer comfort to a distressed client is age appropriate.
- I must never touch a client in a way which may represent a misuse of authority or considered indecent.
- physical contact is never secretive, or for my gratification.
- cultural or religious views about touching and be sensitive to the issues of gender.

If I believe that an action by me could be misinterpreted as abusive, I will report the incident and circumstances immediately to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) or adult Integrated Front Door.

I understand that a client who has suffered previous abuse or neglect may associate physical contact with such experiences. I recognise that such a child or vulnerable adult may seek out inappropriate physical contact and know to deter the client sensitively to help them to understand the importance of personal boundaries. I never indulge in play that involves rough-and-tumble or fun fights.

Clients with disabilities may require more physical contact to assist their everyday learning. The arrangements are understood and agreed by all concerned, justified in terms of the client's needs, consistently applied and open to scrutiny. I always allow/encourage clients, where able, to undertake self-care tasks independently.

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If a client's behaviour presents a serious risk to themselves or others, a robust risk assessment and, where relevant, a physical intervention plan is always put in place and reviewed regularly. In all cases where physical intervention takes place, I record the incident and subsequent actions and seek additional advice and support from partner agencies as appropriate.

One to one situations

Counselling takes place in a private, confidential space. My work with clients is one-to one and I carefully consider the welfare needs of clients when with them in a one to one situation.

Clients are provided with age/developmentally appropriate advice about managing distressing feelings

Transporting clients

I will only transport a client in my car with the permission of the client's parent/carer. My vehicle is insured for business use

Photography and recording

I will not use my phone, camera or any device that can be used for photographing or recording clients when I am on duty for any purpose. However, I contract with the client to take photos of their creative work or art work. This is always done with their consent and the artwork is anonymised to ensure it cannot be identified as belonging to the client.

Curriculum – teaching about safeguarding

I hold in mind a curriculum that promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of my clients and prepares them for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life.

I provide opportunities for clients to develop skills, concepts, attitudes and knowledge that promote their safety and well-being. The PSHE and citizenship curriculum specifically includes the following objectives:

- Developing client self-esteem and communication skills
- Developing strategies for self-protection including online safety
- Developing a sense of the boundaries between appropriate and inappropriate behaviour in adults and within peer relationships (positive relationships and consent)

Early help

I can identify children who may benefit from early help as a problem emerges and use

- The Multi-Agency Thresholds for Safeguarding Children on the SVPP website about suitable action to take when a child has been identified as making inadequate progress or having an unmet need.
- The criteria for consideration of action under Section 42 (1) and (2) of the Care Act (2014) (adult clients)

Identifying the signs and responding to concerns/disclosures of abuse

I know how to recognise the signs of neglect and abuse. When responding to a disclosure of abuse, I never:

- take photographs of any injuries.
- postpone or delay the opportunity for the client to talk.
- take notes while the client is speaking or ask the client to write an account.
- try to investigate the allegation.
- promise confidentiality eg say I will keep 'the secret'.
- approach or inform the alleged abuser.

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I record any concern about or disclosure by a client of abuse or neglect using the standard form. The voice of the client is central to my safeguarding practice and clients are encouraged to express and have their views given due weight in all matters affecting them.

In counselling, my working relationship is confidential. As a member the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP), I am bound by and adhere to the BACP Ethical Framework. There may be times when I have to break confidentiality such as when there is a clear indication of probable physical danger to the client or to others. In addition the law requires disclosure in the case of terrorism, the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults or money laundering.

When working with children and young people, it is essential to work in a systemic way to ensure the best outcomes for the child and I always endeavour to carefully balance the child's right to privacy and confidentiality (UN Convention on the Rights of the Child Article 16) with my duty to safeguard anyone who is at risk of serious harm (HM Government's Working Together to Safeguard Children, 2018). The welfare and safety of the child or young person is always a priority.

I understand my obligations to report instances of safeguarding referral to the commissioner of the counselling work.

Children who are absent and / or missing from education

In respect of any child who may be:

- Absent from education persistently, or for prolonged periods and / or on repeat occasions
- Missing – whereabouts unknown or
- Missing education – (compulsory school age (5-16) with no registered education place and not electively home educated)

I share any unauthorised/unexplained absence of children who have an allocated social worker within 24 hours.

I discuss any unauthorised/unexplained absence of Children Looked After with Virtual School when required.

Children who do not attend education regularly can be at increased risk of abuse and neglect. Where there is unauthorised/unexplained absence, and:

- after reasonable attempts have been made to contact the family without success, I follow the SVPP procedure and consults/refer to the Integrated Front Door team as appropriate.
- there are no known welfare concerns about a child, I follow my procedures for unauthorised absence and report concerns to the child's main registered school base/service commissioner.

Clients with Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

Clients with additional needs face an increased risk of abuse and neglect. I take extra care to interpret correctly apparent signs of abuse or neglect. I never assume that behaviour, mood or injury relates to the client's additional needs without further exploration. I understand that additional challenges can exist when recognising abuse and neglect in clients with SEND, including communication barriers. I recognise that clients with SEND are also at a higher risk of peer group isolation and can be disproportionately affected by bullying.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

FGM is illegal in the UK and a form of child abuse with long-lasting harmful consequences. I will report to the police any 'known' cases of FGM to the police as required by law. **Forced Marriage**

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Forcing a person into a marriage is a crime in England and Wales. A forced marriage is one entered into without the full and free consent of one or both parties and where violence, threats or any other form of coercion is used to cause a person to enter into a marriage.

Since February 2023 it has been a crime to carry out any conduct whose purpose is to cause a child to marry before their eighteenth birthday, even if violence, threats or another form of coercion are not used. As with the existing forced marriage law, this applies to non-binding, unofficial 'marriages' as well as legal marriages. Staff will inform the D/DSL immediately if they suspect a child is at risk of forced marriage.

Child on child abuse

All child on child abuse is unacceptable and is taken seriously. I recognise that while both boys and girls can abuse their peers, it is more likely that girls will be victims and boys instigators of such abuse. Child on child abuse is likely to include, but not limited to:

- bullying (including cyber bullying)
- gender based violence/sexual assaults
- sexting
- 'upskirting' or any picture taken under a person's clothing without them knowing to obtain sexual gratification or cause humiliation or distress.
- initiation/hazing type violence and rituals.

Consequently, I deal with suspected cases of child on child abuse as a safeguarding issue, recorded as such and not managed through the systems set out in the organisation's behaviour policy.

Any client who may have been victimised and/or displayed such harmful behaviours, along with any other client affected by child on child abuse, will be offered support through work with Wiltshire Council Early help services and social care as appropriate.

I liaise with other professionals to develop robust risk assessments and appropriate specialist targeted work for clients who are identified as posing a potential risk to other children. For clients under 18 years, this is done using a Contextual Safeguarding approach to ensure assessments consider risks posed by any wider environmental factors present in a child's life.

Domestic abuse

I understand that domestic violence and abuse is any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. The abuse can encompass but is not limited to psychological; physical; sexual; financial; and emotional harm.

I liaise with partner schools/agencies as part of Operation Encompass in Wiltshire. When police are called to an incident of domestic abuse, where there are children in the household who have experienced the domestic incident, I ensure that I receive up to date relevant information about the child's circumstances and provide emotional and practical support to the child according to their needs.

Mental health

I am aware that mental health problems can be an indicator that a client has suffered or is at risk of suffering abuse, neglect or exploitation.

I understand that:

- abuse and neglect, or other potentially traumatic adverse childhood experiences can have a lasting impact on clients' mental health, behaviour and education. throughout childhood, adolescence and into adulthood.

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- I have a duty to observe clients day-to-day and identify those whose behaviour suggests that they may be experiencing a mental health problem or be at risk of developing one.

Preventing radicalisation

Protecting clients from the risk of radicalisation is part of my wider safeguarding duties and is similar in nature to protecting clients from other forms of harm and abuse.

I use my judgement in identifying clients who might be at risk of radicalisation and will always act proportionately. This may include making a referral to the Channel programme or to the Integrated Front Door.

Serious violence

I am committed to success in learning for all my clients as one of the most powerful indicators in the prevention of youth crime.

Sessions might include exploration of conflict resolution skills and understanding risky situations to help clients develop the social and emotional skills they need to thrive.

I am trained to recognise both the early warning signs that clients may be at risk of getting involved in gangs as well as indicators that a client is involved in serious violent crime. I am also aware of the associated risks and know the measures put in place to minimise such risks.

Exceptional operating circumstances

If I am required to change the way I offer our provision to children and vulnerable adults due to unforeseen circumstances eg during a pandemic lockdown, my responsibilities to remain alert to the signs and risks of abuse to children and vulnerable adults will continue to apply. In such circumstances I will:

- work closely with social care and partner agencies to support clients in these circumstances and to identify children and vulnerable adults who may be at risk for the first time and/or benefit from additional support
- use specific local and national guidance about safeguarding in such circumstances to inform practice and will ensure, clients, and families are provided with written:
- temporary changes to procedures for working with clients eg online or face-to face offsite.
- safeguarding training arrangements
- timescales for such changes so that all clients, families understand when such arrangements will end, and arrangements revert to those in place prior to the events leading to the need for the temporary changes.

I will ensure the sessions I offer during such circumstances, continues to promote clients emotional wellbeing and development.

Record keeping and information sharing

maintain comprehensive records and:

- liaise with partner organisations (schools, Wiltshire Council) to ensure any safeguarding records for clients are shared on transition:
 - by the setting/organisation previously attended by the client.
 - by me when the client leaves our organisation.

For any client dual-registered with another school/setting/organisation, I liaise regularly with the DSL at that base to ensure information is shared in the best interests of the client. This includes contextual safeguarding information about relationships that young people form in their neighbourhoods, schools and online to enable assessment and intervention to happen within these extra-familial contexts.

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- keep clear written records of all client safeguarding and any child protection concerns using a standard recording form, with a body map, including actions taken and outcomes as appropriate.
- ensure all client safeguarding and child protection records are kept securely in a locked location.
- ensure the records incorporate the wishes and views of the client.

I act in accordance with Information Sharing – Department for Education (DfE) (2018) and in line with the Wiltshire Council Record Keeping Guidance which includes details about file retention.

I am committed to work in partnership with parents and carers of children and of vulnerable adults (as appropriate). In most situations, I will discuss initial concerns with them. However, I will not share information where there are concerns that if so doing would:

- place a client at increased risk of significant harm
- place any adult at increased risk of serious harm
- prejudice the prevention, detection or prosecution of a serious crime
- lead to unjustified delay in making enquiries about allegations of significant harm to a child, or serious harm to an adult.

When I become aware that a child is being privately fostered, I remind the carer/parent of their legal duty to notify Wiltshire Children's Social Care. I follow this up by contacting Children's Social Care directly.

Escalation of concerns

Effective working together depends on an open approach and honest relationships between agencies.

I am able to professionally disagree and challenge decision-making as an entirely legitimate activity; a part of my professional responsibility to promote the best safeguarding practice and press for reconsideration if I believe a decision to act/not act in response to a concern raised about a client is wrong. In such cases the SVPP Case Resolution Protocol is used if necessary.

If I am on the receiving end of a professional challenge, I see this as an opportunity to reflect on my decision making.

Complaints

As an Accredited member of the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP), any complaints about Alison Smith and Alison Smith Counselling can be directed to the BACP. You can find a form that may help you to include all the necessary information at www.bacp.co.uk/about-us/protecting-the-public/professional-conduct.

Training

The welfare of all my clients is of paramount importance. I attend multi agency training which is updated every two years as a minimum. My knowledge and skills are refreshed at least annually eg via ebulletins or safeguarding networking events with other DSLs in Alternative Provision. I have attended a Wiltshire Integrated Front Door tour. I attend counselling-psychotherapy specific training around safeguarding. **Training includes:**

Advanced Child Protection and Lone Working – October 2022

Safeguarding Adults – September 2023

Safeguarding Children – September 2023

Preventing Radicalisation

I undertake Prevent awareness training – Refreshed September 2023

Monitoring and review

This policy is reviewed annually or earlier as required by changes to legislation or statutory guidance.

Appendix 1

Related legislation and key documents

Care Act 2014 The Care Act 2014 sets out a clear legal framework for how local authorities and other parts of the system should protect adults at risk of abuse or neglect.

Children Act 1989 (and 2004 update): The Children Act 1989 gives every child the right to protection from abuse and exploitation and the right to have enquires made to safeguard his or her welfare. The Act place duties on several agencies, including s, to assist Social Services departments acting on behalf of children and young people in need (s17) or enquiring into allegations of child abuse (s47).

Education Act 2002 - This requires organisations to make arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and to have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State for Education.

Sexual Offences Act 2003 - This act sets out an offence of 'abuse of trust' - a sexual or otherwise inappropriate relationship between an adult who is responsible for young people and a young person in his/her care.

Information Sharing – Department for Education (DfE) Advice for practitioners providing safeguarding services to children, young people, parents and carers 2018

This advice is for all frontline practitioners and senior managers working with children, young people, parents and carers who have to make decisions about sharing personal information on a case by case basis.

Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 (the CTSA 2015), section 26 requires all organisations, in the exercise of their functions, to have “due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism”. This duty is known as the Prevent duty.

Mental health and behaviour in schools (2018) advice to help schools to support pupils whose mental health problems manifest themselves in behaviour. It is also intended to be helpful to staff in alternative provision settings, although some of the legislation mentioned will only apply to those alternative provision settings that are legally classified as schools.

The Teachers’ Standards (2013) set a clear baseline of expectations for the professional practice and conduct of teachers and define the minimum level of practice expected of teachers in England.

Children Missing Education (2016) Statutory guidance for local authorities and advice for other groups on helping children who are missing education get back into it.

Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges (2021)

Advice for schools and colleges on how to prevent and respond to reports of sexual violence and harassment between children.

