

Leaders Unlocked Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

Updated September 2026

1. Policy statement

Children and young people occupy a central place within our work at Leaders Unlocked. The majority of our projects and activities involve working with children and young people under the age of 18, and/or vulnerable adults¹.

Leaders Unlocked believes that a child, young person or vulnerable adult should be protected from abuse, neglect, exploitation, or harm of any kind. We have a duty of care to safeguard all children, young people and vulnerable adults involved in our projects or working and volunteering on our behalf, and we are committed to practicing in way that protects them.

The definition of safeguarding includes early intervention, protection from harm (both online and offline), and promoting the best outcomes for all children. Child protection is a key part of safeguarding and is defined as protecting children from significant harm, whether they are already suffering or are likely to suffer it.²

This document outlines our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and procedures and provides practical guidance for anyone who works with children, young people and vulnerable adults. This policy applies to all staff, including senior managers and the Board of Directors, paid employees, volunteers and freelance workers, agency staff and anyone working on behalf of Leaders Unlocked.

Our policy ensures that our staff, freelance workers and volunteers who are working directly with children, young people and vulnerable adults are carefully selected and vetted, have the relevant qualifications and experience, and accept responsibility for

¹ Although we use the terminology 'child' or 'young person' throughout this policy, we acknowledge that many of the procedures or practices we refer will also be relevant to vulnerable adults (depending upon the nature of the vulnerability).

² See Appendix 1 for more information on definitions

helping to prevent the abuse of children, young people and vulnerable adults in their care. All suspicions and allegations of abuse and poor practice will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately.

We have procedures in place to support any child/ young person/ vulnerable adult who appears to be at risk, or who appears to be a victim of abuse, neglect or exploitation. We will offer help and support when a child/ young person tells us these issues affect them. We will work closely with external agencies such as the Police, Local Authorities, and NSPCC, to ensure that children and young people are protected as much as possible and the relevant guidance is followed.

2. Policy aims

The aims of this Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy are to:

- Protect children, young people and vulnerable adults who take part in Leaders Unlocked projects and activities.
- Provide staff and volunteers with the overarching principles that guide our approach to safeguarding and child protection.
- Allow staff to make informed and confident responses to specific safeguarding issues.
- Provide help and support to meet the needs of children and young people as soon as problems emerge through early intervention.

3. Legal framework

This policy has been drawn up on the basis of law and guidance that seeks to protect children, young people and vulnerable adults, namely:

- Children Act 1989
- United Convention of the Rights of the Child 1991
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Sexual Offences Act 2003
- Children Act 2004
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006
- Protection of Freedoms Act 2012
- Children and Families Act 2014
- Care Act 2014

- SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years – Statutory Guidance for organisations which work with a support children and young people who have special educational needs or disabilities; HM Government 2015
- Children and Social Work Act 2017
- Data Protection Act 2018, GDPR 2019 and Data (Use and Access) Act 2025 (DUAA)
- Information sharing: Advice for practitioners providing safeguarding services to children, young people, parents and carers; HM Government 2018
- Domestic Abuse Act 2021
- Working together to safeguard children: A guide to multi-agency working to help, protect and promote the welfare of children; HM Government 2023
- Prevent Duty Guidance 2023
- Online Safety Act 2023
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026: Statutory guidance for schools and colleges on safeguarding children and safer recruitment

4. Statement of intent

Leaders Unlocked recognises that:

- the welfare of the Child and Vulnerable Young Person/Adult is paramount, as enshrined in the Children Act 1989.
- all Children and Vulnerable Young people/Adults have, without exception, the right to equal protection from all types of harm and abuse regardless of age, disability, gender, racial heritage, religious belief, sexual orientation or identity.
- it is the responsibility of all adults to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people. However, for those adults employed, commissioned or contracted to work with children, young people and vulnerable adults, this responsibility extends to a duty of care.
- no single practitioner can have a full picture of a child's needs and circumstances. If children and families are to receive the right help at the right time, everyone who comes into contact with them has a role to play in identifying concerns, sharing information and taking prompt action.
- some children, young people and adults are additionally vulnerable because of the impact of their previous experiences, their level of dependency, communication needs or other issues.
- working in partnership with children, young people, their parents, carers and other agencies is essential in promoting young people's welfare.

We require our staff³ and volunteers to adhere to the following overarching principles that guide our approach to safeguarding and children protection:

- everyone who works at Leaders Unlocked must understand their safeguarding responsibilities. All staff and volunteers must be aware of systems which support safeguarding and these should be explained to them as part of staff induction.
- staff and volunteers who work with children, young people and vulnerable adults are responsible for their own actions and behaviour. They should avoid any conduct which would lead any reasonable person to question their motivation and intentions, as set out in Leaders Unlocked Code of Conduct.
- staff and volunteers must be seen to work, in an open and transparent way.
- the same professional standards must always be applied, regardless of age, disability, gender, racial heritage, religious belief, sexual orientation or identity.
- staff and volunteers must monitor & review their practice, engage in safeguarding training as required, and ensure that they follow best practice guidance as set out in this policy.
- all concerns, and allegations of abuse, neglect and exploitation will be taken seriously by Leaders Unlocked, and responded to appropriately - this may require a referral to children's services. the Police or Adult Social Services for vulnerable adults.
- Leaders Unlocked is committed to safe recruitment, selection and vetting.

5. Staff roles & responsibilities

Lead Safeguarding Officer	Rose Dowling, CEO	rose@leaders-unlocked.org
Deputy Safeguarding Officer	Kaytea Budd-Brophy, Senior Manager	kaytea@leaders-unlocked.org
Lead Board member for Safeguarding	Jayne Morgan, Chair of the Board	board@leaders-unlocked.org

The **Lead Safeguarding Officer** leads on *policy development and reporting*, including:

³ When we refer to staff this also includes freelance workers

- Reviewing and updating our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy on an annual basis (or when necessary to fit with new legal requirements) and signing this off with the Board of Directors.
- Leading on contact with Local Authorities in the event that a child/young person is at risk of harm.
- Managing complaints about poor practice and allegations against staff/volunteers
- Referring relevant issues of safeguarding to the Board of Directors for consideration.
- Collecting monitoring data on all safeguarding activities across the organisation.
- Ensuring safer recruitment procedure and promoting safeguarding across the organisation.
- Working with the Exec Team and the Board of Directors to ensure there are robust cover arrangements for periods when they themselves may be unavailable due to illness, leave or other circumstances.

Deputy Safeguarding Officer leads upon *policy implementation*, including:

- Acting as a “front-line” point of contact for any staff or persons concerned about the welfare of a child/young person.
- Updating the Lead Safeguarding Officer on issues raised/reported by staff.
- Modelling best practice with staff, volunteers and participants.
- Contributing to the review and update of the safeguarding policy and procedures.
- Providing guidance to staff concerned about a safeguarding or child protection issue.
- Receiving reports from staff about both lower-level and more serious safeguarding concerns.
- Keeping accurate records of concerns about children and young people and actions taken.

The **Lead Board member for Safeguarding** leads upon policy and procedure oversight, including:

- Ensuring that policy and procedures are fully implemented and followed by all staff.
- Being kept informed of all serious safeguarding incident reports and feeding in as necessary.
- Reporting to the Board of Directors on any observations and/or findings concerning safeguarding.

All members of staff/volunteers have a responsibility to safeguard children and young people from harm, including:

- Being proactive in the implementation of this policy when working with children and young people, both online and offline.

- Being vigilant about the signs that may indicate a child/young person is experiencing harm or is at risk of harm.
- Report any disclosures or concerns as soon as possible and without undue delay to the Lead Safeguarding Officer (Rose Dowling) and the Deputy Safeguarding Officer (Kaytea Budd-Brophy). This applies to both lower-level concerns and more serious concerns. They will ask you to complete an incident reporting form.
- When taking a disclosure from a child/young person, remembering not to ask any leading questions or not to enter into any agreements.

6. Recruitment, selection and training of staff

6.1 Safer recruitment and selection

Safe recruitment and selection practice is vital in safeguarding and protecting children, young people and vulnerable adults. Leaders Unlocked recognises and takes seriously its responsibility to adopt practice that minimises risk to the children and young people by ensuring that measures are in place through this practice to deter, reject or identify people who might abuse children and young people or who are unsuitable to work with them. The safety and well being of children and young people is borne in mind at all times throughout the recruitment and selection process.

With this in mind, Leaders Unlocked ensures that:

- Appropriate checks are carried out on new staff, volunteers and freelance workers.
- Appropriate checks include: identity checks; right-to-work checks; prohibition checks where applicable; overseas criminal record checks where appropriate; enhanced DBS checks.
- DBS certificates are obtained and reviewed in relation to regulated activity, before work with children, young people or vulnerable adults begins.
- Risk assessments are carried out in the event of DBS information being disclosed.
- The safety of children, young people and vulnerable adults is explicitly stated in job descriptions and person specifications.
- Interviewers question gaps in employment history through the interview.
- Shortlisted candidates are informed that online searches may be done as part of pre-recruitment checks.
- Selected candidates are required to provide written references to be contacted to confirm their suitability for working with children and young people.

- All staff and volunteers working with children and young people must undergo safeguarding training with the NSPCC at a level that is appropriate to the role (level 2 or 3).
- Non-executive Directors will also receive appropriate safeguarding training at induction and then at regular intervals, to support them in their governance role. Non-executive Directors should have the knowledge to ensure the organisation's safeguarding policies and procedures are effective.
- Safeguarding training is logged, with clear records of the courses completed and the dates of completion. Training must be updated at least every 2 years to keep up with new developments in safeguarding. Staff are also required to read at least part 1 of 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' on an annual basis, and confirm that they have read and understood it.
- All staff will have a probationary period of 3 months.

7. Identifying concerns about a child/ young person/ vulnerable adult

At times, Leaders Unlocked staff will have to identify and respond to concerns about the welfare of children and young people. This could relate to the actual or potential harm of a child/young person through abuse, neglect or exploitation. Alternatively, a child/young person we are working with may disclose abuse, neglect or exploitation directly our staff.

All staff should have an awareness of safeguarding issues that can put children at risk of harm (both online and offline). For example, behaviours linked to issues such as drug taking and/or alcohol misuse, unexplained and/or persistent absences from education, serious violence (including that linked to county lines), radicalisation, consensual and non-consensual sharing of nude and semi-nude images and/or videos, can all be signs that children are at risk.

In order to effectively protect children and young people from harm, or risk of harm, all staff should be familiar with the various types and key signs of potential abuse, neglect and exploitation. This section provides information and guidelines to aid identification of safeguarding concerns.

7.1 Identifying types & indicators of abuse

The Government's *Keeping Children Safe in Education* (2026) recognises four main statutory categories of abuse:

- Physical;

- Emotional;
- Sexual;
- Neglect.

All staff members are required to acquaint themselves with these categories and the key indicators (please see Appendix 2 for more information).

7.2 Radicalisation

Leaders Unlocked recognises the positive contribution it can make towards protecting children, young people and vulnerable adults from radicalisation to violent extremism.

Through our work, Leaders Unlocked actively promotes the British Values of Democracy, Individual Liberty, Rule of Law, and Mutual Respect and Tolerance. Leaders Unlocked empowers young people to create cohesive communities that are resilient to extremism and support the wellbeing of children, young people and vulnerable adults who may be vulnerable to being drawn into violent extremism.

Radicalisation is the process by which individuals come to support terrorism or violent extremism. There is no typical profile for a person likely to become involved in extremism, or for a person who moves to adopt violence in support of their particular ideology. Although a number of possible behavioural indicators are listed below, staff should use their professional judgement and discuss with other colleagues if they have any concerns:

- Use of inappropriate/ hateful language.
- Possession of violent extremist literature, including electronic material accessed via the internet and communication such as e-mail and text messages.
- Behavioural changes.
- The expression of extremist views.
- Advocating violent actions and means.
- Association with known extremists.
- Seeking to recruit others to an extremist ideology.

If staff have any significant concerns about a child/young person beginning to support terrorism and/or violent extremism, they should report this in writing to the Lead Safeguarding Officer or the Deputy Safeguarding Officer immediately.

7.3 Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

It is illegal in the UK to subject a child to female genital mutilation (FGM) or to take a child abroad or aid or abet someone to take a child out of the country to undergo the procedure, as laid out in the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003. Despite the harm it causes, FGM practicing communities consider it acceptable to protect their cultural identity. The age at which girls are subject to FGM varies greatly from shortly after birth to any time up to adulthood.

Although the age of the children and young people with whom Leaders Unlocked engages is not necessarily in the 'high risk' category for FGM, a child/young person may disclose that she is at risk of FGM, has suffered FGM or that she has a sister or family member who is at risk of mutilation. Staff should be alert to the following indicators:

- The family comes from a community that is known to practice FGM.
- A child/young person may talk about a long holiday to a country where the practice is prevalent.
- A child/young person may confide that she or a sister or family member is to have a 'special procedure' or to attend a special occasion.
- A child/young person may request help from a teacher or another adult.
- Any girl/young woman born to a woman who has suffered FGM or has a sister or relative who has been subjected to FGM must be considered to be at potential risk.

Any information or concern about a child/young person or member of her family being at risk of FGM must be reported to the Lead Safeguarding Officer or Deputy as matter of urgency. This will be treated as an immediate child protection referral to the child/young person's home borough/ local authority, in line with the FGM mandatory reporting legal duty requirement.

7.4 Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE)

Both CSE and CCE are forms of abuse and both occur where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance in power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child into sexual or criminal activity.

- Whilst age may be the most obvious factor, this power imbalance can also be due to a range of other factors including gender, sexual identity, cognitive ability, physical strength, status, and access to economic or other resources.
- In some cases, the abuse will be in exchange for something the victim needs or wants and/or will be to the financial benefit or other advantage (such as increased status) of the perpetrator or facilitator.

- The abuse can be perpetrated by individuals or groups, males or females, and children or adults.
- The abuse can be a one-off occurrence or a series of incidents over time, and range from opportunistic to complex organised abuse.
- It can involve force and/or enticement-based methods of compliance and may, or may not, be accompanied by violence or threats of violence.
- Victims can be exploited even when activity appears consensual and it should be noted.
- Exploitation, as well as being physical, can be facilitated or take place online.
- This type of harm can be committed or facilitated by an organised network or gang, and children may identify as part of one of these groups.
- Most sexual abuse is committed by someone known to the victim.
- Children are not always recognised as victims and can be criminalised for actions they take while under coercion.

7.5 Mental Health

- Where children have suffered abuse and neglect, or other potentially traumatic adverse childhood experiences, this can have a lasting impact throughout childhood, adolescence and into adulthood.
- Staff should be aware of how children's lived experiences can impact on their mental health and behaviour.
- Leaders Unlocked staff will be encouraged to take part in training on mental health and trauma, in addition to the required training on safeguarding.
- If staff have a mental health concern about a child that is also a safeguarding concern, immediate action should be taken, following this policy, and speaking to the Lead Safeguarding Officer or Deputy.
- All staff should be aware that mental health problems can develop into safeguarding concerns.
- Only appropriately trained professionals should attempt to diagnose mental health problems, but other staff play an important role in recognising the warning signs and identifying children who may be struggling with their mental health.

7.6 Child-on-child abuse

- All staff should be aware that children can abuse other children, and that it can happen both face-to-face and online.
- It is important that all staff recognise the indicators and signs of child-on-child abuse, and are able to identify it as early as possible.

- If staff have any concerns regarding child-on-child abuse they should speak to the Lead Safeguarding Officer or Deputy.
- Child-on-child abuse can include, but may not be limited to: bullying; harassment; abuse in intimate personal relationships between peers; physical abuse (this may include an online element which facilitates, threatens and/or encourages physical abuse); violence; sexual violence, such as rape, assault by penetration and sexual assault; (this may include an online element which facilitates, threatens and/or encourages sexual violence); sexual harassment, such as sexual comments, remarks, jokes and online sexual harassment, which may be standalone or part of a broader pattern of abuse; misogyny; the consensual and non-consensual sharing of self-generated intimate images and/or videos, including those created or manipulated using artificial intelligence (such as deepfakes); discriminatory behaviour, including racism and faith-targeted abuse.
- Child-on-child abuse is a safeguarding issue for all children and young people involved.
- It is essential that all staff understand the importance of challenging inappropriate behaviours between peers that are abusive in nature. Downplaying certain behaviours can lead to a culture of unacceptable behaviours and an unsafe environment for children.

7.7 Domestic abuse

Domestic abuse is a safeguarding issue that all staff should be aware of. Domestic abuse can be psychological, physical, sexual, financial, or emotional. Domestic abuse can impact on children through seeing, hearing or experiencing the effects of domestic abuse and/or experiencing it through their own intimate relationships.

7.8 Serious violence

Serious violence is an ongoing safeguarding concern and may involve physical assault, the carrying or use of weapons, and potential criminal exploitation. Staff should be aware of the indicators, which may signal children are at risk from, or are involved with, serious violent crime. These may include:

- Increased absence from school or college.
- A change in friendships or relationships with older individuals or groups.
- Signs of self-harm or a significant change in wellbeing.
- Signs of assault or unexplained injuries.

- Unexplained gifts or new possessions could also indicate that children have been approached by, or are involved with, individuals associated with criminal networks or gangs and may be at risk of criminal exploitation.

Concerns about a child carrying, using or intending to use a weapon should be reported to the designated Safeguarding Lead or Deputy, who should carry out a risk assessment.

7.9 Online risks

The breadth of issues classified within online safety is considerable and ever evolving, but can be categorised into four areas of risk:

- **Content:** being exposed to illegal, inappropriate, or harmful content, for example: pornography, racism, misogyny, self-harm, suicide, antisemitism, radicalisation, extremism, misinformation, disinformation (including fake news) and conspiracy theories; harmful content through generative AI tools and interactions—including voice cloning, deepfakes, and AI chatbots.
- **Contact:** being subjected to harmful online interaction with other users; for example: peer to peer pressure, commercial advertising and adults posing as children or young adults with the intention to groom or exploit them for sexual, criminal, financial or other purposes.
- **Conduct:** online behaviour that increases the likelihood of, or causes, harm; for example, making, sending and receiving explicit images (e.g. consensual and non-consensual sharing of nudes and semi-nudes and/or pornography, sharing other explicit images) and online bullying.
- **Commerce:** risks such as online gambling, inappropriate advertising, phishing and or financial scams.

8. Responding to concerns about a child/ young person/ vulnerable adult

8.1 Hearing a disclosure

If a child/young person says or indicates that they are being abused, or information is obtained which gives concern that a child/young person is being abused, you should follow the below guidance:

- Listen to what is being said, without displaying shock or disbelief.
- All staff should be able to reassure victims that they are being taken seriously and that they will be supported and kept safe in relation to reports made. Victims should

never be made to feel ashamed for making a report of abuse, sexual violence, or sexual harassment, nor should they be given the impression that they are creating a problem by making the report.

- Accept what is said and react calmly so as not to frighten the child/young person.
- Make a note of what has been said as soon as possible.
- It is important that you do not promise to keep it a secret, as your professional responsibilities may require you to report the matter.
- Do not ask 'leading' questions. Such questions may invalidate your evidence (and that of the child/young person) in any later prosecution in court.
- Explain what you have to do next and whom you have to talk to.
- Make some brief notes at the time. Do not destroy your original notes in case a court requires them.
- Record the date, time, place, persons present, and any noticeable non-verbal behaviour.
- Be specific when noting the words used by the child/young person.
- Report the incident to the Lead Safeguarding Officer or the Deputy Safeguarding Officer who will take the matter forward. You will be asked to complete a safeguarding Incident Report Form.

8.2 Reporting allegations, suspicions or concerns

It is not the responsibility of anyone working at Leaders Unlocked to decide whether or not a child/young person is being abused or might be abused. However, there is a responsibility to act on concerns to protect children and young people, in order that appropriate agencies can then make enquiries and take any necessary action to protect the child/person. This responsibility includes lower-level concerns as well as more serious incidents.

Staff should be aware that children may not feel ready or know how to tell someone that they are being abused, exploited, or neglected, and/or they may not recognise their experiences as harmful. This should not prevent staff from having a professional curiosity and speaking to the Lead Safeguarding Officer or the Deputy Safeguarding Officer if they have concerns about a child.

If you become aware of any issue or complaint relating to the welfare or wellbeing of children and young people then you should raise these with the Lead Safeguarding Officer or the Deputy Safeguarding Officer immediately (on the same business day), who will ensure you document your concern on an Incident Report Form.

Reports must always include a clear and comprehensive summary of the concern, details of how the concern was followed up and resolved, and a note of any action taken, decisions reached and the outcome.

Low-level concerns should be recorded, as well as concerns of a more serious nature. A low-level concern could include: Changes in behaviour, mood or attendance; Withdrawal, anxiety or low mood; Difficulties at home, school or work; Bullying or friendship problems; Concerns about online activity; Signs of poor wellbeing or neglect; Emerging concerns about exploitation or unhealthy relationships; Situations where staff have a professional concern or feel that "something isn't quite right".

Accurate record keeping is essential. Records need to include the name, age, contact details of the young person/adult. Records should not include unnecessary detail, jargon, acronyms and personal judgements. Records should be accurate, precise, and use plain English. Records should include professional judgements and decisions taken. We recognise that the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR do not prevent the sharing of information for the purposes of keeping children safe and promoting their welfare. If in doubt about recording requirements, staff should discuss the matter with the Lead Safeguarding Officer or the Deputy Safeguarding Officer.

All concerns will be considered and a decision reached as to whether the concern should be referred to Social Services or the Police. Records will be kept of all concerns, discussions and decisions made, including the rationale for those decisions. All Incident Report Forms are securely stored in a restricted and protected folder on the Leaders Unlocked server.

If the Lead Safeguarding Officer or Deputy is not available and a child/ young person is in immediate danger or at risk of significant harm, staff must contact emergency services (999) and/or Children's Social Care directly without delay. Any such action must then be reported to the Lead Safeguarding Officer or Deputy as soon as possible.

8.3 Making a referral to Social Services

If a decision is made to raise a concern with Social Services (Children's Social Care or Adult Social Care), it will be the responsibility of the Lead Safeguarding Officer to formally report this. We will reference toolkits and threshold documents provided by the Local Child Safeguarding Partnerships. If, for any reason, the Lead Safeguarding Officer is unable to lead on this process (e.g. due to holiday or sick leave) then the Deputy Safeguarding Officer will make the referral. This should be made to the Social Services of the relevant Local Authority, to the Police, or to the NSPCC Helpline.

Leaders Unlocked will make all referrals within 24 hours of a serious concern or disclosure coming to light. When a referral is made, Leaders Unlocked will record the name and role of the children and young people's services member of staff or police officer to whom the concerns were passed, together with the time and date of the call/referral.

If a concern is allayed and a decision is made not to make a referral then Leaders Unlocked will still be required to record details of the concern and details as to why a referral was not made.

9. Allegations of misconduct or abuse by staff and volunteers

In the event of allegations being made against an employee (staff or voluntary), Leaders Unlocked has a dual responsibility in respect of both the child/young person and employee. The same person must not have responsibility for dealing with the welfare issues about children and young people and the staff employment issues.

Two separate procedures must be followed:

- I. In respect of the child/young person the Deputy Safeguarding Officer will lead the process related to the child/young person;
- II. In respect of the staff member against whom the allegation is made, the Lead Safeguarding Officer will lead the process related to the staff member.

With regards to the child/young person, the disclosure process will be followed. With regards to the staff member against whom the allegation is made, the below process will be followed:

1. Leaders Unlocked will make formal contact with the NSPCC who is responsible for providing instruction in the event of an allegation of abuse or suspicious behaviour made against a staff member.
2. Leaders Unlocked is legally required to alert the LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer) to all cases in which it is alleged that a person who works with children and young people has:
 - a.) Behaved in a way that has harmed, or may have harmed, a child/children and/or a young person/young people;
 - b.) Possibly committed a criminal offence against a child/children and/or a young person/young people;

c.) Behaved towards a child in a way that indicates the staff member is unsuitable for such work.

3. The LADO will instruct Leaders Unlocked on procedure and what information may be shared with the person who is the subject of an allegation. Leaders Unlocked and LADO will decide, in consultation with the Police and/or any other relevant agencies, what may be shared in situations that may possibly lead to a criminal investigation.

4. Subject to advice from the LADO, and to any consequent restrictions on the information that can be shared, Leaders Unlocked will, as soon as possible, inform the accused person about the nature of the allegation, how enquiries will be conducted and the possible outcome.

In all instances, Leaders Unlocked will seek to ensure that any staff member is treated fairly and honestly and that they are supported to understand the concerns expressed and processes involved. They will be kept informed of the progress and outcome of any investigation and the implications for any disciplinary or related process.

10. Communication and media with children and young people

10.1 Communication via telephone

Staff mobile phones should be pin locked so that contact data for children and young people is never accessible by others. Phone calls should never be made outside of reasonable working hours, i.e. 8am – 8pm, taking into account the occasional need for evening phone calls.

10.2 Communication via email

Staff may be required to email children and young people using their Leaders Unlocked email address. In all cases staff should use professional language to avoid any misunderstanding on the part of the recipient. Staff members who have concerns regarding content of an email that they send or receive from a child/young person should consult the Lead Safeguarding Officer or Deputy Safeguarding Officer for guidance.

10.3 Communication via virtual conferencing

Leaders Unlocked uses Microsoft Teams (or occasionally Zoom) for virtual conferencing meetings with children and young people. These platforms are most widely used in the

public sector and they do not require participants to sign up with their personal data. We will always take the following steps to ensure children and young people are kept safe while engaging with virtual conferencing meetings:

- Staff members gain parent/carer consent for under 18s taking part in virtual meetings.
- A password is required to access the meetings, and waiting room enabled, to ensure no one unauthorised can join.
- All virtual meetings are administered by a staff member who is DBS-checked and safeguarding trained.
- The staff administrator controls the screen, who accesses the meeting and whether/how the meeting is recorded.
- The staff administrator communicates the ground rules to users about appropriate behaviour.
- Participants' personal information is not accessible anyone other than the staff administrator.

10.4 Social media

Leaders Unlocked recognises that social media can be an effective way to communicate with children and young people. Social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook and Linked In, provide us with vital tools to connect with our participants and promote the work we do.

All Leaders Unlocked staff and volunteers must approach social media interactions with children and young people with the same care and diligence as off-line interactions.

Contact with children and young people through social media platforms should only take place during reasonable business hours (i.e. 8am – 8pm). All interaction should be expressly for professional purposes and use professional language.

Any unusual or inappropriate approaches or contact on social media (e.g. messages of an over-familiar or sexual nature) should be reported immediately to the Lead Safeguarding Officer or Deputy Safeguarding Officer.

10.5 Safe use of photography and video

Parent and carer consent forms for participation in Leaders Unlocked projects or placements for young people request permission for the taking of photographs and video photography for promotional, and educational purposes relating to the project and/or Leaders Unlocked work. This will include obtaining permission to use photographs online to promote Leaders Unlocked activities.

Any parent or guardian wishing to request a copy of the Leaders Unlocked safeguarding policy is prompted at this stage to do so, should they require further information.

Parents have the right to refuse (or later withdraw) consent and in these circumstances the session leader or supervisor will be informed that the young person should not be included (in a recognisable fashion) in any photography or videoing that takes place.

With regard to the usage and storing of such photographs/images, it is the Leaders Unlocked policy that:

- Digital photography (in workshop situations etc) or video photography will be taken only by members of staff or freelancers who are DBS-checked.
- The only exception to this may be when peer-videoing or photography takes place by other young people in the project, in which case it will be supervised by a DBS-checked staff member.
- Photographs are stored in a password-protected folder on the server, with access limited to key DBS-checked employees.

11. Practice guidelines for staff and volunteers

Practices to follow:

- **Risk assessment:** Undertake a risk assessment that incorporates a review of appropriate safeguarding procedures prior to the commencement of each new project. This should be developed in collaboration with the Leaders Unlocked Safeguarding Officer and fully adhered to once the project is underway.
- **Culture of respect and dignity:** Promote a culture wherein children/vulnerable young people and adults treat each other with respect and dignity. Treat the possessions of children/vulnerable young people and adults with respect at all times. Respect the privacy and dignity of children/vulnerable young people and adults.
- **Work in an open way:** Where possible, always work in an open environment, avoiding private or unobserved situations and encouraging open communication.
- **Physical contact:** Keep any physical contact to the minimum appropriate level, and seek the agreement of the participant should physical contact be necessary (e.g. for assistance purposes)
 - It is understood that there may be emergency situations (e.g. when administering First Aid), when this may not be possible. In such situations, First Aiders should ensure that they talk the patient through the procedure and (if possible) avoid administering First Aid in an unobserved environment.
 - Ensure disabled participants are informed of, and comfortable with, any necessary physical contact.
- **Workshop activities:** Ensure that any workshop activities are appropriate to the age group of the participants with reference to content, the risk of physical harm or any issues/ideas being explored.
- **Report suspicions immediately:** Immediately report any suspicion that a young person is the victim of/at risk of abuse to the Leaders Unlocked Safeguarding Officer. The Safeguarding Officer will always report instances of actual or suspected abuse to the appropriate authorities.
- **Report inappropriate behavior:** Inform the Leaders Unlocked Safeguarding Officer if an employee feels uncomfortable about approaches made to him/her by a young person (or any potentially inappropriate behaviour e.g. late night texting etc;).

Practices we caution against:

- **Time spent alone with an individual:** Spending excessive amounts of time alone with a child/vulnerable young person or adult away from others. This is applicable to both online and offline activity.
 - If for any reason a member of staff is supervising a child/vulnerable young person or adult on a one-to-one basis, this should ideally be done in a public/ open area. It is accepted that this will not always be possible, and in such cases the door to the room should be kept open. If possible, another member of staff should be made aware that such one to one supervision is taking place.
- **Driving individuals home:** Taking children, young people or vulnerable adults home in your car.
 - Parental/carers consent should be obtained to agree to any unusual travel procedures for the young person, including lifts home from staff members or volunteers.
 - Where necessary (i.e. travelling home late), a young person/ vulnerable adult may take a registered taxi home, but only if express parental/carers consent has been given for the individual to travel unaccompanied.
 - If calling a taxi is not possible, and the staff member does need to take the young person home in their vehicle, they should inform the Safeguarding Officer or Deputy Safeguarding Officer of the time they leave and where they are going.
 - Appropriate business insurance needs to be in place for any vehicle in which a child, young person or vulnerable adult is being transported.

Practices that are forbidden:

- **Touching:** Never allow or engage in any form of touching of participants.
- **Offensive language:** Never allow project participants or volunteers to use potentially offensive language unchallenged.
- **Sexually suggestive comments:** Never make sexually suggestive comments to a young person/vulnerable adult, even in fun.
- **Ignoring allegations:** Never allow allegations made by a child/vulnerable adult to go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon.
- **Entering into agreements to keep disclosed information secret:** Employees should not enter into agreements with a child or young person to keep disclosed information secret, but should inform the young person they will inform an appropriate employee (i.e. the Safeguarding Officer).
- **Drug and Alcohol Use:** Never allow a project participant to consume alcohol or drugs or in the company of staff or freelancers, or to take part in work events while clearly under the influence of drugs and alcohol.
- **Inappropriate relationships:** Never enter into inappropriate relationships (i.e. relationships of an intensely personal or sexual nature) with young people or vulnerable adults involved in the work of Leaders Unlocked.

Appendix 1: Definitions

- Safeguarding: Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is defined in *Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023* as:
 - Providing help and support to meet the needs of children as soon as problems emerge
 - protecting children from maltreatment, whether that is within or outside the home, including online
 - preventing the 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 outcomes⁴
- 'Staff': those employed by Leaders Unlocked, freelancers, and, where operating in relevant roles, volunteers over 18 working on behalf of Leaders Unlocked.
- 'Abuse' encompasses:
 - physical abuse;
 - emotional abuse;
 - neglect, and/or
 - sexual abuse.
 - (Bullying and domestic violence are also included).
- 'Child' or 'Young Person': anyone up to the age of 18 years⁵
- 'Vulnerable Adult': any person aged 18 years and over: "...with care and support needs who are experiencing, or are at risk of, abuse or neglect and are unable to protect themselves because of those needs." ⁶ Vulnerability is not a rigid, legally defined concept and should be considered in the context of an individual's capacity and circumstances.

⁴ Working Together to Safeguard Children, December 2023

⁵ The Children Act, 1989

⁶ Care Act 2014

Appendix 2: Signs and indicators of abuse

In order to effectively protect children and young people, staff and volunteers should be familiar with the key signs and indicators of abuse, which are detailed below:

PHYSICAL ABUSE

Physical abuse is any form of non-accidental injury or injury which results from willful or neglectful failure to protect a child/young person.

An important indicator of physical abuse is where bruises or injuries are unexplained or the explanation does not fit the injury. A delay in seeking medical treatment for a child/young person when it is obviously necessary is also a cause for concern. Bruising may be more or less noticeable on children and young people with different skin tones or from different racial groups and specialist advice may need to be taken. Patterns of bruising that are suggestive of physical child abuse include:

- Bruises that are seen away from bony prominences;
- Bruises to the face, back, stomach, arms, buttocks, ears and hands;
- Multiple bruises in clusters;
- Multiple bruises of uniform shape;
- Bruises that carry the imprint of an implement;
- Cigarette burns;
- Adult bite marks;
- Scalds.

Although bruising is the commonest injury in physical abuse, fatal non-accidental head injury and non-accidental fractures can occur without bruising. Any child/young person who has unexplained signs of pain or illness should be seen promptly by a doctor.

Behaviour changes can also indicate physical abuse:

- Fear of parents being approached for an explanation;
- Aggressive behaviour or severe temper outbursts;
- Flinching when approached or touched;
- Reluctance to get changed, for example wearing long sleeves in hot weather;
- Depression; or withdrawn behaviour;
- Running away from home.

EMOTIONAL ABUSE

Emotional abuse is defined as the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and adverse effects on the child's/ young person's emotional development.

Emotional abuse can be difficult to measure, and often children, young people and vulnerable adults who appear well-cared for may be emotionally abused by being taunted, put down or belittled. **Verbal abuse can be a form of emotional abuse.** Emotional abuse can also take the form of children and young people not being allowed to mix/play with other children and young people.

The physical signs of emotional abuse may include:

- Failure to thrive or grow;
- Sudden speech disorders;
- Developmental delay, either in terms of physical or emotional progress.
- Changes in behaviour which can also indicate emotional abuse include:
- Neurotic behaviour, eg, sulking, hair twisting, rocking;
- Being unable to play; or fear of making mistakes;
- Fear of parent being approached regarding their behaviour;
- Self-harm.

SEXUAL ABUSE

Sexual abuse is defined as forcing, causing, or inciting a child/ young person to take part in sexual activities.

Adults who use children, young people and/or vulnerable adults to meet their own sexual needs abuse both girls and boys of all ages, including infants and toddlers. Children/ young people can be sexually abused within the family, an institution or a community setting and often know the person carrying out the abuse. Usually, in cases of sexual abuse it is the behaviour of children/young people/vulnerable adults which may cause you to become concerned, although physical signs can also be present. In all cases, children/young people/vulnerable adults who talk about sexual abuse do so because they want it to stop. It is important that they are listened to and taken seriously.

The physical signs of sexual abuse include:

- Pain or itching in the genital/anal areas;
- Bruising or bleeding near genital/anal areas;
- Sexually transmitted disease; vaginal discharge or infection;
- Stomach pains;
- Discomfort when walking or sitting down.

The following changes in behaviour may also indicate sexual abuse:

- Sudden or unexplained changes in behaviour (eg becoming aggressive or withdrawn);
- Fear of being left with a specific person or group of people;
- Sexual knowledge which is beyond their age or developmental level;
- Self harm or mutilation, sometimes leading to suicide attempts;
- Suddenly having unexplained sources of money;
- Acting in a sexually explicit way towards adults;
- Sexual drawings or language.

NEGLECT

Neglect results in a child/young person suffering significant harm or impairment of development as a result of being deprived of food, clothing, warmth, hygiene, intellectual stimulation, supervision and safety, attachment to and affection from adults, or medical care.

Neglect can be a very difficult form of abuse to recognise. The physical signs of neglect may include:

- Hunger, sometimes stealing food from others;
- Constantly dirty or smelly;
- Loss of weight, or being constantly underweight;
- Inappropriate dress for the conditions.

BULLYING

Bullying is behavior that hurts someone else – such as name calling, hitting, pushing, spreading rumours, threatening or undermining someone. It's usually repeated over a long period of time and can hurt a child/ young person both physically and emotionally. Bullying that happens online, using social networks, games and mobile phones, is often called cyber bullying.

You can't always see the signs of bullying. And no one sign indicates for certain that a child's being bullied. But you should look out for:

- belongings getting "lost" or damaged
- physical injuries such as unexplained bruises
- being afraid to go to school, being mysteriously 'ill' each morning, or skipping school
- not doing as well at school
- asking for, or stealing, money (to give to a bully)
- being nervous, losing confidence, or becoming distressed and withdrawn
- problems with eating or sleeping
- bullying others.

Appendix 3: Sample parent/carer permission form

This form will be adapted for specific project or placements. The aim is to inform parents/guardians of young people aged 18 and under about the project/placement, the steps that will be taken to mitigate risks and to seek permission for their child's participation, travel arrangements and photography/video recording and use.

Dear parent/carer,

We'd like to take this opportunity to tell you a bit more about the project/placement in which your child would like to get involved and seek your consent about several aspects of the project.

The project is [name and brief description of project]

Your child's welfare is at the heart of our approach to this project and, as such, we have undertaken a risk assessment which we enclose for your reference. If you any questions about any aspect of this, please do get in touch. If you would like a copy of the Leaders Unlocked Safeguarding Policy or have any questions about any aspect of this assessment, please contact xx.

We need your consent with regard to the following:

- **Participation**

[describe nature of young person's involvement]

I am happy for my son/daughter/ward to participate ☐ Yes
No ☐

- **Travel arrangements**

[describe travel arrangements]

I am happy for my son/daughter/ward to travel in this way ☐ Yes
No ☐

- **Video/photography**

[describe how video/photography will be used and stored]

I am happy for my son/daughter/ward to be photographed/recorded
Yes ☐ No ☐

Signed _____ Date _____

Print name _____

Many thanks for your co-operation. Please return this completed form to... If you have any questions about any aspect of the project, please don't hesitate to get in touch.