

Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy (V3)

This policy must be read in conjunction with Appeer CIC's Safeguarding Procedures, Code of Conduct, Safer Recruitment Policy, ICT/E-Safety Policy, Attendance Policy, Whistleblowing Policy and all other relevant organisational policies available on the All-Staff Hub and website.

1. Policy Statement

Appeer CIC is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all children, young people, and adults with care and support needs. We recognise safeguarding as our highest priority and a collective responsibility.

We will:

- Prioritise the welfare of the child as paramount in all decision-making.
- Provide a safe, inclusive, and supportive environment free from abuse, neglect, exploitation, and harm.
- Ensure all staff, volunteers, and contractors understand and fulfil their safeguarding responsibilities.
- Act in accordance with Children Act 1989 & 2004, Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023), Keeping Children Safe in Education (2023), and all relevant UK legislation and local safeguarding procedures.
- Respond immediately and appropriately to all safeguarding concerns.
- Promote a culture of vigilance, professional curiosity, and early intervention.

2. Policy Purpose

This policy sets out how Appeer CIC will:

- Protect children and young people from harm.
- Promote welfare, safety, and wellbeing.
- Ensure consistent safeguarding procedures across all services.
- Define roles, responsibilities, and reporting mechanisms.
- Ensure compliance with statutory safeguarding requirements.
- Embed a culture of safeguarding, accountability, and continuous improvement.

3. Policy Scope

This policy applies to all staff, volunteers, directors, and contractors working with Appeer, including those delivering one-off or ongoing sessions, programmes, or events.

4. Legal and Statutory Framework

This Safeguarding Policy is underpinned by relevant UK legislation, statutory guidance, and government frameworks designed to protect children and young people from harm. The organisation fully recognises and adheres to its legal responsibilities to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children and young people in its care. This includes working in accordance with current safeguarding legislation and guidance, ensuring that all staff, volunteers, and associated personnel understand and comply with their duties to act in the best interests of children at all times.

Our safeguarding practices are informed by the following key legislation and guidance:

Legislation / Guidance	Key Purpose	Safeguarding Relevance
Children Act 1989 & 2004	Establishes core legal framework for child welfare and local authority duties	Welfare of the child is paramount; sets out duty to safeguard and promote welfare; enables multi-agency safeguarding arrangements
Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023)	Statutory guidance on inter-agency safeguarding practice	Promotes early help, information sharing, and clear roles across agencies to protect children effectively
Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) (2023)	Safeguarding guidance for education settings	Sets expectations for staff responsibilities, safer recruitment, reporting procedures, and managing safeguarding concerns
Children and Families Act 2014	Strengthens support for children and families, especially SEND	Ensures safeguarding and coordinated support for children with special educational needs and disabilities
Data Protection Act 2018 / UK GDPR	Governs how personal data is handled	Ensures safeguarding information is stored, shared, and processed securely and lawfully
Protection of Freedoms Act 2012	Introduces DBS and vetting/barring framework	Prevents unsuitable individuals from working with children or vulnerable groups
Sexual Offences Act 2003	Defines sexual offences, including those involving children	Provides legal protection against sexual abuse and exploitation
Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 (Prevent Duty)	Prevents individuals from being drawn into terrorism	Requires safeguarding measures against radicalisation and extremist influences

5. Definitions

5.1 Safeguarding

Safeguarding is the action taken to protect children and young people from abuse, neglect, exploitation, and wider harm. It includes preventing impairment of health or development, ensuring children grow up in safe environments, and taking action to enable all children to have the best possible outcomes.

5.2 Child Protection

Child protection is a specific part of safeguarding that focuses on protecting individual children who are suffering, or are likely to suffer, significant harm. It involves formal procedures and referrals to external agencies such as children's social care and the police.

5.3 Child / Young Person

A child or young person refers to anyone under the age of 18 years.

5.4 Vulnerable Child / Young Person

A vulnerable child or young person is someone who may be at increased risk of harm due to circumstances such as additional needs, disability, mental health difficulties, social disadvantage, exploitation risk, or unstable home environments.

5.5 Abuse

Abuse is a form of maltreatment of a child or young person. It may be inflicted or caused by failing to act to prevent harm. Abuse can occur in person or online and may be carried out by adults or other children.

Types include:

- *Physical abuse*
- *Emotional abuse*
- *Sexual abuse*
- *Neglect*
- *Criminal exploitation*
- *Sexual exploitation*
- *Domestic abuse*
- *Online abuse / cyberbullying*

5.6 Neglect

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in serious impairment of health or development. This includes failure to provide food, shelter, clothing, supervision, medical care, or emotional support.

5.7 Harm

Harm means ill-treatment or impairment of health or development, including impairment caused by seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another person. Harm may be physical, emotional, sexual, or psychological.

5.8 Disclosure

A disclosure is when a child or young person shares information about abuse, neglect, exploitation, or harm that they have experienced or are experiencing.

5.9 Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

The Designated Safeguarding Lead is the trained senior member of staff responsible for safeguarding within the organisation. The DSL manages safeguarding concerns, liaises with external agencies, and ensures appropriate action is taken in line with safeguarding procedures.

5.10 Staff

Staff refers to all individuals working for or on behalf of the organisation, including paid employees, volunteers, agency staff, contractors, and sessional workers.

5.11 Early Help

Early help means providing support to children and families as soon as problems emerge, at any stage of a child's life, to prevent issues escalating and requiring statutory intervention.

5.12 Child-on-Child Abuse

Child-on-child abuse refers to abuse between children or young people. This may include bullying, physical violence, sexual violence or harassment, emotional abuse, and online abuse.

5.13 Contextual Safeguarding

Contextual safeguarding is an approach that recognises that children may be exposed to harm outside of their family environment, including in peer groups, schools, communities, and online spaces.

5.14 Child Missing from Education (CME)

A child missing from education refers to a child of compulsory school age who is not registered at a school and is not receiving suitable education otherwise. This may indicate safeguarding concerns such as neglect, exploitation, trafficking, or family instability. Organisations must respond promptly to concerns about non-attendance and follow appropriate reporting procedures outlined in Appeer's Attendance, Arrival and Collection Policy.

5.15 Children Absent from Education (Persistent Absence)

Children who are persistently absent from education may be at increased risk of harm. Persistent or unexplained absence should always be treated as a potential safeguarding concern and followed up in line with attendance and safeguarding procedures.

5.16 Exploitation

Exploitation is the intentional abuse of a child for personal gain or benefit. This includes:

- Child sexual exploitation (CSE)
- Child criminal exploitation (CCE)
- Financial or material exploitation
- County lines activity

5.17 Radicalisation

Radicalisation is the process by which a person comes to support or become involved in extremist ideologies, which may lead to terrorism or extremist behaviour.

5.18 Prevent Duty

The Prevent Duty is a legal requirement for specified organisations to have due regard to the need to prevent individuals from being drawn into terrorism, as part of wider safeguarding responsibilities.

5.19 Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE)

KCSIE is statutory guidance for schools and education settings in England. It sets out safeguarding responsibilities, including safer recruitment, staff conduct, reporting procedures, managing allegations, and safeguarding systems.

6. Safeguarding Principles

Appeer is committed to embedding safeguarding into every aspect of its work. The following principles underpin all safeguarding practice across the organisation and guide the behaviour, decision-making, and responsibilities of all staff, volunteers, contractors, and directors.

6.1 Welfare of the Child is Paramount

The safety and welfare of children and young people is always our highest priority. All actions taken by Appeer staff must be in the best interests of the child, even where this conflicts with organisational processes, parental views, or operational convenience.

6.2 Safeguarding is Everyone's Responsibility

Safeguarding is not the sole responsibility of the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL). Every member of staff has a duty to:

- Recognise concerns
- Respond appropriately
- Report concerns without delay

- Contribute to a safe organisational culture

6.3 Child-Centred Approach

We adopt a child-centred approach in all safeguarding matters. This means:

- Listening to children and young people
- Taking their views seriously
- Considering their lived experience
- Ensuring they are supported and informed throughout any safeguarding process

6.4 Early Help and Prevention

Appeer is committed to identifying concerns early and providing timely support to prevent escalation. Where appropriate, we will work in partnership with families and external agencies to offer early help before issues reach crisis level.

6.5 Partnership and Multi-Agency Working

We recognise that safeguarding is most effective when agencies work together. Appeer will:

- Work collaboratively with children's social care, police, education providers, and other partners
- Share information appropriately and lawfully
- Contribute to multi-agency safeguarding arrangements when required

6.6 Proportionality and Professional Judgement

Safeguarding decisions will be based on professional judgement, evidence, and context. Responses will be proportionate to the level of risk, ensuring that action taken is appropriate to safeguard the child without unnecessary escalation.

6.7 Information Sharing to Protect Children

We recognise that timely information sharing is essential to safeguarding children. Concerns will be shared appropriately, even without consent, where there is a risk of harm, in line with data protection legislation and safeguarding guidance.

6.8 Accountability and Transparency

All safeguarding actions will be:

- Recorded accurately and factually
- Documented in a timely manner
- Subject to oversight and review

7. Roles and Responsibilities for Safeguarding

Safeguarding is the responsibility of everyone within the organisation. All staff, volunteers, and associated personnel must understand their role in keeping children and young people safe and ensuring concerns are identified, reported, and acted upon appropriately.

7.1 The Board of Directors and Safeguarding Sub-Committee

Responsible for:

- Strategic safeguarding oversight
- Policy approval and compliance
- Appointment of DSL
- Safer recruitment assurance
- Monitoring safeguarding effectiveness

7.2 Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

Responsible for:

- Operational safeguarding leadership
- Embedding safeguarding across services
- Reporting safeguarding performance to Board
- Resource allocation and workforce capability
- Risk management and compliance

7.3 Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

Responsible for:

- Managing all safeguarding concerns and referrals
- Acting as lead safeguarding decision-maker
- Liaising with Children's Social Care, Police, and agencies
- Maintaining safeguarding records
- Providing staff advice and supervision
- Ensuring training compliance
- Ensuring safeguarding procedures are followed

7.4 DSL Cover

A trained Deputy DSL is always available during operational delivery.

7.5 Head of Programmes/ Programme Managers

Responsible for:

- Embedding safeguarding in programme design
- Ensuring safe delivery environments
- Communicating safeguarding expectations
- Managing operational safeguarding risks
- Escalating concerns to DSL

7.6 All Staff (Including Volunteers, Contractors, and Casual Staff)

Must:

- Follow safeguarding policy and Code of Conduct
- Recognise and report concerns immediately

- Respond appropriately to disclosures
- Maintain professional boundaries
- Complete mandatory training
- Record concerns factually and promptly

8. Types of Abuse and possible indicators

All staff must be aware of the different types of abuse and the possible signs and indicators that a child or young person may be experiencing harm. Abuse can occur in any setting, including at home, in the community, online, or within educational environments. Indicators should always be considered in context and may not confirm abuse on their own but must always be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).

8.1 Physical Abuse

Physical abuse is a form of maltreatment where a child or young person is deliberately harmed or injured by another person. It may involve intentional physical force or actions that result in actual or potential injury, pain, or impairment. Physical abuse can occur as a single incident or as part of a pattern of ongoing harm.

Possible indicators include:

- Unexplained bruises, burns, fractures, or injuries
- Injuries with inconsistent or unclear explanations
- Frequent injuries or patterns of injury
- Fear of physical contact or going home
- Wearing clothing to cover injuries, even in hot weather

8.2 Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child which causes severe and adverse effects on their emotional development and wellbeing. It involves ongoing patterns of behaviour that damage a child's self-worth, emotional health, or sense of identity.

Possible indicators include:

- Low self-esteem or lack of confidence
- Extreme withdrawal, anxiety, or fearfulness
- Sudden changes in behaviour or mood
- Delayed emotional development
- Excessive self-blame or fear of making mistakes
- Inappropriate emotional responses

It may include, but is not limited to:

- Constant criticism, humiliation, or belittling (e.g. calling a child worthless or stupid)
- Shouting, threats, or intimidation used to control or frighten
- Emotional rejection or persistent ignoring of a child's needs
- Unrealistic expectations or excessive punishment

- Preventing friendships or normal social contact
- Emotional manipulation or blackmail (e.g. guilt or conditional affection)
- Exposure to domestic abuse or severe conflict
- Bullying or cyberbullying by peers or adults
- Forcing age-inappropriate responsibilities (e.g. caring roles)
- Ignoring emotional needs or lack of support and reassurance
- Gaslighting or making a child doubt their experiences

8.3 Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse involves forcing, coercing, or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. This includes physical contact and non-contact activities and can occur online or in person. It may be carried out by adults or by other children (child-on-child abuse).

Possible indicators include:

- Age-inappropriate sexual knowledge or behaviour
- Sudden changes in behaviour or personality
- Reluctance to be alone with certain individuals
- Sexually explicit language or actions
- Physical signs such as soreness, injuries, or discomfort
- Fear of specific people or places

Sexual abuse includes, but is not limited to:

- Sexual touching of any part of a child's body, whether clothed or unclothed
- Penetrative acts (e.g. rape or oral sex)
- Forcing or encouraging a child to take part in sexual activities
- Non-contact activities such as:
 - Involving children in looking at or producing sexual images or videos
 - Encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways
 - Grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including online grooming)
- Exploitation through coercion, manipulation, or control (including Child Sexual Exploitation)
- Sharing, requesting, or creating sexual images of children (including via social media, messaging apps, or gaming platforms)

Sexual abuse can also involve power imbalance, grooming, secrecy, threats, bribery, or emotional manipulation to control a child and prevent disclosure.

8.4 Neglect

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child or young person's basic physical, emotional, medical, educational, and supervisory needs, to the extent that it is likely to result in serious harm to their health, development, or wellbeing. Neglect may be ongoing or repeated, and can

occur where a caregiver fails to act, is unable to meet needs, or deliberately withholds care and support.

Neglect can include failure to provide:

- Basic physical care, such as adequate food, clean water, shelter, warmth, and appropriate clothing for weather conditions
- Medical care, including failure to access or follow treatment for illnesses, injuries, or chronic conditions
- Supervision and safety, such as leaving a child unsupervised in unsafe situations or failing to protect them from harm
- Emotional care, including lack of affection, attention, comfort, or consistent emotional support
- Educational needs, such as failing to ensure regular attendance at education or supporting learning and development

Neglect may also involve a child being exposed to unsafe or unsuitable living conditions, including poor hygiene, unsafe environments, or lack of stability at home.

Over time, neglect can significantly affect a child's physical development, emotional wellbeing, behaviour, and ability to form secure relationships.

Possible Indicators include:

- Persistent poor hygiene or inappropriate clothing for weather conditions
- Constant hunger, stealing food, or hoarding food
- Untreated or recurring medical issues
- Frequent lateness, absence, or poor attendance
- Excessive tiredness, fatigue, or falling asleep in sessions
- Poor growth, weight issues, or developmental delays
- Lack of supervision or being left alone for long periods
- Unstable home environment or lack of routine
- Emotional withdrawal, low self-esteem, or attachment difficulties

8.5 Exploitation (Including Online)

Exploitation is the intentional manipulation, coercion, or abuse of a child or young person for personal, financial, criminal, or sexual gain. It can involve adults or other children and may occur in person, within communities, or online. Exploitation often involves grooming, control, pressure, deception, or threats, and may be difficult to identify as children may not recognise they are being exploited.

Exploitation can include, but is not limited to:

- Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE), where a child is manipulated or forced into sexual activity in exchange for something (e.g. gifts, money, affection, status, or protection)
- Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE), where children are coerced or controlled into criminal activity such as drug running ("county lines"), theft, or other illegal acts

- Online exploitation and grooming, including being targeted through social media, messaging apps, gaming platforms, or live streaming services
- Coercion and control, where a child is threatened, blackmailed, or emotionally manipulated to comply with demands
- Financial or material exploitation, such as pressure to obtain money, goods, or services for others
- Trafficking or movement for exploitation, where children are moved locally, nationally, or internationally for the purpose of abuse or gain

Exploitation often involves perpetrators building trust with a child before gradually introducing harmful behaviour. Children may believe they are in a consensual relationship or friendship, which can make disclosure difficult.

Possible Indicators include:

- Frequent or unexplained absence from education or going missing from home
- Sudden changes in behaviour, friendships, or social groups
- Possession of unexplained money, gifts, new clothes, or expensive items
- Secretive behaviour around phones, social media, or online activity
- Multiple phones, SIM cards, or accounts
- Older or controlling peers/adults exerting influence
- Withdrawal from family, friends, or trusted adults
- Signs of fear, anxiety, or coercion when discussing certain individuals
- Returning home late or at unusual times without explanation
- Increased risk-taking behaviour or involvement in offending

8.6 Domestic Abuse

Domestic abuse involves any incident or pattern of controlling, coercive, threatening, degrading, or violent behaviour between individuals who are personally connected, including family members or intimate partners. It can take many forms, including physical, emotional, sexual, psychological, or financial abuse, and may occur within the home or wider family environment.

Children and young people can be direct victims of domestic abuse or may be affected by witnessing abuse between adults, both of which can have significant and long-term impacts on their safety, development, and wellbeing.

Domestic abuse may include:

- Controlling behaviour, such as restricting movement, friendships, or access to support
- Coercive behaviour, including intimidation, threats, manipulation, or isolation
- Physical violence, such as assault or harm between family members or partners
- Emotional or psychological abuse, including humiliation, fear, or constant criticism
- Financial abuse, including restricting access to money or resources
- Exposure of children to violence, conflict, or distressing incidents between adults

Children may be affected even if they do not directly witness incidents, due to the emotional impact of living in an unsafe or unstable environment.

Possible Indicators or Warning Signs

- Anxiety, depression, or ongoing emotional distress
- Aggressive, withdrawn, or unusually quiet behaviour
- Poor concentration, disengagement, or declining performance
- Frequent lateness or poor attendance
- Knowledge of adult issues or language beyond their age
- Fear of going home or reluctance to leave school/setting
- Physical injuries or unexplained marks
- Emotional instability, mood swings, or low self-esteem
- Overly protective behaviour towards a parent/carer or siblings

8.7 Financial Abuse (Where Relevant)

Financial abuse involves the misuse, control, or withholding of money, resources, or material support in a way that negatively impacts a child or young person's welfare, wellbeing, or access to basic needs. Although more commonly associated with adult safeguarding, it may be relevant in situations where a child is directly affected by financial control, deprivation, or exploitation within the home or wider environment.

Financial abuse may include:

- Withholding money or resources needed for basic living requirements such as food, clothing, transport, or school equipment
- Misuse of household funds, resulting in a child's needs not being met
- Preventing access to education or activities due to lack of financial support
- Forcing a child to provide money, goods, or benefits to others, including family members or peers
- Exploitation of a child's earnings or benefits, where applicable
- Neglect linked to financial deprivation, where basic needs are consistently unmet due to misuse or lack of resources

Possible Indicators or Warning Signs

- Lack of basic necessities such as food, appropriate clothing, or school equipment
- Inability to participate in school trips, activities, or social opportunities due to financial barriers
- Signs of neglect despite indications that resources may be available
- Frequent hunger or requests for food at school/setting
- Poor hygiene or living conditions linked to financial hardship
- Unexplained absence of personal belongings or resources
- Pressure or expectation placed on the child to provide money or items for others
- Visible anxiety or distress relating to money or resources

9. Code of Conduct

All staff and volunteers must:

- Report all safeguarding concerns, allegations, and disclosures to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) within 24 hours, or immediately if there is an urgent risk of harm. You do not need to be certain that abuse has occurred before reporting a concern. Never assume that someone else has already reported it.
- Work with the DSL and your line manager to take appropriate action when a safeguarding concern arises.
- Avoid one-to-one contact with participants, whether in person or online. Wherever possible, a second responsible adult should be present, and activities should take place in open and observable environments.
- Not deliberately initiate contact with participants outside of authorised Appeer activities or sessions unless this has been agreed in advance as part of their role and follows organisational procedures.
- Avoid unnecessary physical contact with participants. Physical contact should only take place where necessary, for example to demonstrate a skill, aid, or ensure health and safety. Consent should be sought wherever possible, unless there is an emergency. Any contact should remain appropriate, proportionate, and non-personal.
- Always use appropriate language and behaviour. Avoid comments, joke, or conduct that could be interpreted as aggressive, intimidating, discriminatory, sexually suggestive, or otherwise inappropriate.
- Consider inclusion, accessibility, and individual needs when responding to safeguarding concerns.
- Complete Appeer safeguarding training before undertaking any role involving participants and complete refresher training annually.
- Attend safeguarding briefings and training updates, or review recordings and materials provided, to remain informed of any changes to safeguarding procedures.
- Read and act upon safeguarding updates distributed by Appeer, including communications from the DSL or line manager.
- Participate in pre-session briefings to ensure awareness of any safeguarding concerns, risks, support plans, or reasonable adjustments relevant to participants attending the session.

- Know where safeguarding records, reporting forms, and emergency contact information are kept at the location where they are working.
- Disclose to the DSL any ongoing or past safeguarding investigation involving themselves or someone with whom they have a significant personal relationship, where this may present a safeguarding risk. This includes investigations conducted by statutory agencies, employers, professional bodies, or other organisations. Significant personal relationships include, but are not limited to, family members, partners, and members of the same household.

Staff and volunteers must not:

- Develop personal, intimate, or otherwise inappropriate relationships with participants.
- Exchange personal contact details with participants, including personal phone numbers, email addresses, social media accounts, or messaging app details, unless specifically authorised as part of their role and in accordance with Appeer procedures.
- Communicate with participants through personal social media accounts or personal messaging platforms.
- Meet participants outside authorised Appeer activities or sessions without prior approval and appropriate safeguarding measures in place.
- Promise to keep safeguarding concerns, disclosures, or allegations secret. Where a safeguarding concern is raised, information must be shared with the appropriate safeguarding personnel on a need-to-know basis.
- Share personal information about themselves that is not necessary or appropriate to their role.
- Engage in behaviour that could be perceived as bullying, harassment, intimidation, discrimination, favouritism, grooming, exploitation, or abuse.
- Use language, jokes, comments, or images that are offensive, sexually suggestive, discriminatory, degrading, or otherwise inappropriate.
- Take, store, share, or publish photographs, videos, audio recordings, or personal information relating to participants without the appropriate consent and authorisation.
- Give gifts to lend money to borrow money from or accept significant gifts from participants without prior approval from a manager or the DSL.

- Transport participants in a personal vehicle unless this has been specifically authorised and appropriate risk assessments and safeguarding measures are in place.
- Be under the influence of alcohol, illegal drugs, or any substance that may impair judgement or ability to fulfil their safeguarding responsibilities while undertaking Appeer duties.
- Ignore, minimise, delay, or fail to report safeguarding concerns, allegations, disclosures, incidents, or breaches of this Code of Conduct.
- Retaliate against, victimise, or treat unfairly anyone who raises a safeguarding concern in good faith.

10. Safe Recruitment

Appeer CIC is committed to safer recruitment practices to help protect children and young people from harm. We aim to recruit staff and volunteers who are suitable to work with children, young people and vulnerable adults, and to prevent unsuitable individuals from gaining access to them through our services.

Our safer recruitment procedures include:

- clear role descriptions and person specifications;
- structured recruitment and interview processes;
- obtaining and checking references;
- verifying identity, right to work and relevant qualifications;
- carrying out DBS and barred list checks where appropriate;
- ensuring safeguarding responsibilities are understood as part of induction and ongoing supervision;
- responding promptly to any concerns about the suitability of staff or volunteers.

Safer recruitment is part of Appeer CIC's wider safeguarding approach and is undertaken alongside induction, training, supervision and safeguarding reporting procedures to promote a safe environment for all children and young people. Further information can be found in our Safer Recruitment Policy.

11. Recognising and Responding to Concerns

Appeer is committed to ensuring that all safeguarding concerns are recognised, responded to promptly, and managed appropriately in line with statutory guidance and local safeguarding procedures. All staff, volunteers, contractors, and associated personnel must understand that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and that concerns must always be taken seriously.

11.1 Reporting Procedures

Safeguarding concerns may arise in a number of ways, including through:

- a direct disclosure made by a child or young person;
- something observed by a member of staff, volunteer, or contractor;
- changes in a child's behaviour, presentation, attendance, or wellbeing;
- information shared by a parent, carer, school, partner agency, or another child;
- concerns arising from online activity, peer relationships, exploitation, neglect, or wider family circumstances.

Concerns may relate to abuse, neglect, exploitation, child-on-child abuse, online harm, domestic abuse, radicalisation, mental health concerns, contextual safeguarding risks, or any other situation in which a child or young person may be at risk of harm.

Staff do not need to be certain that abuse has occurred before reporting a concern. If in doubt, the concern must always be shared with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or Deputy DSL.

DSL@appeer.org.uk

11.2 Responding to concerns

If a child or young person discloses abuse, neglect, exploitation, or any other safeguarding concern, staff must:

- stay calm and listen carefully;
- take what the child says seriously;
- reassure the child that they have done the right thing by speaking up;
- avoid expressing shock, disbelief, or making promises that cannot be kept;
- not ask leading questions, investigate, or press the child for more information than is necessary to establish the basic facts;
- explain that the information will need to be shared with the DSL or appropriate safeguarding staff in order to keep them safe;
- make a clear, factual written record as soon as possible.

priority should always be the immediate safety and wellbeing of the child or young person.

11.3 Recording a Concern

Any safeguarding concern, disclosure, allegation, or incident must be recorded promptly, accurately, and factually. The record should include, where possible:

- the date, time, and location of the concern;
- the name of the child or young person involved;
- the nature of the concern or disclosure;
- the exact words used by the child or young person where relevant;
- any observations of injuries, behaviour, presentation, or interactions;
- the name of the person making the record;

- any immediate actions taken.

Staff must distinguish clearly between fact, observation, and opinion. Safeguarding records must be stored securely and shared only on a need-to-know basis in accordance with data protection and safeguarding requirements.

11.4 Reporting a Concern

All safeguarding concerns must be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or Deputy DSL without delay. Concerns should be raised on the same day and, in all cases, within 24 hours of the concern arising. Staff must never assume that someone else has already reported the concern.

Where a concern involves an immediate risk of significant harm, staff must take urgent action straight away, including contacting emergency services where necessary, and informing the DSL as soon as possible afterwards.

The DSL will consider the information, assess the level of risk, and decide on the most appropriate course of action. This may include:

- monitoring the concern and gathering further information;
- speaking with parents or carers where appropriate and safe to do so;
- offering or signposting early help;
- consulting with external safeguarding professionals;
- making a referral to Children's Social Care, the Police, or other relevant agencies;
- taking immediate steps to protect the child or young person within Appeer activities.

11.5 Immediate Risk or Emergency

If a child or young person is believed to be in immediate danger, at risk of significant harm, or in need of urgent medical attention, staff must take immediate action to protect them. This may include:

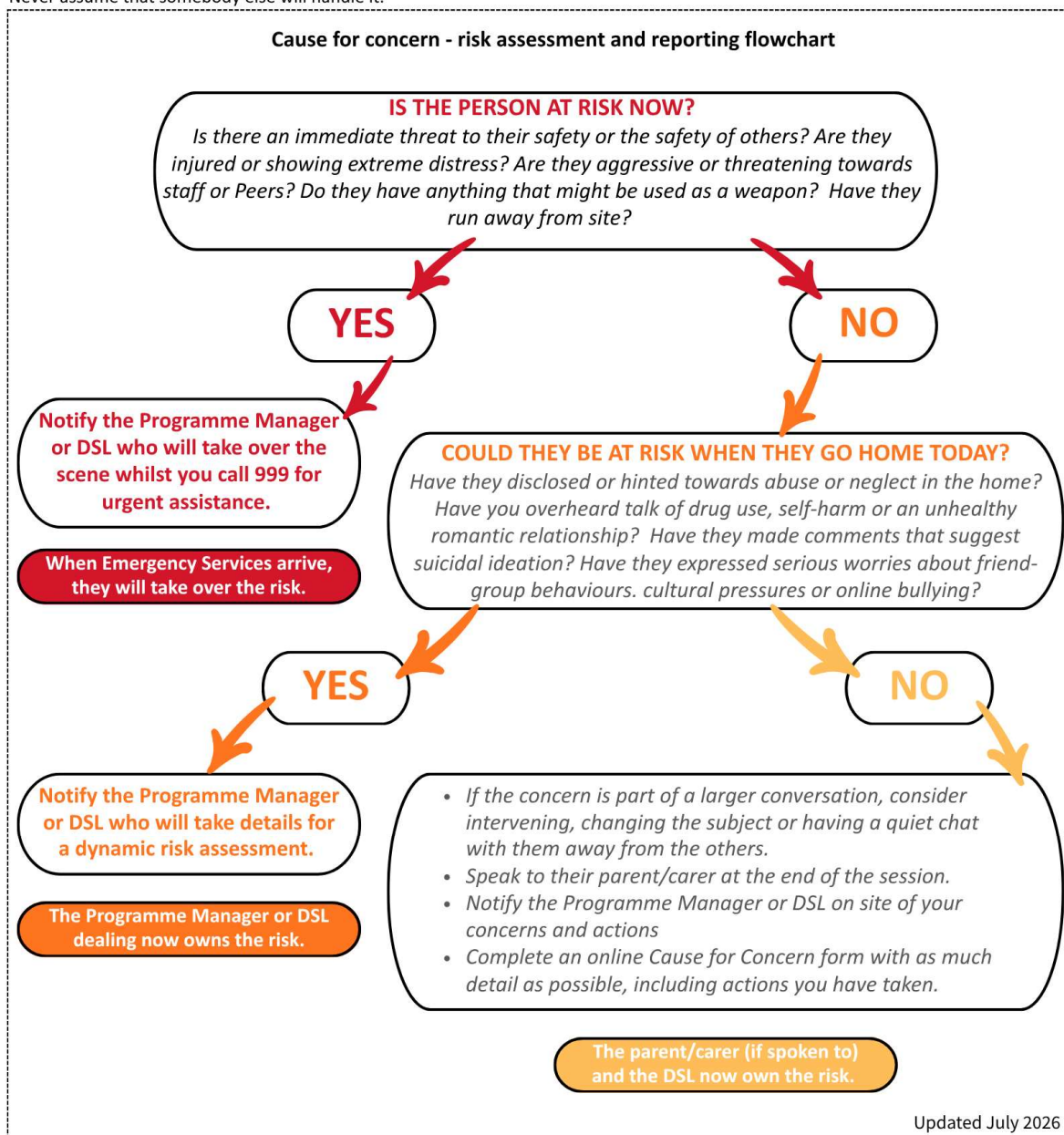
- contacting emergency services by calling 999;
- contacting the Police if a crime may have been committed;
- seeking urgent medical help where required;
- informing the DSL or Deputy DSL at the earliest possible opportunity.

A referral to statutory services should not be delayed because the DSL is unavailable if waiting would place a child at further risk.

Cause for concern - risk assessment and reporting flowchart

Instructions for risk-assessing and reporting welfare concerns about participants or staff. This includes disclosures made in person, overheard conversations or witnessed behaviours that have led you to suspect the person may be unsafe.

Once you are aware of the concern, **that risk belongs to you**, and you must ensure that it is passed to the correct department or agency. Never assume that somebody else will handle it.



11.6 Confidentiality and Information Sharing

Safeguarding information must be treated as confidential and only shared with those who need the information in order to protect a child or young person. However, confidentiality must never prevent appropriate safeguarding action.

Information may be shared without consent where:

- there is a concern that a child is at risk of harm;
- sharing information is necessary to protect a child or another person;
- a referral to statutory safeguarding agencies is required;
- the law or safeguarding guidance requires it.

All information sharing must be lawful, proportionate, relevant, and recorded appropriately.

11.7 Whistleblowing and escalation

If a member of staff feels that a safeguarding concern has not been taken seriously, has not been acted upon appropriately, or they are concerned about the conduct of a colleague, volunteer, or manager, they must escalate the matter in line with Appeer's Whistleblowing Policy and safeguarding procedures.

No member of staff should ever delay action because they are worried about being mistaken, causing offence, or challenging a more senior colleague. Safeguarding concerns must always be raised in good faith and in the best interests of the child.

11.8 Managing Allegations Against Staff, Volunteers, Contractors or Associated Persons

Appeer is committed to ensuring that any allegation, concern, or complaint about the behaviour of a staff member, volunteer, contractor, director, or associated person is taken seriously and managed promptly, fairly, and in line with safeguarding law, statutory guidance, and local procedures. This includes concerns about behaviour inside or outside of work, including online conduct, where it may indicate that a person poses a risk to children or young people.

Any allegation that a person working with children has harmed a child, may have committed a criminal offence against a child, behaved in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm, or may be unsuitable to work with children must be reported immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and Chief Executive Officer (CEO), unless the concern relates to one of those individuals, in which case it must be escalated to the appropriate senior safeguarding lead. Where a child is at immediate risk of harm, urgent action must be taken straight away, including contacting Children's Social Care, the Police, or emergency services where necessary.

Appeer will take immediate steps to safeguard children, consider whether the individual should be temporarily removed from contact with children, and determine whether the matter meets the threshold for referral to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO). The organisation will not investigate allegations that may meet the LADO threshold without first seeking appropriate external advice. All allegations and concerns will be recorded clearly, handled confidentially on a need-to-know basis, and managed in a way that protects children while also ensuring fairness and appropriate support for everyone involved.

Appeer also recognises the importance of responding to low-level concerns about adults working with children, even where the behaviour does not meet the threshold for a formal allegation. Concerns about professional boundaries, conduct, or behaviour inconsistent with the Code of Conduct must still be reported and reviewed so that patterns can be identified, risks managed, and safer practice promoted across the organisation.

12. Online Safety

Appeer recognises that children and young people may be exposed to safeguarding risks online, including bullying, grooming, exploitation, exposure to harmful content, inappropriate contact, and misuse of images or personal information. Online safety is therefore treated as an integral part of safeguarding practice across all programmes, activities, communications, and digital engagement.

All staff, volunteers, contractors, and associated personnel must use technology safely and professionally, follow Appeer's procedures for digital communication, and maintain appropriate boundaries with children and young people at all times. Any concerns relating to online safety, digital behaviour, inappropriate communication, or online harm must be reported promptly to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and managed in line with safeguarding procedures. Appeer will take reasonable steps to ensure that online activities, platforms, and communications used with children and young people are planned, monitored, and delivered in a way that promotes safety, privacy, and wellbeing. Further guidance can be found in our **ICT, E-Safety and Communications Policy**.

13. Training and Awareness

Appeer will ensure that all staff, volunteers, contractors, directors and other adults working with children and young people receive safeguarding and child protection training and updates that are appropriate to their role and responsibilities, in accordance with Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE), Working Together to Safeguard Children, and local safeguarding partnership procedures.

All staff must receive safeguarding and child protection training as part of their induction.

Induction must include:

- Appeer's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy;
- the staff Code of Conduct / behaviour policy;
- the identity and role of the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and any Deputy DSLs;
- the safeguarding reporting procedures, including how to raise and record a concern;
- the role of early help and the importance of acting on concerns without delay;
- staff responsibilities under Part 1 of KCSIE (or Annex B where appropriate, if determined by the organisation for certain staff roles);

- Appeer's procedures for managing allegations against staff, low-level concerns, whistleblowing, attendance concerns, and online safety.

All staff must receive regular safeguarding and child protection updates, including at least annually, and more frequently where required, so that they remain aware of safeguarding risks, local procedures, emerging issues and statutory changes. This will include, as appropriate:

- signs and indicators of abuse, neglect and exploitation;
- child-on-child abuse, including sexual violence and sexual harassment;
- online safety, including filtering and monitoring, cyberbullying, online grooming, sharing nudes or semi-nudes, and the risks posed by technology and AI-generated content;
- children missing education, persistent absence, and attendance-related safeguarding risks;
- contextual safeguarding risks, including criminal exploitation, county lines, radicalisation and serious violence;
- mental health concerns where they may be an indicator that a child is suffering or at risk of abuse, neglect or exploitation;
- the additional safeguarding vulnerabilities of children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND);
- professional curiosity, information sharing, confidentiality, and responding to disclosures.

Training must support staff to understand that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility, that they must always act in the best interests of the child, maintain an attitude of "it could happen here", and report concerns immediately in line with Appeer procedures. Staff must also understand the difference between a safeguarding concern, a low-level concern, and an allegation against an adult working with children, and know how each should be reported.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and any Deputy DSLs must undertake training to provide them with the knowledge and skills required to carry out the role. This training must be updated at least every two years. In addition to formal training, the DSL and Deputy DSLs must undertake regular safeguarding updates, at least annually, and more frequently where necessary, to keep their knowledge and understanding of safeguarding developments, local procedures, safeguarding risks, and statutory requirements up to date.

Appeer will maintain an accurate record of safeguarding training undertaken by staff and volunteers, including induction, refresher training, DSL training, and any safeguarding updates or briefings. Safeguarding training compliance will be monitored by the DSL and senior leaders to ensure that all staff remain suitably trained and that safeguarding practice is effective, current and consistent across the organisation.

14. Record Keeping

Appeer will ensure that all safeguarding concerns, disclosures, allegations, incidents, decisions, and actions are recorded promptly, accurately, and factually. Records must be clear, dated, signed where appropriate, and distinguish between fact, observation, and professional opinion.

Where a child or young person has made a disclosure, their own words should be recorded as accurately as possible.

Safeguarding records will be stored securely, kept confidential, and only shared on a need-to-know basis in line with safeguarding duties, data protection legislation, and organisational procedures. The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) is responsible for overseeing safeguarding record keeping and ensuring that records are maintained appropriately, monitored for follow-up action, and retained in accordance with legal and organisational requirements.

15. Whistleblowing

Appeer is committed to promoting a culture of openness, accountability, and safeguarding vigilance, where staff, volunteers, and associated personnel feel confident to raise concerns about unsafe practice, poor conduct, or failures in safeguarding arrangements. Any concern that a child or young person may be at risk, or that safeguarding procedures are not being followed appropriately, must be raised without delay.

Where an individual feels unable to raise a concern through normal safeguarding reporting routes or believes that a concern has not been acted upon appropriately, they must use Appeer's Whistleblowing Policy or external safeguarding reporting routes where necessary. No member of staff or volunteer should suffer disadvantage, retaliation, or victimisation for raising a genuine safeguarding concern in good faith. Please see the **Whistleblowing Policy** for further guidance.

16. Monitoring and Review

Appeer is committed to ensuring that its safeguarding policy remains effective, up to date, and in line with statutory guidance and best practice.

17. Responsibility for Review

The policy will be reviewed and approved by:

- The CEO
- The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)
- The Board of Directors' Safeguarding Sub-Committee

18. Frequency of Review

The policy will be reviewed annually as a minimum.

Additional reviews will take place if:

- There are changes in legislation or statutory guidance.
- Best practice or organisational needs require an update.
- A safeguarding incident or audit identifies areas for improvement.

19. Monitoring Compliance

The DSL is responsible for monitoring the implementation of the policy across all activities, sessions, and programmes.

Compliance checks may include:

- Staff and volunteer adherence to procedures.
- Training completion and refresher courses.
- Record-keeping and reporting practices.

Findings from monitoring will be reported to the CEO and Safeguarding Sub-Committee.

20. Communication of Updates

- Any changes to the policy will be communicated promptly to all staff, volunteers, and relevant stakeholders.
- Updated policies will be accessible to all and incorporated into induction and training materials.

21. Audit and Continuous Improvement

Appeer CIC continuously monitors safeguarding effectiveness through:

- Regular case reviews and audits (Quarterly)
- Training compliance monitoring (continuous)
- Incident and concern analysis (continuous)
- Policy review at least annually or following legislative change

Findings are used to strengthen practice and improve outcomes for children and young people..

22. Variations

Appeer reserves the right to unilaterally vary this policy from time to time. Any request to amend or vary this policy will require the written consent of Appeer.

If you have any questions or concerns about this policy, contact the DSL at DSL@appeer.org.uk

23. Key Safeguarding contacts

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL): Lindsay Prior - DSL@appeer.org.uk

Deputy DSLs:

- Cathryn Jagger – cathryn@appeer.org.uk
- Kris Cornell – kris@appeer.org.uk
- Nicki Bligh – nicki@appeer.org.uk

Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy Version No: 3.0	
Summary:	Our policy detailing our commitment to and key principles around safeguarding and protecting children and vulnerable adults who participate in APPEER sessions as well as staff (paid and unpaid) and other involved parties such as parents/carers.
Policy Owner:	Lindsay Prior (DSL)
Author:	Annaliese Boucher (CEO)
Target Audience:	Staff, volunteers, directors and beneficiaries
Approved and Ratified By:	Board of Directors Safeguarding Sub-committee
Version Date:	20 th May 2026
Date of issue:	20 th May 2026
Next Review Date:	1 st April 2027

Change Record				
Date	Author	Version	Page/s	Reason for Change
10 th April 2020	Jo Dilworth	1.1	4 or 5 changes throughout the document	To accommodate fortnightly optional hobbies based zoom sessions with girls from 7-12 groups.
4 th October 2020	Jo Dilworth Paige Sinkler	1.2	Changes throughout document	To accommodate parent/carer online sessions during the pandemic.
10 th March 2021	Jo Dilworth	1.3	Changes throughout	To accommodate changes in policy and procedure for teen programmes
1 st June 2021	Jo Dilworth	1.4	Changes throughout	New teen programmes and girls' groups restarting

1 st December 2021	Jo Dilworth	1.5	Changes throughout	New teen and young women's programmes starting
10 th May 2022	Jo Dilworth	1.6	Changes throughout	Division of into separate policy and internal guidance and procedures documents.
9 September 2022	Jo Dilworth Paige Sinkler	1.7	Content on page 1, and formatting throughout	For consistency with other updated policies.
16 th October 2023	Jo Dilworth	1.8	Change to contact details for DDSL	Change of DDSL and annual review of policy
19th April 2024	Paula Stables	1.9	Changes throughout as change in DSL	as left
20th Sept 2024	Paula Stables	1.9	Changes to DSLs	Staff changes
11 Sept 2025	Sam Emmerson	2.0	Changes to DSLs	Staff changes
15 January 2026	Sarah Nolan	2.1	Changes to roles and contact details	Staff changes
20 May 2026	Annaliese Boucher	3.0	Throughout	KCSIE and safer recruitment