

Mary Frances Trust Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy and Procedures

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Document Control

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VERSION	AUTHOR	SUMMARY OF CHANGES	DATE
0.2	Policy Committee	Scope clarified, exploitation/FGM added, training cycles specified, controls updated	02/03/2026
0.3	DSL / GCP	Policy updated to reflect <i>Working Together to Safeguard Children (2026)</i> , including refreshed statutory references and strengthened wording on shared safeguarding responsibility, child-centred practice and inclusive safeguarding.	11/05/2026

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1. Introduction

This policy demonstrates Mary Frances Trust's (MFT) commitment to keeping safe all those at risk with whom it works. Mary Frances Trust acknowledges its duty to act appropriately on any allegations, reports, or suspicions of abuse.

This policy has been developed in line with relevant legislation and statutory guidance that seeks to protect children in England, including the Children Act 1989 and 2004, the Children and Social Work Act 2017, and ***Working Together to Safeguard Children (2026)***, which provides the key statutory framework for all organisations working with children, young people and families.

Working Together to Safeguard Children (2026) places a strong emphasis on safeguarding as a **shared, child-centred responsibility**, requiring effective partnership working, timely information sharing, and a focus on the lived experience of the child. All safeguarding-related policies and procedures will be reviewed regularly to ensure ongoing compliance with statutory guidance and local safeguarding partnership arrangements.

2. Policy Statement

This Policy applies to anyone working on behalf of Mary Frances Trust including senior managers and the board of trustees, paid staff, volunteers, sessional workers, agency staff and students. Its purpose is to protect and enhance the safety and well-being of all children and young people by actively promoting awareness, good practice, and sound procedures.

Mary Frances Trust recognises that safeguarding is a **collective responsibility** and that effective safeguarding depends on strong collaboration between professionals, agencies, families and communities. Our approach is child-centred, trauma-informed and proportionate, ensuring that the safety and welfare of children and young people remains paramount in all decision-making.

We believe the safety and well-being of children and young people is of the utmost importance and that they have a fundamental and equal right to be protected from harm regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation. We fully recognise our statutory responsibility for safeguarding: the safety, protection and well-being of all children and young people that Mary Frances Trust supports and interacts with, is paramount and has priority over all other interests. This includes responding immediately and appropriately where there is a suspicion that any young person under the age of 18 years old may be a victim of bullying, harassment, abuse (including physical, sexual, emotional) or neglect.

In line with statutory guidance, Mary Frances Trust is committed to anti-discriminatory and inclusive safeguarding practice. This includes recognising and responding to the ways in which inequality, discrimination or disproportionality may affect children's experiences of harm and access to support. Safeguarding practice will actively promote fairness, respect and dignity, and challenge discrimination where it may impact on a child or young person's safety or wellbeing.

'Young Person' means those under 18 years old including all of those up to their 18th birthday- as designated a 'child' within the terms of the Children's Act 1989.

Mary Frances Trust encourages a culture of listening to and engaging in dialogue with children seeking their views in ways that are appropriate to their age, culture and understanding.

This policy has been drawn up because of legislation, policy and guidance that seeks to protect children in England, including the Children's Act 2004 and "**Working Together to Safeguard Children (2026)**". Working together to safeguard children - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) provides the key statutory guidance for anyone working with children and young people. All procedures and policies pertaining to safeguarding should be regularly reviewed and updated on an annual basis.

3. Organisational Responsibilities

- Mary Frances Trust will be initially responsible for the implementation of the Safeguarding Policy and may designate a certain member of staff to manage the Safeguarding Policy and its implementation.
- It is the responsibility of the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) to take appropriate action following any expression of concern and make referrals to the appropriate agency.
- Mary Frances Trust will ensure that the DSL participates in regular Designated Safeguarding Lead Training and Prevent training on a biennial (every two years) basis so that they are aware of the procedures of identifying and reporting suspected cases of abuse and neglect and are up to date with any legal changes.
- All staff/ volunteers will be made aware of this Safeguarding Policy and related relevant procedures as part of their induction and their contract of employment.
- All staff/ volunteers will be informed and have access to regular training as required to update their knowledge on safeguarding.
- Mary Frances Trust will work in accordance with guidance and good practice from the Surrey Safeguarding Children Partnership. More information can be found at: Surrey Safeguarding Children Partnership (surreyscp.org.uk).

3.1. Safeguarding Manager Responsibilities

- Mary Frances Trust will ensure that all members of staff/ volunteers have timely and relevant safeguarding training.
- The DSL will take appropriate action following any expression of concern, disclosure or reported incident and make referrals to the appropriate agency.

3.2. Staff and Volunteer Responsibilities

- Any new member of staff or volunteer with direct contact with young people will be taken through this safeguarding policy as part of the induction process and offered training soon after commencing their post.
- All staff and volunteers to participate in timely and relevant training on a biennial (every two years) basis.
- All staff have a duty to ensure that any suspected incident, allegation, or other manifestation relating to child protection is reported using the procedures detailed below in this policy.

- If in any doubt about what action to take, employees must seek advice from one of the named DSLs or in their absence, the CEO or board of trustees.

4. Safeguarding Information

4.1. Definition of Harm

For this policy, Mary Frances Trust has defined harm as:

- Neglect - the persistent failure to meet the basic physical and physiological needs of the young person that results in serious impairment of their health and development, including the failure to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, and failure to respond to basic emotional needs, such as being cared for when sick.
- Abandonment - leaving a child alone and unattended in circumstances that are inappropriate for their age and/ or level of ability.
- Emotional abuse – persistent, emotional ill treatment that has a severe adverse effect on the emotional development of children and young people. It may involve conveying to them that they are not wanted, not loved or worthless. It may involve inappropriate expectations (such as taking on the responsibility of an adult within the family) being placed on the young person leaving them frightened and unable to cope. It may also involve the threatening, exploitation or corruption of children and young people.
- Exploitation – Harm includes all forms of exploitation including modern slavery, human trafficking, and criminal exploitation such as ‘country lines,’ where children and young people are coerced, groomed or manipulated into transporting drugs, money or other illegal items across regions. These activities often involve violence, and abuse making young people particularly vulnerable due to their age and circumstances.
- Physical abuse – hitting, kicking, shaking, slapping, and throwing, scalding, burning, poisoning, drowning, suffocating, or other action intended to cause physical harm or ill health to the child or young person. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer covers up the symptoms of, or deliberately causes ill health to a child or young person within their care. This also includes harmful practices such as Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), which is illegal and considered a severe form of abuse.
- Racial abuse – any type of verbal or physical abuse that is directed at an individual or group because of their racial or ethnic background.
- Witnessing ill treatment, including domestic abuse of another person- this may impact the health or development of a child or young person.
- Sexual abuse or sexual exploitation - forcing or enticing a child or young person to participate in sexual activities, whether the child or young person is aware or has knowledge of what is happening. It includes child prostitution, encouraging children or young people to watch or participate in the production of pornographic material, online grooming, encouraging children and young people to behave in sexually inappropriate ways. Sexual acts include penetrative (rape or buggery) and non-penetrative acts such as touching or stroking.

Under The Children and Social Work Act 2017, Mary Frances Trust recognises the importance within this act of which introduced new measures to improve outcomes for children in care and care leavers.

We work to promote the welfare and safeguarding of children, by ensuring we do all we can to ensure children and young people. Some of the rights that are contained in the Convention on the Rights of the Child include:

- The right to be treated fairly.
- The right to have a say about decisions affecting you.
- The right to live and grow up healthy.
- The right to be safe no matter where you are.
- The right to get an education.
- The right to play and have fun.

Human rights are standards that recognize and protect the dignity of all human beings. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights promotes basic human rights so every woman, man and child on this planet can live and develop with dignity and in peace. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is a list of rights that countries around the world have agreed that all children have. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was put in place by the United Nations in 1948. Through our work we promote this right for everyone.

The Sexual Offences Act 2003 defines ‘consent’ as ‘if he agrees by choice and has the capacity to make that choice’. The Act, removes the element of consent for many sexual offences for:

- Children/young people under 16 (including under 13).
- Children/ young people under 18 having sexual relations with a person of trust (for example: teachers, youth workers, foster carers, police officers).
- Children / young people under 18 involved with family members over 18.
- Persons with a mental disorder impeding choice or who are induced, threatened, or deceived.
- Persons with a mental disorder who have sexual relations with care workers.
- In relation to young people under the age of 13, consent is irrelevant. The law says, ‘a child under the age of 13 does not, under any circumstances, have the legal capacity to consent to any form of sexual activity’.
- The Police must be informed immediately of any sexual activity involving a child under 13 years of age.

4.2. General Safeguarding Advice

- Remember not to be a young people’s friend, always maintain a professional manner when working with them.
- Do not accept a young person as a friend on any social networking site that you use.

- Always keep a record of any text or email exchanges with a young person (staff will use work telephones where available).
- Always be aware that your comments or actions may be perceived differently than intended, so be sensitive to the situation.
- Do not meet a young person alone, this is for the safety and well-being of the young person and also for yourself. Where this is necessary, try to use public spaces for one-to-one meetings if you are not meeting in the Mary Frances Trust office or premises. You must inform your line manager in advance (by call, text or email) providing details of when, where, the purpose of the meeting, and must confirm when the contact ended, in line with safeguarding requirements.
- Avoid detailed discussions about your personal experiences e.g., drugs, alcohol, sex.
- Never speak to the press about a child or young person without permission from Mary Frances Trust.

5. Reporting Procedures

In all cases it is vital to take every action that is needed to safeguard the child, children, and young person(s). Immediate action may be necessary in the following situations.

- If emergency medical attention is required, phone the emergency services or take the child/ young person to the nearest Accident and Emergency department.
- If the child or young person is in immediate danger the police should be contacted by calling 999.
- Any suspicion, allegation or disclosure of abuse or harm must be reported immediately or as soon as practicably possible on the day of the occurrence to your DSL.
- Disclosure or evidence for concern may occur in several ways including a comment made by a child, physical evidence such as bruising, a change in behaviour or inappropriate behaviour or knowledge.
- The DSL must record the concern, with the staff member or volunteer using the appropriate Reporting Form. The DSL is responsible for ensuring that a copy of the Incident Report or Request for Support referral form is immediately passed onto the most senior person responsible for safeguarding or Surrey Children's Services, C-SPA, details below. This form must be kept strictly confidential and stored securely.
- It is the responsibility of the DSL or in their absence the CEO/ person who has overall responsibility for safeguarding to deal with safeguarding matters. If further referral is necessary, it will either be through Surrey Safeguarding Children Partnership/ Surrey Children's services or the Police.

The DSL, CEO or chairperson of trustees will be responsible for informing the employee who reported the disclosure of any action taken and any outcome if this is appropriate.

It is also the responsibility of the DSL, CEO or chairperson of trustees to ensure any partner agencies involved with the young person are made aware of the disclosure and the action taken where relevant and where information sharing guidance permits this.

It is important to remember that often, it is only when information held by several workers is put together, that a picture of child abuse emerges. All staff & volunteers must adhere to the information sharing protocol published by HM Government, adopted by the Children's Trust, and endorsed by SSCP. Details can be found [here](#); Information sharing: advice for practitioners (publishing.service.gov.uk). In addition to this, whilst respecting cultural differences, the basic requirement for children is that they are kept safe across social, ethnic, and cultural boundaries.

5.1. Responding to a disclosure

If the child or young person is not in immediate danger or does not require immediate medical attention, contact:

- a) Katrina Elliott: Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

Phone/email: katrina@maryfrancestrust.org.uk

- b) Glyn Marchant: Deputy DSL

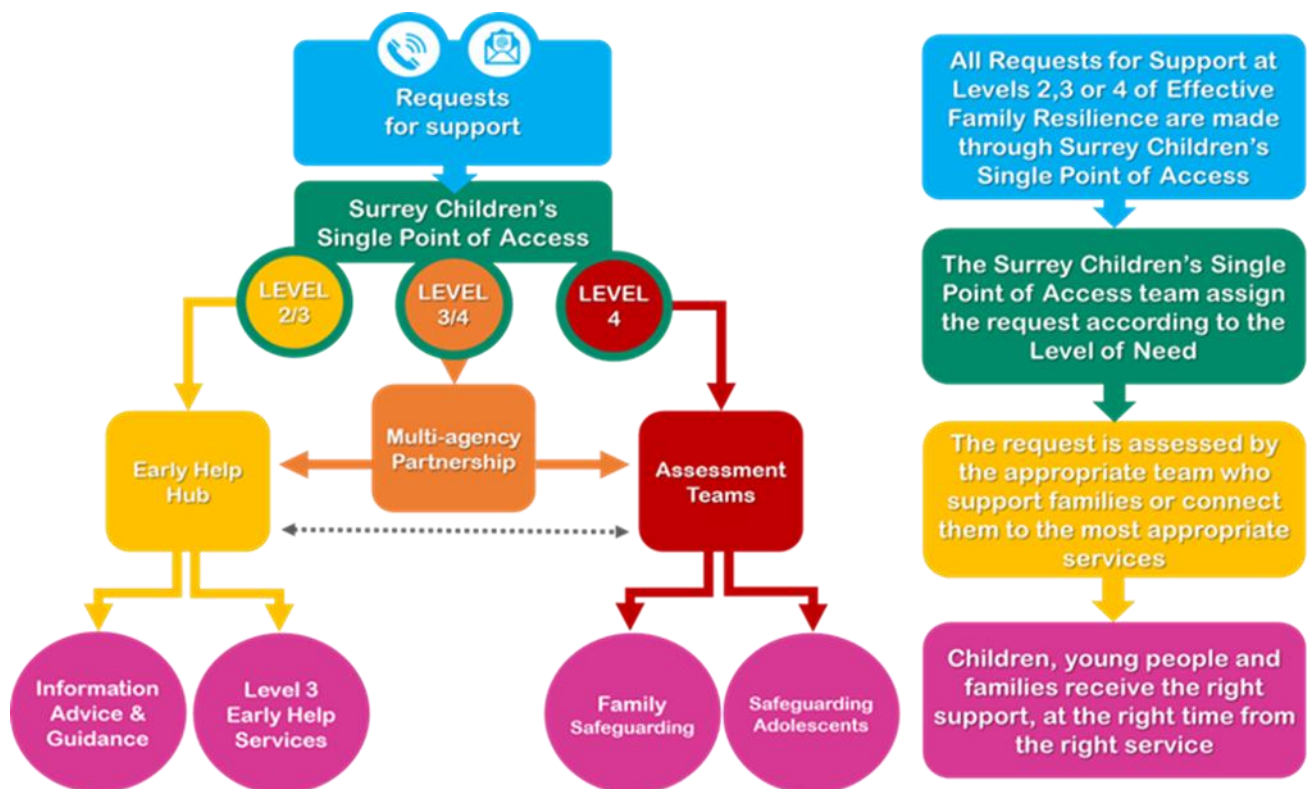
glyn@maryfrancestrust.org.uk

- c) Patrick Wolter: CEO

Phone/email: patrickwolter@maryfrancestrust.org.uk

Children's Single Point of Access (C-SPA), a front door to Surrey County Council services for children, provides residents and people who work with children in Surrey with direct information, advice, and guidance about where and how to find the appropriate support for children and families. C-SPA is available 9am-5pm, Monday – Friday

Phone: 0300 470 9100 Email: cspa@surreycc.gov.uk



Emergency Duty Team (EDT) provides an emergency social care service for urgent situations which are out of normal office hours. If your call is not answered, please do leave a message and your contact details for someone to get back to you.

- EDT is available 5pm-9am, Monday – Friday, Weekends 24 hours a day.
- Phone: 01483 517898 Email: edt.ssd@surreycc.gov.uk
- The LADO Service manages allegations against individuals who work or volunteer with children in Surrey. If you have a concern regarding someone who works with children, please contact the LADO on 0300 123 1650 Email: LADO@surreycc.gov.uk
- NSPCC Helpline 0808 800 5000

5.2. Reacting to a disclosure

- Listen carefully rather than asking leading questions.
- Never promise any particular action or NOT to disclose any information shared.
- Allow silence and/or allow child, young person to be upset.
- Try to relate to the age, understanding or special needs of the child or young person.
- Write down carefully the information you have been given as soon as possible, preferably within 24 hours and only including what you have been told.

- Discuss this as soon as possible with the DSL/ line manager.
- Any decision not to tell the parents must be discussed with the DSL/ line manager unless the child or young person is in immediate danger.

5.3. Parents/ carers

It is good practise to be as open and honest as possible with parents/carers about any concerns. However, you must not discuss your concerns with parent's/ carer's in the following circumstances:

- Where sexual abuse or exploitation is suspected.
- Where organised or multiple abuse is suspected.
- Where fabricated or induced illness is suspected.
- Where female genital mutilation is a concern.
- In cases of forced marriage.
- Where contacting parents / carers would place a child / young person or others at immediate risk.

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021, which provides a legal definition of domestic abuse, establishes a domestic abuse commissioner, introduces new protection orders and offences, and strengthens the support for victims of domestic abuse and their children. The Act also requires local authorities in England to provide support to victims of domestic abuse and their children within refuges and other safe accommodation.

6. Escalation Policy

Effective working together depends upon an open approach and honest relationships between agencies and a belief in genuine partnership working. Any disputes about the safety and well-being of a child should be resolved in a timely way with all agencies working together in the best interests of the child so that the welfare of the child remains paramount.

The Partners recognise that complexity of need and range of intervention/support will not always fit into a simple formula that leads to 'the right solution'. Often there may be no right or wrong answer and quite legitimately, practitioners may exercise their professional judgement differently. It is also the case that exceptionally, the needs of some young people and families may not easily fit within a conventional application of thresholds. The purpose of the SSCP Escalation Policy is to create a transparent process that enables multi-agency practitioners to exercise their professional judgement and provide the best possible service in a timely and safe way.

It is of vital importance that children; young people and their families do not become entangled in professional disagreements. Neither should disputes detract from the focus on the child, delay effective decision making, nor lead to protracted disputes that negatively impact upon the child and/or family and on inter-agency relationships and working practice. To reach a resolution, it is always essential that disputes are approached in a considerate manner and one which both respects and

seeks to understand the views and concerns of others from their experience and perspective when engaging with the young person/family.

Disagreements should be resolved through child centred discussion between agencies. This escalation policy outlines the process to be followed when professionals are unable to agree about what is in the best interests of the child. The detailed policy can be accessed here: [SSCP-Escalation-Procedure-Final-1.pdf \(surreyscp.org.uk\)](https://surreyscp.org.uk/SSCP-Escalation-Procedure-Final-1.pdf)

7. Allegations made against Staff and Volunteers

When any form of complaint is made against an employee or volunteer, it must be taken seriously. The complaint should initially be dealt with by the most senior staff member on site at the time the complaint is made. If the complaint is against the most senior member of staff on site, then the DSL, CEO or Chair of Trustees must be informed.

The senior staff member must report the complaint immediately to the DSL giving details of the circumstances. The DSL or CEO may contact the Local Authority Designated Officer. Further information can be found here: [3.2 Managing allegations against people that work or volunteer with children | Surrey Safeguarding Children Partnership \(procedures.org.uk\)](https://procedures.org.uk). They will attend the site of the allegation to gain an initial account of what has occurred from all relevant parties, including the person against whom the allegation has been made. If this is not possible, contact will be made by telephone. Mary Frances Trust will have the right to suspend from duty and/or the premises, any person who is a party to the allegation until a full investigation has been made.

This action does not imply in any way that the person suspended is responsible or is to blame for any action leading up to the complaint. The purpose of any such suspension is to enable a full and proper investigation to be carried out in a professional manner.

It is the responsibility of the DSL, CEO or the Board of Trustees to make the decision as to whether to inform Social Services and/or the Police Child Protection Unit, depending on the nature of the allegation. In matters of allegations against staff or volunteers working in child protection, information must be provided to the local designated officer.

8. Confidentiality and Whistle Blowing

- Mary Frances Trust operates a confidentiality policy. However, under no circumstances will information be kept confidential that raises concern about the safety and welfare of a child or young person.
- Any staff or volunteers with concerns about anybody providing services to children and young people should report this to their Line Manager, DSL/ CEO, or trustee board member as appropriate. They will be fully supported throughout the process.
- All staff must be aware that they have a professional responsibility to share information with other agencies to safeguard children and young people in accordance with the Information Sharing Policy published by HM Government, adopted by the Children's Trust and endorsed by SSCP. The Data Protection Act 1998 and General Data Protection Regulations are not a barrier to sharing information where a failure to do so would place a child at risk of harm.

- All staff must be aware that they cannot promise a child that they will keep secrets/not disclose potentially harmful information.

9. Safer Recruitment Policy Statement

Mary Frances Trust will apply the Working Together to Safeguard Children 2022 and SSCP Guidelines using the framework for safer recruitment and employment practice.

This will apply to all staff and volunteers undertaking activities with children and young people including teaching, training or instruction, care, or supervision, providing guidance or treatment, fostering and childcare.

The purpose of safer recruitment is to ensure:

- Applicants who may wish to harm adults at risk, children or young people are deterred from applying for jobs or volunteering opportunities.
- Any unsuitable applicants are rejected by scrutinising applications and exploring potential areas for concern at interview
- Unsuitable appointments are not made by having at least one member of the interview panel trained in safer recruitment; carrying out all relevant pre-employment checks* and ensuring all new staff and volunteers are given an appropriate induction.
- To identify and manage any identified risks.
- Maintain a safe and vigilant culture.

Multi-agency training on safer recruitment is available through the Surrey Children's Services Academy: Surrey Children's Services Academy (SCSA) - Surrey County Council (surreycc.gov.uk)

9.1. Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Checks

The organisation undertakes Enhanced DBS checks for all new staff and volunteers in client-facing roles, with the level of DBS check required specified in the job description. DBS information will be kept on the personnel file and the DBS number and date of processing will be held on a secure database. A risk assessment will be completed if there is a positive DBS check sent back. Any positive disclosures will be discussed with the DSL, CEO and/or trustees.

Failure to disclose convictions may result in disciplinary action or dismissal.

10. Summary of changes

- Updated statutory references throughout the policy to align with *Working Together to Safeguard Children (2026)*, replacing references to earlier versions of national guidance.
- Strengthened policy wording to reflect the statutory expectation that safeguarding is a **shared responsibility** across the organisation and partner agencies, while maintaining existing roles and accountability arrangements.
- Clarified the organisation's commitment to **child-centred safeguarding practice**, including a focus on the child or young person's lived experience and welfare in decision-making.

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- Introduced explicit reference to **inclusive and anti-discriminatory safeguarding principles**, building on existing rights-based statements to reflect national guidance on addressing inequality and disproportionality.
- Confirmed that these updates provide clarification and alignment with current statutory guidance only and **do not introduce changes** to Mary Frances Trust's safeguarding procedures, referral routes, thresholds, roles, or ways of working.

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