

POLICY STATEMENT ON CHILD PROTECTION AND SAFEGUARDING

POLICY OR PROCEDURE OR BOTH	Policy
INFORMATION CATEGORY	Internal
WHO NEEDS TO READ AND /OR BE TRAINED	Trustees, Director of Operations, Supervising Staff, Employed Staff, and Volunteers
OWNERSHIP OF APPROVAL	Trustee responsible for Safeguarding (Chair of St Luke's Advice Service, Martin Poole)
ADOPTION	Adopted by the Management Committee: Jan 2022.
REVIEW FREQUENCY	Annually
UPDATES	Sept 2022, Apr 2023, Apr 2024, Apr 2025
LAST REVIEW DATE AND PERSON	April 2025 – Director of Operations & Trustee responsible for Safeguarding (Chair of SLAS)
E -signature of responsible persons	SDM :  SLAS Chair:  Dated: April '25
CROSS REFERENCES	Safeguarding Adults Policy & Procedure Vulnerable Person Policy Equalities, Diversity & Inclusion Policy Conflicts of Interest Policy & Register Policy Statement on Confidentiality Referral and Signposting Procedure Whistleblowing Equalities, Diversity & Inclusion Policy

1. Purpose of this policy statement

This policy statement outlines St Lukes Advice Service's (SLAS) commitment to the welfare and safeguarding of children, the principles underlying this commitment and the action, which will be taken, if any concerns are identified or suspected. A child is defined as an individual who has not yet reached their 18th birthday. For older individuals see Safeguarding Policy and Procedure for Adults.

2. Policy principles and key features

St Luke's Advice Service believes that it is always unacceptable for a child or young person to experience abuse of any kind. Whilst we do not work directly with children, we work with adults who come into

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contact with children, some of whom have caring responsibility for children, and carers may bring their children to our office.

We recognise that the welfare of the child/young person is paramount and that all children without exception have the right to protection from abuse, regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, or sex.

The Director of Operations (Grace Smyth) is the Child Protection Officer and can be contacted initially via grace@stlukesadvice.service.gov.uk. This person has received training in safeguarding children which is updated when required and is the Designated Safeguarding Lead for the service, in her absence Jess Keilthy is the deputy Safeguarding Lead and she can be contacted via jess@stlukesadvice.service.org.uk.

St Luke's Advice Service is dedicated to ensuring the safety and welfare of children through robust recruitment procedures. All staff and volunteers who will be in direct contact with clients undergo thorough screening, including enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks, in compliance with legal requirements.

Our recruitment process is designed to identify individuals who are suitable and safe to work with vulnerable population. It includes rigorous interview procedures and reference checks.

During the recruitment process, candidates are required to provide details of any previous convictions or cautions, including those that may be considered spent under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974. Any relevant information disclosed is carefully considered in relation to the role and responsibilities involved.

We review and update our recruitment procedures to ensure compliance with relevant legislation and best practices in safeguarding.

All new staff members and volunteers are provided with comprehensive information about our organisation's commitment to safeguarding both children and adults, and the expected standards of behaviour and conduct. Trustees, whilst not required to have any direct contact with clients, are also provided with safeguarding information and are required to undertake regular safeguarding training.

Any worker, volunteer or trustee at SLAS may have concerns about the welfare, abuse, or possible abuse of a child.

We recognise that the welfare of children is everyone's responsibility, particularly when it comes to protecting them from abuse or harm.

Examples of when a concern is raised would be:

- A client tells you they have abused a child.
- A client speaks about the abuse of a child by someone else.
- A client's child is seen with unexplained bruising.
- During discussions about money with a client, it becomes apparent that food is not bought for children.

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- During a home visit you become aware of housing conditions that impact adversely on children
- During a home visit you notice images of children that give you cause for concern
- A parent only speaks negatively about their child eg tells you they are evil

You might also have concerns about a child at risk becoming radicalised, in which case note your concerns and raise them with the Director of Operations at the earliest opportunity.

The Government has a counter-terrorism strategy that includes supporting vulnerable people to prevent them being drawn into terrorism. Please speak to the Director of Operations (Grace Smyth) as soon as possible if you have any concerns arising from discussions with clients, or client behaviour.

Actual evidence of abuse is not required for there to be a concern.

- It is everyone's responsibility to report any concerns about abuse (initially to the Director of Operations, see below) and it is the responsibility of Social Services and the Police to conduct, where appropriate, a joint investigation.
- All incidents of alleged poor practise, misconduct, abuse or the potential for harm to children will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately.
- All personal data will be processed in accordance with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 2018.

We recognise the importance of whistleblowing in safeguarding the welfare of children and encourage all staff, volunteers, and trustees to report any suspicions or incidents of abuse promptly.

To ensure that whistleblowers are protected, and reports are handled confidentially, the following procedures are in place:

- **Confidential reporting channels:**

Any individual who has concerns about the welfare or safety of a child is encouraged to report them promptly. We provide multiple channels for reporting, including direct communication with the Director of Operations (Grace Smyth) or contacting external agencies such as social services or the police.

- **Protection of whistleblowers:**

St Luke's Advice Service is committed to protecting the identity and confidentiality of whistleblowers. Individuals who report concerns in good faith will not face any form of retaliation, victimisation, or discrimination as a result of their disclosure. Any attempts to intimidate or retaliate against whistleblowers will be treated as a serious disciplinary offense.

- **Confidentiality and data protection:**

All reports of concerns are handled with the utmost confidentiality and in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018. Information shared during the reporting process is only disclosed to individuals on a need-to-know basis, ensuring the privacy and dignity of all parties involved.

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- **Handling of reports:**

Reports of concerns are taken seriously and investigated promptly and impartially. The Director of Operations (Grace Smyth) is responsible for overseeing the handling of reports and ensuring appropriate actions are taken in line with safeguarding procedures and legal requirements.

- **Feedback and support:**

Whistleblowers will receive feedback on the outcome of their report to the extent possible without compromising confidentiality. Additionally, individuals who report concerns will be offered appropriate support and guidance throughout the process.

3. St Luke's Advice Service policy in practice:

We will:

- Follow the Pan Sussex Child Protection and Safeguarding Procedures available at <https://sussexchildprotection.procedures.org.uk/>
- Promote the well-being and welfare of children by providing opportunities, for those responsible for them, to access advice and information through our service.
- Promote and implement appropriate procedures to safeguard the well-being of children and protect them from abuse. All staff and volunteers in direct contact with clients (face to face) are required to complete a Disclosure and Barring Services check.
- Recruit, train, support and supervise staff, volunteers and trustees to adopt best practice to safeguard and protect children from abuse and minimise risk.
- Require staff, volunteers, and trustees to adopt and abide by this Policy. This Policy will form part of Induction procedure for all staff, volunteers, and trustees.
- Report any concerns over the welfare of a child to the Director of Operations (Grace Smyth), who acts as appointed child protection officer and has received training in safeguarding children which should be updated when required.
- Record all concerns. Any actions taken will also be recorded following the recording procedures contained in the risk assessment procedures and Incidents must be case noted factually and objectively.
- Ensure that if immediate action is required to keep a child safe, the worker should call for the appropriate help. This would be emergency services -an ambulance or police.
- Ensure that normally any subsequent action is agreed with the client concerned. Client's details or confidential information about a child would not be passed to any other agency without consent from the client and/or the child's parent or guardian, as appropriate. This is overridden if the child's safety would be compromised by this.
- Ensure that St Luke's Advice Service's whistle blowing, confidentiality and disclosure procedure will be followed.

Action taken could include:

- Calling social services for advice without passing on confidential information
- Referrals to other agencies
- Speaking again with the client for more information
- Whenever there is concern that a child has been abused or neglected a referral must be made without delay to the duty social worker

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- The Director of Operations is responsible for ensuring their own training in safeguarding children is up to date.
- The Director of Operations is responsible for speaking with any St Luke's Advice Service team member with concerns and agreeing with them a course of action.
- These concerns of abuse or neglect will then be raised with Front Door for Families. Tel: 01273 290400. Email: FrontDoorForFamilies@brighton-hove.gcsx.gov.uk. Front Door for Families is part of Brighton and Hove City Council.
- SLAS will respond to any allegations of misconduct or abuse of children in line with this Policy and Procedure as well as implementing, where appropriate, the relevant disciplinary and appeals procedures.
- SLAS will respond to any allegations of misconduct or abuse of children in line with this Policy and Procedure as well as implementing, where appropriate, the relevant disciplinary and appeals procedures.
- SLAS will review and evaluate this Policy and Procedures on an annual basis or as required following any relevant issues or concerns raised or changes in legislation relating to the protection of children (whichever is soonest).

4. Further guidance and support:

For further information on safeguarding children and who to contact if you have any concerns about the welfare of children.

For children in Brighton and Hove:

<https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/families-children-and-learning/child-protection/child-protection>

For children in East Sussex:

<https://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/children-families/report-a-concern-child>