Policy for Safeguarding Adults and Children at Risk

Policy Title: Safeguarding Adults and Children at Risk	
Policy Type & number: OCC1	Owner: Operational Directors
Policy category: mandatory~~/general/specific~~	Review Cycle: Annually

Author	Approved by	Effective Date
Denice Houslin	Board of Directors	01/06/2026

Distribution	All staff, volunteers and consultants

1. Purpose

Oak Community Services CIC (OAK) is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people, and adults at risk who engage with our services.

This policy sets out:

- **Our safeguarding responsibilities**
- **How to recognise and respond to concerns**
- **The roles and responsibilities of staff, volunteers, and consultants**

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2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- All staff
- Volunteers
- Consultants
- Trustees/Board members

It covers anyone who comes into contact with:

- Children (under 18)
- Adults at risk (18+)

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3. Legal and Regulatory Framework

This policy is informed by current UK legislation and guidance, including:

- Children Act 1989 & 2004
- Care Act 2014
- Domestic Abuse Act 2021
- Mental Capacity Act 2005
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Data Protection Act 2018 (UK GDPR)
- Modern Slavery Act 2015
- Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 (Prevent Duty)
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (2026)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (2025)

4. Key Principles

OAK is committed to ensuring that:

- Everyone has the right to live free from abuse, harm, and exploitation
- Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility
- Concerns are taken seriously and acted upon promptly
- Individuals are treated with respect, dignity, and fairness
- We work in partnership with statutory agencies

5. Definitions

Child

Any person under the age of 18.

Adult at Risk

An adult who:

- Has care and support needs, and
- Is experiencing or at risk of abuse or neglect, and
- Is unable to protect themselves

Abuse

Abuse can take many forms, including:

- Physical
- Emotional/Psychological
- Sexual
- Financial
- Neglect
- Domestic abuse (including coercive control)
- Modern slavery and trafficking
- Discriminatory abuse
- Organisational/institutional abuse

6. Roles and Responsibilities

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

Name: Denice Houslin

The DSL is responsible for:

- Receiving safeguarding concerns
- Making referrals to external agencies
- Maintaining records
- Providing guidance and support

All Staff, Volunteers, and Consultants

Must:

- Complete safeguarding training within 1 month of joining
- Refresh training annually
- Be alert to signs of abuse
- Report concerns immediately
- Maintain confidentiality

7. Recognising Abuse

Indicators may include:

- Unexplained injuries
- Sudden behavioural changes
- Withdrawal or fear
- Financial irregularities
- Signs of neglect (poor hygiene, malnutrition)

Abuse may be:

- Ongoing or a single incident
- Intentional or unintentional

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8. Responding to Safeguarding Concerns

If you suspect or witness abuse:

Do:

- Stay calm and listen
- Take the concern seriously
- Record factual information
- Report immediately to the DSL

Do Not:

- Promise confidentiality
- Investigate yourself
- Delay reporting

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9. Reporting Procedure

1. Report concern to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) immediately
2. DSL will assess risk and take appropriate action
3. Where necessary, referrals will be made to:
    - Local Authority Safeguarding Team
    - Police
    - NHS or relevant services

Emergency:

If someone is in immediate danger, call 999

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10. Whistleblowing

All staff have a duty to report concerns about:

- **Unsafe practice**
- **Misconduct**
- **Failure to safeguard**

Concerns can be raised without fear of retaliation under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998.

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11. Training

- Mandatory safeguarding training for all staff
- Annual refresher training
- Additional training for DSL and leadership

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12. Record Keeping

- All safeguarding concerns must be documented
- Records must be:
  - Accurate
  - Timely
  - Secure
- Stored in line with Data Protection Act 2018

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13. Confidentiality

Information will be shared on a need-to-know basis only, except where:

- There is a risk of harm
- A legal obligation exists

Safeguarding concerns override confidentiality where necessary.

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14. Safer Recruitment

OAK will:

- Carry out DBS checks where appropriate
- Verify identity and references
- Ensure staff are suitable to work with vulnerable groups

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15. Prevent Duty

OAK recognises its duty to prevent radicalisation and extremism.

Staff must:

- Be aware of signs of radicalisation
- Report concerns through safeguarding procedures
- Promote safe, inclusive environments

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16. Failure to Comply

Failure to follow this policy may result in:

- Disciplinary action
- Dismissal
- Legal consequences

It may also place individuals at serious risk of harm.

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17. Review

This policy will be reviewed:

- Annually
- Following legislative or organisational changes
- After serious incidents

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18. Contact

For questions or concerns, contact:

Designated Safeguarding Lead: Denice Houslin

Appendix A: Family Mediation Council (FMC) Safeguarding Addendum

This appendix applies specifically to cases, MIAMs, and sessions conducted by FMC-registered mediators or within FMC-accredited family mediation services. Where FMC requirements exceed general organizational policy, this addendum takes precedence for mediation practice.

A1. Regulatory Framework In addition to Section 3, FMC-registered mediators operate in accordance with:

- FMC Code of Practice
- FMC Manual & Standards Framework
- Family Mediation Standards Board (FMSB) Guidance on Safeguarding and Confidentiality

A2. Role of the Professional Practice Consultant (PPC)

- Mediators must consult their designated PPC when evaluating complex safeguarding concerns or potential breaches of confidentiality.
- PPCs advise on assessing party safety, managing coercive control, and safely suspending or terminating mediation.

A3. Mediation Confidentiality & Safeguarding Exceptions

- Limits of Confidentiality: Mediation confidentiality (including MIAMs and session disclosures) must be breached if a child or adult at risk is suffering—or at risk of suffering—significant harm, or if required by law.
- Client Notification: Participants are informed of these legal limits during the MIAM and via the Agreement to Mediate before mediation begins.
- Reporting & Disclosure: Where safe, the mediator will consult their PPC prior to sharing information with external agencies. Clients will be informed of any referral unless doing so increases the risk of harm.

A4. Operational Safeguarding in Mediation

- **Screening**: Every participant must undergo individual screening (at the MIAM stage and continuously throughout) for domestic abuse, coercive control, and child safety.
- **Termination on Safety Grounds**: If mediation is unsafe or inappropriate due to safeguarding concerns, the mediator will terminate the process safely, using neutral unsuitability phrasing to avoid placing any party at heightened risk.
- **Child-Inclusive Mediation (CIM)**: Mediators running direct child consultations must hold FMC CIM accreditation and an enhanced DBS check. Information shared by a child remains confidential from parents unless a child protection issue arises.