Special Partnership Trust

# ADULT SAFEGUARDING POLICY

Date Reviewed:  September 2026

Date due for review: September 2027

**Adult Safeguarding Policy**

The SPT recognises that adults have the right to live life free from harm and abuse and with dignity and respect. It is a moral and legal duty that everyone who works with adults who may be at risk of harm, neglect or exploitation is involved in protecting their welfare and safety. Adult safeguarding therefore requires all agencies to work collaboratively to improve outcomes, rather than duplicating or superseding existing responsibilities for providing safe and effective care.

The SPT adopts the Making Safeguarding Personal approach, ensuring safeguarding responses focus on outcomes desired by the adult wherever they have capacity.

**The Purpose and scope of this policy statement.**
The Special Partnership Trust provides education for pupils who have an Education Health and care Plan outlining their with Special Educational Needs. The majority of our pupils are under 18, however some pupils stay in Post 16 Provisions beyond their 18th birthday. All staff who work in the Trust access Safeguarding training and work within the Trust's Safeguarding policy and processes in line with KCSIE. This policy outlines safeguarding specifically for Post 18 pupils – who are adult in need of protections.

Whilst this policy is for adults over 18 – the SPT recognises the importance of Transitional safeguarding for young people aged 16 – 25 moving between children and adult services – schools work closely with young people and their families alongside partner services.

This policy outlines the role that SPT staff play in safeguarding and protecting adults who are at risk of abuse or adult in need of protections. Staff must;

- Know how to recognize potential abuse of adults at risk/adult in need of protections
- Know what to do when safeguarding concerns arise
- Understand what the School / SPT expects of them in terms of their own behaviour and actions

An adult at risk of abuse can be anyone over the age of eighteen, pupils, staff or volunteers (see the 'terminology' section below). Whilst personal characteristics may make an individual more vulnerable e.g. disability and communication difficulties, it is the situation around an individual which may increase risk or place them at potential risk of harm. It is therefore vital to be open to the possibility that

any adult may be at risk and that this can be temporary or on-going depending on the support and protective factors around them.

This policy and procedure must be read in conjunction with:

- SPT Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

This policy applies to all staff and volunteers (including trustees and governors), agency staff, students.

**Why the policy is important and legal context**

Adults at risk of abuse may have additional support needs, meaning that they are more likely to experience abuse, and less able to protect themselves from it. The abuse of adults at risk can have devastating effects on their physical, mental, emotional, social and spiritual wellbeing, as well as on their children or children connected to them. Equally, many adults at risk have been victims or survivors of abuse and harmful experiences in childhood which have impacted upon their confidence, self-worth and resilience and compounded other personal characteristics increasing vulnerability. Safeguarding adults at risk is therefore closely linked to child protection work.

Statutory guidance means that the Special Partnership Schools must protect adults at risk and adhere to the framework of relevant legislation and statutory guidance as follows:

The most current version of "Care and Support Statutory Guidance" – this policy will operate in accordance with any updates issued by the Department of Health and Social Care.

Mental Capacity Act 2005: Governs decision making for individuals aged 16 plus who may lack capacity.
Serious Crime Act 2015: Introduced the offence of coercive and controlling behaviour in intimate and familial relationships.
BSI Safeguarding Standards.

This policy supports the Six Care Act Safeguarding Principles;

1. Empowerment
2. Prevention
3. Proportionality
4. Protection
5. Partnership
6. Accountability

**Terminology**
For the purposes of this policy and procedures, the following terms are used:

**Adult at risk**: An adult at risk is 'any person who is aged 18 years or over and at risk of abuse or neglect because of their needs for care and support' (Care Act 2014 [England]). This includes individuals who may be temporarily vulnerable due to illness, trauma, or situational factors.

**Adult in need of protection**: is a person aged 18 or over, whose exposure to harm through abuse, exploitation or neglect may be increased by their:

a) Personal characteristics AND/OR
b) Life circumstances AND
c) Who is unable to protect their own well-being, property, assets, rights or other interests; AND
d) Where the action or inaction of another person or persons is causing, or is likely to cause, him/her to be harmed

**Safeguarding:** This describes the activity that is undertaken to protect adults at risk from abuse, harm, ill-treatment and neglect. It includes prevention, early intervention and co-ordinated multi-agency responses.

**Abuse**: This is the ill-treatment or abuse of an adult at risk. A person may abuse or neglect an adult at risk by inflicting harm or by knowingly failing to act to prevent harm1. Adults can be abused in a family, at a community fundraising event, in any type of institution/organisation, by those known to them or others, for example by those responsible for organising, participating or providing support or care.

**Prevention**: This is how we seek to reduce the abuse of adults at risk occurring in the first place. This includes training, guidance and support for employees and volunteers, as well as for those receiving services.

**Online and Digital Safeguarding** : This identifies the risk that can be posed by;
-online exploitation
-romance scams
- online coercion
-Sextortion
- AI enabled abuse and fraud
-Financial exploitation through digital platforms.

**Categories of Abuse: Appendix 1**

**Key Principles** Special Partnership Trust Schools s approach to safeguarding adults at risk is based on the following principles**:**

- All adults have a right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse, regardless of age, ability, gender, racial heritage, religious beliefs, sexual orientation or personal characteristics which may indicate additional vulnerabilities
- The best interests of the person are paramount in all considerations about the safeguarding and protection of adults at risk
- Interventions must be person -centred, proportionate and empowering
- Where concerns are identified, the key principles of working with adults at risk embedded in the Care Act 2014, will inform the approach to interventions at all times (see section 6 below**)**
- Where a concern is identified, we must communicate very clearly what we have done and will be doing to safeguard the adult at risk, unless to do so would in any way increase risk to them or a child. Capacity will be assumed unless there is reason to believe that the person cannot understand (see section 7 below)
- Where we are working together with adults at risk, their carers', family members and other agencies, it is essential to recognise that, in some limited circumstances, it will not be appropriate to engage with carers or family members in order to protect the adult at risk
- Concerns or allegations that staff or volunteers have abused or neglected adults will be taken very seriously and managed sensitively and fairly in accordance with these policies, relevant legislation and local procedures

**We deliver this policy by:**

- Providing effective leadership and management for staff and volunteers through induction, support and training
- Ensuring effective and robust safeguarding and protection practices by having clear policies, procedures, practice standards and guidance in place
- Safe recruitment and employment practices to ensure that robust recruitment, selection, induction processes are in place for all those who work across the Special Partnership Trust.

**How to comply**

**Capacity and Consent** It is important to be alert to issues of cognitive capacity which can increase the vulnerability of people where they have a reduced ability to make informed decisions in the moment. This may be transient (e.g. due to fear,

shock, injury, illness) or long term (e.g. due to learning differences, disability, mental health issues).

Whilst this is a complex issue, it should not get in the way of staff and volunteers genuinely seeking to ensure that all individuals are respectfully consulted in relation to participation in activities and/or sharing of information about them.

A young person aged 16 or older is presumed in law to have capacity to consent, unless there is evidence to the contrary. Capacity to consent is not simply based on age however, particularly where learning and communication difficulties and disabilities are identified. You should also consider a person's capacity to understand the consequences of giving or withholding their consent. They should not be treated as unable to make a decision until all practicable steps to help them have been taken.

When assessing a person's understanding you should seek to explain the issues using their preferred mode of communication and language. This should be done in a way that is suitable for them, considering all you know about them from your contact with them, particularly their age, language and likely understanding.

It is important to try and ensure that they really understand the issues and are not just agreeing to what is proposed. If you are unsure whether they have the capacity to consent, then you should work closely with the staff team – informed by the EHCP and personalised learning or care plans.

The following criteria should be considered when assessing whether a person has sufficient understanding at any time to consent, or to refuse consent, to sharing of information about them or participating in specific activities:

- Can the person understand the question being asked of them?
- Are they taking an active part in the discussion?
- Can they rephrase the question in their own words?
- How would they explain it to someone else?
- Do they have a reasonable understanding of what the risks or benefits of giving their consent or saying no?
- What do they say they think would happen if they agree the action being suggested?
- Can they appreciate and consider the alternatives, weighing up one aspect against another and express a clear and consistent personal view? Encourage them to say out loud, or write down, their view of the pros and cons. You could recheck these views later or at a later contact with them

**If you have concerns.**

**Duty of Care:**

The SPT will retain the same duty of care principles as it affords our vulnerable children recognising that everyone has a clear moral and/ or professional responsibility to prevent or act on incidents or concerns of abuse. Our duty of care to adults identified at risk, will be fulfilled when all the acts reasonably expected of a person in their role have been carried out with appropriate care, attention and prudence.

The **local authority** retains the responsibility for overseeing a safeguarding enquiry and ensuring that any investigation satisfies its duty under section 42 to decide what action (if any) is necessary to help and protect the adult, and to ensure that such action is taken when necessary.

The SPT will therefore, be fully informed on their safeguarding working practice regarding adult in need of protections by the Devon or Cornwall and Isles of Scilly (CIoS) Adult safeguarding principles and key legislation underpinning this legal framework;

These principles, key legislation and associated guidance implement the 2011 Government policy which states:

*"The Government's policy objective is to prevent and reduce the risk of significant harm to adult in need of protections from abuse or other types of exploitation, whilst supporting individuals in maintaining control over their lives and in making informed choices without coercion" (Statement of government policy on adult safeguarding: 2011)*

**The SPT will therefore:**

- respond to issues of abuse and neglect in accordance with the Multi-Agency Adult Safeguarding Policy and Procedure
- maintain their own internal policy and procedures, consistent with the CIoS multi-agency Policy and Procedure
- ensure all staff and volunteers raise adult safeguarding concerns as specified with the CIoS multi-agency Policy and Procedure
- ensure that appropriate senior representatives of the organisation attend and actively contribute to adult safeguarding Strategy Meeting/ discussions.
- provide details of enquiries undertaken and their findings to inform adult safeguarding plans and any meetings or conferences held to develop plans.
- attend meetings and actively contribute to adult safeguarding processes.

- work in partnership with other agencies to ensure the safeguarding planning needs of the adult at risk are met.
- ensure information is shared between agencies in accordance with information sharing policies and protocols.
- keep its own records in relation to safeguarding concerns and how these are responded to.
- supports and empowers adults at risk to make decisions about their own lives.
- adhere to the principles of the Mental Capacity Act 2005*, and accompanying Code of Practice, where an adult at risk lacks capacity to make the relevant decision(s)
- support adults at risk to end abuse and to access support that enables them to achieve resolution and recovery wherever possible.

**Reporting safeguarding concerns:**
All members of staff will report any safeguarding concerns to the DSL/ DDSL of the school using the well-embedded CPOMs process, providing all necessary detail in the electronic records made. The DSL/ DDSL will act upon the information received in accordance to the detailed records made.

The SPT will always work directly with our young people to encourage them to make their own decisions, however, the law recognises that some adults at risk may not be able to make their own decisions about the risks presented by known facts. The SPT will look towards the Mental Capacity Act (2005); this is the law that outlines how decisions are made concerning adults and governs the work of the Trust. It applies to people over the age of 16. The Act recognises that if the adult does not have the mental capacity to make a decision, then key adults involved with the adult will be involved in making decisions of their behalf ('best interests'). This includes parents, medical and educational professionals and other relevant agencies depending upon the complexity of the situation. At all times, the adults' best interests must be considered carefully when assessing risks (capacity assessment) and determining courses of action, including safeguarding plans.

Using this additional information, the DSL/ DDSL will liaise with adult social care colleagues in regard to any safeguarding concerns raised regarding any adult in need of protection within our schools particularly when it is perceived they lack the capacity to make informed decisions regarding their own personal safety and welfare. The welfare needs of the young person will be at the forefront of any social care discussion, planning appropriately with them to ensure a robust multi-agency approach in the identification of potential outcomes; the SPT will act upon such advice and guidance discussed/ received.

**Appendix 1**: Categories of Adult Abuse
Reference: Care and Support Statutory Guidance (2018)

**What constitutes abuse and neglect?**
This section considers the different types and patterns of abuse and neglect and the different circumstances in which they may take place. This is not intended to be an exhaustive list but an illustrative guide as to the sort of behaviour which could give rise to a safeguarding concern.

Organisations and individuals should not limit their view of what constitutes abuse or neglect, as they can take many forms and the circumstances of the individual case should always be considered. Exploitation and abuse of power are common themes in the following list of the types of abuse and neglect.

**Physical abuse including**:

- assault
- hitting
- slapping
- pushing
- misuse of medication
- restraint
- inappropriate physical sanctions

Domestic violence including:

- psychological
- physical
- sexual
- financial
- emotional abuse
- honour-based violence
- Coercive control

The cross-government definition of domestic violence and abuse is:

Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. A new offence of

coercive and controlling behaviour in intimate and familial relationships was introduced into the Serious Crime Act 2015. The offence will impose a maximum 5 years' imprisonment, a fine or both. The offence closes a gap in the law around patterns of coercive and controlling behaviour during a relationship between intimate partners, former partners who still live together, or family members, sending a clear message that it is wrong to violate the trust of those closest to you, providing better protection to victims experiencing continuous abuse and allowing for earlier identification, intervention and prevention.

Sexual abuse including:

- rape
- indecent exposure
- sexual harassment
- inappropriate looking or touching
- sexual teasing or innuendo
- sexual photography
- subjection to pornography or witnessing sexual acts
- indecent exposure
- sexual assault
- sexual acts to which the adult has not consented or was pressured into consenting

Psychological abuse including:

- emotional abuse
- threats of harm or abandonment
- deprivation of contact
- humiliation
- blaming
- controlling
- intimidation
- coercion
- harassment
- verbal abuse
- cyber bullying
- isolation
- unreasonable and unjustified withdrawal of services or supportive networks

Financial or material abuse including:

- theft
- fraud

- internet scamming
- coercion in relation to an adult's financial affairs or arrangements, including in connection with wills, property, inheritance or financial transactions
- the misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits

Financial abuse is the main form of abuse investigated by the Office of the Public Guardian both amongst adults at risk and children. Financial recorded abuse can occur in isolation, but as research has shown, where there are other forms of abuse, there is likely to be financial abuse occurring.

Although this is not always the case, everyone should also be aware of this possibility.
Potential indicators of financial abuse include:

- change in living conditions
- lack of heating, clothing or food
- inability to pay bills/unexplained shortage of money
- unexplained withdrawals from an account
- unexplained loss/misplacement of financial documents
- the recent addition of authorised signers on a client or donor's signature card
- sudden or unexpected changes in a will or other financial documents

Modern slavery encompasses:

- slavery
- human trafficking
- forced labour and domestic servitude.
- traffickers and slave masters using whatever means they have at their disposal to coerce, deceive and force individuals into a life of abuse, servitude and inhumane treatment

Discriminatory abuse including forms of:

- harassment
- slurs or similar treatment:
    - because of race
    - gender and gender identity
    - age
    - disability
    - sexual orientation
    - religion

Organisational abuse Including neglect and poor care practice within an institution or specific care setting such as a hospital or care home, for example, or in relation to care provided in one's own home.

This may range from one off incidents to on-going ill-treatment. It can be through neglect or poor professional practice due to the structure, policies, processes and practices within an organisation.

Neglect and acts of omission including:

- ignoring medical
- emotional or physical care needs
- failure to provide access to appropriate health, care and support or educational services
- the withholding of the necessities of life, such as medication, adequate nutrition and heating

Self-neglect

This covers a wide range of behaviour neglecting to care for one's personal hygiene, health or surroundings and includes behaviour such as hoarding. A decision on whether a response is required under safeguarding will depend on the adult's ability to protect themselves by controlling their own behaviour. There may come a point when they are no longer able to do this, without external support.

Incidents of abuse may be one-off or multiple and affect one person or more. Professionals and others should look beyond single incidents or individuals to identify patterns of harm. Repeated instances of poor care may be an indication of more serious problems and of what we now describe as organisational abuse. In order to see these patterns, it is important that information is recorded and appropriately shared.

Patterns of abuse vary and include:

- serial abuse, in which the perpetrator seeks out and 'grooms' individuals. Sexual abuse sometimes falls into this pattern as do some forms of financial abuse
- long-term abuse, in the context of an ongoing family relationship such as domestic violence between spouses or generations or persistent psychological abuse
- opportunistic abuse, such as theft occurring because money or jewellery has been left lying around

Note: This is not an exhaustive list, nor do these examples prove that there is actual abuse occurring. However, they do indicate that a closer look and possible investigation may be needed.

Appendix 2

**Adult Safeguarding Referrals**

**Cornwall**

**Adult Safeguarding Concern / Referral**

- Telephone: **0300 123 4131**
- Online referral: Adult Safeguarding Concern Form via Cornwall Council
- Professional advice: **01872 326433** [cornwall.gov.uk], [rms.cornwall.nhs.uk]

**Out of Hours**

- Emergency Duty Team: **01208 251300** [cornwall.gov.uk], [cornwallad...line.co.uk]

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**Devon**

**Adult Safeguarding Concern / Referral**

- Adult Social Care: **0345 155 1007**
- Email: **adultsc.safeguardingadultservices-mailbox@devon.gov.uk**
- Online safeguarding referral available through Devon Adult Social Care. [devon.gov.uk], [devonsafeg...hip.org.uk]

**Out of Hours**

- Emergency Duty Service: **0345 600 0388** [devon.gov.uk], [devon.gov.uk]

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**Torbay**

**Adult Safeguarding Concern / Referral**

- Safeguarding Adults Single Point of Contact Team:
  - **01803 219700**
- Email:
  - **tsdft.safeguardingalert@nhs.net** [devonsafeg...hip.org.uk], [torbay.gov.uk]

**Professional Safeguarding Enquiries**

- **01803 219888** (professionals only) [devonsafeg...hip.org.uk]

**Out of Hours**

- Emergency Duty Service: **0300 456 4876** [devonsafeg...hip.org.uk], [torbay.gov.uk]

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**Police and Emergency Response Procedure**

Include the following in the Trust policy:

**Immediate Risk of Harm**

Where an adult is:

- in immediate danger;
- seriously injured;
- requiring urgent medical assistance; or
- a crime is in progress,

staff must:

1. **Call 999 immediately** and request Police, Ambulance or Fire Service as required.
2. Take reasonable action to safeguard the adult and others from immediate harm.
3. Inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or most senior manager available.
4. Make an Adult Safeguarding Referral to the relevant local authority as soon as possible.
5. Record all actions, decisions and timings on the Trust's safeguarding recording system.

**Non-Emergency Police Contact**

- **Devon & Cornwall Police: 101**
- Emergency: **999** [cornwall.gov.uk], [devon.gov.uk]

If an adult safeguarding concern arises outside normal local authority operating hours, staff must assess immediate risk. Where there is immediate danger, serious injury, a crime in progress or medical emergency, staff must contact emergency services via 999. Where statutory adult safeguarding intervention is required but the situation is not an emergency, staff should contact the relevant Emergency Duty Team for Cornwall, Devon or Torbay and notify the Designated Safeguarding Lead at the earliest opportunity. All actions must be recorded and followed up on the next working day.