

Achieve Change & Engagement (a.c.e.)

Safeguarding
Policy
2026



| Title | Version | Review Date | Accountable Director |
|--|---------|-------------|----------------------|
| ACE Safeguarding Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults. | 2026 | 01/04/27 | Keren Hardman |

Contents

- 1. Purpose**
- 2. Definitions**
- 3. Policy**
- 4. Appendices - 1a: Definitions of Abuse**
 - 1b: Code of Behaviour**
 - 2: Relevant Information**
 - 3: Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) Process**
 - 4: Summary of Lancashire Children’s Safeguarding Assurance Partnership Online Safeguarding Strategy**
 - 5: Summary of Lancashire’s multi-agency escalation policy**

1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to define how Achieve Change & Engagement (a.c.e.) operates to safeguard children, young people and adults in order to:

- Protect them from harm
- Provide staff, volunteers and students with the overarching principles that guide our approach to safeguarding

a.c.e recognises we have a duty of care and is committed to the protection and safety of all children, young people and adults at risk who are under the organisation's care. It is the duty of all adults at the organisation (staff, volunteers and students) to safeguard the welfare of children, young people and adults at risk by creating an environment that protects them from harm, ensuring policy and best practice guidelines are followed.

This policy is a fundamental part of our governance responsibilities and priorities. Trustees' responsibilities include ensuring that a.c.e. provides a safe environment and protects clients, staff, volunteers and students from abuse or maltreatment of any kind.

We are committed to ensuring our safeguarding practices reflect our legal responsibilities, government guidance and Lancashire Safeguarding Partnership requirements. a.c.e. recognises that it has responsibilities for the safety and care of children under the Children Act 1989 and 2004 and Working Together 2023. It recognises its responsibilities to safeguard adults at risk of harm under the Care Act 2014. a.c.e. will act in accordance with all legislation including the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, the Terrorism Act 2000 and the Modern Slavery Act 2015 and relevant online safety legislation.

a.c.e. delivers safeguarding within a trauma-informed, ACE-aware framework, recognising the impact of adversity on development, behaviour and risk. We also recognise that safeguarding includes risks arising in digital, online and hybrid environments, and we commit to addressing these proactively.

We will fulfil our duty to report Serious Incidents, including safeguarding, as part of our governance and reporting responsibilities to the Charities Commission.

This policy needs to be read in conjunction with safeguarding procedures and the wider policies and procedures for a.c.e. which when combined develop a comprehensive and more robust framework for safeguarding.

2. Definitions

- **Children** are defined as anyone under the age of 18
- **Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children** is defined in Working Together 2023 as:

- Providing help and support to meet the needs of children as soon as problems emerge
- Protecting children from maltreatment, whether that is within or outside the home, including online
- Preventing impairment of children’s mental or physical health or development
- Ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care. Promoting the upbringing of children with their birth parents, or otherwise their family network when in the best interests of the children
- Taking action to enable children to have the best outcomes set out in the Children’s Social Care Network Framework

Adults at risk of abuse or neglect defined by the Care Act 2014 as:

Someone aged 18 years or over who:

- Has care and support needs
- Is experiencing or at risk of experiencing abuse or neglect
- As a result of their care and support needs is unable to protect themselves from abuse or neglect or the risk of it

If someone has care and support needs but is not currently receiving support from a health or social care service they can still be an adult at risk.

Contextual safeguarding

Harm can occur outside the home — in peer groups, schools, neighbourhoods, online spaces and communities. a.c.e. recognises these wider influences and works with partners to address them.

Exploitation

Includes child sexual exploitation (CSE), child criminal exploitation (CCE), financial exploitation, modern slavery, trafficking, online exploitation and grooming.

Staff

Includes paid employees, sessional workers, freelancers, contractors, trustees, volunteers and students on placement.

3. Policy Statement

This policy applies to everyone working or volunteering on behalf of a.c.e., including the board of trustees, paid staff, volunteers, self employed workers and students on placement.

- We will practice in a way that promotes the welfare of children and adults and protects them from harm.
- We will demonstrate best practice in safeguarding children and adults at risk, underpinned by the principles and values in working to support the development and empowerment of young people, in line with the strategic aims of the Children’s Safeguarding Assurance Partnership and Lancashire Safeguarding Adults Board.
- It is everyone’s responsibility to report any concerns and all staff, volunteers and students and contracted staff will know how to recognise and report safeguarding concerns of abuse, self-abuse, exploitation, radicalisation and mistreatment.
- We will promote high ethical standards within the organisation and ensure these are embedded within philosophy and practice and not affected by age, ability, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious belief and/or sexual identity of the child or adult.
- We will ensure that a.c.e is fully compliant with relevant national and local safeguarding legislation, including the Safer Working Practice Guidance (2024 update).
- Adults will be included in swift and personalised safeguarding responses in line with the six principles of safeguarding for adults and Making Safeguarding Personal.
- We are committed to interagency collaboration and information sharing to protect children and adults at risk of harm.
- We will ensure that all children and adults at risk are kept safe during online, telephone and hybrid work.
- Embed trauma-informed and ACE-aware practice across all safeguarding activities.

The key principles underpinning the policy are:

We will value, listen, respect and respond to children and adults.

- The child’s and/or vulnerable adult’s welfare and safeguarding will always be the paramount consideration.
- All children, young people and vulnerable adults have the right to be protected from abuse.
- All allegations of abuse will be taken seriously and responded to promptly and appropriately in line with statutory duties and national safeguarding principles.
- The recognition of the importance of information sharing procedures in safeguarding.

In addition:

- ACE will work with local agencies to ensure that any concerns are reported and acted upon appropriately in line with statutory duties and national safeguarding principles.
- Parents and other members of the family will be actively encouraged and supported to engage with ACE and clear communication channels will be developed to facilitate this.

- Staff and volunteers will provide good role models of behaviour, in line with the principles of best practice when working with children, young people and adults.
- Partnerships Local solutions through services working with their communities. Safeguarding adults will be most effective where citizens, services and communities work collaboratively to prevent, identify and respond to harm and abuse. The skills of the multiagency team should be utilised when safeguarding adults with care and support needs.

We will keep children and adults safe by:

- Providing effective safeguarding management, induction and regular training and support for all staff, volunteers, trustees, students on placement and contractual workers on policy and procedures. Including Prevent, capacity, exploitation, genital mutilation, modern slavery, contextual safeguarding, online safety and digital risks as part of our safeguarding training programme.
 - Using our safeguarding policy and procedures to share and report all safeguarding concerns to the relevant internal staff and external authorities swiftly and appropriately.
 - Using our safeguarding policies and procedures to share and manage any allegations of safeguarding concerns about staff, volunteers, students or contractual workers against a child using the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) Process (see Appendix 3).
 - Managing the risks of extremist or terrorist abuse, not supporting or enabling terrorism or other illegal conduct, such as hatred on the grounds of race, religion or sexual orientation. Preventing and reporting extremist and radicalisation concerns.
 - Acting in an appropriate, professional manner as set out in our Code of Conduct and Boundaries Policies. Failure to maintain standards may be dealt with using our Disciplinary Procedures.
 - Recruiting and selecting staff, contractual workers, students, trustees and volunteers safely as stated in our recruitment policy.
 - Recording, storing and using information professionally and securely in line with data protection legislation and our Data Protection and IT policies.
 - Implementing effective safeguarding systems where;
- The child and adults’ needs of safety are paramount, and professional judgement is used to put the person’s need at the heart of the safeguarding system so that the best possible solution can be found for each individual.

- Safeguarding for adults is person led, and outcome focused, engaging the adult at risk in decisions about the safeguarding situation, ensuring that issues of capacity, consent, the six key adult principles of safeguarding adults and Making Safeguarding Personal are considered.
 - Practising professional curiosity, being alert to needs and risks of harm.
 - Ensuring that a trustee has leadership and responsibility for safeguarding within a.c.e.
 - Having a Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and a Deputy DSL within a.c.e for all hours when staff are working and contacts for these known by all staff and prominently displayed.
 - Ensuring our policy is clear and transparent and accessible on the drive.
 - Ensuring we have effective complaints, grievance and whistleblowing policies.
 - Responses to harm and abuse will be responded to proportionally to reflect the risk, nature and seriousness of the concern. Responses will be the least restrictive of the person’s rights and take account of the person’s age, culture, wishes, lifestyle and beliefs, so that concerns are managed in the most safe, effective and efficient way.
 - Online safety: a.c.e will ensure that staff and volunteers are aware of and comply with the 4 strategic objectives of the Lancashire Children’s Safeguarding Assurance Partnership (CSAP) online safeguarding strategy (see Appendix 4) and provide guidelines for working safely online. Ace will also comply with its Social Media Policy regarding children and people at risk interaction with its social media accounts.
 - The risks that increase a person’s vulnerability will be appropriately assessed and identified at the first contact and continue throughout the contact.
 - Ensuring staff understand low-level concerns and how to report them, in line with national expectations.
 - Ensuring staff understand professional challenge and escalation procedures, including Lancashire’s multi-agency escalation policy (see Appendix 5).
 - Supporting safeguarding through regular supervision and reflective practice.

Approval

This policy is approved on a minimum annual basis.

The policy will be reviewed by the CEO, DSL and the Trustee accountable for Safeguarding. The reviewed policy will be sent to the board of trustees for approval, which will be minuted within the Trustees meetings.

If the policy is revised within an annual review period, a new version is created, and the review date is moved to 12 months from the approval date.

Appendices

Appendix 1

Appendix 1a – Definitions of Abuse

This appendix provides clear definitions of abuse and harm in line with Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023, the Care Act 2014, and current safeguarding best practice. Abuse may be a single act or repeated acts. It can occur in any relationship and may result in significant harm.

A. CHILD ABUSE CATEGORIES (Working Together 2023)

1. Physical Abuse

Physical abuse involves causing physical harm to a child. It may include hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm.

It also includes:

- Non-accidental injury
- Fabricated or Induced Illness (FII), where a parent or carer exaggerates or deliberately causes symptoms of illness in a child
- Failure to act to protect a child from physical harm

2. Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child that causes severe and persistent adverse effects on emotional development. It may involve:

- Conveying to a child that they are worthless, unloved or inadequate
- Age- or developmentally-inappropriate expectations
- Preventing normal social interaction
- Serious bullying (including cyberbullying)
- Seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another

Emotional abuse is present in all other forms of abuse.

3. Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening or gives apparent consent. It includes:

- Physical sexual contact
- Non-contact activities such as involving children in looking at or producing sexual images
- Encouraging sexually inappropriate behaviour
- Online sexual abuse, including grooming, coercion, image-based abuse and AI-generated sexual imagery

Both adults and other children/young people can perpetrate sexual abuse.

4. 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. It may involve failing to:

- Provide adequate food, clothing or shelter
- Protect from physical or emotional harm
- Ensure adequate supervision
- Ensure access to medical care or treatment

Neglect also includes emotional neglect, such as failing to provide love, security and affection.

5. Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

CSE is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child into sexual activity:

- In exchange for something the child needs or wants
- For the financial advantage or status of the perpetrator

CSE can occur online or offline and may not involve physical contact.

6. Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE)

CCE occurs when a child is manipulated, coerced or forced into criminal activity for the benefit of others. This includes:

- County lines activity
- Drug distribution
- Theft, fraud or financial exploitation
- Online criminal exploitation

Children may not recognise they are being exploited.

7. Online Abuse

Online abuse is any type of abuse that occurs via digital technology. It includes:

- Online grooming
- Coercive control via digital platforms
- Cyberbullying
- Image-based sexual abuse
- Deepfake or AI-generated sexual imagery

- Online radicalisation
- Exploitation through gaming, livestreaming or social media

B. ADULT ABUSE CATEGORIES (Care Act 2014)

1. Physical Abuse

Includes assault, hitting, slapping, pushing, misuse of medication, inappropriate restraint or physical punishment.

2. Domestic Abuse

Domestic abuse includes controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between individuals aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members.

It includes:

- Physical, emotional, psychological, sexual or financial abuse
- Coercive control
- Tech-facilitated abuse
- Economic abuse

Children are recognised as victims in their own right.

3. Sexual Abuse

Includes rape, sexual assault, sexual acts to which the adult has not consented or was unable to consent, and sexual exploitation.

4. Psychological Abuse

Includes emotional abuse, threats, humiliation, intimidation, coercion, harassment, verbal abuse, cyber-harassment, and isolation.

5. Financial or Economic Abuse

Includes theft, fraud, exploitation, pressure in connection with wills or property, misuse of benefits, or preventing access to money.

It also includes:

- Online financial exploitation
- Coercive control of finances
- Taking out credit or loans in someone's name

6. Neglect and Acts of Omission

Includes ignoring medical, emotional or physical care needs, failure to provide access to services, withholding necessities such as medication, food or heating.

7. Organisational Abuse

Poor or inadequate care within a service, including unsafe systems, lack of choice, rigid routines, poor safeguarding culture, or failure to follow procedures.

8. Self-Neglect

Self-neglect includes a wide range of behaviours such as neglecting personal hygiene, health or surroundings. It includes:

- Hoarding
- Inability or unwillingness to care for oneself
- Situations where mental capacity may be impaired

Self-neglect requires a sensitive, person-centred response.

C. FORMS OF ABUSE THAT MAY AFFECT BOTH CHILDREN OR ADULTS

1. Bullying and Cyberbullying

Bullying includes physical, verbal, emotional or relational harm. Cyberbullying includes harassment, threats, humiliation or abuse via digital platforms, messaging, social media or AI-generated content.

2. Discriminatory Abuse

Abuse motivated by prejudice relating to race, gender, disability, age, religion, sexual orientation or other protected characteristics.

3. Modern Slavery

Includes trafficking, forced labour, domestic servitude, criminal exploitation and sexual exploitation. Recruitment may occur online or through coercion.

4. Forced Marriage

A marriage where one or both people do not consent and pressure or abuse is used. Forced Marriage Protection Orders (FMPOs) may be used to protect individuals.

5. Honour-Based Abuse (HBA)

Abuse committed to protect or defend perceived family or community honour. It may include violence, coercion, threats, forced marriage or control. Note: Staff receive online training in these areas at induction and should be aware of signs and symptoms emphasised in training and the relevant mandatory reporting duties particularly with regard to the serious Crime act 2015.

Training Note

All staff receive training on these areas at induction and through regular safeguarding updates. Staff must be aware of mandatory reporting duties, including those relating to FGM, forced marriage and serious crime legislation.

Appendix 1b - Code of Behaviour

This Code of Behaviour sets out the standards expected of all staff, volunteers, trustees, students and contractors working on behalf of a.c.e. It is designed to:

- Protect children, young people and adults at risk
- Maintain safe, professional boundaries
- Reduce the risk of misunderstandings or allegations
- Promote high-quality, trauma-informed practice

All staff must follow this Code alongside the a.c.e. Safeguarding Policy, Boundaries Policy, Code of Conduct, and Safer Working Practice guidance.

Staff and volunteers must:

- Behave professionally at all times, demonstrating warmth, empathy, respect and clear boundaries
- Maintain a trauma-informed, ACE-aware approach, recognising how past experiences may influence behaviour and communication
- Record all relevant interactions in line with a.c.e. monitoring and record-keeping procedures
- Consult with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) whenever they are unsure about a safeguarding concern, boundary issue or risk
- Use professional communication channels only, including email, messaging and phone systems approved by a.c.e.
- Work transparently, avoiding situations where they are alone with a child or adult at risk unless this is part of planned, risk-assessed work
- Model safe and respectful behaviour, including online and during hybrid or digital sessions
- Report any concerns about a colleague's behaviour, including low-level concerns, to the DSL or safeguarding trustee

Staff and volunteers must never:

- Engage in rough physical play, horseplay or any behaviour that could be misinterpreted as aggressive, sexual or overly familiar
- Carry out personal care tasks that an individual can reasonably do for themselves (e.g. dressing, applying sunscreen), unless part of an agreed care plan
- Use physical restraint, except where necessary to prevent immediate harm to the individual or others, and only in line with a.c.e. protocols
- Form personal, intimate or romantic relationships with children, young people or adults at risk
- Share personal contact details, including personal phone numbers, home address, private email or personal social media accounts

- Communicate with children or adults at risk via personal social media, messaging apps or private accounts
- Transport individuals in personal vehicles unless this is risk-assessed, approved and recorded
- Accept or give gifts that could compromise professional boundaries
- Use their position to intimidate, coerce, favour or disadvantage any individual

Appendix 2- Relevant information

This appendix provides key principles and frameworks that underpin safeguarding adults work at a.c.e., in line with the Care Act 2014 and Making Safeguarding Personal.

1. Six key principles that underpin safeguarding adults work

- **Empowerment** – People being supported and encouraged to make their own decisions and informed consent
- **Prevention** – It is better to take action before harm occurs
- **Proportionality** – The least intrusive response appropriate to the risk presented
- **Protection** – Support and representation for those in greatest need
- **Partnership** – Local solutions through services working with their communities. Communities have a part to play in preventing, detecting and reporting neglect and abuse
- **Accountability** – accountability and transparency in delivering safeguarding

2. Making Safeguarding Personal (MSP)

MSP is a person-centred approach that ensures safeguarding:

- Is led by the adult at risk
- Focuses on outcomes that matter to them
- Respects their rights, wishes, history and circumstances
- Enhances involvement, choice and control
- Improves wellbeing, safety and quality of life

MSP recognises that adults may choose to remain in situations of risk. Staff must:

- Explore the person's wishes and desired outcomes
- Assess mental capacity where relevant
- Provide clear information about risks
- Work collaboratively with partner agencies
- Document all decisions, actions and consultations

Where adults decline support, staff must continue to exercise vigilance, maintain contact where appropriate, and record all safeguarding activity.

DSL will give full support to staff over problems when handling cases of adults remaining in high-risk situations, provided that:

- It is evident from case records that Safeguarding Adults procedures have been properly followed

- Every effort has been made, on a multi-agency basis, to intervene positively to protect the adult at risk
 - Legal advice has been obtained and acted upon
- And ultimately that the adult at risk has been fully consulted and involved as far as practicable in every decision relating to their situation

3. Capacity, Consent and Decision-Making

The Mental Capacity Act 2005 (MCA) provides the legal framework for supporting adults who may lack capacity to make specific decisions.

The MCA is underpinned by five key principles:

1. Presumption of capacity
2. Support to make decisions
3. Right to make unwise decisions
4. Best interests
5. Least restrictive option

Key considerations:

- Capacity is decision-specific and time-specific
- Adults aged 16–17 fall under the MCA; liaison with Children’s Services may be required
- Consent must be informed, voluntary and freely given
- Lack of capacity must be evidenced, not assumed

4. Serious Crime Act 2015 – Overview (Safeguarding-Relevant Sections)

The Serious Crime Act strengthens protections for vulnerable children and adults, including:

- Offences relating to coercive and controlling behaviour
- Strengthened legislation on domestic abuse
- Enhanced protections against Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)
- Mandatory reporting duty for FGM in under-18s by regulated professionals

Mandatory FGM Reporting Duty

Professionals must report “known” cases of FGM in under-18s directly to the police via 101.

A “known” case is when:

- A girl discloses FGM has been carried out, or
- Physical signs are observed that indicate FGM

5. Equality Impact Review

This policy has been subject to an Equality Impact Review (EIR) (details shown at end of policy). No negative impact has been identified for any protected characteristic.

a.c.e. will:

- Monitor safeguarding activity for disproportionate impact
- Ensure accessible communication and reasonable adjustments
- Review the EIR annually

Appendix 3 - Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) Process

1. Purpose of the LADO Process

The Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) oversees the management of allegations or concerns about any individual who works or volunteers with children. This includes paid staff, volunteers, students, contractors, and self-employed practitioners.

The LADO process ensures allegations are:

- Responded to promptly
- Managed fairly and consistently
- Investigated by the correct agencies
- Handled in a way that protects children and the rights of staff

This process applies whether the alleged behaviour occurred at work, online, in the community, or in the person's private life, if it raises concerns about their suitability to work with children.

2. When to Contact the LADO

A referral must be made when it is alleged that a person working with children has:

- Behaved in a way that has harmed, or may have harmed, a child
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against, or related to, a child
- Behaved towards a child in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm
- Behaved in a way that suggests they may not be suitable to work with children (including behaviour in their private life)

If unsure whether the threshold is met, organisations should still seek consultation with the LADO.

3. Internal Steps Before Contacting the LADO

Your organisation must:

1. Record the concern factually and securely.
2. Inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) immediately.
3. Take immediate protective action if a child is at risk (e.g., remove the adult from regulated activity).
4. Do NOT investigate, interview the child or adult, or request screenshots.
5. Contact the LADO the same working day.

4. What the LADO Will Do

The LADO will:

- Provide advice and guidance

- Decide whether the threshold for a LADO process is met
- Coordinate with police, social care, and the employer
- Chair Allegation Management Meetings where required
- Oversee the case until conclusion
- Ensure learning and safer practice measures are implemented

5. Lancashire LADO Contact Details (Pan-Lancashire)

Lancashire County Council (LCC) – LADO

Email: lado.admin@lancashire.gov.uk

- (Email is *not* for referrals—use the online form.)
- Referral: LADO Online Referral Form - via Lancashire Safeguarding Partnership website:
<https://www.lancshiresafeguarding.org.uk/children/professionals/lado-local-authority-designated-officer/>
- Advice line: Through Children’s Services
 - Immediate safeguarding concerns: 0300 123 6720
 - Out of hours: 0300 123 6722

6. What Organisations Must Not Do

- Do not investigate or interview the staff member or child.
- Do not promise confidentiality.
- Do not delay contacting the LADO.
- Do not destroy or alter records.
- Do not allow the person to continue working with children if there is any immediate risk.

These expectations align with statutory guidance *Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023/26)* and Lancashire multi-agency procedures.

7. Recording and Follow-Up

Your organisation must:

- Keep a secure, factual record of all concerns, decisions, and actions.
- Attend LADO meetings when required.
- Implement any recommendations (e.g., training, supervision changes, disciplinary action).
- Support staff appropriately while maintaining child-centred safeguarding practice.

Appendix 4- Summary of Lancashire Children’s Safeguarding Assurance Partnership Online Safeguarding Strategy

Purpose

The CSAP Online Safeguarding Strategy sets out Lancashire’s multi-agency approach to protecting children and young people from harm in digital environments. It recognises that online spaces (social media, gaming, messaging apps, live-streaming and online communities) are key contexts where risk can emerge, escalate, or be facilitated. For charities working with children and young people, this strategy provides a framework for preventing online harm, identifying concerns early, responding effectively, and embedding learning into practice.

1. Prevention

Aim: Reduce the likelihood of online harm occurring

Charities are expected to:

- Promote safe and responsible online behaviour
- Provide accessible information to children, parents, and carers about online risks
- Build digital resilience and awareness into group work, support sessions, and outreach
- Ensure staff and volunteers receive annual training on online safeguarding, digital trends, and emerging risks

2. Identification

Aim: Improve early recognition of online risks and harmful digital contexts

This includes:

- Understanding indicators of online grooming, exploitation, bullying, radicalisation, and harmful content
- Recognising how online interactions may link to offline behaviours (e.g., missing episodes, peer conflict, emotional distress)
- Sharing concerns promptly with safeguarding leads and partner agencies
- Using multi-agency intelligence to build a fuller picture of risk

3. Response

Aim: Provide coordinated, timely, and child-centred intervention

Charities should:

- Follow CSAP multi-agency procedures when online harm is suspected
- Contribute to strategy meetings, contextual assessments, and safety planning
- Support children to understand what has happened and rebuild safety online and offline
- Work with families, schools, police, and social care to disrupt harmful online contexts and reduce ongoing risk

4. Learning

Aim: Use local and national learning to strengthen safeguarding practice

This involves:

- Reflecting on learning from case reviews, audits, and national research
- Updating policies, training, and procedures in line with emerging risks and statutory guidance
- Embedding a culture of continuous improvement and digital awareness across the organisation
- Ensuring trustees maintain oversight of online safeguarding risks and responses

How This Supports Our Charity's Work

- Ensures our safeguarding practice is aligned with Lancashire's multi-agency expectations
- Strengthens our ability to recognise and respond to online harm affecting the children we support
- Helps us create safer digital and physical environments
- Reinforces our commitment to trauma-informed, child-centred practice

Appendix 5- Summary of Lancashire's multi-agency escalation policy

Purpose

The Pan-Lancashire multi-agency escalation process provides a clear, structured method for resolving professional disagreements about safeguarding decisions. Its aim is to ensure that concerns about a child's or adult's safety are addressed promptly, transparently, and without delay.

When the Procedure Applies

This process should be used whenever professionals from different agencies disagree about:

- Threshold decisions (e.g., Early Help, Child in Need, Section 42 enquiries)
- Levels of risk or urgency
- Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) outcomes or case progression
- Roles, responsibilities, or information sharing
- Decisions to step up, step down, or close a case

The welfare and safety of the child or adult at risk must remain the primary consideration throughout.

Principles

- Respectful professional challenge is expected where safety concerns remain unresolved.
- Timeliness is essential; disagreements must not delay protective action.
- Transparency and accountability underpin all stages.
- Accurate recording of discussions, decisions, and outcomes is required by each agency.
- The voice and wishes of the child or adult must be considered at every stage.

Staged Escalation Process

The Pan-Lancashire procedure follows a four-stage model:

Stage 1 – Professional to Professional

Frontline practitioners discuss the concern directly to clarify decisions and seek resolution.

Stage 2 – Line Manager to Line Manager

If disagreement persists, the matter is escalated to immediate managers for review.

Stage 3 – Senior Manager to Senior Manager

Senior leaders from each agency consider the issue and work to reach agreement.

Stage 4 – Partnership-Level Escalation

If unresolved, the concern is referred to the relevant safeguarding partnership (LSCP or SAB) for final consideration.

At any stage, if a child or adult is believed to be at immediate risk of harm, practitioners must take urgent protective action while the escalation continues.

Recording and Accountability

All agencies are responsible for:

- Documenting the nature of the disagreement
- Recording actions taken at each stage
- Noting the final outcome and any learning identified
- Ensuring the escalation process is reflected in supervision and case management

Outcome

The escalation process ensures that safeguarding decisions are robust, defensible, and centred on the safety and wellbeing of the child or adult at risk. It promotes a culture where professional challenge is welcomed as part of effective multi-agency safeguarding practice.

Next Annual EIA review: March 2027

Dated :01/04/26 Keren Hardman Safeguarding trustee.

| | | | Neutral | Negative | Comments |
|----------------------|--|--|---------|----------|----------|
| Age | | | Yes | | |
| Disability/ illness | | | Yes | | |
| Gender assignation. | | | Yes | | |
| Marriage | | | Yes | | |
| Pregnancy /maternity | | | Yes | | |
| Race | | | Yes | | |
| Religion | | | Yes | | |
| Sex | | | Yes | | |
| Sexual Orientation | | | Yes | | |