

# Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy

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## 2 INTRODUCTION

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Suffolk's Libraries Industrial and Provident Society Ltd (hereafter referred to as 'Suffolk Libraries') acknowledges the duty of care to safeguard and promote the welfare of everyone who uses its services. The organisation is committed to upholding safeguarding practice and that it reflects statutory responsibilities, government guidance and complies with best practice as set out by the Suffolk Safeguarding Partnership requirements.

The principle laws and legislation guiding this policy are:

- No Secrets, 2000
- The Children Act 1989, 2004
- Mental Capacity Act, 2005
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act, 2006
- Mental Health Act, 2007
- The Health and Social Care Act, 2008
- Care Act, 2014
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015
- The Children and Social Work Act 2017
- Digital Economy Act 2017

## 3 COMMITMENT AND SCOPE

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### 3.1 STATEMENTS OF COMMITMENT

Suffolk Libraries recognises its responsibility to safeguard the welfare of all children, young people and vulnerable adults when they are engaged in services and activities organised by the library service. The organisation will always take any concern about a child or vulnerable adult seriously and will not tolerate harassment of anyone who raises concerns.

Suffolk Libraries will work to the best of its ability through its recruitment and selection policy to ensure suitable people are selected for working with children and vulnerable adults.

Suffolk Libraries will work in cooperation with relevant local authorities and will comply with the relevant guidance from the local safeguarding boards on best practice and procedures.

Referrals made by an employee or volunteer cannot be anonymous and should be made in the knowledge that during the course of enquiries they may be asked to provide further information.

All staff have a responsibility to follow the 5 R's (Recognise, Respond, Report, Record and Refer) and these are explored in the organisational training offered to all staff.

## 3.2 SCOPE

This policy applies to all Suffolk Libraries staff and volunteers, and anyone who represents Suffolk Libraries or undertakes work on their behalf.

The policy applies to any engagement between children and vulnerable adults in all the different environments Suffolk Libraries offers. This includes all physical environments and virtual ones including social media and websites.

Any deviation of these procedures will be taken extremely seriously. Where necessary, information and evidence regarding a suspected failure to adhere to this policy will be passed to the appropriate authorities. It may also lead to staff being subject to disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal, and contractors having their contractual arrangements with Suffolk Libraries terminated.

## 4 PRINCIPLES AND DEFINITIONS

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### 4.1 PRINCIPLES

Suffolk Libraries firmly believes in the following principles:

- The welfare of children and vulnerable adults is paramount.
- All children and vulnerable adults have the right to participate in a library environment which is safe and free from violence, fear, abuse, bullying and discrimination.
- Working in partnership with children, their parents, carers and vulnerable adults and other agencies is essential in promoting children and vulnerable people's welfare.
- Suffolk Libraries is responsible for establishing appropriate policies and procedures to ensure that its activities promote the safety and wellbeing of children and vulnerable adults, e.g. safe recruitment policies, safe working practices etc.
- **Safeguarding is everyone's business.**

### Radicalisation and Extremism

Suffolk Libraries recognises that safeguarding against radicalisation is no different from safeguarding against any other vulnerability in line with the Prevent Strategy 2011.

The organisation's aim is to ensure that staff are fully engaged in being vigilant about radicalisation and extremism and will work alongside other professional bodies and agencies to ensure that customers are safe from harm.

## 4.2 DEFINITIONS

### What is safeguarding?

- Safeguarding children: is the action that is taken to promote the welfare of children and protect them from harm. Safeguarding means: protecting children from abuse and maltreatment; preventing harm to children's health or development; ensuring children grow up with the provision of safe and effective care. *NSPCC*
- Safeguarding adults: is Protecting an adult's right to live in safety, free from abuse and neglect. It is about people and organisations working together to prevent and stop both the risks and experience of abuse or neglect, while at the same time making sure that the adult's wellbeing is promoted including, where appropriate, having regard to their views, wishes, feelings and beliefs in deciding on any action. This must recognise that adults sometimes have complex interpersonal relationships and may be ambivalent, unclear or unrealistic about their personal circumstances. *Social care institute for excellence (SCIE)*

### Who is a child, young person or adult at risk?

The following are the legal definitions of a child and a vulnerable adult:

- *Adult: Any person aged 18 or over and at the risk of abuse or neglect because of their needs for care and support*
- *Child: A person below the age of 18, unless the laws of a particular country set the legal age for adult age younger*

### Forms of abuse

Suffolk Libraries also recognises that abuse can take many forms including, but not limited to:

- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Psychological and emotional abuse
- Exploitation
- Financial/economic abuse
- Neglect and acts of omission
- Self-neglect and hoarding
- Discriminatory
- Institutional abuse
- Organisational
- Trafficking
- Domestic abuse
- Modern slavery

- Poor Parenting
- Social Media abuse
- County Lines (drug and gang activity imported to local area)

## 5 SAFEGUARDING OBLIGATIONS

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Suffolk Libraries will meet its legal obligations and reassure its users through the following:

- Committing to employees (and volunteers where appropriate) receiving the appropriate level of training and providing them with support if they suspect a child or vulnerable adult is experiencing or at risk of harm.
- We will ensure our Safeguarding trainers receive ongoing training and support offered by the Suffolk Partnership Board.
  - ✓ Suffolk Libraries will give training to all staff on safeguarding procedures and practice. All staff will be expected to undertake formal safeguarding course offered which will be refreshed within a three-year time frame per employee. The training will ensure staff know where to go if they have a concern and the appropriate way to report it. This training will be given a continuing high profile to promote it.
  - ✓ Suffolk Libraries has a Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO) as set out in the Care Act (2014) and Working Together to Safeguard Children statutory guidance (2015). This person is named and known to the Suffolk Safeguarding Partnership.
- Ensuring staff can voice any concerns they may have through an established procedure and that there are effective recording systems in place.
  - ✓ Suffolk Libraries will actively maintain appropriate procedures and forms for reporting concerns which will be regularly monitored and updated which includes any changes in legislation which may affect this.
  - ✓ The organisation will implement and maintain effective procedures for recording and reporting to the responsible local authority concerning any allegations or suspicions of harm or abuse
- To respect the rights, wishes, feelings and privacy of children and vulnerable adults by listening to them and minimising risks that may affect them.
  - ✓ Ensure that the training package takes account of the rights and personal feelings of library users.

- ✓ Suffolk Libraries will safeguard the welfare and wellbeing of children and vulnerable adults during their contact with library services. The forward planning of services will ensure that this is accounted for.
- To ensure that contracted services have safeguarding policies and procedures commensurate with the level of involvement they have with children and vulnerable adults.
- ✓ Suffolk Libraries will maintain a good level of safe working practice at all times to minimise risk to children and vulnerable adults that come into contact with volunteers and contractors.

## 6 SAFER RECRUITMENT

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Suffolk Libraries' HR team (staff) and the Volunteer Manager (volunteers) are responsible for a robust recruitment policy. This includes the following:

- Normally, a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check will not be sought for employees and volunteers as part of their normal duties and responsibilities if they are not required to work alone on a regular basis.
- However, Suffolk Libraries will require employees who work single staffed three or more times a month, all relief staff and volunteers for the Home Library Service to undergo an enhanced DBS check.
- DBS checks (where required) and references will be taken up in writing and followed up prior to any formal offer of employment being made.
- In line with the recruitment and selection policy all staffing appointments will be conditional until the following are completed and satisfied:
  - Written application inc. CV submitted and on file
  - A face-to-face interview with comprehensive interview notes filed
  - Two references checked
  - If previous employment was less than three years, previous employers contacted to confirm work history
  - DBS check (where required)

Where a member of staff or volunteer is suspended from duties as a result of gross misconduct involving abuse or a safeguarding allegation, the Chief Executive or the DSO will make a referral to the Independent Safeguarding Authority.

Contractors or sub-contractors funded by or on behalf of Suffolk Libraries are responsible for applying for appropriate checks on their employees/volunteers and that their staff comply with their own safeguarding procedures and are made aware of the Suffolk Libraries policy. They are

also responsible for informing relevant Suffolk Libraries managers of any concerns they encounter in relation to safeguarding issues.

## 7 PROCEDURES FOR REPORTING

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All Suffolk Libraries staff and volunteers who have concerns are responsible for implementing these policies & procedures, and every allegation will be taken seriously. The Designated Safeguarding Officer will not investigate the allegations, but will talk through the concerns with a professional advisor at the county's Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and follow their advice. The Designated Safeguarding Officer is Krystal Vittles and she can be contacted on [krystal.vittles@suffolklibraries.co.uk](mailto:krystal.vittles@suffolklibraries.co.uk) or 07763 356 424.

### 7.1 HEADLINE REPORTING PROCEDURES

If staff or volunteers have a concern they should undertake the following action:

- Employees and volunteers who have such concerns or who have witnessed abuse should report this as quickly as possible to the Designated Safeguarding Officer (Krystal Vittles) and fill-out a contact referral form. If the Designated Safeguarding Officer is not available, the deputy safeguarding manager (Laura Cooke) should be informed or in the last instance the incident should be reported to the Chief Executive (Bruce Leeke).
- If the employee or volunteer has significant concerns for the immediate safety of an individual they should contact the police using 999 and then follow this up with the Designated Safeguarding Officers (or the others in the chain of safeguarding command).
- Customers who have reported or alleged an incident should have their details written into the contact form and passed to the Designated Safeguarding Officer.
- All those alleging or expressing concern about abuse should be re-assured that their concerns will be taken seriously and that they will be informed of the outcome.
- All alleged incidents will be followed-up by the Designated Safeguarding Manager who will work with the relevant authorities. If any investigation is required this will be undertaken by those relevant authorities.

### 7.2 SPECIFIC REPORTING PROCEDURES

Where the disclosure to an employee or volunteer is from an individual under 18 years of age the following procedure must be followed:



- **Do Not** interview the child or young person. However, you may ask them to clarify what they have told you to ensure you have clear information and understand the concern.
- Reassure them that by telling they have done the right thing.
- Inform them that we must pass the information on but that only those that need to know about it will be told.
- Make a detailed note of the full date e.g. 5<sup>th</sup> June 2022, time, place, what the child said and did using the contact form.
- Immediately inform the Designated Safeguarding Officer who will follow-up the disclosure with the appropriate authority.
- Where there is immediate danger or physical injury emergency services (999) should be contacted immediately.

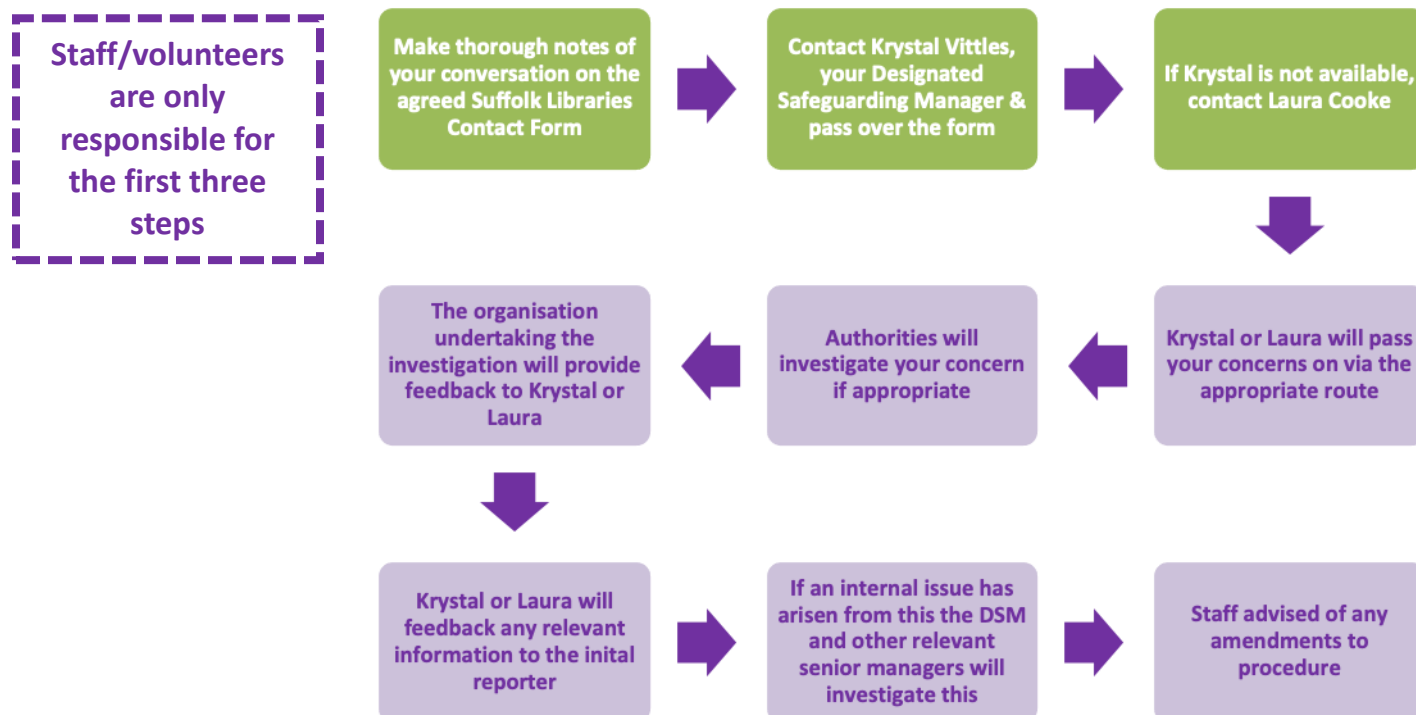
Where the disclosure or suspicion is by a vulnerable adult the following procedure must be followed:

- Talk to the person and **gain their consent** to take action to protect them from further risk. Where consent is not given, this will need to be approached sensitively. It will need to be explained to them that the information will be passed to the Designated Safeguarding Officer but that their objection to the referral will be conveyed.
- **Do Not** interview the person. However, you may ask them to clarify what they have told you to ensure you have clear information and understand the concern.
- Make a detailed note of the full date e.g. 5<sup>th</sup> June 2022, time, place, what the person said and did and the questions asked of the person using the contact form.
- Inform the Designated Safeguarding Officer as quickly as possible who will follow-up the disclosure with the appropriate authority if appropriate.
- Where there is immediate danger or physical injury emergency services (999) should be contacted immediately.

Where the disclosure of an alleged abuse of a child or a vulnerable adult is made by a third party to an employee or volunteer of Suffolk Libraries, they must report the allegation to the Designated Safeguarding Officer as soon as possible and fill-out a contact referral form.

### 7.3 REPORTING FLOWCHART

The referral flowchart and follow-up procedure:



This flowchart is found in the training package and has been made into a poster which is in every library staff room.

## 8 ALLEGATIONS AGAINST STAFF

Allegations against staff will be investigated in line with the organisations other policies including:

- Whistle blowing policy
- Code of conduct policy
- Anti-harassment and bullying policy

This policy is not intended to cover the abuse of staff by library users. The anti-social behaviour policy covers this.

Staff and volunteers should be mindful regarding the taking and use of photographs, especially of children. More information can be found in the photography policy.

## 9 DATA AND INFORMATION

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### 9.1 DATA PROTECTION AND INFORMATION STORAGE

All copies of the Safeguarding contact referral form and any other relevant documents or records (e.g. telephone calls, CCTV information, etc.) relating to the incident will be securely stored within Suffolk Libraries' systems. This information will be retained in accordance with data protection periods and retention guidelines. Suffolk Libraries' Data Protection Policy is available to Suffolk Libraries' employees and volunteers.

Information relating to an employee will be retained in their electronic personal file and overseen by HR.

Access to safeguarding records will be on a needs-only basis.

### 9.2 CONFIDENTIALITY AND INFORMATION SHARING

Confidentiality is a key issue in safeguarding but a person's safety is more important than the privacy of another person. Sometimes sharing information is necessary to establish the level of risk to a child or vulnerable adult. Information that needs to be shared will be done sensitively with relevant agencies only.

Suffolk Libraries is signed-up to the principles of the Suffolk Safeguarding Partnership.

### 9.3 SHARING CONCERNS WITH PARENTS AND CARERS

Information obtained about individuals should usually be shared with them unless sharing the information would likely to result in serious harm to the individual, a child or another person, or the information relates to a third party who expressly indicated the information should not be disclosed. For example, where a parent/carer may be responsible for the abuse or not able to respond to the situation appropriately.

In all cases, decisions about withholding information will be made by the Designated Safeguarding Manager after receiving guidance from professionals.

## 10 PHOTOGRAPHY AND FILMING

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Suffolk Libraries staff must seek consent for the taking and use of any images (still or moving) on any media, of children within or on the library premises, or off site during the course of their work.

Suffolk Libraries uses photography permission forms for all children, young persons and vulnerable adults. The taking and use of an image for a child under the age of 13 must have parental/guardian permission. Any child above 13 and up to the age of 18 must have permission from both the child and parent/guardian.

An image of a child that is used on any publicity, posters, social media or website should not have their name published under any circumstances.

In all cases, permission granted by parents/guardians is limited to that specific use only. Staff must clearly label and date images and note the agreed use. If the member of staff wishes to reuse an image for a different purpose, it is necessary to gain new permission.

[For more information please refer to Photography in Libraries Policy.](#)

## 11 RISK ASSESSMENTS

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All pre-planned activities at Suffolk Libraries will be subject to a risk assessment. The responsibility for completion lies with the library manager. Care must be taken to make provision for children, young people and vulnerable adults in its composition. Particular care must be made to protect those who are disabled due to their increased vulnerability to abuse and neglect as well as any other barriers they may face, in particular communication.