

Version Control	
Author	Claire Coleman
Policy was last approved	18.10.23
Frequency of review	Annually
Ownership of the policy	Mel Holmes
Distribution	Staff, Volunteers, Trustees
Version control	v.2



Caring in Bristol

Safeguarding Policy

Contents

1. [Purpose and Scope of the Policy](#)
2. [Definitions](#)
3. [Legal Context](#)
4. [Caring in Bristol's Commitment](#)
5. [Confidentiality and Safeguarding](#)
6. [Roles and Responsibilities](#)
7. [Procedure Flowchart](#)
8. [Code of Conduct](#)

1. Purpose and scope of the Policy

Why do we have a safeguarding policy?

As an organisation, Caring in Bristol is committed to the safety and wellbeing of our service users, volunteers, staff, and anyone else who comes into contact with the charity.

As a charity that works with adults and young people experiencing or at risk of homelessness, it is important to acknowledge that we work with people who may be disproportionately at risk of safeguarding issues due to factors including but not limited to their physical living circumstances, lived experiences, trauma, and discrimination. In addition, people who are under 18 years of age are also vulnerable due to their age. A significant proportion of Caring in Bristol's service users therefore experience potential risks of harm through abuse or exploitation. The person-centred, relational approach of Caring in Bristol's services means that our frontline staff are likely in the course of their work to identify potential safeguarding risks.

It is therefore critical that safeguarding underlines our practice throughout the organisation, and that staff understand their duties and the appropriate course of action to take if the potential for harm is identified. This policy sets out Caring in Bristol's understanding of safeguarding, and the approach the organisation takes to protecting adults, young people, and children from harm.

The goals of this policy are to uphold the safeguarding of children, young people, and adults at risk by establishing:

- **Understanding** - define abuse to ensure all staff are able to identify it and report concerns.
- **Accountability** - clarifying responsibilities of the organisation and individuals within it.
- **Consistency** - Establishing a clear and appropriate procedure to follow when concerns are identified, including a process for escalation to the relevant authorities.

Who does the policy apply to?

This policy applies to everyone in the organisation: trustees, paid staff (permanent, temporary and consultancy), students on placement, volunteers, contractors, locums, and service users. For the purposes of this document the term "worker" or "staff" applies to anyone engaged by the organisation, whether on a paid or voluntary basis.

Safeguarding is integral to the delivery of our work to any service user, in any of our projects, who may be considered to be vulnerable and at risk of harm because they are or may be a victim of abuse. This could be due to age, disability, and/or other support needs. Within this policy the words "client" and "beneficiary" may be used interchangeably with the phrase "service user".

This policy also applies to potential abuse that may affect any other person that we may become aware of in the course of our work, such as a family member or associate of our service users.

Caring in Bristol upholds this policy equally regardless of the identity of the person at risk of harm. This includes characteristics such as age, disability, mental health, sex, gender identity, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, or lifestyle.

Safeguarding Children and Young People

Child safeguarding and child protection covers all people under the age of 18. In the course of Caring in Bristol's work, our staff come into contact with children and young people who may be service users, or the family of service users, volunteers, or staff. Their welfare and protection are paramount.

Where a member of staff has any concerns about a person under the age of 18, matters will be dealt with swiftly through internal procedures (see flowchart in section 7), and the child safeguarding protocols outlined by the appropriate local authority. The difference from adult safeguarding is that in some cases, a report may have to be made without the consent of the child at risk.

Safeguarding Adults

Through Caring in Bristol's work supporting people experiencing or at risk of homelessness, it is likely that we will work with adults who are at risk of abuse and/or neglect

The terms "adult at risk", "vulnerable adult", "adult with support needs" are also interchangeable within this document.

When safeguarding adults, we must consider self-determination within our decision-making. Special attention must be paid to a person-led approach, with staff member consulting the adult at risk involved as far as possible before actions are taken. The only time we may deviate from this is if Caring in Bristol staff believe the adult at risk does not have full decision-making mental capacity.

2. Definitions

What does safeguarding mean?

Caring in Bristol follows the UK Charity Commission definition of safeguarding, which is *protecting people who come into contact with your charity through its work from abuse or mistreatment of any kind.*

What are the types of harm someone may experience?

There are ten categories of abuse defined within the Care Act 2014:

- Physical abuse
- Domestic violence
- Sexual abuse
- Psychological abuse
- Financial or material abuse
- Modern slavery
- Discriminatory abuse
- Organisational abuse
- Neglect and acts of omission
- Self-neglect

More information on the signs that someone may be experiencing harm or abuse are provided by the Social Care Institute for Excellence. All Caring in Bristol staff should familiarise themselves with them here: [SCIE indicators of abuse.pdf](#)

3. Legal Context

It is vital that Caring in Bristol works within the legal frameworks for safeguarding, and that our staff understand their professional duties and related legislation.

Children and Young People

The Children Act 2004 (Section 11) places a statutory duty on agencies that their services are discharged having regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. It also requires agencies to co-operate in this endeavour. Government guidance, *Working Together to Safeguard Children* (2018) states that everyone that works with children has a responsibility for keeping them safe. Therefore, Caring in Bristol has a role to play in identifying concerns, sharing information, and taking prompt action where appropriate. We also have a duty to cooperate with other agencies that support the young people we encounter in our work.

When a Caring in Bristol worker identifies a concern about a person under the age of 18, it is essential that they follow up these concerns and, where the Safeguarding Lead deems it appropriate, report them to Bristol City Council's [First Response](#) team (or the relevant team if the person has a link to a different local authority). In line with Caring in Bristol's person-led approach, every effort will be made to ensure the young person understands and consents to the actions the staff member feels are necessary to stop or prevent harm. However, we acknowledge that there may be cases where external action is required but consent cannot be obtained, in which case staff must record this in our safeguarding records.

Adults

Adults at Risk are defined with specific criteria by the Care Act 2014:

- (a) has needs for care and support (whether or not the authority is meeting any of those needs),
- (b) is experiencing, or is at risk of, abuse or neglect, and
- (c) as a result of those needs is unable to protect himself or herself against the abuse or neglect or the risk of it.

Where the above is true, our staff will make a report to the relevant local authority via the safeguarding procedure. Caring in Bristol recognises that we may not always have access to the full details of somebody's needs or situation and will take a reasonably practicable approach to judging an adult's risk of harm. A person-led approach will then be taken, meaning wherever possible the adults involved in any safeguarding concern will be made fully aware of, and consent to, the actions and decisions taken by our staff.

With regards to consent, due consideration must be given to the mental capacity of any adult involved (see below), and whether anyone under the age of 18 is at risk (see above). In these cases, we may need to take action without the consent.

It should be noted that someone may experience abuse who does not fit these criteria, and that should still be identified and discussed internally, although a decision may be made not to take external action. In contrast, someone's need for support does not mean that they will inevitably experience harm or abuse. Caring in Bristol's person-led approach means we will deal with each case individually, considering all the information we have, including the views of the adults considered to be at risk.

Capacity

Mental capacity is an important concept in adult safeguarding. In carrying out our work we may encounter service users or other people who are at risk, who lack capacity to make informed decisions about their lives.

According to the Mental Capacity Act 2005, an adult is unable to make a decision for themselves if they are unable to:

- (a) understand the information relevant to the decision,
- (b) retain that information,
- (c) use or weigh that information as part of the process of making the decision, or
- (d) communicate their decision (whether by talking, using sign language or any other means).

As required by the principles of the Mental Capacity Act 2005, Caring in Bristol staff will always assume that an adult we are working with has the capacity to make decisions. However, when there is evidence that an adult involved in a safeguarding concern, this should be discussed in full as part of the safeguarding process and a decision may be made by the Safeguarding Lead to make a report without the full consent of the adult in question.

4. Caring in Bristol's commitment

Caring in Bristol's commitment to safeguarding applies to everything the organisation does. There are some key areas where protocols are in place:

- **Recruitment** - We ensure that all staff and volunteers who work in roles which are legally entitled to get a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check are screened. We also obtain appropriate references as part of our employee recruitment process and reserve the right to await the results of DBS checks and references before allowing a person to start in that role.
- **Induction & Training** – In-person safeguarding training is provided as part of the compulsory induction process for all paid staff, and key volunteers. All other volunteers receive a comprehensive handbook which highlights the importance of safeguarding. Our employees that work directly with clients are provided with ongoing development opportunities including tailored training to improve our organisational practice.
- **Information assurance** – Confidentiality is key to safeguarding. Caring in Bristol uses secure systems to store sensitive data, as detailed in our Privacy Notice. Access to safeguarding records are carefully managed and information is only shared externally when the decision has been made to do so in line with the safeguarding procedure (see below).
- **Reporting procedure** – There is a clear and straightforward procedure which all staff can follow when they have a concern.
- **Quality assurance** – The remit of the safeguarding panel includes continual review and evaluation of our work, to ensure Caring in Bristol is upholding this policy and our duties to prevent harm.

5. Confidentiality and Safeguarding

Confidentiality is important at Caring in Bristol. It is important that our clients can trust us and know that the information they disclose is treated in confidence. Where, however, we have suspicions or information has been disclosed in relation to abuse, we have a responsibility to take action. Our principles do not override the need to protect adults or children at risk from abuse.

In accordance with the principle of empowerment, the decision on whether to report a safeguarding concern should normally be discussed with the person the concern is about and where possible their permission should be gained to report the concern.

There will, however, be situations when confidentiality between ourselves and the client needs to be breached without their permission. This includes situations where the person we're concerned about is in serious and immediate danger and there's no time to get permission, it's not possible to get permission or the person is not able to give permission (abuser is always present). Also, we would not try to get permission if there's a chance it would put the person we're concerned about in more danger.

In these situations, the wellbeing of the client or others who may be at risk takes precedence over our principle of confidentiality.

6. Roles and Responsibilities

Safeguarding is a collective responsibility - all staff must understand the part they play protecting people from harm.

To ensure that safeguarding is an area of ongoing attention and development, Caring in Bristol has a number of individuals with specific responsibilities:

- There is a **Safeguarding Trustee** (James Eldred). This person contributes their external safeguarding expertise to the organisation and provides a critical role in evaluating our practice.
- The **Head of Operations and Impact** (Claire Coleman) has overall responsibility for ensuring the safety of our staff, volunteers, and services users, and therefore has an overview of safeguarding. The Head of Operations and Impact ensures key issues and concerns are escalated to the Chief Executive (Ian Byworth) and trustee board where appropriate.
- Caring in Bristol has a designated **Safeguarding Lead** (Mel Holmes) who is skilled in this area and sits on the Senior Leadership Team. The Lead is responsible for ensuring staff appropriately handle any incidents or concerns, and advocates for good safeguarding practice across the organisation. There is an assigned **Deputy Safeguarding Lead** (Jessie Seal) who supports the Lead and can cover these responsibilities in the absence of the Lead.
- These roles form the **Safeguarding Panel**, who conduct case reviews to quality assure our safeguarding practice. These occur quarterly and feed into reports to the trustee board.

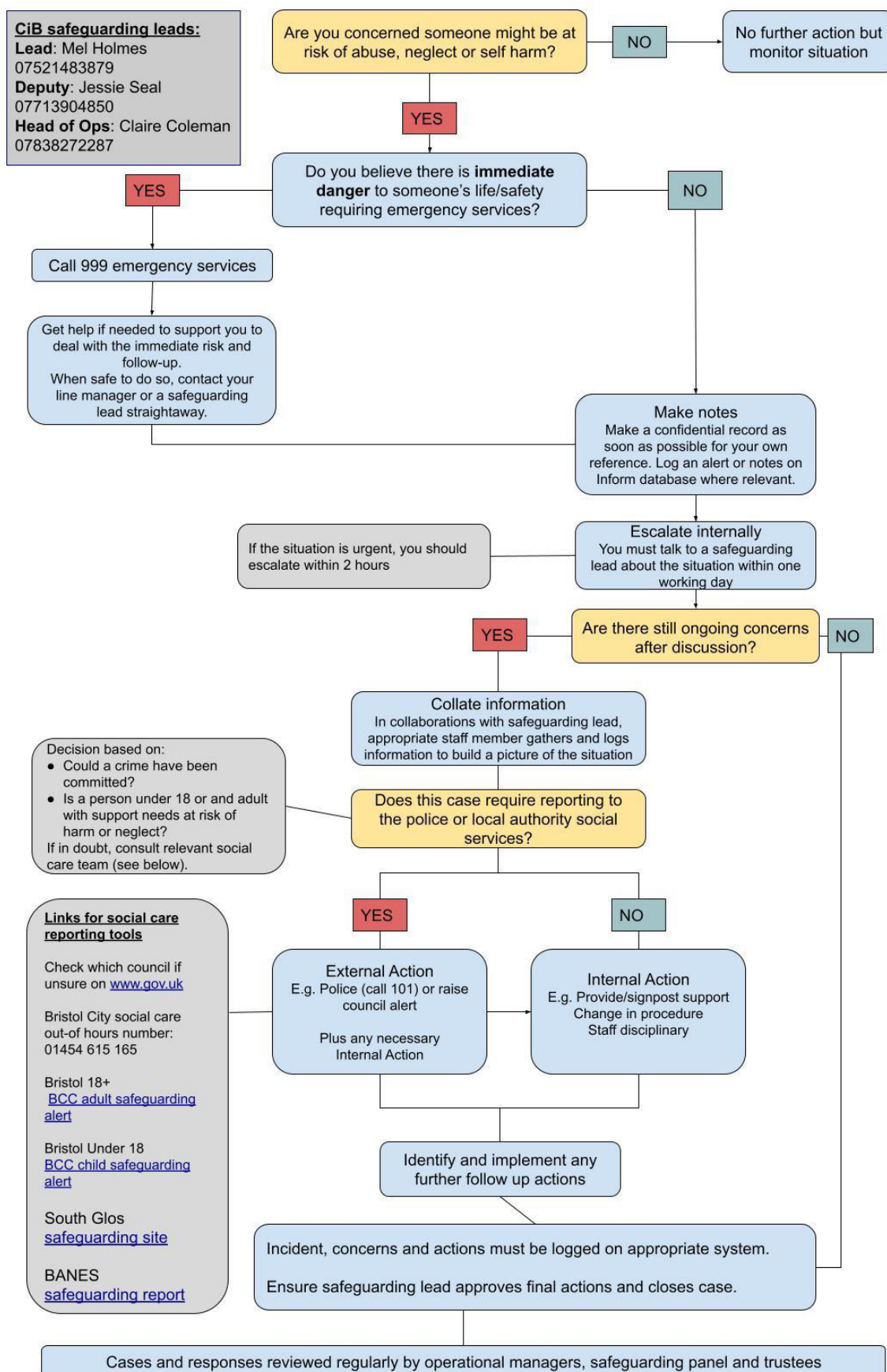
Contact Information

Role	Postholder	Email	Phone
Head of Operations & Impact	Claire Coleman	claire.coleman@caringinbristol.org.uk	0117 457 8502
Safeguarding Lead	Mel Holmes	mel.holmes@caringinbristol.org.uk	0117 457 8621
Deputy Safeguarding Lead	Jessie Seal	jessie.seal@caringinbristol.org.uk	0117 457 8710
Safeguarding Trustee	James Eldred	james.eldred@caringinbristol.org.uk	

The following table provides a clear breakdown of the duties of staff across the organisation:

Board & Senior Leadership Team	Safeguarding Lead	Line / Project Managers	Frontline Staff
Provide strategic/tactical support to the Safeguarding Lead and operational staff members in the case of a serious incident	Lead on the development of Caring Bristol's safeguarding practice and strategy	Understand and cascade the content of safeguarding policy and procedure	Recognise signs and symptoms of abuse
Contribute to & approve appropriate policies and procedures	Act as the primary point of contact for staff to discuss safeguarding concerns. Provide support and guidance in decision making in the follow up to an incident or concern being raised, including decision-making around when to report concerns externally.	Ensure safeguarding is included in risk assessments of the work carried out as part of the service they manage, and design any project-specific procedures where necessary	Identify risk factors of abuse/neglect
Review safeguarding policy every 12 months or sooner if a material change	Where the seriousness of an issue requires it, step into key meetings/interactions with agencies or the service user involved	Upholding staff welfare through monthly supervisions with space to discuss safeguarding and staff wellbeing	Understand CiB safeguarding policy and procedure
Ensure robust staff wellbeing support is implemented	Ensure incidents / concerns are logged securely and escalated to Head of Operations appropriately	Ensure new and existing staff they line manage are inducted fully into CiB safeguarding policy and procedure	Assess risk in their daily work and respond accordingly to uphold safe working practices
Safeguarding agenda point at every Board Meeting and Senior Leadership Team meeting	Facilitate induction training to new staff on CiB safeguarding policy and procedures	Encourage a culture of transparency within their staff teams	First response – recognise an emergency and act accordingly
Implement recruitment practices that incorporate safeguarding good practice	Ensure safeguarding patterns or themes are regularly discussed at senior leadership and operational manager meetings	Identify and escalate any additional needs for safeguarding training among staff	Know how to report and escalate appropriately
Promote a culture of transparency so that staff feel able to share concerns	Complete a safeguarding report for CiB board meetings		Keep adequate records in secure systems
	Chair quarterly case reviews with the Safeguarding Panel		

7. Procedure Flowchart



8. Code of Conduct

1. General Terms

- Challenging all inappropriate behaviour and reporting any breaches of the behaviour code to Mel Holmes or another member of the Leadership Team
- Reporting all concerns about abusive behaviour, following our safeguarding and child protection procedures - this includes inappropriate behaviour displayed by an adult or child and directed at anybody of any age
- Ensure equipment is used safely and for its intended purpose
- Be familiar with, and follow, our principles, policies, and procedures including our policies and procedures for safeguarding and child protection, whistleblowing, and online safety
- Workers should not enter into a close relationship (social, physical, emotional, or sexual) or form relationships with any service user outside of our service delivery model. Workers should not take service users to their homes, give out their personal telephone numbers or email addresses or connect with them via any social media sites (unless expressly authorised to do so) or befriend service users using personal online accounts, including e-mail, chat rooms, social networking sites
- Workers should never take photographs of client without a formal Caring in Bristol agreement in place which includes the service user's explicit consent. If photographs are agreed by the organisation and the service user, they should be taken on Caring in Bristol devices only.
- Any inappropriate behaviour towards workers by a service user should be recorded and reported, and if this behaviour was witnessed by other staff, the witness (es) should also record and report what they witnessed.
- Workers should avoid giving lifts to service users except to assist in the provision of housing and support services or as part of organised activities.
- Staff are required to follow clear procedures to prevent themselves or others from receiving personal benefit when working with service users.
- Caring in Bristol is not a specialist financial advice or welfare rights agency, and it is outside of workers' professional role to provide such a level of advice to service users on their finances. However, we need to recognise that, as part of their support role, staff inevitably find that money is an important issue in people's lives and need to be able to offer basic budgeting, benefits, and debt support to service users. Where there is a need for specific, detailed professional financial advice, service users will be referred to an appropriate internal or external service.
- All staff are required to account fully for any monies paid to Caring in Bristol or handled by Caring in Bristol's staff and must follow the relevant financial procedures when handling or accounting for any monies held by Caring in Bristol workers on behalf of a service user.

- Gifts offered or given to staff by service users (or vice versa) must be reported to the line manager, so that a decision can be made on how the gift, or offer of a gift, should be dealt with.
- Where there are any concerns that a colleague may have behaved inappropriately or where we receive information that may constitute an allegation, all staff are required to report this to the Designated Safeguarding Lead as soon as possible, however trivial. This includes reporting concerns about colleagues from other organisations.
- All allegations or suspicions of abuse, including inappropriate behaviour, inappropriate relationships, or corporal punishment by a worker (paid or otherwise) will be taken seriously and where appropriate, reported to the police as potential or actual criminal activity.
- Inappropriate behaviour or relationships with any service user outside the boundaries of our service specifications, including the list above is likely to additionally result in a disciplinary investigation being undertaken and may be considered as gross misconduct (see Disciplinary Policy).

2. Children and Young People Specific Terms

You are responsible for:

- prioritising the welfare of children and young people
- providing a safe environment for children and young people
- modelling good behaviour for children and young people to follow
- listen to and respect children at all times
- value and take children's contributions seriously, actively involving them in planning activities
- wherever possible
- respect a young person's right to personal privacy as far as possible
- if you need to break confidentiality in order to follow child protection procedures, it is important to explain this to the child or young person at the earliest opportunity.

You should:

- treat children and young people fairly and without prejudice or discrimination
- understand that children and young people are individuals with individual needs
- respect differences in gender, sexual orientation, culture, race, ethnicity, disability, and religious belief systems, and appreciate that all participants bring something valuable and different to the group/organisation
- challenge discrimination and prejudice
- encourage young people and adults to speak out about attitudes or behaviour that make them uncomfortable
- promote relationships that are based on openness, honesty, trust, and respect

- avoid showing favouritism
- be patient with others
- exercise caution when you are discussing sensitive issues with children or young people
- ensure your contact with children and young people is appropriate and relevant to the nature of the activity you are involved in
- ensure that whenever possible, there is more than one adult present during activities with children and young people
 - if a situation arises where you are alone with a child or young person, ensure that you are within sight or can be heard by other adults
 - if a child specifically asks for or needs some individual time with you, ensure other staff or volunteers know where you and the child are
- only provide personal care in an emergency and make sure there is more than one adult present if possible
 - unless it has been agreed that the provision of personal care is part of your role and you have been trained to do this safely.

When working with children and young people, you must not:

- allow concerns or allegations to go unreported
- take unnecessary risks
- smoke, consume alcohol or use illegal substances
- develop inappropriate relationships with children and young people
- make inappropriate promises to children and young people
- engage in behaviour that is in any way abusive or including having any form of sexual contact with a child or young person
- let children and young people have your personal contact details (mobile number, email, or postal address) or have contact with them via a personal social media account
- act in a way that can be perceived as threatening or intrusive
- patronise or belittle children and young people
- make sarcastic, insensitive, derogatory, or sexually suggestive comments or gestures to or in front of children and young people.