



# **St John** **Scotland**

## **Safeguarding Policy and Procedures**

A commitment to provide a safe and supportive  
environment for our volunteers

**This page is left blank for printing**

# Safeguarding

At St John Scotland, we deeply care about the safety and wellbeing of everyone involved in our work. This policy is here to help you feel confident, supported, and informed about what to do if something doesn't feel right

Please read it, refer to it, and comply with it as you go about your role(s) with SJS

The Policy is divided into four parts -

1. Fundamental Principles.
2. How to recognise abuse.
3. How to respond to a concern.
4. How to meet our responsibilities.

The Policy is approved by the Board and will be regularly reviewed and updated by SJS Head Office as necessary.

**Lynn Cleal**

Chancellor

11 June 2025

## **St John Scotland National Safeguarding Team**

Telephone **0131 287 5776 (voicemail)**

Email **[safeguarding@stjohnscotland.org.uk](mailto:safeguarding@stjohnscotland.org.uk)**

### **Area Safeguarding Lead**

Name:

Telephone:

Email:

### **Area Safeguarding Coordinator Lead**

Name:

Telephone:

Email:

### **External local contacts Local police**

Telephone 112 (non-emergencies) & 999 (emergencies)

### **Local social services**

Website: [www.mygov.scot/social-services](http://www.mygov.scot/social-services)

### **Other useful numbers**

#### **Name**

Role title:

Telephone:

Email:

#### **Name**

Role title:

Telephone:

Email:

#### **Name**

Role title:

Telephone:

Email:

## **PART ONE**

### **FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES**

**All those working with children and vulnerable adults must promote their welfare, health, wellbeing, and development and take every reasonable precaution to protect them. This means they should consider what is in the best interests of the child or vulnerable adult.**

The Board of St John Scotland (SJS) has overall responsibility for safeguarding within the organisation. They ensure that the organisation complies with duties under legislation.

All staff and volunteers have a role to play in identifying concerns, sharing information, and taking prompt action.

For the volunteer's safety, SJS policy is that a minimum of two volunteers will engage in any of our Core Projects and activities, apart from Patient Transport where this is not possible.

#### **Policy Statement**

SJS seeks to provide an environment where all can work safely to serve the community at large and for their own personal development. We do and will take every reasonable precaution to minimise risk. This policy also applies to The Priory of Scotland.

The organisation is committed to ensure that all, and specifically those who are vulnerable, are kept safe from harm while they are involved with the organisation in any way.

Staff and volunteers have a personal responsibility for safeguarding the welfare and wellbeing of all children and vulnerable adults by protecting them from abuse and will support them wherever this happens.

**The term child has the specific legal meaning of anyone below the age of 18 years and the term adult refers to anyone aged 18 years or over.**

**A vulnerable adult is someone who has needs for care and support, is experiencing, or is at risk of, abuse or neglect and is unable to protect themselves (sometimes referred to as 'an adult at risk of harm').**

We are committed to creating a safe, respectful and inclusive environment. That means looking out for each other, speaking up when something's wrong, and always putting people's wellbeing first.

SJS will:

- stop abuse or neglect whenever possible
- prevent harm and reduce the risk of abuse or neglect
- promote the general welfare, health, wellbeing, and development of all and take every reasonable precaution to minimise risk
- protect, maintain, and uphold the human rights of children and vulnerable adults
- eliminate discrimination
- take steps to deal with bullying or exploitation of any kind whenever or wherever it may be found
- provide support, training, and protection for everyone.

**To meet this commitment SJS will ensure that:**

- staff and volunteers are familiar with and have access to the safeguarding policy and procedures
- the organisation continues to monitor the implementation of the safeguarding policy and procedures and takes any measures required to strengthen and improve existing practice
- staff and volunteers have their own copy of the safeguarding pocket card and know who to contact for further information and advice
- children and vulnerable adults, parents and carers know how to voice their concerns and obtain help if they are unhappy or worried about anything
- effective procedures are in place for responding to complaints, concerns, and allegations of suspected or actual abuse
- everyone knows how to report any alleged malpractice or negligence and will be supported when speaking out
- it maintains a national safeguarding team of staff and volunteers to ensure appropriate support is provided to all SJS personnel and service users
- there is appropriate documentation for completion when recording any untoward occurrence
- it maintains a register of all causes for concern and liaises with internal and external bodies as appropriate
- there are appropriate risk assessments for all our activities

- every employee and volunteer will be trained in the fundamentals of safeguarding and that further training for anyone working with children or vulnerable adults will be provided
- clearly defined recruitment procedures including ID checks, references, and Protecting Vulnerable Groups (PVG) checks are followed for every volunteer applicant and SJS employee before they are allowed to work with children or vulnerable adults
- staff and volunteers working directly with children or vulnerable adults may be expected to complete a minimum probationary period of six months during which they are supported, supervised, and appraised.
- all volunteers working directly with children or vulnerable adults should receive an annual safeguarding review and hold a current PVG.
- PVG checks are legally required to be updated every five years and/or when a change of role occurs which involves working with children or vulnerable adults
- for staff and volunteers (at Area level) undertaking regulated activity 'Introduction to Safeguarding' training is required and will be provided.
- for staff, the 'Introduction to Safeguarding' training is required and will be provided
- for key HQ staff, the 'Designated child protection lead in Scotland' training is required and will be provided
- for Board/Trustees, 'Charity trustee safeguarding' training is required and will be provided.

## **PART TWO**

### **HOW TO RECOGNISE ABUSE**

Abuse is a form of maltreatment. It is the violation of an individual's human and civil rights, usually for the gratification of the abuser. Abuse can be self-inflicted or afflicted by another person or persons. In the context of safeguarding, it is used to refer to any knowing, intentional, or negligent act by another that causes harm or a serious risk of harm to another. Any form of abuse is usually perpetrated as the result of deliberate intent.

However, vulnerable people can also be harmed, damaged, or distressed by acts of neglect or ignorance.

Abuse can take place wholly online, or technology may be used to facilitate offline abuse.

Abusers are usually known to their victims and are trusted by them or dependent on them. An abuser will make every effort to establish trust and will seek to maintain the respect of friends and colleagues alike.

Contrary to commonly held belief, strangers very seldom abuse because without having gained trust they cannot be confident that their victims will not tell.

- Abuse may consist of single, multiple, or repeated acts, either to one person in a continuing relationship or service context, or to more than one person at a time.
- Abuse can occur in any relationship and may result in significant harm to, or exploitation of, the person subjected to it. It may result in death.

### **Types of abuse**

#### **Online abuse**

Online abuse is any type of abuse that happens on the web, whether through social networks, playing online games or using mobile phones. Children and young people may experience cyberbullying, grooming, sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, or emotional abuse. It can take place anywhere and anytime.

Children can be at risk of online abuse from people they know, as well as from strangers. Online abuse may be part of abuse that is taking place in the real world (for example bullying or grooming). Or it may be that the abuse only happens online (for example persuading children to take part in sexual activity online).

Children can feel like there is no escape from online abuse – abusers can contact them at any time of the day or night, the abuse can come into safe places like their bedrooms, and images and videos can be stored and shared with other people.

Online abuse can include:

### **Online bullying or cyberbullying**

Cyberbullying is an increasingly common form of bullying behaviour which happens on social networks, games, and mobile phones. Cyberbullying can include spreading rumours about someone, or posting nasty or embarrassing messages, images, or videos.

#### **Cyberbullying includes:**

- sending threatening or abusive text messages creating and sharing embarrassing images or videos
- ‘trolling’ – sending menacing or upsetting messages on social networks, chat rooms or online games
- excluding children from online games, activities, or friendship groups
- setting up hate sites or groups about a particular child encouraging young people to self-harm
- voting for or against someone in an abusive poll
- creating fake accounts, hijacking, or stealing online identities to embarrass a young person or cause trouble using their name
- sending explicit messages, also known as sexting
- pressuring children into sending sexual images or engaging in sexual conversations.

### **Online grooming**

Grooming is when someone builds an emotional connection with a child to gain their trust for the purposes of sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, or trafficking.

Groomers can use social media sites, instant messaging apps including teen dating apps, or online gaming platforms to connect with a young person or child.

They can spend time learning about a young person’s interests from their online profiles and then use this knowledge to help them build up a relationship.

It’s easy for groomers to hide their identity online – they may pretend to be a child and then chat and become ‘friends’ with children they are targeting.

Groomers no longer need to meet children in real life to abuse them. Increasingly, groomers are sexually exploiting their victims by persuading them to take part in online sexual activity.

### **Online child sexual abuse**

When sexual exploitation happens online, young people may be persuaded, or forced, to:

- send or post sexually explicit images of themselves
- take part in sexual activities via a webcam or smartphone
- have sexual conversations by text or online.

### **Discriminatory abuse**

Discriminatory abuse is when someone picks on a person because something about them is different. This can include unfair or less favourable treatment due to a person's race, sex, gender reassignment, age, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation, appearance or cultural background, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity. Abusers may threaten to send images, video or copies of conversations to the young person's friends and family unless they take part in other sexual activity.

Images or videos may continue to be shared long after the sexual abuse has stopped.

Signs of possible **discriminatory abuse** include but are not limited to:

- harassment
- offensive materials or graffiti
- verbal abuse, gestures or statements which are unwelcome and intended as insults
- threatening or obscene behaviour, jokes of a derogatory nature
- bullying, offensive language or violence excluding or treating differently
- preventing contact especially with particular individuals.

Domestic abuse is any incident of threatening behaviour, violence, or abuse. Domestic abuse will include emotional, psychological, physical, sexual, and financial abuse between those who are or have been intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender, sexuality, age, race, wealth, or geography. Possible signs indicating this abuse can be found under the relevant headings in this section.

There are 11 things that are illegal for a person to do to their partner:

- share sexually explicit images of them
- restrict their access to money
- repeatedly put them down
- stop them seeing friends or family
- scare them
- threaten to reveal private things about them
- put tracking devices on their phones jealousy that leads to violence
- make them obey their rules control what they wear
- force them to do things they don't want to.

Signs of possible **emotional or psychological abuse** include but are not limited to:

- delayed physical or emotional development or sudden speech disorders
- compulsive nervous behaviour, e.g., highly anxious, or obsessive behaviour
- excessive deference, need for approval, attention, or affection
- reluctance to have parents/carers contacted
- fear in the eyes, avoiding looking at individuals, flinching on approach
- ambivalence towards individuals
- low self-esteem
- unexplained fear or defensiveness
- threatening or aggressive behaviour.

Signs of possible **financial or material abuse** include but are not limited to:

- money going missing and/or having no cash available
- small items disappearing regularly
- unusual or inappropriate financial transactions
- person is without belongings, clothes, or services which they can afford
- person managing financial affairs appears evasive or difficult
- carer seeks to secure financial assets rather than provide personal care
- recent or long-lost relatives or acquaintances expressing sudden or disproportionate affection for a vulnerable adult with money or property
- recent changes to their legal documents.

## Specific safeguarding issues

There are specific types of behaviour that are abusive and can result in harm. Although abuse is most often caused by others, on occasions it may be self-inflicted.

### Neglect and acts of omission

Neglect is the continuing failure to prevent harm that damages or impairs health and/or development by not meeting a person's basic physical and/or psychological needs.

Signs of possible **neglect** include but are not limited to:

- poor health
- being constantly hungry or thirsty
- loss of weight or being constantly underweight
- being tired all the time
- lack of personal care; inadequate or inappropriate clothing
- being dressed inappropriately for the weather, unkempt, dirty, or smelly
- untreated medical conditions
- injuries that have not been treated or have been treated inadequately
- lack of respect for their privacy or dignity.

### Organisational abuse

Organisational abuse is the mistreatment, abuse or neglect of children or vulnerable adults by an organisation or its personnel.

It can take place within settings and services that children or vulnerable adults live in or use, and it violates their dignity, resulting in a lack of respect for their human rights.

It can take the form of an organisation failing to respond to or address incidents of poor practice brought to its attention.

Organisational abuse means that a culture is created where emotional, physical, and sexual abuse become acceptable and can be regarded as the norm. As part of that culture all too often visits are discouraged, and the involvement of relatives or friends are kept to a minimum.

Possible signs indicating this abuse can be found under the relevant headings in this section.

Signs of possible **physical abuse** include but are not limited to:

- any injury which is not fully explained or inconsistent with the account given
- unexplained bruises or welts on face, lips, mouth, body, arms, back, buttocks or thighs
- bite marks
- bruises in various stages of healing
- clusters of bruises forming regular patterns, reflecting the shape of an object or fingers
- unexplained burns, especially on soles of feet, palms and back; immersion burns, scalds, rope marks, electrical appliance or carpet burns
- cigarette burns
- unexplained fractures to any part of the body, especially in various stages of healing; multiple or spinal injuries
- unexplained lacerations or abrasions to mouth, lips, gums, eyes, or external genitalia
- avoidance of physical contact
- malnutrition, rapid or continued weight loss, insufficient food on premises, dehydration, complaints of hunger
- incontinence
- loss of physical functions due to misuse of medication
- restriction of freedom of movement.

## **Sexual abuse**

Sexual abuse is the involvement of the person in sexual activities which they do not want or truly understand, or to which they are unable to give valid or effective consent. This may involve rape, sexual assault, inappropriate sexual contact or exposure to inappropriate material.

- significant change in sexual behaviour, language, or outlook
- overtly sexual behaviour, often inappropriate to age or development
- bruising or other injuries on areas of the body normally covered – for this reason, they may only be noticed during activities such as swimming
- torn or stained underwear
- pain or itching, bruises or bleeding in genital or anal area
- stomach pains or discomfort when walking or sitting down
- sexually transmitted, urinary tract or vaginal infections
- pregnancy in a person who lacks capacity or who is very young

- self-inflicted injury or attempted suicide

## **Sexting**

Sexting is when someone shares sexual, naked, or semi-naked images or videos of themselves or others or sends sexually explicit messages. They can be sent using mobiles, tablets, smartphones, laptops etc. – any device that allows you to share media and messages.

Sexting may also be called ‘trading nudes’, ‘dirties’ or ‘pic for pic’. The creating or sharing of explicit images of a child is illegal, even if the person doing it is a child.

**TOP TIP** CEOP (Child Exploitation and Online Protection) Command enables anyone worried about online sexual abuse or the way that someone has been communicating with them online to make a report to one of CEOP’s Child Protection Advisors.

## **Bullying**

is behaviour that is:

- threatening, aggressive or intimidating abusive, insulting, or offensive
- cruel or vindictive
- humiliating, degrading, or demeaning.

Bullying can occur between children, adults or between adults and children. Bullying can take many forms. It can be physical, verbal, or non-verbal. Mobile phones, the internet or instant messaging can be used to bully.

Whatever form the bullying takes, many who are bullied will not tell anyone.

- Bullying can be inflicted by anybody whether as an individual or in a group
- It often occurs in circumstances where it is difficult for the bullied to defend themselves
- Bullies will usually pick on those they consider to be vulnerable and less able to protect themselves, such as those who are younger, different, or disadvantaged in some way
- Some individuals may be picked on because of race, class, religion, gender, sexuality, disability, or appearance. Others are bullied for no obvious reason
- It can leave those bullied feeling lonely, isolated, and very unhappy
- Some children and adults have taken their own lives when bullying became too much to bear

- Bullying influences everyone, not just those directly involved. Some feel they can only stand on the side lines and do nothing because if they intervene, they run the risk of being turned on themselves
- Bullying causes much fear and misery and should never be taken lightly.

## **Cuckooing**

Cuckooing is the process whereby criminal gangs target the homes of vulnerable people to use their premises for criminal activity.

Many of the victims are particularly vulnerable and criminal gangs may use threats and intimidation to gain access to the property to engage in criminal activity such as drug dealing, sexual exploitation etc.

Signs of **cuckooing** include but are not limited to:

- an increase in the number of visitors to what is NOT usually a multi-occupancy or social housing property
- different people that you do not recognise coming and going at the property
- new or hire cars parked outside the property
- changes in the resident's behaviour (they might become reclusive, but you see other people coming and going from the property)
- changes in the resident's appearance (they may have visible injuries or look like they are in discomfort from hidden ones)
- signs of drug paraphernalia around the property
- disengagement with support services: a local increase in anti-social behaviour.

## **Criminal exploitation: County Lines**

Criminal exploitation of children or vulnerable adults is a geographically widespread form of harm that is a typical feature of County Lines criminal activity: drug networks or gangs groom and exploit people to carry drugs and money from urban areas to suburban and rural areas, market and seaside towns.

Key to identifying potential involvement in county lines are missing episodes when the victim may have been trafficked for the purpose of transporting drugs.

It can involve force and/or enticement-based methods of compliance and is often accompanied by violence or threat of violence. It can be perpetrated by individuals or groups, males or females, and young people or adults.

It is typified by some form of power imbalance in favour of those perpetrating the exploitation. Whilst age may be the most obvious, this power imbalance can also be due to a range of other factors including gender, cognitive ability, physical strength, status, and access to economic or other resources.

### **Drug, alcohol, and substance misuse**

Misuse is defined as a pattern of habitually taking any substance which can cause harm for mood altering purposes. Substances which can be identified as causing harm may be legal or illegal.

Signs of possible drug, alcohol and substance misuse include but are not limited to:

- unexplained change in personality or attitude
- sudden mood swings, irritability, or angry outbursts
- lack of motivation, lethargy or appearing 'spaced out' confusion
- unexplained shortage of money fraud, theft
- unexplained weight loss/gain.

**Grooming** occurs when someone builds an emotional connection with a child or vulnerable adult to gain their trust for the purposes of abuse or exploitation. They can be groomed online or in person, by a stranger or by someone they know – for example a family member, friend or professional. Groomers can be male or female. They can be any age.

The internet has created new opportunities for abusers to target the vulnerable. They do this by taking advantage of an unsuspecting individual and then proceed to groom. Because the internet is largely unregulated, it has become a significant tool for manipulation in the hands of an abuser.

Caring and concerned adults may also be groomed by the abuser, winning their trust, and as a result a situation which should cause concern becomes acceptable.

Those affected may not realise they have been groomed, or that what has happened is abuse and abusers will try to overcome a child or an adult's natural resistance in stages by:

- making and sustaining contact offering gifts or rewards as bribes
- using secrecy and possible threats so that they become isolated
- introducing them to abuse that appears natural.

## Homelessness

Being homeless or being at risk of becoming homeless (i.e., without a permanent dwelling) presents a real risk to a person's welfare. Indicators that a family may be at risk of homelessness include household debt, rent arrears, domestic abuse and anti-social behaviour, as well as the family being asked to leave a property.

## Peer on peer abuse

Children can abuse other children. It can take many forms including: bullying; sexual violence and sexual harassment; physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling or otherwise causing physical harm; sexting and initiating/hazing type violence and rituals. Sexual violence and sexual harassment can occur online and offline. Evidence shows that girls, children with special education and needs disabilities (SEND) and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) children are at greater risk.

Peer on peer abuse tends to be experienced by children aged 10 and upwards, with those abusing them being slightly older.

Signs of possible **peer on peer abuse** include but are not limited to:

- physical injuries
- drug and alcohol abuse going missing
- committing criminal offences disengagement from school
- poor mental health
- sexual health concerns.

## Radicalisation

The process of radicalisation is different for every individual and can take place over an extended period or within a very short time frame. It may follow an experience of racism or discrimination. They believe that joining a movement offers social and psychological rewards such as adventure, camaraderie, and a heightened sense of identity.

Signs of possible **radicalisation** include but are not limited to:

- changes of behaviour, sense of isolation or failure
- Expression of extremist views
- Use of improper language – racist or hate terms
- Supporting violent methods and actions
- Accessing extremist material online, including through networking sites (e.g. Facebook, YouTube).
- Travel for extended periods to international locations known to be associated with extremism.

## Self-harm

Self-harm is primarily a coping strategy and can provide a release from emotional distress and enable an individual to regain feelings of control. There is no typical person who self-harms. It can be anyone.

- covering up cut marks with clothing
- frequent thoughts of helplessness, hopelessness, or worthlessness
- shame, guilt, low self-esteem
- unexplained injuries
- fear
- depression
- loss of sleep
- unexplained weight loss or gain
- confusion
- unexpected or unexplained change in behaviour
- feeling guilty.

## Sexual Exploitation

Some children and vulnerable adults are trafficked into or within the UK for this purpose. They may be tricked into believing they are in a loving, consensual relationship. Abusers will use various means to gain compliance such as drugs, alcohol, gifts, threats and bribes.

Signs of possible **sexual exploitation** include but are not limited to:

- being missing from home or care
- physical injuries
- drug or alcohol misuse
- involvement in offending
- repeated sexually transmitted infections, pregnancy and terminations
- absence from school
- change in physical appearance
- being estranged from their family
- inappropriate use of social networking sites and other media devices
- receipt of gifts from unknown sources
- recruiting others into explosive situations
- poor mental health
- self-harm
- thoughts of or attempts at suicide.

## **PART THREE**

### **HOW TO RESPOND TO A CONCERN**

It is a sad fact of life that, from time to time, those organisations which exist to help the community are targeted by those who pose a threat to children and vulnerable adults. SJS is no exception. Abuse can occur anywhere at any time. If you have any suspicions, concerns or are made aware of possible abuse you must follow the reporting procedure.

In the course of your work, you may be party to information about individuals which is not in the public domain. Any information you receive belongs to the organisation and may only be used for SJS purposes.

As a rule, information cannot be shared outside the organisation without authority. In the case of information relating to children or vulnerable adults that authority will be given by the National Safeguarding Team.

If information is required immediately by an outside agency (e.g., social services, police) any relevant information must be shared on a need-to-know basis. This is because the safety, protection and wellbeing of the child or vulnerable adult is paramount and will override the normal rules of confidentiality.

Concerns that a child or adult may be at risk of suffering harm may arise from information given to you, behaviour by the child/vulnerable adult, an injury that arouses suspicion or contact with someone known to pose a risk to children/vulnerable adults.

#### **What to do if someone shares a concern with you**

Someone who is worried about what is happening or someone who has been harmed may talk to you. They may raise concerns which may be internal or external to the organisation. In most cases a person will confide in someone they know and trust. As a part of the organisation this could be you. If a child or vulnerable adult confides in you or you learn from anyone else, then you must report that concern.

#### **What you must do**

- Remain calm, approachable, and receptive Listen carefully without interrupting
- Make it clear that you are taking what is being said seriously
- Acknowledge you understand how difficult this may be
- Reassure them that they have done the right thing in telling
- Let them know that you will do everything you can to help them

- Record carefully using the words of the child or vulnerable adult and sign, date and time your notes
- Record only what has been said, heard, seen and what you have done.

### **What you must not do**

- Do not show any shock or distaste
- Do not probe or investigate yourself – only listen, record and report
- Do not ask any questions that suggest the answer Do not speculate or make assumptions
- Do not make any comments about any of the people involved
- Do not make promises you cannot keep
- Do not promise to keep the information secret but explain that there may be a need to share it in confidence with an appropriate person
- Do not delay in contacting your safeguarding team, whatever the time, and always make sure you keep them aware of any further developments
- Do not discuss the situation with anyone who does not need to know.

### **Reporting a safeguarding concern**

The flowchart below sets out the steps for reporting a concern or allegation of abuse in all cases.

**If there is an imminent risk of significant harm**, contact the police or your local social services **immediately**. Do not leave that person until you can hand them over to the appropriate responsible person. Say that you are making a referral and need to speak to the appropriate person.

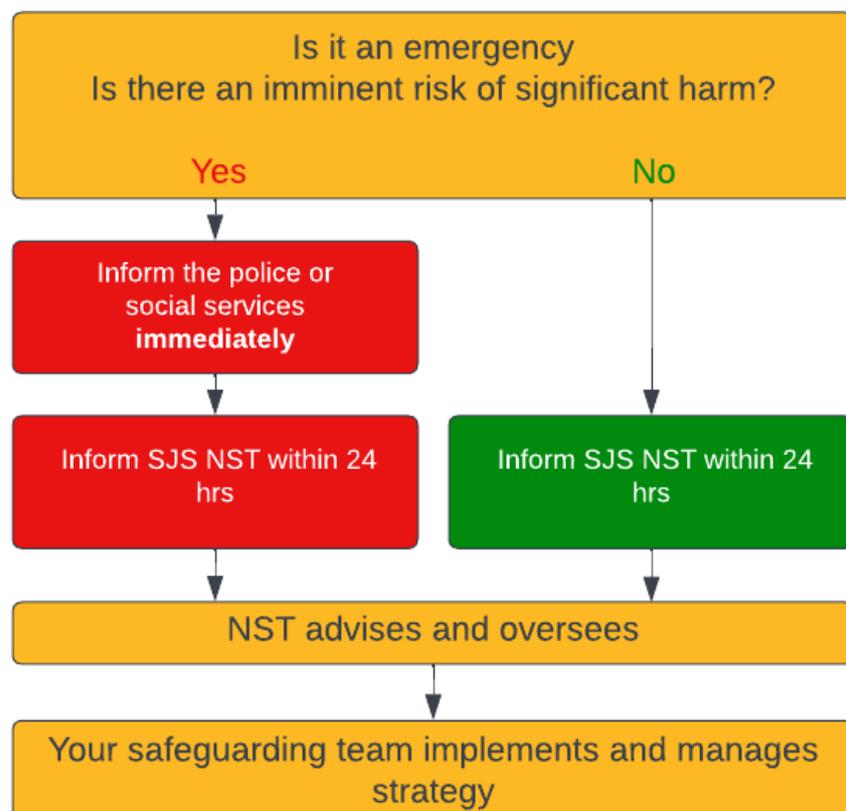
When making such a contact you should:

- Say who you are
- give the details of the person at risk state what they have told you
- provide any relevant background information and ask what will happen next.

Then contact your safeguarding team after you have spoken to the authorities. Do not delay in contacting your safeguarding team, whatever the time, and always make sure that you keep them aware of any further developments. Do not discuss the situation with anyone who does not need to know. Continue to be caring and supportive for the child or vulnerable adult.

**In a non-emergency situation** inform your safeguarding team and then the appropriate manager within 24 hours.

The confidential reporting a cause for concern form has been developed to help this process and can be used by anyone who has a concern that needs to be raised and addressed. The form is available on *SharePoint*, from your safeguarding team or your line manager who can help you complete it if required.



Imminent risk of significant harm means that a child or vulnerable adult is in danger at that moment.

Once you have contacted National Safeguarding Team the following steps will be taken:

- a unique case number will be allocated, which will be passed onto you as confirmation that the matter is being dealt with appropriately.
- Thereafter, other relevant personnel will be informed on a need-to-know basis.

Remember that the media may also become involved. If you are approached do not give any comment. Never provide a statement to the media, or answer any

questions from them – simply ask for their details and say a representative of the organisation will contact them and then immediately pass this information on to SJS's Communication Officer: **communications@stjohnscotland.org.uk**

## **To report or not to report**

### **What if I am wrong?**

Yes, you could be wrong, but you cannot afford to take the risk of not reporting your concerns. Not to report could represent a lost opportunity to help the child or vulnerable adult and could then result in criticism of you and the organisation.

### **'X' always seems such a nice, gentle, helpful person – I am sure they would never hurt anyone**

Appearances can be deceptive. Abusers will do everything they can to appear normal and caring. They will ensure that trust has been firmly established to give them continued access to those they have identified as vulnerable.

### **If something was wrong surely somebody else or another responsible organisation would have noticed and done something?**

Others may have noticed a change in behaviour and reported that fact but that did not cause action to be taken – the additional information you provide could be vital.

### **It's none of my business – I only see this person once a week and I wouldn't like it if someone interfered in my family life**

It is your business – the protection of anyone at risk takes precedence over anything else, and what you have seen or have been told may be extremely important.

### **How could I live with myself if 'X' found out that I had reported them – especially if I was wrong?**

You raised concerns about something which appeared inappropriate to protect someone at risk. How would you feel if that person was to be seriously harmed, and you had done nothing to share or raise your concerns?

### **What if they took that child or adult away?**

A child or vulnerable adult will only be taken away from their home as a last resort if there is serious risk of further significant harm.

### **Maybe I'll wait for a while and see if things get better – if there is something wrong, someone else is bound to notice and report it**

It is vital that you act immediately. There is no guarantee that what you have seen will be noticed elsewhere and once rebuffed, ignored or not taken seriously the person may be reluctant to tell anyone else. Delay could be very serious to the individual concerned. You are not making a definitive judgement, and it is not your role to investigate but to report. However, your information may be an important piece of a jigsaw puzzle which, when put together, may provide a fuller picture. You will need to inform your safeguarding team and the appropriate manager.

## **Mental health**

Around one in four people in the UK experience a mental health problem each year, according to Mind, the mental health charity. There are many different mental health problems such as anxiety, depression, phobias and eating disorders. Help is available but too many people go without the vital support they need to feel better. SJS is committed to fighting the stigma around mental health.

Everyone has good and bad days. However, feeling stressed or low for a long time can be a sign of a mental health problem. There are some common signs that people may need some extra support such as:

- frequently experiencing problems falling asleep or regularly waking up very early
- persistent headaches, palpitations and nausea increased anxiety and irritability
- persistent low mood
- experiencing deep feelings of anger at minor irritations
- avoiding people or activities that they'd normally enjoy
- replaying difficult situations in their mind that can lead them to question or doubt themselves and their actions.

If you spot any of your colleagues displaying these behaviours, it's important to talk to them to see how they're doing as sometimes they just need someone to talk to. For an adult employee or volunteer, support services are available on our:

### **MyWellbeing hub.**

Free and confidential advice and support from Workplace Wellness is available 24 hours a day – telephone 0800 111 6387 or visit [my-eap.com](http://my-eap.com) (organisation code: SJAwell)

All volunteers, board and staff in SJS have access to a confidential assistance programme provided by Workplace Wellness to help people manage and reduce the impact of life's ups and downs, both at home and at work. The telephone helpline (0800 1116 387) gives people access to 24/7 confidential and independent

support from accredited counsellors and information specialists, depending on what you need.

There can be difficult feelings and behaviours which are associated with mental health problems, and sometimes people may try to deal with these overwhelming feelings and situations through self-harm or suicidal thoughts. A safeguarding referral should be made in instances where someone is experiencing, or at risk of, harm and neglect, such as self-harm.

If someone is feeling as though they may act on suicidal feelings and unable to keep themselves safe, then this is a mental health emergency. It's important to treat it as seriously as any physical health emergency and seek urgent help – for example by dialling 999, going to the nearest A&E, or calling the Samaritans on 116 123.

## **PART FOUR**

### **HOW TO MEET OUR RESPONSIBILITIES**

SJS is committed to ensuring that all those working with children and vulnerable adults must promote their welfare, health, wellbeing and development and take every reasonable precaution to protect them. Through the National Safeguarding Team, the Board ensures that there are appropriate policies and procedures in place. However, safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.

#### **Your responsibilities**

- Understand and be familiar with the safeguarding policy and procedures
- Undertake training to the appropriate level to support your role and ensure that this is regularly updated
- Follow safe working practice
- Act appropriately and be able to challenge inappropriate behaviour in others
- Be able to recognise signs of abuse
- Know how to follow and use the procedure for reporting concerns or alleged or suspected incidents of abuse
- Where there is a role requirement ensure that you have a current PVG certificate (to be renewed every 5 years).
- Always wear your ID badge when engaged in St John Scotland activities (events, meetings, awareness sessions)
- Ensure you follow the policy on the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

**TOP TIP:** You have a responsibility to challenge any inappropriate behaviour that could harm an individual or the reputation of St John Scotland.

#### **Supporting you in your responsibilities**

**Area Safeguarding Lead (ASL) and safeguarding team** The Area Safeguarding Lead and safeguarding team provide advice, guidance and practical support to volunteers to ensure that they work safely with children and vulnerable adults in all St John Scotland activities. ASLs and safeguarding teams will:

- undertake appropriate safeguarding training
- advise you on any issues or concerns about working practices
- manage any causes for concern that occur within the Area.

## **Safeguarding Team**

- develops strategy, policy and procedure for working safely with children and vulnerable adults
- promotes safe practice
- seeks to ensure compliance with this policy
- manages and supports Area Safeguarding Teams
- advises and oversees the management of all causes for concern.

## **Your Role and for ensuring**

You are responsible for undertaking safeguarding training as defined by the Board of St John Scotland to the appropriate level for your role and ensuring that this is regularly updated.

## **Safe working practice**

Developing an atmosphere of mutual support and care is essential in helping all staff and volunteers to be comfortable about discussing inappropriate attitudes or behaviour. Always ensure your own behaviour is always beyond reproach. Do not believe that 'it won't happen to me'. The reality is that people who may be blameless, but disregard safe practice, may be subject to accusations of wrongdoing including abuse. If you have any concerns about an individual or suspect that abuse is taking or has taken place, it is your responsibility to report in accordance with this policy.

Safe working practice means working professionally to create a safe environment. You can help to achieve this by:

- being friendly, courteous, and kind; never making suggestive or discriminatory comments
- treating all with dignity and respect regardless of race, gender, age, disability, religion, sexuality, appearance or cultural background
- respecting personal privacy
- considering where possible individual needs, likes and dislikes
- being available to listen
- being ready to refer to someone more experienced than yourself if required
- never ignoring a concern or failing to act knowing how to contact your safeguarding team

- avoiding any questionable activity e.g. rough or sexually provocative games, horseplay and violent games must be avoided
- challenging unacceptable behaviour and reporting any concerns or allegations of abuse
- avoiding favouritism or singling out those who cause trouble or offer challenging behaviour
- minimum of two people – whenever possible ensure other people can see or hear you
- you must not visit individuals in their homes on your own
- not using any form of inappropriate language or subject matter – be careful not to do or say anything that could be misinterpreted as innuendo
- never ignoring or trivialising bullying
- not allowing or engaging in any kind of physical contact that is inappropriate – remember someone else may misinterpret your actions
- establishing links with parents and carers
- making sure you have all appropriate contact details readily available for those in your care.

**TOP TIP:** Follow safe practice at all times – always remember to work safely and do not take any unnecessary risks

If an exceptional situation occurs, seek advice immediately. Where policy cannot be followed or a situation arises that could be misconstrued, detail the circumstances and reasons for what has occurred in a report, which must be forwarded to your safeguarding team within 24 hours of what has taken place.

### **Physical contact**

Physical contact should be avoided wherever possible. If inappropriate, such contact will be construed as indicating some form of abuse. Where physical contact is required, take the following steps:

- Respect the dignity, privacy, and feelings of the individual.
- When a person is upset, try to provide comfort and support without unnecessary or excessive physical contact.
- With potential physical contact during Bystander CPR Awareness sessions, be sensitive and always avoid inappropriate touching of a child or an adult. Ideally, demonstrate on another SJS volunteer or other responsible adult with their pre-arranged permission or ask a participant to demonstrate on another participant.
- There should be no need to adjust clothing. If required, this should be done either by the individual or a peer. On occasions it may be necessary to check

and adjust protective or safety clothing and equipment. This should be done with care, openly in the presence of the entire group.

- It is not acceptable to restrain. If restraint and control are required, appropriate qualified support will need to be obtained, e.g., the police. Only in an emergency where immediate intervention is required to preserve life or limb is restraint justified e.g., grabbing a child to prevent them running into the road.
- In the event of any physical aggression seek appropriate assistance immediately.

## **Communication**

Ways of communicating have changed. Today this includes the wider use of technology such as mobile phones, text and multimedia messaging, emails, videos, webcams, websites and blogs. Communication between adults and those who are vulnerable, by whatever method, should take place within clear and explicit boundaries.

### **Communication principles**

- Know and follow the SJS image and reputation policy.
- SJS staff and volunteers are individually responsible for the content they publish on the internet or any other form of user-generated media. Be mindful that what you publish will be public for a long time – protect your privacy.
- Respect patient confidentiality, data protection and copyright.
- Be mindful of your association with SJS in online social networks. If you identify yourself as a St John Scotland employee or volunteer, ensure that your profile and related content is consistent with the professional standards required by the organisation.
- Always respect other people in the way that you would like them to respect you.
- Adhere to terms and conditions laid out by social media channels.

### **Safe practice**

- You should ensure that all communications are transparent and open to scrutiny.
- Details of mobile numbers and emails must be securely stored as required by the SJS data protection policy.
- You should not ask for or respond to any request for personal information from a child, other than that which is appropriate as part of your role within SJS.
- For children you should make all arrangements by contacting parents or guardians directly. If you send text messages or emails or use social media to contact 16- and 17-year-old children, send copies to parents or guardians and to a person with Area Volunteer Lead.

- Adults must not share their personal social networking site contact details with those under 18.

## **Photography and videos**

It may be appropriate on occasion to record photographic and video images of staff or volunteers, or to allow them to record images of each other, e.g., to assist learning, to celebrate achievement or for publicity.

Because of the potential for images of children to be misused for pornographic or grooming purposes:

- images of children **Will Not** be displayed on any social media sites, websites, in publications or in a public place without the consent of both the child and the parent or carer
- parents or carers are to be routinely asked to give general consent for their child to be photographed or images recorded. This should be updated as required.

Only record images when it is agreed and understood that this will be done

- Be clear why images are being recorded and what will happen to them
- Ensure that all images are available for scrutiny, to screen for acceptability
- Do not take images in one-to-one situations
- Do not take images 'in secret' or in a situation that may be construed as being underhand
- Report any concern about inappropriate or intrusive photographs being taken or subsequently found
- If any image is used, do not name the individual, unless you have specific consent and there is a need to do so
- Where SJS has decided that images should be retained for further use, they should be securely stored and accessed only by those authorised to do so
- No photos or videos of SJS events or activities should be taken without the agreement of all concerned and following the principles set out above.

## **Activities: minimising the risk of harm**

Staff and volunteers should be aware that SJS provides risk assessment guidance. A risk assessment is an important step in protecting the health and safety of staff and volunteers, and others who may be affected by our activities, as well as a requirement of the law.

A risk assessment is simply a careful examination of what could cause harm, so that you can weigh up whether you have taken sufficient precautions or should do more to prevent it. The aim is to try to make sure that no one suffers harm.

A hazard is anything which can cause harm. Risk is the likelihood or chance of that happening. So, the important thing you need to decide is whether the hazard is significant and what action you can take so that the risk is minimised, or whether the activity should be discontinued.

There are several practical matters to consider when planning activities, including:

- the type of activity
- the environment where the activity is taking place the number of participants
- the age of participants
- the skill, ability and competence of those taking part and of the persons supervising or leading the activity.

The risk assessment must be formally recorded. This will provide a clear audit trail, which can be used in the event of an inquiry or complaint.

### **Basic principles of making a risk assessment**

- Complete a thorough risk assessment of the venue, the activity, and its suitability for the proposed participants. This should also include detail of action to be taken in the event of an untoward incident or occurrence
- Undertake a risk assessment for every activity. If it is a regular activity the existing assessment will need to be reviewed regularly and amended as required
- Inform and obtain permission from those with parental or caring responsibilities for the activities that are being organised
- Ensure that all participants are aware of identified risks and safeguards in place
- Ensure that appropriate supervision is in place
- Ensure any activity using potentially dangerous equipment has constant supervision by a responsible person with the appropriate qualifications
- In the event of any dangerous or inappropriate behaviour by anybody present ensure that it is stopped immediately
- Ensure that those with caring responsibilities for children or vulnerable adults are aware of where they are and what they are doing, and that appropriate staffing ratios are maintained
- All risk assessments should be subject to on-the-spot monitoring and change. This is known as 'dynamic' risk assessment where changes are made in response to an increased level of risk or additional hazards that become apparent

- Ensure outside providers are made aware of and comply with the SJS procedures.

### **Five steps to assess general risk**

1. Identify the hazard.
2. Decide who might be harmed and how.
3. Evaluate the risks and decide on precautions.
4. Record your findings and implement them.
5. Review your assessment and update if necessary.

Forms can be obtained from SJS - [info@stjohnscotland.org.uk](mailto:info@stjohnscotland.org.uk)

### **Safer recruitment**

SJS seeks to prevent people who pose a risk of harm from working with children or adults by adhering to statutory responsibilities to check staff and volunteers who work with children and vulnerable adults.

As most staff and volunteers will be engaging in regulated activity, an enhanced PVG certificate which includes barred list information, will be required for most roles.

### **Supervision**

SJS owes all staff and volunteers a duty of care. Specifically, regarding children and vulnerable adults, this means acting as a prudent parent or carer would and protecting them from harm, whether intentional or unintentional.

Planning for appropriate supervision is one of the most effective ways of preventing harm to any of its personnel or to the reputation of the organisation.

Having clearly defined supervision arrangements will not only minimise the risk of accidents but will contribute to the safety of all.

It is your duty:

- to inform the responsible parent or carer of any accidents that have occurred within the activities provided
- to complete a report form and send it to the appropriate manager
- to make sure there is a follow-up call to those with parental or caring responsibility

- to inform the appropriate manager of any injuries you have been told about that occurred outside the organisation.

From time to time, a session may have visitors. It is important that all visitors are always supervised. Supervision means that the visitor is within your eyeline, and you are assured that children and young people are kept safe from harm.

### **Additional requirements for working safely with children**

- Ensure the session has an up-to-date copy of the safeguarding policy and procedures and know whom to contact for further advice, information, and support.
- Never plan to run an awareness session on your own.
- Always maintain the required ratios of adults to those under 18 years of age (see table at the end of this section).
- In case of emergency ensure you have contact details of parents and carers.
- Try to ensure you have the appropriate balance of male and female personnel for whatever activity is taking place. If necessary, introduce a rota scheme.
- Remember to check and record any visitors and guests very carefully whether their visit is by invitation or unsolicited.
- Plan the arrival and departure of children. Ensure that responsible adults are at the premises before the children are expected to arrive. Do not leave the premises until all children have left or been collected by parents or carers.
- Only with written parent or carer approval and the agreement of the Area Lead(s) will those under 16 be allowed to make their own way to meetings and leave without supervision. Agree arrangements that everyone is happy with.
- Involve children in establishing their own list of rules for outlining what is and is not acceptable in their Area. These should be prominently displayed and followed by all adults and children.
- Be firm and fair with children. Avoid favouritism and singling out those who cause trouble. Remember it's the behaviour that is not acceptable and not the child.
- When you find, a child is trying to get a lot of attention, redirect them into positive activity.
- Do not allow children or adults to engage in abusive activities such as initiation ceremonies, ridiculing or bullying.
- Avoid all one-to-one situations with a child. Where such a situation is unavoidable, always keep a door open and ensure someone else can see or hear you.
- It is sometimes necessary for staff and volunteers to carry out personal tasks for children and vulnerable adults, particularly if they are very young or disabled. Ensure that tasks are carried out with the full understanding and consent of parents and carers.

- Staff should be sensitive to and respectful of the child or vulnerable adult's feelings and undertake personal tasks with the utmost discretion.
- In an emergency which requires physical contact, parents and carers should be fully informed as soon as possible of what has happened.
- You and other adults in charge of children should not drink alcohol, both because you are in charge also to set a good example. This applies even if you are off duty but around children.
- Formally organised transportation shall only be undertaken in appropriate SJS vehicles or approved private vehicles with the driver being suitably qualified.
- As a St John Scotland volunteer or employee, do not take a child to your own home or any other premises where you will be alone with them (this does not apply if the child is related to you).
- Never trivialise child abuse.
- Record and report any allegations by a child including any made against you.

### **Adult supervision ratio requirements when working with those under 18 years of age**

When working with groups of children or young people it's important that there are enough qualified adults to provide the appropriate level of supervision.

The NSPCC states that: 'staffing and supervision ratios can sometimes be difficult to judge. It's important that you have enough volunteers to ensure children are safe – and that these adults are suitable to undertake various tasks as needed'.

Wherever possible, for mixed gender groups of children the supervising adults should reflect the mixture of genders.

As a minimum there should always be at least two adult volunteers. It may not always be possible to stick to recommended ratios. However, every effort should be made to always achieve the best level of supervision of children.

All volunteers who undertake 'regulated work' on behalf of SJS will undergo a Protecting Vulnerable Groups (PVG) check. All volunteers who have contact with children should understand and agree to follow the safeguarding policy and procedures.

### **Other considerations for working safely with children and adults**

- SJS is committed to creating an equal, inclusive and diverse organisation that provides a high quality and safe service.
- Areas should be mindful that some people may benefit from additional help: e.g. is disabled and has specific additional needs; has special educational needs; and is a young carer

- Areas should also be mindful that the most common reason for children becoming looked after is because of abuse and/or neglect. It is essential that this potentially vulnerable group are kept safe.
- Children with special educational needs (SEND) and disabilities can face additional safeguarding challenges. This can include for example that they are disproportionately impacted by behaviours such as bullying without outwardly showing any signs

<b>14-17 YEARS</b>		
<b>VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES</b>	<b>MEETINGS</b>	<b>ADULTS REQUIRED</b>
Up to 8	Up to 10	Minimum 2
9-16	11-20	Minimum 2
17-24	21-30	Minimum 3
25-32	31-40	Minimum 4
33-40	41-50	Minimum 6

- Transgender and non-binary children and adults have the right to be respectfully treated in a manner consistent with their identity. Facilities will need to be checked carefully to ensure that, wherever possible, an individual's needs, and the organisations can be met
- LGBTQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and others) people can feel more vulnerable with regards to bullying and mental health. The organisation wishes all staff and volunteers to feel valued, accepted and included.

Document Title:	VP011 – Safeguarding Policies & Procedures
Document Sponsor:	Chancellor
Date Approved:	June 2025
Board Approval:	Yes
Version No:	v1.0
Review Frequency:	Every 2 years
Next Review Date:	June 2027



**St John**  
Scotland

St John Scotland Registered Office: 21 St John Street, Edinburgh EH8 8DG

**T:** 0131 556 8711 **E:** [info@stjohnscotland.org.uk](mailto:info@stjohnscotland.org.uk) **W:** [stjohnscotland.org.uk](http://stjohnscotland.org.uk)

Scottish Registered Charity number SC047485.

A company limited by guarantee registered in Scotland number SC557034