



Safeguarding

This policy outlines how Transition Stroud (TS) promotes a safe working environment that actively prevents harm, and quickly and effectively responds to instances of harm taking place, both for itself and the people and groups with whom it comes into contact.

All TS policies contain within them an element of safeguarding.

What is safeguarding?

Safeguarding is the term used to describe everything needed to create a safe working environment, protect individuals in it from harm, and promote their welfare. It involves anticipating and preventing harm (risk), identifying harm that has taken place (report), and acting to remedy harm (respond).

Everyone involved with TS has a role to play in safeguarding, and deserves to be safeguarded.

Why safeguarding needs to be proactive

People who have experienced or are experiencing harm may find it difficult to report, and it may be difficult for others to recognise. This is why TS must conspicuously value safeguarding, provide a sympathetic and confidential space for its reporting, and be seen, as far as individual needs for privacy allow, to deal decisively and sensitively with any safeguarding issues.

Likewise, people working with and for TS need to understand safeguarding, and be vigilant for signs of harm taking place. Recognising harm cannot be left to a 'better qualified' or 'more experienced' authority – this assumes too much. It may be that the person who has spotted the harm is the only person in whom the person at risk is prepared to confide.

Safeguarding is everybody's job. It's just some people will more often be in a position where it becomes relevant than others.

Even if you don't interact with people directly, you still need to think about your safeguarding responsibilities and how you respond to them.

Harm

Harm can be unintentional. People sometimes don't realise or understand they are causing harm. Harm can be indirect, either with consequences felt 'outside the room', or by appearing to validate actions by others which cause harm. Good intentions can cause harm, not least by carrying presumptions about others or disempowering them.

We need to let other people, especially those new to us, tell their story.

Harm may be:

- ◆ Discriminatory.
- ◆ Emotional.
- ◆ Financial.
- ◆ Physical.
- ◆ Psychological.
- ◆ Sexual.

It may be caused through:

- ◆ Coercion or grooming.
- ◆ Denial of rights.
- ◆ Deprivation.
- ◆ Modern slavery or exploitation.
- ◆ Neglect.
- ◆ Radicalisation.

Children and vulnerable adults

Everyone has the right not to be abused, but there are additional duties and legal protections for children and vulnerable adults (or 'adult at risk' or 'at-risk adult').

TS itself does not habitually work with children or vulnerable adults, but affiliated groups and projects that do should appoint a dedicated safeguarding lead. (TS' default safeguarding lead is the Coordinator.) This is an example of proportionality: the more we work with people at risk, the more we do to manage that risk and protect them.

- ◆ A child is anyone under the age of 18.

A vulnerable adult is anyone aged 18 or over who:

- ◆ Is, or may be, unable to take care of themselves.
- ◆ Is unable to protect themselves from harm or exploitation.

- ◆ Is currently experiencing or is at risk of harm or exploitation.

This may be due to:

- ◆ Addiction problems.
- ◆ Age.
- ◆ Frailty.
- ◆ Learning disability.
- ◆ Mental or physical illness.
- ◆ Sensory impairment.
- ◆ Transitioning from children's support services.

Whether an adult is considered vulnerable or not may change as their circumstances change. An adult should be assumed to be covered by this policy unless there is information to indicate they are not.

The types and prevalence of risks faced by children and vulnerable adults are different, may present differently, and need to be managed differently.

Vulnerable adults still retain the right to make unwise decisions, including choosing not to take action to protect themselves, in any situation where they are able to do so.

Children do not have this freedom, their safety is the primary concern, although listening to their views is still important. For a child maltreatment includes impairing their development and best outcomes.

Risk

It's unlikely that all safeguarding issues can be prevented, but this does not stop us making our best effort to prevent as many as possible by managing risk.

Priority

We set a high priority on safeguarding with this policy, and by reinforcing it through other policies such as our values, conduct, inclusion, safe working, and whistleblowing policies we make safeguarding a strong aspect of our culture.

Publicity

We ensure that we and those we work with are aware of our commitment to safeguarding and ask them to know their responsibilities and uphold them.

Recruiting and deploying

We carry out appropriate and legal background checks (which may include interviews, references, criminal records checks, mandatory DBS checks, requests to see organisational safeguarding and other policies) on individuals before we work with them, and on groups looking to affiliate with us, or partner on projects.

Where it's not appropriate to do these checks, we put other measures in place to ensure they carry out their roles safely.

The measures we take relate proportionally to the potential risks. Role descriptions, memoranda of understanding, and project briefs will make these risks clear.

Induction and training

We ensure people have received and continue to receive safeguarding training at a level appropriate to their role.

Designing out risk

We aim to design and undertake our activities in a way that protects people from any risk of harm that may arise from their coming into contact with TS:

- ◆ We follow this policy, which we review regularly and update as necessary, notifying all relevant parties of updates.
- ◆ We conduct risk assessments as necessary, and design our activities according to their findings, prioritising those most at risk.
- ◆ We familiarise ourselves with novel sources of risk, which may impact assessments we have conducted in the past and require revisiting.
- ◆ From our risk assessments we identify recurring issues, and then review our activities and procedures for ways of addressing them.
- ◆ We involve as many people as possible in our risk management, prioritising the insights of those with direct experience of the risk issue.
- ◆ We are clear about accountability, whistleblowing, how to raise and escalate safeguarding concerns.
- ◆ We understand the problems which may be caused by association, by for example users of our services, or bad actors who take our communications out of context and use them to inaccurately characterise us.

Valuing and encouraging concern

We want everyone to know how to speak up and feel comfortable about raising concerns. We ask everyone to make time and space to reflect on how things are going and whether there might be a safeguarding issue that needs raising.

We understand contemplating safeguarding issues may be triggering for some people because of their past experiences, and aim to provide a supportive atmosphere that makes reporting concerns easier.

We understand that safeguarding issues may take a lot of work to resolve, and allow them to take appropriate priority over other activities.

Lone working

Lone working increases the risk to personal safety. We ask everyone working with us to take special care to recognise risks and take precautions when working alone, which may mean agreeing a formal risk assessment with the Coordinator or a director, and agreeing a 'buddy' – someone (not necessarily at TS, but knows who and how to contact TS) who knows a lone-worker's schedule, and with whom they will be in contact for support and reassurance.

We aim never to work in person with the public on our own, or to at least do so in a public place. No-one should meet children or vulnerable adults on their own, or knowingly enter risky situations, without prior agreement from the Coordinator or a director.

Recognise and report

Every safeguarding concern should be reported, even if the person with the concern is not certain.

Recognising the signs of harm and abuse can be difficult. Some present as changes in behaviour or lifestyle that can only be spotted over a period of time. It's best to be safe rather than sorry.

Safeguarding concerns need to be reported immediately to the safeguarding lead, who for TS is the Coordinator. If they are unavailable or inappropriate, contact another appropriate person, which for TS is any director.

If the situation suggests otherwise, contact a trusted third party, for example a person's school, the NSPCC, Hourglass, the National Domestic Abuse Helpline, or the local Council.

If someone is in immediate danger, contact the police on 999.

Information

It's important to take notes of as much of the important information supporting a concern as is possible. This may include:

- ◆ Date, time and location.
- ◆ The identity of the person you're concerned about.
- ◆ The names of any other people present.
- ◆ What you think happened (is going on).
- ◆ Why (for example things you saw, heard, conversations you had).
- ◆ Whether there's any evidence (for example CCTV, social media posts).
- ◆ The actions you took.

Respond

TS will:

- ◆ Follow up safeguarding reports and concerns according to policy and procedure, and legal and statutory obligations.
- ◆ Apply appropriate disciplinary action as far as it is able, and refer any incident to the appropriate authorities if the survivor of the harm consents (remembering that crimes must be reported).
- ◆ Offer support to survivors, regardless of whether a formal internal response is carried out (such as an internal investigation). Decisions regarding support will be led by the survivor.

TS will not:

- ◆ Ignore harms to which it is witness which fall outside the scope of its activities.

Welcoming and sympathetic

Safeguarding issues can be hard to report, especially for survivors of harm. We aim to be:

- ◆ Calm.
- ◆ Compassionate.
- ◆ Constructive.
- ◆ Honest.
- ◆ Patient listeners.
- ◆ Professional.

- ◆ Realistic.
- ◆ Reassuring.
- ◆ Supportive.
- ◆ Understanding.
- ◆ Welcoming.

These are not situations where it is appropriate to be 'touchy-feely', or to offer advice, opinions or judgments.

Confidentiality

Information we receive through the reporting of a safeguarding concern is confidential, but it is not secret. Confidential information is kept securely.

Information will be shared only with people who need and have the right to know, who may be able to help. This may include the police.

Beyond this, we will ask for consent to share such information as is necessary with anybody who we feel has a legitimate interest, such as our safeguarding lead should you have approached another person at TS. We have a duty to recognise and prevent harm to others.

This version agreed by the TS Council on 5th December 2024

To be reviewed December 2026, or as needed by TS Council, whichever is the soonest.