



SAFEGUARDING AND CHILD PROTECTION POLICY INCLUDING RECOGNISING AND RESPONDING TO ABUSE GUIDANCE

Let's Communicate Ltd

November 2023

Version 1

SAFEGUARDING AND CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

OVERVIEW

Our aim at Let's Communicate Ltd (The Company) is to provide excellent speech and language therapy to children either through schools who commission our services, families who contract from us or third-party organisations such as fostering agencies. Safeguarding is at the core of what we do at Let's Communicate and is vital in our work with children, families and schools.

The Company's Registered Office is at:

104 Cloonmore Avenue, Orpington, England, BR6 9LW

Company Number: 14177790

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to set out Let's Communicate's approach to safeguarding children and vulnerable adults. It applies to everyone working for Let's Communicate or acting on their behalf, including managers, paid staff, sessional workers, and students. It describes some corporate safeguarding responsibilities so that you know who to ask for decisions or advice if you need to. It provides the framework to help us safeguard children with commitment and confidence.

The principal purpose of this policy statement is:

- to protect children and young people who receive Let's Communicate's services from harm,
- to provide staff, as well as children and young people and their families, with the overarching principles that guide our approach to child protection.

This policy has been drawn up based on legislation, policy and guidance that seeks to protect children in England. A summary of the key legislation and guidance is available from [nspcc.org.uk/child protection](https://www.nspcc.org.uk/child-protection).

Supporting documents: This policy statement should be read alongside our company policies, procedures, guidance and other related documents:

- code of conduct for staff and student SLTs
- safer recruitment
- acceptable use policy in relation to technology and online safety

- safeguarding children and young people from radicalisation and extremism
- anti-bullying
- equality and diversity
- training, supervision and support

OUR APPROACH TO SAFEGUARDING

Principles

Our approach to safeguarding is driven by several principles which are informed by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, relevant legislation and guidance, and by best practice.

- ¹**Principle 1** We believe all children have a right to protection from harm and abuse, regardless of age, ability, gender, racial heritage, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, identity or additional vulnerabilities. Some children are additionally vulnerable because of the impact of previous experiences, their level of dependency, communication needs, or special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Extra safeguards may be needed to keep children who are additionally vulnerable safe from abuse.
- **Principle 2** We believe the best interests of the child are paramount in all the work we do and in all the decisions we take, including when to maintain confidentiality and when to share information about them. We have a responsibility to promote the welfare of all children and young people, to keep them safe and to practise in a way that protects them.
- **Principle 3** We believe that working in partnership with children, young people, their parents, carers and other agencies is essential in promoting young people's welfare.

¹**Definitions:** Safeguarding children is the action we take to promote the welfare (or wellbeing) of children and protect them from harm. Child protection is part of the safeguarding continuum and focuses on the activity that is undertaken to protect individual children identified as suffering or likely to suffer significant harm. Child: This policy is in respect of all children. A child includes babies, children and young people from pre-birth up to 18 years. ³ An adult at risk is 'any person who is aged 18 years or over and at risk of abuse or neglect because of their needs for care and support' (Care Act 2014 [England]).

- **Principle 4** We believe children have a right to participate in decisions about their interventions from Let's Communicate. Their views, wishes and feelings are important in our work with them.
- **Principle 5** Concerns or allegations that Let's Communicate staff have abused or neglected a child or adult will be managed sensitively and fairly in accordance with these policies, relevant legislation and local procedures.
- **Principle 6** Working together with children, their parents, carers and other agencies is essential to promoting children's welfare/wellbeing and ensuring their protection. In some limited circumstances, it will not be appropriate to engage with parents and carers to protect the child.
- **Principle 7** As part of working together we expect other professionals to act on our concerns, and we will escalate our concerns in our efforts to be satisfied that the child has been protected.

HOW WE SEEK TO KEEP CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SAFE

- by valuing, listening to and respecting them.
- by appointing a nominated safeguarding and child protection lead for children and young people, in this case, the lead for safeguarding and child protection within Let's Communicate is the Director, Francesca Beard,
- adopting child protection and safeguarding best practice through our policies, procedures and code of conduct for staff and students on placement,
- developing and implementing an effective online safety policy and related procedures
- providing effective management for staff, through supervision, support, training and quality assurance measures so that all staff, sessional workers, and students know about and follow our policies, procedures and behaviour codes confidently and competently

DISCLOSURE

Disclosure is the process by which children and young people start to share their experiences of abuse with others. This can take place over a long period of time – it is a journey, not one act or action. Children may disclose directly or indirectly and sometimes they may start sharing details of abuse before they are ready to put their thoughts and feelings in order. Not all disclosures will lead to a formal report of

abuse, case being made or a case being taken to court, but all disclosures should be taken seriously. It takes extraordinary courage for a child to go through the journey of disclosing abuse. It's vital that anyone who works with children and young people undertaking this journey is able to provide them with the support they need.

HOW DISCLOSURE HAPPENS

Children and young people may disclose abuse in a variety of ways, including:

- directly - making specific verbal statements about what's happened to them,
- indirectly – making ambiguous verbal statements which suggest something is wrong,
- behaviourally – displaying behaviour that signals something is wrong (this may or may not be deliberate),
- non-verbally – writing letters, drawing pictures or trying to communicate in other ways.

Children and young people may not always be aware that they are disclosing abuse through their actions and behaviour. Sometimes children and young people make partial disclosures of abuse. This means they give some details about what they've experienced, but not the whole picture. They may withhold some information because they:

- are afraid they will get in trouble with or upset their family,
- want to deflect blame in case of family difficulties as a result of the disclosure,
- feel ashamed and/or guilty,
- need to protect themselves from having to relive traumatic events.

When children do speak out it is often many years after the abuse has taken place

BARRIERS TO DISCLOSURE

Some children and young people are reluctant to seek help because they feel they don't have anyone to turn to for support. They may have sought help in the past and had a negative experience, which makes them unlikely to do so again.

They may also:

- feel that they will not be taken seriously,
- feel too embarrassed to talk to an adult about a private or personal problem,
- worry about confidentiality,
- lack trust in the people around them (including parents) and in the services provided to help them,
- fear the consequences of asking for help,
- worry they will be causing trouble and making the situation worse,
- find formal procedures overwhelming.

(Mental Health Foundation and Camelot Foundation, 2006).

Not all children and young people realise they have experienced abuse, for example if they have been groomed.

THE RISKS TO CHILDREN

Children can be vulnerable to different forms of abuse and harm. It is important to recognise that abuse and harm of children can cover a wide range of circumstances and behaviours. For example, children can be at risk of:

- physical or emotional abuse
- neglect
- sexual abuse
- female genital mutilation (FGM)
- grooming and exploitation
- trafficking and modern slavery
- exposure to or infliction of domestic abuse
- bullying or cyber bullying
- exposure to other inappropriate content or behaviour, such as violence or criminal behaviour

- self-harm
- physical harm when engaging with activities without adequate supervision

SPOTTING THE SIGNS OF ABUSE

Children and young people who have been abused may want to tell someone, but not have the exact words to do so. They may attempt to disclose abuse by giving adults clues, through their actions and by using indirect words. Adults need to be able to notice the signs that a child or young person might be distressed and ensure there is a safe, comfortable environment where children feel empowered to speak about any concerns.

The NSPCC sets out four different types of abuse:

- physical
- sexual
- emotional
- neglectful

Please see the NSPCC's fact sheet on signs to look out for. Your child protection training will help your confidence in recognising the indicators of abuse and understanding the different ways a child might try to share what they have experienced.

HELPING CHILDREN DISCLOSE ABUSE

It's important to create an environment where children and young people are comfortable about speaking out if anything is worrying them. They need to:

- be able to recognise abuse and know it is wrong,
- know who they can talk to about it.

The people they choose to disclose to need to listen, understand and respond appropriately so the child gets the help, support and protection they need.

The NSPCC Childline service offers children and young people confidential help and advice. Calls to 0800 1111 are free and children can also contact Childline online or find advice on the Childline website.

RESPONDING TO DISCLOSURES

The NSPCC identify three key interpersonal skills that help a child feel they are being listened to and taken seriously:

- **show you care, help them open up:** Give your full attention to the child or young person and keep your body language open and encouraging. Be compassionate, be understanding and reassure them their feelings are important. Phrases such as 'you've shown such courage today' help.
- **take your time, slow down:** Respect pauses and don't interrupt the child – let them go at their own pace. Recognise and respond to their body language. And remember that it may take several conversations for them to share what's happened to them.
- **show you understand, reflect back:** Make it clear you're interested in what the child is telling you. Reflect back what they've said to check your understanding – and use their language to show it's their experience.

If a child tells you they are experiencing abuse, it's important to reassure them that they've done the right thing in telling you. Make sure they know that abuse is never their fault. Never promise a child that you will keep the things they're telling you a secret. Explain that you need to share what they've told you with someone who will be able to help. Never talk to the alleged perpetrator about the child's disclosure. This could make things a lot worse for the child.

MAKING NOTES

It's important to keep accurate and detailed notes on any concerns you have about a child. You will need to share these with the nominated safeguarding and child protection lead.

Include:

- the child's details (name, age, address)
- what the child said or did that gave you cause for concern (if the child made a verbal disclosure, write down their exact words)
- any information the child has given you about the alleged abuser.

CONFIDENTIALITY AND DATA PROTECTION

All personal information we may process relating to children, shall be processed and stored in accordance with our data protection privacy policy which can be located at: WEBSITE & ON REQUEST.

NB: It is important to share information with relevant professionals if this is in the public interest. This includes protecting children from significant harm and promoting the welfare of children. The [Data Protection Act 2018](#) and [General Data Protection Regulation \(GDPR\)](#) do not affect this principle.

SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AT SCHOOLS

Let's Communicate contracts into other organisations such as schools who will have their own safeguarding policies. It is important that Let's Communicate staff are familiar with these policies and know who the local safeguarding lead is. Any safeguarding concerns regarding children or young people should be reported as a matter of urgency to the organisation's safeguarding lead. This action should be recorded in Let's Communicate's clinical notes and reported to Let's Communicate's safeguarding lead.

REPORTING CONCERNS - LET'S COMMUNICATE'S PROCEDURES

If a child is suffering or at risk of suffering significant harm, you can share information with appropriate agencies or professionals without the child's or their parent's consent.

If a child is in immediate danger, call the police on 999.

If a child is not in immediate danger:

- Make notes and share your concerns with Let's Communicate's Safeguarding and Child Protection Lead: Francesca Beard on 07946 577634 Upon receipt of any safeguarding concern, the Safeguarding Officer shall consult with any other relevant persons and will make any appropriate referrals to the relevant authorities, such as the applicable Local Authority Children's Services department.

- If you are unable to contact Let's Communicate's Safeguarding and Child Protection Lead, then contact the local authorities' child protection services:
 - Children's Social Care Team at Medway Council: [01634 334466](tel:01634334466) (Monday to Friday, 9 – 5). 030 0041 9191 (Out of hours)
 - Children's Social Care Team at Kent County Council: call [03000 41 11 11](tel:03000411111) (Monday to Friday, 9 – 5). 030 0041 9191 (Out of hours)
- You can also contact the NSPCC Helpline on [0808 800 5000](tel:08088005000) or by emailing help@nspcc.org.uk. Their trained professionals will talk through your concerns with you, give you expert advice and take action to protect the child as appropriate. This may include making a referral to the local authority.

If you have made a verbal referral to local children's services you should follow this up with a written referral as soon as possible, ideally within 48 hours.

REPORTING CONCERNS ABOUT OTHER ADULTS WITHIN THE COMPANY

Where any person has a concern regarding the conduct of an adult connected to Let's Communicate, which poses or may pose a safeguarding risk to children such as:

- harming a child either physically or emotionally
- exposing a child to behaviour which may cause physical or emotional harm
- engaging in criminal activity concerning a child

this must be raised in the first instance with the Safeguarding Lead (or where this is not appropriate, a different senior member of the organisation) so that the next appropriate steps may be agreed and actioned. We recognise that there could be circumstances where a person may need to report a matter that has taken place in a setting outside of the person's engagement with Let's Communicate. Usually, any appropriate steps following a safeguarding referral in respect of an individual connected to Let's Communicate will include either:

- further initial enquiries
- escalation to the applicable Local Authority Children's Services department for assessment and/or the police for investigation
- instigation of any appropriate disciplinary, formal investigation processes and suspension of any person concerned within the Company

- a referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service, or any other relevant regulatory bodies

Any person within the Company who has allegations made against them shall be informed properly in a formal meeting of the particulars of the allegations and the relevant next steps which shall be taken. Such a meeting should ordinarily be held by the Safeguarding Officer. On certain occasions, such a meeting may not be convened until this has been approved by any authorities involved (such as the police or the relevant Local Authority). Any person from within the Company who has allegations made against them shall be treated fairly. All enquires, investigations and decisions taken shall be just and fair, with the safety of any child concerned at the heart of the process. Any person from within the Company who makes an allegation against another person from within the Company shall be listened to, taken seriously and shall be treated fairly and justly throughout the process of enquiries, investigations and decision making.

MANAGING BEHAVIOUR OF CHILDREN GENERALLY

Whenever any adult engaged by us is faced with challenging or inappropriate behaviour from a child or with conflict between children, they must:

- treat each child fairly and equally
- approach the situation in a calm and neutral manner
- only ever use physical restraint/intervention in order to protect the immediate safety of a person, for example to prevent an injury or harm either to the child or others
- wherever it is justified to physically restrain a child or to physically intervene, the amount of force used should be kept to the absolute minimum taking into account the risk posed
- make a written record of the incident and ensure this is reported appropriately to the Safeguarding Officer

MANAGING RISKS POSED BY OTHER CHILDREN

It is important for all adults engaged by the Let's Communicate to recognise that children can face harm from their peers. This can commonly take the form of bullying. Bullying can be defined as any behaviour which is:

- repeated; and
- has the intention of hurting somebody either physically or emotionally.

Bullying can sometimes be motivated by prejudices based on certain groups, for example gender, race, religion or sexual orientation. Bullying can often include: - physical harm perpetrated against another child - name calling and threats - cyberbullying (threats and abusive comments made via technology).

Any instance of bullying or concern relating to possible bullying between children observed at a contract school will be reported to their Safeguarding Lead.

PHOTOGRAPHY

On some occasions, we may take clinical photographs of children, for example of their mouths, faces, posture. We recognise that photography of children carries risks, such as:

- the potential for images to be re-used, shared or adapted in a damaging or inappropriate manner
- the general risk of sharing images and the impact this could have on a child's public image as they grow older

In view of these risks, we will:

- always ask for written permission from a child's parent/guardian before taking any image of them
- always ensure that a child and their parent/guardian are properly informed how an image will be used and potentially shared within a clinical report.

We **WILL NOT** share images of children outside of clinical reports and will store photos in accordance with our data protection policy.

Contact details for the nominated Safeguarding Lead at Let's Communicate Ltd:

Name: Francesca Beard

Position: Director of Let's Communicate Ltd

Phone/email: 07946 577634, francesca@letscommunicateltd.com

We are committed to reviewing our policy and good practice annually. Updated policies will reflect new learning and are consistent with best safeguarding practice and legislation in the UK. This policy was last reviewed on: 30.11.2023