



Safeguarding Policy

Safeguarding children, young people and adults

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Policy Statement

At People First, we are committed to creating a safe and supportive environment for everyone, including children, young people, and vulnerable adults. Our safeguarding policy aims to protect individuals, promote their well-being, and uphold their rights. We take this responsibility seriously, working with staff, volunteers, and partners to ensure a culture of care and respect.

Our policy follows a Think Family approach, recognising that the safety and well-being of children, young people, and adults are often connected, especially within families and communities. We consider how issues affecting one person may impact others, helping us address risks and provide the support needed for everyone.

The policy outlines the steps we take to safeguard those we work with and the actions we take to prevent abuse or neglect. It is designed to ensure that no act or omission by People First puts anyone at risk, and that we have systems in place to promote the welfare of children, young people, and adults at risk of harm.

People First operates across multiple local authority areas, and this policy applies wherever we work. When working in partnership with other organisations, including our sub-contractors, we will make sure that relevant authorities are informed of any incidents or concerns related to safeguarding.

This policy must be read in conjunction with the following PF policies (this list is not exhaustive):

- Health and Safety
- Lone Working
- SAFER Recruitment including Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service Checks
- Whistleblowing
- Data Protection
- Feedback and Complaints
- Staff and Volunteer Handbooks

1. Principles

This policy aims to protect children, young people, and adults at risk of abuse, regardless of their background or protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010, such as age, gender, race, disability, and more.

People First is committed to treating everyone with kindness, dignity, respect, and fairness. We believe safeguarding is a shared responsibility that requires cooperation between public agencies, professionals, and organisations. At People First, we promote strong relationships by:

- Ensuring Trustees, Directors, and Senior Leadership are dedicated to ongoing safeguarding learning.
- Clearly defining safeguarding roles and responsibilities within the organisation.
- Providing staff and volunteer training on abuse signs, responsibilities, and key safeguarding laws (such as the Care Act 2014 and Mental Capacity Act 2005).
- Offering support and supervision to staff on safeguarding practices.
- Implementing safe working practices, including thorough recruitment and DBS checks.

- Encouraging effective collaboration with other organisations and sharing information where appropriate.

This policy aligns with local Early Help Strategies to identify issues early and provide support to families.

2. Key Safeguarding Roles and Responsibilities at People First

Everyone at People First plays an important role in safeguarding the individuals we work with, whether directly or indirectly. Clear roles and responsibilities ensure that safeguarding is integrated into everything we do and that all concerns are taken seriously and acted upon swiftly.

The key safeguarding roles and responsibilities within People First are:

Trustees

- **Oversight and Accountability:** The Trustees and Directors hold overall responsibility for safeguarding within People First. They ensure that safeguarding policies and practices are robust, up-to-date, and compliant with relevant legislation.
- **Leadership Commitment:** Trustees and Directors are committed to fostering a culture of safeguarding, demonstrating leadership through continuous learning, development, and active participation in safeguarding initiatives.
- **Review and Monitoring:** They ensure regular reviews of safeguarding practices, monitor the implementation of policies, and assess any risks related to safeguarding.

Chief Executive Officer

The ultimate accountability for safeguarding sits with the Chief Executive Officer. Any failure to have systems and processes in place to protect children and adults at risk would result in a failure to meet our statutory duties and non-statutory organisational constitution.

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

- **Central Point of Contact:** The DSL is the main point of contact for all safeguarding concerns within People First. They provide guidance and support to staff, volunteers, and others involved in safeguarding matters.
- **Risk Management and Referrals:** The DSL leads on assessing, managing, and making referrals to appropriate authorities when safeguarding concerns arise. They ensure that all safeguarding concerns are addressed promptly and appropriately.

- **Training and Awareness:** The DSL ensures that safeguarding training is provided to staff and volunteers and that everyone is aware of how to report concerns or incidents.
- **Monitoring Safeguarding Practices:** The DSL works closely with the Senior Leadership Team to monitor the effectiveness of safeguarding measures and ensures compliance with policy and procedures.

Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead(s)

- **Supporting the DSL:** In the absence of the DSL, the Deputy DSL(s) step in to take responsibility for safeguarding concerns. They assist in managing referrals and ensuring safeguarding processes are followed correctly.
- **Training and Development:** The Deputy DSL(s) also play a key role in helping to train staff and volunteers, ensuring safeguarding knowledge is spread throughout the organisation.
- **Ongoing Support:** They offer support to staff, volunteers, and others on safeguarding issues and provide advice on how to manage and escalate concerns.

Senior Leadership Team (SLT)

- **Strategic Oversight:** The SLT is responsible for ensuring that safeguarding is embedded within the organisation's strategic plans and that resources are allocated to support safeguarding practices.
- **Policy Implementation:** SLT play a key role in overseeing the implementation of safeguarding policies and procedures and ensuring that these are regularly reviewed and updated.
- **Supporting the DSL:** The SLT works closely with the DSL to ensure that any serious safeguarding concerns are managed appropriately and that appropriate actions are taken to safeguard individuals.

Safeguarding Champions (if applicable)

- **Peer Support and Guidance:** In larger teams or departments, designated Safeguarding Champions may be appointed. These individuals are responsible for promoting safeguarding awareness within their teams and providing support to colleagues who may have safeguarding concerns.
- **Feedback and Reporting:** They offer a direct line of communication to the DSL or Deputy DSL, ensuring that safeguarding issues are promptly raised, addressed and recorded within their areas of responsibility.

All Staff and Volunteers

- **Recognising and Reporting Concerns:** Every staff member and volunteer has a responsibility to be vigilant, recognise potential safeguarding issues, and report any concerns promptly. This includes signs of abuse, neglect or harm.

- **Adhering to Safeguarding Procedures:** All staff and volunteers are expected to follow safeguarding protocols and guidelines:
 - Ensuring that they act in accordance with the policy to protect those they work with.
 - Contributing to multi-agency meetings established to ensure safeguarding arrangements.
 - Escalating concerns when safeguarding concerns raised are not responded to appropriately in line with the person's wishes, fundamental rights, duty of care, or local guidance/ legislation.
- **Safeguarding Culture:** All staff and volunteers are responsible for maintaining a culture of safeguarding within the organisation, treating all individuals with respect and dignity, and promoting an environment where concerns can be raised without fear of retribution.

Partners and External Agencies

- **Collaboration for Safeguarding:** People First works closely with external agencies, including statutory bodies, local authorities, and other organisations, to ensure effective safeguarding practices. This collaborative approach ensures that concerns are addressed in a coordinated way.
- **Information Sharing:** Partners are expected to work with People First in a transparent and open manner, sharing relevant information to protect vulnerable individuals from harm.

3. Whistleblowing and complaints

People First is dedicated to valuing all employees and ensuring that all staff and volunteers work to high standards. Everyone has a responsibility to maintain public trust in People First and uphold high personal conduct, both at work and in personal life. Staff and volunteers should not act in a way that could harm People First's reputation.

People First expects staff to be:

- Professional and honest
- Collaborative in achieving goals
- Open to learning and change
- Respectful and caring towards colleagues, those we support, and the community

Staff and volunteers are advised to use social media carefully, keeping in mind the Social Media Acceptable Use policy, which applies to both work and personal use.

PF supports Whistleblowing and encourages raising concerns about PF's services or those of other organisations. Complaints about safeguarding will be addressed according to our

Feedback and Complaints Policy. If independent support is needed, PF will help individuals contact their local Citizens Advice Bureau and provide reasonable adjustments when necessary.

4. Governance Arrangements

Safeguarding Assurance

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) will provide a quarterly Safeguarding Report to the Senior Leadership Team, covering the number and types of incidents/cases and referrals made. An annual Safeguarding Audit will also be completed, detailing policy changes, training undertaken by the DSL and staff, and the number and types of incidents/cases. Any areas for improvement identified in the audit will be addressed in an action plan, which will be monitored and signed off by the Senior Leadership Team.

Safeguarding Training and Development

PF's Training Matrix outlines required training for all staff and volunteers, including understanding abuse types, signs, and the Mental Capacity Act 2005. Safeguarding training is included in induction and delivered regularly through formal training, meetings, supervision, and briefings. The effectiveness of training is evaluated through feedback, assessments, and monitoring incident reports to identify knowledge gaps. Additional training will be provided where needed.

Support for Staff and Volunteers

We understand that the safeguarding process can be difficult, and we want to ensure all staff and volunteers feel supported. If you need help or guidance, you can speak to your line manager or HR for support. Additionally, if you need emotional or wellbeing support, we have resources available to assist you. Your wellbeing is important, and we encourage you to access these services whenever you need them.

Safer Recruitment Practices

As outlined in the Safer Recruitment Policy, all recruitment is managed by HR to ensure the appropriate DBS check is completed for each role. The process also includes reference checks and interviews to assess candidate suitability. For full details, refer to the Safer Recruitment Policy.

Managing allegations against persons who work with children or adults at risk.

Where there are concerns that a member of staff or volunteer, either directly or non-directly employed by People First, is behaving in a way that demonstrates unsuitability for working with children, young people or adults at risk, in their present position, or in any capacity this must be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

The allegation or concern may arise either in the employees/professionals' work or private life.

Examples include:

- Commitment of a criminal offence against or related to children or adults at risk.

- Failing to work collaboratively with social care agencies when issues about care of children or adults at risk for whom they have caring responsibilities are being investigated.
- Behaving towards children or adults, in a manner that indicates they are unsuitable to work with this client group.
- Where an allegation or concern arises relates to the individuals' private life such as perpetration of domestic abuse; behaviours to his/her own children; or behaviour to others which may impact upon the safety of children/adults to whom they owe a duty of care.
- Where inadequate steps have been taken to protect vulnerable individuals from the impact of violence or abuse and neglect.

All concerns and allegations will be considered in line with the local Children Safeguarding Partnerships (CSP)/ Safeguarding Adults Board (SAB) policy relevant to managing allegations against persons who work with children or adults. The Designated Safeguarding Lead will inform the appropriate Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) or Position of Trust Lead, of all allegations that come to their attention that meet the criteria outlined in the local CSAP /SAB policy.

In instances where the allegation suggests that a child/young person or adult is at risk of significant harm the case must be referred to the respective local authority in line with local SAP / SAB policies and procedures.

If a child or adult is in immediate danger, the case must be referred to the Policy.

5. Breaches of Policy

This policy is mandatory. If it is not possible to follow the policy or a decision is made to depart from it, the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), or the Deputy DSL (DDSL) in the DSL's absence, must be informed. This will allow the level of risk to be assessed and an action plan to be developed.

6. Safeguarding Children

People First is committed to keeping children and young people safe. Our goal is to create a safe space where children and young people can grow and thrive. For the purpose of this policy, a 'Child' is anyone under the age of 18 years, and 'Children' refers to both children and young people throughout this policy.

Approaches to Safeguarding and Promoting the Welfare of Children

Safeguarding and Promoting the Welfare of Children (as defined in *Working Together to Safeguard Children* 2018) includes:

- Protecting children from maltreatment.
- Preventing impairment of children's health or development.
- Ensuring children grow up in safe and effective care.
- Taking actions to help children achieve the best outcomes.

Child Protection: This is a part of safeguarding focused on protecting specific children at risk of or experiencing abuse.

Early Help: This approach supports families in regaining control before issues escalate, through targeted services such as Edge of Care and Focus Families.

Young Carers: Children or young people who care for family members with disabilities, long-term illnesses, or substance misuse.

Looked After Children: Children under state care, including those on care orders or temporarily looked after, as per the Children Act 1989.

Children Safeguarding Assurance Partnerships (CSAP): As per the Children and Social Work Act 2017, Local Safeguarding Children Boards have been replaced by multi-agency safeguarding partnerships, involving:

- The local authority
- Clinical commissioning groups
- The police chief officer

These partners coordinate services, collaborate, and hold each other accountable to safeguard children, promote their welfare, identify emerging threats, and embed learning to improve services.

Transitional Safeguarding is about making sure young people are kept safe as they move from being a child to becoming an adult, usually around the age of 18. During this time, they may face new risks and challenges and may not have the same level of protection or support they had as children.

Key points of transitional safeguarding include:

1. **Ongoing Support:** Some young people still need help and protection as they become adults, especially those who have been in care or have special needs. This includes helping them understand their rights and access support services.
2. **Personalized Help:** Every young person is different, so the support is tailored to their specific needs. This might involve working with different professionals to make sure they get the help they need in areas like housing, education, and health.
3. **Building Support Networks:** It's important to help young people build strong connections with family, friends, and community groups, so they can stay safe and get the support they need.

4. **Adapting Safeguarding:** The way we protect young people changes when they become adults, so safeguarding practices are adjusted to make sure they continue to receive the right protection and help.
5. **Preventing Exploitation:** Young people can be at risk of exploitation, like being taken advantage of by others. Transitional safeguarding works to spot and stop these risks.
6. **Learning Life Skills:** As young people grow, they need to learn how to take care of themselves and face life's challenges. Transitional safeguarding helps them build these important skills.

Transitional safeguarding ensures that young people get the continued protection and support they need as they move into adulthood.

The Prevent Strategy (Radicalisation of Vulnerable People)

Prevent is a strategy which aims to stop people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism (being **radicalised**) and operates before any criminal activity has taken place.

Prevent aims to address:

Radicalisation: the process by which people come to support, and in some cases to participate in terrorism.

Violent Extremism defined by the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS): the demonstration of unacceptable behaviour by using any means or medium to express views which:

- Justify or glorify terrorist violence because of beliefs.
- Seek to provoke others to terrorist acts or serious criminal acts.
- Fosters hatred which might lead to inter-community violence in the UK.

Given the very high numbers of people who encounter health and social care professionals, these organisations, including People First, are critical partners in Prevent. People First recognise that there are many opportunities for staff and volunteers to help protect people from radicalisation. The key challenge is to ensure that all staff can identify the signs that someone is vulnerable to radicalisation, interpret those signs correctly and access the relevant support. The following website link provides information to support identification.

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/reporting-abuse/dedicated-helplines/protecting-children-from-radicalisation/>

Chanel is a multi-agency process within Prevent, which aims to support those who may be vulnerable to being drawn into violent extremism. It works by identifying individuals who may be at risk, assessing the risk and where necessary referring cases to a multi-agency panel which decides on the most appropriate type and level of support to divert and support the individual at risk.

Categories of Abuse

Abuse is any form of maltreatment of a child, whether through the infliction of harm or the failure to prevent it. It can occur in family, institutional, or community settings and can be perpetrated by adults or other children.

- **Physical Abuse:** Deliberately causing physical harm to a child, including hitting, shaking, burning, poisoning, or fabricating or inducing illness. This also includes situations where harm is caused through neglectful actions that lead to serious injury or impairment.
- **Emotional Abuse:** Persistent emotional maltreatment or neglect that impacts a child's emotional health and development. This can include threats, humiliation, isolation, rejection, exploitation, or exposure to the abuse of others. It may result in severe emotional or psychological harm.
- **Sexual Abuse:** Any form of sexual activity involving a child, including forcing, coercing, or enticing them into sexual acts, or non-contact activities such as grooming, indecent exposure, or the production and distribution of sexual images. This includes the use of technology for online abuse.
- **Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE):** A form of sexual abuse in which a child is manipulated, coerced, or forced to engage in sexual activities for the benefit of the abuser. This often involves exploitative relationships, peer pressure, or the use of technology to exploit and control the child.
- **Neglect:** The persistent failure to meet a child's basic needs, which is likely to result in significant harm. This includes neglect of a child's physical, emotional, and psychological needs, such as failure to provide adequate food, shelter, medical care, supervision, education, or emotional support.
- **Extremism:** The active or vocal rejection of fundamental British values, including democracy, individual liberty, and respect for different beliefs. This includes the involvement of children in radicalization or subjecting them to harmful ideologies that undermine social cohesion, with a focus on preventing children from becoming victims or perpetrators of radical or extremist actions.
- **County Lines:** The exploitation of children by criminal gangs to transport or store illegal drugs. This involves manipulation, coercion, or threats, often leading to serious harm or entrapment, and frequently includes physical or sexual violence and the use of children for illegal purposes.
- **Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE):** A form of exploitation in which children are coerced or forced into criminal activities, including drug trafficking, theft, or involvement in violent crime. This often involves threats, manipulation, or violence, leading to long-term physical and emotional harm.

What to do if you suspect a child is being abused or neglected

1. Assess Immediate Risk to the Child

- If the child is at immediate risk of serious harm, take immediate action to protect them:
 - Remove the child from danger if possible.
 - Call emergency services (police or ambulance) if necessary.
 - **Do not investigate** or confront the suspected abuser.

2. Report the Concern to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

- Immediately inform the DSL or Safeguarding Officer including what you have seen, heard, felt and action taken.
- If the DSL is unavailable, contact another designated person.

3. Record the Concern

- Write down everything you observed or heard, including dates, times, and actions taken.
- Keep the record accurate and detailed.

4. DSL Assesses the Concern

- The DSL will:
 - Review the situation
 - Refer to local Threshold Guidance
 - Decide on further action, including whether emergency services need to be involved if not already.
 - Keep accurate records of all actions taken.

5. Referral to Statutory Authorities (If Needed)

- If the child remains at risk, the DSL will refer the case to Children's Social Care or Police.

6. Maintain Confidentiality

- Share the information only with people who need to know, keeping it confidential.
- Where appropriate, explain the limits of confidentiality.

7. Offer Support to the Child (If Appropriate)

- If the child is safe, offer reassurance and help them feel supported.
- Encourage the child to seek professional help if needed.

8. Monitor the Situation in partnership with the DSL

- The DSL will support you to:
 - Keep an eye on the child's wellbeing and follow up to ensure the situation is being addressed.
 - Contribute to any multi-agency meetings
 - Utilise escalation procedures where appropriate

Important Note: Always call emergency services if there is an immediate threat to the child's safety.

Immediate Protection

When there is a risk to the life of a child or a likelihood of serious immediate harm, local authority social workers, the police, or the NSPCC should use their statutory child protection powers to act immediately to secure the safety of the child.

If it is necessary to remove a child from their home, the local authority must, wherever possible and unless a child's safety is otherwise at immediate risk, apply for an Emergency Protection Order (EPO). Police powers to remove a child in an emergency should be used only in exceptional circumstances where there is insufficient time to seek an EPO or when there is an immediate risk to the child's safety.

An EPO, made by the court, authorizes the removal of a child and places them under the protection of the applicant.

When considering whether emergency action is necessary, agencies should always consider the needs of other children in the same household or in the household of an alleged perpetrator.

The local authority in whose area a child is found in circumstances that require emergency action (the first authority) is responsible for taking emergency action. If the child is looked after by, or the subject of a child protection plan in another authority, the first authority must consult the authority responsible for the child.

Only when the second local authority explicitly accepts responsibility (to be followed up in writing) is the first authority relieved of its responsibility to take emergency action.

Multi-Agency Working

Planned emergency action will normally take place following an immediate strategy discussion. Social workers, the police, or NSPCC should:

- Initiate a strategy discussion to discuss planned emergency action. Where a single agency has to act immediately, a strategy discussion should take place as soon as possible after action has been taken.
- See the child (this should be done by a practitioner from the agency taking the emergency action) to decide how best to protect them and whether to seek an EPO.
- Wherever possible, obtain legal advice before initiating legal action, in particular when an EPO is being sought.

Related Information:

For further guidance on EPOs, see Chapter 4 of the statutory guidance document for local authorities, *Court Orders and Pre-Proceedings* (DfE, April 2014).

Notifiable Incidents

As per *Working Together to Safeguard Children* (2023), local authorities must notify Ofsted of any serious childcare incidents within 5 working days of being informed.

Criteria for Notifiable Incidents

- A child has died (suspected suicide included), and abuse or neglect is suspected.
- A child has been seriously harmed due to abuse or neglect.
- A looked-after child has died (whether abuse is suspected or not).
- A child in a regulated service has died (whether abuse is suspected or not).

"Seriously harmed" includes life-threatening injuries, long-term impairment, or being the victim of a serious crime like rape. Recovery does not negate serious harm.

7. Safeguarding Adults

People First is dedicated to protecting adults in all its activities. Our aim is to create a safe environment where adults feel supported and respected. For the purpose of this policy, an 'Adult' is anyone who is 18 years old or over. This includes leavers of care and young people who are over 18 and covered by the Childrens and Families Act 2014.

Approaches to Safeguarding and Promoting the Welfare of Adults

Safeguarding Adults

Safeguarding means protecting an adult's right to live in safety, free from abuse and neglect. It involves people and organisations working together to prevent and stop both the risks and experiences of abuse or neglect, while promoting the adult's well-being. This includes considering their views, wishes, feelings, and beliefs when deciding on any actions. It's important to recognize that adults may sometimes have complex interpersonal relationships and may be unclear, ambivalent, or unrealistic about their personal circumstances.

Adult at Risk (of Abuse and Neglect)

Adult safeguarding duties apply to any adult who:

- Has care and support needs, and
- Is experiencing or at risk of abuse or neglect, and
- Is unable to protect themselves due to their care and support needs.

Note: The Local Authority does not have to be meeting the care and support needs of the adult. Additionally, if an individual aged 18 or over is still receiving children's services, and a safeguarding issue arises, it should be handled through adult safeguarding procedures.

Making Safeguarding Personal: Key Principles (The Care Act 2014)

The following principles are crucial in making safeguarding personal and person-centred:

- **Empowerment:** Presumption of person-led decisions and informed consent.
- **Protection:** Support and representation for those in greatest need.
- **Prevention:** Proactive action to prevent harm before it occurs.

- **Proportionality:** A proportionate, least intrusive response appropriate to the level of risk.
- **Partnership:** Involving communities in preventing, detecting, and reporting abuse and neglect.
- **Accountability:** Ensuring accountability and transparency in safeguarding practices.

The Safeguarding Adults Board (SAB)

As per the Care Act 2014, all local authorities must have a Safeguarding Adults Board (SAB) in place. The SAB works in partnership with organizations to protect adults with care and support needs from abuse or neglect. The SAB aims to ensure that adults at risk, and their carers, are empowered to:

- Live as safely and independently as possible.
- Make their own decisions.
- Take control of their own lives.

The three core duties of the SAB are:

- **Publish an annual strategic plan** to outline the approach and objectives for safeguarding adults.
- **Publish an annual report** to assess and report on the effectiveness of safeguarding initiatives.
- **Review serious safeguarding cases** through Safeguarding Adult Reviews (SARs), which are conducted following serious incidents of abuse or neglect to learn and improve practices.

Categories of Adult Abuse (Care Act 2014)

- **Physical Abuse:** This includes assault, hitting, slapping, pushing, misuse of medication, restraint, or the inappropriate use of physical sanctions or force.
- **Domestic Abuse:** This encompasses psychological, physical, sexual, financial, and emotional abuse; so-called 'honour' based violence; forced marriage; and female genital mutilation (FGM). Domestic abuse also includes coercive control and patterns of intimidation or manipulation within intimate partner relationships or family dynamics.
- **Sexual Abuse:** Includes rape, indecent exposure, sexual harassment, inappropriate touching, sexual teasing, subjection to pornography, sexual photography, or any sexual acts to which the adult has not consented, was coerced into consenting, or was unable to consent due to capacity issues.
- **Psychological Abuse:** Encompasses emotional abuse, threats of harm or abandonment, deprivation of contact, humiliation, blaming, controlling behaviour, intimidation, coercion, verbal abuse, cyberbullying, harassment, and unreasonable or unjustified withdrawal of services or support systems.
- **Financial or Material Abuse:** Includes theft, fraud, internet scamming, coercion in relation to an adult's financial affairs, manipulation of financial arrangements

(such as wills, property, inheritance, or transactions), or the misuse or misappropriation of personal property, possessions, or benefits.

- **Modern Slavery:** Encompasses human trafficking, forced labour, and domestic servitude. Perpetrators use coercion, deception, and force to manipulate individuals into exploitation and abusive situations, stripping them of their autonomy and freedom.
- **Discriminatory Abuse:** Includes harassment, discrimination, or similar treatment based on race, gender, gender identity, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion, or any other characteristic that causes harm or distress.
- **Organisational Abuse:** Refers to neglect or poor care practices within institutions or care settings, such as hospitals, care homes, or care provided in the adult's own home. It may range from isolated incidents to ongoing ill-treatment or neglect resulting from systemic failures in policies, processes, and staff practices.
- **Neglect and Acts of Omission:** Involves ignoring an individual's medical, emotional, or physical care needs, failing to provide access to necessary health care, support, or educational services, or withholding essential life necessities such as medication, adequate nutrition, and heating.
- **Self-Neglect:** Includes a range of behaviours where an individual neglects to care for their personal hygiene, health, or surroundings. This can also encompass behaviours such as hoarding and failure to take care of one's own safety and well-being.

What to Do If You Suspect an Adult is Being Abused or Neglected

1. Assess Immediate Risk to the Adult

- If the adult is at immediate risk of serious harm, take immediate action to protect them:
 - Call emergency services (police or ambulance) if necessary.
 - Do not investigate or confront the suspected abuser.
 - **Obtain the adult's consent** (if they are able to give it) to seek emergency assistance or involve other agencies. If they are unable to give consent due to mental capacity, proceed with safeguarding actions. If they are able to give consent, but refuse to, please seek support from the DSL unless there is an overriding public duty e.g. a crime has been committed or others are at risk.

2. Report the Concern to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

- Immediately inform the DSL or Deputy, including what you have observed, heard, or been told, and any action taken.
- If the DSL is unavailable, contact another designated person.
- Ensure **consent** is sought where possible before sharing sensitive information, unless there is an immediate risk to the adult or others.

3. Record the Concern

- Write down everything you observed or heard, including dates, times, and actions taken.
- Keep the record accurate, detailed, and confidential.
- Ensure that **consent** is obtained from the adult, if possible, to record and share information about them.

4. DSL Assesses the Concern

- The DSL will:
 - Review the situation and assess the level of risk.
 - Refer to local safeguarding threshold guidelines.
 - Decide on further action, including whether emergency services need to be involved.
 - Report the concern, or support you to report, to the Local Authority.
 - Keep accurate records of all actions taken.
 - **Ensure consent** is respected when deciding what actions to take, unless there is an immediate risk.
 - **Consent** should be obtained from the adult before making a referral unless it is necessary to act without their consent to protect their safety e.g. seeking consent would put them at further risk.

5. Maintain Confidentiality

- Share the information only with those who need to know, keeping it confidential.
- Where appropriate, **explain the limits of confidentiality** to the adult and inform them who will be involved in the process.

6. Offer Support to the Adult (If Appropriate)

- If the adult is safe, offer reassurance and support.
- Encourage the adult to seek professional help (e.g., counselling, wellbeing support) if appropriate.
- Be mindful of **consent** when offering support or suggesting services, ensuring their autonomy is respected.

7. Monitor the Situation in Partnership with the DSL

- The DSL will:
 - Support you to monitor the adult's wellbeing and ensure that any safeguarding actions are followed through.
 - Contribute to multi-agency meetings if needed.
 - Utilise escalation procedures where appropriate.
 - **Ensure the adult's consent** is obtained for ongoing actions, unless they are unable to give it due to mental capacity. This should be clearly recorded.

Important Note:

- Always call emergency services if there is an immediate threat to the adult's safety.

- **Respect the adult's autonomy and consent** where possible but take immediate action to protect them if they are at risk of harm.
- If you hear information about a safeguarding concern third-hand, you should report it to your line manager or DSL as soon as possible, so they ensure the matter is addressed appropriately.

Safeguarding Adult Reviews (SARS)

The **Care Act 2014** requires Safeguarding Adults Boards to arrange a **Safeguarding Adult Review (SAR)** in the following circumstances:

- The case involves an adult with care and support needs, regardless of whether the local authority was meeting those needs.
- There are concerns about how the Safeguarding Adults Board or its member organisations worked together to safeguard the adult.
- The adult has died (including death by suicide), and there is reason to believe that abuse or neglect contributed to the death, even if this was not known prior to the adult's death.

Alternatively, a SAR may be required if:

- The adult is still alive, but there are concerns or evidence that they have experienced serious abuse or neglect, resulting in potentially life-threatening injury, serious sexual abuse, or significant impairment of health or development.

People First will raise SAR requests as appropriate, in accordance with the criteria above and local procedures. Staff and volunteers who believe that the criteria for a SAR may be met are encouraged to seek guidance and support from the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) to ensure that concerns are properly addressed and escalated as needed.

8. Mental Capacity and Deprivation of Liberty safeguards

At People First, we are committed to ensuring that adults with care and support needs are treated with respect, dignity, and care in all aspects of their lives. The **Mental Capacity Act 2005 (MCA)** and the **Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS)** are fundamental in supporting the rights of individuals who may lack the capacity to make certain decisions for themselves.

Mental Capacity Act (MCA)

The **Mental Capacity Act 2005** provides a framework for acting and making decisions on behalf of people who lack the capacity to make particular decisions for themselves. This could be due to reasons such as illness, injury, or disability. The Act is based on five key principles:

1. **Presumption of Capacity:** Every adult has the right to make decisions for themselves unless it is established that they lack capacity to do so.
2. **Right to Make Unwise Decisions:** Individuals have the right to make decisions that others might consider unwise or risky, as long as they have the mental capacity to do so.
3. **Support to Make Decisions:** A person must be given all practicable help before anyone concludes that they lack capacity to make a decision.
4. **Best Interests:** Any decision made or action taken on behalf of someone who lacks capacity must be done in their best interests.
5. **Least Restrictive Option:** Any decision or action taken should be the least restrictive of the person's rights and freedoms.

It is essential that all staff understand the MCA, ensuring that those who may lack capacity are supported to make informed decisions wherever possible. When a person lacks capacity, staff must always act in the individual's best interests and explore the least restrictive options available to support them.

Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS)

The **Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS)** are part of the MCA and are designed to protect individuals who are deprived of their liberty in a care setting, to ensure their rights are protected.

A deprivation of liberty occurs when an individual is not free to leave a care setting, and their care arrangements restrict their freedom of movement or choice in a way that could be seen as a breach of their human rights. DoLS are intended to protect vulnerable adults who may be subject to such restrictions by ensuring that these arrangements are reviewed and approved by the appropriate authorities.

Key Principles of DoLS:

- A deprivation of liberty must only be used when absolutely necessary and when there is no less restrictive alternative.
- The person must be assessed by qualified professionals to determine whether the DoLS safeguards are needed.
- If a person is deprived of their liberty, it must be for the shortest time possible and reviewed regularly.
- The individual and their family or carers must be involved in the decision-making process and informed of their rights to appeal.

At People First, we ensure that any decision that could result in a deprivation of liberty is properly assessed and authorized in line with the MCA and DoLS requirements. We work closely with relevant authorities to ensure that any restrictions are lawful, in the best interests of the individual, and subject to regular review.

Training and Support

All staff and volunteers at People First will receive appropriate training on the Mental Capacity Act and the Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards. We aim to ensure that all staff are equipped to recognize when these legal safeguards may apply, and are clear on the procedures to follow in supporting individuals in these circumstances. If there is any doubt about the application of the MCA or DoLS, staff should seek advice from their line manager or safeguarding lead.

9. Domestic Abuse

Domestic abuse is any form of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence, or abuse. It can involve physical, emotional, psychological, and financial abuse, which can occur in person or through digital means. Typically, domestic abuse takes place between adults who are, or have been, in an intimate relationship, or between family members.

This abuse often forms a pattern of behaviour but can also be a one-off incident. We understand that any member of our workforce can experience domestic abuse, and in some cases, the victim may not even recognize the behaviour as abusive. Research shows that individuals dealing with domestic abuse are often targeted while at work.

Domestic abuse can happen at any point in a person's life and can be triggered or worsened by specific events. This policy outlines how the company treats domestic abuse seriously and is committed to providing a safe, supportive workplace for employees experiencing domestic abuse. It applies to all company employees, including permanent, temporary, agency workers, and self-employed contractors.

Impact of Domestic Abuse at Work

We know that domestic abuse doesn't just affect someone at home—it can also impact their work life. Employees may struggle with challenges like absenteeism or reduced productivity due to domestic abuse.

An employee could experience domestic abuse in the workplace, such as:

- Threatening visits, phone calls, or emails from the abuser.
- Abuse during the commute to or from work.
- Colleagues may also experience intimidating or threatening behaviour from the person who is abusing the employee.

Additionally, employees may experience financial abuse, where their abuser controls their access to money, making it difficult to afford daily necessities or work-related expenses. The company will make reasonable efforts to support employees facing this issue.

Management Support

If an employee shares that they are experiencing domestic abuse, their manager should listen with care and treat everything discussed as confidential. Managers should not intervene directly in the situation or confront the alleged abuser but should focus on supporting the employee and guiding them to expert help.

Managers should:

- Encourage the employee to seek external help, such as contacting the police or a specialised support organisation.
- Provide employees with access to HR who can arrange confidential support, which includes counselling services.
- If the employee is not comfortable talking to their manager, they can speak to another trusted colleague or Designated Safeguarding Lead.
- Support the employee without requiring proof of abuse.

Support can include:

- Regular check-ins to ensure the employee is okay.
- Allowing time to search for help online or speak with experts.
- Ensuring helpful websites are accessible on company equipment.
- Offering time off to visit support organizations, the police, or medical professionals.
- Adjusting work targets to reduce unnecessary pressure.
- Diverting calls if the abuser tries to contact the employee at work.
- Ensuring there is no public access to the workplace when needed.
- Agreeing on code words or hand signals during calls to indicate a need for assistance.

If a Manager Suspects an Employee is a Victim of Domestic Abuse

Managers will be trained to recognise signs of domestic abuse, including subtle signals that may appear during video calls with remote employees. Signs may include:

- Sudden changes in behaviour or work quality.
- Changes in dress, such as wearing excessive clothing on a hot day, or using more makeup than usual.

If a manager suspects domestic abuse but has no clear evidence, they should:

- Give the employee the opportunity to confide in them without pressure.
- Be cautious when an employee works remotely, as the abuser might be monitoring communications.
- If the employee seems distressed but unwilling to speak, encourage them to contact the Employee Assistance Programme, HR, or another trusted person.

In situations where a colleague reports that an employee is a victim of domestic abuse, the manager should proceed with care, offering the employee the chance to share their situation without any pressure.

If Both the Victim and the Alleged Perpetrator Work for People First

If both the victim and the perpetrator of domestic abuse are employed by the company, we will take action to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the employee experiencing abuse including:

- Considering changes to work locations, hours, or shifts.
- Minimising the potential for the abuser to access information about the victim's whereabouts.
- Offering support to both parties through different supervisors and resources, where possible.
- Assessing any potential security measures and implementing a safety plan for the victim.

Impact on Performance

We understand that an employee experiencing domestic abuse may struggle with performance at work. Managers should have a sensitive conversation about any performance concerns and ensure that reasonable support is in place.

People First will make reasonable efforts to support the employee during a difficult time. This may include setting realistic performance targets and offering necessary assistance. Formal disciplinary action should only be used as a last resort if performance does not improve despite support.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality will be respected, but there are situations where it may need to be broken. If there are concerns about a child or vulnerable adult, or if an employee's safety is at risk, the manager will discuss with the employee why disclosure may be necessary and seek their agreement where possible.

All records related to domestic abuse will be kept confidential and in line with the Data Protection Act 2018. Any breaches of confidentiality will be taken seriously and could result in disciplinary action.

Training and Awareness

To ensure that all staff are equipped to understand and respond to domestic abuse appropriately, regular training will be provided. This will include:

- Providing information on the signs of domestic abuse and coercive control.
- Offering guidance on how to provide emotional support or refer an individual to appropriate resources.
- Encouraging an understanding of the importance of confidential reporting and support options.

All staff should feel confident in identifying signs of domestic abuse and offering support or referring individuals to the appropriate channels.

Referral Services and Support for Victims

In addition to internal support, employees who are experiencing domestic abuse can access external services for further help. People First will:

- Provide contact information for external support organisations, such as Women's Aid, Refuge, and the National Domestic Violence Helpline.
- Ensure that employees know how to access legal advice, shelters, or support groups.
- Encourage employees to contact specialized support services, including domestic violence shelters, legal assistance, or advocacy services.

Support for Perpetrators of Domestic Abuse

While the focus is on supporting victims, the company will also provide support for individuals who may be perpetrators of domestic abuse. Employees who identify as perpetrators can seek support in the form of:

- Referral to specialised counselling programs or anger management courses.
- Support in accessing resources to help address abusive behaviour and engage in behavioural change programs.

Supportive Work Environment and Responsibility of Colleagues

At People First, we foster a supportive work environment where we look out for one another. If you believe a colleague may be experiencing domestic abuse, it is important to seek support and act in a compassionate, sensitive manner. Employees should:

- Approach the situation with care and concern for the colleague's well-being.
- Respect their confidentiality while encouraging them to reach out for help, either through internal resources (e.g., HR or the Employee Assistance Programme) or external support services.
- Report any concerns to a trusted manager or designated person, ensuring that appropriate steps are taken to offer support.

By looking out for each other and offering support when needed, we contribute to maintaining a safe and positive workplace for all.

10. Recording Safeguarding Information

Accurate and up to date recording of safeguarding concerns is essential for several reasons including:

- Helping settings identify concerns at an early stage.
- Helping settings identify patterns of concerns.
- Enabling settings to record seemingly minor issues to build a more complete picture of what life may be like for the people who use their services.
- Helping settings to monitor and manage safeguarding practices, including decision making, actions taken and agreed joint strategies with other agencies.

- Providing evidence to support professional challenge, both internally and when working with external agencies.
- Supporting settings to demonstrate action taken to reduce impact of harm.
- Helping to evidence robust and effective safeguarding practice in audits and inspections.

All concerns, discussions and decisions made, and the reasons for those decisions, should be recorded in writing. If in doubt, staff should discuss with their line manager or the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

All safeguarding concerns must be recorded as soon as possible. It is important to note the following protocol when recording safeguarding information:

- Record the information being given; if this information is recorded in writing initially, you must ensure that the notes are securely stored on the PF database.
- Try to record the information verbatim.
- Record consent or reasons why consent to raise the alert has not been given.
- Record the information at the time of the conversation, or as soon as possible afterwards.
- Record the information objectively. However, do identify where you have been subjective, or where you have interpreted information, particularly if the person has difficulty communicating clearly.
- All information recorded must be entered on to the database, as a soon as possible as a case file note.
- All action taken, including raising to a manager, must also be recorded on to the database.
- All sign postings must be recorded on the database.

Tracking and Monitoring via the Safeguarding Dashboard

We use a Safeguarding Dashboard to track all safeguarding concerns across the organisation. Each concern is logged and assigned a status to monitor its progress from initial report to resolution. The dashboard allows us to monitor timescales, referrals, outcomes and any follow-up actions taken. This provides a clear and up-to-date overview of safeguarding activity and helps ensure accountability.

The dashboard is reviewed regularly by Designated Safeguarding Leads and senior managers to ensure all concerns are being addressed appropriately and in a timely manner. Quarterly reports are shared with the Senior Leadership Team and Board of Trustees as part of our safeguarding governance and continuous improvement process.

Where appropriate, outcomes for individuals involved in safeguarding concerns are recorded, including the type of support or intervention provided. This helps us understand the impact of our response and improve how we safeguard people in future.

Information from the dashboard is also used to identify trends, recurring issues or areas for improvement. We use this insight to strengthen policies, adapt training and improve our services. Learning from safeguarding cases is shared across teams in a way that respects confidentiality but supports better practice.

11. Escalation Procedures

On occasions there may be disagreement between People First and the Local Authority regarding a Child or Adult Safeguarding concern raised. Potential areas of disagreement include:

- An alert not considered to meet the threshold for a Safeguarding Adults Enquiry by the Local Authority.
- The Local Authority conclude that further information should be sought by the referrer before an alert is progressed. There is disagreement in relation to timescales for the Local Authority responding to the alert.
- The adult themselves is dissatisfied with the response/ process.
- There is a disagreement over the sharing of information and/or provision of services.
- There is disagreement over the outcome of any assessment and whether the appropriate action plan is in place to safeguard and promote the welfare of the adult.

At no time must professional disagreement detract from ensuring that the child or adult is safeguarded. The person's feelings, wishes, welfare and safety must remain paramount throughout.

Escalation Procedure

Stage One: Local Resolution

Level 1: Most disagreements can be resolved through discussion and negotiation. The professionals involved should attempt to resolve differences through discussion, but if they are unable to do so, their disagreement must be reported by them to their line managers or equivalent.

Level 2: With respect to most day-to-day issues, the relevant line managers will be able to resolve the disagreement. The purpose of this contact is to review the available information and to resolve the concern. It may be helpful to consider the involvement of the Local Authorities Safeguarding Adults Service Manager at this stage in preference to use of line management.

Level 3: Where it is not possible to resolve the matter at front line management level, the matter should be referred without delay to the relevant service leads should take place; for example, Child Protection, Manager of Adults Safeguarding Service Lead, District Leads.

The issue will then be considered at service lead level with any action agreed fed back immediately to the relevant managers involved and the detail of the conflict and agreements reached should be recorded on the adult's database record.

Stage Two: Formal Dispute Procedure

If despite following the Stage One process the disagreement remains, the matter will be referred to an appropriate Executive Manager/Lead, e.g. for Cumbria County Council Adults and/or Children's Services this will be the Assistant Director for People Services.

The purpose of escalating the dispute to this level is to reach a position where differing professional opinions have been taken into account and efforts made to explore whether the dispute has arisen through lack of clarity or understanding in the professional dialogue. Ultimately a decision will need to be reached where agencies agree a way forward where the interests of the child or adult take precedence over a professional stalemate.

Stage Three: Where Disagreements Remain

If agreement cannot be reached, then the formal process should be activated. PF will write a formal letter of complaint to the appropriate Council and to the Chair of the appropriate Children Safeguarding Assurance Partnership or Safeguarding Adults Board highlighting the concern raised, steps taken to try to resolve the concern, desired outcomes of raising the concern.

All disputes should be escalated in a timely way so that the welfare of the adult remains paramount. In some situations, it may be required to instigate all of the stages within a short period of time or to escalate the process so that the safety of the adult is not compromised.

12. Review and monitoring

This policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner if there are any changes to relevant laws or regulations, to ensure it remains current and effective. This review will include:

- Gathering feedback from staff, volunteers and those with lived experience who have used the policy and support services.
- Identifying any gaps or areas of improvement in the policy or response processes.

Ensuring compliance with legal requirements and best practice standards.

Appendix 1 Safeguarding Contact Details for Reporting

Designated Safeguarding Lead	Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead
Lindsay Graham Lancashire and South Cumbria Director	Vicky Weir Head of Advocacy
During office hours contact via Teams	During office hours contact via Teams

Out of Hours number shared internally	Out of Hours number shared internally
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Local Authority Area	Children	Out Of Hours	Adults	Out of Hours
Cumberland	0333 240 1727	01228 526690	0300 373 3732	01228 526690
County Durham	03000 267 979 (24hrs)		03000 267 979 (24hrs)	
Darlington	01325 406777	01642 524552	01325 406777	01642 524552
Gateshead	0191 433 2653	0191 477 0844	0191 433 7033	0191 433 0844
Hartlepool	01429 284284	01642 524552	01429 523390	01642 524552
Middlesbrough	01642 726004	01642 524552	01642 065070	01642 524552
Lancashire	0300 123 6722		Are you concerned about a vulnerable adult? - Lancashire County Council	
Newcastle	0191 277 2500	0191 278 7878	0191 278 8377	0191 278 7878
North Tyneside	0345 2000 109	0330 333 7475	0191 643 2777	0330 333 7475
Northumberland	01670 536400 (24hrs)		01670 536400 (24hrs)	
Redcar & Cleveland	01642 130700	01642 524552	01642 771500	01642 524552
Stockton-on-Tees	01429 284284	01642 524552	01642 527764	01642 524552
South Tyneside	0191 424 5010	0191 456 2093	0191 424 4049	0191 455 6111
Sunderland	0191 561 7007	0191 520 5552	0191 5618934	0191 5618936
Westmorland and Furness	0300 373 2724	01228 526690	0300 373 3301	01228 526 690

Who to contact in the Police Public Protection Unit?

Tel: **101** and request to speak to the PPU for the area where the adult resides.

In an emergency contact the Police on **999**