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**Last Reviewed: 21st May 2024**

**ACTS FAST Safeguarding Policy**

**Safeguarding and ACTS FAST**

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| ACTS FAST is committed to ensuring that it provides a safe and trusted environment which safeguards and promotes the welfare and wellbeing of anyone who meets, or comes into contact with the Charity, staff (including partner organisations) and volunteers.  Protecting people and safeguarding responsibilities are a priority for all charities. As such, ensuring appropriate and robust safeguarding measures are in place is a key part of governance, as laid out by the Charity Commission. Our board of trustees promotes a fair, open, and positive culture to ensure everyone within our Charity has confidence to identify and report concerns, take appropriate action and contribute to constant improvement. |
| Our Trustees hold overall responsibility for taking reasonable steps to protect from harm people who come into contact with the Charity.  We are committed to:   * having appropriate policies and procedures in place, which are followed by all trustees, staff, volunteers, beneficiaries (people who come into contact with the Charity, and other identified stakeholders. * Making sure safeguarding is central to the Charity’s culture and that everyone knows their role and responsibility regarding safeguarding. * Outlining the checks made to evidence people are suitable to act in their roles and ensuring quality staff induction. * Providing guidance, training, and support so everyone knows how to spot and handle concerns in a full and open manner. * Defining clear systems of referring or reporting as appropriate, including involving external agencies. * Identifying a systematic process for reviewing policies / guidance and a schedule for updating training. * Setting out the lines of accountability and governance for safeguarding. Providing a clear process of investigation and review for major incidents or when things go wrong. * Keeping up to date with statutory guidance, good practice guidance and legislation relevant to the Charity’s safeguarding function. |

**Everyone’s Responsibility**

Safeguarding is everyone’s responsibility, and everyone has a role to play. It is about ensuring general safety and wellbeing whilst taking additional steps for those least able to protect themselves from harm or abuse. All staff, volunteers and other Charity stakeholders have a responsibility for the safety and wellbeing of all those coming into contact with the Charity.

Safeguarding means protecting a person’s right to live in safety and free from abuse or neglect.

As safeguarding is such a fundamental part of the Charity’s business it is essential that you, as a member of ACTS FAST are equipped with the knowledge and skills to meet our safeguarding responsibilities to comply with legislation and regulation. This policy is issued with associated guidance on different aspects of safeguarding with which you must maintain an up-to-date knowledge. Further, you also have a responsibility to make sure that you comply with all training and refresher training requirements in relation to your position and as detailed in the Safeguarding Training Schedule.

**Safeguarding Adults**

The Care Act (2014) sets out what constitutes an ‘adult at risk’. Adult at risk is the term used to describe those deemed to require additional protection measures because they may be unable to ensure this for themselves. Under safeguarding law an adult at risk is defined as a person 18 and over who:

* Has needs for care and support (whether the local authority is meeting any of those needs) and;
* Is experiencing, or at risk of, abuse or neglect; and
* As a result of those care and support needs is unable to protect themselves from either the risk of, or the experience of abuse or neglect. It is important to note that being an “adult at risk” can be temporary or changeable and therefore other risk factors to consider –
* Mental health and psychological factors (capacity)
* Alcohol or substance misuse
* Physical dependency
* Low self esteem
* Previous abuse as an adult or child

**Safeguarding Children**

It is important to be mindful that safeguarding may be necessary to reduce the immediate risk of harm or address safeguarding concerns relating to an adult who is not deemed ‘vulnerable’; this may be a colleague, client, or other person connected to ACTS FAST who at a given time requires safeguarding due to immediate or significant safeguarding concerns. We all have a duty of care to each other to consider safeguarding if there is a concern or risk which we witness, are made aware of, or have a concern about which requires action to reduce harm or address the concern.

ACTS FAST has a duty to comply with legislation and statutory guidance to keep children safe and to act upon concerns relating to risk of harm.

Safeguarding Children means protecting children from maltreatment, preventing impairment of children’s mental and physical health or development, ensuring that children grow up with safe and effective care, and taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2>

The scope of this policy and accompanying guidance ensures that ACTS FAST staff, parents/carers, trustees, volunteers, and the wider community understand their responsibilities, can recognise, and prevent risks, and know what action to take to protect children should the need arise.

**What is Abuse?**

Abuse can include but is not limited to the following types of behaviours, risks or concerns:

* Physical abuse: including hitting, slapping, punching, burning, misuse of medication, inappropriate restraint.
* Sexual abuse: including rape, indecent assault, inappropriate touching, exposure to pornographic material.
* Psychological or Emotional abuse: including belittling, name calling, threats of harm, intimidation, isolation.
* Financial or Material abuse: including stealing, selling assets, fraud, misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions, or benefits.
* Domestic: including physical / psychological violence, financial abuse, coercive control, harassment, stalking, on-line / digital abuse.
* Neglect and Acts of Omission: including withholding the necessities of life such as medication, food, or warmth, ignoring medical or physical care needs.
* Discriminatory abuse: including racist, sexist, based on a person’s disability and other forms of harassment, slurs, or similar treatment.
* Institutional or Organisational: including regimented routines and cultures, unsafe practices, lack of person-centred care or treatment.
* Modern Slavery: including sex trafficking, child sex trafficking, forced labour, forced criminality, forced marriage, organ harvesting and domestic servitude, child labour / child soldiers.
* Self-neglect: including personal care, diet, hoarding, insanitary or squalid living conditions, neglecting household maintenance.
* Cyber abuse: including grooming, incitement, bullying, fraud, radicalisation.

**Responding to Safeguarding Concerns**

Staff and volunteers who have any safeguarding concerns should:

**1. Respond**

* In an emergency, dial 999 for emergency services.
* If a safeguarding referral to a non-urgent matter is to be made, inform the person you are safeguarding of your intentions and be transparent in your actions – ideally the person involved will consent to the safeguarding referral but if consent is not provided and a breach of confidentiality is required, explain your intentions and next steps as empathically as possible, ensuring to record your actions.

**2. Report & Refer**

* Reports of safeguarding concerns or incidents must be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) as soon as possible.
* In instances of referring a person to a third-party agency such as Children’s Social Care, a GP surgery, Community Mental Health Teams, it is the responsibility of the ACTS FAST team member to ensure that safe receipt of the referral has been made and acknowledged. Until the third party acknowledges receipt verbally or in writing, the safeguarding concern remains active and cannot be closed by ACTS FAST without ensuring that the onward referral has been appropriately handed over.
* Use the safeguarding referral forms to record the incident with ACTS FAST and ensure, that the DSL if not available, a Trustee responds in writing to acknowledge receipt of this information.

In deciding whether to refer or not, the following is to be considered:

(1)  the person’s wishes and preferred outcome,

(2)  whether the person has mental capacity to make an informed decision about their own and others’ safety,

(3)  the safety or wellbeing of children or other adults with care and support needs,

(4)  whether there is a person in a position of trust involved,

(5)  whether a crime may have been committed.

Where there are concerns about an at-risk person, the sharing of information in a timely and effective manner between professionals and organisations can reduce the risk of harm. Whilst the Data Protection Act 2018 places duties on organisations and individuals to process personal information fairly and lawfully, it is not a barrier to sharing information where the failure to do so would result in a child or at-risk adult being placed at risk of harm. Similarly,

human rights concerns, such as respecting the right to a private and family life would not prevent sharing where there are real safeguarding concerns.

Therefore, the correct management of information is central to good safeguarding practice and ACTS FAST understands the critical importance of information sharing between professionals and local agencies. The Charity works within statutory frameworks and Caldicott principles. Any transfer of safeguarding data is actioned securely in accordance with the Charity’s and government’s guidelines concerning data protection.

Information sharing requirements should be discussed with the DSL in the first instance.

A member of staff must never guarantee confidentiality to anyone about a safeguarding concern (including parents / carers or other external agencies) or promise to keep a secret which might compromise safety or wellbeing.

All staff and volunteers should contact the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) with any concerns/queries they have in regard to safeguarding.

**Safeguarding concerns relating to Staff & Volunteers**

ACTS FAST recruits colleagues in line with its Safer Recruitment Policy. Further, the Charity will ensure that any allegations made against a member of staff will be dealt with swiftly and fairly.

**Whistleblowing and Raising Concerns**

All staff need to be aware of their duty to raise concerns, where they exist, relating to safeguarding. These may include the attitude or actions/inactions of colleagues, poor or unsafe practice and potential failures in the Charity’s safeguarding arrangements. This list is not exhaustive.

ACTS FAST aims for everyone connected with the Charity to feel able to report any concerns through existing procedures, including the whistleblowing and complaints policies.

The Charity is committed to ensuring that staff, contractors, and volunteers who, in good faith, whistle-blow in the public interest, will be protected from reprisals and victimisation.

Please refer to the ACTS FAST Complaints and Whistleblowing Policy.

**Safeguarding Team Contact List**

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| Name | Position | Email |
| Simone Gosden | CEO | Simone.gosden@actsfast.org.uk |
| Vikki Taylor | Therapy Lead | Vikki.taylor@actsfast.org.uk |
| Simone Walls-McDonald | Trustee | Simone.walls-macdonald@actsfast.org.uk |
| Sarah Vile | Trustee | Sarah.vile@actsfast.org.uk |

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Mobile numbers for Designated Safeguarding Leads shared with all team members directly.