



ReConnect

Child Protection and Safeguarding Children Policy

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1. Background

This comprehensive policy ensures that all aspects of safeguarding, including online safety, are addressed in compliance with the latest **Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024** guidelines and informed by the key documents listed at the base of this document.

2. Safeguarding Policy

Safeguarding at ReConnect is not limited to child protection but encompasses various other elements including health and safety, anti-bullying measures, and online safety. We recognise safeguarding issues such as Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), child-on-child abuse, upskirting, radicalisation (Channel programme), and the broader Prevent duty.

ReConnect is committed to ensuring the welfare of all children, young people, and vulnerable adults. Our staff and volunteers are trained to identify, respond to, and report concerns regarding neglect, physical, emotional, or sexual abuse. We uphold the following principles:

- **Awareness and training:** Staff and volunteers are trained to recognise signs of abuse and to follow appropriate procedures.
- **Recruitment and safeguarding checks:** Comprehensive DBS checks and references are part of our safer recruitment process.
- **Reporting procedures:** All staff have a duty to report concerns to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).

3. Arrangements and Procedures

The DSL is responsible for overseeing safeguarding arrangements. All staff are trained in safeguarding procedures, and regular updates are provided to reflect current guidance and legislation.

4. Safer Recruitment of Staff and Volunteers

ReConnect has a vetting and barring procedure and will not employ anyone in the provision of activities who has committed any offence listed in the document 'Convictions and Circumstances relating to employment.'

A reference must be obtained for all candidates before confirming an appointment, with one ideally from someone who has experience of the candidate working with children. It is essential that the referee is explicitly asked whether the candidate is suitable for the role and for working with young people. References should be obtained in writing, but notes from a phone or face-to-face conversation are acceptable.

All staff and volunteers are subject to a DBS check (see below). All appointments are subject to a personal interview to explore attitudes, motivation, temperament, and personal qualities, as well as skills and experience. Candidates must provide proof of identity before appointment, and a copy must be retained on file.

All employment offers must be conditional on satisfactory references, checks, and DBS Disclosure. If someone must start work before these are completed, a risk assessment must be undertaken, and they must be supervised by a DBS-checked member of staff while working with children and vulnerable adults.

5. DBS Checks

ReConnect operates safe recruitment practices and takes two references for all employees and associates. All staff working directly with, or having access to, children and young people are subject to enhanced DBS checks.

DBS checks must be renewed every three years. It is accepted that the renewal process may take up to six months to complete, and therefore we will accept a DBS clearance certificate for up to three and a half years, after which the DBS certificate will be considered invalid.

It is a condition that all employees and volunteers at ReConnect have an ongoing obligation to promptly report any convictions, police cautions, or warnings to the CEO.

ReConnect maintains a database that records the status of DBS checks obtained for staff and volunteers.

6. Induction and Training

ReConnect is committed to ensuring that all staff and volunteers are fully trained in safeguarding practices and understand their responsibilities. The safeguarding induction and training process is comprehensive and ongoing to maintain a high standard of care.

All new staff and volunteers will:

- Be given access to the safeguarding policy as part of their induction process.
- Understand and fulfil their responsibilities to safeguard young people and vulnerable adults.
- Receive safeguarding training within six months of their employment or appointment, with refresher training every three years.
- Be adequately supervised, and their progress will be reviewed regularly.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) will:

- Be trained to Level 3/4 safeguarding standards, with refresher training every three years.
- Undertake annual Continuous Professional Development (CPD) in safeguarding, which will be recorded in the central staff training record.
- Ensure Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads are trained to Level 3 or equivalent, with the same refresher schedule.

All staff and volunteers will:

- Know the signs and symptoms of abuse and how to respond to a young person who discloses abuse.
- Understand the steps to take if they have concerns about an individual's welfare.
- Attend a safeguarding induction, ideally on their first day but no later than their first week, followed by mandatory safeguarding training within the first three months.
- Complete the 'Workshop to Raise Awareness of Prevent' (WRAP) training, available online.

Annual CPD training will be delivered by the DSL and recorded, with additional refresher training every three years. Staff will be updated on policy changes through emails, meetings, or other communications, and the DSL and their deputies will be available for guidance on safeguarding matters.

Parents and carers will be informed of ReConnect's safeguarding responsibilities, ensuring transparency and collaboration in the protection of children and young people.

General Safeguarding Responsibilities and Training

At ReConnect, all staff are responsible for recognising and reporting concerns related to FGM, child-on-child abuse, upskirting, and radicalisation. As part of their safeguarding training, staff will be made aware of the signs, symptoms, and response protocols for each of these issues. The DSL and Deputy Safeguarding Leads will provide regular safeguarding updates to ensure that staff are fully equipped to handle these safeguarding topics. In all cases, concerns must be reported following ReConnect's internal safeguarding procedures, with a focus on ensuring the safety and well-being of the child.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is illegal in the UK under the Female Genital Mutilation Act (2003) and is considered a form of child abuse and gender-based violence. Staff at ReConnect are trained to recognise potential indicators of FGM, such as girls discussing a special procedure or event, or returning from extended holidays in areas where FGM is prevalent. All professionals have a legal duty to report known cases of FGM in girls under 18 to the police. If staff suspect that a student is at risk of or has undergone FGM, they must immediately inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and follow the appropriate reporting procedures. Preventive measures, such as educating families and young people about the risks and illegality of FGM, will also be taken where necessary, and relevant external agencies will be engaged to support the safeguarding process.

Child-on-Child Abuse

ReConnect recognises that child-on-child abuse can occur in various forms, including physical, sexual, emotional, and financial abuse. It also encompasses bullying (both online and offline), physical violence, sexual harassment, and exploitation. Staff are trained to identify the signs of child-on-child abuse, such as unexplained injuries, changes in behaviour, or a child appearing distressed around certain peers. Any form of child-on-child abuse is not tolerated. Staff are expected to follow clear procedures to address such incidents, ensuring the victim's safety, speaking with all involved parties, and escalating concerns to the DSL. Comprehensive records of all incidents will be kept, and external agencies, such as children's social care, will be informed if required. Preventive education around respectful relationships and appropriate behaviour is embedded within the provision's curriculum.

Upskirting

Upskirting, defined as taking a photograph or video under someone's clothing without their consent for sexual gratification or to cause humiliation, is illegal under the Voyeurism (Offences) Act 2019 and is treated as a form of sexual harassment. Staff at ReConnect are trained to recognise the signs of upskirting and understand that any incident involving this behaviour is a serious safeguarding concern. If upskirting is suspected or reported, staff must immediately inform the DSL, who will ensure the matter is handled sensitively, with appropriate support provided to the victim and disciplinary action taken against the perpetrator. The incident will also be reported to the police where necessary. ReConnect takes a zero-tolerance approach to upskirting and promotes awareness among students regarding the legal and personal consequences of such behaviour.

Channel Programme and Prevent Duty

ReConnect follows the government's Prevent strategy, which aims to safeguard individuals from being drawn into extremism or terrorism. The Channel programme provides support to those identified as being at risk of radicalisation. Staff are trained to recognise signs of radicalisation, such as significant changes in behaviour, withdrawal, expressing extremist views, or glorifying violence. If staff suspect that a student is at risk of radicalisation, they are required to report their concerns to the DSL, who will assess the situation and, if necessary, refer the individual to the local Channel panel. Prevent training is provided to all staff as part of their safeguarding responsibilities.

to ensure they are aware of their duty to protect young people from extremism and know how to respond appropriately. This policy supports our commitment to upholding the Prevent duty and ensuring a safe and inclusive environment for all students.

7. Good Working Practice

ReConnect maintains a friendly, relaxed atmosphere. However, staff should always conduct themselves to avoid compromising situations and to protect themselves against false allegations of abuse.

- Staff should wear identity badges at all times.
- Physical contact with young people should be avoided and only when critical for ensuring safety.
- Isolated situations with children should be avoided where possible.

8. Definitions of Child Abuse

All employees of ReConnect must recognise and accept that children have a fundamental right to be protected from harm. In upholding this fundamental right, we recognise that there are four definitions of child abuse, including neglect, as defined in Chapter 4 of the London Child Protection Procedures (<http://www.londonscb.gov.uk/>) and as précised in this policy below. The four categories of child abuse are as follows:

Neglect

The persistent neglect of a child or the failure to protect a child from exposure to any kind of danger including cold, lack of food, or failure to carry out important aspects of care, resulting in significant impairment of the child's health or development including non-organic failure to thrive.

Physical

Actual or likely physical injury to a child or a failure to prevent physical injury (or suffering) to a child including deliberate poisoning, suffocation, or Munchhausen Syndrome by proxy.

Emotional

Actual or likely severe adverse effect on the emotional and behavioural development of a child caused by persistent or severe emotional ill treatment (this category also includes bullying).

Sexual

Actual or likely sexual exploitation of a child, including exposure to sexually explicit material, sexual harassment, as well as all forms of physical sexual contact.

Criminal Exploitation (County Lines)

Criminal exploitation, also known as 'county lines', occurs when gangs and organised crime networks groom and exploit vulnerable people (including children and young people) to sell drugs. These individuals often travel across counties, using dedicated mobile phone 'lines' to supply drugs. We have a duty to remain vigilant and look for signs of criminal exploitation to protect our learners. A useful video to support the understanding of County Lines can be found at:

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3ILaguFXHr4&t=103s>

Additional Information

Child abuse is often difficult to recognise unless the child makes a disclosure. Injuries may not be conclusive. There must always be concern if the parent or carer shows no anxiety about the child's condition or coldly blames the child. Suspicion is raised when:

1. There is a delay in seeking treatment.
2. Inadequate explanations are given, or the child has injuries of different ages, or there is a history of injury.
3. There is evidence of a failure to thrive.

Recognising Child Abuse

Recognising the signs of child abuse is a first step in protecting children. Below are some signs, though not exhaustive, which may give rise for concern:

- Unexplained bruising, injuries, burns, or illnesses
- Changes in behaviour/character (e.g., becoming very withdrawn)
- Sexually explicit language, behaviour, or mode of dress
- Being left outside the home for long periods of time without food or drink
- Showing uncharacteristic aggressive behaviour
- Showing unexpected fear of an adult
- Refusing to attend school, or other school-related issues
- Low self-esteem
- Depression and/or self-harm, which may lead to suicide
- Developmental delay – mentally, physically, or emotionally
- Reluctance to go home
- Reluctance to disclose personal details i.e., contact details
- Too much money or many new possessions

It's important to remember that changes in behaviour or other signs may not necessarily mean a child is being abused. There could be other issues such as bullying or domestic problems. It is not your responsibility to decide if it is abuse – it is your responsibility to act on concerns.

9. Responding to Concerns

If a child discloses abuse:

- Listen carefully and take them seriously.
- Reassure the child without making promises.
- Report immediately to the DSL, without pressing the child for more information.
- Record the disclosure accurately and follow procedures for reporting.

Receive

- Take seriously whatever the child tells you.
- Just listen and be supportive.
- Do not ask detailed or leading questions or press the child for more information than they want to give you; instead, ask, 'Do you want to tell me more?'
- Report to the Designated Safeguarding Lead or nominated deputy as soon as possible. Be very careful that you have not led the child in any way, as this can have legal implications.

Reassure

- Reassure the child that it is not their fault.
- Do not make judgments or say anything about the alleged abuser.
- Do not promise to keep secrets. Be honest about your own position, and if possible, name the person you will talk to about this matter.

- Do not ask the child to repeat the disclosure to anyone else.
- Do not display shock or disapproval when the child is making the disclosure.
- Keep the child informed of any action you are going to take.

Respond

- Inform the CEO (or the nominated deputy in case of the CEO's absence) as soon as possible.
- Make a written record of everything as soon as possible. The record must state exactly what the child said, with no additions or assumptions. Sign and date the record and give it to the designated person who must keep it in a secure, locked place.
- Do not destroy any evidence.
- Initial disclosure, even if retracted, may still be referred to.
- Take care of yourself – ensure you have the opportunity to discuss your feelings (in confidence) with a fellow professional.

10. Suspicion of Abuse or Inappropriate Behaviour

If any member of staff suspects abuse or inappropriate behaviour towards a child by anyone (including ReConnect staff), they must report their concerns to the DSL. The DSL will investigate and record all facts concerning the incident and decide upon appropriate action.

In the case of suspected abuse while a child is in the care of ReConnect, the following details will be recorded:

- The child's name, address, sex, date of birth
- Parent(s)' or guardian(s)' names and contact point
- The name of the staff member making the referral
- Details of the incident or allegation, action taken (including dates and times)

Staff involved are advised to keep an independent record of this information. The DSL will inform the relevant Local Authorities Children's Social Care Services. It may be necessary to suspend, without prejudice, any ReConnect staff member against whom an allegation is made until further investigation takes place.

In cases of a child disclosing information about their welfare or safety (including abuse), staff should report this to the DSL. ReConnect staff should explain to the young person that they are unable to maintain confidentiality.

11. Whistleblowing Procedures

All staff should be aware of their duty to raise concerns about the management of child protection, including the attitude or actions of colleagues. Any concerns for a child's welfare arising from suspected abuse or harassment by a member of staff or volunteer should be reported to the DSL immediately.

11. Off-Site & Residential Events

ReConnect is not responsible for a child, young person, or adult at risk while they are travelling to and from ReConnect events unless agreed beforehand. It is the responsibility of the parent/guardian or school/local authority to make appropriate travel arrangements for them.

Staff organising residential trips must ensure appropriate safeguarding arrangements, including risk assessments, health and safety protocols, and suitable supervision ratios.

ReConnect requires leaders organising residential events for children, young people, and adults at risk to make appropriate sleeping arrangements to ensure the safeguarding of individuals and minimise risk.

All residential visits must be submitted for Health & Safety approval at least 3 weeks before the visit is due to take place. Any residential trips must complete all relevant risk assessment forms.

- An External Provider Form must be completed if there is an element of instruction, staffing, or guiding as part of the agreement with the accommodation provider.
- Mixed groups should be accompanied by at least one male and one female staff member where possible.
- A preliminary visit to new accommodation is strongly recommended, or thorough enquiries should be made with the provider.
- On arrival, staff should inspect the accommodation and report any damage before young people access the rooms.
- Teachers should be accommodated on every floor where there are children or young people.
- All staff and young people should be aware of the emergency procedures and escape routes in case of fire.

12. Online Safety and E-Safety

ReConnect recognises the importance of online safety. Staff are trained to monitor digital activity and support young people in safe internet use. The Online Safety Lead, Chris Sodey, can be reached at **07929 279129** or via email at **chris@instrumentaluk.com**

E-Safety

We understand the requirement to ensure that young people are able to use the Internet and related technologies appropriately and safely. It is part of our wider duty of care, as mentioned above, to ensure that young people are safe and protected from potential harm, both within and outside ReConnect. Staff will:

- Have an up-to-date awareness of online safety matters and of the ReConnect online safety policy and practices.
- Report any suspected misuse or problem to senior staff or the CEO for investigation/action.
- Ensure that all digital communications with students/parents/carers are on a professional level.
- Support young people in understanding and following the Online Safety Policy and acceptable use policies.
- Monitor the use of digital technologies, mobile devices, cameras, etc., in planned sessions and other activities.
- Guide young people to sites checked as suitable for their use and ensure that processes are in place for dealing with any unsuitable material that is found in internet searches.
- Be aware of the potential for serious child protection/safeguarding issues to arise from:
 - Sharing of personal data
 - Access to illegal/inappropriate materials
 - Inappropriate online contact with adults/strangers
 - Potential or actual incidents of grooming
 - Online bullying

Inform young people about the importance of reporting abuse, misuse, or access to inappropriate materials and know how to do so.

E-Learning and Online Delivery

E-safety will be embedded into all teaching and learning so that learners know how to stay safe online. All learners will receive a safeguarding induction at the beginning of each course providing information on safeguarding processes for the project. The email or personal website addresses of children or vulnerable adults should **not** be disclosed by staff under any circumstances and are not to be used to make contact with those individuals except for approved professional purposes.

13. Epidemic or Pandemic

In situations, for example caused by Coronavirus (COVID-19), ReConnect will follow government guidelines, understanding that these guidelines are subject to change. Unless classified as an essential service, ReConnect will remain closed until instructed otherwise, to ensure that staff, volunteers, and young people remain safe.

If staff or volunteers were working remotely during an outbreak, as experienced with COVID-19, they will:

- Continue to process and store personal information in line with our Data Protection policies.
- Not use personal devices to communicate with young people, store personal information on personal devices, or download and use apps on work or personal devices (phones/laptops/tablet computers) without express authorisation from senior staff.

In the case of blended delivery, ReConnect will ensure that government advice in relation to COVID-19 safety is followed and that the appropriate signage, hygiene and cleaning protocols, and social distancing measures are adhered to.

14. Prevent

The Government published the Prevent Strategy in 2010, raising awareness of the need to safeguard young people from extremism and radicalisation.

At ReConnect, we understand that our Prevent policy is to keep young people safe and within the law. Staff will respond to suspicions by making a referral to the relevant borough's Prevent Duty.

Our Health & Safety policy, set out in a separate document, reflects the consideration we give to the protection of young people both physically within ReConnect, including internet use and Prevent, as well as during off-site activities.

15. Health & Safety

We follow strict health and safety policies to ensure a safe environment for young people. Emergency procedures, including evacuation and fire safety, are detailed in our Health & Safety policy.

15. Evacuation

ReConnect's evacuation procedure is outlined in detail in our Health and Safety and Fire Safety policy documents, which are available on request.

16. Safeguarding Lead Contacts

- **Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL):** Chris Sodey
 - Telephone: 07929 279129
 - Email: chris@instrumentaluk.com
- **Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL):** Naomi Hamer
 - Telephone: 07599 035520
 - Email: naomi@instrumentaluk.com

17. Key documents that underpin ReConnect safeguarding policies and procedures

Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSiE)

- **Publisher:** Department for Education (DfE)
- **Latest Version:** September 2024
- **Description:** This statutory guidance outlines the responsibilities of schools and colleges to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. It includes guidance on recognising abuse, handling disclosures, safer recruitment practices, and working with multi-agency safeguarding partners.

Working Together to Safeguard Children

- **Publisher:** HM Government
- **Latest Version:** Updated February 2019
- **Description:** This statutory guidance applies to all organisations and agencies that work with children. It outlines how agencies should work together to protect children and details the roles and responsibilities of professionals in safeguarding.

The Children Act 1989 and 2004

- **Publisher:** HM Government
- **Description:** These Acts form the legislative framework for child protection in the UK. The 1989 Act sets out the duties of local authorities and the 2004 Act introduces key reforms to child protection services, focusing on children's welfare and rights.
- **Description of Content:** These Acts highlight the duty of care that organisations have to protect children from harm and to work together with local authorities.

The Education Act 2002

- **Publisher:** HM Government
- **Description:** Section 175 of this Act places a duty on schools and local education authorities to ensure that their functions are exercised with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. This Act also mandates that all schools have arrangements in place for child protection.

The Prevent Duty (Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015)

- **Publisher:** HM Government
- **Description:** The Prevent Duty is part of the government's strategy to prevent individuals from being drawn into terrorism. The duty applies to a range of organisations, including schools, and requires them to have due regard to the need to prevent people from being radicalised.

The Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003

- **Publisher:** HM Government
- **Description:** This Act makes it illegal to perform FGM in the UK or assist someone in carrying out FGM abroad. It includes mandatory reporting for professionals, who must report known cases of FGM in under-18s directly to the police.

What to Do if You're Worried a Child is Being Abused

- **Publisher:** Department for Education (DfE)
- **Latest Version:** Updated March 2015
- **Description:** This advice is for practitioners and explains how to recognise the signs of abuse, what actions to take if they suspect abuse, and how to refer concerns to children's social care.

Disqualification Under the Childcare Act 2006

- **Publisher:** Department for Education (DfE)
- **Latest Version:** Updated August 2018
- **Description:** This statutory guidance sets out the criteria under which an individual is disqualified from providing childcare, including convictions and cautions for certain offences. Schools and early years providers are required to comply with this guidance.

Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006

- **Publisher:** HM Government
- **Description:** This Act provides the framework for the vetting and barring scheme, which ensures that individuals working with children and vulnerable adults are suitably checked (DBS checks) and monitored.

The Sexual Offences Act 2003

- **Publisher:** HM Government
- **Description:** This Act covers a range of offences, including child sexual abuse and exploitation. It criminalises activities such as grooming and defines the legal responsibilities of organisations working with children to protect them from sexual abuse.

The Voyeurism (Offences) Act 2019

- **Publisher:** HM Government
- **Description:** This Act criminalises upskirting (taking photos under someone's clothing without their consent). It's important for safeguarding policies to recognise this as a form of abuse and ensure that it is addressed.

Multi-Agency Statutory Guidance on Female Genital Mutilation (2016)

- **Publisher:** HM Government
- **Description:** This statutory guidance explains the responsibilities of professionals in various sectors, including education, to protect girls at risk of FGM and to report cases where FGM has been carried out

Child Sexual Exploitation: Definition and a Guide for Practitioners (2017)

- **Publisher:** Department for Education (DfE)
- **Description:** This non-statutory guidance helps professionals working with children to recognise and respond to child sexual exploitation (CSE). It explains what CSE is and provides advice on how to support and protect victims.