

<p style="text-align: center;">MISSING LINK, NEXT LINK and SAFE LINK SAFEGUARDING ADULTS AT RISK OF ABUSE POLICY</p>

1.0 Scope

1.1 This policy applies to all Missing Link, Next Link and Safe Link Services. Hereafter, any reference to Missing Link applies to all the above services unless otherwise specified.

Overview

1.2 Safeguarding is everybody's business. Safeguarding is the responsibility of everyone including statutory, independent and voluntary agencies as well as every citizen. We will work together to prevent and minimise abuse. Missing Link recognises that the welfare of all adults is paramount and considers it the duty of Committee Members, staff and volunteers to promote the welfare of all adults and to keep them safe.

1.3 Missing Link recognises that adults at risk, who are members of specific key groups, may experience discrimination and less favourable treatment on the grounds of their age; disability; race; colour; ethnic or national origin; financial or economic status; gender or marital status; HIV status; homelessness or lack of a fixed address; political view or trade union activity; religion or belief; sexuality; or unrelated criminal convictions. We will take positive steps to stop any unfair/unlawful discrimination, and carry out positive action where lawful.

1.4 Missing Link is committed to making safeguarding personal by ensuring that it will be person-led, outcome-focused and that choice and control remain with the service user as far as is possible.

1.5 Missing Link staff will engage the person in a conversation about how best to respond to their safeguarding situation in a way that enhances involvement, choice and control as well as improving their quality of life, wellbeing and safety.

'Well-being' is defined as relating to any of the following:

- personal dignity (including treatment of the individual with respect);
- physical and mental health and emotional well-being;
- protection from abuse and neglect;
- control by the individual over day-to-day life (including over care and support, or support, provided to the individual and the way in which it is provided);
- participation in work, education, training or recreation;
- social and economic well-being;
- domestic, family and personal relationships;
- suitability of living accommodation;
- contribution to society.

1.6 Missing Link's safeguarding practices are in line with the six key principles which underpin all adult safeguarding work:

- Empowerment – people being supported and encouraged to make their own decisions and informed consent.
- Prevention – it is better to act before harm occurs.
- Proportionality – the least intrusive response appropriate to the risk presented.
- Protection – support and representation for those in greatest need.
- Partnership – local solutions through services working with their communities.
- Communities have a part to play in preventing, detecting and reporting neglect and abuse.
- Accountability – accountability and transparency in delivering safeguarding.

In addition to these principles, it is also important that all safeguarding partners take a broad community approach to establishing safeguarding arrangements. It is vital that all organisations recognise that adult safeguarding arrangements are there to protect individuals. We all have different preferences, histories, circumstances and life-styles, so it is unhelpful to prescribe a process that must be followed whenever a concern is raised.

The response to safeguarding concerns must be personal to the individual.

Making safeguarding personal means it should be person-led and outcome-focused. It engages the person in a conversation about how best to respond to their safeguarding situation in a way that enhances involvement, choice and control as well as improving quality of life, wellbeing and safety.

1.7 Missing Link seeks to keep adults at risk of abuse safe by:

- Valuing them, listening to and respecting them
- Promoting service user choice and control
- Adopting safeguarding adults practices through procedures and a code of conduct for staff and volunteers
- Providing effective management for staff and volunteers through supervision, support and training
- Recruiting staff and volunteers safely, ensuring all necessary checks are made
- Sharing information about adults at risk and good practice with staff and volunteers
- Sharing concerns with agencies who need to know, and involving adults at risk and carers appropriately
- Working in partnership with adults at risk, their carers and other agencies is essential in promoting their welfare.

1.8 Missing Link will not tolerate any acts of abuse or exploitation perpetrated against any adult. Missing Link recognises its duty of care in ensuring that the risk of abuse is minimised and that action is taken immediately wherever it is suspected, known or disclosed that abuse is occurring. All staff, Management Committee Members and volunteers will take action according to this policy against all cases of suspected or known abuse.

1.9 All staff and volunteers are expected to work in line with Missing Link, Next Link and Safe Link's trauma informed approach, with the starting point being the survivor's lived experience. This is underpinned by BNSSG Trauma Informed Principles: Safety, Choice and Clarity, Collaboration, Trustworthiness, Empowerment, Inclusivity. Staff and volunteers will be trained on this approach during induction. Please also refer to [Guidance on the Working definition of trauma-informed practice](#).

2.0 AIMS

The aims of adult safeguarding are to:

- stop abuse or neglect wherever possible;
- prevent harm and reduce the risk of abuse or neglect to adults with care and support needs;
- safeguard adults in a way that supports them in making choices and having control about how they want to live;
- promote an approach that concentrates on improving life for the adults concerned;
- raise public awareness so that communities as a whole, alongside professionals, play their part in preventing, identifying and responding to abuse and neglect;
- provide information and support in accessible ways to help people understand the different types of abuse, how to stay safe and what to do to raise a concern about the safety or well-being of an adult, and;
- address what has caused the abuse or neglect.

3.0 Legal Framework and Guidance

This policy has been drawn up on the basis of law and guidance that seeks to protect adults at risk, namely:

- Equality Act 2010
- Care Act 2014 and Care and Support Statutory Guidance
- Joint Safeguarding Adults Multi-Agency Policy 2019 (Agreed by Safeguarding Adults Boards in Bristol, South Gloucestershire, North Somerset, Bath and North East Somerset and Somerset). To be read in conjunction with the relevant Local Authority Area's Policy and Procedures (KBSP, South Gloucestershire Safeguarding Adults Board, North Somerset Safeguarding Adults Board)
<https://bristolsafeguarding.org/media/42651/20190625-final-joint-safeguarding-adults-policy.pdf>
- Mental Capacity Act 2005
- Homelessness Reduction act 2017
- Mental Health Act 1983 and 2007
- Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards, Code of Practice 2008 (soon to be updated to Liberty Protection Safeguards (LPS))
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998
- Protection of Freedoms Act 2012

- Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015
- Children and Families Act 2014
- Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003
- Health and Safety at Work ect Act 1974
- Serious Crime Act 2015
- Data Protection Act 2018
- General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)

3.1 Missing Link aims to cooperate with the Local Safeguarding Adults Board to safeguard and promote the welfare of adults at risk and ensure the effectiveness of safeguarding procedures.

PROCEDURES

DOING NOTHING IS NOT AN OPTION: If we know or suspect that an adult at risk is being abused, we will do something about it and ensure our work is properly recorded. We will share information in a timely way.

4.0 Management Responsibility

4.1 The overall responsibility for ensuring this policy is implemented and monitored throughout the organisation lies with the Chief Executive and the Management Committee who may delegate this responsibility to named managers for the completion of certain tasks.

4.2 **Ana Romero** is the organisational designated **Operational Safeguarding Lead** with responsibility for safeguarding within the services. All staff are informed of this at induction. Ana Romero should be contacted immediately if there is a concern or referral for an adult at risk. Tel: **(Mob) 07407895695** or head office **0117 9250680 Ext: 2517**. Email: Ana.Romero@nextlinkhousing.co.uk

4.3 **Sian Scholes** is the organisational designated **Strategic Safeguarding Lead** with responsibility for, on a quarterly basis, holding a specific safeguarding meeting for all team leaders to review safeguarding referrals made including quality and quantity, identify any common recurrent issues and review specific cases for any lessons learnt. Email: Sian.Scholes@nextlinkhousing.co.uk

4.4 Senior Managers

Missing Link expects all senior managers to uphold the Safeguarding Policies of the organisation in all aspects of their work. This includes ensuring that all employees are trained in the policy and procedures and that the services we offer and our employment practices adhere to the policy and commitment of the organisation to safeguarding. They have a duty to monitor all aspects of employees work in relation to safeguarding and to investigate and report to the Chief Executive any breaches of the policy.

4.5 All staff

All Committee Members, employees and volunteers have a responsibility to ensure that they understand and follow this policy. Their working practice will reflect a full commitment to safeguarding. All employees have a responsibility to report any breaches of the policy to their line manager and the Safeguarding Lead(s).

5.0 Definitions – who is at risk and in what way?

5.1 Who is an adult at risk?

For the purpose of this procedure, an “adult at risk” is defined as a person aged 18 or over who:

- has needs for care and support (whether or not the local authority is meeting any of those needs) **and**;
- is experiencing, or is 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.

Missing Link has separate policies regarding Safeguarding Children and Young People.

5.2 What kind of abuse is covered?

Abuse may take different forms and can include the following:

- **Physical abuse** - including assault, hitting, slapping, pushing, misuse of medication, restraint or inappropriate physical sanctions
- **Domestic violence** – including coercive control, psychological, physical, sexual, financial, economic, emotional abuse; so called ‘honour’ based violence
- **Sexual abuse** – including rape, indecent exposure, sexual harassment, inappropriate looking or touching, sexual teasing or innuendo, sexual photography, subjection to pornography or witnessing sexual acts, indecent exposure and sexual assault or sexual acts to which the adult has not consented or was pressured into consenting.
- **Psychological abuse** – including emotional abuse, threats of harm or abandonment, deprivation of contact, humiliation, blaming, controlling, intimidation, coercion, harassment, verbal abuse, cyber bullying, isolation or unreasonable and unjustified withdrawal of services or supportive networks.
- **Financial or material abuse** – including theft, fraud, internet scamming, coercion in relation to an adult’s financial affairs or arrangements, including in connection with wills, property, inheritance or financial transactions, or the misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits
- **Modern slavery** – encompasses slavery, human trafficking, forced labour and domestic servitude. Traffickers and slave masters use whatever means they have at their disposal to coerce, deceive and force individuals into a life of abuse, servitude and inhumane treatment.
- **Discriminatory abuse** – including forms of harassment, slurs or similar treatment; because of race, gender and gender identity, age, disability, sexual orientation or religion
- **Organisational abuse** – including neglect and poor care practice within an institution or specific care setting such as a hospital or care home, for example, or in relation to care provided in one’s own home. This may range from one off incidents to on-going ill-treatment. It can be through neglect or poor professional practice as a result of the structure, policies, processes and practices within an organisation.
- **Neglect and acts of omission** – including ignoring medical, emotional or physical care needs, failure to provide access to appropriate health, care and support or educational services, the withholding of the necessities of life, such as medication, adequate nutrition and heating
- **Self-neglect** – this covers a wide range of behaviour neglecting to care for one’s personal hygiene, health or surroundings and includes behaviour such as hoarding.

The above categories of abuse can be found within the Care Act guidance.

- **Hate Crime** - A hate crime is any criminal offence motivated by hostility or prejudice based upon the victim's disability, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, transgender identify. This crime relates the 'discriminatory' category of abuse.
- **Mate Crime** - Mate crime occurs when a person is harmed or taken advantage of by someone they thought was their friend. Mate Crime can become a very serious form of abuse. In some cases victims of Mate Crime have been badly harmed or even killed. Surveys indicate that people with disabilities can often become the targets of this form of exploitation. The type of criminal offences within 'Mate crime' can relate to several categories of abuse such as psychological, physical and financial.
- **Forced Marriage** - Forced marriage is a term used to describe a marriage in which one or both of the parties is married without their consent or against their will. A forced marriage differs from an arranged marriage, in which both parties consent (and have the capacity to consent) to the assistance of their parents or a third party in identifying a spouse. This type of crime relates to the 'domestic violence' category of abuse if it involves family members coercing.
- **Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)** - FGM is a procedure where the female genital organs are injured or changed and there is no medical reason for this. It is frequently a very traumatic and violent act for the victim and can cause harm in many ways. This type of crime would come under the 'physical violence' category of abuse and also 'domestic violence' if family is involved in any way.
- **PREVENT (Preventing radicalisation to extremism)** - Prevent defines extremism as: "vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs. We also include in our definition of extremism calls for the death of members of our armed forces".
- **Criminal Exploitation (including Cuckooing)** - Criminal exploitation of children and vulnerable adults is a geographically widespread form of harm that is a typical feature of county lines activity. It is a harm which is relatively little known about or recognised by those best placed to spot its potential victims and can be a form of Mate Crime when befriending is used.
- **Grooming** - Grooming can be defined as the process that an abuser uses to desensitise someone – to make them less likely to reject or report abusive behaviour. Grooming can happen when there is a power differential within a relationship, which the abuser exploits for their own gratification. Staff need to be mindful of being groomed themselves to not recognise abuse.

For a full description of Abuse Signs, Symptoms and Indicators see Missing Link's Safeguarding Adults at Risk of Abuse Policy – Abuse Indicators, Appendix 1.

5.3 Patterns of Abuse

Abuse may consist of a single act or repeated acts over time. Abuse could be active or passive (such as an omission around care) that may result in harm or exploitation. Abuse can be directed at one or more people.

Missing Link staff should look beyond single incidents or individuals to identify patterns of harm. Repeated instances of poor care may be an indication of more serious

problems and of what we now describe as organisational abuse. In order to see these patterns, it is important that information is recorded and appropriately shared.

5.4 Who abuses and neglects adults?

Anyone can carry out abuse or neglect, including:

- spouses/partners;
- other family members;
- neighbours;
- friends;
- acquaintances;
- other service users;
- local residents;
- people who deliberately exploit adults they perceive as vulnerable to abuse;
- paid staff, professionals, contractors;
- volunteers
- strangers
- the person themselves via self-neglect

5.5 Where abuse takes place

Abuse can happen anywhere, for example, in someone's own home, in a public place, in hospital, in a care home or in college. It can take place when an adult lives alone or with others. Abuse can take place in any setting, including in places assumed to be safe. In some instances, it may be necessary for the abused adult to be away from the setting and/or the abusive person in order to be able to report the abuse and to make a choice regarding how to proceed. Staff should be aware of this when dealing with any suspicion or allegation of abuse and should consider with the person if they wish to be removed to another environment.

5.6 Abuse and self-neglect can be intentional or unintentional. It is important to understand that unintentional abuse needs to be taken seriously as abuse.

5.7 Where it is suspected or known that abuse is taking place an initial refusal of help should not be taken at face value. Staff should discuss with their manager and the Safeguarding Lead(s) regarding how to proceed according to section 7.0 below.

6.0 Mental capacity

People must be assumed to have capacity to make their own decisions and be given all practicable help before anyone treats them as not being able to make their own decisions. Where an adult is found to lack capacity around a particular decision, then any action taken, or any decision made for, or on their behalf, must be made in their best interests and in a less restrictive way.

All professionals and other staff are required to work in accordance with the Mental Capacity Act 2005 ('MCA') and have regard to the relevant Code of Practice. The provisions of the Act are binding upon anyone seeking to make decisions for a person who may lack capacity.

When safeguarding concerns arise the mental capacity of the individuals involved – victims as well as those alleged to be responsible - is central to the assessment and decision-making processes. However having full capacity around decisions should not act as a barrier to undertaking safeguarding work. It is essential that in any level of safeguarding enquiry the mental capacity of those involved is clarified at the outset and as needed throughout as capacity can change. It is also important to ensure that safeguarding decision-making and mental capacity best interests decision-making do not become confused. In essence this is because safeguarding procedures do not convey any authority to act on behalf of a person who may lack mental capacity. Any protective measures thought to be necessary for a person who lacks mental capacity to consent to them must be subjected to a robust consideration and follow the MCA principles of acting in the person's best interests and using the principle of 'least restriction'.

If there are concerns about abuse by an attorney or deputy then the Office of Public Guardian should be contacted.

For further information see Missing Links Mental Capacity Act and Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards Policy and Procedure.

7.0 Deprivation of Liberty

The state has a duty under the Human Rights Act 1998 to ensure citizens are protected from unlawful deprivation of liberty. The Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards ('DoLS') were introduced in 2009 as a process to assess and put on a legal footing the deprivation of liberty of people who lack capacity for example to agree to detention in hospital or a care home for care or treatment.

At present although a deprivation of liberty can occur in other community settings such as supported living, it cannot be assessed under the usual DoLS procedures. In these cases, the manager of the service should seek advice from the local authority which covers the service in which the person is living. Liberty Protection Safeguards are expected to replace DoLS in future but are not yet implemented.

Whenever care arrangements are to be made as part of a protection plan and the person might be deprived of their liberty as a consequence, and they lack capacity to agree to this, authority must be sought immediately.

For further information see Missing Links Mental Capacity Act and Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards Policy and Procedure.

8.0 Recognising abuse

If we know or suspect that an adult at risk is being abused, we will do something about it and ensure our work is properly recorded. Missing Link staff will ensure people reporting abuse are listened to and their information acted upon.

8.1 Staff should be alert to the indicators of the possibility of abuse, although each indicator may have a different explanation other than that abuse is occurring. These include:

- full or partial disclosure of abuse
- frequent and unexplained minor injuries or bruising
- signs of depression or stress
- neglected personal care
- weight loss
- changes in habits/mood
- persistent financial hardship

8.2 For a fuller description of Indicators see document; Safeguarding Adults at Risk of Abuse Policy – Abuse Indicators – Appendix 1

9.0 Ways that abuse might be brought to Missing Link’s attention

- Direct disclosure from an adult themselves
- Direct disclosure from a third party
- Information from a third party that is concerning
- Concern from a member of staff about an adult’s appearance or behaviour or about the behaviour of a carer towards the person
- Direct disclosure by a carer about abuse suffered by an adult in the past or is currently suffering

9.1 Information regarding the possibility of abuse can come from various sources, although it should be followed up and treated in the same way. This includes information from an anonymous source. Service users will have been made aware at first contact with us that staff and volunteers cannot ignore issues around abuse and that steps will be taken to handle the situation as sensitively as possible.

10.0 Allegation of abuse concerning a member of staff or volunteer.

10.1 Staff or volunteers may be subject to allegations of abusing adults at risk. Allegations of abuse may be reported by children, adults or colleagues.

10.2 This information needs to be treated in exactly the same way as other disclosures of abuse - see procedure below. While an investigation is ongoing the member of staff will not be allowed to work with the service user concerned in any setting and may be suspended from duty in line with Missing Link’s Disciplinary procedure if it is felt they may be a risk. This is a precautionary and neutral act and protects both the accuser and the accused and support will be offered during this time. The Safeguarding Lead(s) will inform Adult Social Care and the police (if criminal). Missing Link will ensure that Adult Social Care is given all assistance in pursuing any investigation, and the disciplinary procedure may be implemented.

11.0 Procedure for reporting abuse or suspected abuse for Staff and Volunteers

The objectives of an enquiry into abuse or neglect are to:

- establish facts;
- explore concerns further with the person expressing concern;
- ascertain the adult's wishes and views, or their representative's;
- establish perceived risk;
- assess the needs of the adult for protection, support and redress and how they might be met;
- protect from the abuse and neglect, in accordance with the adult's views and wishes;
- make decisions on necessary follow up action with regard to the person or organisation responsible for the abuse or neglect, and;
- enable the adult to achieve resolution and recovery.

11.1 Missing Link has a duty to report abuse to the Local Authority (and police if appropriate) and then work in partnership regarding any enquiry as appropriate to skill set, areas of expertise, relationship to the person being abused etc. It is the responsibility of individual staff or volunteers to act immediately on any suspicion or evidence of abuse or neglect.

11.2 The seriousness or extent of abuse may not be clear when a concern is first raised and it is important to take the following factors into account when making any assessment:

- the vulnerability, including mental capacity, of the individual
- the extent and nature of the abuse
- the length of time it has been occurring
- the impact on the individual
- the risk of repeated or escalating acts involves this or other adult/s

11.3 When abuse is disclosed or suspected, the member of staff should take the following action:

11.4 Where there is the possibility of immediate, serious harm to any person or significant risk to property, staff should contact the emergency services on 999.

11.5 All reports of abuse must be immediately reported to their line manager and Safeguarding Lead(s).

11.6 The facts of the situation must be checked to be clear about what has led to the suspicions being mindful not to ask leading questions and to record the persons own words.

11.7 The Safeguarding Lead(s) will assess the information and decide whether or not to make raise a concern. Following a decision to raise a concern, the Safeguarding Lead(s) will inform the relevant Local Authority (see list at end of Policy) of the suspicions, concerns or disclosures immediately or in a timely way appropriate to the level of urgency and risk.

11.8 Staff should recognise the potential power imbalance that exists between paid staff and service users and ensure that power and authority are never misused and recognise the need for an environment that lessens this imbalance of power.

12.0 Making safeguarding personal

The person should be made aware of what the concerns are and consulted about what action can/should be taken. Missing Link will respect the person's dignity and their own choices should be paramount and their informed consent obtained prior to any action being taken **except** where they are unable to make an informed decision or they are at risk or where any other persons could be at risk. The person should be as fully involved as possible and any communication needs addressed in order to fully support this.

12.1 Where the service user's informed consent is not obtained or given, it may be necessary to act without this where it is in their best interests. The circumstances under which information will be shared without the agreement of the person are described in the Confidentiality Policy and Data Protection and Information Governance Policy. Where this is the case, the person concerned will be told what information is being shared, with whom and why, and will be kept informed of any action being taken and its outcome unless this puts them at greater risk.

12.2 Under no circumstances should any service user withholding her consent be pressed for further information or to change their position. In this instance, the responsibility for following up the matter rests with the relevant Local Authority/agency.

12.3 Where the abuse may be a criminal matter resulting in criminal proceedings, staff should be aware that evidence should not be tampered with before the incident is reported and the advice of the police is taken. This includes not asking leading questions.

12.4 All service users will be supported through the safeguarding process and encouraged to be as involved as possible throughout.

13.0 Follow Up

13.1 Details of the abuse should be put in writing (if appropriate) to the relevant Authority (see list at end of Policy) within 24 hours of reporting the abuse using secure email and the relevant referral form on the webpages of the Local Authority within which it is alleged the abuse has, or is, taking place.

13.2 Details of the abuse and action taken should be recorded accurately and kept on file.

13.3 Missing Link will fully co-operate with and support, where appropriate, any decisions made by Adult Social Care and the Safeguarding Lead(s) will nominate a named worker to co-ordinate our role in the enquiry and follow up. This would normally be a manager or senior staff member.

13.4 The nominated worker is responsible for updating the Missing Link case file with a written record of all discussions and actions taken (including names, dates, times) and of keeping up to date with any review of the protection plan where one exists and keeping the Safeguarding Lead(s) informed of progress in each and every instance.

13.5 The nominated worker will record the name and contact details of the service user, the name and contact details of the person giving the information, details of the disclosure/information, immediate and long-term actions and follow up.

13.6 Where safeguarding multi-agency meetings have been called, a designated member of staff must attend each one. Each service invited will submit a typed report using the appropriate format, detailing involvement with the service user. This report must be prepared by the designated staff member and authorised by the Safeguarding Lead(s). All professionals attending have a professional responsibility to contribute fully to the process, pass on relevant information and give their opinion appropriately throughout the meeting.

13.7 Each service Team Leader is responsible for keeping an accurate up to date electronic log of all Safeguarding concerns. They must provide the Safeguarding Lead(s) with a summary of all Safeguarding issues and concerns on a monthly basis using the designated report template.

13.8 Missing Link will also conduct its own review of any instances of abuse and the action taken. This is to consider whether any action could, or should, have been taken to avoid the circumstances under which the abuse arose. The organisation will also consider the effectiveness of its policies and procedures in ensuring that disincentives to report actual or suspected abuse were minimised and that the management of the abuse after it was identified was as effective as possible. See 'Policy on Managing Incidents'

13.9 All service users affected by any instances of abuse will be offered additional support and counselling. This could include considering a transfer to other accommodation if necessary.

14.0 Serious incidents

14.1 Serious incidents include:

- serious crime or violent attacks e.g. use of weapons i.e. guns, knives, explosive, physical or sexual assault, or abuse including physical injury, abuse or neglect; psychological abuse, sexual financial, material or discriminatory abuse;
- immediate risk to staff, service users and/or adults at risk;
- any other serious threat to staff, service users and/or adults at risk.

14.2 Where there is an immediate risk to staff and/or service users, Missing Link staff member will call 999 immediately and inform her Line Manager and the Safeguarding Lead(s).

14.3 Missing Link will make the relevant Local Authority or agency aware of any serious incidents that occur within 24 hours of Missing Link becoming aware of such incident.

15.0 Monitoring

15.1 All safeguarding concerns will be recorded fully, monitored and analysed for their learning implications on a quarterly basis by the Safeguarding Lead(s). The report will be discussed within the Senior Management Team. Where appropriate an action plan will be drawn up and implemented under the guidance of the Safeguarding Lead(s). Where changes to systems or procedures are necessitated, these will be disseminated across the organisation, including our volunteers, and training provided as appropriate.

16.0 Support to staff and volunteers

16.1 Staff will receive Safeguarding supervision/reflective practice. Safeguarding issues will be an agenda item on all staff supervision sessions.

16.2 As a result of Missing Link reporting the concerns to a relevant Local Authority, staff may find the person who disclosed the information is upset or angry.

16.3 Missing Link will support staff and if appropriate offer extra supervision and other support as necessary to ensure staff do not suffer as a result of reporting or exposing the abuse or neglect.

16.4 If Adult Social Care or the Police need further information or involvement from Missing Link, the staff member will need to decide with their Supervisor/Manager whether the individual staff member will talk with them or whether it would be more appropriate for the Supervisor/Manager to talk to them and how this will happen.

17.0 Information Sharing

17.1 Missing Link's Confidentiality Policy, Data Protection and Information Governance Policy and Safeguarding policies are explained in Missing Link's Service User handbooks which are given to each service user at the start of support.

17.2 Service users are given a copy of the Service User Guide to Safeguarding at the start of the service.

17.3 Confidentiality is crucial to all our relationships, **however the welfare of adults at risk is paramount.**

17.4 Before any information is shared with another, all professionals should ensure that the decision to share information with another agency is undertaken in accordance with Missing Link's Confidentiality Policy/Data Protection and Information Governance Policy and in line with the relevant Local Safeguarding Adults Board Information Sharing Protocol.

17.5 Whistleblowing

Staff who are concerned that a colleague may be perpetrating abuse should report the matter to the Safeguarding Lead(s) for investigation. If there is a concern that abuse is being allowed to continue without action being taken, staff should refer to the Organisation's Policy on Whistleblowing.

17.6 Data Protection & Freedom of Information

As an organisation, Missing Link is committed to freedom of information. Service users have a right to access their case files and any other personal information held about them by the organisation except for information that has been given in confidence by someone else. For further information see Missing Link's Freedom of Information Policy, Service User Charter and Data Protection Statement.

17.7 Storage of records

17.7.1 All confidential and non-confidential information is stored securely to prevent it being lost or damaged. In line with Missing Link's Data Protection and Information Governance Policy and Data Retention and Erasure Policy and Procedure, access to confidential information is strictly controlled.

17.7.2 Records of all Safeguarding concerns resulting in a referral to Adult Social Care are kept for 6 years after the last contact with the service user.

17.7.3 Personnel files and training records (including disciplinary records and record of DBS checks) are kept for 6 years after employment ceases. Records will be kept longer if:

- Safeguarding concerns have been raised during employment
- A criminal offence may possibly have been committed relating to a child

18.0 Staff and Volunteers

Recruitment checks

18.1 As a provider of support services to adults, children and young people, Missing Link has a particular responsibility to ensure that its recruitment and employment standards are rigorously applied.

18.2 Missing Link uses Age UK to make disclosure applications to the Disclosing and Barring Service (DBS).

We make every subject of a DBS Disclosure aware of the existence of the [DBS Code of Practice](#) and make a copy available on request.

18.3 All applicants for employment [paid or voluntary] with Missing Link are asked to declare any previous convictions on their application form.

18.4 All eligible employees, paid or voluntary are subject to an enhanced DBS check. These are completed every 3 years for all staff. In line with our current Recruitment Policy, two written references will be sought for new staff and volunteers and a medical reference may also be required. All staff will complete a probationary period.

18.5. All information resulting from a DBS checks will be dealt with in line with Missing Link's Recruitment Policy.

Training and induction

18.6 All Staff and Volunteers will receive copies of Missing Link's Safeguarding Policies as part of their induction pack. In addition they receive internal induction on Missing Link's Safeguarding Procedures from the Safeguarding Lead(s).

18.7 All staff/volunteers will receive suitable inter-agency Safeguarding Training (or equivalent) which will be updated as a minimum every 3 years for staff and every 2 years for the Safeguarding Lead(s). Recognised courses organised and run by Local Authority Safeguarding Boards only will be used, unless there are circumstances which mean these courses aren't available. (E.g during a pandemic) In this case any course identified needs to be recommended and quality assured by the LSAB.

18.8 Safeguarding will be a standard item on team meeting and individual supervision meeting agendas.

19.0 Complaints

19.1 Missing Link has a Complaints Procedure that service users can access if they feel that they have been treated unfairly.

19.2 Missing Link will treat seriously any complaints on any of the stated grounds made by employees, volunteers, Management Committee members, service users or other third parties and will take action where appropriate.

19.3 All complaints will be investigated in accordance with Missing Link's Complaints Procedure and the complainant will be informed of the outcome.

19.4 In the event of an investigation concerning a complaint against an employee, Missing Link's Grievance Policy and Procedures will be followed and any action necessary dealt with under Missing Link's Disciplinary Procedure.

19.5 Complaints will be monitored annually and any outcomes/action recorded.

20.0 Escalation

Concerns between agencies will be formally raised using Local Safeguarding Board escalation policies where they exist.

21.0 Useful Contacts

If a vulnerable adult is in immediate danger, dial 999 and ask for police assistance.

REPORTING A CONCERN

If you need to make a safeguarding referral, the numbers for each local area are:

Bristol

Care Direct

Telephone: **0117 922 2700**

8.30am to 5pm Monday to Friday (answerphone outside office hours)

Online: [Report suspected abuse](#)

Bristol Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO):
Tel: 0117 903 7795
Mob: 07795 091020

South Gloucestershire

Adult Care Customer Service Desk

Telephone: **01454 868007**

South Gloucestershire Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)

Tel: 01454 868924

BaNES

If you suspect an adult is being abused or neglected (this could be you or someone you know), call us on 0300 247 0201 and select option 3 (our phone lines are open Monday to Thursday, 8.30am to 5pm, and Fridays, 8.30am to 4.30pm)

Bath and North East Somerset Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO): Tel: 01225 396810

Email: LADO@bathnes.gcsx.gov.uk

North Somerset

Care Connect: **01275 888801** Monday to Friday 8am - 6pm

North Somerset Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO):

Tel: 01275 888808

Email: LADO@n-somerset.gcsx.gov.uk

OOH Duty Desk for Bristol, South Gloucestershire, BaNES and North Somerset
(for serious emergencies, such as requiring immediate place of safety):

Telephone: **01454 615165**

Somerset

Somerset County Council

Telephone: **0300 123 2224**

Email: adults@somerset.gov.uk

If you would like to speak to a social worker outside of office hours please phone Adults and Mental Health out of hours on 0300 123 23 27

Email: [Somerset LADO Reporting Form](#)

The Police

Telephone 101

In an emergency telephone 999

Textphone 18001 followed by 101

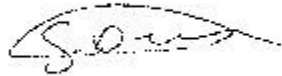
Textphone in an emergency 18000

22.0 Review

22.1 As part of our commitment to Safeguarding, Missing Link will review all Safeguarding Policies, Procedures and good practice on an annual basis or earlier if required in light of changes in legislation or local good practice and safeguarding guidance.

22.2 Relevant associated policies will be updated accordingly.

This policy has been endorsed by Sarah O'Leary (an appropriate senior member of staff) and has the full support of the management committee.
For more information, please contact: sarah.oleary@nextlinkhousing.co.uk



Signed:
Print: Sarah O'Leary
Position: CEO
Date: 26th February 2026

This policy should be read in conjunction with Missing Link's:

- Safeguarding Adults and Children Using the Service Policy
- Safeguarding Adults at Risk Policy Abuse Indicators – Appendix 1
- Safeguarding Adults at Risk Policy - Service Users Guide – Appendix 2
- Safeguarding Children and Young People's Policy
- Safeguarding Children and Young People – Service User Guide
- Mental Capacity Act and Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards Policy and Procedure
- Recruitment and Selection Procedure & Policy
- Staff Induction, Development and Training Policy
- Reference Policy
- Whistleblowing policy
- Confidentiality Policy and Guidance
- Service User Charter and Data Protection Statement
- Data Protection and Information Governance Policy
- Data Retention and Erasure Policy and Procedure
- Equalities Policy
- Anti Discriminatory Policy
- Anti Harassment Policy
- Reporting Racist Incidents Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Raising a Concern Policy.
- Code of Conduct
- Disciplinary Procedure
- Grievance Procedure
- Managing Incidents Policy
- Standard conditions of engagement for Contractors
- Approved Contractor Assessment
- Tenants Finances and Possessions
- Supervision Policy and Procedure
- Prevent Awareness