

<p style="text-align: center;">MISSING LINK, NEXT LINK and SAFE LINK SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE POLICY</p>

1.0 General

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

1.2 Missing Link believes that a child or young person should never experience abuse of any kind.

1.3 Missing Link considers it the duty of staff, Management Committee and volunteers to promote the welfare of all children and young people and to keep them safe.

1.4 Missing Link is committed to best practice approaches which are designed to protect children and young people from abuse.

1.5 Missing Link recognises that:

- The welfare of the child is paramount as enshrined in the Children Act 1989 and amended 2004.
- All children regardless of gender, age, disability (including physical, sensory, specific learning disabilities, mental health issues and long term medical conditions), race (including colour, nationality, and ethnic or national origins), religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, cultural background, HIV status have a right to equal protection from all types of harm and abuse.
- Some children are additionally vulnerable because of the impact of experiences, their level of dependency, communication needs or other issues.
- Working in partnership with children, young people, their parents, carers and other agencies is essential in promoting young people's welfare and we have a responsibility under the guidance in 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' HM Government 2018.

1.6 Missing Link seeks to keep children and young people safe by:

- Valuing them, listening to and respecting them
- Adopting child protection practices through procedures and a code of conduct for staff and volunteers

- Developing and implementing an effective e-safety policy and related procedures, including working with children in our Safe Houses to ensure location services etc. are deactivated.
- 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 child protection and good practice with children, parents, staff and volunteers
- Sharing concerns with agencies who need to know, such as Safeguarding Children's Partnerships, and involving parents and children appropriately

1.7 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 Legal Framework and Guidance

2.1 This policy has been drawn up on the basis of law and guidance that seeks to protect children and young people, namely:

- Children Act 1989/ Children Act 2004 and as amended by the Children and Social Work Act 2017
- Children and Families Act 2014
- Equality Act 2010
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 1991 (UNCRC).
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Homelessness Act 2002
- Data Protection Act 2018
- General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)
- Sexual Offences Act 2003
- Protection of Freedoms Act 2012
- Freedom of Information Act 2000
- Care Act 2014 (as amended 2016)
- Safeguarding and Vulnerable Groups Act 2006

- Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003
- Mental Health Act 1983 and 2007
- Health and Safety at Work Act 2014
- Serious Crime Act 2015
- Working Together to Safeguard Children: A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children 2018
- KBSP, SG Children's Partnership and North Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership Multi-Agency Guidance and Local Procedures

2.2 Missing Link aims to cooperate with our Safeguarding Partners to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people and ensure the effectiveness of safeguarding procedures.

2.3 This policy is in line with the South West of England Child Protection Procedures and local Safeguarding Partners guidance available at: South West Child Protection Procedures <https://swcpp.trixonline.co.uk/>

[Bristol Safeguarding Children, South Gloucestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership Procedures](#)

PROCEDURES

3.0 Management Responsibility

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

3.2 **Ana Romero, Dawn Harding, Debbie Naylor, Helen Whittle and Alexa Murray** are the organisational designated **Operational Safeguarding Leads** with responsibility for safeguarding and child protection within the services. All staff are informed of this at induction. One of these members of staff should be contacted immediately if there is a concern or referral for a child at risk. Tel: head office on **0117 9250680 or contact directly**

Ana Romero – 07407895695 Ana.Romero@nextlinkhousing.co.uk

Dawn Harding – 07793874978 Dawn.Harding@nextlinkhousing.co.uk

Debbie Naylor –07435808617 Debbie.Naylor@nextlinkhousing.co.uk

Helen whittle – 07793837757 Helen.Whittle@safelinksupport.co.uk

Alexa Murray - 07557390521 Alexa.Murray@nextlinkhousing.co.uk

3.3 Operational Safeguarding Lead (Lead Practitioner)

The Safeguarding Lead will have responsibility for:

- Managing allegations of abuse against people who work with children in line with Appendix 5 of Working Together to Safeguard Children
- Informing the appropriate Local Authority Designated Officer of any concerns or allegations
- Reviewing any protection plans and ensuring written records are kept,

- accurate and up to date
- Authorising reports to be submitted to appropriate case conferences
- Monitoring and reporting all safeguarding issues on a quarterly basis to the senior management team
- Ensuring 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.

3.4 Sian Scholes, Charlotte Adlem and Joanna McCarthy are the organisational designated **Strategic Safeguarding Leads** 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.

Sian.Scholes@nextlinkhousing.co.uk

Charlotte.Adlem@missinglinkhousing.co.uk

Joanna.McCarthy@safelinksupport.co.uk

3.5 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.

3.6 All staff

All employees 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.

4.0 Definitions

4.1 Child, children and young people

As defined in the Children Acts 1989 and 2004, child means a person who has not reached their 18th birthday. This includes young people aged 16 and 17 who are living independently; their status and entitlement to services and protection under the Children Act 1989 is not altered by the fact that they are living independently.

4.2 Child Protection

Process of protecting individual children identified as either suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm as a result of abuse or neglect.

4.3 Children in need

Children who are defined as being “in need” under s.17 Children Act 1989, are those whose vulnerability is such that they are unlikely to reach or maintain a satisfactory level of health or development, or their health or development will be

significantly impaired, without the provision of services (s.17 (10) Children Act 1989), plus those who are disabled. Local authorities have a duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in need.

4.4 The concept of significant harm

The Children Act 1989 introduced the concept of significant harm as the threshold that justifies compulsory intervention in family life in the best interests of children and young people. It gives local authorities a duty to make enquiries to decide whether they should take action to safeguard or promote the welfare of a child who is suffering, or likely to suffer significant harm.

This was amended by the Adoption & Children Act 2002 to include, “for example, impairment suffered from seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another”. Furthermore the Domestic Abuse Act of 2021 strengthens this in relation to seeing, hearing and/or living in a domestic abuse environment.

5.0 Nature of abuse

5.1 The Children’s Act recognises four categories of abuse:

- Physical Abuse
- Sexual Abuse
- Emotional Abuse
- Neglect

For further advice and information on the Signs and Symptoms of abuse go to: [NSPCC Preventing Abuse](#)

5.1.1 Physical Abuse

Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child.

5.1.2 Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

5.1.3 Neglect

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child’s basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child’s health or development.

Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to:

- provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment);
- protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger;
- ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care givers); or
- ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.

It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

5.1.4 Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development.

-Emotional abuse may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond the child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyberbullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

5.2 Additional definitions of recognised abuse

5.2.1 Domestic Abuse

Experiencing Domestic Abuse as a child is child abuse. Children are recognised as victims of domestic abuse under the DA ACT 2021. Living in a home where domestic abuse happens can have a serious impact on a child or young person's physical safety, mental and physical wellbeing, as well as their behaviour. Domestic abuse can continue after the adults' relationship has come to an end, and post-separation abuse and coercive controlling behaviours can continue to remain a factor in the child's life. The impact can last into adulthood.

5.2.2 Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

FGM is a collective term for all procedures which include the partial or total mutilation of the external female genital organs for cultural or other non-medical reasons. It is known that children are subject to this procedure both in the UK and overseas. FGM is not an acceptable practice and is a form of child abuse under UK law. It is an offence to:

- perform FGM (including taking a child abroad for FGM)
- help a girl perform FGM on herself in or outside the UK
- help anyone perform FGM in the UK
- help anyone perform FGM outside the UK on a UK national or resident
- fail to protect a girl for whom you are responsible from FGM

Anyone who performs FGM can face up to 14 years in prison. Anyone found guilty of failing to protect a girl from FGM can face up to seven years in prison.

5.2.3 Forced Marriage

Forced marriage is a form of child/domestic abuse and violence against children/women. A forced marriage is a marriage in which one or both Intended spouses do not consent (or are unable to consent due to age or mental capacity) to the marriage and duress is involved. Duress can include physical, psychological, financial, sexual and emotional pressure.

5.2.4 Honour-based violence

The terms “honour crime” or “honour-based violence” or “izzat” embrace a variety of crimes of violence including assault, imprisonment and murder, where the person is being punished by their family or their community.

They are being punished for actually, or allegedly, undermining what the family or community believes to be the correct code of behaviour. In transgressing this ‘correct code’ of behaviour, the person shows that they have not been properly controlled to conform by their family and this is to the “shame” or “dishonour” of the family.

5.2.5 Hate crime

Hate incidents and hate crime are acts of violence or hostility directed at people because of who they are or who someone thinks they are. Something is a hate incident if the victim or anyone else thinks it was motivated by hostility or prejudice based on one of the following things:

- disability
- race
- religion
- transgender identity
- sexual orientation.
- The police can also chose to record other types of identity/characteristics if they think this was targeted, for example age and sex. A Bill regarding making misogyny a hate crime is currently being considered by government.

Hate incidents can take many forms including:

- verbal abuse like name-calling and offensive jokes
- harassment
- bullying or intimidation by children, adults, neighbours or strangers
- physical attacks such as hitting, punching, pushing, spitting
- threats of violence

- hoax calls, abusive phone or text messages, hate mail
- online abuse for example on Facebook or Twitter
- displaying or circulating discriminatory literature or posters
- harm or damage to things such as your home, pet, vehicle
- graffiti
- arson
- throwing rubbish into a garden
- malicious complaints for example over parking, smells or noise.

Hate crimes include:

- assaults
- criminal damage
- harassment
- murder
- sexual assault
- theft
- fraud
- burglary
- hate mail (Malicious Communications Act 1988)
- causing harassment, alarm or distress (Public Order Act 1988).

5.2.6 Grooming

Grooming is when someone builds an emotional connection with a child to gain their trust for the purposes of [sexual abuse](#), [sexual exploitation](#) [trafficking](#). Children and young people can be groomed online or face-to-face, by a stranger or by someone they know - for example a family member, friend or professional. Groomers may be male or female. They could be any age. Many children and young people do not understand that they have been groomed or that what has happened is abuse.

5.2.7 Sexual Exploitation

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) is a type of [sexual abuse](#). Children in exploitative situations and relationships receive something such as gifts, money or affection as a result of performing sexual activities or others performing sexual activities on them.

Sexual exploitation can also happen to [young people in gangs](#).

5.2.8 Trafficking

Child trafficking is child abuse. Children are recruited, moved or transported and then exploited, forced to work, undertake criminal activity and/or sold. They are often subject to multiple forms of exploitation.

Children are trafficked for:

- [child sexual exploitation](#)
- benefit fraud
- forced marriage

- domestic servitude such as cleaning, childcare, cooking
- forced labour in factories or agriculture
- criminal activity such as pickpocketing, begging, transporting drugs, working on cannabis farms, selling pirated DVDs, bag theft.

Many children are trafficked into the UK from abroad, but children can also be trafficked from one part of the UK to another.

5.2.9 Radicalisation

Radicalisation can be really difficult to spot. Signs that may indicate a child is being radicalised include:

- isolating themselves from family and friends
- talking as if from a scripted speech
- unwillingness or inability to discuss their views
- a sudden disrespectful attitude towards others
- increased levels of anger
- increased secretiveness, especially around internet use

Children who are at risk of radicalisation may have low self-esteem, or be victims of bullying or discrimination. Extremists might target them and tell them they can be part of something special, later brainwashing them into cutting themselves off from their friends and family.

See Missing Link's Prevent Awareness Policy for further details.

5.2.10 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.

County lines is the police term for urban gangs supplying drugs to suburban areas and market and coastal towns using dedicated mobile phone lines or "deal lines". It involves child criminal exploitation (CCE) as gangs use children and vulnerable people to move drugs and money. Gangs establish a base in the market location, typically by taking over the homes of local vulnerable adults by force or coercion in a practice referred to as 'cuckooing'.

County lines is a major, cross-cutting issue involving drugs, violence, gangs, safeguarding, criminal and sexual exploitation, modern slavery, and missing persons; and the response to tackle it involves the police, the National Crime Agency, a wide range of Government departments, local government agencies and VCS (voluntary and community sector) organisations. County lines activity and the associated violence, drug dealing and exploitation has a devastating impact on young people, vulnerable adults and local communities.

Like other forms of abuse and exploitation, county lines exploitation:

- can affect any child or young person (male or female) under the age of 18 years;
- can affect any vulnerable adult over the age of 18 years;
- can still be exploitation even if the activity appears consensual;
- can involve force and/or enticement-based methods of compliance and is often accompanied by violence or threats of violence;

- can be perpetrated by individuals or groups, males or females, and young people or adults; and
- is typified by some form of power imbalance in favour of those perpetrating the exploitation.

Whilst age may be the most obvious, this power imbalance can also be due to a range of other factors including gender, cognitive ability, physical strength, status, and access to economic or other resources. One of the key factors found in most cases of county lines exploitation is the presence of some form of exchange (e.g. carrying drugs in return for something). Where it is the victim who is offered, promised or given something they need or want, the exchange can include both tangible (such as money, drugs or clothes) and intangible rewards (such as status, protection or perceived friendship or affection). It is important to remember the unequal power dynamic within which this exchange occurs and to remember that the receipt of something by a young person or vulnerable adult does not make them any less of a victim. It is also important to note that the prevention of something negative can also fulfil the requirement for exchange, for example a young person who engages in county lines activity to stop someone carrying out a threat to harm his/her family.

For further information please refer [Home Office guidance on the Criminal exploitation of children and vulnerable adults](#)

5.3 Staff and volunteers are not responsible for diagnosing abuse although they have a responsibility to be aware and alert to signs that all is not well with a child or young person. Not all concerns about children or young people however, relate to abuse, there may well be other explanations. It is therefore important to keep an open mind and consider what is known about the child and their circumstances. The reporting procedure for abuse or suspected abuse is detailed in section 9 below.

5.4 Staff should have an awareness of the additional vulnerabilities for children and young people who are:

- At risk of gang involvement
- Frequently missing/absent from home
- Misusing drugs or alcohol themselves
- At risk of modern slavery, trafficking, exploitation
- At risk of radicalisation
- Other groups identified as vulnerable – privately fostered children, young carers, young people in secure youth establishments, those living in families where there are emerging parental mental health issues or drug and alcohol issues or homelessness or parents/carers are in prison.
- The right to special protection for child refugees.

6.0 Historical Abuse

There may be occasions when an adult will disclose abuse which occurred in the past during their childhood. This information needs to be treated in exactly the same way as a disclosure or suspicion of current child abuse. The reason for this is the abuser may still represent a risk to children now. The reporting procedure for abuse or suspected abuse is detailed in section 9 below.

7.0 Ways that abuse might be brought to Missing Link's attention

- Direct disclosure from a child about themselves
- Direct disclosure from a child about another child
- Information from a child that is worrying
- Concern from a member of staff about a child's appearance or behaviour or about the behaviour of a parent/carer towards a child
- Direct disclosure by a parent/carer about abuse suffered by a child in the past or is currently suffering
- Disclosure of Domestic Abuse
- Information from a parent that is worrying
- Information from a third party which is worrying
- DASH Risk Assessment carried out on entry to service
- Regular Support Plans

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

8.1 Staff, volunteers or Management Committee members may be subject to allegations of abusing children. Allegations of abuse may be reported by children, service users or colleagues.

8.2 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 children in any setting and may be suspended from duty in line with Missing Link's Disciplinary Procedure. This is a precautionary and neutral act and protects both the accuser and the accused and support will be offered during this time.

8.3 The Safeguarding Lead(s) will inform the appropriate Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO). Missing Link will ensure that Children and Young People Services are given all assistance in pursuing any investigation, and the disciplinary procedure may be implemented.

8.4 For more information staff are referred to the <https://swcpp.trixonline.co.uk/>

9.0 Procedure for reporting abuse or suspected abuse

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

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

9.2 Inform whoever has disclosed the information that it cannot be guaranteed to be kept confidential and may have to be passed on to the appropriate agencies. Staff must never guarantee absolute confidentiality, as Safeguarding will always take precedence over any other issues. Staff should advise that they will offer support as appropriate.

9.3 Discuss the disclosure immediately with your Line Manager and/or Safeguarding Lead(s). The responsibility for deciding whether it is a Safeguarding issue, and whether the appropriate Local Authority/Agency needs to be informed lies with the Safeguarding Lead(s). In her absence any Senior Manager can make this decision.

9.4 If the disclosure concerns an allegation of abuse by a member of staff, this information must be reported immediately to the Safeguarding Lead(s) and in her absence a Senior Manager only.

9.5 If appropriate, explain to the service user what you have to do and whom you have to tell unless it would put them or others at greater risk. Ensure that the 'discloser' is kept informed about what will happen next, so they can be reassured about what to expect.

9.6 If the 'discloser' is also the abuser, it must be determined whether or not it is safe to inform them of Missing Link's decision to report the abuse. This reasoning must be recorded and included within the reporting to the relevant Local Authority/Agency.

9.7 If a disclosure is to be made you will need to decide if it is to be made by you or your Supervisor/Manager who will then pass the information on to the relevant Children's Social Care Safeguarding team within each Local Authority using their referral system.

9.8 Record the details of the disclosure and subsequent discussions accurately, immediately after the event, on the case file and the appropriate Safeguarding Log.

9.9 Where this is required by the relevant local Authority, details of the abuse must be followed up in writing using the relevant pro forma within 24 hours of the initial report.

9.10 The worker/Manager who makes the referral is responsible for obtaining the outcome of the referral and recording this on the case file and Safeguarding Log.

10.0 Serious incidents

10.1 Serious incidents include:

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

10.2 Where there is an immediate risk to staff and/or service users/a child, Missing Link staff member will call 999 immediately and inform your Line Manager and the Safeguarding Leads(s).

10.3 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.

11.0 Publicity

11.1 Press statements/interviews with the media will only be given with authorisation from the Chief Executive and in consultation with the relevant Local Authority.

12.0. Follow up and recording of information

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

12.2 The nominated worker is responsible for updating the Missing Link case file with a written record of all discussions and actions taken, 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.

12.3 The nominated worker will record the name and contact details of the child and parent, the name and contact details of the persons giving the information, details of the disclosure/information, immediate and long term actions and follow up.

12.4 Where case conferences have been called, a designated member, of staff must attend each one. Each agency invited to the case conference will submit a typed report using the appropriate format, detailing involvement with the child and significant adults in the child's life. This report must be prepared by the designated staff member and authorised by the Safeguarding Lead(s). All professionals attending a child protection conference have a professional responsibility to contribute fully to the process, pass on relevant information and give their opinion appropriately throughout the meeting.

12.5 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.

13.0 Monitoring

13.1 All safeguarding concerns will be recorded fully, monitored and analysed for their learning implications on a quarterly basis by the Safeguarding Lead(s).

The findings will be reported to the Team Leaders quarterly business meeting.

Any trends will be discussed within the Senior Management Team and 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.

14.0 Support to staff and volunteers

14.1 Staff employed as Children's/Family Workers and those working directly with Children and Young People will receive Safeguarding supervision/reflective practice. Safeguarding issues will be an agenda item on all staff supervision sessions and staff will be supported to have a [Think Family Approach](#) in their work.

14.2 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, frightened or angry. Missing Link will support staff and if appropriate offer extra supervision. If children's social care or the Police need further information or involvement from you, you will need to decide with your Supervisor/Manager whether you will talk with them or whether you would prefer your Supervisor/Manager to talk to them and how this will happen.

15.0 Information Sharing

15.1 Missing Link's Confidentiality 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.

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

15.3 Confidentiality is crucial to all our relationships, **but the welfare of the child is paramount**. The law does not allow anyone to keep concerns relating to child abuse to themselves and this is reflected in Missing Link's Confidentiality Policy.

15.4 In Bristol, before any information is shared with another agency and in particular, a request for help to 'First Response' for Families in Focus (early help) or Children's Social Care, all professionals should ensure that the decision to share information with another agency is undertaken in accordance with the Information Sharing Protocol (2014)

15.5 Whistleblowing

Staff who are concerned that the organisation is not responding to allegations of abuse appropriately should report the matter under the organisation's Policy on Whistleblowing. The interests of the child should remain paramount.

15.6 Data Protection

As an organisation, Missing Link is committed to Data Protection. 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

Confidentiality Policy, Data Protection and Information Governance Policy, Service User Charter and Data Protection Statement and our Privacy Notices.

15.7 Storage of records

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

15.7.2 Records of all Safeguarding concerns resulting in a referral to children's social care are kept for 6 years after the last contact with the service user.

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

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

16.0 Staff and volunteers

Recruitment checks

16.1 Missing Link uses a 3rd party 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.

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

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

16.4 As a provider of services to vulnerable people, Missing Link has a particular responsibility to ensure that its recruitment and employment standards are rigorously applied.

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

Training and induction

16.6 All Staff and Volunteers 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).

16.6 All staff/volunteers will receive suitable inter-agency Safeguarding training 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

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Authority Safeguarding Partnerships 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 Local Authority Safeguarding Partnership.

17.0 Complaints

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

17.2 Missing Link has a Code of Conduct for Staff and breach of this may result in disciplinary action being taken.

17.3 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.

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

17.5 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.

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

18.0 Escalation

Local Safeguarding Partners escalation policies will be used to formally raise concerns between agencies regarding work relating to children.

19.0 To report a concern

- Police Urgent 999
- Police Non-Urgent 101
- Emergency Duty Team 01454 615 165 (for all reports outside office hours)

Bristol

First Response Bristol: 0117 903 6444

Bristol Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)

Tel: 0117 903 7795

Mob: 07795 091020

Email: childprotection@bristol.gov.uk

Online: <https://bristolsafeguarding.org/children/support-for-families>

BaNES

Children and Families Assessment and Intervention Team: 01225 396312

Bath and North East Somerset Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)

Tel: 01225 396810

Email: LADO@bathnes.gcsx.gov.uk

Online: <https://beta.bathnes.gov.uk/report-concern-about-child>

South Gloucestershire

01454 866000 Monday to Friday

01454 615165 Out of hours/Weekends

South Gloucestershire Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)

Tel: 01454 868508

Email: lado@southglos.gov.uk

Online: <https://sites.southglos.gov.uk/safeguarding/children/i-am-a-professional/concerned-about-a-child-2/>

North Somerset

Single Point of Access (SPA) Team: 01275 888808

Professional consultation phone line – 01275 888690

Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm ask to speak to the duty social worker

North Somerset Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)

Tel: 01275 888808

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

Online: <https://nsscp.co.uk/professionals-practitioners/essential-contact-details-referrals-concerns-support>

Somerset

Early Help Advice Hub on 01823 355803

Children's Social Care on 0300 123 2224

Consultation line for DSLs and GPs on 0300 123 3078

Email: childrens@somerset.gov.uk

20.0 Other useful contacts

Childline

Provides a free telephone counselling service for young people in trouble or danger: [Childline](#)

Phone: 0800 1111

Become

In care or a care leaver? Looking for help and advice? Talk to us in confidence – online or over the phone.

You can call us on 0800 023 2033 between 10:30am and 3pm, Monday to Friday, or email us at advice@becomecharity.org.uk

<https://becomecharity.org.uk/>

Children's Legal Centre

[Coram Children's Legal Centre](#) is an independent national organisation concerned with law and policy affecting children and young people. Free advice and information service.

Phone: 08088 020 008

NSPCC (National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children)

[NSPCC](#) Child protection helpline. Advice, information and referrals. 24 hour service

Phone: 0808 800 5000

Young Minds

[Young Minds](#) provides information for children, young people and their parents about mental health and well-being.

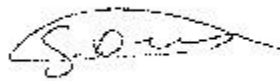
21.0 Review

21.1 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.

21.2 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
Position CEO
Date 1st May 2025

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

- Safeguarding Children and Young People – Service User Guide
- Safeguarding Adults and Children Using the Service Policy
- Safeguarding of Adults at Risk of Abuse Policy
- Safeguarding Adults at Risk Policy Abuse Indicators
- Safeguarding Adults at Risk Policy - Service Users Guide
- Equalities Policy
- Anti Discriminatory Policy
- Anti Harassment Policy
- Reporting Racist Incidents Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Code of Conduct for Staff Recruitment and Selection Procedure policy
- Staff Induction, Development and Training Policy
- Reference Policy
- Whistleblowing policy
- Confidentiality Policy and Guidance
- Disciplinary Procedure
- Grievance Procedure
- Service User Charter and Data Protection Statement
- Supervision Policy and Procedure
- Prevent Awareness Policy and Procedure
- Data Protection and Information Governance Policy

