Flourishing Learning Network - Safeguarding Policy

Approved by trustees	**23 October 2026**
Review due	Annually, and sooner after a serious incident or significant service change
Safeguarding Lead	Jane Robinson
Deputy Safeguarding Lead	Max Jervis Read
Trustee contact for concerns about the Safeguarding Lead	Lex Thurman

1. Our commitment and scope

Flourishing Learning Network provides low-pressure, relationship-based community activities for children and young people who may be experiencing barriers to education or community participation, including SEND, emotionally based school avoidance (EBSA), anxiety and social isolation. Parents and carers are present at family events, and future services may include small-group or one-to-one support.

Children's welfare comes first. Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and we maintain an attitude that harm can happen in any setting. Every child has an equal right to protection. We recognise that disability, communication differences, anxiety, trauma and previous experiences may make it harder to express concerns or seek help. We adapt how we listen and communicate and do not dismiss a concern because of a diagnosis, communication style or behaviour.

This policy applies to trustees, staff, volunteers, session leaders, contractors and anyone acting on Flourishing's behalf. A child is anyone under 18. We also respond appropriately to concerns about adults who may be at risk.

2. Legislation and guidance

Flourishing is a charity rather than a school or alternative provision. Our safeguarding arrangements are therefore designed for our own activities and risks, while drawing on relevant national and local safeguarding guidance. We will keep this section under review as guidance changes.

- Children Act 1989 and Children Act 2004.
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026.
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026, where relevant as a good-practice reference for work with education settings and people working with children.
- Information sharing to safeguard children and young people: statutory guidance (2026).
- Equality Act 2010.
- Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR.
- Care Act 2014 in relation to adults at risk.
- Charity Commission safeguarding guidance for charities and trustees.
- Local safeguarding partnership and Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) procedures in the area where an activity takes place.

3. Recognising abuse, neglect and other safeguarding concerns

Everyone working with Flourishing must be alert to signs that a child may need help or protection. The four broad categories of abuse are physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse and neglect.

Safeguarding concerns can also arise through harm between children or through wider contextual and online risks.

- Child-on-child abuse, bullying, sexual violence or sexual harassment.
- Online abuse, grooming and exploitation.
- Child sexual exploitation and child criminal exploitation, including county lines.
- Domestic abuse and coercive or controlling behaviour affecting a child.
- Radicalisation and extremism.
- Fabricated or induced illness.
- Discriminatory abuse, including abuse linked to disability, race, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, religion or belief.
- Any behaviour, change in presentation or disclosure that causes concern about a child's safety or welfare.

Children with SEND or communication differences may be more vulnerable to abuse, may have additional barriers to telling someone, and may show distress through behaviour. We therefore take changes in behaviour, withdrawal, distress, increased anxiety or changes in engagement seriously and consider what they may be communicating.

4. Roles, induction and training

The Safeguarding Lead coordinates safeguarding practice, referrals, records and follow-up. The Deputy acts when the Lead is unavailable. Trustees retain collective responsibility for safeguarding even where day-to-day responsibilities are delegated.

- Everyone will receive safeguarding induction before beginning a role, including how to recognise and report a concern, professional boundaries, confidentiality and the Code of Conduct.
- Trustees, staff and regular volunteers will complete safeguarding training appropriate to their role and receive updates when guidance or local risks change.
- The Safeguarding Lead and Deputy will complete enhanced safeguarding training appropriate to the role and refresh it at least every two years, with updates in between.
- At least one person involved in recruitment for regular roles will have appropriate safer-recruitment knowledge or training.
- The Safeguarding Lead will keep aware of relevant local safeguarding issues and changes to national guidance.

5. Safer recruitment and professional boundaries

Recruitment and selection will be proportionate to the role and level of contact with children. Flourishing will not rely on a DBS check alone to establish suitability.

- Use clear role descriptions and safeguarding expectations.
- Check identity, relevant qualifications where required, and eligibility to work where applicable.
- Take appropriate references and explore any concerns or unexplained gaps where relevant to the role.
- Carry out DBS checks at the level the role is legally eligible for and any other required pre-appointment checks.
- Include safeguarding and suitability questions when recruiting people who will work directly with children.

- Provide induction, supervision and a clear Code of Conduct.

A central record will be maintained of the safeguarding and suitability checks completed for trustees, staff and volunteers. This is a proportionate charity record and is not intended to replicate a school Single Central Record unless Flourishing later becomes subject to such requirements.

Everyone must maintain appropriate boundaries. Private messaging, unsupervised meetings, lifts or transport, personal social-media contact and private arrangements with children are not permitted unless specifically authorised within an approved service model, risk assessed and covered by clear procedures.

6. Keeping people safe during Flourishing activities

- Each activity and venue will be risk assessed, including supervision, site boundaries, missing children, toilets, access needs, animals, tools, fire, first aid and any off-site activity.
- The Safeguarding Lead or Deputy will be identified for each event and families will know how to contact them.
- Children's choices, personal space and communication will be respected. Participation is voluntary and humiliation, coercion, discriminatory behaviour and inappropriate contact are unacceptable.
- Photographs or recordings will only be taken and used with appropriate permission, with a clear way to opt out and with the child's wishes respected.
- At family events, parents/carers remain present and responsible for their child's day-to-day supervision and personal care. This does not remove Flourishing's safeguarding responsibility.
- Visitors, contractors or helpers who have not completed the checks required for unsupervised work will not be left alone with children.

Physical contact and intervention

Flourishing does not use restraint as a routine behaviour-management strategy. Appropriate, proportionate physical contact may sometimes be needed to comfort, reassure or support a child, taking account of the child's wishes, communication and any known plan. If immediate action is necessary to prevent a child or another person from coming to serious harm, the least restrictive reasonable action should be used. Any significant physical intervention or boundary concern must be recorded and reviewed with the Safeguarding Lead and parent/carer, and referred externally where required.

One-to-one and Sidekick support

Before Sidekick or any other one-to-one support begins, trustees will approve a specific framework covering safer recruitment, DBS eligibility, training, matching, parental consent, supervision, communication, transport, lone working, record keeping, escalation and ending arrangements. One-to-one support will not begin simply on the basis of this general policy.

7. Responding to a concern or disclosure

Everyone must act on concerns about abuse, neglect, exploitation, unsafe behaviour, a breach of professional boundaries or harm between children. Do not wait for proof.

1. Protect: if someone is in immediate danger, call 999 and take reasonable steps to keep them safe.
2. Listen: stay calm, take the person seriously and reassure them that telling someone was the right thing to do. Use open prompts only. Do not investigate, ask leading questions or promise secrecy. Explain that information may need to be shared to keep people safe.

3. Record: as soon as possible, record the date, time, place, observations, the person's own words and any action taken. Separate facts from opinions.
4. Report: tell the Safeguarding Lead immediately, or the Deputy if the Lead is unavailable. Urgent action must never be delayed while waiting for an internal response.

The Safeguarding Lead will decide the next safeguarding action, seek advice where needed, make or support referrals to children's social care, adult social care, the police or other agencies, record the reasons for decisions and ensure follow-up. The child's wishes and feelings should be heard and taken into account, while recognising that consent must not become a barrier to necessary safeguarding action or information sharing.

Escalation and follow-up

A referral is not the end of Flourishing's responsibility. Where a response or agreed action is not received within the expected timeframe, the Safeguarding Lead will follow up. If concerns remain or the child's situation is not improving, Flourishing will use the relevant local escalation process. Anyone may contact statutory services directly if the Safeguarding Lead is unavailable, implicated or has not acted adequately.

8. Concerns about someone working or volunteering with us

Any concern about the conduct or suitability of a trustee, staff member, volunteer, session leader or contractor must be reported, including behaviour outside Flourishing that may affect their suitability to work with children.

Where a concern may meet the harm or suitability threshold, Flourishing will contact the relevant LADO promptly, follow their advice and avoid conducting an internal investigation before statutory advice is obtained. Required referrals to the Disclosure and Barring Service, Charity Commission, police or other regulator will be made where applicable.

Low-level concerns

Concerns that do not appear to meet the LADO threshold must still be shared. This includes behaviour that is inconsistent with our Code of Conduct, causes unease, represents poor professional boundaries or could indicate an emerging pattern. Low-level concerns will be recorded, reviewed by the Safeguarding Lead and considered for patterns or wider learning.

If the concern is about the Safeguarding Lead

Contact the named trustee directly. If that trustee is involved, contact another uninvolved trustee or the relevant statutory service. No one should be expected to report a concern only to a person who may be implicated.

Whistleblowing

Anyone working or volunteering with Flourishing may raise concerns about unsafe practice or failures in our safeguarding arrangements without fear of disadvantage for raising a genuine concern. Concerns should normally be raised with the Safeguarding Lead or a trustee; if the response is inadequate or those people are implicated, the concern may be raised directly with the relevant local authority safeguarding service, police, Charity Commission or another appropriate body.

9. Recording, confidentiality and information sharing

Safeguarding records will be stored securely with access limited to those who need the information for safeguarding purposes and kept separately from general event records. Records will include the original concern, discussions, decisions, reasons, referrals, actions, follow-up and outcomes. The person

receiving a concern should submit their record to the Safeguarding Lead on the same day wherever practicable.

Information will be shared on a need-to-know basis and in accordance with safeguarding and data-protection law. Children and families will normally be told what happens next unless doing so could increase risk or compromise an investigation. A lack of consent will not prevent sharing where information must be shared to protect a child or another person.

Where Flourishing works with schools, social care, health or other agencies, we will cooperate with appropriate multi-agency safeguarding arrangements. If responsibility for ongoing safeguarding information needs to pass to another organisation, the Safeguarding Lead will arrange secure transfer and keep an appropriate record of what was shared and with whom.

10. Governance, quality assurance and review

Trustees are collectively responsible for safeguarding and will ensure that safeguarding risks are identified and managed. Safeguarding will be a standing item at trustee meetings while the charity is delivering activities with children and young people.

- The Safeguarding Lead will provide proportionate updates to trustees on themes, actions, training and risks without unnecessarily disclosing confidential personal information.
- Safeguarding concerns, near misses and feedback will be reviewed at least quarterly, and sooner where a concern indicates a need for immediate learning or action.
- The safeguarding risk register and relevant event risk assessments will be reviewed alongside safeguarding learning.
- This policy will be reviewed at least annually, after a serious incident, after significant changes to guidance, and before introducing materially different services such as regular one-to-one support.
- Families, children and volunteers will receive accessible information about how to raise concerns, including concerns about Flourishing itself.

11. Local reporting routes

Use the safeguarding route for the local authority in which the child lives or the concern arises. If a child already has an allocated social worker, contact that worker/team as well as taking any urgent action required. In an emergency call 999.

Concern / area	Route
West Sussex - urgent child concern / advice	Integrated Front Door (IFD): 01403 229900, Mon-Fri 9am-5pm. Out of hours Emergency Duty Team: 0330 222 6664.
West Sussex - concern about person working/volunteering with children	Use the West Sussex LADO referral route.
East Sussex - urgent child concern / advice	Single Point of Access (SPoA): 01323 464222. Mon-Thu 8:30am-5pm; Fri 8:30am-4:30pm. Out of hours Emergency Duty Service: 01273 335905.
East Sussex - concern about person working/volunteering with children	Use the East Sussex LADO referral form / professional referral route.
Kent - child safeguarding concern	Kent Integrated Children's Services: 03000 41 11 11. Out of hours: 03000 41 91 91. Professionals can also use the Kent Integrated Children's Services Portal.
Kent - concern about person working/volunteering with children	Use the Kent LADO professionals referral route through the Kent Children's Portal.
Adult safeguarding	Use the adult safeguarding referral route for the relevant local authority. If there is immediate danger, call 999.

12. Related Flourishing documents and procedures

- Code of Conduct / professional boundaries guidance.
- Event and activity risk assessments.
- Safeguarding concern recording form and secure safeguarding log.
- Volunteer / staff recruitment and induction records.
- Whistleblowing arrangements.
- Photography, communications and data-protection arrangements.
- Sidekick safeguarding and supervision framework before one-to-one support begins.

References and review notes

This policy should be read alongside current national and local safeguarding guidance. Key current references at the time of revision include Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026, Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 (where relevant), the 2026 statutory information-sharing guidance, and Charity Commission safeguarding guidance for charities and trustees. Local authority contact details should be checked at each annual review because routes and telephone numbers can change.