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| 1 | Purpose |  |

We aim to safeguard the welfare of children and vulnerable adults participating in Parents Opening Doors hereafter known as PODS, activities. In order to give children protection from potential and actual abuse it is important that all concerned have a basic understanding of the issues involved and that procedures are in place that are understandable and easy to implement by anyone providing a service to children at PODS.

PODS is committed to creating an environment that enables children to learn, develop and express themselves in a safe, understanding and encouraging environment. Although we do not take sole responsibility for children and vulnerable adults by virtue of not being care practitioners we do endeavour to provide events, trips and activities that are child led and friendly. Parents trust us to provide an environment in which they can come together with their children to care for them, to give them encouragement and keep them safe.

PODSsafeguarding children and vulnerable adult’s policy arises from the following principles:

* The child’s/ vulnerable adult’s welfare is first consideration.
* The children/ vulnerable adults up to the age of 25 regardless of disability, gender or ethnic origin have a right to be protected from all forms of harm, abuse, neglect and exploitation.

Child abuse is a difficult issue and presents challenges to all that provide services for children also many people feel uncomfortable with the subject. It is not easily recognisable and individuals often fear reading too much into a situation. Many children experience minor accidents causing injuries, but there may be occasions where you are concerned over the nature and frequency of injury.

This policy has been developed in line with legal obligations, including, where applicable, the Human Rights Act 1998, the European Convention on Human Rights, the Children and Social Work Act 2017, the Equality Act 2010. We will adhere to Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023, Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024 and the Telford and Wrekin Threshold Guidance. We recognise the NSPCC website also provides us additional information on abuse, neglect, exploitation and what to look out for.

This document contains information on some of the signs that may give cause for concern. This document is based on the principle that:

*“It is not your responsibility as members of PODS to decide whether or not child abuse is occurring, but it is your responsibility to act on those concerns and do something about it.”*

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| 2 | Key People |  |

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| **Our Safeguarding Team** | |
| Designated Safeguarding Lead | *Jeannie Lear* |
| Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead | *Jayne Stevens* |
| Trustee Designated Safeguarding Lead | *Sarah Hall* |

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| 3 | Scope |  |

This policy covers

**3.1 Children**

Any child/ young person between the ages of 0 – 18 years who has access to any PODStrip and or activity. Any child/young person between the ages of 0 – 18 years of any Parent/ Carer who is a member of and/ or known to PODS.

**3.2 Vulnerable adults**

Any vulnerable adult defined by having a disability/ additional need that is between the ages of 18 – 25 years and who has access to any PODStrip and or activity. Any vulnerable adult between the ages of 18 – 25 years of age and whom is connected with any Parent/ Carer who is a member of and/ or known to PODS.

**3.3 Other Parties**

Trustees, Staff, Volunteers and Parent Representatives are also covered by this policy in relation to their roles/ work for PODS.

**3.4 Coverage**

This policy covers any interaction between Trustees, staff, volunteers, Parent carers who access PODS and their families, Funders and the general public. Whether this be at events, family groups, face 2 face, emails or social media etc.

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| 4 | Target Audience |  |

The audience for this policy are the Board of Trustees, Staff, Volunteers, Parent Representatives, Parent Carers who access PODS and their families, funders and the general public.

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| 5 | Responsibilities |  |

The Trustees have the main responsibility for ensuring safeguarding principles and practices are part of the way the charity works.

The Trustees also have responsibility for ensuring PODS has a named designated safeguarding lead whose role it is alongside the project manager to review annually, update when required and implement this policy in consultation with the Trustees. The Designated Safeguarding Lead has a responsibility for helping to ensure any safeguarding requirements are shared with the Trustees, and then implemented where necessary.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead can be contacted regarding any concerns or queries and it is their responsibility to signpost to the appropriate authority and/ or report any concerns to Social Care Team (Family Connect), Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) and/or police.

Employees and Volunteers have a responsibility to read and follow the guidelines in this policy

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| 6 | Policy issues/principles |  |

**6.1 What is child abuse?**

**Do not ever think that you could never be placed in the position of reporting child abuse.**

The generic term ‘child abuse’ is used to describe various ways in which children are harmed or mistreated. There are many different ways in which children can be harmed, all with a common factor that the child feels under-valued and worthless.

Abuse can happen anywhere, but research indicates that the perpetrators of such abuse are likely to be known and trusted by the child.

**6.2 Types of abuse**

* ***PHYSICAL ABUSE***

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

* ***SEXUAL ABUSE***

Involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, including prostitution, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative or non-penetrative acts. They may include non-contact activities such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, pornographic materials or watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways

* ***EMOTIONAL ABUSE***

This is the persistent emotional ill-treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve:

* + - * Telling a child they are worthless, unloved or inadequate
      * Valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person
      * Age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on a child
      * Overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning
      * A child seeing or hearing the ill treatment of another
      * Serious bullying
      * Causing a child to frequently feel frightened or in danger
      * Exploitation or corruption of a child
* ***NEGLECT***

This is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health and development. Neglect may occur:

* During pregnancy as a result of substance abuse
* Failure to provide adequate food and clothing
* Failing to provide shelter including exclusion from home or abandonment
* Failing to protect a child from physical harm or danger
* Failure to ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care givers)
* Failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment

**6.3 Effects and Indications of Abuse**

The effects of child abuse can be devastating, especially if children are left unprotected or do not have the support to cope with that abuse.

**Indications that a child may be being abused include:**

* Unexplained or suspicious injuries such as bruising, cuts or burns, particularly if situated on a part of the body not normally prone to such injuries.
* An injury for which the explanation seems inconsistent.
* The child describes what appears to be an abusive act involving him or her.
* Someone else (child or adult) expresses concern about the welfare of another child.
* Unexplained changes in behaviour or emotions such as becoming very quiet, withdrawn or displaying sudden outbursts of temper.
* Inappropriate sexual awareness,
* Engaging in sexual explicit behaviour, sexually explicit talk inappropriate to the child’s age.
* Distrust of adults, particularly those with whom a close relationship would normally be expected.
* Difficulty in making friends.
* Uncharacteristic eating disorders, depression and suicide attempts.
* The child may become withdrawn, introverted and depressed and have low self esteem and lack of confidence.

**6.4 What you should do if you suspect abuse**

If any member of the organisationis concerned that abuse may have or has occurred they must refer the matter immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead who will decide whether or not to report the matter further. In the event it is not appropriate to refer to the DSL, the matter should be raised with the Trustee Designated Safeguarding Lead. If it is felt that further investigation is necessary in order to protect the child, the matter must be referred to the appropriate Children’s Social Care (Family Connect, LADO).

In the event of referral to Children's Social Care, copies of all relevant correspondence, notes of dialogue, diagrams of any injury witnessed must be passed to the co-ordinator for filing.

It is very important that any concerns on a child’s safety are noted.

**6.5 Safeguarding Procedure**

* There will be a named person for safeguarding children who will be responsible for dealing with any concerns about the safeguarding of children. This person is currently Jeannie Lear.
* All staff will be carefully selected and vetted, in accordance to our safer recruitment policy, to try and ensure they do not pose a risk to children. Those staff having contact with children will be checked through the *Disclosure and Barring Scheme* where appropriate, we will also request References to confirm that the Referees are not aware of any reason why they should not be working with children/vulnerable adults.
* All staff and volunteers will receive information and basic training in safe conduct and what to do if they have concerns about a child/ vulnerable adult. This will include information on recognising where there are concerns about a child/ vulnerable adult, where to get advice and what to do if no one seems to have taken their concerns seriously.
* We will endeavour to make this organisation a safe and caring place for children/ vulnerable adults to be by having a code of conduct for all staff, volunteers and users. This will be given to all staff, volunteers and users and they will be expected to comply with it.
* Any information given to users about activities of the organisation will include information about the safeguarding children policy and procedure. Parents and carers of any children using supervised activities for children will be given specific information about the safeguarding policy and procedure.
* PODS will carry out risk assessments where appropriate and in all cases where members of staff/volunteers will be working solo within in members homes or in a 1-1 environment.
* Whistle-blowers or people that raise a concern about PODS will be covered and protected under the Whistle-blower policy.

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| 7 | Staff |  |

**7.1 Designated Safeguarding Lead**

* This organisation will have a dedicated person to take responsibility for safeguarding children matters. This person is Jeannie Lear.
* They will be selected by PODS Trustees.
* They will have an enhanced level DBS checks due to their key role in keeping children safe.
* Their role is to;
* Ensure the organisation’s safeguarding children policy and procedures are followed.
* Ensure they know how to make contact with social services and police staff responsible for dealing with safeguarding children concerns both during and after office hours.
* Report any concerns to social services or the police. (N.B. Urgent concerns should be reported immediately by those aware of them even if the designated person is not available, and it is the role of the Designated Safeguarding Lead to ensure all staff and volunteers know how to do this.)
* Act as a source of advice on all safeguarding children matters and seek further advice and guidance from [Telford and Wrekin Safeguarding Partnership](https://www.telfordsafeguardingpartnership.org.uk/site/index.php)as needed.
* Ensure that a record is kept of any concerns about a child or adult and of any conversation or referrals to statutory agencies.
* Ensure that any such record is kept safely and securely.

**7.2 Behavioural practices – staff/ volunteer do’s and dont’s**

Always remember that whilst PODS do not have sole responsibility for children/ vulnerable adults as any activity/ trip is provided for the whole family and Parents/ Carers have responsibility for their children/ vulnerable adults at all times whilst using/attending any PODS facility/activity. However, you are still in contact with those children/ vulnerable adults and are in a position of trust and your responsibilities to them and the organisation must be uppermost in your mind at all times.

**DO NOT:**

* Use any kind of physical punishment or chastisement such as smacking or hitting.
* Smoke in front of any child.
* Use non-prescribed drugs or be under the influence of alcohol.
* Behave in a way that frightens or demeans any child.
* Use any racist, sexist, discriminatory or offensive language.
* Invite a child to your home or arrange to see them outside the set activity times.
* Engage in any sexual activity (this would include using sexualised language) with a child you meet through your duties or start a personal relationship with them, this would be an abuse of trust.
* Engage in rough or physical games, including horseplay.
* Let allegations a child makes go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon.
* Rely upon good nature to protect you or believe “it could never happen to me”.
* Give children presents or personal items. \*

*\*(Exceptions to this could be a custom such as: buying children a small birthday token or leaving present, help to a family in need such as equipment to enable them to participate in an activity. Both types of gift should come from the organisation and from a professional capacity and be agreed with the named person for safeguarding children and the child’s parent/carer. Similarly do not accept gifts yourself other than small tokens for appropriate celebrations, which you should mention to the activity leader.)*

**DO:**

* Exercise caution about being alone with a child. In situations where this is unavoidable, ensure another worker or volunteer knows what you are doing and where you are.
* Ensure that any physical contact is open and initiated by the child’s needs, e.g. for a hug when upset or help with toileting. Always prompt children to carry out personal care themselves and if they cannot manage ask if they would like help.
* Talk explicitly to children about their right to be kept safe from harm.
* Listen to children and take every opportunity to raise their self-esteem.
* Work as a team with your co-workers/volunteers. Agree with them what behaviour you expect from children and be consistent in enforcing it.
* Remember if you have to speak to a child about their behaviour you are challenging ‘what they did’, not ‘who they are’.
* Make sure you have read the Safeguarding Children Procedure and Policy and that you feel confident that you know how to recognise when a child may be suffering harm, how to handle any disclosure and how to report any concerns.
* Seek advice and support from your colleagues and your Designated Safeguarding Lead for safeguarding children.
* Be clear with anyone disclosing any matter that could concern the safety and wellbeing of a child that you cannot guarantee to keep this information to yourself.
* Seek opportunities for training.
* Where possible encourage parents to take responsibility for their own children.
* Make sure you are up to speed with your organisations confidentially policy and Information Sharing Protocol.

Where a member of staff/volunteer fails to uphold safeguarding policy and procedures the matter in the first instance will be referred to their line manager and the Designated Safeguarding Lead, with the potential of being elevated to the Board of Trustees. Dependent on the severity to how the matter will dealt with, options could be retraining, supervision or even dismissal.

**7.3 Guidelines on recruiting and screening staff and volunteers**

PODS have safer recruitment policies relating to Trustees, Employees and Volunteers that detail safeguarding, and screening.

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| 8 | Activity |  |

**8.1 What is ‘regulated activity’?**

* Any activity of a specified nature that involves contact with children or vulnerable adults frequently, intensively and/or overnight – such activities include teaching, training, care, supervision, advice, treatment and transportation.
* Any activity that is in a specified place that involves contact with children or vulnerable adults frequently or intensively – such places includes schools and care homes.
* Fostering and childcare.
* Any activity that involves people in certain defined positions or responsibility – such positions include school governor, directors of children’s/ adults social care and Trustees of certain charities.

‘Regulated activity’ is when the activity is frequent (once a month or more) or ‘intensive’ (takes place on three or more days in a 30-day period).

**8.2 What is a ‘controlled activity?**

* Frequent or intensive support work in general health settings, the NHS and further education – such work includes cleaners, caretakers, shop workers, catering staff, car park attendants and receptionists
* Individuals working for specified organisations (e.g. a local authority) who have frequent access to sensitive records about children and vulnerable adults
* Support work in adult social care settings – such jobs include day centre cleaners and those with access to social care records
* ‘Controlled activity’ is when this type of activity is ‘frequent’ (once a month or more) or ‘intensive’ (takes place on three or more days in a 30-day period).

**8.3 How does ‘controlled activity’ work?**

* It will be a criminal offence for an employer to take on an individual in a controlled activity without checking that individual’s status
* An employer can permit a barred individual to work in a controlled activity only if sufficient safeguards are put in place

No distinction is made between paid and unpaid work, and all rules will apply to both volunteers and employees.

Fees in relation to PODS should a DBS check be required will be covered by PODS.

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| 9 | Disclosure and Barring Scheme (DBS) |  |

**9.1 What is it?**

The DBS is an executive agency of the Home Office. It offers a one stop shop service for checking paid employees and volunteers against three main data bases for the purpose of finding out whether there is information about them on these data bases that would suggest they may be unsuitable to work with children. Remember a positive DBS clearance does not mean the persson is suitable to work with children; you still need to try and assess that. You can also track the progress of your request at the website below.

For further information look at the DBS website: www.gov.uk/disclosure-barring-service-check/overview

**9.2 Are there different types of check?**

There are two levels of check available at present, standard and enhanced. The most thorough is the Enhanced Disclosure, which would reveal information on police records even if a person has not been convicted. For example when they have been accused of harming a child but no charges have been brought. This is the level that should be used for those having substantial unsupervised contact with children.

**9.2.1 Standard Disclosure**

Standard Disclosures contain the following;

* Details of all convictions, cautions, reprimands and warnings held on the Police National Computer (PNC); and if the position involves working with children and the relevant boxes have been marked on the application form to indicate this:
* Information from the Protection of Children Act List (PoCA);
* Information from the Protection of Vulnerable Adults List (POVA); and
* Information held by the Children’s Barred List and List 99 under Section 142 of the Education Act 2002 of those considered unsuitable for banned from working with children.

**9.2.2 Enhanced Disclosure**

Enhanced Disclosures are for posts involving a far greater degree of contact with children.  In general, the type of work will involve regularly caring for, supervising,

training or being in sole charge of such people. Examples include a Teacher, Scout or Guide leader

 Enhanced Disclosures contain the same information as Standard Disclosures but with the addition of local police force information considered relevant by Chief Police Officer(s).

**8.3 Who should be checked?**

Anyone who is coming into contact with children and/ or vulnerable adults where the work is “regulated” and/ or “controlled” must be DBS checked; anyone working unsupervised must have an enhanced disclosure.

**9.4 What do I have to do?**

PODS when taking on Employees/ Volunteers will make a decision as to whether a DBS is required and if so contact an organisation approved to conduct checks to oversee the process.

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|  | Forms and related documents |  |

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| Document reference: | Document title: |
| PODS-CP-013 | Safer Recruitment Policy |
| PODS-CP-015 | Whistle-Blower Policy |
| PODS-CP-005 | Code of Conduct Policy |
| PODS-CP-006 | Social Media Policy |
| PODS-CP-003 | Data Protection Policy |
| PODS-AGR-003 | Confidentiality Agreement |
| PODS-CP-027 | Lone working Policy |
| PODS-CP-012 | Confidentiality Policy |

Approval Date: 31/05/2024

Approval Name: Sarah Hall

Position: Trustee DSL