



Policy Number	Review Date	Next Review Date
4	March 2026	March 2027

Little Village Children and Young People Safeguarding Policy

1. Statement of intent

Little Village is committed to safeguarding children and young people who come into contact with our work. We believe every child and young person has the right to be safe, treated with dignity and respect, and supported to thrive.

We are a charity that serves families. Most children we see are with their parent or carer when they access our hubs and services. We do not facilitate children only activities. However, children and young people are present across our hubs, community spaces, deliveries, partnerships and may take part in supervised volunteering, and we recognise that we may sometimes see or hear things that make us worried about their safety or wellbeing. Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility across Little Village.

All staff, volunteers and representatives are expected to notice concerns, take them seriously, and report them promptly through our internal safeguarding routes.

We aim to create an environment where:

- concerns are noticed and acted on
- children and families are treated with care and dignity
- staff and volunteers understand what to do if worried
- reporting is safe and supported
- decisions are proportionate and recorded
- learning is used to strengthen practice

Little Village is not responsible for carrying out child protection investigations. Our role is to notice when something may be wrong, respond with care, record concerns clearly, and pass them to the appropriate safeguarding services so children and young people can be protected.

This policy forms part of our wider safeguarding and assurance framework, alongside our Adult Safeguarding Policy, Whistleblowing Policy, Data Protection and Data Retention Policy, Safer Recruitment Policy and other relevant policies.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all children and young people under 18 who come into contact with Little Village through our services, sites, programmes, partnerships or activities. This includes babies and children attending hubs with their parents or carers, children present during family support and advice contact, deliveries and outreach activity, and young people involved through partnerships, programmes or supervised volunteering, including Duke of Edinburgh placements. It also covers situations where children are included in media communications or storytelling activity.

The policy applies across our hubs, warehouses and community spaces, as well as during delivery and outreach work, events and partner settings, and through phone, digital and online contact. It covers both in-person and remote interactions.

It applies to all staff, volunteers, trustees, contractors, agency workers and partners working on behalf of Little Village.

3. What we mean by safeguarding children & young people

Safeguarding children means protecting them from maltreatment, preventing harm to their health or development, and taking proactive action so they can grow up with safe and effective care and support. Our approach is guided by UK safeguarding law and statutory guidance, including the Children Acts 1989 and 2004, the Children and Social Work Act 2017, and Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023, which set out how organisations should recognise concerns and work with safeguarding partners.

A safeguarding concern may arise through something a child or adult tells us, something we observe, a pattern we notice, or information shared by a partner agency. In our charity context, this may happen through hub contact, deliveries, phone support and supervised under-18 volunteering and partnership activity.

Staff and volunteers are not expected to investigate concerns or prove abuse. They are expected to recognise concerns and pass them on through the safeguarding reporting route without delay. We support a culture of speaking up through our Whistleblowing Policy and safe reporting routes, and we keep our safeguarding arrangements under regular review, so they stay aligned with legislation, guidance and sector good practice.

Categories and indicators of abuse are set out in Annex B.

4. Key principles

Our approach to safeguarding children and young people is grounded in the principle that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and part of everyday practice at Little Village. We take concerns seriously and act on them promptly. We work proactively to reduce risk through safer recruitment, training, supervision, inclusive practice and safe service delivery design.

We listen carefully when children, young people or parents share worries, and we do not dismiss or minimise what we are told. We respond calmly and respectfully, without judgement, and we are clear about what will happen next.

We do not carry out child protection investigations ourselves. We pass concerns to safeguarding leads and, where appropriate, to statutory services. Information is shared on a need-to-know basis to protect children's safety and wellbeing, and decisions are recorded with clear rationale.

We support a culture of speaking up through our Whistleblowing Policy and safe reporting routes, and we keep our safeguarding arrangements under regular review, so they stay aligned with legislation, guidance and sector good practice.

5. Roles and responsibilities

Safeguarding children and young people is a shared responsibility across Little Village. Everyone who works with or on behalf of the organisation has a duty of care and must stay alert to possible safeguarding concerns and follow reporting procedures without delay.

All staff, volunteers and representatives are responsible for noticing and raising concerns about a child or young person's safety or wellbeing, responding appropriately to disclosures, maintaining professional boundaries, and reporting concerns through the safeguarding route. They are not expected to investigate concerns or prove abuse. Concerns must not be managed in isolation without involving the Safeguarding Manager or a Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).

Managers, including line managers, hub managers and volunteer managers are responsible for creating an environment where safeguarding can be raised openly and safely. They ensure teams understand reporting routes and safer working expectations, and that concerns are escalated promptly. They are also responsible for safe day-to-day practice in services and spaces involving children and families.

The Safeguarding Manager and DSLs receive and triage safeguarding concerns, advise on risk, and decide next steps. This includes making or supporting referrals to children's social care, police or other statutory services where threshold is met, and ensuring safeguarding records are accurate and secure. They are the main source of safeguarding advice and decision-making across the organisation. DSLs consider each concern in context and advise on immediate protective actions and communication with families. Wherever it is safe and appropriate, parents or carers are informed about concerns and referrals. Consent is not required where seeking it could increase risk or place a child or young person at further harm. Decisions and rationale are recorded, and information is shared lawfully and, on a need-to-know basis.

The People and Volunteering teams are responsible for embedding safeguarding into safer recruitment, onboarding, training, supervision and conduct processes. This includes role risk assessment, proportionate background checks, and safeguarding expectations for both adult and under-18 volunteers, including supervised and Duke of Edinburgh placements.

Operational are responsible for keeping frontline environments and interactions safe. This includes making sure there is appropriate supervision, clear boundaries, and that any concerns are escalated quickly. Digital, communications and fundraising teams take care to safeguard children in how we share stories, images and engagement content, including consent, ethical storytelling and online safety. Teams responsible for data and systems ensure safeguarding information is handled and stored securely.

Trustees and the CEO hold overall accountability for safeguarding governance, culture and oversight. A named safeguarding trustee provides board-level challenge and assurance.

6. Recognising safeguarding concerns

A safeguarding concern about a child or young person may arise through something they say, something a parent or carer shares, something we observe, or a pattern we notice over time. Concerns may also come from partner organisations, referral agencies, volunteers or other professionals.

Concerns can relate to abuse, neglect, exploitation, exposure to domestic abuse, online harm, unsafe caregiving, or other risks to a child's health, safety or development. They may appear during short interactions at hubs, during deliveries, through support and guidance calls, through partnership activity, or in digital or communications work.

Staff and volunteers are not expected to decide whether abuse has happened or to meet legal thresholds. They are expected to notice when something feels worrying, unusual or unsafe and to pass this on through the safeguarding reporting pathways.

It is not necessary to have proof. A reasonable concern is enough to report. Categories and possible indicators of abuse and neglect are set out in Annex B.

7. What to do if you have a concern

If you are worried about a child or young person's safety or wellbeing, you must act promptly and follow Little Village's safeguarding reporting route. If a child is in immediate danger or needs urgent medical help, contact emergency services without delay. Safeguarding reporting should still be completed internally as soon as possible afterwards however first call of action to ensure immediate protective measures are implemented is to contact emergency services.

Where there is no immediate danger, concerns must be reported as soon as possible using the Incident Report Form. Staff should also inform their manager. Volunteers should tell their session lead, hub manager or volunteer manager, who must ensure the concern is escalated to the Safeguarding Manager or a Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).

When a child or young person shares something worrying, staff and volunteers should listen calmly, take what is said seriously, avoid leading questions, and not to promise confidentiality. It should be explained in simple terms that the information will need to be shared with the safeguarding team so that the right help and protection can be considered. Detailed guidance on handling disclosures is set out in Annex C.

Little Village does not investigate child protection concerns itself. The Safeguarding Manager or DSL will review the information, assess risk, and decide next steps. Where threshold is met, they will make or support a referral to children's social care, police or other statutory services.

Where concerns involve a parent, carer or family member, DSLs will usually aim to be open about referrals and concerns. However, parental knowledge or consent is not required where seeking consent could increase risk, lead to evidence being lost, or place a child or another person at further harm. This includes situations involving suspected abuse within the household, exploitation, or harm by someone in a position of trust or power. Decisions about consent are made case by case and recorded with reasons.

Where a concern relates to the behaviour of a member of staff, volunteer, trustee or someone working on behalf of Little Village, it must be reported immediately through the safeguarding route. The Safeguarding Manager / DSL and People team will ensure appropriate steps are taken, including referral to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) where criteria are met. Staff and volunteers must not attempt to manage these concerns informally. All concerns, decisions and actions must be recorded factually and promptly. If in doubt, report and seek advice and do not wait.

8. Allegations against staff/volunteers/trustees

Little Village takes any concern about the behaviour of a staff member, volunteer, trustee, contractor or representative towards a child or young person seriously. This includes concerns that someone may have caused harm, behaved in a way that puts a child at risk, or may be unsuitable to work with children. Any such concern must be reported immediately through the safeguarding reporting route. It must not be handled informally, investigated personally, or discussed widely.

The Safeguarding Manager or a Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), together with the People team and senior leadership where appropriate, will assess the concern and decide next steps. Where the allegation meets the relevant criteria, a referral will be made to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) in line with statutory guidance.

Little Village will cooperate fully with any external safeguarding or regulatory enquiries. Protective steps may be taken while a concern is being assessed. This may include temporary changes to duties, increased supervision, or suspension from role or activity. These steps are neutral acts taken to protect children and young people and to protect the integrity of the process however they are not disciplinary findings in themselves.

Where legal criteria are met, referrals will also be made to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS). Where appropriate, serious incidents will be reported to the Charity Commission and relevant funders or regulators. Concerns about organisational practice, culture or leadership behaviour can also be raised through the Whistleblowing Policy where this feels safer or more appropriate.

All allegations, decisions and actions are recorded, handled sensitively, and shared only on a need-to-know basis.

9. Serious incidents, escalation and external reporting

Where a safeguarding concern involves serious harm, risk of serious harm, alleged abuse by someone connected to Little Village, or a significant failure of safeguarding controls, it will be escalated immediately through senior safeguarding and leadership routes. This includes notification to the Safeguarding Manager or DSL, relevant directors, and the named safeguarding trustee where appropriate.

Little Village will assess whether the concern meets the threshold for external reporting and will make reports without undue delay where required. This may include referral to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), children's social care or police, reporting to the Charity Commission as a serious incident, and referrals to the Disclosure and Barring Service where legal criteria are met. Relevant funders or regulators may also be notified where appropriate.

Where needed, proportionate internal case reviews will be carried out to understand what happened, whether procedures were followed, and what could be strengthened. The purpose of review is learning and improvement, not blame. Agreed actions are tracked, and learning from incidents and near misses is used to strengthen safeguarding practice, training and safer working arrangements across the organisation.

10. Information sharing and confidentiality

Safeguarding information about children and young people is handled sensitively and shared only where necessary to protect safety and wellbeing. Information is shared in line with safeguarding duties and UK data protection law.

Where possible and appropriate, we are open with parents or carers about safeguarding concerns and referrals. However, consent is not required where seeking it could increase risk, place a child at further harm, involve an alleged perpetrator in a position of trust, or compromise a safeguarding enquiry. Decisions about sharing without consent are made by the Safeguarding Manager or DSL and the rationale is recorded.

Safeguarding concern records are stored securely within restricted systems. Standard safeguarding records are retained for up to six years. Records involving serious harm, statutory investigations, LADO involvement or legal action may be retained for longer in line with sector guidance and our Data Retention Policy.

11. Safer recruitment and suitability

Safeguarding children and young people is supported through Little Village's safer recruitment and suitability processes. All staff and relevant volunteer roles follow the Safer Recruitment Policy, including role risk assessment, references, identity checks and proportionate DBS checks where eligible.

Suitability decisions are based on role responsibilities, level and type of contact, supervision arrangements, and safeguarding risk. Under-18 volunteers and placements are risk assessed and supervised at all times. Safeguarding expectations, boundaries and reporting pathways are built into recruitment, onboarding and role guidance for both staff and volunteers.

12. Training and safeguarding culture

All staff and volunteers receive safeguarding awareness training or briefing appropriate to their role. This includes recognising concerns, responding to disclosures, professional boundaries and reporting pathways. Safeguarding is also reinforced through induction, refresher learning, manager support and practical guidance. Designated Safeguarding Leads receive additional role-specific training and updates.

Little Village promotes an open, values-led safeguarding culture where people are encouraged to raise concerns, ask questions and challenge unsafe practice. Safeguarding arrangements are reviewed regularly to stay aligned with legislation, guidance and sector good practice.

13. Support for staff and volunteers

Safeguarding concerns can be upsetting and difficult to handle. Staff and volunteers who raise or manage concerns are offered timely and supportive follow-up from their manager or the safeguarding team. This may include check-ins, practical guidance and space to talk through what happened and next steps. The focus is support and learning, not having a blame culture.

Staff have access to the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) for confidential wellbeing support. Volunteers can access supportive follow-up conversations and appropriate signposting where needed.

14. Working with other policies

This policy sits within Little Village's wider safeguarding and safe practice framework. It should be read alongside the Adult Safeguarding Policy, Safer Recruitment Policy, Volunteering Policy, Recruitment of Employees and Volunteers with a Criminal Record, Whistleblowing Policy, Data Protection Policy and Data Retention Policy, as well as safer working and online safety guidance.

Together these policies support consistent, practical and joined-up safeguarding across our services, volunteering, communications, fundraising and partnerships. This policy may be reviewed earlier where there are legislative changes, serious incidents, regulatory recommendations or significant organisational learning.

15. Responsible persons

Little Village has a Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO) and acting Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSLs) with organisational responsibility for safeguarding children and young people, including advice, escalation and decision-making. A named safeguarding trustee provides board-level oversight and challenge. Names and contact details and reporting pathways are shared with staff and volunteers through induction, training materials and safeguarding escalation guides and not in this policy.

Annexes to this policy

- Annex A: What to do if you have a concern (escalation tree)
- Annex B: Types and indicators of abuse (children and young people)
- Annex C: Responding to a disclosure (conversation guidance)
- Annex D: Safer working and professional boundaries with children and young people

Signed:

Sophie Livingstone,
CEO, Little Village

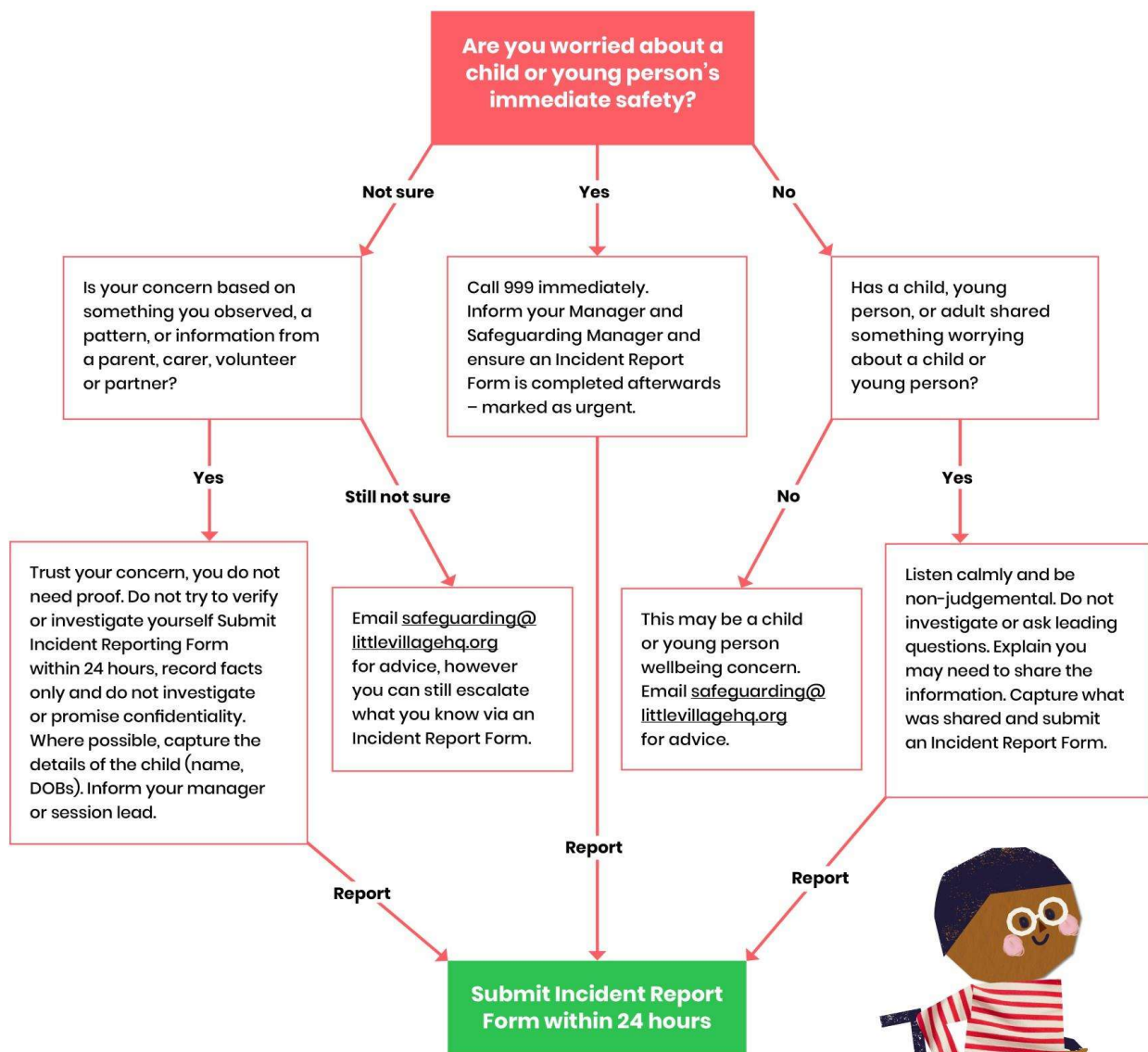
Reviewers:

Hinda Omar, Safeguarding & Family Insights Manager (DSO)

Kate Husselbee, Trustee

Review Date: **March 2026**

What to do if you have a concern about a child or young person



<p>Include what you know if possible:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child's name and DOB (approx. age works too) • Location • Contact details • Any details of any other children in the home • Any context that would support multi-agency working and statutory reporting 	<p>If someone makes a disclosure...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen • Stay Calm • Do not investigate • Do not promise confidentiality • Explain you must report • Record their words • Submit incident report form
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When in doubt, please report or seek safeguarding advice on safeguarding@littlevillagehq.org



Types and indicators of abuse and neglect (children and young people)

Summary

Under statutory safeguarding guidance, child safeguarding recognises four main categories of abuse: physical, emotional, sexual and neglect. Additional specific safeguarding risks are also recognised, including and unfortunately not exclusive to, domestic abuse, exploitation, radicalisation, online harm and harmful practices such as FGM and child marriage.

Abuse may be a single incident or pattern over time. It can take place in families, communities, organisations or online. The indicators below are examples only. They are not proof that abuse has taken place. Staff and volunteers are not expected to decide the type of abuse that is occurring or investigate. Your role is to notice concerns and report them. Concerns may arise during short interactions such as hub visits, deliveries, phone support, partner referrals and supervised youth volunteering.

Physical abuse involves deliberately causing physical harm to a child, including hitting, shaking, burning, poisoning or fabricating illness. Possible indicators include unexplained bruises or injuries, repeated “accidents”, injuries that do not match the explanation given, or a child appearing fearful around a particular adult. In a Little Village context this may be noticed during hub visits, deliveries or partner conversations where injuries are visible or explanations feel inconsistent.

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional mistreatment of a child that affects their emotional development and sense of worth. It may include humiliation, intimidation, rejection or excessive control. Indicators can include extreme withdrawal, anxiety, very low confidence, fear of getting things wrong, or a child seeming unusually shut down or distressed during interactions with adults.

Sexual abuse includes sexual assault, sexual activity without consent, grooming and exploitation, including online. Indicators may include behaviour or language beyond a child’s age, sudden withdrawal, distress linked to a specific individual, sexualised behaviour, or indirect disclosures during conversation. Concerns may arise through what a child says, how they behave, or information shared by a parent or partner agency.

Neglect is the ongoing failure to meet a child’s basic physical or emotional needs. Indicators may include a child appearing consistently hungry, poorly clothed for the weather, unwashed, frequently unwell without treatment, or lacking supervision. In Little Village settings this may sometimes be noticed through repeated unmet essential needs, concerning patterns shared in support conversations, or observations during deliveries or hub visits

Domestic abuse (child affected) children can also be harmed through domestic abuse between adults in the household. Even where the child is not directly harmed, seeing or hearing abuse is itself a safeguarding concern. Indicators may include fearfulness about home, distress when certain adults are mentioned, controlling behaviour by one adult during interactions, or sudden cancelled contact.

Child sexual or criminal exploitation whether sexual or criminal, involves a child being manipulated or coerced for someone else’s gain. Signs may include secrecy around relationships, unexplained gifts or money, fear of certain people, or sudden behaviour changes.

Online abuse or digital harm can include grooming, exploitation, coercion, AI nudification or deepfakes or abuse through digital platforms. Indicators may include distress linked to online contact, secrecy about devices, pressure to share images or personal information, or threatening messages.

Staff and volunteers should report concerns based on what they see, hear or are told, including during brief or one-off contact. Proof is not required. If you are worried, pass it on

Responding to a disclosure (conversation guidance)

Practical guide for staff and volunteers

When a child or young person shares a worry or something that feels unsafe, follow the five steps: *Recognise, Respond, Report, Record, Refer*. Your role is to listen, take it seriously, and pass it on and not to investigate or prove what happened.

Step	What this means	What to do	Helpful words you can use
Recognise	Notice when something feels worrying about a child or young person's safety or wellbeing. This may come from something they say, behaviour you observe, an interaction with a parent or carer, or information shared by a partner.	Trust your concern. Abuse and harm are often hidden and children rarely tell easily. Take what you see or hear seriously, even if you are unsure.	"I'm glad you told me."
Respond	Stay calm, kind and steady if a child shares something worrying. Your role is to listen and support and to not question in depth.	Listen without interrupting. Do not challenge, investigate or ask leading questions. Allow them to speak in their own words. Ask only simple clarifying questions if needed for basic facts. Do not show shock or disbelief. Do not promise secrecy. Explain that you will need to share this with the safeguarding team to help keep them safe.	"Thank you for telling me." "You've done the right thing." "I'm going to listen." "This is not your fault." "I can't keep this secret, but I will only tell people who need to help keep you safe."
Report	Pass the concern on through the safeguarding route and do not keep it to yourself or try to handle it alone.	Submit a Safeguarding Incident Report Form as soon as possible (within 24 hours). If a child is in immediate danger, contact emergency services first, then report internally. Tell your manager, hub lead or session lead that you have reported.	"I'm going to share this with our safeguarding lead so they can help."

Step	What this means	What to do	Helpful words you can use
Record	Write down what was seen, heard or said. This may later be important.	Record facts only. Use the child or young person's own words where possible. Include date, time, place and who was present. Do not include opinions or guesses. Do not investigate or ask the child to repeat their account. Do not delay reporting while writing, report first, then complete the record.	—
Refer	Safeguarding leads decide next steps and whether to refer to children's social care, police or other services.	The Safeguarding Manager / DSL will assess risk and make referrals where threshold is met. Staff and volunteers should not contact children's social care or the police directly unless directed or in an emergency. Continue to cooperate if asked for further information.	"Our safeguarding lead will decide what happens next."