

27.1

Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy

Introduction

This Policy has been reviewed to take account of updated policies and legislation. It emphasises the fundamental importance of safeguarding children and young people and reflects Hopian's beliefs that all children & young people have a right to feel safe, valued, listened to and to always receive a confidential service (within the limits of the confidentiality policy). It is also to support them to achieve their educational, emotional and developmental potential now and in the future.

We acknowledge the enormous impact domestic abuse has on parents/carers ability to safeguard their children. We hope that this policy will support parents and carers to effectively safeguard their children while receiving services from us. When this is not effective, staff in contact with children & families, including those who may not have direct contact with children, have a duty to safeguard & promote the welfare of children.

Policy Aims

Our aims in producing this policy are:

- ✔ To ensure that everyone working for Hopian Services, including volunteers, and children and families receiving a service through Hopian know how to deal effectively with safeguarding issues.
- ✔ To provide those who engage with our services, information about how we respond to safeguarding issues.

This document contains a policy statement.

All staff should read procedural guidance in conjunction with this policy. The guidance will provide clear and specific guidelines to enable Hopian Services to deal appropriately and effectively with safeguarding concerns.

The functions of the policy statement are set out briefly below:

Policy Statement

The policy statement sets out the broad framework of principles within which the area of work will be carried out. It sets out Hopian's style and approach to the issue, including any aims and guiding principles.

Your role in safeguarding children

Staff at Hopian will come into frequent contact with children and young people who are distressed and in crisis and therefore staff are well placed to identify indicators of abuse and neglect. Children entering specialist services may display behaviours similar to those displayed by abused and neglected children. To differentiate we may expect a reasonable decrease of symptomatic behaviours after a period of time, if abuse is no longer continuing.

It is important to be open to the possibility that children may have been abused or are continuing to be abused, by either parent/carer.

Research is clear that witnessing or being present in a household where there is domestic abuse can be emotionally abusive and increases the risk of physical violence to the child him/herself. This has been recognised in the definition of harm in the Children Act 1989 and the Adoption and Children Act 2002, which extended the definition of harm to include witnessing domestic abuse.

The **Domestic Abuse Act 2021** recognises that children can be victims of domestic abuse. A child who sees or hears or experiences domestic abuse and is related to the person, either being abused or the perpetrator, is also to be regarded as a victim of domestic abuse in their own right. Abusive behaviour towards a child under 16 is still dealt with as child abuse, if they are aged 16 or over this moves into domestic abuse.

We acknowledge the enormous impact domestic abuse has on parents/carers ability to safeguard their children. We hope that this policy and our safeguarding procedures will support adults to effectively safeguard their children while receiving services from us. We as a service have a duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children where there are risk factors that affect their safety and welfare.

When an adult engages with Hopian services they are given information about the service and the policies on safeguarding. This should include when an adult is referred to the Support Service with particular emphasis at the first stage of contact about where a child may be witnessing domestic abuse. Staff also give information to children accessing the service to inform them about the service and safeguarding policies, we provide a 'Child Privacy Notice' and all conversations are had at an age-appropriate level.

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

CYPS	Children and Young People's Service
DBS	Disclosure and Barring Service
DSL	Designated Safeguarding Lead
DSO	Designated Safeguarding Officer
EHA	Early Help Assessment
RSCP	Rotherham Safeguarding Children for Partnership
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
FM	Forced Marriage
LGBT+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender/Transsexual Plus
MATD	Multi-Agency Threshold Descriptors
Hopian	was formerly known as Rotherham Rise
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
VAWG/VAWC	Violence against Women and Girls/Violence against Women and Children. The terms are used interchangeably to show that Women's Aid includes children of both sexes.
WAFE	Women's Aid Federation of England (Women's Aid)
WT 23	Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023

Policy Statement

1. Principles

1.1

Hopian believes that all children and young people have a right to be protected from all forms of abuse and the right to enjoy a childhood that is safe, happy and free from all forms of fear, abuse and harm.

1.2

Hopian recognises that abuse occurs across all socio-economic class structures, race, cultures, sexual identity, ethnicities, religions and professions.

1.3

Hopian recognises the strong links between gender-based violence (the term used to denote harm inflicted upon individuals and groups that is connected to normative understandings of their gender) and child abuse and harm. (See below 3.1)

1.4

Hopian takes a child-centred approach to child safeguarding and believes that the welfare of the child must be the paramount consideration in line with international and national agreements. (See Hopian Procedures Appendix 1)

1.5

Hopian believes that safeguarding is a multi-agency responsibility. It is not the responsibility of any one agency; all agencies should work in cooperation to protect children from harm.

1.6

Hopian recognises that most child abuse is not perpetrated by strangers. Abuse towards children and young people is most commonly perpetrated by family members, friends, professionals or people in position of trust as well as children and young people themselves.

1.7

Hopian recognises that it is vital to have good working relationships with Social Care Services (both Children and Young People's Services and Adult Services) and the police, as they have lead responsibility for dealing with safeguarding issues.

1.8

Hopian believes that any concerns about the safety and well-being of a child must not be ignored. In practical terms this means that where a child is at risk of harm, the need for appropriate action will override any guarantees of confidentiality. Hopian's ethos is to believe adult and children's disclosure/concerns of abuse and will take these disclosures seriously and act on the information appropriately.

1.9

Hopian recognises that one of the best ways to support a child or young person is to also provide support for the non-abusing parent/carer. However, where there is a conflict between the interests of the child and the interests of the parent/carer, the welfare of the child is paramount.

1.10

Hopian also endorses the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)**. However, with respect to **Article 9(3)1**, we also recognise that witnessing domestic abuse and sexual abuse or knowing that the parent/carer is living in fear may have a harmful impact on the child. For this reason, we consider contact or living arrangements with an alleged abusive person may involve unacceptable risks for the child and the parent/carer and so the risks should be carefully assessed and managed. Hopian wholly supports contact with both parents/carers as long as it is safe and in the best interests of the child.

2. Anti-Discriminatory Practice

2.1

Hopian is committed to anti-discriminatory practice. Such practice will consider the diverse needs of our client group.

2.2

Hopian recognises the negative impact of discrimination, based on age, gender, race, culture, ethnicity, religion and belief, sexuality, sexual identity or disability, on a child's development. Every effort will be made to challenge discrimination both externally and within Hopian's Services. The process of challenging discrimination will involve challenging assumptions and stereotypes, recognising differing needs and attempting to meet these needs as far as is practicable. These principles will underpin any action taken in response to safeguarding children.

3. Rationale

3.1

Given the high prevalence of child abuse where there is gender-based violence, it is highly probable that staff in Hopian services will encounter a variety of safeguarding issues. In response to this, it is vital that services develop a clear and consistent approach to safeguarding children.

3.2

Clear guidelines provide protection for service users (adults and children) and for staff. Having effective policies and practice in response to safeguarding should also help to ensure that referrals to CYPS are taken seriously and dealt with appropriately.

4. Definitions

4.1

Hopian recognises a child as someone up to his or her 18th birthday in accordance with **Article 1 of the UNCRC** and in accordance with the **Children's Acts 1989** and **2004**. The term 'child' therefore is an encompassing term which includes young people.

4.2

An unborn child may also be at risk of serious harm, and this policy and the procedures can equally apply in terms of assessing the risk to the unborn child and/or the need for service intervention following delivery.

4.3

A parent/carer is the responsible adult who has legal responsibility for the child.

4.4

The term 'Staff' refers to all employees and volunteers, it also includes all trustees.

4.5

Hopian has adopted the definition of safeguarding as an encompassing term as contained in the government's '**Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023 guidance**'.

The definition includes:

- ✔ protecting children from maltreatment.
 - ✔ preventing impairment of children's health and development.
 - ✔ ensuring that children are growing up in circumstances consistent with the
 - ✔ provision of safe and effective care.
- taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes.

Safeguarding is therefore defined as the activity that is undertaken to protect specific children who are suffering or are likely to suffer significant harm.

Hopian will refer to the Rotherham Safeguarding Children Partnership Procedure and Practice Guidance. A statutory body, established in accordance with the **Children Act 2004** and **Working Together to Safeguard Children Guidance 2023**, which provides important safeguarding information for the public, children, young people, parents, carers, school staff and other professionals.

4.6

Harm, as contained in **Section 31(9) of the Children Act 1989**, as amended by **Section 120 of the Adoption and Children Act 2002**, is defined in the following way: harm means ill-treatment or the impairment of health or development, including impairment suffered from seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another; development includes physical, intellectual, emotional, social or behavioural and health includes physical or mental health. "ill-treatment" includes sexual abuse and forms of ill-treatment which are not physical.

4.7

Child abuse or harm may occur in one or more of the following ways:

Physical abuse – is any form of non-accidental injury or failure to protect from injury.

Examples of physical abuse includes hitting, kicking, shaking, throwing, burning, scalding, choking, poisoning, or suffocating.

A child may also be physically abused by a parent or carer suffering from fabricated and induced illness which involves the exaggeration of physical symptoms or deliberately causing ill health.

Abuse can also result from physical punishment or discipline. Hopian aims to make Hopian's services abuse-free environments and encourages parents/carers to use positive forms of discipline. (See section 8.2 Disciplining Children, Safeguarding procedures document)

Emotional/psychological abuse – is the severe or persistent rejection or emotional ill treatment of the child, which would negatively affect the emotional or behavioural development. This includes withholding affection, constant criticism, shouting, undermining confidence.

Hopian also recognises that children may be forced into marriage through emotional coercion from their parents or wider family members.

Sexual abuse – is the actual or likely sexual exploitation of a child by any other person or another child. This includes physical contact (penetrative or non-penetrative) and non-physical contact such as forcing to touch or to be touched sexually, rape, showing pornographic materials, inappropriate sexual remarks or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

Sexual abuse also encompasses sexual exploitation through social media and mobile technology including the use of ‘sexting’ as an abusive strategy.

For more information on Fabricated or Induced Illnesses, please see **NHS Overview - Fabricated or induced illness:** <https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/conditions/fabricated-or-induced-illness/overview/>.

Hopian also recognises Female Genital Mutilation is a form of sexual gender-based violence and is included within the category of sexual abuse for the purposes of this Policy.

Neglect – is the persistent or severe neglect and failure to meet the basic physical and or psychological needs, including not providing a child with basic food, warmth, shelter, clothing, care or protection.

Harmful practices – whilst Hopian recognises and values diversity and that there is a wide range of religious and cultural beliefs and customs, safeguarding is the paramount consideration. Some practices such as female genital mutilation, forced marriage, child marriage and ritualistic abuse, often consisting of physical, sexual or emotional abuse, are harmful to children and therefore are a form of child abuse and are wholly unacceptable.

4.8

Hopian recognises that these definitions are not exhaustive or mutually exclusive. (See Hopian Safeguarding Procedures Appendix 2 for indicators of abuse).

5. Legislation And Guidance

5.1

Hopian approach to safeguarding and related issues is set within the entire remit of national and international legal frameworks and statutory guidance relating to children and young people. (A non-exhaustive list is available in Hopian Safeguarding procedures.)

Procedures and Guidance - For guidance and procedures relating to Safeguarding, see Hopian separate guidance and procedures document.

Policy Review

The overall responsibility for this policy lies with the Chief Executive and the Board.

Policy Author: **Sue Wynne - Chief Executive Officer**



Policy agreed by Trustees and Chair on: **18 November 2025**

Version no: **v3**

Date of next review: **November 2026**

Relevant Equality Area	Does the policy or its implementation:			Does Hopian need to proceed to full EIA? (If in doubt progress to full assessment)
	Breach Equalities Legislation?	Affect different groups in different ways (both positive and negative)	Promote equality/ good relations?	
Gender	No	No	Yes	No
Race	No	No	Yes	No
Disability	No	No	Yes	No
Sexual Orientation	No	No	Yes	No
Religion and Beliefs	No	No	Yes	No