Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy

Supportive Bridge Ltd | Community Support and Healthcare Staffing | Bradford, England

IF YOU ARE WORRIED ABOUT A CHILD RIGHT NOW

- **A child in immediate danger or seriously hurt: call 999.**
- **Report a concern to Durham County Council, First Contact: 03000 267 979**, which is open 24 hours. You can do this yourself and you do not need permission from anyone at Supportive Bridge first.
- **Then tell the Supportive Bridge office or the on-call manager**, the same day.
- **Do not investigate,** do not question the child, and never promise to keep a secret.
- **Concern about a member of staff and a child?** Tell the Registered Manager at once. They must contact Durham's Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) through First Contact **within one working day**.

POLICY AT A GLANCE

- **We support adults, but children are in the homes we visit.** Everyone has a duty to act.
- **Safeguarding children is everybody's responsibility,** and a child's welfare comes first, ahead of loyalty to a family or a colleague.
- **You do not need proof.** An honest concern is enough, and you will not be in trouble if you are wrong.
- **Report the same day, always.** Never wait to see if it happens again.
- **Watch for young carers:** a child doing the caring for an adult we support is a safeguarding matter and must be reported.

SERVICE DETAILS (fill in before issuing)

Registered Manager (Safeguarding Lead)	
Nominated Individual (Deputy Lead)	
Office phone	
Out-of-hours / on-call number	
Date issued	
Next review date	

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1. PURPOSE

1.1 This policy explains how Supportive Bridge Ltd ("Supportive Bridge", "we", "us") protects children and young people, and what everyone who works for us must do if they are worried about a child.

1.2 We provide support to adults, not to children. However, our workers go into people's homes where children live or visit, and our staffing arm supplies workers into settings where children may be present. In law, a child is anyone under the age of 18.

1.3 It reflects the Children Act 1989 and 2004, the statutory guidance Working Together to Safeguard Children, and Regulation 13 of the Health and Social Care Act 2008 (Regulated Activities) Regulations 2014.

1.4 Serious case reviews repeatedly find that someone outside the family noticed something and did not pass it on, often because they assumed it was not their business or that someone else would. Our workers are sometimes the only professional who sees inside a family home regularly.

2. SCOPE

2.1 Supportive Bridge Ltd operates two arms, and this policy applies to both: our **healthcare staffing service**, supplying care and support workers to care homes, hospitals and other providers; and our **community support service**, where our own support workers visit adults and older people in their own homes, including council housing, on morning and evening shifts, to support them with daily living.

2.2 Supportive Bridge does **not** provide personal care. Personal care is a regulated activity under the Health and Social Care Act 2008 and we will provide it only if and when we are registered with the Care Quality Commission. Our support workers provide non-personal support such as companionship, meal preparation, shopping, domestic help, prompting, and support to get out and about. This policy is written to meet both local authority provider assurance requirements and the standards we will be assessed against at CQC registration.

2.3 It applies to everyone who works for us, in any capacity, and to any concern about any child, whether that child lives in a home we visit, is related to a person we support, is present during a shift, or is a child of a member of staff where a concern arises at work.

2.4 Failure to report a concern about a child may lead to action under our Disciplinary Policy and a referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service.

3. OUR COMMITMENTS

- the welfare of the child is the paramount consideration, ahead of any other interest;
- every worker knows how to recognise and report a concern, and knows they can go directly to the council;
- we report concerns the same day, and never delay to gather more evidence;
- we work openly with Durham County Council, Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership, the police and health services;
- we recruit safely, with enhanced DBS checks including the children's barred list where a role involves contact with children;
- no worker will be treated badly for raising a concern in good faith.

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4. WHAT WE MAY SEE

4.1 Our workers may become aware of a concern in several ways:

- seeing a child in the home during a shift: their condition, behaviour, how they are spoken to, whether they seem cared for;
- the home environment: cold, dirty, unsafe, no food, drug paraphernalia, dangerous animals;
- a child telling them something;
- an adult we support telling them something, or disclosing that they harm or fear for a child;
- a child left alone, or left in the care of someone unsuitable;
- a child providing care for an adult we support (a young carer);
- domestic abuse in the household, which is harmful to any child who lives there even if they are not physically hurt;
- an adult in the household whose behaviour, mental health or substance use puts a child at risk.

5. TYPES AND SIGNS OF ABUSE

Type	What it is and what you might see
Physical abuse	Hitting, shaking, throwing, burning, poisoning, or fabricating illness. Unexplained bruises, burns or marks, especially on a baby or in unusual places; injuries that do not match the explanation; a child flinching.
Emotional abuse	Persistent ill-treatment causing severe effects on emotional development: constant criticism, humiliation, being made to feel worthless, seeing others mistreated, or age-inappropriate expectations. A withdrawn, fearful or overly compliant child.
Sexual abuse	Forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, including online. Sexual knowledge or behaviour beyond their age, soreness, fear of a particular person, secretive online contact.
Neglect	Persistent failure to meet basic needs: food, clothing, shelter, warmth, hygiene, supervision or medical care. A hungry, dirty or inadequately dressed child; a child left alone; medical appointments missed.
Child exploitation	Sexual or criminal exploitation, including county lines. Unexplained money, phones or gifts; older friends; going missing; changes in behaviour.
Online harm	Grooming, bullying, or exposure to harmful content.
Domestic abuse	A child living where there is violence or coercive control is a victim in law under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, whether or not they are directly harmed.
Other specific concerns	Female genital mutilation, forced marriage, so-called honour-based abuse, radicalisation, and harm linked to a parent's substance use or mental ill health.

5.1 Concerns are often not dramatic. The most common is a slow accumulation of small things, which is why every concern must be passed on rather than weighed up alone.

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6. YOUNG CARERS

6.1 A young carer is a child who provides care for someone in their family, often an adult we support. They may help with medicines, personal care, cooking, cleaning, shopping, bills, or emotional support, and they may have been doing it for years without anyone noticing.

6.2 This is a safeguarding matter. Signs include a child who is often absent from school, tired, older than their years, reluctant to leave the house, or who answers questions on behalf of the adult.

6.3 Workers must report it to the office the same day. The Registered Manager contacts Durham County Council so the child can have a young carer's assessment under the Children and Families Act 2014, and reviews whether the adult's own support is enough. A child should never be relied on to provide care our service should be providing.

7. FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION

7.1 FGM is illegal and is child abuse. There is a **mandatory legal duty** on regulated health and social care professionals and teachers to report to the police, on 101, any case where a girl under 18 tells them she has had FGM, or where they observe physical signs of it.

7.2 Any worker who becomes aware of this must tell the Registered Manager immediately, who will make sure the report is made and will also refer to First Contact. Where FGM is being planned for a girl, this is an emergency: call 999 or the NSPCC FGM helpline on 0800 028 3550.

8. PREVENT AND RADICALISATION

8.1 Where a worker is concerned that a child or an adult is being drawn into terrorism or extremism, they report it to the office. The Registered Manager contacts the police on 101, or the Anti-Terrorist Hotline on 0800 789 321, and works with the local Prevent team. In an emergency, call 999.

9. WHAT TO DO IF YOU ARE WORRIED

THE FIVE STEPS

1. **Make sure the child is safe.** Call 999 if they are in immediate danger or seriously hurt.

2. **Listen if a child tells you something.** Stay calm, let them speak in their own words, and do not interrupt. Do not ask leading questions, do not press for detail, and do not make them repeat it. Tell them they were right to tell you, and that you have to pass it on to keep them safe. **Never promise to keep a secret.**

3. **Do not investigate.** Do not question the child, the parents or anyone else, do not examine a child, and do not photograph injuries.

4. **Report the same day.** Tell the Registered Manager or on-call manager. In an urgent situation, or if you cannot reach us, call First Contact yourself on 03000 267 979, at any hour.

5. **Write it down** as soon as possible: the date, time, place, who was present, exactly what you saw and heard, the child's own words in quotation marks, and what you did. Sign and date it.

9.1 Workers must not discuss the concern with the parents unless the Registered Manager has agreed, because doing so can put the child at greater risk or affect an investigation.

10. WHAT THE REGISTERED MANAGER DOES

- makes sure the child is safe and arranges urgent help where needed;

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- makes a referral to Durham County Council First Contact on 03000 267 979 the same day, and confirms it in writing where asked;
- contacts the police where a crime may have been committed;
- records the concern, the referral and the response on the safeguarding log, separately from the adult's support record;
- considers whether the adult we support is also at risk, and whether an adult safeguarding referral is needed;
- considers whether we can continue to work safely in that home, and what our workers need to know;
- supports the worker who raised it, who may be worried about the family's reaction;
- cooperates fully with any child protection enquiry, provides records and statements promptly, and attends meetings including strategy discussions and child protection conferences where invited.

10.1 Consent is not needed to refer a child protection concern, and we do not seek the family's permission where doing so would place the child at greater risk.

11. CONCERNS ABOUT A MEMBER OF STAFF

11.1 Where an allegation is made that a member of our staff has behaved in a way that harmed a child, may have committed a criminal offence against a child, behaved towards a child in a way that indicates they may pose a risk, or behaved in a way in their personal life that raises concerns about their suitability:

- it is reported to the Registered Manager immediately, or to the Nominated Individual if it concerns the Registered Manager;
- the Registered Manager contacts the Durham County Council **Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)**, through First Contact on 03000 267 979, **within one working day**, and follows their advice;
- the police are contacted where a crime may have been committed;
- the worker is normally suspended or moved to duties with no contact with children while it is looked into, as a neutral act;
- our own investigation and any disciplinary process follow the LADO's and the police's lead, and never cut across them;
- where the worker is dismissed, or would have been, because they harmed or put a child at risk, we have a **legal duty** to refer them to the Disclosure and Barring Service, even if they resign first.

11.2 Where the allegation concerns a worker we have supplied to a client organisation, we work with that organisation and the LADO, and withdraw the worker from that setting immediately.

12. SAFER RECRUITMENT

12.1 We obtain an enhanced DBS check including the children's barred list for any role involving contact with children, take up references covering safeguarding, and explore employment gaps, as set out in our Safer Recruitment, Selection and DBS Policy.

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13. INFORMATION SHARING

13.1 The duty of confidentiality does not prevent sharing information to protect a child. We share promptly, proportionately and lawfully with the council, police and health services, and record what was shared, with whom, when and why, in line with our Data Protection Policy and the government's information sharing advice for safeguarding practitioners.

13.2 Fear of sharing information must never be a barrier to protecting a child.

14. TRAINING

14.1 All workers complete safeguarding children awareness training at induction, before working alone, and refresh it every year, alongside their adult safeguarding training. Training covers the signs of abuse, young carers, how to respond to a disclosure, and how to report.

14.2 The Registered Manager and Nominated Individual complete safeguarding lead training at a higher level and keep up to date with Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership guidance and local learning reviews.

15. USEFUL CONTACTS

Organisation	Contact
Child in immediate danger	999
Durham County Council, First Contact (children)	03000 267 979 (24 hours)
Durham LADO (allegations against staff)	Via First Contact, 03000 267 979
Durham County Council, Social Care Direct (adults)	03000 267 979 (24 hours)
Police	101, or 999 in an emergency
NSPCC helpline (adults worried about a child)	0808 800 5000 | help@nspcc.org.uk
Childline (for children)	0800 1111
NSPCC FGM helpline	0800 028 3550
National Domestic Abuse Helpline	0808 2000 247 (24 hours)
Anti-Terrorist Hotline (Prevent)	0800 789 321
Care Quality Commission	03000 616161
Disclosure and Barring Service (referrals)	03000 200 190

Check these numbers are current; the Registered Manager reviews them at each policy review.

16. RECORDS AND MONITORING

16.1 Child safeguarding records are kept securely in the office, separate from adult support records, shared only with those who need them, and retained for at least eight years, or longer where the local authority or an ongoing investigation requires it.

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16.2 The Registered Manager records every concern on the safeguarding log and reviews it monthly. The Nominated Individual reviews it at least quarterly, and lessons are shared with the team.

16.3 This policy is reviewed every year, or sooner if the law, national guidance or Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership procedures change, or if a case shows it needs to change.

17. LEGISLATION AND GUIDANCE

- Children Act 1989 and Children Act 2004, section 11
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (statutory guidance)
- Children and Families Act 2014 (young carers' assessments)
- Children and Social Work Act 2017
- Domestic Abuse Act 2021 (children as victims)
- Serious Crime Act 2015, section 5B (mandatory reporting of FGM) and the FGM Act 2003
- Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 (Prevent duty)
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 (DBS referral duty)
- Health and Social Care Act 2008 (Regulated Activities) Regulations 2014, Regulations 13, 17 and 19
- UK General Data Protection Regulation and Data Protection Act 2018; Information sharing advice for safeguarding practitioners
- Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership procedures

18. RELATED POLICIES AND FORMS

Related policies: Safeguarding Adults from Abuse and Neglect; Whistleblowing; Safer Recruitment, Selection and DBS; Staff Code of Conduct and Professional Boundaries; Data Protection and Confidentiality; Incident Reporting and Duty of Candour; Support Records and Record Keeping; Disciplinary; Lone Working.

Forms: Child Safeguarding Concern Form (Appendix A); Safeguarding Log; Incident Report; DBS Referral form.

19. DOCUMENT CONTROL

Version	Date	Approved by	Role	Reason
1.0			Nominated Individual	New policy for local authority assurance and CQC registration

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APPENDIX A: CHILD SAFEGUARDING CONCERN FORM

Complete as soon as possible after reporting by phone. Facts and the child's own words. Do not investigate. Return to the Registered Manager the same day.

Child's name, age and address (as far as you know)	
Their relationship to the person we support	
Date and time of what you saw or heard	
Date and time you are writing this	
Your name, role and signature	
Who else was present?	
What did you see, hear or find? (facts only)	
The child's own words (in quotation marks)	
Any injuries or marks seen (do not photograph)	
Is this about a member of staff? (if yes, tell the manager at once)	
What did you do immediately?	
Who have you told, when, and how?	

Office use: Received by _____ Date/time _____ Referral to First Contact: Yes / No, ref _____ LADO contacted (within 1 working day): Yes / No / N/A Police: Yes / No Adult safeguarding referral also needed: Yes / No DBS referral considered: Yes / No

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