The Neighbour Network CIC - Safeguarding Policy

1 General Policy Statement

1.1 The Neighbour Network CIC has a moral and legal duty to ensure that it functions in upholding and promoting the welfare and safeguarding of children, young people and at-risk adults.

1.2 Throughout these policies and procedures, reference is made to "children", this includes other young people. Therefore, this term is used to mean "those under the age of 18". The Board of Directors recognises that some adults are also vulnerable to abuse, accordingly where appropriate, the procedures apply to "vulnerable adults". This term is used to mean "those aged 18 and over".

1.3 The Board of Directors is committed to ensuring that the organisation:

- Provides a safe environment for children, young people and vulnerable adults
- Identifies children and vulnerable adults who are victims of abuse
- Takes appropriate action to see that such children and vulnerable adults are kept safe from harm

1.4 In pursuit of these aims, the Board of Directors will approve and annually review policies and procedures with the aim of:

- Raising awareness of issues relating to the welfare of children and vulnerable adults and the promotion of a safe environment for them.
- providing procedures for reporting concerns
- Establishing procedures for reporting and dealing with allegations of abuse against members of staff
- The safer recruitment of staff

2. Responsibilities

2.1 Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) - The organisation will appoint a lead person with special responsibility for all safeguarding issues. This person will undertake appropriate training, unless they have already received such training. This person will be a member of staff, the DSL is the person to whom all concerns or allegations should be addressed. In the absence of the DSL, the Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead should be contacted.

2.2 Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (Deputy DSL) - The organisation will appoint a second person with suitable training to fulfil the role when the lead person is absent. If possible, and a suitable individual is available within the organisation, the deputy if possible should be of the opposite gender to the lead. This is to ensure that any gender difference may not hinder the reporting or disclosure of safeguarding incidents.

2.3 Training – All staff and volunteers working with children and vulnerable adults will receive adequate training to familiarise them with child protection issues and responsibilities and the organisation's procedures and policies, with refresher training at least every 3 years. For DSLs and Deputy DSLs training should be refreshed every 2 years and any updates passed down to other key staff/volunteers as needed.

2.4 The **DSL** is: **Mrs. Lydia Olliver**

2.5 The **Deputy DSL** is: **Miss. Selena Worrall**

2.6 For any safeguarding concern or need further information, please contact the safeguarding team via phone at **0300 102 7952** or by **email: hello@theneighbournetwork.co.uk**. If no one is immediately available, please leave a message and a member of the safeguarding team will return your call as soon as possible.

For urgent concerns outside of office hours or that require immediate attention, please contact:
Kent LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer) team
03000 41 11 11 (out of hours: 03000 41 91 91) and/or the police **999**.
Alternatively, you can seek independent advice or support by contacting **Thirtyone:eight**
0303 003 1111 (Option 2) between 9am and 5pm.

2.7 The DSL has a key duty for raising awareness within the organisation of issues relating to the welfare of children and vulnerable adults, and the promotion of a safe environment for them.

2.7.1 He/she is responsible for ensuring that exempted questions are asked on relevant volunteer and employment application forms in accordance with the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 and any other applicable legislation.

2.7.2 He/she has received appropriate training and should keep up to date with developments in child protection and vulnerable adults' issues. He/she will also have responsibility for making new staff and volunteers aware of the existing safeguarding policy.

2.7.3 He/she will be the main contact point for all Safeguarding issues and will have contact details for relevant organisations available for employees and volunteers. This list will usually include contact details of relevant individuals and provisions such as the NSPCC Helpline

0800 800 5000 and the local police child protection unit, LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer for Safeguarding), the Disclosure and Barring Service referral unit and where appropriate thirtyone:eight.

3. Definitions of Abuse

The Board of Directors recognises the following categories of abuse. These apply to children, young people, and vulnerable adults:

- **Physical abuse**
  Deliberate actions that cause physical harm or injury, such as hitting, shaking, burning, or failing to prevent harm.

- **Emotional or psychological abuse**
  Ongoing emotional harm through threats, rejection, humiliation or controlling behaviour that affects a person's well-being and development.

- **Sexual abuse**
  Forcing or persuading someone to take part in sexual activity. This includes contact and non-contact acts, whether or not the person understands or appears to consent.

- **Financial exploitation**
  Improper or illegal use of a person's money, property or resources without their understanding or permission.

- **Institutional or organised abuse / spiritual abuse**
  Abuse that includes the misuse of power or authority. This may include spiritual abuse, where religious authority is used to manipulate, control, or harm.

- **Discriminatory abuse**
  Harassment or harm based on race, gender, disability, faith, age, sexual orientation, or other personal characteristics.

- **Neglect**
  Failing to meet a person's basic needs, such as food, shelter, medical care, supervision or emotional support, leading to harm or risk of harm.

- **Self-harm**
  When a person deliberately injures themselves or puts themselves at risk. This may be a sign of deeper abuse or mental health need.

- **Other forms of abuse**
  These include bullying (peer-to-peer abuse), sexual exploitation, honour-based violence, radicalisation, and domestic abuse.

4. Regulated Activity and eligibility for DBS Criminal Record checks

4.1 Under the Safeguarding of Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 as amended by the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012, an individual working unsupervised with children and/or vulnerable adults is considered to be engaged in Regulated Activity and must have an enhanced Disclosure and

Barring Service (DBS) check which will involve a check of the relevant Barred List, in order to perform their role.

4.2 However, an individual working in a directly and permanently supervised position or where parents remain present is not considered to be engaged in regulated activity but should still have a basic DBS disclosure check. However, because they are working in a supervised role the check will not include a check of the Barred List.

4.3 Note that applications for a DBS enhanced check can only be submitted where the applicant is aged 16 or over at the time of making the application.
Anyone working in a supporting role with no direct interaction with children or vulnerable adults is not required to have a DBS check.

5. 'Relevant conduct' under the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006

5.1 In addition, the Board of Directors accepts the following definitions of relevant conduct in relation to the barring of those who pose a risk of harm to children.

5.2 A relevant conduct is a conduct which must be referred to the DBS and which could lead to a barring decision. It includes any:

- conduct which endangers a child or vulnerable adult or is likely to endanger a child or vulnerable adult
- conduct which if repeated against or in relation to a child or vulnerable adult would endanger that child or vulnerable adult
- conduct involving sexual material relating to children (including possession of such material)
- conduct involving sexually explicit images depicting violence against human beings
- conduct of a sexual nature involving a child or vulnerable adult (or in the case of a vulnerable adult - an act that is considered inappropriate)

6. Duty to refer to the DBS

6.1 The organisation acknowledges that it is mandatory to refer anyone known to pose a threat of harm to children or vulnerable people to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS). This means that the DSL must not knowingly employ anyone who poses a risk of harm to children or vulnerable adults, this includes anyone who is believed to have committed a relevant conduct while on the job or who has a record of such conduct.

6.2 The organisation has a legal duty to refer an employee or volunteer who poses a risk of harm to children or vulnerable adults to the DBS, failure to do so can result in a fine and/or up to 5 years imprisonment. There must be sufficient and solid evidence that the employee or volunteer poses a risk of harm before they can be referred to the DBS. The DBS will not consider evidence based on rumour or unsubstantiated reports. The employer should also inform the police and other relevant authorities if they believe a relevant conduct has occurred.

6.3 Referral forms can be downloaded from the DBS's website www.gov.uk/dbs.

7. The DBS's barring process

7.1 Whenever new relevant information (such as a conviction or caution) becomes known, the information will be sent to the DBS. The DBS will consider this information, together with other information known on the individual, and decide whether it indicates that the individual poses a risk of harm to vulnerable groups. If so, the DBS will commence its barring process and the DBS will issue a disclosure certificate to the applicant with the barring information.

7.2 The applicant should be advised by the designated member of staff to make a representation to the DBS regarding the barring information. The DBS will assess the barring information and representation and decide whether to bar the applicant. If there is sufficient barring evidence, the applicant will be placed on either the **Children's Barred List** or the **Vulnerable Adults Barred List** or both depending on the offence. The applicant must then be removed from regulated activity.

7.3 The applicant has the right of appeal to a tribunal and must be advised of this right. Serious offences committed against vulnerable people will lead to automatic barring and the applicant will have no right to make representations or to appeal against a barring decision.

8. Dealing with Disclosure of Abuse and Procedure for Reporting Concerns

8.1 If a child or vulnerable adult tells a member of the team about possible abuse:

a) Listen carefully and stay calm.

b) Do not interview the child or vulnerable adult, but question normally and without pressure, in order to be sure that you understand what the vulnerable adult is telling you.

c) Do not put words into the child or vulnerable adult's mouth.

d) Reassure the child/vulnerable adult that by telling you, they have done the right thing.

e) Inform the child/vulnerable adult that you must pass the information on, but that only those that need to know about it will be told. Inform them of to whom you will report the matter.

f) Note the main points carefully and as soon as possible after you receive the information.

g) Make a detailed note of the date, time, place, what the child or vulnerable adult said, did and your questions etc. Use the **Confidential Incident / Concern Report Form (Appendix 1)** to help record all the required information.

h) Staff should not investigate concerns or allegations themselves but should report them immediately to the DSL or Deputy.

8.2 If there is an immediate threat of harm, the Police should be contacted without delay.

Where it is judged that there is no immediate threat of harm, the following will occur:

- The concern should be discussed with the C.I.C. DSL and a decision made as to whether the concern warrants a referral to the statutory authorities.
- A confidential record will be made of the conversation and the circumstances surrounding it using the **Safeguarding Report template**. This record will be kept securely in the

Safeguarding Reports folder on the Google Drive, and should be password protected using the password system known to the DSL and Deputy SL. A copy of reports may be passed to statutory authorities if a referral is made.

- The person about whom the allegation is made must not be informed by anyone in the C.i.C if it is judged that to do so could place a child or adult at increased risk. If the statutory authorities are involved, they should be consulted beforehand.
- The Board of Directors should be kept informed of any serious concerns.

9. Reporting and Dealing with Allegations of Abuse against Members of Staff.

The procedures apply to all staff, whether Directors, administrative, management or support, as well as to volunteers. The word "staff" is used for ease of description.

9.1 In rare instances, staff of Christian organisations have been found responsible for child abuse. Because of their frequent contact with children and young people, staff may have allegations of child abuse made against them. The Neighbour Network CIC recognises that an allegation of child abuse made against a member of staff may be made for a variety of reasons and that the facts of the allegation may or may not be true. It is imperative that those dealing with an allegation maintain an open mind and that investigations are thorough and not subject to delay.

9.2 The Organisation recognises that the Children's Act 1989 states that the welfare of the child is of paramount concern. It is also recognised that hasty or ill-informed decisions in connection with a member of staff can irreparably damage an individual's reputation, confidence and career. Therefore, those dealing with such allegations within the organisation will do so with sensitivity and will act in a careful, measured way.

9.3 For any concerns relating to children, the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) will be contacted. The timing and method of any action to be taken will be discussed and agreed with the LADO. This will cover communication with the worker, suspension, investigation and possible strategy meetings. A decision will be taken by the LADO about when to inform the worker and the C.I.C. will follow this advice. To contact the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), please call **03000 41 08 88**, or email kentchildrenslado@kent.gov.uk

9.4 For concerns relating to adults, Adult Social Care will be contacted. Call **03000 41 61 61** or email social.services@kent.gov.uk.

9.5 In accordance with the law, a referral will be made to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) / Protecting Vulnerable Groups scheme (PVG) if the C.I.C. withdraws permission for an individual to engage in work with children / vulnerable adults OR would have done so had that individual not resigned, retired, been made redundant or been transferred to a different position because the

employer believes that the individual has engaged in relevant conduct, satisfied the harm test, or committed an offence that would lead to automatic inclusion on a barred list.

10. Safer Recruitment and Selection Procedure

The Neighbour Network CIC will follow safer recruitment and selection procedures. These should be reviewed regularly in order to ensure that they take account of the following:

- They should apply to staff and volunteers who may work with children.
- The post or role should be clearly defined.
- The key selection criteria for the post or role should be identified.
- Vacancies should be advertised widely in order to ensure a diversity of applicants.
- Obtain professional and character references.
- Verify previous employment history.
- Disclosure and Barring Service disclosure/List 99 checks (maintain sensitive and confidential use of the applicant's disclosure).
- Use a variety of selection techniques (e.g. qualifications, previous experience, interview, reference checks).

The Directors will review this policy annually, amending and updating it as required.

Last Reviewed	30/05/26
Last Updated	1/10/26