Safeguarding Policy Statement

The Volunteer Tutors Organisation (VTO) works with children and families as part of its activities. These include:

- one-to-one tuition in a child's home or in a safe, neutral environment
- one-to-one tuition via an online tutoring platform
- supported tuition within structured Learning Hubs in schools or community venues

The Purpose and Scope of this Policy Statement

The purpose of this policy statement is:
- to protect children and young people who receive VTO's services.
- to provide staff and volunteers, as well as children and young people and their families, with the overarching principles that guide our approach to child protection.

This policy statement applies to anyone working on behalf of VTO including senior managers and the board of trustees, paid staff, volunteers, sessional workers, agency staff and students.

Legal Framework

This policy has been drawn up on the basis of legislation, policy and guidance that seeks to protect children in Scotland. A summary of the key legislation and guidance is available from

https://www.gov.scot/publications/national-guidance-child-protection-scotland-2021-updated-2023/

Safeguarding Principles

We believe that:

- children and young people involved in our work should never experience abuse, harm, neglect or exploitation.
- we have a responsibility to promote the welfare of all children and young people, as well as staff and volunteers, to keep them safe and to deliver our services in a way that protects them.
- we all have a collective responsibility for creating a culture in which children, young people, staff and volunteers alike not only feel safe, but are able to speak up if they have any concerns.
- the welfare of children is paramount in all the work we do.
- all children, regardless of protected characteristics of age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation have an equal right to protection from all types of abuse, harm, neglect or exploitation.
- some children are additionally vulnerable because of the impact of previous experiences, their level of dependency, communication needs or other issues.
- working in partnership with children, young people, their parents, carers and other

agencies is essential in promoting young people's welfare.

Types of Abuse

Abuse can take many forms, such as emotional, physical, psychological, sexual abuse or neglect. Definitions of abuse and signs that may indicate that they are happening can be found in Appendix 1.

Reporting Safeguarding Concerns

If a crime is in progress, or an individual is in immediate danger, call the police as you would in any other circumstances.

For all other safeguarding concerns, where there is not an immediate danger present, contact your named VTO point of contact (Learning Communities Coordinator) in the first instance, who will escalate the concerns to a Safeguarding lead in our organisation. If they are not available, use the contact details for the Safeguarding Officers at the end of the policy.

Safeguarding concerns will be recorded and stored in accordance with GDPR legislation and shared with statutory organisations such as Social Services or the Police, who will investigate further and make provisions to keep the child or young person safe.

Further details on what to do if a child or young person makes a disclosure to you can be found in Appendix 2.

Creating a safe environment

VTO maintains a commitment to create a safe environment for children and young people as well as staff and volunteers. We do this by:

- valuing, listening to and respecting them.
- creating opportunities for children and young people to express their views, ensuring they feel safe and respected.
- appointing a nominated Child Protection & Safeguarding Lead, a Deputy Child Protection & Safeguarding Lead and a Trustee / Board Member who is the Senior Lead for Child Protection & Safeguarding.
- developing a Safeguarding policy and procedures which reflect best practice and which follow ScotGov child protection guidelines.
- recruiting staff and volunteers safely, ensuring all staff and adult volunteers are members of the Protecting Vulnerable Groups scheme.
- ensuring all staff, volunteers, children and guardians are aware of our safeguarding policy.
- ensuring all staff and volunteers are appropriately trained, both induction and annual refresher, to recognise possible signs of abuse, harm, neglect or exploitation and to respond in an appropriate way.
- ensuring staff and volunteers know how to report their concerns to the appropriate individual or agencies, involving children, young people, parents / guardians and carers where relevant.
- ensuring that staff and volunteers understand the importance of accurate recording of their concerns including any direct disclosures. Concerns about possible GDPR infringements must not stand in the way of accurate recording and appropriate reporting of child safeguarding incidents, disclosures or concerns.

- ensuring all staff are positive role models to children and young people by adhering to a code of conduct as laid out in our VTO Values; Safe, Inclusive, Responsible, Nurturing and Collaborative.
- creating and maintaining an anti-bullying environment and ensuring that we deal effectively with any bullying that does arise.
- ensuring we respond to any allegations against staff and volunteers appropriately.
- ensuring that we have an effective Complaints, Grievances and Concerns policy in place which can be easily accessed on our website https://www.vtoscotland.org/policies/
- promoting a safeguarding culture where staff, volunteers, children, young people and their families, treat each other with respect and are comfortable about sharing concerns.

While children and young people are in our care in Learning Hubs we will:

- ensure that we provide a safe physical environment for our children, young people, staff and volunteers, by applying health and safety measures in accordance with the legislation and regulatory guidance.
- ensure that children and young people are offered a snack, a drink and comfort breaks are accommodated appropriately.
- carry out and record risk assessments on our activities and manage risks in accordance with Health & Safety and Safeguarding legislation and policies.
- ensure their safety by stringently maintaining attendance registers, processes for dismissing children safely at the end of sessions and necessary permissions from their parents / guardians for their attendance and dismissal.
- ensure we have permission from parents / guardians before using photos or videos of children and young people.

While children and young people taking part in online or face-to-face tutoring we will:

- ensure that a trusted adult is present when tutoring is taking place in the home or a safe, neutral community venue. For online tutoring, this will be checked by the tutor at the start and end of every session. If no adult is present, the tutor will leave the session and report this to VTO.
- carry out and record risk assessments on our activities and manage risks in accordance with Health & Safety and Safeguarding legislation and policies.

Trustees' Safeguarding Responsibilities

Trustees will:

- lead in creating a safe environment for children and young people as well as staff and volunteers, in which everyone feels safe and able to speak up.
- receive regular reports on safeguarding concerns, ensuring that any issues are properly investigated and dealt with appropriately and that statutory authorities have been notified as required.
- review the Safeguarding policy and procedures annually.

Contact details

General	-	admin@vtoscotland.org	0141 946 6498
Nominated Child Protection & Safeguarding Lead	Paul Quinn	pquinn**@vtoscotland.org**	07308 964 942
Deputy Child Protection & Safeguarding Lead	Kesson Wilson	kwilson@vtoscotland.org	07308 967 669
Senior Lead for Child Protection & Safeguarding	Douglas Johnston (Chair)	djohnston@vtoscotland.org	07775 538 148

Signed by: Douglas Johnston (Chair)

Signature:

Date: 13th June 2024

Appendix 1: Types of abuse and signs to look for

Emotional Abuse	Physical Abuse	Sexual Abuse	Neglect
The ongoing emotional maltreatment of a child, which can have a severe and persistent negative effect on the child's emotional health and development	Deliberately hurting a child and causing physical harm	Forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities	Persistently failing to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs resulting in serious damage to their health and development
Lack of self-esteem, difficulties expressing emotions, may seem clingy, may have anger issues, difficulty forming and maintaining relationships, act in a way that is inappropriate for age, self-harm	Bruises, broken bones, burns, bite marks, effects of drowning and poisoning	Sexual behaviour disproportionate with age, self-harm, changes in mood, changes in eating habits, bruises, withdrawal, spending lots of time on internet	Poor appearance and hygiene, health and development issues, housing issues, family issues, changes in behaviour

The NSPCC details some additional risks to children and young people that don't necessarily fit into the 4 categories above. These are:

- **Child Sexual Exploitation** - is sexual abuse in which children are sexually exploited for money, power or status, they may be tricked into believing they're in a loving, consensual relationship and invited to parties, given drugs and alcohol and may also be groomed online.
- **Radicalisation** - is a non-specific word and may mean different things to different people. The Scottish Government's refers to the process by which a person comes to support terrorism and extremist ideologies associated with terrorist groups. As a form of child abuse, Children can be most vulnerable to radicalisation or extremist views during development of adolescence or early teen years when they are exposed to new influences and potentially risky behaviours. it might be very hard to identify behaviours.
- **Forced Marriage** - is a when either or both parties do not or cannot consent to the marriage and coercion is involved. It is different from an arranged marriage. A forced marriage that takes place without the full and free consent of both parties. And is against the law in Scotland and offenders can go to prison.
- **Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)** is also known as female circumcision or female genital cutting, it is a form of child abuse which can have devastating physical and psychological consequences for girls and women.
- **Domestic Abuse** is any type of controlling, bullying, threatening or violent behaviour between people in a relationship. But it isn't just physical violence – domestic abuse includes emotional, physical, sexual, financial or psychological abuse. Witnessing Domestic Abuse is child abuse, it can seriously harm children and young people. Abusive behaviour can occur in any relationship, it can continue even after the relationship has ended. Both men and women can be abused or be abusers and teenagers can experience this in their relationships.
- **Child/Human trafficking** is recruiting, moving, receiving and harbouring children for the purpose of exploitation (Scottish Government, 2013). Child trafficking is a form of modern slavery (HM Government, 2014). Many children are trafficked into the UK from overseas, but children can also be trafficked from one part of the UK to another. Children are trafficked for: Child sexual exploitation; criminal activity; forced marriage; domestic servitude; forced labour; illegal adoption; and unreported private fostering arrangements (for any exploitative purpose). This list is not exhaustive and children who are trafficked are often exploited in more than one way.
- **Online abuse**: Online abuse is any type of abuse that happens on the internet, facilitated through technology like computers, tablets, mobile phones and other internet-enabled devices (Scottish Government, 2021;). It can happen anywhere that allows digital communication, such as social networks, text messages and messaging apps, email and private messaging, online chats, comments on live streaming sites, voice chat in games. Children and young people can be re-victimised (experience further abuse) when abusive content is recorded, uploaded or shared by others online. This can happen if the original abuse happened online or offline. Children and young people can also be groomed online: perpetrators may use online platforms to build a trusting relationship with the child in order to abuse them. This abuse may happen online, or the perpetrator may arrange to meet the child in person with the intention of abusing them.

- **Sexting** is when people share a sexual message and/or a naked or semi-naked image, video or text message with another person. It's also known as nude image sharing. Children and young people may consent to sending a nude image of themselves. They can also be forced or coerced into sharing images by their peers or adults online. If a child or young person originally shares the image consensually, they have no control over how other people might use it. If the image is shared around peer groups, it may lead to bullying and isolation. Perpetrators of abuse may circulate a nude image more widely and use this to blackmail a child and/or groom them for further sexual abuse. It's a criminal offence to create or share explicit images of a child, even if the person doing it is a child. If sexting is reported to the police, they will make a record but may decide not to take any formal action against a young person.
- **Grooming** is when someone builds a relationship, trust and emotional connection with a child or young person so they can manipulate, exploit and abuse them.
- **Criminal Exploitation** is where children and young people are manipulated and coerced into committing crimes. This could include County Lines, a police term for urban gangs exploiting young people into moving drug from a hub, a large city into suburban areas and market and coastal towns.
- **Bullying** is when individuals or groups seek to harm, intimidate or coerce someone who is perceived to be vulnerable (Oxford English Dictionary, 2021). It can involve people of any age, and can happen anywhere – at home, school or using online platforms and technologies (cyberbullying). This means it can happen at any time. Bullying encompasses a range of behaviours which may be combined and may include the behaviours and actions, such as verbal abuse, physical abuse, emotional abuse, cyberbullying /online bullying. Bullying can be a form of discrimination, particularly if it is based on a child's disability, race, religion or belief, gender identity or sexuality.

Appendix 2: What to do if a child or young person makes a disclosure to you

At VTO, we follow safeguarding guidelines known as 'the 4Rs of Safeguarding', and these apply to any for form of tutoring you might be doing. (Online, face to face or within a Learning Hub).

RECOGNISE

By realising that something isn't quite right, concerns can be recorded and support can be given to children and young people

RESPOND

Respond appropriately

Don't probe or ask leading questions

Listen

Reassure young person

Don't make unrealistic promises

Explain concerns must be shared with VTO

REPORT

Report your concern to your LCC or the safeguarding team

If a child is unsafe or in immediate danger, call 999 straightaway

If supporting a child or young person out with normal working hours and need to report a concern, call out of hours safeguarding officer, Douglas Johnston on 07775 538 148

RECORD

LCC to inform safeguarding team and log details on concern form

Safeguarding team will follow up and share information with appropriate agency