

SAFEGUARDING POLICY

v2.0 (last updated Jun-25)

Introduction

At Sunshine Coast Breastfeeding Support, the safety and wellbeing of everyone who engages with our charity is our highest priority. We are committed to providing a safe, supportive, and respectful environment where all mothers, babies, children, families, volunteers, trustees, peer supporters, and anyone involved in our activities feel protected from harm, abuse, or exploitation. This policy applies to all individuals involved with the charity and covers every setting in which we operate, including our clinics, cafés, events, and any online or digital activities.

Our Commitment to Safeguarding

We recognise that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and are fully committed to promoting the welfare of all individuals we work with, protecting people from abuse, neglect, or exploitation, and creating a safe environment where concerns can be raised and responded to promptly and appropriately. We aim to support anyone who raises or discloses a safeguarding concern and ensure that our safeguarding procedures reflect best practice and comply with legal requirements. Trustees, volunteers, and representatives who are in close contact with mothers in the clinic setting receive appropriate safeguarding training to ensure they understand their responsibilities and are equipped to recognise and respond to any concerns in a timely and effective manner. While not all members of the charity receive training at this stage, the charity remains committed to ensuring that those in key safeguarding roles are properly informed and supported.

Definitions of Abuse

Abuse can take many forms, including but not limited to:

- Physical abuse: causing physical harm or injury.
- Emotional abuse: persistent emotional ill-treatment causing severe and long-term adverse effects.
- Domestic abuse: a range of controlling, coercive, or threatening behaviours between individuals in close relationships.
- Sexual abuse: any form of sexual activity without consent.
- Neglect: persistent failure to meet basic needs.

- Financial abuse: illegal or improper use of a person's money or assets.
- Discriminatory abuse: unfair treatment based on protected characteristics.
- Self-neglect: where individuals fail to care for their own basic needs, impacting their health and wellbeing.
- Organisational abuse: systemic failure to safeguard individuals.
- Modern slavery: involves human trafficking, forced labour, or exploitation.

Safeguarding Point of Contact (SPOC)

The charity has appointed a Safeguarding Point of Contact (SPOC) who is responsible for overseeing and managing all safeguarding matters. The SPOC will provide support to volunteers, trustees, and service users, ensure that safeguarding concerns are responded to appropriately and promptly, and maintain oversight of safeguarding procedures within the charity.

For Sunshine Coast Breastfeeding Support, the Safeguarding Point of Contact is Sasha Knott, who can be contacted at info@sunshinecoastbreastfeedingsupport.com.

Roles and Responsibilities

Board of Trustees:

- Take overall responsibility for ensuring safeguarding is fully embedded across all areas of Sunshine Coast Breastfeeding Support.
- Ensure all safeguarding policies and procedures are kept up to date, reviewed regularly, and meet national and local standards.
- Integrate safeguarding into the charity's activities, governance, procedures, and training.
- Oversee the provision of safeguarding training that is relevant, accessible, and regularly updated.
- Ensure volunteers and representatives in close contact with mothers are trained and competent to recognise signs of abuse, neglect, or harm, and know how to act on concerns appropriately.
- Support the Safeguarding Point of Contact (SPOC) to act promptly and effectively on any safeguarding concerns.

Safeguarding Point of Contact (SPOC):

- Act as the main point of contact for safeguarding concerns within the charity.

- Provide help and guidance to trustees, volunteers, and service users on safeguarding matters.
- Ensure safeguarding concerns are recorded, managed, and acted upon appropriately.
- Maintain confidential safeguarding records and liaise with external agencies as necessary.
- Keep their safeguarding knowledge and training up to date and in line with current best practice.

Volunteers, Peer Supporters, and Other Representatives:

- Remain alert to potential signs of abuse, neglect, or harm.
- Act on any safeguarding concerns in line with the charity's safeguarding policies.
- Complete any relevant safeguarding training appropriate to their role and refresh knowledge regularly.
- Understand and follow confidentiality principles, sharing information when necessary to protect individuals, in line with charity policies.
- Participate in safeguarding discussions or investigations when required.
- Contribute to creating a culture where safeguarding is prioritised at all times.

Safeguarding Vulnerable Infants and Adults

As our charity works with mothers, babies, and young children, additional care is taken to safeguard children and vulnerable adults. We recognise the unique vulnerabilities in these groups and ensure that our safeguarding practice reflects this responsibility.

Preventative Measures

Sunshine Coast Breastfeeding Support takes proactive steps to safeguard those we support. All trustees, and volunteers are recruited safely, with appropriate background checks. Individuals receive any safeguarding training that is appropriate and relevant to their role to ensure they are equipped to recognise and respond to concerns. Clear codes of conduct and confidentiality agreements are in place to guide behaviour and protect sensitive information. All activities are carried out with careful attention to risk assessments, health and safety procedures, and safeguarding best practice, to maintain a safe environment for everyone involved.

Raising and Reporting Concerns

At Sunshine Coast Breastfeeding Support, any information shared by parents, carers, or individuals will be treated with confidentiality and only shared on a need-to-know basis in the course of safeguarding duties. Information will not be disclosed to others without consent unless withholding it would place an infant or adult at risk of harm. In situations where it is necessary to refer concerns to local safeguarding services or statutory agencies, this will, wherever possible, be done with the knowledge and consent of the parent or carer. However, in serious situations where informing a parent or carer may increase risk to the individual, the referral may proceed without prior discussion, following consultation with appropriate safeguarding authorities such as Social Services and the Police.

If any volunteer, peer supporter, or trustee becomes concerned about the welfare or safety of an infant or adult, they must;

Always

- Seek appropriate advice and support.
- Discuss concerns with the charity's Safeguarding Point of Contact within 24 hours.
- Record all details of the concern as soon as possible.

Never

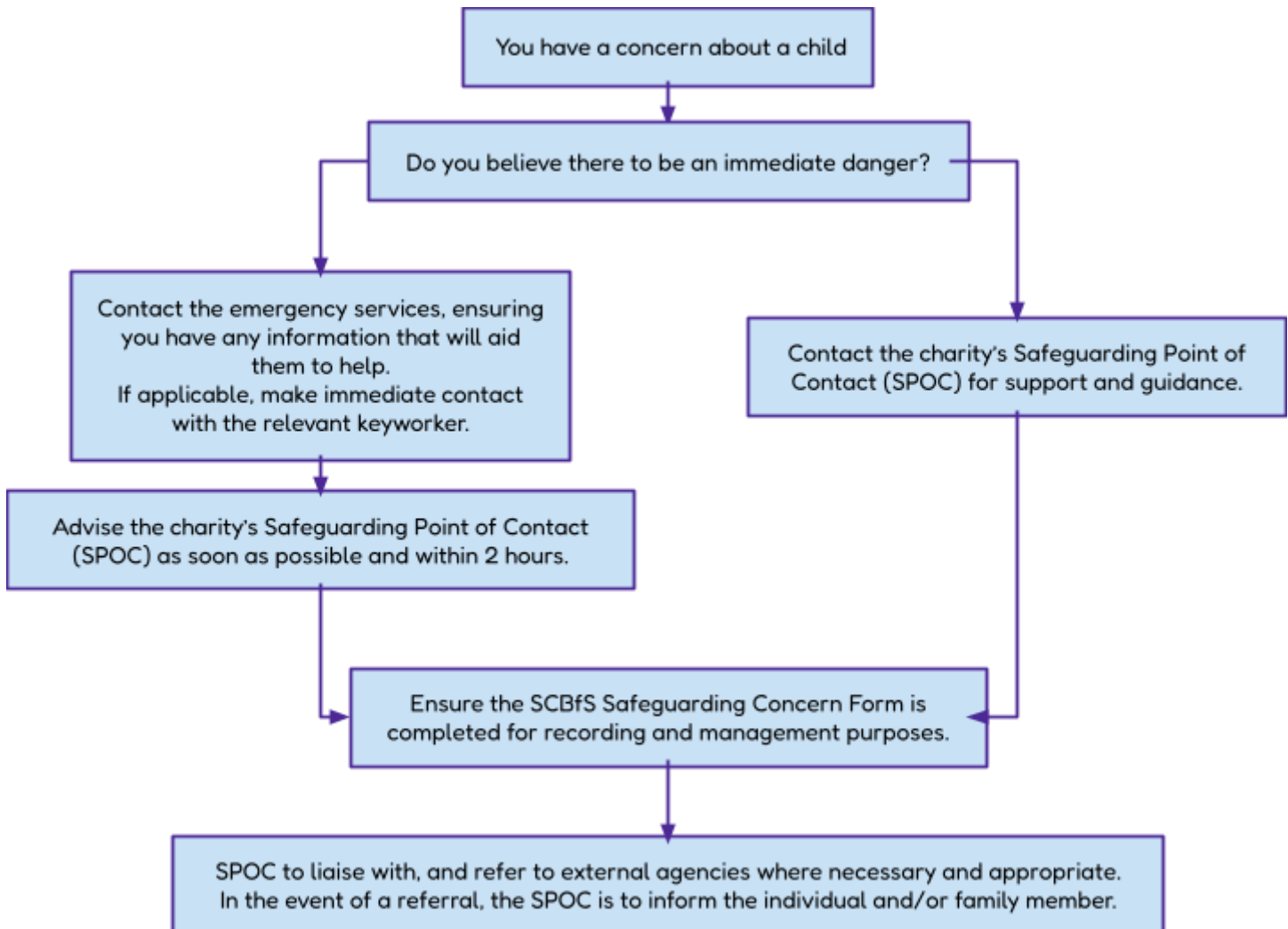
- Do nothing.
- Assume that someone else will take action.
- Attempt to investigate or resolve any safeguarding concerns themselves.

All safeguarding concerns are to be reported following the charity's safeguarding reporting process. The Safeguarding Point of Contact can be contacted via email in the first instance, with emergency contact available if immediate advice is needed.

A flowchart in figure 1 represents the process for reporting safeguarding concerns.



Figure 1



Allegations about Trustees or Volunteers

At Sunshine Coast Breastfeeding Support, we take any allegations or concerns about the conduct of trustees, volunteers, or anyone acting on behalf of the charity extremely seriously. All individuals representing the charity are expected to uphold the highest standards of behaviour, integrity, and safeguarding at all times.

If an allegation is made that suggests a trustee, volunteer, or any other representative of the charity has:

- Behaved in a way that has harmed, or may have harmed, a child or vulnerable adult;
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against, or related to, a child or vulnerable adult; or
- Behaved towards a child, vulnerable adult, or others in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm,

The matter will be referred without delay to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), who is responsible for managing allegations against individuals who work or volunteer with children or vulnerable adults. This process ensures that allegations are managed appropriately, fairly, and in line with statutory safeguarding procedures.

While the LADO process is underway, the individual concerned may be suspended from their duties as a precautionary measure, depending on the nature and seriousness of the allegation. The decision to suspend will be made by the board of trustees, taking into account the best interests of all parties and the advice of safeguarding professionals.

All allegations will be treated with the utmost confidentiality and sensitivity, in line with our Confidentiality Policy and Data Protection Policy. Records of any allegations, investigations, and outcomes will be securely maintained.

Support will be provided to both the individual making the allegation and the person against whom the allegation has been made, recognising the impact that such situations can have on all involved.

The charity will fully cooperate with all external investigations and act on any recommendations or outcomes arising from the LADO process to ensure the ongoing safety and wellbeing of the children and families we support.

Domestic Abuse

Sunshine Coast Breastfeeding Support recognises that domestic abuse can have a significant impact on the wellbeing and safety of both adults and children. Domestic abuse may take many forms, including physical violence, emotional abuse, controlling or coercive behaviour, financial abuse, and sexual abuse. It can occur in any relationship, regardless of gender, age, or background.

The charity is committed to creating a safe and supportive environment where individuals feel able to disclose concerns about domestic abuse. All volunteers, trustees, and individuals working on the charity's behalf, will handle any disclosure of domestic abuse sensitively, respectfully, and in confidence, following the principles of our safeguarding and confidentiality policies. Information will only be shared with appropriate services where necessary to protect the safety and welfare of those involved.

Where concerns of domestic abuse arise, the Safeguarding Point of Contact will assess the situation and, if appropriate, make referrals to specialist domestic abuse services, safeguarding partners, or statutory agencies in line with current safeguarding procedures. Our team is trained to recognise potential signs of domestic abuse and understands the importance of responding appropriately to ensure the safety of all individuals affected.

Whistleblowing

At Sunshine Coast Breastfeeding Support, we want everyone involved with the charity to feel confident and supported in raising any concerns they may have about the safety or conduct of individuals, or about any practices that may put children, vulnerable adults, volunteers, staff, or the charity itself at risk. If you are worried that something may be wrong, please do not keep it to yourself. Raising concerns early allows us to respond promptly and appropriately, and often there may be a simple explanation. However, unless concerns are raised, we may not be aware until it is too late.

We encourage anyone who has a safeguarding concern, or any concern about wrongdoing, malpractice or unsafe practices, to speak up as soon as possible. If you feel comfortable, speak to the Safeguarding Point of Contact or a trustee in the first instance. If you feel unable to do so, or if you feel your concerns have not been taken seriously or appropriately handled, you are encouraged to refer to our Whistleblowing Policy, which provides further guidance on how to escalate your concern safely and confidentially.

Raising a concern in good faith will never disadvantage your position or involvement with the charity. All whistleblowing reports will be treated seriously, handled sensitively, and kept confidential as far as possible.

Confidentiality

Safeguarding concerns will be handled with confidentiality and information will only be shared with those who need to know in order to protect the welfare of the individuals concerned. This policy operates in line with our Confidentiality Policy and Data Protection Policy.

Information Sharing

Effective and appropriate information sharing is essential to safeguarding and protecting the welfare of children, vulnerable adults, and families who engage with Sunshine Coast Breastfeeding Support. In many situations, only when information from multiple sources is shared can risks be fully understood and the necessary support provided.

We are committed to sharing information responsibly, and always in line with our Confidentiality Policy and Data Protection Policy. The Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR are not barriers to sharing information where the purpose is to safeguard an individual's welfare; rather, they provide a framework to ensure information is shared appropriately and lawfully.

Whenever possible, we aim to be open and honest with individuals and their families about why, how, and with whom information may be shared. Consent to share personal information should usually be sought, and individuals should be informed of how their information will be used. However, in some circumstances it may be necessary to share information without consent if seeking consent would place a child or vulnerable adult at further risk, or if it is not practicable to obtain consent in a timely manner. Decisions to share information without consent will always be made with great care and in the best interests of the individual concerned.

When sharing information for safeguarding purposes, we ensure that:

- The information shared is necessary, proportionate, relevant, accurate, timely, and secure.
- Information is shared only with those who need to know in order to protect the individual.
- Advice is sought if there is uncertainty about sharing information, wherever possible without disclosing personal details until a decision has been made.

- All decisions, whether to share or not share information, are clearly recorded, including the reasons for the decision, what was shared, with whom, and for what purpose.
- Any information shared is kept confidential and handled securely in accordance with our data protection obligations.

Where there is a safeguarding concern, information may be shared with statutory agencies such as Children's Social Care, Adult Social Services, the Police, or other relevant safeguarding authorities, even if consent has not been given, if this is necessary to protect a person from significant harm or risk.

For further guidance, staff and volunteers should also refer to our Confidentiality Policy and Data Protection Policy, which outline our broader responsibilities around handling personal data.

Changes to This Policy

We may update this policy from time to time to ensure it remains effective and up to date. The latest version will always be published on our website and dated clearly at the top of the page.

How to Get in Touch With Us

If you have any questions about this Policy or how we handle your data, please contact us by email at info@sunshinecoastbreastfeedingsupport.com.