SIDEMISSION SOCIAL

SAFEGUARDING & CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

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Purpose & Commitment

Side Mission Social is committed to providing a safe, welcoming, accessible and inclusive environment where young people can participate, develop skills, build confidence and explore their interests.

The safety and welfare of everyone involved in our activities is a priority. We recognise our responsibility to take concerns seriously, respond appropriately to suspected abuse or harm, and work with relevant agencies to protect children and young people.

We will take reasonable steps to prevent harm, ensure staff and volunteers understand their responsibilities, and create an environment in which participants feel able to raise concerns and ask for help.

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. Any concern must be acted upon, even where the person raising it is uncertain whether abuse or harm has occurred.

Scope

This policy applies to all Side Mission Social directors, employees, volunteers, sessional workers, contractors, guest contributors and anyone representing the organisation.

- It covers all activities delivered or organised by Side Mission Social, including:
- Core programmes and informal youth club sessions.
- Creative, digital, music and technology activities.
- Workshops delivered at partner venues.
- Publications, photography, filming and online activities.
- Events, trips, visits and other off-site activities.
- Contact with participants through organisational communication channels.
- Our initial programmes are intended for young people aged 13–17 and 18–23.

Children under 18 are covered by child safeguarding arrangements. For participants aged 18–23, we will respond to concerns using appropriate adult safeguarding procedures where applicable, alongside our general safeguarding responsibilities. The Care Act 2014 adult safeguarding framework applies where its statutory criteria are met.

Safeguarding Principles

Side Mission Social will:

Put the safety and welfare of participants first.

Listen to young people, take their views seriously and treat them with respect

Provide an inclusive environment without discrimination, bullying, harassment or abuse.

Recognise that children and young people may face different barriers to seeking help or disclosing concerns.

Take concerns seriously, respond promptly and record information accurately.

Share relevant information with appropriate agencies when necessary to protect someone from harm.

Maintain clear professional boundaries.

Ensure staff, volunteers and contributors understand this policy before undertaking relevant duties.

Review our procedures in response to learning, feedback, incidents and changes in guidance.

Legal and Guidance Framework

This policy will be implemented in line with relevant legislation, statutory guidance and local safeguarding procedures, including:

Children Act 1989 and Children Act 2004.

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026.

Current information-sharing guidance for safeguarding children and young people.

Doncaster Safeguarding Children Partnership procedures and referral pathways.

Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 and relevant Disclosure and Barring Service requirements.

Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR.

Equality Act 2010.

Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 and relevant Prevent guidance.

Care Act 2014 and relevant adult safeguarding procedures, where applicable.

We will monitor relevant updates and amend this policy when necessary. Education-specific guidance will be used where relevant as a reference point, without assuming every school requirement automatically applies to our organisation.

Roles and Responsibilities

Company directors

The directors are responsible for ensuring that Side Mission Social has suitable safeguarding arrangements, policies, resources and oversight. They will ensure that concerns about the organisation or its personnel are handled appropriately and that required action is taken.

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

The DSL will be responsible for coordinating safeguarding arrangements, receiving and recording concerns, advising staff and volunteers, making or supporting referrals to relevant agencies, and maintaining secure safeguarding records.

The DSL will monitor changes to local procedures and relevant guidance and arrange appropriate safeguarding training.

Deputy DSL

The deputy will support the DSL and take responsibility when the DSL is unavailable or where a concern involves the DSL.

Staff, volunteers and contributors

Everyone involved in delivery must understand this policy, maintain professional boundaries, remain alert to signs of harm, report concerns promptly and cooperate with safeguarding procedures.

Safeguarding responsibility cannot be passed solely to the DSL. Anyone who believes someone is in immediate danger must contact the emergency services directly.

Designated Safeguarding Lead

Before delivery begins, Side Mission Social will formally appoint a DSL and deputy, with appropriate training and authority to carry out their responsibilities.

The names and contact details of these individuals will be recorded in the final approved policy and made available to staff, volunteers and relevant partners.

The DSL will ensure that concerns are acted upon promptly. Where a concern relates to the DSL, it must be reported to the deputy or a company director. Where a concern relates to a director or cannot be addressed safely through internal arrangements, advice must be sought from the appropriate external safeguarding authority.

Recognising Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation

Abuse and harm may be physical, emotional, sexual or neglect-related. They may occur within families, peer groups, relationships, institutions, online environments or the wider community.

Concerns may include:

- Unexplained injuries, repeated injuries or explanations that cause concern.
- Significant changes in behaviour, mood, appearance or wellbeing.
- Signs of neglect, unmet basic needs or unsafe living conditions.
- Bullying, harassment, discrimination or harmful behaviour between participants.
- Sexual abuse, sexual harassment, grooming or inappropriate relationships.
- Child sexual exploitation, criminal exploitation, coercion or trafficking.
- Domestic abuse, including children affected by abuse within the home or their own relationships.
- Online abuse, threats, exploitation, harmful content or pressure to share images.
- Self-harm, suicidal thoughts or other concerns about immediate safety.
- Radicalisation concerns or pressure to engage with extremist activity.
- Disclosures or information from a parent, carer, partner organisation or another person.

This list is not exhaustive. A concern does not need to fit a particular category before it is reported.

Staff and volunteers must not investigate suspected abuse themselves or attempt to establish whether an allegation is true.

Responding to a Disclosure or Concern

If a young person discloses abuse or another safeguarding concern, staff and volunteers must:

1. Listen calmly and take the person seriously.
2. Allow them to explain in their own words without interrupting unnecessarily.
3. Reassure them that they have done the right thing by speaking up.
4. Explain that information may need to be shared with people who can help keep them safe.
5. Ask only limited, open questions necessary to understand the immediate concern. Do not lead the person or investigate.
6. Establish whether there is an immediate danger or urgent medical need.
7. Report the concern to the DSL as soon as possible and record it accurately.

Do not promise secrecy, express disbelief, confront the alleged abuser or ask the person to repeat their account to multiple people unnecessarily.

If someone is in immediate danger or requires an emergency response, call 999. Do not delay emergency action while trying to contact the DSL.

If the DSL is unavailable, or a delay could increase risk, staff must contact the relevant safeguarding service directly.

Recording and Reporting Concerns

All safeguarding concerns, disclosures, incidents and relevant decisions must be recorded promptly using the organisation's safeguarding concern form.

Records should include, where known:

The participant's name and relevant identifying details.

The date, time and location of the concern.

What was observed, reported or disclosed.

The person's own words where possible.

Any immediate action taken.

Who was informed and when.

Advice received, referrals made and decisions taken.

Records must distinguish between facts, direct observations, reported information and professional opinions. Staff must not speculate, add unnecessary personal comments or alter records in a way that obscures the original account.

Safeguarding records must be stored securely with access restricted to authorised people. They must not be kept in general programme files, personal messaging accounts or unsecured shared folders.

Referrals and Working with Doncaster Safeguarding Services

Where there is a concern that a child may be at risk of abuse or harm, the DSL or another appropriate person will contact Doncaster's children's safeguarding service and follow current Doncaster Safeguarding Children Partnership procedures.

Current child safeguarding contact: 01302 737777.

Out-of-hours contact: 01302 796000.

Immediate danger: 999.

The current referral route and contact details must be checked against the Doncaster Safeguarding Children Partnership website before this policy is approved and whenever the policy is reviewed.

The organisation will provide relevant information to safeguarding agencies and cooperate with appropriate enquiries. We will not assume that a concern has been dealt with simply because it has been passed to another person.

Where a concern does not meet the threshold for statutory intervention, we may seek advice about early help or other appropriate support. Consent requirements for early help will be followed, while recognising that safeguarding information may need to be shared without consent where the law permits or requires it.

Early Help and Additional Support

Some concerns may indicate that a young person or family needs additional support before difficulties escalate.

Where appropriate, and with relevant consent, Side Mission Social may work with families, schools, youth services and other support organisations to help participants access suitable services.

Early help does not replace child protection action where a child may be at risk of significant harm. Where the level of concern changes, the matter must be reassessed and escalated as necessary.

Allegations Against Staff, Volunteers or Contributors

Any allegation or concern that a member of staff, volunteer, contractor or contributor may have harmed a child, placed a child at risk, or behaved in a way that raises questions about their suitability to work with children must be taken seriously and reported immediately.

The concern must be reported to the DSL or, where it concerns the DSL, to the deputy or an appropriate director.

The organisation will seek advice from the relevant local authority designated officer (LADO) or other appropriate safeguarding authority and follow local procedures. We will not conduct an internal investigation that could compromise an external investigation.

Where necessary, the individual may be removed from duties or have contact with participants restricted while appropriate advice is obtained. Any action will be proportionate and handled fairly.

Where the legal criteria are met, the organisation will make the required referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service.

Safer Recruitment and DBS Checks

Side Mission Social will use appropriate safer recruitment procedures for employees, volunteers and other people working with participants.

These may include identity and reference checks, role descriptions, interviews, checks of relevant experience, safeguarding questions, induction and supervision.

DBS checks will be assessed according to the duties involved and the relevant legal eligibility criteria. An enhanced DBS check, with a children's barred list check where legally permitted and applicable, will be obtained for roles that meet the relevant requirements. Checks will not be requested at a level for which a role is ineligible.

A DBS certificate alone does not establish that someone is suitable to work with young people. Recruitment decisions will take account of all relevant information and safeguarding considerations.

No person will undertake duties requiring a completed check until the appropriate recruitment and clearance requirements have been met. Where any permitted supervised arrangement is considered, it must be assessed and managed in line with applicable guidance and risk.

Professional Boundaries and Appropriate Conduct

Everyone representing Side Mission Social must behave professionally and protect participants from inappropriate relationships, pressure, favouritism and abuse of trust.

Staff, volunteers and contributors must:

Treat participants respectfully and fairly.

Avoid sexualised, threatening, humiliating or discriminatory language and behaviour.

Avoid inappropriate personal relationships or private arrangements with participants.

Use approved organisational communication channels wherever possible.

Avoid private contact with under-18s through personal social media or messaging accounts.

Avoid being alone with a participant in circumstances that cannot be justified or appropriately managed.

Follow agreed procedures for transport, trips, physical assistance and one-to-one support.

Never use physical punishment, intimidation or inappropriate restraint.

Report boundary concerns or breaches of this policy.

Any necessary one-to-one support must be planned, proportionate and managed in a way that protects both the participant and the adult providing support.

Online and Digital Safeguarding

Because Side Mission Social will use digital media, websites, gaming, music technology and online communications, online safeguarding will form part of our delivery arrangements.

We will take reasonable steps to manage risks including cyberbullying, harassment, grooming, inappropriate contact, harmful content, misuse of personal information and the sharing of images.

Organisational accounts and communication channels will be managed appropriately. Access to equipment, online platforms and participant information will be controlled according to the activity and the participant's needs.

Staff must report online safeguarding concerns in the same way as other concerns. Relevant evidence should be preserved where safe and appropriate, without circulating harmful material or conducting their own investigation.

Photography, Filming and Social Media

Photography, filming and the use of participants' creative work will be managed through a separate consent and media procedure.

Appropriate consent and permissions will be obtained before identifiable images or recordings are used publicly. Young people will be given suitable information about how their images or work may be used, and their wishes will be respected alongside any necessary parent or carer permissions for under-18s.

Consent for publicity will not be a condition of participation. Images and recordings must not be taken or shared in inappropriate settings or used in ways that expose participants to avoidable risk.

Any concern about image misuse, online sharing or consent must be reported and managed promptly.

Peer-on-Peer Abuse and Harmful Behaviour

Side Mission Social recognises that children and young people may harm, intimidate, exploit or abuse their peers. This may include bullying, discriminatory behaviour, physical violence, sexual harassment, sexual violence, coercion and harmful online conduct.

Such behaviour will not be dismissed as harmless banter or an ordinary part of growing up.

Concerns will be assessed promptly, with attention to the safety and support needs of everyone involved. Staff will avoid making assumptions based on age, gender, disability, background or relationships between participants.

Where a child may be at risk of significant harm, or the behaviour may constitute a criminal offence, the appropriate safeguarding authorities or police will be contacted as necessary.

Exploitation and Wider Community Risks

We recognise that risks to young people may arise outside the organisation, including in public spaces, peer groups, relationships and online environments.

Staff should remain alert to signs of grooming, criminal or sexual exploitation, coercion, trafficking, serious violence and other forms of contextual harm.

Concerns will be shared with the DSL and referred to the appropriate agencies. The organisation will not attempt to investigate suspected exploitation independently.

Domestic Abuse, Prevent and Other Specific Risks

Staff must be alert to safeguarding concerns arising from domestic abuse, harmful relationships, radicalisation, discrimination, self-harm and other circumstances that may place a participant at risk.

Concerns will be considered individually and handled through the appropriate safeguarding route. Prevent-related concerns will be approached proportionately and without stereotyping individuals or communities.

Staff will seek advice from the DSL and relevant specialist services. Immediate danger or urgent threats must be referred to the emergency services as appropriate.

Missing Participants and Emergencies

Side Mission Social will maintain attendance records and appropriate emergency contact details for activities.

If a participant cannot be accounted for, staff will follow the organisation's missing participant procedure, taking account of age, individual circumstances, known risks and the nature of the activity. The DSL, parent or carer where appropriate, and relevant authorities will be contacted according to the circumstances.

For trips and events, arrangements will include suitable supervision, emergency contacts, agreed meeting points and clear procedures for separation, late collection and other foreseeable risks.

Immediate danger, serious injury or a suspected crime will be escalated to the emergency services as appropriate.

Safeguarding Participants Aged 18–23

Participants aged 18–23 will be treated as adults, with respect for their autonomy, privacy and rights.

Where an adult may be experiencing abuse or neglect, staff will listen, respond sensitively and help them access appropriate support. Where the adult safeguarding criteria under the Care Act 2014 are met, the DSL will seek advice or make a referral through the appropriate local authority route.

Consent and decision-making capacity will be considered appropriately, without assuming that a disability or support need automatically means someone lacks capacity.

Where a concern involves an adult who may pose a risk to a child, or indicates that a child is also at risk, the relevant child safeguarding procedures must be followed.

Training and Awareness

All staff, volunteers and relevant contributors will receive safeguarding information appropriate to their roles before working with participants.

The DSL and deputy will undertake training appropriate to their responsibilities, including relevant Doncaster Safeguarding Children Partnership training. Refresher training and updates will be arranged as appropriate.

The organisation will maintain records of training and ensure people know how to recognise, report and respond to concerns.

Whistleblowing and Escalation

Anyone who has a concern about unsafe practice, a failure to respond to a safeguarding issue or the conduct of a person representing Side Mission Social must be able to raise it without fear of retaliation.

Concerns should be reported to the DSL, deputy or a director as appropriate. If internal reporting is unsafe, ineffective or involves the person receiving the concern, the individual should contact the relevant external safeguarding authority directly.

The organisation will take concerns seriously and will not tolerate victimisation of anyone raising a safeguarding concern in good faith.

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The organisation will take concerns seriously and will not tolerate victimisation of anyone raising a safeguarding concern in good faith.

Monitoring and Review

The directors will ensure this policy is reviewed at least annually, after a significant safeguarding incident, or when legislation, guidance or local procedures change.

Reviews will consider feedback, incidents, training, changes in activities and lessons from relevant safeguarding agencies.

All staff, volunteers and contributors will be informed of significant changes. The approved policy will be made available to relevant participants, families, partners and funders as appropriate.

Key Contacts and Referral Routes

Emergency services: 999 where someone is in immediate danger or requires an emergency response.

Doncaster child safeguarding referrals: 01302 737777.

Doncaster out-of-hours child safeguarding contact: 01302 796000.

Doncaster Safeguarding Children Partnership: https://dscp.org.uk/

Designated Safeguarding Lead: To be completed before approval.

Deputy DSL: To be completed before approval.

Relevant adult safeguarding contact: To be confirmed from current Doncaster Council procedures before approval.

Contact details and referral routes must be verified at the time of approval and checked during each policy review.

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Approval:

This policy was approved by the directors of Side Mission Social on:

Director name and signature:

Director name and signature:

Next review date: