



Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy

The Fatherhood Project

Effective Date: May 2026

1. Policy Statement

The Fatherhood Project is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all children, young people, and vulnerable adults who engage with our services. We recognise our responsibility to take all reasonable steps to promote safe practice and to protect individuals from harm, abuse, and exploitation.

This policy applies to all staff, volunteers, mentors, trustees, and anyone working on behalf of The Fatherhood Project, whether in a paid or unpaid capacity.

While The Fatherhood Project utilizes grassroots community outreach and word-of-mouth to recruit highly relatable mentors with lived experience, all candidates are strictly processed through our formal Safer Recruitment Policy. This includes standardized application forms, two-panel interviews, mandatory Enhanced DBS checks, and a structured probationary period to ensure total youth safety.

Legislative Framework (2026): This policy is informed by and compliant with Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026, the London Safeguarding Children Procedures (2026 update), Safeguarding Adolescents in London (SAIL) guidance (January 2026), the Care Act 2014, the Bedfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership Strategic Plan 2023-2026, and the Bedford Borough & Central Bedfordshire Safeguarding Adults Board procedures. It aligns with the requirements of all London boroughs and Bedfordshire local authority safeguarding partnerships.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Protect children and vulnerable adults who receive The Fatherhood Project's services
- Provide staff, volunteers, and mentors with the overarching principles that guide our approach to safeguarding
- Ensure The Fatherhood Project meets its legal and moral obligations in relation to safeguarding
- Create a safe and positive environment in which children and vulnerable adults can thrive
- Demonstrate best practice in safeguarding to partner organisations and funders

3. Scope

This policy applies to all activities undertaken by or on behalf of The Fatherhood Project, including but not limited to:

- One-to-one mentoring sessions
- Group workshops and programmes
- Community outreach events
- Online interactions and digital services
- Residential activities or trips
- Any contact with service users in any setting

4. Key Definitions

Child: Anyone under the age of 18 years.

Vulnerable Adult: A person aged 18 or over who is, or may be, in need of community care services by reason of mental or other disability, age, or illness, and who is or may be unable to take care of themselves or protect themselves against significant harm or exploitation.

Safeguarding: The action taken to promote the welfare of children and vulnerable adults and protect them from harm. This includes preventing impairment of health or development, ensuring safe and effective care, and taking action to enable all individuals to have the best outcomes.

Abuse: A form of maltreatment. This may include physical, emotional, sexual, financial abuse, neglect, or exploitation. Abuse can occur in any relationship and may result in significant harm to, or exploitation of, the person subjected to it.

DBS Check: Disclosure and Barring Service check, which helps employers make safer recruitment decisions by providing criminal record information.

5. Safer Recruitment

The Fatherhood Project is committed to safer recruitment practices to help deter, reject, or identify people who might abuse children or vulnerable adults. All recruitment follows a structured 7-step process:

Step 1 - Outreach and Attraction: Candidates are identified through grassroots community networks and word-of-mouth referrals, targeting individuals with relevant lived experience.

Step 2 - Application: All candidates must complete a standardised application form declaring any relevant convictions, cautions, or concerns.

Step 3 - Two-Panel Interview: Candidates undergo a formal two-panel interview assessing values alignment, safeguarding awareness, and suitability for working with young people.

Step 4 - References: A minimum of two professional references are obtained and verified before any offer is made.

Step 5 - Enhanced DBS Check: All candidates must undergo an Enhanced DBS check with barred list check. No candidate may commence unsupervised work until clearance is received.

Step 6 - Induction and Training: Successful candidates complete mandatory safeguarding training, including recognising abuse, reporting procedures, and professional boundaries.

Step 7 - Probationary Period: All new mentors and staff serve a structured probationary period with regular supervision, observation, and review before confirmation in role.

6. Roles and Responsibilities

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL): Stephanie

The DSL is responsible for:

- Acting as the first point of contact for all safeguarding concerns
- Ensuring this policy is implemented and followed
- Managing referrals to local authority children's or adult services (London boroughs and Bedfordshire)
- Liaising with the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) where concerns involve staff or volunteers
- Maintaining accurate and secure safeguarding records
- Ensuring all staff and volunteers receive appropriate training
- Reporting to the Board of Trustees on safeguarding matters
- Completing Level 3 DSL training (refreshed every two years)

Board of Trustees:

- Holds overall accountability for safeguarding within the organisation
- Ensures adequate resources are allocated to safeguarding
- Reviews this policy annually
- Appoints a designated trustee for safeguarding oversight

All Staff, Volunteers, and Mentors:

- Familiarise themselves with this policy and follow its procedures
- Attend mandatory safeguarding training and refreshers
- Report any concerns immediately to the DSL (Stephanie)
- Maintain appropriate professional boundaries at all times
- Never promise confidentiality to a child or vulnerable adult making a disclosure
- Cooperate fully with any safeguarding investigation

7. Recognising Abuse and Reporting

Types of Abuse:

- **Physical abuse:** Hitting, shaking, burning, or otherwise causing physical harm
- **Emotional abuse:** Persistent emotional maltreatment causing severe adverse effects
- **Sexual abuse:** Forcing or enticing involvement in sexual activities
- **Neglect:** Persistent failure to meet basic physical or psychological needs
- **Financial abuse:** Theft, fraud, or exploitation of money or assets (vulnerable adults)
- **Exploitation:** Including county lines, radicalisation, or criminal exploitation

Signs to Look For:

- Unexplained injuries or changes in behaviour
- Withdrawal, fearfulness, or aggression
- Inappropriate sexual behaviour or language
- Poor hygiene, hunger, or inadequate clothing
- Reluctance to go home or be with certain individuals

Reporting Procedure:

1. Listen carefully and reassure the individual
2. Do not promise confidentiality
3. Record what was said using the individual's own words
4. Report immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead
5. Do not investigate or confront the alleged abuser
6. Complete a written Safeguarding Concern Form within 24 hours
7. The DSL will assess and refer to the appropriate authority

8. Reporting Procedure (Detailed)

All staff, volunteers, and mentors must follow this procedure when a safeguarding concern arises. This applies whether the concern is disclosed directly, observed, or reported by a third party.

Step 1 - Receive the Disclosure or Identify the Concern

- Listen calmly and take the person seriously
- Do not express shock, disgust, or disbelief
- Do not ask leading questions - let them speak in their own words
- Reassure them that they have done the right thing by telling you
- Do NOT promise confidentiality - explain you must share the information to keep them safe

Step 2 - Record Immediately

- Write down exactly what was said, using the person's own words
- Note the date, time, location, and who was present
- Record any visible injuries (do not photograph without consent)
- Sign and date your record
- Use The Fatherhood Project Safeguarding Concern Form

Step 3 - Report to the Designated Safeguarding Lead

- Contact the DSL immediately (same day, within 1 hour where possible)
- If the DSL is unavailable, contact the Deputy DSL
- If neither is available and a child/adult is at immediate risk, call 999
- Hand over your written record to the DSL

Step 4 - DSL Assessment and Referral

The DSL will:

- Assess the concern against safeguarding thresholds
- Decide whether to refer to the relevant local authority:
 - London boroughs: Contact the relevant borough's MASH (Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub)
 - Bedfordshire: Central Bedfordshire Integrated Front Door: 0300 300 8585
 - Bedford Borough children's services or adult safeguarding as appropriate
- Make the referral within 24 hours of receiving the concern
- Follow up any verbal referral in writing within 48 hours

Step 5 - Follow-Up and Recording

- The DSL records all actions taken and outcomes
- The referrer is informed of the outcome (where appropriate)
- All records are stored securely in the Safeguarding Log

Emergency Contacts:

- Police (immediate danger): 999
- Police (non-emergency): 101
- NSPCC Helpline: 0800 800 5000
- Central Bedfordshire (children): 0300 300 8585
- Central Bedfordshire (adults): 0300 300 8122
- Out of hours (Bedfordshire): 0300 300 8123
- Childline: 0800 1111

9. Enhanced DBS Check Requirements

The Fatherhood Project requires Enhanced DBS checks with barred list checks for **all** individuals who work with or have access to children and vulnerable adults. This is a non-negotiable requirement.

Who Must Be Checked:

- All paid staff (full-time, part-time, and casual)
- All managers and senior leadership
- All volunteer mentors
- Trustees with direct contact with service users
- Any contractor or freelancer in a regulated activity role
- Students on placement

Level of Check Required:

Enhanced DBS with Children's and/or Adults' Barred List check. This is legally required because all roles within The Fatherhood Project involve regulated activity - unsupervised work with children or vulnerable adults including teaching, training, mentoring, care, supervision, or advice.

Process (2026 Compliant):

1. Confirm the role is eligible for Enhanced DBS (all TFP roles qualify)
2. The organisation submits the check via a registered Umbrella Body
3. Applicant provides identity documents for verification
4. Application is submitted specifying "child workforce" and/or "adult workforce"
5. Volunteers are processed free of charge under the legal volunteer definition
6. No individual may commence unsupervised work until the DBS certificate is received and reviewed
7. Any disclosed information triggers a formal risk assessment by the DSL and management

Ongoing Compliance:

- All staff and volunteers are encouraged to join the DBS Update Service for continuous monitoring
- DBS checks are renewed every 3 years as a minimum
- A central DBS register is maintained by the DSL recording check dates, certificate numbers, and renewal dates
- Any change in criminal record status must be self-declared immediately

2026 Legislative Note: From 21 January 2026, self-employed individuals in regulated activity can apply for Enhanced DBS without an employer countersignature. This does not change the process for TFP employees or volunteers - the organisation continues to submit checks on their behalf via the Umbrella Body.

8. Code of Conduct

All staff, volunteers, and mentors must adhere to the following code of conduct when working with children and vulnerable adults:

You must:

- Treat all individuals with dignity and respect
- Maintain appropriate professional boundaries at all times
- Ensure that wherever possible, one-to-one meetings take place in visible, accessible spaces
- Report any concerns, disclosures, or allegations immediately
- Keep accurate records of sessions and interactions
- Attend all mandatory training and supervision sessions
- Follow data protection and confidentiality procedures

You must not:

- Engage in any form of inappropriate physical contact
- Use inappropriate language or make suggestive remarks
- Develop personal or sexual relationships with service users
- Share personal contact details (phone, social media) with service users
- Give or receive gifts without prior management approval
- Transport service users in your personal vehicle without authorisation
- Take photographs of service users without written consent
- Administer medication unless specifically trained and authorised
- Be under the influence of alcohol or drugs during any activity

9. Training and Development

The Fatherhood Project ensures that all personnel receive appropriate safeguarding training:

- **Induction:** All new staff and volunteers complete safeguarding awareness training before commencing duties
- **Level 1:** Basic safeguarding awareness for all personnel (refreshed annually)
- **Level 2:** Enhanced training for those in regular contact with children and vulnerable adults
- **Level 3:** Designated Safeguarding Lead training (refreshed every two years)
- **Specialist:** Additional training as required (e.g. online safety, county lines, domestic abuse)

10. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed:

- Annually as a minimum
- Following any safeguarding incident or concern
- When there are changes to legislation or statutory guidance
- When there are significant changes to the organisation's activities

The Board of Trustees is responsible for approving any amendments to this policy.

Policy Owner: Designated Safeguarding Lead

Approved by: Board of Trustees

Next Review Date: May 2027