Safeguarding Policy

Table of Contents

Policy Statement 2
Scope 2
Supporting Policies and Procedures 2
Our Safeguarding Principles 3
Our Safeguarding Commitments 3
Key Definitions 5
- Child 5
- Adult at Risk 5
- Safeguarding 5
- Abuse, Neglect and Harm 5
- Significant Harm 5

Roles and Responsibilities 5
- Board of Trustees 5
- Chair of the Safeguarding Panel 6
- Safeguarding Lead Officer 6
- Deputy Safeguarding Lead Officer 6
- Safeguarding Officers 6
- Staff and Volunteers 6

Information Sharing 7
Quality Assurance 7
- Safeguarding Panel Oversight 7
- Safeguarding Training and Compliance Monitoring 7
- Case Audits and Spot Checking 7
- Policy Review 8

Appendix A – Legislative Framework 9
- Key legislation and guidance in England 9
- Key legislation and guidance in Northern Ireland 10
- Key legislation and guidance in Scotland 10
- Key legislation and guidance in Wales 10

Policy Statement

Missing People is committed to the principle and practice of safeguarding. Our vision is that every missing person is found safe. We offer a lifeline to the 170,000 people who run away and go missing each year. For those left behind, we provide specialised support and the chance to connect with others who are missing a loved one. It is through these services that we aim to safeguard and protect children, young people and adults.

We believe that everyone has the right to be safe from abuse, exploitation and harm. We are committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people and adults irrespective of age, ability, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, and any other protected characteristics as stated by Equality Act 2010. Safeguarding is everybody's responsibility, and we expect all staff, volunteers and trustees to share our commitment to keeping people safe.

Missing People recognises the significant and vital role that it plays in protecting those who use our services from harm and promoting their wellbeing. We believe that all children and adults have the right to live without fear, abuse, harm, exploitation or intimidation.

Scope

Missing People operates in all four nations of the UK, this policy applies to the safeguarding of children, young people and adults at risk across England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

This policy and Missing People's approach to safeguarding is informed by relevant safeguarding legislation and statutory guidance across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, including Working Together to Safeguard Children (2026), the Children Acts (1989) and (2004), the Care Act (2014) and equivalent and related legislation and guidance in each nation. Further detail on the legislative framework can be found in Appendix A.

This policy applies to all trustees, employees, volunteers, contractors, consultants and anyone acting on behalf of Missing People. It applies to all services, programmes, events and activities delivered by Missing People, including telephone, online and face-to-face services.

Supporting Policies and Procedures

The majority of Missing People's services support both children and adults and for this reason we have one over-arching set of policy and procedures. This policy should be read in conjunction with the following supporting procedures and reference documents.

SER-HL-003	Safeguarding Procedures	Explains how to identify and respond to safeguarding concerns
SER-HL-015	Reference Guide: Recognising Risk, Abuse and Harm	A reference guide detailing risk factors, protective factors and types of abuse, exploitation and harm

Our Safeguarding Principles

This policy and Missing People's approach to safeguarding is based on the following principles:

Grounded	Being grounded in the needs of missing people and their families and our knowledge of the vulnerabilities that they face.
Human	We seek to understand the impact of lived experiences and the unique needs of individuals and respond and communicate with compassion, respect and professional curiosity, supporting people in the way that works for them.
Person-Led	We respect confidentiality and aim to empower our service users. We respect a person's right to be missing, and we work with them to help keep them safe. We have a culture of listening to children and adults, understanding their wishes and feelings and placing these at the forefront, both in individual decisions and in the development of our services.
Strategic	Safeguarding is essential to achieving our vision that every missing person is found safe. Our safeguarding arrangements support the protection and wellbeing of those who use our services.

Our Safeguarding Commitments

We understand that the impact of abuse, neglect, exploitation and harm of any child, young person, or adult at risk can have a major long-term effect on all aspects of their health, and well-being. At Missing People, we recognise our duty to:

- Recognise and identify risk to individuals
- Act to prevent abuse and neglect
- Promote the rights, welfare, health and safety of individuals
- Act to prevent them from experiencing harm
- Empower individuals to make their own choices

To effectively safeguard those who use our services, at Missing People we are committed to the following:

Oversight	We have clear roles and responsibilities for safeguarding at every level of the organisation.
Support	Staff and volunteers are given training and supervision appropriate to their role and can access the On Call Manager 24 hours a day.
Accountability	Staff and volunteers maintain accurate, timely and proportionate records of all work with service users, safeguarding concerns and decision making.
Internal Information Sharing	We understand that a child or adult may share different pieces of risk information with different people within the organisation and we ensure that we are able to "join up the dots" through accurate and prompt recording of risks and safeguarding actions on our case management system, and through effective internal communication and handovers.
Multi-Agency Working	We recognise that as an organisation we are not always able to keep people safe on our own, and we work collaboratively with partner agencies and will share relevant information with statutory agencies when needed to protect an individual from experiencing harm.
Best Practice	We are compliant with good practice frameworks relating to safeguarding, and as an organisation we seek to continually improve our safeguarding practice through regular training and learning opportunities, reflection, supervision and quality monitoring practices.
Safer Recruitment	Missing People embeds safer recruitment throughout every stage of its recruitment process. The charity establishes and advertises clear role requirements and shows clearly which roles require DBS checks. We use consistent shortlisting and structured interviews to assess each candidate's suitability, explore understanding of safeguarding responsibilities in context, and any safeguarding concerns. Appropriate pre-employment checks including reference vetting and basic or enhanced DBS checks as required and are completed before staff begin their roles. Together, these measures help us recruit suitable people and maintain a safe environment for colleagues and those who use our services.
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion	We are committed to anti-racist and anti-discriminatory safeguarding practice. We recognise that discrimination, bias and inequality can affect safeguarding experiences and outcomes, and we actively work to identify and address these factors in our practice.
Online Safety	We recognise that abuse, exploitation and harm may occur online as well as offline. We seek to identify, prevent and respond appropriately to online abuse, exploitation and other digital harms affecting those who use our services.
Managing Allegations and Complaints	Missing People promotes an open, safe and transparent culture. We respond promptly and appropriately to concerns, complaints and allegations involving staff or volunteers. We encourage the reporting of low-level concerns and maintain clear procedures for managing allegations, including referral to relevant statutory or regulatory bodies where appropriate. Further detail can be found in our Complaints Policy.
Whistleblowing	We have clear whistleblowing procedures for staff and volunteers, and we foster a culture where everyone feels free to speak up about any concerns they have.

Key Definitions

Child

Missing People recognises a child as a person under 18 years of age.

Adult at Risk

Missing People recognises *an adult at risk of harm* as a person over the age of 18, who may need care and support and who, as a result of their needs or circumstances, is (either permanently or temporarily) unable to protect themselves from harm (whether that be abuse, neglect, exploitation or other harm). The context of having a loved one who is missing, can make someone vulnerable or increase the risk of them coming to harm or having care and support needs.

Safeguarding

As defined by the Charity Commission, Safeguarding includes the range of measures in place to protect people in a charity, or those it comes into contact with, from abuse and mistreatment of any kind.
Safeguarding adults at risk means protecting their right to live in safety and free from abuse and neglect. Safeguarding children means to:

- protect children from abuse and maltreatment
- prevent harm to children's health or development
- ensure children grow up with the provision of safe and effective care
- take action to enable all children and young people to have the best outcomes

Abuse, Neglect and Harm

Abuse is a violation of an individual's human and civil rights by any other person or persons. Any action or failure to act that causes a person or places them at risk of significant harm is abuse. It may consist of a single act or repeated acts and can occur both in person and online. There are four main categories of child abuse and neglect: physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse and neglect.

Significant Harm

Significant harm is "the threshold that justifies compulsory intervention in family life in the best interests of the child", to protect a child, as defined in the *Children Act 1989*.

Roles and Responsibilities

Board of Trustees

Missing People's trustees hold ultimate responsibility for safeguarding governance and practice in the organisation. The Board appoints a Chair of Missing People's Safeguarding Panel; the Chair has safeguarding expertise and their role is to provide oversight of the safeguarding policy and practice within Missing People. The trustees delegate their operational responsibility to the Chief Executive who appoints the Director of Services as the Missing People Safeguarding Lead Officer. A Deputy Safeguarding Lead Officer is also appointed to act in the Director of Services' absence.

Chair of the Safeguarding Panel

This role is held by a trustee with safeguarding expertise. The duties of the role are:

- To chair the Safeguarding Panel, which audits and evaluates Missing People's safeguarding practices
- To report to the Board on Missing People's safeguarding practices
- To provide advice and guidance to the Director of Services and assist with the annual review of Missing People's Safeguarding Policy

Safeguarding Lead Officer

This role is undertaken by the Director of Services. The duties of the role are:

- To take the lead role to ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place to safeguard children and adults who come into contact with Missing People
- To promote the safety and welfare of children and adults at risk throughout the organisation
- To act as a central point of contact and to ensure an out of hours response to safeguarding concerns is always available
- To be responsible for ensuring policy, procedures and training are kept up to date
- To alert the Chief Executive to any complaints made against a member of staff or volunteer

Deputy Safeguarding Lead Officer

This role is shared by the Head of Helpline and Reconnections, the Head of Service Development and the Head of Support Services who will deputise for the Safeguarding Lead Officer when needed.

Safeguarding Officers

In addition to the Director of Services and Heads of Services, managers and coordinators of Missing People services are also Safeguarding Officers (and members of the On Call Team).

Staff and Volunteers

Whether or not colleagues are in front line service delivery roles, safeguarding is the responsibility of everyone at Missing People. All staff and volunteers must have a working knowledge of the Safeguarding Policy and Procedures and must recognise their individual responsibilities for safeguarding children and adults.

Contacts

We will maintain an up-to-date list of current safeguarding contacts, including the Safeguarding Lead Officer, Deputy Safeguarding Lead Officer(s), Safeguarding Officers and Chair of the Safeguarding Panel. This list is in the Safeguarding Procedures and will be reviewed whenever personnel or contact details change.

Safeguarding concerns can be raised by contacting: complaints@missingpeople.org.uk

Information Sharing

Missing People offers a pledge of confidentiality to the users of our services. Confidentiality is the foundation on which our services are built, as it allows people to trust us. Through building a relationship of trust we are often better able to help someone to stay safe. As the safety and welfare of the individual is of prime importance, Missing People will consider disclosing information without their agreement, where we are required to by law, or where there is sufficient reason to believe that

- they are at significant risk of serious harm, or
- their life, or someone else's life, is in danger.

Our confidentiality policy, safeguarding duty and services remits and boundaries are transparently explained to those who we support to ensure that they are aware of any instances in which we might need to share information about them or pass on something that they have told us about someone else.

Our Safeguarding Procedures set out in detail Missing People's approach to dealing with concerns about a service user, and working safely with adults and children who use our services. They include processes for identifying and managing risk, and responding to concerns and reports. The Procedures cover the situations in which the organisation may share information about a service user, staff member, trustee or volunteer with the relevant authorities.

Quality Assurance

To monitor the effectiveness and quality of both this policy and ensure Missing People's approach to safeguarding is effective, the following measures are in place:

Safeguarding Panel Oversight

Our Safeguarding Panel of experts provides independent advice, challenge and scrutiny of safeguarding activity across the organisation. The Panel supports the review of safeguarding practice, emerging risks, themes and trends, and provides recommendations for improvement.

Safeguarding Training and Compliance Monitoring

Safeguarding training is mandatory for all staff and volunteers. All staff who manage or deliver frontline services must complete initial and annual refresher safeguarding training and all staff and volunteers who are not regularly in contact with service users must complete the refresher training a minimum of every 3 years. Missing People monitors training completion and compliance to ensure that staff and volunteers have the knowledge and skills required to fulfil their safeguarding responsibilities.

Case Audits and Spot Checking

Missing People monitors the effectiveness of its Safeguarding Policy and Procedures through regular proactive spot checking of case and contact recordings on the integrated case management system and scrutiny by its Safeguarding Panel. Staff undertake regular audits and spot checks of case records and safeguarding activities to assess the quality of decision making, record keeping, risk assessment, information sharing and adherence to safeguarding procedures. Learning identified through quality assurance activities, case audits and serious incidents is used to improve practice.

Policy Review

This policy is reviewed annually, or earlier where there are significant changes in legislation, statutory guidance, organisational structure or learning arising from safeguarding practice reviews, incidents or audits.

This policy was reviewed on:	3rd September 2026
Next planned review date:	3rd September 2027

Appendix A – Legislative Framework

This appendix provides an overview of the principal legislation and statutory guidance informing the organisation's safeguarding arrangements in each nation. Staff and volunteers should refer to the Safeguarding Procedures and associated guidance documents for detailed operational requirements.

Key legislation and guidance in England

Children Act 1989	Establishes the welfare of the child as paramount. Defines children in need and significant harm. Provides the framework for child protection intervention.
Children Act 2004	Establishes safeguarding partnership arrangements and places duties on agencies to cooperate to safeguard and promote children's welfare.
Children and Social Work Act 2017	Strengthened multi-agency safeguarding arrangements. Introduced Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews.
Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026	Statutory guidance setting out expectations for multi-agency safeguarding, information sharing, child-centred practice and organisational responsibilities. Highlights safeguarding as everyone's responsibility. States that voluntary organisations should have appropriate arrangements in place to safeguard and protect children from harm. Charity trustees are responsible for ensuring that those benefiting from, or working with, their charity, are not harmed in any way through contact with it.
Care Act 2014	Primary statutory framework for adult safeguarding in England. Establishes duties to protect adults with care and support needs. Sets out six key principles to underpin all adults safeguarding work: empowerment, prevention, proportionality, protection, partnership, and accountability.
Online Safety Act 2023	Establishes duties designed to improve the protection of children and people at risk online. Recognises online harms including grooming, exploitation and harmful content. Applicable in each nation.

Key legislation and guidance in Northern Ireland

Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland 2017	Regional safeguarding guidance for agencies working with children. overarching policy framework for safeguarding children and young people in the statutory, private, independent, community, voluntary and faith sectors. It outlines how communities, organisations and individuals must work both individually and in partnership to ensure children and young people are safeguarded as effectively as possible.
Adult Safeguarding Policy (Northern Ireland)	Policy framework for adult safeguarding in Northern Ireland, for all organisations working with, or providing services to, adults. Sets clear and proportionate safeguarding expectations across the range of organisations.

Key legislation and guidance in Scotland

Children (Scotland) Act 1995	Core legislation relating to children's welfare and protection.
National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2023	National framework for child protection practice and multi-agency working. describes the responsibilities and expectations for all involved in protecting children and will support the care and protection of children.
Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Act 2007	Primary adult safeguarding legislation in Scotland. It aims to protect adults who are at risk of harm or neglect. The act defines adults at risk as those aged 16 years and over who are unable to safeguard their own wellbeing, property, rights or other interests.

Key legislation and guidance in Wales

Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014	Principal safeguarding legislation in Wales. Provides the framework for social services, safeguarding and well-being in Wales.
Working Together to Safeguard People	Statutory guidance supporting implementation of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014.