

Safeguarding Policy

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Safeguarding Contacts

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Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to protect all people, particularly children and vulnerable adults, from any harm that may be caused due to their coming into contact with the Braillists Foundation. This includes potential harm caused by:

- The conduct of personnel associated with the Braillists Foundation
- The design and implementation of the Braillists Foundation's programmes and activities

*In every action we take, **the welfare of the child or adult at risk is paramount.***

The policy lays out the commitments made by the Braillists Foundation, and informs associated personnel of their responsibilities in relation to safeguarding.

What is Safeguarding?

In the UK, safeguarding means protecting peoples' health, wellbeing and human rights, and enabling them to live free from harm, abuse and neglect .

The Braillists operate across several sectors: Technical/IT, educational, social engagement and disability/Visual Impairment. We therefore understand safeguarding to mean protecting people, including children and adults at risk, from harm that potentially arises from coming into contact with our staff or programmes across these sectors.

Scope

- All Board members
- All members of the Braillists Hub email group
- Associated personnel whilst engaged with work or visits related to the Braillists Foundation, including but not limited to the following: volunteers; consultants/contractors; visitors to events

Legal framework

This policy has been drawn up on the basis of legislation, policy and guidance that seeks to protect children in England/Northern Ireland/Scotland/Wales. A summary of the key legislation and guidance is available from [nspcc.org.uk/child protection](https://nspcc.org.uk/child-protection).

Policy Statement

The Braillists Foundation believes that everyone with whom we come into contact, regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation has the right to be protected from all forms of discrimination, harm, abuse or neglect

The Braillists Foundation is committed to creating and maintaining a safe and positive environment, both online and offline, and an open, respectful listening culture where people feel able to share concerns without fear of retribution.

The Braillists Foundation acknowledges that safeguarding is everybody's responsibility and is committed to prevent abuse and neglect through safeguarding the welfare of all adults and children who come in contact with us.

The Braillists Foundation recognises that health, well-being, ability, disability and the need for care and support can affect a person's resilience. We recognise that some people experience barriers, for example, to communication in raising concerns or seeking help.

Activities through which The Braillists Foundation might be in contact with vulnerable adults:

Online

The vast majority of our activities take place online: Braille tuition, workshops, informational events, social online events, email discussion forums etc. The Braillists Foundation moderation policy contains a code of conduct for all of these activities, in which safeguarding concerns are considered.

Face-to-face events

Occasionally the Braillists Foundation will organise in person events: braille events with social elements, public demonstrations and/or lessons in hired spaces, private one-to-one tuition or group meetings in hired spaces. Safeguarding is considered as part of the risk assessment process when organising these events.

Activities through which The Braillists Foundation might be in contact with children:

Online

- The Braillists Foundation does not promote events as suitable for children without their guardians and would therefore assume guardians are present. When it is obvious a child is attending an online event without their guardian present we will moderate content appropriately until the guardian is present or the child is removed from the event by the moderator.
- For any online events where interaction with unaccompanied minors is anticipated, at least two DBS-checked volunteers must be present at all times to supervise and uphold safeguarding standards.

Face-to-face events

- Normally, the Braillists Foundation will only organise events designed for adults over 18. Children are welcome to attend only so long as they are accompanied by their parent/guardian or another adult nominated by the parent/guardian.
- For events where interaction with unaccompanied minors is anticipated, at least two DBS-checked volunteers must be present at all times to supervise and uphold safeguarding standards.
- When attending an event where this is not anticipated, if an unaccompanied child approaches the Braillists Foundation's stand or otherwise interacts with Braillists Foundation personnel during an event, the most senior member of Braillists personnel present at the time of the incident will ensure that concerns are promptly reported to the event organisers.

Risk Assessments

- For any events organized directly by The Braillists Foundation, internal risk assessments will be carried out and appropriately documented to ensure thorough safeguarding measures are in place.
- Where the Braillists Foundation is taking part in public events, we will ensure that proper risk assessments have been undertaken by the organisers and that safeguarding protocols are in place.

Approach

The Braillists Foundation commits to addressing safeguarding throughout its work, through the three pillars of prevention, reporting and response.

Prevention

A. The Braillists Foundation's Responsibilities

The Braillists Foundation will:

- Ensure all personnel have access to, are familiar with, and know their responsibilities within this policy
- Design and undertake all its programmes and activities in a way that protects people from any risk of harm that may arise from their coming into contact with the Braillists Foundation. This includes the way in which information about individuals in our programmes is gathered and communicated. Adherence to data protection regulation (GDPR) also applies.
- Implement stringent safeguarding procedures when recruiting, managing and deploying volunteers and associated personnel
- Ensure all personnel receive training on safeguarding at a level commensurate with their role in the organization - The Braillists Foundation will provide safeguarding training to all staff and volunteers upon induction, with refresher sessions held every two years or sooner if significant legislative changes occur. Training will be delivered in a manner which is accessible to participants, emphasising scenario-based learning and active discussion when possible. Course content will include an overview of key safeguarding principles, legal frameworks (e.g., the Children Act 1989, the Care Act 2014), recognizing and responding to potential abuse or neglect, reporting procedures, and confidentiality requirements. Designated Safeguarding Leads will receive additional, more in-depth training, ensuring they can effectively coordinate the charity's safeguarding efforts.
- Follow up on reports of safeguarding concerns promptly and according to statutory process.
- Hold regular check-ins re. safeguarding at board meetings or operational meetings.

B. Personnel Obligations

All personnel must:

- Contribute to creating and maintaining an environment that prevents safeguarding violations and promotes the implementation of the Safeguarding Policy
- Report any concerns or suspicions regarding safeguarding violations to the Safeguarding Lead or Deputy Safeguarding Lead.

C. Safer Recruitment of Volunteers

The Braillists Foundation values the commitment and contributions of volunteers and is dedicated to ensuring that all volunteers are suitable to work with children and adults at risk. We adopt safer recruitment practices in line with UK legislative and regulatory requirements, including but not limited to the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006, the Children Act 1989, and the Care Act 2014.

- Role Descriptions and Person Specifications

- All volunteer positions that involve contact with vulnerable groups are clearly defined, outlining specific duties, expectations, and any safeguarding responsibilities. This helps applicants and the organisation assess suitability for the role.
- Application Process
- Volunteers are required to complete a concise application form or register of interest that includes relevant background information, skills, and any criminal conviction declarations. Applicants are encouraged to address why they wish to volunteer and how their experience aligns with safeguarding responsibilities.
- Interviews and Informal Discussions
- An informal discussion or brief interview is held for shortlisted volunteer applicants. This process may include questions on safeguarding awareness, motivation to volunteer, understanding of professional boundaries, and willingness to uphold The Braillists Foundation's Safeguarding Policy and Code of Conduct.
- References
- At least one reference is requested, preferably from a professional contact or someone who can comment on the applicant's suitability to work with vulnerable groups. Referees are asked about the volunteer's reliability, interpersonal skills, and any known safeguarding concerns.
- Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Checks
- For volunteer roles involving regulated activity or frequent contact with vulnerable individuals, an enhanced DBS check (including a check of the relevant barred lists) is undertaken. The volunteer position is conditional upon receiving a satisfactory DBS certificate.
- Confirmation of Identity
- Volunteers must provide proof of identity (e.g., passport, driving licence) before they start. This ensures that everyone is who they claim to be and helps maintain a safe environment.
- Induction and Orientation
- All new volunteers participate in an induction session covering key organisational policies, including safeguarding, health and safety, data protection, and confidentiality. Volunteers are also introduced to their supervisor or main point of contact.
- Probationary Period and Ongoing Support
- New volunteers are placed on a 3 month probationary period during which their performance, conduct, and adherence to safeguarding practices are monitored. Volunteers have regular check-ins with their point of contact to identify any concerns, training needs, or additional support.
- Continuous Review
- The Braillists Foundation periodically reviews all volunteer roles to ensure that safeguarding measures, including references and DBS checks, remain current and appropriate. Any changes in a volunteer's responsibilities or any safeguarding concerns are dealt with promptly in line with disciplinary and statutory procedures.

By embedding these safer recruitment practices for volunteers, The Braillists Foundation maintains high standards of protection for children, vulnerable adults, and all individuals interacting with our services, ensuring a positive and secure volunteering experience.

Enabling Reports

- The Braillists Foundation will ensure that safe, appropriate, accessible means of reporting safeguarding concerns are made available to all personnel and the communities with which we work. For ease of access the email address: safeguarding@braillists.org is available.
- All data pertaining to safeguarding concerns is stored in a central location, accessible to the safeguarding lead and deputy safeguarding lead with Braillists staff and volunteers required to delete sensitive data following a report being made.
- The Braillists Foundation will also accept complaints from external sources such as members of the public, partners and official bodies.

How to report a safeguarding concern

- Anyone having a concern or complaint relating to safeguarding should report it immediately to safeguarding@braillists.org
- In an urgent situation, the Safeguarding Lead, Deputy Safeguarding Lead, or any Board member can also be contacted.

Response and responsibilities

The Braillists Foundation will follow up on safeguarding reports and concerns according to legal and statutory obligations.

Levels of Response:

Once a concern has been reported or a complaint received in relation to safeguarding, the Safeguarding Lead or Deputy Safeguarding Lead will

- Assess the immediate level of urgency and seek medical attention, if required
- Follow up on the concern/complaint by assessing the situation to determine appropriate next steps
- Depending on the outcome, escalate internally, externally and/or refer to the relevant authorities and/or Local Authority.

A. Managing Allegations Against Personnel

In accordance with Working Together 2023 and Care Act 2014.

- Remove the individual from contact with children/adults at risk pending enquiry.
- Inform the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) or Adult Safeguarding Team within one working day.
- Cooperate with police and statutory agencies.
- Where evidence is found, make a referral to the DBS.
- Inform the charity's insurers and the Charity Commission (Serious Incident Report) if thresholds are met.

B. Levels of Response to All Concerns

Level	Example	Action
1 – Advice/Support	Low-level boundary issue, no immediate harm	DSL gives guidance, records case, monitors
2 – Internal Investigation	Breach of Code of Conduct	DSL investigates, possible disciplinary measures
3 – External Referral	Actual or likely significant harm	Report to police, LADO/adult services, DBS

Confidentiality

Information is shared **on a need-to-know basis only**. Electronic records are encrypted and access controlled.

Retention periods: 25 years after last contact with a child; 7 years for adult cases or until the subject is aged 26 (whichever is longer).

Associated policies

Moderation policy for webinars (Code of Conduct)

Glossary of Key Safeguarding Terms (UK)

- Abuse
- A violation of an individual's human and civil rights by another person or persons. Abuse can be physical, sexual, emotional (including psychological), or financial. It can also include neglect, exploitation, or discriminatory abuse.
- Adult at Risk (also referred to as a Vulnerable Adult): An individual aged 18 or over who has needs for care and support (whether or not those needs are being met), and as a result of those needs is unable to protect themselves against abuse, harm, or exploitation. The Care Act 2014 replaced the term vulnerable adult with adult at risk in many contexts.
- Child: In the UK, a child is defined as anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday. Children therefore remain under the legal responsibility of safeguarding processes and legislation until they turn 18.
- Child Protection: Part of safeguarding that focuses on protecting individual children identified as suffering or likely to suffer significant harm. It involves measures and structures designed to prevent and respond to abuse and neglect.
- Confidentiality: Ensuring that information is accessible only to those authorized to have access and is protected throughout its lifecycle. In safeguarding, confidentiality is balanced with the need to share information appropriately to protect a child or adult at risk.
- Data Protection: Legislation and principles (e.g., Data Protection Act 2018, UK GDPR) governing how personal data must be handled, stored, and shared, including data about vulnerable individuals.
- Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS): A non-departmental public body of the Home Office in the UK that helps employers make safer recruitment decisions. It replaces the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) and Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA). A DBS check is the process to see if a prospective employee or volunteer has a criminal record that would prevent them from working with children or adults at risk.
- Emotional (or Psychological) Abuse: The persistent emotional maltreatment of an individual that results in severe adverse effects on their emotional development or mental well-being. This can include threats, constant criticism, ridicule, or coercive control.
- Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI): Refers to the framework, policies, and practices that ensure fair treatment and opportunity for all, regardless of protected characteristics (e.g., race, religion, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity). In safeguarding, EDI helps address the diverse needs of children and adults at risk.

- **Financial (or Material) Abuse:** Misuse of a person's funds, property, or financial assets. It can include theft, fraud, coercion in relation to an adult at risk's financial affairs or arrangements, or the misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions, or benefits.
- **Harm:** Ill-treatment or the impairment of health or development. This can be physical, sexual, or emotional; it can also include neglect and the impairment of a person's physical, intellectual, emotional, social, or behavioural development.
- **Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO):** An official within the Local Authority who is responsible for the management and oversight of allegations against people who work with children in statutory or non-statutory settings.
- **Neglect:** The persistent failure to meet an individual's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in serious impairment of health or development. It can involve a parent/carer failing to provide adequate food, shelter, clothing, medical care, or supervision.
- **Online Safety:** Procedures and measures designed to protect individuals (especially children and adults at risk) from harm when using online or digital platforms. This includes the prevention of cyberbullying, grooming, and inappropriate content.
- **Physical Abuse:** Causing physical harm to someone, which can include hitting, shaking, burning, poisoning, or otherwise causing physical harm. It may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child (sometimes referred to as Fabricated or Induced Illness).
- **Prevent Strategy:** A UK government strategy aimed at reducing the threat of terrorism by stopping people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism. It is part of **CONTEST**, the government's counter-terrorism strategy. Prevent relates to safeguarding individuals who may be vulnerable to radicalisation.
- **Regulated Activity:** Certain roles or activities involving working with children or adults at risk that require enhanced DBS checks. Examples include unsupervised teaching, training, or carrying out personal care.
- **Risk Assessment:** A systematic process of evaluating potential risks that could be involved in any activity or undertaking. In safeguarding, it involves identifying potential sources of harm to children or adults at risk and putting measures in place to mitigate these risks.
- **Safeguarding:** In the UK, safeguarding means protecting people's health, wellbeing, and human rights, enabling them to live free from harm, abuse, and neglect. Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and includes both children and adults at risk.
- **Safeguarding Lead (DSL):** The designated person responsible for overseeing safeguarding and child/adult protection within an organization. Sometimes called the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL). They coordinate safeguarding concerns, respond to disclosures, and ensure policies are followed.
- **Sexual Abuse:** Forcing or enticing a person to take part in sexual activities without their consent, whether or not the individual is aware of what is happening. This can include physical contact (penetrative or non-penetrative acts) and non-contact activities (e.g., grooming, exposing children to sexual acts or materials).
- **Significant Harm:** A concept used in statutory guidance that denotes a threshold of abuse or neglect which justifies compulsory intervention in family life in the best interests of the child (Children Act 1989).
- **Whistleblowing:** The process of reporting wrongdoing or malpractice within an organization, usually by an employee or volunteer. Whistleblowing policies protect the

individual making the disclosure from negative repercussions and help foster a culture of transparency and accountability.

Note: The definitions above align with UK national guidelines (e.g., Working Together to Safeguard Children, Care Act 2014).