

9. CHILD PROTECTION POLICY STATEMENT AND PROCEDURES

Reviewed: July 2025

Due for Review: July 2026

Policy Statement for Safe Strong and Free

We will:

- Treat everyone with respect;
- Remember that some issues are confidential;
- Provide an example we would wish others to follow;
- Where possible consider activities, which involve more than one adult being present or at least within sight and hearing of others;
- Be aware that someone else might misinterpret our actions even if they are well-intentioned;
- Respect a child's right to personal privacy;
- Provide time for children to talk to us;
- Encourage children and adults to respect and care for others;
- Take action to stop any inappropriate verbal or physical behaviour;
- Remember to REFER not INVESTIGATE any suspicions or allegations about abuse;
- Only share concerns and seek support from those identified in the organisation's child/adult protection policy;

Contact numbers for Local Family Teams and the Police are available at www.hcpc.scot

Child Protection Policy

Child Protection Policy for Safe Strong and Free

We believe that every child regardless of age has, at all times and in all situations, a right to feel safe and protected from any situation or practice that results in a child being physically or psychologically damaged. In our organisation, if we have suspicions about a child's physical, sexual or emotional well-being, we will take action.

We recognise that child protection should not be treated in isolation - we will take on board guidance given by Highland Child Protection Committee and will address recruitment and selection of volunteers and paid employees by doing the following:

1. We accept that it is our responsibility as an organisation to check that all adults in positions requiring disclosure checks are members of the appropriate Protection of Vulnerable Groups Scheme and have been appropriately vetted
2. We will ensure we have a record of personal details for each member of staff/volunteer
3. We will ensure we have carried out necessary checks in relation to anyone working with children and young people, including requesting references where appropriate
4. We will interview prospective volunteers and staff
5. We will notify Disclosure Scotland if anyone on the Disqualified from Working with Children List applies to work for or volunteer with our organisation
6. We will ensure that all staff are given Codes of Practice to work to
7. We will remove any member of staff or volunteer whom we know or suspect to have caused harm to a child, or to have placed a child at risk of harm and we will notify Disclosure Scotland of our actions and the reasons for them, even if that person has left our organisation.

All volunteers or staff are encouraged to share concerns with SSF's Child Protection Officer, or in her absence the deputy for child protection. If the situation is urgent, the child is frightened to go home, or we have serious doubts about the child's safety, we will contact the Police or Social Work immediately.

Child Protection Is Everyone's Responsibility

At Safe Strong & Free, we are committed to promoting equality, valuing diversity, and ensuring inclusion for all children and young people, staff, volunteers, and stakeholders. We believe that every child has the right to be protected from harm, regardless of their age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation.

We actively work to eliminate discrimination and create an inclusive environment that respects and upholds the dignity and rights of all individuals. We recognise the additional vulnerabilities experienced by some children and families due to social inequalities, and we are committed to ensuring our child protection procedures are responsive and equitable.

Our approach is aligned with the principles set out in the Equality Act 2010, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), and Scottish child protection legislation and policy. We strive to ensure that all our practices are fair, transparent, and uphold the best interests of the child at all times.

Relevant Legislation and Guidance (Scotland)

1. **Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014**
<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2014/8/contents>
2. **National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland (2021)**
<https://www.gov.scot/publications/national-guidance-child-protection-scotland-2021/>
3. **Equality Act 2010**
<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents>
4. **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)** – as incorporated into Scottish law:
<https://www.gov.scot/policies/childrens-rights/uncrc/>
5. **Getting it right for every child (GIRFEC)** – Scotland's national approach:
<https://www.gov.scot/policies/girfec/>

Dealing with a Child Protection Situation

People who abuse others often do so in a manner that makes it difficult for children or young people to tell someone else if they are being abused.

However, there may be signs which make you concerned and may be an indication of abuse or neglect.

The Child/Young person may:

- Have unexplained bruising or bruising in unusual place
- Appear afraid, quiet or withdrawn
- Appear afraid to go home
- Be left unsupervised/unattended
- Have inappropriate levels of responsibility for their age
- Be acting out in a sexually inappropriate way
- Be misusing drugs or alcohol
- Be being bullied

Remember it is not our job to decide if abuse has taken place – it is your responsibility to report concerns.

Responding to children who disclose abuse

It is important to know that if you suspect a child is being abused or they disclose abuse or neglect to you, you have a responsibility to respond appropriately.

To this end, volunteers and staff will follow the SSF procedures when responding to a concern of abuse or assault.

If we have concerns, we must act – it may be the final piece of the jigsaw that is needed to protect that child – or we may prevent further children from being hurt.

Steps to Respond

1. Stay Calm and Listen:
Show empathy and let the child share at their own pace without interrupting or expressing shock.
2. Use Open-Ended, Non-Leading Questions:
Encourage the child to talk more about the situation in their own words, without suggesting answers or conclusions.
3. Clarify Gently Without Probing:
If details are unclear, ask for clarification in a neutral and open way, avoiding questions that might make the child feel interrogated.
4. Acknowledge Their Feelings:
Validate their emotions and let them know you're there to support them.
5. Do Not Make Promises:
Avoid promising confidentiality if you may need to report the concern for their safety.
6. Record the Disclosure Accurately:
Write down what the child says in their own words as soon as possible, without adding your interpretations.
7. Take appropriate action

Example Questions to Clarify Gently

If the child has already disclosed some information but it's unclear, here are some examples of follow-up questions that remain non-leading:

1. "Can you tell me more about what happened?"
(Encourages the child to share further without directing their response.)
2. "How did that make you feel?"
(Helps explore the emotional impact of the situation.)
3. "What happens after that?"
(Neutral exploration of events without suggesting actions or outcomes.)
4. "Does this happen often, or was it just this time?"
(Clarifies whether the incident is a one-off or part of a pattern.)
5. "What do you do when that happens?"
(Explores the child's reactions.)
6. "Who else was there?"

(Helps identify if others are aware of the situation.)

7. "Has anything like this happened before?"
(Gently checks if there's a history of similar incidents.)

Responding to the Disclosure

When the child shares, it's important to respond in a supportive and neutral way:

- "Thank you for telling me. That must have been really hard for you."
(Validates their courage in sharing.)
- "It sounds like that made you feel [name the emotion they described]. Is that right?"

(Shows understanding and checks accuracy of their feelings.)
- "You've done the right thing by talking about this. It's important that we make sure you're safe."
(Reassures the child they made the right decision.)

SSF Child Concern Reporting Process

LISTEN/OBSERVE/ACKNOWLEDGE

child discloses harm or neglect/
abuse or neglect suspected/
allegation made

RESPOND

Acknowledge the information received and take it seriously

Establish BASIC facts - do not investigate

Make sure the child/YP is SAFE

REPORT

Report to the setting's Designated Child Protection Officer (usually the Head Teacher or Nursery Manager)
Contact SSF's Child Protection Officer, Kerry Lowe (CEO) on the day of the concern to give a verbal report.
If designated or secondary Child Protection Officer for Child Protection in UNAVAILABLE report as below ...

REPORT

Contact your local Family Team

If there are immediate concerns about a child's safety, contact the Police on 999

RECORD

Record your concerns on the electronic SSF Concern Form
Email a copy to the setting's Designated Child Protection Officer
Email a copy to the Designated Child Protection Officer for SSF, Kerry Lowe on the day of the concern, then ensure the form is deleted from your devices (GDPR), when receipt from Kerry is acknowledged



An electronic version of this form is saved on the shared drive (Share Point). Please use electronic version.

Child Concern Form

This information should be used to complete section 2.2 of the Standard Child Concern Form, where there is a child protection concern.

Please call Kerry Lowe and report concern on the day, then complete this form, and email to SSF's Designated Child Protection Officer Kerry Lowe kerry@safestrongandfree.org.uk within 24 hours.

Child's Name

Child's DOB

Date and time of incident/concern

Name of setting

Which workshop were you leading at the time?

Give details of the concern/incident

Name of nursery/school staff member present at the time

Contact number for designated person

What action did the Designated Person agree to take?

Name of Project Worker

Date form completed

Please now call SSF's Designated Child Protection Officer Kerry on 07506 487021 to report (if not already done so), and then email form to her at kerry@safestrongandfree.org.uk

Responding to Child Protection Concerns

What happens next....

- SSF's Child Protection Officer will inform the Board at monthly Board Meetings of the number of concerns recorded but will not give any details.
- SSF's Child Protection Officer will contact the designated Person for Child Protection in the nursery within 7 days to ascertain what action was taken.
- In the event that SSF's Child Protection Officer is not satisfied with the action undertaken by the Designated Person in the nursery/school, the concern will be passed to the relevant Practice Lead or Duty Social Worker.

Contact numbers for Local Family Teams and the Police are available at www.hcpc.scot

Local Family Team (Care and Protection)

Police	101 (non-urgent) 999 (urgent)
Out of hours Social Work Emergency Service:	08457 697284