

SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN & GUIDELINES FOR REPORTING ABUSE



1. Purpose

For all organisations working with young people at risk, it is essential to carefully consider safeguarding both vulnerable people and the team (be it employee or volunteer) who have responsibility for them. The emphasis was established and enshrined in the 1989 and subsequent Children Acts, that the 'welfare of the child is paramount'. In an agency such as Azalea this is difficult as the majority of relational work is completed with adult women and men. However, it needs to be clear in this policy that ANY child who has been identified as suffering significant harm, or at risk of, needs to be referred to Children's Services and/or the Police as soon as practically possible.

Due to the nature of our work, we have drawn up this safeguarding policy with a set of procedures to put what is intended into practice. All Azalea employees and volunteers will be made aware of our policy and procedures to ensure that they know exactly what to do should significant harm to a child be suspected and to help promote best practice. The policy also exists to inform young people at risk of their rights and what they should do if they have any concerns.

Azalea aims to create an environment where young people and adults at risk feel secure, valued and listened to at all times and a place where their welfare is promoted. Any concerns will be taken seriously and acted upon appropriately and we will pay attention to what our guests and clients say and feel. All employees and volunteers are obliged to take seriously and report any allegations of abuse which suggest that a child is at risk of significant harm. ALL concerns must be reported without delay using the Adult/Child Safeguarding Record form, which is on SharePoint and is stored in the Encompass office/safeguarding forms box, AND calling the police as necessary.

2. Policy statement

For Azalea Luton: Azalea engages with people at risk principally through our Encompass project and Flint project, which operate out of our premises in Luton. Azalea recognises that its guests and clients could also be connected to others who are at risk of harm themselves or harming others and therefore we take seriously our duty to safeguard both our guests and clients and connected individuals.

Azalea takes seriously our responsibility to respond to issues of child protection and to respond appropriately and promptly in order to safeguard children whom we may hear about in connection to our guests and clients.

Azalea recognises that the law in the area of safeguarding is under constant review. The interpretation of the law and professional guidance is likewise subject to continual change. We realise our obligation to keep abreast of developments in this complex area and the need to pass on information to employees and volunteers. The training, guidance and supervision of employees is key to the successful operation of sound safeguarding.

Review and partnership working

Azalea is committed to continually reviewing and monitoring our safeguarding policies and procedures. We will gain further advice and information wherever possible in line with developments in safeguarding legislation. An Azalea safeguarding subcommittee has been established to ensure that all policies and procedures are appropriate and current. Azalea will seek mutually beneficial partnerships with organisations in the criminal justice, youth justice and rights sector to ensure that best practice is maintained.

Do not use or share Azalea policies outside of Azalea without prior permission from the CEO.

3. Who the policy covers?

This policy covers all:

- Azalea employees
- Azalea volunteers
- Azalea trustees
- Azalea guests and clients

Any elements of the policy that are specific to Azalea Luton are indicated by **For Azalea Luton**.

4. Terms and definitions

'Azalea employees/volunteers' refers to all employees and volunteers who form Azalea's primary team and includes the CEO, employees, Encompass frontline volunteer team and Flint frontline volunteer team. It excludes those who serve Azalea from a distance e.g., cake makers, prayer support, donors.

'Guests/Clients' refers to the women (guests) involved in sex trafficking and exploitation who are engaging with Encompass' services, and the men (clients) who are/have been purchasing sex and are engaging with Flint's services, whether that is a single encounter during outreach, or an ongoing relationship.

'Sex trafficking' refers to the experiences of Encompass service users who are trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation both locally, nationally and internationally.

'Human trafficking' as defined by the Palermo Protocol, the first internationally recognised definition of human trafficking:

"Trafficking in persons shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of

abduction, of fraud, of deception, of abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control of another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or removal of organs."

Additional definitions for this policy:

'Designated Safeguarding Officers' refers to Azalea employees who have been appointed as primarily responsible for coordinating and pursuing safeguarding procedures within Azalea.

'A child' refers to any person aged under 18 years and includes an unborn child when the lifestyle of a pregnant woman is thought to be detrimental to the health of the unborn child.

'Child at risk' refers to someone who is 18 years old or younger who has care and support needs and is experiencing, or is at risk of, abuse or neglect and they are unable to protect themselves from either the risk or the abuse.

'Adult at risk' refers to someone over the age of 18 who has care and support needs and is experiencing, or is at risk of, abuse or neglect and they are unable to protect themselves from either the risk or the abuse.

'Significant harm' The persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. In considering whether harm is significant to a child's health or development, the child's health and development must be compared with that which could reasonably be expected of a similar child. This includes impairment suffered from seeing or hearing the ill treatment of another person. (Section 31(9), Children Act 1989.)

5. What is child abuse

Child abuse is when a child is intentionally and or persistently harmed by an adult or another child. It can be over a period of time and can also be a one-off action. It can be physical, sexual or emotional and it can happen face to face or online. It can also be a lack of love, care and attention – this is neglect. The new Domestic Abuse Act 2021 has introduced the concept that children will be classified as now suffering domestic abuse in their own right if they experience domestic abuse within their household.

Physical abuse is when someone hurts or harms a child or young person on purpose.

Signs include *bruises, broken or fractured bones, burns or scalds, bite marks. It can also include other injuries and health problems, such as scarring, the effects of poisoning, such as vomiting, drowsiness or seizures, breathing problems from drowning, suffocation or poisoning. Head injuries in babies and toddlers can be signs of abuse so it's important to be aware of these. Visible signs include swelling, bruising, fractures, being extremely sleepy or unconscious, breathing problems, seizures, vomiting, unusual behaviour, such as being irritable or not feeding properly.*

Sexual abuse is described as when a child is forced or tricked into sexual activity. They might not understand it as abuse or that it's wrong and they might be afraid to tell someone. Sexual abuse can happen anywhere, and it can happen in person or online. It's never a child's fault they were sexually abused.

Signs include *avoiding being alone with or frightened of people or a person they know., language or sexual behaviour you wouldn't expect them to know, having nightmares or bed-wetting, alcohol or drug misuse, self-harm, changes in eating habits or developing an eating problem, changes in their mood, feeling irritable and angry, or anything out of the ordinary, bruises, bleeding, discharge, pains or soreness in their genital or anal area, sexually transmitted infections, pregnancy.*

Emotional abuse is any type of abuse that involves the continual emotional mistreatment of a child. It's sometimes called psychological abuse. Emotional abuse can involve deliberately trying to scare, humiliate, isolate or ignore a child. Emotional abuse is often a part of other kinds of abuse, which means it can be difficult to spot the signs or tell the difference, though it can also happen on its own.

Signs include *humiliating or constantly criticising a child, threatening, shouting at a child or calling them names, making the child the subject of jokes, or using sarcasm to hurt a child, blaming and scapegoating, making a child perform degrading acts, not recognising a child's own individuality or trying to control their lives, pushing a child too hard or not recognising their limitations, exposing a child to upsetting events or situations, like Domestic Abuse or drug taking, failing to promote a child's social development, not allowing them to have friends and persistently ignoring them, being absent, never saying anything kind, expressing positive feelings or congratulating a child on successes and never showing any emotions in interactions with a child, also known as emotional neglect.*

Neglect is the ongoing failure to meet a child's basic needs and the most common form of child abuse. A child might be left hungry or dirty, or without proper clothing, shelter, supervision or health care. This can put children and young people in danger. And it can also have long term effects on their physical and mental wellbeing.

Signs include *being smelly or dirty, being hungry or not given money for food, having unwashed clothes, having the wrong clothing, such as no warm clothes in winter, having frequent and untreated nappy rash in infants, anaemia, body issues, such as poor muscle tone or prominent joints medical or dental issues, missed medical appointments, such as for vaccinations or not given the correct medicines, poor language or social skills, regular illness or infections, repeated accidental injuries, often caused by lack of supervision, skin issues, such as sores, rashes, flea bites, scabies or ringworm, thin or swollen tummy, tiredness, untreated injuries, weight or growth issues, living in an unsuitable home environment, such as having no heating, being left alone for a long time, taking on the role of carer for other family members.*

These are some general signs and symptoms for the four common areas of child abuse that are used within children's social care. There are however many other areas of concern that need to be highlighted as causing significant harm to children and young people, such as:

E-Safety refers to the internet and other electronic forms of communication such as email, text messages, social media which can be used to put young people and adults at risk of abuse. There are many ways in which the various forms of technology can be used in a harmful way:

- **Online grooming:** *when someone uses the internet to trick, force or pressure a young person into doing something sexual - like sending a naked video or image of themselves.*
- **Sex talk/Sexting:** *Engaging someone in explicit conversations or requesting sexually explicit pictures from them via text.*
- **Cyber bullying:** *Using electronic forms of communication such as email, text, social media to send malicious or unkind messages to try and intimidate or threaten someone.*

Parents and carers have a responsibility to ensure that the devices that children and young people are accessing have the correct and up to date parental controls and software.

Radicalisation is the process by which individuals come to support terrorism or extremism. The use of the internet and other social media is the one of the main methods used to try and "groom" children and young people at risk. There is no typical profile for a person likely to become involved in extremism, or for a person who moves to adopt violence in support of their particular ideology. A number of possible behavioural indicators are listed below:

- Use of inappropriate /discriminatory language
- Possession of violent extremist literature including electronic material accessed via the internet and communication such as e-mail and text messages
- Behavioural changes
- The expression of extremist views
- Advocating violent actions and means
- Association with known extremists
- Seeking to recruit others to an extremist ideology.

If employees or volunteers have any significant concerns about a guest/client at Azalea beginning to support terrorism and/or extremism, they should discuss this with the Designated Safeguarding Officers.

Female genital mutilation is when a female's genitals are deliberately altered or removed for non-medical reasons. It's also known as 'female circumcision' or 'cutting' but has many other names. It can happen at different times in a girl or woman's life, including;

when a baby is new-born; during childhood or as a teenager; just before marriage; during pregnancy.

Signs that it might happen: A relative or someone known as a 'cutter' visiting from abroad; A special occasion or ceremony takes place where a girl 'becomes a woman' or is 'prepared for marriage'; A female relative, like a mother, sister or aunt has undergone FGM; A family arranges a long holiday overseas or visits a family abroad during the summer holidays; A girl has an unexpected or long absence from school; A girl struggles to keep up in school; A girl runs away – or plans to run away - from home.

Signs that it might have taken place: Having difficulty walking, standing or sitting; Spending longer in the bathroom or toilet; Appearing quiet, anxious or depressed; Acting differently after an absence from school or college; Reluctance to go to the doctors or have routine medical examinations; Asking for help – though they might not be explicit about the problem because they're scared or embarrassed.

This is not an exhaustive list but a guide to the most regular forms of abuse and concern.

6. Procedures for safeguarding children and young people at risk

a) Safe recruitment procedure

All volunteers and employees, including temporary personnel and helpers who have regular contact with guests and clients at Azalea should be subject to a careful and rigorous selection and vetting process with the following elements:

- Completion of an application form or letter of application and proof of identity should be provided
- Taking up two references
- An interview conducted by a minimum of 2 people
- Gaps in employment or inconsistencies in a person's application will be identified and satisfactory explanations for this will be provided
- Police checks and checks with the Disclosure and Barring Service will be carried out
- Allowing no unsupervised access to children, young people and adults at risk until the above procedures have been completed
- If necessary, Azalea will seek advice about recruiting someone with a criminal record.

b) Induction, training and supervision for employees and volunteers

All Azalea employees and volunteers who have regular contact with adults at risk are provided with appropriate induction and training. This includes awareness of types of abuse, discussion of policy issues, and guidance on individual responsibilities in handling disclosures and/or allegations of abuse.

Details regarding appropriate conduct with guests/clients within Azalea are outlined in additional policies (Employee Code of Conduct and Volunteer Code of Conduct). All team are expected to read, understand and adhere to the necessary boundaries for the safety

of all. Compulsory frontline training is provided to explore some of the complex areas within the guidelines, for example, the appropriate use of touch.

Supervision is available to employees and volunteers. Employees and volunteers are actively encouraged to access this service on a regular basis. Employees and volunteers are required to ensure that the management is aware of potential problems and that inappropriate behaviour is reported through line management arrangements. Reporting and responsibilities are outlined on the attached appendix.

In terms of working practice, all Azalea employees and volunteers are entitled to feel that they are not being put into situations where they could be at danger of malicious or mistaken claims.

Azalea, as an organisation., and within our different teams, owe a duty of care to each other, an obligation to support each other in working with the guests and clients met by Azalea. Volunteers will not be expected or allowed to work on their own at any time, without clear guidance and support in place.

c) Risk assessment and risk management

A risk assessment is carried out in the development phase of all our activities, and includes an assessment of employee suitability, employee to guest ratio, physical setting, equipment used, first aid provisions and other safety procedures. Risk management is an on-going activity and risk assessments will be reviewed annually.

d) Dealing with disclosure

All guests and clients who engage with Azalea's support will be made aware of Azalea's responsibility to break confidentiality when there is a safeguarding concern. If a guest/client comes to you with the intention of disclosing an incident, it may be possible at the beginning to remind her/him of this - that you may need to share the information further and will talk through with her/him the potential ways that this will happen. If it is not possible to explain this, due to the traumatic presentation of the guest/client, be sensitive and allow her/him to express and process as she/he needs, without interruptions.

You may hear two different categories of disclosures, information that requires immediate action and information that is historic and will need to be recorded but may not necessitate immediate action.

A guest or client may disclose information that requires immediate action or may present to you as in such a state as to require immediate action. For example, it may be apparent that a child is at immediate risk of harm. If this is the case, follow the guidelines outlined in this policy.

CALL THE POLICE – if there is a child believed to be at immediate risk of harm you must call the police. Even if you don't feel you have the entire picture, you must call the police.

- Support the guest to the Encompass crisis room if safe to do so (**In Azalea Luton: the Oasis room/ the Sanctuary**). Similarly, ensure the client is in a confidential, safe and comfortable space
- If there is a member of the Encompass employee/Flint employee team around, ask them to join you in the room. If there is not, call the Encompass emergency phone (07723 481027)
- Keep a mental note of what the guest/client is sharing with you – times, dates, names, locations, physical descriptions, detail of what happened. When you have an opportunity, write this information down as accurately as possible
- Do not probe or ask questions. Only listen to the information that the guest/client is offering. They may not offer any
- Be with the guest/client. See if there is another team member who could get a glass of water/cup of tea/ something sweet for the guest/client to eat
- After, when you are no longer with the guest/client, write everything down on Azalea's child safeguarding record form. **For Azalea Luton: stored in the purple box file in the Encompass office.**

The Encompass employee can then:

- Offer to support the guest/client in reporting the incident to the police
- If the guest/client declines, the employee can offer to submit the information anonymously to police intel
- Remind the guest/client that if they change their mind at any stage and want to report anything themselves, we can support them with this.
- Refer to the 'How We Keep Children Safe' document for more guidance about what we do and don't do

e) **Pregnancy**

On occasion, we will become aware of pregnancy or impending parenthood of a guest. We should always understand that there may be a need for additional support and that the unborn child may be vulnerable due to the circumstances of the guest.

These circumstances include (but are not limited to):

- Where concerns exist regarding the mother's ability to protect
- Where alcohol or substance abuse is thought to be affecting the health of the expected baby
- Where the expectant parent(s) are very young and a dual assessment of their own needs as well as their ability to meet the baby's needs is required
- Where a previous child in the family has been removed because they have suffered harm or been at risk of significant harm
- Where a person who has been convicted of an offence against a child, or is believed by child protection professionals to have abused a child, has joined the family
- Where there are acute professional concerns regarding parenting capacity, particularly where the parents have either severe mental health problems or learning disabilities

- Where the child is believed to be at risk of significant harm due to domestic abuse.

On hearing about/seeing a confirmed or suspected pregnancy, volunteers must ensure that a child safeguarding record form is completed, and that the frontline employees are informed. Designated Safeguarding Officers will then alert the relevant authorities and professionals as appropriate.

f) Disclosures of historic abuse

A guest/client may disclose historic information pertaining to a situation that constitutes safeguarding. This may not require any immediate action. In these situations, follow the guidance as above with regards to hearing the disclosure and respecting the guest/client in this process. Ensure you complete a child/adult safeguarding record form recording all of the information accurately. Even if a situation does not require immediate action, your observations could add to an ongoing situation. If ever there is uncertainty, the emergency phone can be called by the Team Lead.

g) Whilst someone is disclosing, follow this guidance on a positive approach to take:

- Stay calm, try not to show shock or disbelief
- Remember that they have chosen you to talk to regarding intimate details of their lives. Feel honoured that you have such a positive relationship with this individual. Express gratitude that they have shared this with you
- Explain that if they talk about a child being at risk of harm you will have to report this information
- Take a 'non-advice' approach
- Listen sensitively and carefully, reflect back what they are saying to assure that you are hearing them and taking it seriously
- Encourage them that disclosing has been the right thing to do, and that what has happened to them is not their fault
- Empathise but do not jump to conclusions or put words in their mouth.

Do not:

- Interrupt them when they may be recalling significant events – if interrupted they may not want to repeat it again
- Indicate judgment towards the perpetrator
- Probe for detail or interrogate
- Promise to keep it a secret or try to solve the problem with them
- Make promises you cannot keep, i.e., 'this won't happen again'
- Contact the alleged abuser
- Be judgmental i.e., 'why didn't you run away'.

After the guest/client has come to a natural end, or it became necessary to end the conversation to keep the guest/client safe, seek advice and support from your Team Leader.

The Team Leader may do the following:

- Phone the emergency phone for further advice; the emergency phone is held by a frontline employee and is available 24/7
- Consider calling the police on 101, or 999, if it is an emergency, or the person is in immediate danger. If they are not in immediate danger, but are at risk and warrant an emergency call, the person must grant permission before you call the police on their behalf.

h) Completing Azalea's Safeguarding Adults at Risk and Children Record Forms

If you have a safeguarding concern, a safeguarding record form must be completed as soon as possible:

- The record must be a clear, precise and factual account of the account given to you and/or your observations
- In cases of visible signs of abuse (bruises/cuts) please draw a diagram indicating the position of any marks on the child or adult
- If more than one person was present when the safeguarding concern arose, one person should fill the form in, and then ask the other team members who were present to add any additional information or details that they remember
- Use a pen or a biro, preferably with black ink (for photocopying) – do not use a computer as this cannot be recognised as your personal account
- If you make a mistake, put a line through it – do not use Tippex
- Write down exactly what the person said – for example, if a female guest said, 'he touched me down there', write this down. Don't make assumptions about what this might mean
- Write down the setting and whether anyone else was present
- Write it down as soon as possible after the disclosure – this will ensure as much information as possible is remembered and recorded
- Sign, date and include the time on the record.

You are not being asked to investigate, verify or prove that information is true. You are being asked to log your concerns and report them to the appropriate person.

i) Reporting abuse

All employees and volunteers have a duty to work within the policies of Azalea. Should an employee or a volunteer suspect a guest, client or a person known to Azalea is being abused the above guidance must be followed. In summary, alerting or raising a concern about abuse means:

- Recognising signs of adult/child abuse
- Responding to disclosures
- Recognising bad practice
- Reporting a concern, disclosure or allegation
- Collating and recording initial information.

Alerting is a necessary first stage in the process of keeping people safe. Alerting through formal channels will enable a proper assessment and investigation to be subsequently carried out.

For Azalea employees and volunteers the Designated Safeguarding Officers to report concerns to are:

- Hollie Stone DESIGNATED SAFEGUARDING LEAD
- Jayne Sinclair DESIGNATED SAFEGUARDING OFFICER

The key principles to be adhered to in all circumstances are as follows:

- Any disclosures or allegations of abuse must be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Officers or to a member of the Senior Leadership Team.
- If the child or adult at risk is in immediate danger CALL the Police or ambulance services immediately on 999.

j) Allegations against another member of employees:

- If any of our guests or clients makes a complaint of abuse against an Azalea employee, the person receiving the complaint **must report it immediately to a member of the SENIOR LEADERSHIP TEAM**
- Any Azalea employee who has reason to suspect that a colleague may have abused a child or adult at risk must immediately report concerns to a member of the Senior Leadership team. A record must also be made of these concerns, noting any witnesses to the said incident/allegation. Please be familiar with Azalea's whistle blowing policy.

k) Employees and volunteer's self-protection

Because of concerns about abuse and in particular sexual abuse, it is important that all adults working with adults at risk, have guidelines for self-protection to avoid instances of false allegations about them. Sometimes, a person can be wrongly accused. Steps that can be taken to avoid or resolve issues include:

- In the event of any injury - accidental or otherwise, ensure that it is recorded and witnessed by another Azalea team member on the accidents/incidents/near-miss form
- Keep written records of any false allegations/comments an adult makes against you and inform the Team Lead of your session/your line manager if you feel that a guest/client has taken a strong dislike to you. The Team Lead will then communicate this to frontline employees who will monitor developments of the same behaviour
- If a guest/client touches an Azalea employee/volunteer inappropriately, record what happened immediately and ensure that the Team Lead of the session/your line manager is informed immediately. The Team Lead will then communicate this to frontline employees
- Do not meet the person making the allegation against you on your own
- Keep calm. Do not get involved in an argument that is likely to make the situation worse
- Immediately inform your Team Leader/line manager. The quicker that action is taken to investigate the allegations, the sooner the situation will be resolved
- Record the facts as you understand them
- Ensure that no-one is placed in a position which could cause further compromise
- Do not contact another agency involved with the guest/client or the person concerned
- Await further contact from the Senior Leadership Team.

Ensure you are familiar with all minimising risk documents for each aspect of Azalea's work.

l) Allegations against a member of the Senior Leadership Team

- When a disclosure is made against a member of the Senior Leadership Team, the person receiving the disclosure must report it to the Chair of Trustees and the Safeguarding Trustee. In the absence of the Safeguarding Trustee, another trustee must be informed.
 - *SAFEGUARDING TRUSTEE – Gerard Van Der Westhuyzen
 - *CHAIR OF TRUSTEES – Martyn Shea

m) Confidentiality

- Whatever the nature of the issue, it must be kept confidential. Only speak to your Team Lead/line manager and the Senior Leadership Team about these matters
- You must not discuss the disclosure with any individual or party other than those identified in the above procedure.

APPENDIX

Lines of Responsibility and Reporting within Safeguarding in Encompass

