Forces Online CIO

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Registered Charity: 1188955 (England & Wales) SC050678 (Scotland)

Forces Online CIO

Safeguarding Policy

Note: This policy is a 'living document' and as such it can be reviewed, revised and amended at any time to meet any changes or amendments deemed necessary to facilitate any legislative or environmental changes, however, such changes will only take place following consultation with and authorisation by the Forces Online CIO, Scotland and Northern Ireland Senior Management team.

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FORCES ONLINE

SAFEGUARDING POLICY

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Approved by: Chief Executive Officer/Board of Trustees

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1.   Introduction

1.1   Organisation Overview

Forces Online CIO (Registered Charity No. 1188955 England & Wales, SC050678 Scotland) Northern Ireland currently in registration process is an online direct support and signposting and support service operated by volunteers. We provide help, advice, support, and signposting to other specialist organisations that deliver direct services to Armed Forces veterans and their families who may be experiencing difficulties with mental health, physical wellbeing, accommodation, financial status, social needs, employment support, and other challenges.

Important Note: Forces Online CIO is NOT an emergency response charity. We provide direct support through a referral process and signposting services that connects veterans and their families with other appropriate specialist support organisations. In emergency situations, we direct service users to contact emergency services (999) or the Samaritans on 116123.

1.2   Our Services

Our volunteer-operated services include:

- **Online signposting and advice** through our website and Veterans Directory

- **Virtual Hub** - Live Zoom platform open Monday-Friday 10:00-16:00 and arranged appointments outside of these times.

- **Live chat service** available 09:00-22:00 via Chat Heroes platform. Times may vary during holiday periods.

- **Welfare Support referral system** at welfaresupport.net

- **Social media support** across multiple platforms

- **Email and telephone guidance** for accessing appropriate services

1.3   Purpose of this Policy

This Safeguarding Policy establishes our commitment to protecting vulnerable veterans who access our signposting and support services. Given our role as an intermediary organisation, this policy emphasises our responsibility to identify risks, make appropriate referrals, and where applicable ensure safe transitions to other specialist support providers.

1.4   Policy Scope

This policy applies to all trustees, volunteers, staff members, contractors, and anyone acting on behalf of Forces Online CIO/Scotland/Northern Ireland across all our service delivery channels. It covers our role as a signposting service and our interactions with service users (beneficiaries) during our direct services responses, and referral process to other specialist service providers.

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2.   Definitions

Safeguarding: Protecting vulnerable Armed Forces veterans, their families and dependents from abuse, neglect, exploitation, and harm while promoting their welfare and wellbeing.

Families may be Child/Young People: Anyone under the age of 18 years.

Vulnerable Veterans or other family adults: Any person aged 18 or over who may be unable to take care of themselves or protect themselves from harm or exploitation due to mental illness, physical disability, sensory impairment, learning disability, age, illness, or circumstances such as homelessness, substance abuse, or domestic violence.

Abuse: Physical, emotional, sexual, financial, psychological, discriminatory abuse, neglect, or institutional abuse.

Signposting: The process of directing service users to appropriate specialist organisations and services that can meet their specific needs.

Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSL): The person responsible for coordinating safeguarding within Forces Online CIO.

Service User: Any individual who accesses our signposting and support services, including veterans, serving personnel, and their family members.

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3.   Commitment Statement and Limitations

3.1   Our Commitment

Forces Online is committed to:
- Creating and maintaining safe interactions during our direct help or signposting process
- Recognising that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility within our volunteer team
- Ensuring all safeguarding concerns are identified and appropriately referred to specialist services
- Working collaboratively with service users and specialist organisations
- Promoting the welfare and rights of vulnerable veterans, their families and dependents within our direct support or signposting role
- Supporting veterans and their families to access other appropriate specialist services

3.2   Our Role and Limitations

Forces Online operates direct support and signposting services and volunteers must understand:

What we DO:
- Provide direct support.
- Provide information and guidance on other available services
- Make referrals to appropriate specialist organisations
- Offer emotional support during the signposting process
- Maintain contact during transition periods where appropriate
- Follow up to ensure service users have accessed referred services
- Ensure that any audio or written record fully complies with the Data Protection Act 2018 (GDPR)

What we DO NOT do:
- Provide emergency response services
- Offer clinical treatment or therapy
- Conduct formal safeguarding investigations
- Replace statutory services or professional interventions
- Provide crisis intervention or counsel beyond immediate signposting

In emergency situations, our role is to:
- Direct service users to emergency services (999) and/or the Samaritans 116123
- Follow up to ensure emergency contact has been made
- Report safeguarding concerns to appropriate authorities with the service users consent
- Document the incident and any referral process

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4.   Legal Framework

This policy is underpinned by relevant legislation including:
- The Care Act 2014 (duty to report safeguarding concerns)
- Children Act 1989 and 2004 (child protection responsibilities)
- Mental Capacity Act 2005 (capacity and consent issues)
- Data Protection Act 2018 (GDPR) (information sharing and storage)
- Human Rights Act 1998 (dignity and rights)
- Equality Act 2010 (non-discrimination)
- Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 (Prevent Duty)
- Charity Commission guidance on safeguarding

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5.   Roles and Responsibilities

5.1   Board of Trustees
- Overall strategic responsibility for safeguarding within the organisation
- Ensuring adequate resources and training for safeguarding implementation
- Monitoring safeguarding effectiveness through quarterly reporting
- Approving safeguarding policies and procedures
- Ensuring compliance with charity law and safeguarding duties

5.2   Chief Executive Officer

- Operational responsibility for safeguarding implementation
- Ensuring all volunteers understand their safeguarding responsibilities and limitations
- Reporting serious incidents to relevant authorities, Charity Commission, and trustees
- Maintaining relationships with key partner organisations for referrals
- Overseeing the Designated Safeguarding Lead

5.3   Assistant Chief Executive Officer
- Deputising for CEO on safeguarding matters when required
- Supporting safeguarding implementation across all service areas
- Coordinating with service area leads on safeguarding issues

5.4   Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)
Primary responsibilities:
- First point of contact for all safeguarding concerns within Forces Online
- Assessing safeguarding concerns and determining appropriate referral pathways
- Making referrals to local authority safeguarding teams and other agencies
- Maintaining comprehensive safeguarding records and documentation
- Liaising with external agencies and specialist services
- Providing safeguarding guidance and consultation to volunteers
- Coordinating safeguarding training across the organisation
- Reporting to CEO and trustees on safeguarding matters

Decision-making authority:
- Determining when immediate referrals or direct services are required
- Authorising information sharing for safeguarding purposes
- Escalating complex cases to appropriate authorities
- Making decisions about service user safety during signposting process

5.5   Service Area Leads (Virtual Hub, Welfare Support, Chat Services)
- Implementing safeguarding procedures within their specific service areas
- Ensuring volunteers receive appropriate training for their roles
- Monitoring interactions for safeguarding concerns
- Reporting concerns to DSL immediately
- Maintaining safe working practices within their teams

5.6   All Volunteers and Staff
Core responsibilities:
- Remaining vigilant for signs of abuse, neglect, or risk during all interactions
- Understanding the limits of our signposting role
- Knowing how to make immediate referrals to emergency services
- Following safe communication practices across all platforms
- Reporting all safeguarding concerns to DSL without delay
- Participating in mandatory safeguarding training
- Maintaining appropriate professional boundaries
- Documenting interactions and concerns appropriately

Specific duties:
- Never attempting to investigate safeguarding concerns independently
- Always prioritising service user safety over organisational considerations
- Recognising when situations require immediate emergency response
- Supporting service users to access appropriate specialist services
- Maintaining confidentiality while ensuring necessary information sharing

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6. Recognising Abuse and Neglect

6.1 Types of Abuse - Detailed Identification

Physical Abuse:
- *Indicators*: Unexplained injuries, bruising in unusual places, marks suggesting restraint, injuries inconsistent with explanation, repeated injuries
- *Behavioural signs:* Flinching when touched, fear of physical contact, wearing clothes to hide injuries, reluctance to discuss injuries
- *In virtual interactions:* Visible injuries on video calls, interruptions suggesting someone is monitoring, sudden changes in behaviour during calls

Emotional/Psychological Abuse:
- *Indicators:* Verbal threats, intimidation, harassment, isolation, humiliation, controlling behaviour, cyberbullying
- *Behavioural signs:* Low self-esteem, anxiety, depression, withdrawal from social contact, fearfulness, confusion
- *In virtual interactions:* Signs of someone listening in, fear when discussing relationships, extreme emotional responses to questions

Sexual Abuse:
- *Indicators:* Any non-consensual sexual activity, sexual exploitation, inappropriate sexual behaviour
- *Behavioural signs:* Inappropriate sexual knowledge, sexualised behaviour, fear of specific individuals, self-harm
- *Disclosure patterns:* Often disclosed indirectly, through hints or partial disclosures

Financial Abuse:
- *Indicators:* Theft, fraud, coercion regarding financial decisions, misuse of benefits, unauthorized use of bank accounts, property
- *Signs:* Unexplained financial difficulties, inability to pay for necessities despite adequate income, confusion about finances, missing personal items
- *Veteran-specific:* Exploitation of military pensions, compensation payments, or benefits

Neglect:
- *Indicators:* Failure to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, medical care, supervision, or emotional support
- *Signs:* Poor hygiene, malnutrition, untreated medical conditions, unsafe living conditions

- *Self-neglect:* Inability or unwillingness to maintain personal care, medication compliance, or safe living conditions

Discriminatory Abuse:

- *Indicators:* Harassment, slurs, or poor treatment based on protected characteristics (race, gender, sexuality, disability, religion, age)
- *Manifestations:* Denial of services, verbal abuse, exclusion, hate incidents

Institutional Abuse:
- *Indicators:* Poor practice within care settings, lack of person-centred care, inappropriate restrictions, inadequate complaints procedures
- *Organisational signs:* High staff turnover, lack of training, poor management oversight

6.2 Specific Vulnerabilities in the Armed Forces Community

Combat-Related Trauma:
- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) symptoms affecting daily functioning
- Complex trauma responses affecting relationships and decision-making
- Hypervigilance, flashbacks, avoidance behaviours
- Sleep disorders affecting mental capacity

Military Sexual Trauma (MST):
- Sexual harassment or assault during military service
- Often underreported due to command structures
- May affect trust in authority figures and services

Transition Difficulties:
- Identity issues following military discharge
- Loss of military community and support structures
- Difficulties adapting to civilian life and employment

Substance Abuse:
- Self-medication for trauma, pain, or adjustment difficulties
- Alcohol dependency affecting capacity and safety
- Prescription drug misuse or dependency

Financial Vulnerabilities:
- Complex benefits and compensation systems
- Potential for exploitation due to regular payments
- Financial difficulties during transition periods
- Debt issues affecting housing and family stability

Family and Relationship Issues:
- Domestic violence related to trauma or adjustment issues
- Family breakdown during or after military service
- Children affected by parental military service or trauma

Social Isolation:
- Geographic isolation from military community
- Difficulty forming civilian relationships

- Loss of military identity and purpose
- Reluctance to seek help due to military culture

6.3 Warning Signs During Virtual Interactions

During Zoom Sessions (Virtual Hub):
- Background voices suggesting control or monitoring
- Reluctance to speak freely or frequent looking off-camera
- Visible injuries, poor living conditions, or signs of neglect
- Interruptions that cause fear or anxiety responses
- Inability to participate due to technological restrictions imposed by others

During Chat Sessions:
- Messages suggesting immediate danger or risk
- Descriptions of abuse or exploitation
- Financial concerns suggesting exploitation
- Requests for help that indicate emergency situations
- Sudden cessation of communication during crisis discussions

During Telephone Conversations:
- Background noise suggesting conflict or danger
- Whispered conversations indicating fear of being overheard
- Abrupt ending of calls when discussing sensitive topics
- Coded language suggesting inability to speak freely

7. Safe Recruitment and Volunteer Management

7.1 Enhanced Recruitment Process

Application Stage:
- Comprehensive application forms requesting full history of employment/volunteering (to include any gaps in employment)
- Specific questions about experience with vulnerable populations
- Declaration of any criminal convictions or safeguarding concerns
- References from at least two sources, including recent employers'/volunteer organisations
- Self-declaration of suitability to work with vulnerable adults and children

Screening Process:
- Enhanced DBS checks for all volunteers with direct service user contact
- Barred List checks where appropriate
- Reference checks with specific safeguarding questions
- Online presence review for social media and public profiles
- Identity verification and address confirmation

Interview Process:
- Structured interviews including safeguarding scenarios
- Assessment of understanding of professional boundaries
- Evaluation of communication skills and emotional intelligence
- Discussion of personal motivations and understanding of volunteer role
- Clear explanation of safeguarding expectations and limitations

Decision Making:
- Via an interview panel, to include DSL or trained safeguarding representative
- Clear scoring criteria including safeguarding competency
- Documentation of recruitment decisions
- Clear feedback process for unsuccessful candidates

7.2   Induction and Probationary Period

Comprehensive Induction (First Month):
- Organisational overview including safeguarding commitment
- Role-specific training including boundaries and limitations
- Introduction to safeguarding procedures and reporting mechanisms
- Shadowing experienced volunteers during initial interactions
- Assessment of competency before independent practice

Probationary Period (First 6 Months):
- Monthly supervision meetings including safeguarding discussions
- Regular observation of practice with constructive feedback
- Progressive increase in responsibility and independence
- Formal review at 3 and 6 months
- Clear criteria for successful completion of probationary period
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7.3   Ongoing Training Requirements

Mandatory Training for All Volunteers:
- Safeguarding awareness (annual refresher)
- Recognising signs of abuse and neglect
- Reporting procedures and documentation
- Professional boundaries and safe practice
- Data protection and confidentiality
- Equality, diversity, and human rights

Role-Specific Training:
- **Virtual Hub volunteers:** Online safety, managing virtual groups, crisis recognition
- **Chat service follow-up:** Written communication skills, de-escalation techniques, emergency protocols
- **Welfare support volunteers:** Assessment skills, referral processes, multi-agency working
- **Social media volunteers:** Digital safeguarding, appropriate online responses, content moderation

Advanced Training for Designated Roles:
- **DSL training:** Specialist safeguarding lead qualification (renewed every 2 years)
- **Supervisors:** Safeguarding supervision skills, case management
- **Trainers:** Adult learning principles, safeguarding training delivery

7.4 Supervision and Support Framework

Regular Supervision Structure:
- **New volunteers:** Weekly supervision for first month, fortnightly for months 2-6
- **Experienced volunteers:** Monthly individual supervision minimum
- **Team meetings:** Monthly team meetings including safeguarding agenda items
- **Ad-hoc support:** Available immediately following safeguarding concerns or difficult interactions

Supervision Content:
- Review of recent interactions and any concerns
- Discussion of professional development needs
- Safeguarding case discussions (anonymised)
- Emotional support and wellbeing check
- Policy updates and learning from incidents

Support Mechanisms:
- Employee Assistance Programme or equivalent for volunteers
- Debriefing sessions following serious incidents
- Peer support networks within volunteer teams
- Access to external supervision for complex cases

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8. Detailed Safe Working Practices

8.1 Online Safety Protocols

Website and Veterans Directory Interactions:
- Clear privacy statements and data protection notices
- Secure contact forms with encryption for sensitive information
- Regular security updates and monitoring for vulnerabilities
- Clear guidance on what information to share and what to refer elsewhere
- Incident reporting system for inappropriate contact attempts

Email Communications:
- Use of secure, organisational email accounts only
- Clear email signatures identifying role and organisation
- Professional format and appropriate response times
- Documentation of all significant email exchanges
- Secure storage and regular deletion of emails containing sensitive information and/or materials

8.2 Virtual Hub (Zoom Platform) Detailed Guidelines

Pre-Session Setup:
- Waiting room enabled for all sessions
- Registration required with verification of participant identity
- Clear session objectives and ground rules shared in advance
- Technical checks for hosts including backup communication methods
- Risk assessment for each session type

During Sessions:
- **Host responsibilities:** Constant monitoring of participants, immediate response to concerning behaviour
- **Recording policies:** Clear consent processes, secure storage, retention periods
- **Participant management:** Clear guidelines for joining/leaving, breakout room supervision
- **Crisis protocols:** Immediate response procedures for disclosures or emergencies
- **Documentation:** Session logs including attendance, significant interactions, and any concerns

Breakout Room Management:
- Minimum two participants per room unless specific need identified
- Host rotation through rooms for monitoring
- Clear instructions for requesting help or reporting concerns
- Emergency protocols for concerning situations in breakout rooms

Post-Session Procedures:
- Immediate documentation of any safeguarding concerns
- Follow-up contact for participants who disclosed problems
- Secure deletion of session recordings after appropriate period
- Referral processes for ongoing support needs identified

8.3 Live Chat Service Protocols

Chat Platform Management:
- **Operating hours:** 09:00-22:00 with clear handover procedures
- **Response time standards:** Maximum 5 minutes for initial response
- **Queue management:** Clear escalation for high-volume periods
- **Technical monitoring:** Regular checks on platform functionality and security

Chat Interaction Guidelines:
- **Opening protocols:** Standardised greeting and service explanation
- **Information gathering:** Structured approach to understanding needs without being intrusive
- **Signposting process:** Clear explanation of referral options and next steps
- **Closing protocols:** Ensuring service user has clear next steps and contact information
- **Emergency procedures:** Immediate protocols for crisis disclosures

Documentation and Follow-up:
- Complete chat logs saved securely with personal data protection
- Immediate flagging system for safeguarding concerns
- Follow-up procedures for incomplete conversations or ongoing needs
- Regular review of chat themes and common safeguarding issues

8.4 Welfare Support and Referral System

Referral Acceptance Criteria:
- Clear eligibility criteria for referral acceptance

- Screening process for assessing appropriateness and urgency
- Risk assessment tools for identifying safeguarding concerns
- Capacity to accept referrals based on volunteer availability

Assessment Process:
- Structured assessment tools for understanding needs
- Risk assessment including safeguarding indicators
- Consent processes for information sharing
- Clear timescales for assessment completion

Referral Making:
- Database of vetted, appropriate services with current contact information
- Standardised referral processes with partner organisations
- Follow-up procedures to ensure referrals are successful
- Alternative options when primary referrals are unsuccessful

8.5 Social Media Safety Management

Platform-Specific Guidelines:
- **Facebook:** Page management, comment moderation, private message protocols
- **Twitter:** Tweet content guidelines, direct message management, hashtag monitoring
- **LinkedIn:** Professional networking guidelines, connection policies
- **Instagram:** Visual content guidelines, story monitoring
- **Support Platform:** Moderation of posts, user behaviour monitoring

Content Management:
- Pre-publication review process for sensitive content
- Clear guidelines on acceptable and unacceptable content
- Immediate response protocols for concerning posts or comments
- Regular monitoring schedule with escalation procedures

User Interaction Management:
- Professional response guidelines maintaining boundaries
- Recognition of concerning behaviour or posts
- Reporting mechanisms for inappropriate content or behaviour
- Privacy settings and security measures

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9. Comprehensive Reporting Procedures

9.1 Immediate Response Protocols

Emergency Situations (Immediate Danger):
1. **Ensure immediate safety:** Guide service user to contact emergency services (999) directly
2. **Stay connected:** Remain in contact until emergency services are contacted
3. **Document:** Record all details of emergency and response
4. **Report:** Inform DSL immediately (within 1 hour)
5. **Follow-up:** Check that emergency services responded appropriately

Urgent Safeguarding Concerns (Risk but not immediate danger):
1. **Initial assessment:** Evaluate risk level and urgency
2. **Immediate documentation:** Record all relevant information using incident form
3. **DSL notification:** Contact DSL within 2 hours
4. **Safety planning:** Work with service user on immediate safety measures
5. **Referral preparation:** Gather information for appropriate referrals

Non-urgent Concerns:
1. **Documentation:** Complete incident report form within 24 hours
2. **DSL notification:** Report to DSL within 48 hours
3. **Assessment:** DSL evaluates need for external referral
4. **Planning:** Develop appropriate response and support plan

9.2 Internal Reporting Structure

Level 1: Volunteer/Staff Member Identification
- Recognise potential safeguarding concern
- Ensure immediate safety if required
- Complete incident report form
- Contact DSL or senior volunteer immediately

Level 2: Team Leader/Service Area Lead
- Receive reports from volunteers
- Provide immediate guidance and support
- Escalate to DSL if not already contacted
- Ensure proper documentation

Level 3: Designated Safeguarding Lead
- Monitor all direct support interventions
- Receive all safeguarding reports
- Assess risk and determine appropriate response
- Make external referrals to statutory agencies
- Coordinate internal response and support
- Report to CEO on all significant cases

Level 4: Chief Executive Officer
- Oversight of all serious safeguarding cases
- Liaison with external agencies at senior level
- Reporting to trustees and Charity Commission where required
- Strategic oversight of safeguarding implementation

9.3 External Reporting Requirements and Processes
Local Authority Safeguarding Teams:

Adult Safeguarding Referrals:
- **When to refer:** Concerns about adults who may be at risk of abuse or neglect
- **How to refer:** Local authority adult safeguarding team (contact details in appendix)

- **Information required:** Personal details, nature of concern, current risks, consent status
- **Timeframes:** Immediate for urgent cases, within 24 hours for non-urgent
- **Follow-up:** Written confirmation within 48 hours

Children's Safeguarding Referrals:
- **When to refer:** Any concerns about children under 18
- **How to refer:** Local authority children's services or MASH (Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub)
- **Information required:** Child and family details, specific concerns, current safety
- **Timeframes:** Immediate for urgent cases, same day for all others
- **Follow-up:** Written referral within 24 hours

Police Involvement:
- **Criminal activity:** Report to police (999 emergencies, 101 non-emergency)
- **Domestic violence:** Specialist domestic violence units
- **Financial crime:** Action Fraud (0300 123 2040)
- **Online abuse:** Report to police and platform providers

Other Specialist Services:
- **Mental health crisis:** Local crisis teams or NHS 111
- **Substance abuse:** Local substance abuse services
- **Homelessness:** Local housing departments or homelessness charities
- **Benefits issues:** Citizens Advice Bureau or benefits specialists

9.4   Charity Commission Reporting

Serious Incident Reporting: Forces Online will report to the Charity Commission within 15 days of becoming aware of:
- Incidents where service users have been seriously harmed
- Allegations of abuse by volunteers or staff
- Significant breaches of safeguarding procedures
- Criminal investigations involving the charity
- Regulatory action by other bodies

Reporting Process:
- Initial notification online via Charity Commission portal
- Detailed written report within specified timeframes
- Regular updates on investigation progress and outcomes
- Final report including lessons learned, training needs and improvements implemented

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10.   Information Sharing and Confidentiality

10.1   Principles of Information Sharing

Legal Basis for Sharing:
- Actual (i.e. not implied) consent of the individual where possible
- Vital interests (life and death situations)
- Legal obligation (statutory reporting requirements)

- Public interest (prevention of crime or harm)
- Legitimate interests (safeguarding of vulnerable people)

When Consent is Not Required:
- Emergency situations where delay would increase risk
- Where seeking consent would increase risk to the individual
- Where the person lacks mental capacity to consent
- Where there are child protection concerns
- Where serious crime may have been committed

10.2   Information Sharing Protocols

Internal Information Sharing:
- Information shared on strict 'need to know' basis
- Clear documentation of who information is shared with and why
- Regular review of who has access to sensitive information
- Secure systems for storing and transmitting information
- Clear retention and disposal policies

External Information Sharing:
- Written records of all information shared externally
- Clear legal basis documented for each sharing decision
- Feedback sought from receiving agencies where appropriate
- Service user informed of information sharing unless this increases risk

Multi-Agency Working:
- Participation in safeguarding meetings and case conferences
- Information sharing agreements with key partner agencies
- Clear protocols for joint assessments and investigations
- Regular review of information sharing arrangements

10.3   Data Protection and GDPR Compliance

- Lawful basis for processing clearly identified and documented
- Privacy notices clearly explaining how information will be used
- Data minimisation - only collecting necessary information
- Accuracy - regular checks and updates of information held
- Storage limitation - clear retention and disposal schedules
- Security - appropriate technical and organisational measures

Special Category Data:
- Health information, sexual orientation, religious beliefs require additional protections
- Explicit consent or other specific lawful basis required
- Enhanced security measures for storage and transmission
- Regular review of necessity for processing special category data

Rights of Individuals:
- Right to be informed about data processing
- Right of access to personal data held
- Right to rectification of inaccurate data
- Right to erasure in specific circumstances

- Right to restrict processing
- Right to data portability
- Right to object to processing

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11. Supporting Service Users through Safeguarding Processes

11.1 Person-Centred Approach

Fundamental Principles:
- **Empowerment:** Supporting people to make their own decisions and giving informed consent
- **Prevention:** Acting before harm occurs, when possible
- **Proportionality:** Proportionate and least intrusive response appropriate to the risk
- **Protection:** Support and representation for those in greatest need
- **Partnership:** Local solutions through services working with communities
- **Accountability:** Accountability and transparency in delivering safeguarding

Individual Rights:
- Right to be heard and have views respected
- Right to confidentiality balanced with safety needs
- Right to accessible information and communication
- Right to advocacy and independent support
- Right to participate in safeguarding processes
- Right to complain about services received

11.2 Trauma-Informed Practice
Understanding Trauma Impact:
- Recognition that many veterans have experienced military trauma
- Understanding that safeguarding processes can re-traumatise
- Awareness of trauma responses that may affect engagement
- Sensitivity to triggers that may cause distress

Trauma-Informed Responses:
- Creating psychological and physical safety in all interactions
- Offering choice and control wherever possible
- Building trustworthiness and transparency
- Emphasising collaboration and mutuality
- Recognising cultural, historical, and gender issues
- Prioritising emotional and physical safety

11.3 Cultural Competency and Diversity

Military Culture Considerations:
- Understanding military hierarchy and its impact on help-seeking
- Recognition of military values (honour, loyalty, duty) and how they may affect disclosure
- Awareness of military identity issues and transition challenges
- Sensitivity to different service experiences and conflicts

Diversity and Inclusion:
- Cultural competency in working with different ethnic backgrounds
- Gender-specific considerations, particularly for female veterans
- LGBTI+ awareness and inclusive practice
- Religious and spiritual sensitivity
- Age-appropriate approaches for different generations
- Disability awareness and reasonable adjustments

11.4   Family and Carer Involvement

Supporting Military Families:
- Recognition that military service affects entire families
- Understanding of family deployment experiences and separation
- Awareness of secondary trauma in military families
- Support for children of military personnel

Carer Support:
- Recognition of carer stress and burden
- Support for carers who may also be vulnerable
- Information sharing with carers while respecting confidentiality
- Referral to carer support services where appropriate

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12. Specific Safeguarding Situations - Detailed Protocols

12.1   Mental Health Crises and Suicide Risk - Risk Assessment Framework

- **Immediate risk factors:** Active suicidal ideation, plan, means, recent attempts
- **Historical factors:** Previous attempts, family history, trauma history
- **Protective factors:** Family support, professional relationships, future plans
- **Warning signs:** Giving away possessions, saying goodbye, hopelessness expressions

Response Protocols:
High Immediate Risk (Active suicidal ideation with plan and means):
1. Do not leave person alone if in virtual session
2. Encourage immediate contact with emergency services (999)/Samaritans 116123
3. Offer to stay connected while they make the call
4. If refused, explain duty of care and contact emergency services yourself
5. Document all actions and decisions
6. Follow up within 24 hours to ensure safety

Medium Risk (Suicidal thoughts without immediate plan):
1. Conduct detailed risk assessment
2. Develop safety plan with service user
3. Provide crisis helpline numbers (Samaritans 116 123)
4. Refer to GP or local mental health crisis team
5. Arrange follow-up contact within 48 hours
6. Document assessment and actions

Ongoing Mental Health Support Needs:
1. Refer to appropriate mental health services
2. Provide information about veteran-specific mental health support
3. Consider referral to Combat Stress, PTSD charities, or NHS veteran services
4. Support with accessing benefits and accommodations if needed

Documentation Requirements:
- Detailed risk assessment notes
- Exact words used by service user where relevant
- Actions taken and rationale
- Follow-up arrangements
- Professional consultations

12.2 Domestic Violence and Abuse

Recognition of Domestic Violence:
- Physical violence, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, coercive control
- Economic abuse including control of finances
- Isolation from family and friends
- Monitoring of activities and communication
- Threats and intimidation

Veteran-Specific Considerations:
- Higher rates of domestic violence in military families
- Impact of PTSD and trauma on relationships
- Weapons training and access to weapons
- Command reporting concerns for serving personnel
- Female veterans experiencing intimate partner violence

Safe Response Protocols:
Immediate Safety Concerns:
1. Assess immediate safety - is perpetrator present?
2. If virtual contact, establish safe communication method
3. Provide National Domestic Violence Helpline number (0808 2000 247)
4. Discuss safety planning without creating additional risk
5. Document concerns and actions
6. Consider police involvement if immediate danger

Non-Crisis Support:
1. Provide information about specialist domestic violence services
2. Discuss safety planning and escape planning
3. Information about legal options and protection orders
4. Financial support and housing options
5. Children's safety and support needs
6. Long-term support services for survivors

Information Sharing:
- Consent preferred but not always required for safeguarding
- Consider risk to children in the household
- Multi-agency approach may be needed
- Maintain detailed records of all concerns and actions

12.3 Financial Abuse and Exploitation

Types of Financial Abuse:
- Theft of money or possessions
- Fraud and scamming
- Coercion or pressure regarding financial decisions
- Misuse of benefits or pensions
- Exploitation of property or assets
- Preventing access to own money

Veteran-Specific Financial Vulnerabilities:
- Regular pension or compensation payments make attractive targets
- Complex benefits system creates confusion and vulnerability
- Transition period financial instability
- Mental health issues affecting financial decision-making
- Family exploitation of military compensation

Response Framework:
Immediate Financial Exploitation:
1. Assess current safety and access to funds
2. Advise contacting bank/building society to freeze accounts if appropriate
3. Report to Action Fraud (0300 123 2040) if criminal activity suspected
4. Contact adult safeguarding team if vulnerable adult involved
5. Consider police involvement for serious fraud or theft
6. Document all concerns and actions taken

Ongoing Financial Abuse:
1. Refer to specialist financial abuse services
2. Citizens Advice Bureau for benefits and debt advice
3. Legal advice regarding financial exploitation
4. Support with budgeting and financial management
5. Benefits review to ensure receiving correct entitlements

Support Approach
- Information about common scams targeting veterans
- Safe banking and internet security advice
- Power of attorney information and protection
- Benefits entitlement reviews
- Budgeting support and financial planning

12.4 Radicalisation and Extremism (Prevent Duty)

Understanding the Prevent Duty: Forces Online has a legal duty under the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 to have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism.

Risk Factors for Radicalisation:
- Identity crisis or personal grievances
- Social isolation and disconnection
- Exposure to extremist narratives online

- Mental health vulnerabilities
- Experience of discrimination or perceived injustice
- Charismatic extremist influences

Veteran-Specific Considerations:
- Transition difficulties and identity loss
- Grievances about treatment by government or military
- Combat experience and weapons training
- Potential targeting by extremist groups
- Online communities that may promote extreme views

Recognition of Concerning Behaviour:
- Expression of extremist views or support for terrorist acts
- Significant changes in behaviour, appearance, or social interactions
- Withdrawal from family and friends
- Increased secrecy about online activities
- Possession of extremist literature or propaganda
- Travel to areas of concern without clear legitimate purpose
- Contact with known extremist individuals or groups

Response Protocols:
Initial Concerns:
1. Do not confront the individual directly about extremist views
2. Document specific behaviours and statements of concern
3. Consult with DSL immediately
4. Consider consultation with local Prevent team
5. Maintain normal supportive relationship while monitoring

Escalated Concerns:
1. Contact local authority Prevent team or police Prevent unit
2. Provide detailed information about concerns
3. Participate in multi-agency assessment if requested
4. Continue appropriate support while agencies assess risk
5. Document all actions and decisions

Support Approach:
- Focus on underlying vulnerabilities and grievances
- Provide alternative positive activities and connections
- Address isolation and mental health needs
- Work with families where appropriate and safe
- Maintain engagement while agencies work with the individual

12.5   Self-Harm and Self-Neglect

Understanding Self-Harm:
- Deliberate injury to oneself as a way of coping with emotional distress
- May include cutting, burning, hitting, or other forms of self-injury
- Often hidden but may be disclosed during support conversations
- May be linked to trauma, depression, or other mental health conditions

Self-Neglect Indicators:
- Poor personal hygiene or self-care

- Failure to take prescribed medication
- Not seeking medical care for health conditions
- Living in unsafe or unsanitary conditions
- Inadequate nutrition or hydration
- Social isolation and withdrawal

Veteran-Specific Considerations:
- Self-harm as coping mechanism for trauma or guilt
- Self-neglect due to depression or PTSD
- Alcohol or substance misuse masking self-harm behaviours
- Reluctance to seek help due to military culture stigma
- Self-punishment related to survivor guilt or moral injury

Response Framework:
Active Self-Harm Disclosure:
1. Thank the person for trusting you with this information
2. Assess immediate risk and medical needs
3. Encourage seeking medical attention if injuries present
4. Provide crisis support numbers and resources
5. Discuss safety planning and alternative coping strategies
6. Arrange follow-up support and referrals

Self-Neglect Concerns:
1. Assess capacity to make decisions about care
2. Consider underlying causes (mental health, substance use, physical health)
3. Refer to appropriate health and social care services
4. Adult safeguarding referral if person lacks capacity or is at significant risk
5. Involve family or carers where appropriate and consented
6. Coordinate with multiple agencies for comprehensive support

12.6   Substance Abuse and Addiction

Recognition of Substance Abuse:
- Alcohol dependency affecting daily functioning
- Prescription drug misuse or dependency
- Illegal drug use
- Combining substances in dangerous ways
- Withdrawal symptoms when substances unavailable

Impact on Safeguarding:
- Reduced capacity to make safe decisions
- Increased vulnerability to exploitation
- Risk of neglect of self or dependents
- Financial abuse through addiction exploitation
- Risk-taking behaviours while intoxicated

Veteran-Specific Factors:
- Self-medication for trauma or pain
- Prescription opioid dependency from service injuries
- Alcohol culture within military environment
- Transition stress leading to substance use
- Availability of substances in some veteran communities

Response Approaches:
Immediate Safety Concerns:
1. Assess current level of intoxication and safety
2. Medical emergency if overdose suspected (999)
3. Ensure safe environment and reduce immediate risks
4. Avoid confrontation about substance use during crisis
5. Document concerns and immediate actions

Ongoing Support:
1. Non-judgmental approach focusing on harm reduction
2. Referral to specialist addiction services
3. Information about veteran-specific substance abuse programs
4. Support with underlying trauma or mental health issues
5. Family support and education where appropriate
6. Coordination with other support services

Capacity and Consent Issues:
- Assessment of decision-making capacity when intoxicated
- Delayed consent processes until sober if possible
- Balance between respecting autonomy and ensuring safety
- Consider lasting powers of attorney if severe addiction

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13. Quality Assurance and Monitoring

13.1   Case Review Processes

Individual Case Reviews:
- **Routine reviews:** All safeguarding cases reviewed monthly by DSL
- **Complex case reviews:** Multi-disciplinary review for ongoing complex cases
- **Post-incident reviews:** Comprehensive review following serious incidents
- **Learning reviews:** Analysis of cases to identify learning opportunities

Review Participants:
- Designated Safeguarding Lead (Chair)
- Relevant volunteers involved in the case
- Service area leads where appropriate
- External consultants for complex cases
- CEO for serious incidents

Review Outcomes:
- Assessment of response effectiveness
- Identification of good practice
- Areas for improvement
- Training needs identification
- Policy or procedure amendments
- Individual support needs

13.2   Safeguarding Audit Framework

Annual Internal Audit:
- Review of all safeguarding policies and procedures
- Assessment of training compliance and effectiveness
- Analysis of safeguarding incident data and trends
- Review of partnership working arrangements
- Assessment of resource adequacy
- Volunteer feedback on safeguarding support

External Audit (Every 3 Years):
- Independent review by safeguarding specialists
- Assessment against best practice standards
- Recommendation for improvements
- Validation of internal audit findings
- Benchmarking against similar organisations

Continuous Monitoring:
- Monthly safeguarding statistics and trend analysis
- Quarterly reporting to trustees
- Annual safeguarding report to Charity Commission
- Regular feedback collection from service users and partners

13.3   Performance Indicators and Metrics

Quantitative Measures:
- Number of safeguarding concerns raised
- Response times for different risk levels
- Completion rates for safeguarding training
- Number and outcome of external referrals
- Volunteer retention rates post-safeguarding training
- Service user satisfaction with safeguarding responses

Qualitative Measures:
- Quality of safeguarding documentation
- Effectiveness of multi-agency working
- Service user feedback on feeling safe and supported
- Volunteer confidence in handling safeguarding issues
- Partner agency feedback on collaboration
- Learning and improvement from incidents

13.4   Continuous Improvement Framework

Learning from Practice:
- Regular case study development for training
- Best practice sharing across service areas
- Peer learning networks with other veterans' organisations
- Research into effective safeguarding approaches for veterans

Innovation and Development:

- Pilot programs for new safeguarding approaches
- Technology improvements for safer service delivery
- Partnership development for enhanced safeguarding
- Service user involvement in safeguarding improvement

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14. Training and Development programme

14.1 Training Needs Analysis

Role-Based Training Matrix:
All Volunteers - Foundation Level:
- Safeguarding awareness and legal duties (4 hours)
- Recognising abuse and neglect (2 hours)
- Reporting procedures and documentation (2 hours)
- Professional boundaries and safe practice (2 hours)
- Data protection and confidentiality (1 hour)
- Equality, diversity, and human rights (2 hours)
- **Total minimum:** 13 hours annually

Front-Line Service Volunteers - Enhanced Level:
- All foundation training plus:
- Communication skills for vulnerable people (3 hours)
- De-escalation and conflict resolution (2 hours)
- Mental health awareness specific to veterans (3 hours)
- Domestic violence awareness (2 hours)
- Substance abuse recognition (1 hour)
- **Additional:** 11 hours annually

Specialist Roles - Advanced Level:
- **Virtual Hub facilitators:** Group dynamics and online safety (4 hours)
- **Chat service operators:** Crisis intervention and text-based communication (4 hours)
- **Welfare support team:** Assessment skills and referral processes (6 hours)
- **Social media managers:** Digital safeguarding and content management (3 hours)

14.2 Training Delivery Methods

Face-to-Face Training:
- Initial induction safeguarding training
- Complex scenario-based learning
- Interactive skills practice
- Multi-agency training events
- Annual refresher sessions

Online Learning:
- Self-paced modules for basic awareness
- Webinar series for specialist topics
- Virtual reality training for difficult scenarios
- Mobile-friendly microlearning modules
- Assessment and certification systems

Work-Based Learning:
- Shadowing experienced volunteers
- Reflective practice sessions
- Case study discussions
- Peer learning groups
- Mentoring programmes

14.3   Competency Assessment Framework

Foundation Competencies (All Volunteers):
- Can identify different types of abuse and neglect
- Knows when and how to report safeguarding concerns
- Understands professional boundaries and limitations
- Can maintain appropriate records and documentation
- Demonstrates respectful communication with vulnerable people

Enhanced Competencies (Service Delivery Roles):
- Can conduct appropriate risk assessments
- Demonstrates effective communication with people in crisis
- Can make appropriate referrals to external agencies
- Shows understanding of trauma-informed practice
- Can work effectively as part of multi-disciplinary teams

Specialist Competencies (Role-Specific):
- Platform-specific safety management skills
- Crisis intervention techniques
- Complex case management abilities
- Training and supervision skills for designated roles
- Strategic safeguarding leadership for senior roles

14.4   Professional Development Opportunities
Internal Development:
- Leadership programmes for experienced volunteers
- Train-the-trainer programmes for safeguarding champions
- Secondment opportunities to partner organisations
- Conference and seminar attendance
- Research and development projects

External Qualifications:
- Safeguarding lead qualifications for designated roles
- Professional certificates in relevant specialisms
- Degree-level courses with study support
- Professional body memberships and networking
- International learning exchanges

15.   Partnership working and multi-agency collaboration

15.1 Strategic Partnerships

Statutory Partners:
- **Local Authority Adult Safeguarding Boards:** Participation in strategic planning and case reviews
- **Local Safeguarding Children Partnerships:** Contribution to local child protection strategies
- **Police Forces:** Collaboration on Prevent duty and criminal matters
- **NHS Trusts and Mental Health Services:** Referral pathways and joint working protocols
- **Local Housing Authorities:** Housing support and homelessness prevention

Voluntary Sector Partners:
- **Major veterans' charities (SSAFA, RBL, Help for Heroes):** Coordinated support and referral pathways
- **Specialist organisations:** PTSD charities, addiction services, domestic violence services
- **Local community organisations:** Grassroots support and community integration
- **Faith-based organisations:** Spiritual support and community networks
- **Advocacy services:** Independent support and representation

15.2 Information Sharing Agreements

Formal Data Sharing Protocols:
- Written agreements with all key partners
- Clear purposes and legal basis for sharing
- Data minimisation and security requirements
- Regular review and update processes
- Breach reporting and incident management

Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements:
- Participation in local safeguarding adult boards
- Contribution to serious case reviews
- Joint training and development programmes
- Shared learning from safeguarding incidents
- Coordinated awareness campaigns

15.3 Referral Pathway Development

Comprehensive Service Mapping:
- Detailed directory of local and national services
- Regular updates and verification of service information
- Waiting times and accessibility information
- Specialist services for specific veteran needs
- Emergency and crisis services available 24/7

Referral Quality Assurance:
- Standardised referral processes and forms
- Follow-up systems to track referral outcomes
- Feedback loops with receiving services

- Service user satisfaction with referral experiences
- Continuous improvement of referral pathways

16. Complaints and Feedback Systems

16.1 Comprehensive Complaints Procedure

Informal Resolution (Stage 1):
- Direct discussion with volunteer or team leader
- Immediate resolution where possible
- Documentation of informal complaints and resolutions
- Escalation process if informal resolution unsuccessful
- Timescale: Resolution attempted within 5 working days

Formal Complaint Investigation (Stage 2):
- Written complaint submitted to designated complaints officer
- Acknowledgement within 48 hours
- Independent investigation by senior staff member
- Full written response within 20 working days
- Right of appeal to trustees if unsatisfied

External Review (Stage 3):
- Appeal to Board of Trustees
- Independent panel review for serious complaints
- External mediation where appropriate
- Final response within 40 working days
- Information about external complaint routes (Ombudsman, regulators)

16.2 Safeguarding-Specific Complaints

Special Procedures for Safeguarding Complaints:
- Immediate assessment of ongoing risk to service user
- Separate investigation process from general complaints
- Independent investigation for complaints about safeguarding responses
- Automatic review by DSL and CEO
- External oversight for serious safeguarding failures

Support for Complainants:
- Independent advocacy support available
- Clear explanation of complaint process
- Regular updates on investigation progress
- Emotional support during complaint process
- Protection from victimisation or retaliation

16.3 Learning from Complaints and Feedback

Systematic Analysis:
- Monthly review of all complaints and themes
- Quarterly reporting to trustees on complaint trends
- Annual analysis of complaint data and learning
- Integration of learning into training programmes

*   Policy and procedure updates based on complaint outcomes

Service User Feedback Integration:
*   Regular satisfaction surveys including safeguarding questions
*   Focus groups with service users on safeguarding experiences
*   Anonymous feedback mechanisms
*   Exit interviews with service users leaving services
*   Co-production approaches to service improvement

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17. Implementation Roadmap and Resource Planning

17.1   Phased Implementation Plan

Phase 1: Foundation (Months 1-3)
*   Policy approval and launch
*   DSL appointment and training
*   Basic safeguarding training for all volunteers
*   Reporting systems and documentation setup
*   Partnership agreement establishment

Phase 2: Enhancement (Months 4-6)
*   Advanced training rollout
*   Quality assurance systems implementation
*   Partnership working protocols establishment
*   Service user feedback systems launch
*   First quarter review and adjustments
*
Phase 3: Embedding (Months 7-12)
*   Specialist training for designated roles
*   External audit preparation
*   Performance monitoring system refinement
*   Continuous improvement processes
*   Annual policy review and updates

17.2   Resource Requirements
Human Resources:
*   **Designated Safeguarding Lead:** 0.5 FTE equivalent volunteer time
*   **Training Coordinator:** 0.2 FTE for training delivery and coordination
*   **Administrative Support:** 0.1 FTE for documentation and reporting
*   **External Consultants:** Budget for specialist training and audit

Financial Resources:
*   **Training Budget:** £5,000 annually for external training and materials
*   **Technology:** £2,000 for secure systems and communication tools
*   **External Support:** £3,000 annually for specialist consultation and audit
*   **Materials and Resources:** £1,000 for training materials and documentation

Technology Infrastructure:
*   Secure case management system
*   Encrypted communication tools
*   Online training platforms

- Reporting and monitoring systems
- Backup and recovery systems

18. Policy Review and Governance

18.1   Regular Review Schedule

Annual Policy Review:
- Comprehensive review of entire policy
- Assessment against current legislation and guidance
- Integration of learning from incidents and cases
- Feedback from volunteers, service users, and partners
- Update of contact information and procedures

Interim Reviews (as required):
- Following serious safeguarding incidents
- Changes in legislation or statutory guidance
- Significant organisational changes
- Learning from serious case reviews
- Recommendations from external audits

18.2   Governance Structure

Board Oversight:
- Designated trustee with safeguarding lead responsibility
- Quarterly safeguarding reports to full board
- Annual safeguarding strategy review
- Resource allocation for safeguarding priorities
- External relationship management with statutory bodies

Executive Management:
- CEO overall accountability for safeguarding implementation
- Monthly review meetings with DSL
- Resource planning and allocation
- Strategic partnership development
- Serious incident management and reporting

Operational Leadership:
- DSL operational responsibility for safeguarding
- Service area leads implementation within their teams
- Regular team meetings with safeguarding agenda items
- Case management and multi-agency coordination
- Training and development coordination

19. Emergency Contact Information

19.1 Emergency Services

- **Police, Fire, Ambulance Emergency:** 999

- **Police non-emergency:** 101
- **NHS Emergency (when 999 not appropriate):** 111

19.2   Safeguarding Services

National Services:
- **NSPCC Helpline:** 0808 800 5000
- **Childline:** 0800 1111
- **Adult Safeguarding Information:** Contact local authority
- **Domestic Violence National Helpline:** 0808 2000 247
- **Men's Advice Line:** 0808 801 0327
- **LGBT+ Domestic Violence Helpline:** 0800 999 5428

Mental Health Crisis Services:
- **Samaritans:** 116 123 (24/7 free service)
- **CALM (Campaign Against Living Miserably):** 0800 58 58 58
- **MIND Infoline:** 0300 123 3393
- **NHS Mental Health Crisis:** Contact local NHS trust

Specialist Veteran Services:
- **Combat Stress:** 0800 138 1619
- **SSAFA:** 0800 731 4880
- **Royal British Legion:** 0808 802 8080
- **Help for Heroes:** 01980 844280
- **Walking with the Wounded:** 020 7023 6711

Substance Abuse Services:
- **Frank Drug Advice:** 0300 123 6600
- **Alcoholics Anonymous:** 0800 9177 650
- **Narcotics Anonymous:** 0300 999 1212

Financial and Legal Support:
- **Action Fraud:** 0300 123 2040
- **Citizens Advice:** 0800 144 8848
- **National Debtline:** 0808 808 4000

19.3   Forces Online Internal Emergency Contacts

Primary Safeguarding Contacts:
Designated Safeguarding Lead:
 Len Chappell len.chappell@forcesonline.org.uk Tel 0300 300 2288/07826163001

Deputy Safeguarding Lead: [Keith Shields, keith.shields@forcesonline.org.uk, Tel 0300 300 2288/07806672223

Chief Executive Officer: Len Chappell len.chappell@forcesonline.org.uk Tel 0300 300 2288/07826163001

Emergency Out-of-Hours Contact: call 0300 300 2288

Service-Specific Contacts:
- **Virtual Hub Emergency:** CEO

- **Chat Service Emergency:** CEO
- **Welfare Support Emergency:** CEO
- **Social Media Emergency:** CEO

20. APPENDICES

Appendix A: Safeguarding Incident Report Form
Email len.chappell@forcesonline for access - comprehensive incident reporting template including risk assessment, immediate 00 300 2288 for access actions taken, referrals made, and follow-up required

Appendix B: Risk Assessment Framework and Tools
Email len.chappell@forcesonline for access - standardised risk assessment tools for different types of safeguarding concerns, including scoring systems and escalation criteria

Appendix C: Training Matrix and Competency Framework
Email len.chappell@forcesonline for access - detailed breakdown of training requirements by role, learning outcomes, assessment criteria, and renewal requirements

Appendix D: Information Sharing Consent Forms
Email len.chappell@forcesonline for access - various consent forms for different levels of information sharing, capacity assessment tools, and documentation requirements

Appendix E: Multi-Agency Contact Directory
Email len.chappell@forcesonline for access - comprehensive contact information for all local and national partner agencies, including out-of-hours contacts and specialist services

Appendix F: Safeguarding Process Flowcharts
Email len.chappell@forcesonline for access - visual guides for different safeguarding scenarios, including decision trees and action sequences

Appendix G: Service User Information and Rights
Email len.chappell@forcesonline for access - accessible information for service users about safeguarding, their rights, complaint procedures, and support available

Appendix H: Legal Framework and Guidance References
Email len.chappell@forcesonline for access - comprehensive list of relevant legislation, statutory guidance, and best practice resources with web links and update schedules

DOCUMENT CONTROL
- **Policy Owner:** Chief Executive Officer, Forces Online CIO
- **Authors:** Len Chappell/Keith Shields
- **Approved by:** Board of Trustees, Forces Online CIO
- **Approval Date:** 07/04/2020
- **Review Date:** Policy reviewed every April see footer.
- **Version:** 5.0
- **Distribution:** All trustees, volunteers, staff, and key partners
- **Location:** Forces Online website, volunteer handbook, trustee papers

VERSION CONTROL:
- **Version 5.0:** Initial policy creation and approval
- **Future versions:** Will be logged with changes made and rationale

This comprehensive safeguarding policy should be implemented alongside Forces Online CIO's other organisational policies including Data Protection, Health and Safety, Equality and Diversity, Volunteer Management, and Complaints Procedures. All policies should be reviewed together to ensure consistency and effectiveness.

Forces Online CIO is committed to creating a safe environment for all service users while recognising our role as a signposting service that connects veterans and their families with appropriate specialist support organisations. This policy reflects our commitment to safeguarding while acknowledging our limitations and the importance of effective partnership working.

Change Record

Date of Change:	Changed By:	Comments:
07/04/2000	LC/ME	Authorised by Trustees.
07/04/2021	LC/ME	Policy Check
07/04/2022	LC/PE	Policy Check
07/04/2023	LC/PE	Policy Check
07/04/2024	LC/PE	Policy Check
07/04/2025	LC/GD	Policy Check
01/09/2025	LC/KS/SD	Format changed to PDF