

Online Safeguarding Policy

Aim of this policy

The aim of this policy is to run virtual Doorstep Library (DL) sessions where staff, volunteers, parents/carers, children, young people and adults at risk are protected from harm; to ensure that staff and volunteers are able to effectively raise safeguarding concerns and to ensure that staff and volunteers are able to confidently handle allegations or incidents if and when they arise.

Who is covered by this policy?

This policy applies to all employees, trustees and volunteers. It also applies to the children and young people and their families that the DL works with and a version will be made available on our website. This policy must be read in conjunction with the 'DL's Safeguarding Policy'.

Policy Statement

This policy is designed to safeguard and promote the wellbeing of anyone who interacts with DL using our virtual platform.

The purpose of this policy statement is to:

- ensure the safety and wellbeing of children and young people is paramount when staff, volunteer, young people or children are using the DL's virtual platform
- provide staff and volunteers with the overarching principles that guide our approach to online safety
- ensure that, as an organisation, we operate in line with our values and within the law in terms of how we use the virtual platform.

DL believes that:

- children and young people should never experience abuse of any kind
- children should be able to use the virtual platform for reading sessions with volunteers but safeguards need to be in place to ensure they are kept safe at all times.
- volunteers, parents/carers and staff should never experience abuse of any kind

DL recognises that the virtual platform provides us with a new and innovative way of reaching families; however, it can also present risks and challenges.

We will therefore seek to keep children and young people safe by:

- appointing an Online Safety Coordinator (this is Emily Oliver, Designated Safeguarding Lead, contact details at the end of this policy)
- providing clear and specific directions to staff and volunteers on how to behave online through our 'Online Reading Sessions Training'
- supporting and encouraging parents and carers to do what they can to keep their children safe online within our sessions and in general
- developing consent forms for use with young people and their parents/carers, and volunteers
- following clear and robust procedures to enable us to respond appropriately to any incidents of inappropriate behaviour, whether by an adult or a child/young person
- reviewing and updating the security of our information systems regularly
- ensuring personal information about the adults and children who are involved in our programmes are held securely and shared only as appropriate and in line with our Data Protection Policy and Privacy Policy.

Online Safety

DL will ensure that safeguarding children, staff and volunteers extends to any online activity the organisation undertakes.

It is essential that any contact with families via our virtual platform:

- Is carried out via the DL secure database with the correct settings in place
- Is documented afterwards by volunteers in the 'post-visit records'
- Has the verbal consent of a parent at the beginning of each session
- Has a parent present for the duration of the session for any child under 5 years old

Any other contact needed between volunteers and families:

- Will only happen during the allotted hours of a volunteer shift
- Has been consented to from both sides via our Doorstep Library Consent Forms
- Will be via the volunteer's phone for a phone call, and the DL database for all text messages
- Will only be with parents/carers/adults over 18 years of age; DL will not use or record children's phone numbers
- Must not be established through any other medium, for example volunteers and staff must not make or accept connection requests from parents or children on any social media platforms.

During a volunteer shift, volunteers' phones must be:

- In close proximity
- Charged or plugged in
- Have the following key numbers saved (available from the Doorstep Dashboard):
 - Team Leader's phone number
 - Volunteer partner's phone number
 - Designated Safeguarding Lead's phone number
 - Director and Safeguarding Trustees phone numbers
 - Your families' anonymised phone numbers

Volunteers will be fully trained according to our Online Reading Sessions Training Programme. This includes sections on confidentiality, safeguarding, and maintaining boundaries, alongside all relevant supporting documents. These training sessions will ensure that staff and volunteers are fully aware of the risks associated with using an online platform, know how to reduce these risks, are able to deal with any risks should they arise, and understand the reporting process. They will know how to protect themselves from harm as well as the families they are in contact with.

Any safeguarding incident or concern that occurs during an online activity will be treated with the same urgency and importance as that which occurs during a face-to-face activity.

Reporting procedures differ for an online activity in that:

- The volunteer will record any concerns or ongoing observations, in the relevant section of the post-visit records
- This will generate a notification to the Team Leader who will review within 24 hours and contact the volunteer for further information should it be needed
- **However, should a serious incident occur, such as volunteers witness abuse, are concerned that a child is at risk of serious immediate harm, or receive a disclosure, they must follow the same processes as detailed in DL's Safeguarding Policy; informing the Designated Safeguarding Lead immediately, or 999 if anyone is in immediate danger**
- In the case that the Designated Safeguarding Lead is not available, all relevant phone numbers to escalate a serious safeguarding issue will be available on the volunteers'

database dashboard (and are at the bottom of this policy). Volunteers are also required to save these numbers in their phone for immediate access and for reasons such as internet issues preventing connection to the database

- The Designated Safeguarding Lead will email the person making the referral a password protected Logging Form, which must be completed and returned within 24 hours.

Online One to One Sessions Safety

An Online One to One Session ('Online Reading Sessions') consists of two volunteers and one family and lasts approximately 20 minutes. It is hosted via Zoom which is integrated into our internal database. The volunteers will read stories with the children or listen to the children read aloud. A parent may not be present on screen (unless the child is under 5 years old), but will always be aware the session is taking place.

Any safeguarding incident or concern that occurs during an online activity will be treated with the same urgency and importance as that which occurs during a face-to-face activity.

Ahead of a child's first reading session it is the parent/guardian's responsibility to ensure that their children are aware of online behaviour expectations as highlighted in the parent consent form.

The specific procedures apply:

- For all children, when you first say hello there must be an adult present to give consent. If no adult is visible, ask 'Is Mum/Dad there?' as volunteers are requested to do on a face-to-face visit. It is acceptable for a parent to provide consent to a volunteer off-screen (they may not want to appear), however they must be aware of the online visit before it can go ahead. If consent is not available, the volunteers must end the session.
- For younger children (any child aged five and under), there must be an adult in the room to supervise at all times. This is in case the child puts itself in a position where they could cause an accident that the volunteer is unable to prevent (for example disappears from screen, throws things at the screen, turns off the screen, climbs on the furniture etc.)
- There should never be one volunteer on a call with a child alone. Both volunteers must be present before the family are admitted into the session. If one volunteer drops off the Zoom call the other volunteer must follow this protocol:
 - Continue the session for 2 minutes to see if the partner volunteer re-enters the meeting.
 - If the partner volunteer does not re-enter, the remaining volunteer should explain to the family that they will call them. Volunteers must mute themselves before making the call.
 - If the other volunteer cannot be reached or is unable to get back online, this must be explained to the family and they should be informed that unfortunately the session will need to end.
 - If either volunteer is not able to get back online for any subsequent reading sessions, the Team Leader needs to be informed. The Team Leader may be available to step in. If they are not, volunteers are asked to phone all subsequent families to explain what has happened, apologise, and say that the session will resume next week.
- Should a child or family display inappropriate content through sharing their screen or otherwise, volunteers should ask that they stop or the session will be ended. Volunteers should call the Team Leader, and log this in the relevant section of the post-visit record. If the content is a safeguarding concern volunteers should action the 'Online Safety' process above and immediately contact the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Online Group Sessions Safety

*An Online Group Session ('Online Read and Play') consists of two volunteers, one Team Leader/moderator, and a number of parents and children **aged 0-5**. It lasts approximately 25-30 minutes and is hosted via Zoom which is integrated into our internal database. The volunteers will read stories, sing songs and play games with the families. A parent must always be present on screen.*

Any safeguarding incident or concern that occurs during an online activity will be treated with the same urgency and importance as that which occurs during a face-to-face activity.

The specific procedures apply for **volunteers and Team Leaders:**

- The Team Leader will be on the call listening in with their video turned off (but may not always be watching the screen). Volunteers will know in advance how to alert the Team Leader if they are worried about anything – for instance having their phone number available to text, or calmly asking them to return to the call out-loud.
- There should never be one DL volunteer on a call with children or families alone. That means if one volunteer drops off the Zoom call for any reason the remaining volunteer must make sure the Team Leader's attention is drawn to this through the methods as above. The Team Leader must immediately turn their video on and have a visible presence on the call.

The specific procedures apply to group session **Team Leaders/moderators:**

- Turn a family's video off if something is happening on screen that other families shouldn't see (for instance a child takes their underwear off)
- Ring a parent if there is a clear, immediate danger / something looks unsafe / the video has had to be turned off by Team Leader
- If a parent isn't visible but the child is engaging and safe then there's no need to call the parent straight away (they may be attentive but just behind/holding the screen), however keep an eye on the child and call parent if it becomes clear they are not being supervised
- If a child is with just an older sibling aged 6 and over, and is engaging and safe then no need to call the parent
- If a parent does not reappear at the end of session the Team Leader must call the parent to ask them to leave the session, to ensure that child is safe
- If there are any concerns over parental supervision during the session, the Team Leader must call the parent before the next one and reiterate our requirements
- The Team Leader does not end the meeting – but allow families to leave one by one.

Zoom Logistics and Safety

Zoom calls, whether One to One or Group sessions, will always be facilitated via a DL account integrated into our internal secure database. Calls will never be scheduled via the personal accounts of staff, volunteers, or families.

Both volunteers must be set as 'host' and 'co-host' in advance so that a family is never automatically assigned as host should a volunteer drop out of the call.

Calls with families must never be recorded via Zoom or any other platform. If this is done inadvertently it must be immediately deleted from any place it has been manually or automatically stored, and the Designated Safeguarding Lead must be informed.

To ensure no one unexpected or with intent to cause harm can join the Zoom sessions, we have the following procedures in place to reduce the likelihood the link could be intercepted by anyone other than the intended recipient:

- All Zoom calls are generated by our internal database; a different link for each new session
- The link a family receives is unique to them only, and directs them to our database first before being redirected to the general Zoom link for that session
- For Group sessions, the database detects each family who joins and marks them as 'attended'

For both types of sessions, the waiting room must be enabled so families can't join without being admitted by the host. If all participants are already on the call no one else must be admitted.

If someone with intent to cause harm or who obviously doesn't belong in the session is admitted by accident, the volunteers or moderator must immediately remove the person or end the meeting as appropriate, and without explanation. All hosts must be aware of how to do this. In this instance;

- If the person had been causing harm and the call was ended, do not try to log back on to the call
- If the person was removed, the session can be continued if appropriate to do so, assuring others in attendance that they were admitted by accident and will not be able to re-join
- Volunteers must contact the Team Leader immediately
- Staff must contact Emily Oliver to report what happened (or Katie Bareham or Aileen Kane if unavailable)
- Log the incident on the Post-Visit Record for that session

Contact details

If you suspect that a child or adult at risk needs protection or is at risk of abuse, please contact DL's Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL):

- Name: Emily Oliver
- Title: Programme Manager, DL
- Mobile: 07769 320338 (working hours: 10 – 6pm, Mon – Fri) or 07944 007262 (if unavailable or outside of working hours)
- Email: emily@doorsteplibrary.org.uk

If the DSL is unavailable, contact:

- Name: Katie Bareham
- Title: Director, DL
- Mobile: 07836 250134
- Email: Katie@doorsteplibrary.org.uk

- Name: Aileen Kane
- Title: Safeguarding Trustee, DL
- Mobile: 07894 819810
- Email: aileenkane1@gmail.com