



Winchester Youth Counselling

Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy

1. General Policy Statement and Principles

1.1 The mission of Winchester Youth Counselling (WYC) is to protect and preserve good mental health and wellbeing among people aged between 11 and 25 years of age who are resident in the Winchester district by providing counselling and therapeutic interventions to develop their mental capacity and help them grow to full maturity as individuals and as members of society.

1.2 The safeguarding of children and young people is at the heart of what we do at Winchester Youth Counselling (WYC). We recognise that everyone who comes into contact with children, young people and their families has a role to play. We acknowledge that clients who use our service are often very vulnerable, and we are committed to supporting them emotionally and promoting their wellbeing. We are determined to ensure their welfare and will work towards protecting them from harm or abuse, in-person or online. We make every effort to provide a culture of safety and openness where both children and adults feel secure, able to talk and to know that they are being listened to.

1.3 It is a requirement that all staff, volunteers and Board of WYC must be aware of and comply with this policy and the key resources and statutory and legal frameworks referred to therein.

1.4 We recognise that:

- The welfare of the child / young person is paramount.
- All children and young people regardless of age, disability, gender, race, cultural background, religion or belief, sexual orientation or identity, have the right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse.
- Working in partnership with children, young people, their parents, carers and other agencies is essential in promoting young people's welfare.
- WYC has an important role to play in safeguarding children and young people from harm and abuse. It is not WYC's role to investigate allegations of harm, risk of harm or abuse, however all internal and external processes detailed in this policy will be robustly followed to ensure that the appropriate agency and professional is informed of any safeguarding issues.

2. Contacts

The organisation has named the following members as safeguarding leads:

- Rose Milford as Designated Safeguarding Lead for adults at risk.
- Lucy Clarke as the Deputy DSL if Jill is absent or on leave.
- Jill Guppy as Tertiary DSL.
- The Designated Safeguarding Trustee is the Chair of Trustees

Primary Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) contact:
Rose Milford (Clinical Co-Lead – Services) Tel: 01962 820444 Clinical@winchyc.org
Secondary DSL Contact
Lucy Clarke (Clinical Co-Lead – Development) Tel: 01962 820444 Clnicial@winchyc.org
Tertiary DSL Contact
Jill Guppy – Clinical Advisor (Outdoors therapies) Tel: 01962 820444 Outdoors@winchyc.org
Lead Trustee with Safeguarding Responsibility:
Julie Todd SafeguardingTrustee@winchyc.org

3. Scope and Aim of Policy

3.1 This policy applies to children and young people up to the age of 18. For young people aged 18 and over, please refer to our [Adult Safeguarding Policy](#). The organisation is committed to the protection, welfare and wellbeing of all young people who come to Winchester Youth Counselling.

3.2 The purpose of this policy is to provide all staff, counsellors, volunteers and governors with guidance on procedures they should adopt if they suspect or are told that a child or young person may be experiencing, or is at risk of, harm.

4. Statutory and Legal Framework

4.1 The [Children Act 1989](#) and [2004](#) provide the overall framework for safeguarding children and promoting their welfare. The child's welfare is to be the paramount consideration in all decision-making.

4.2 The Government's guidance on safeguarding children in England is called [Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023](#) (often shortened to Working Together). This says that everyone who works with children has a responsibility for keeping them safe. In addition, everyone who comes into contact with children and families has a role to play in sharing information and identifying concerns.

4.3 Legislation covering the need to share information as part of the duty of safeguarding is set out in '[Information Sharing, 2018](#)'.

5. Key Guidance Resources

Outline	Link
A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. It sets out the roles, responsibilities and expectations of services as well as highlighting and defining different types of abuse.	Working Together to Safeguard Children – 2023
Statutory guidance on the planning, commissioning and delivery of health services for looked-after children.	Promoting the Health and Wellbeing of Looked after Children - 2015
Guidance for specified authorities in England and Wales on the duty in the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 to have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism.	Prevent Duty Guidance -2015
This guideline covers how organisations, practitioners and carers should work together to deliver high-quality care, stable placements and nurturing relationships for looked-after children and young people.	NICE Guidance for Looked After Children 2021

The Hampshire and Isle of Wight Child Protection Procedures Manual provides comprehensive guidance on responding to child protection concerns.	HIPS LSCP Child Protection Procedures
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6. Categories of Abuse

6.1 WYC will ensure that all staff, volunteers and Board have a basic understanding of types of abuse. Child abuse covers the following categories that are recognised for the purposes of the Child Protection register:

Physical injury:	Actual or likely physical injury to child or young person, or failure to prevent injury (or suffering) to a child/young person including deliberate self-poisoning and suffocation.
Neglect:	Persistent or severe neglect, or the failure to protect a child from exposure to danger, including cold or starvation, or extreme failure to carry out important aspects of care resulting in significant impairment of the child/young person's health or development including non-organic failure to thrive.
Sexual abuse:	Actual or likely sexual exploitation of a child/young person. This includes digitally 'grooming' a young person with explicit imagery or inappropriate contact online.
Emotional abuse:	Actual or likely severe adverse effect on the emotional and behavioural development of a child/young person caused by persistent or severe emotional ill treatment or rejection. This includes harassment, bullying and intimidation on social media and other digital platforms, as well as suspected fraud and/or cybercrime.
Other forms of abuse and safeguarding concern	• Domestic abuse • Hate crime • Forced marriage • Honour based violence • Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) • Modern Slavery • Child Criminal Exploitation • Child Sexual Exploitation • Grooming • Missing/ Exploited/ Trafficked • County Lines • Extremism and Radicalisation • Peer-on-Peer Abuse • Self-harm

6.2 It is worth understanding that certain groups may be more vulnerable to abuse due to characteristics or their history, such as children from minority communities, disabled children, children who have experience of being in care, children who have previously been abused or subject to a Child Protection plan/on the Child Protection register.

7. Confidentiality

7.1 Children and young people have a right to expect that confidentiality is respected in the counselling relationship. However, in establishing the counselling contract with the child or young person and, in some cases, their parents, the limits of confidentiality must be explained i.e. that the counsellor will need to inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead if there are concerns about the child or young person's safety or there is a risk of significant harm. This is set out in the Counselling Contract. It is for the child or parent to choose what is and is not spoken about during counselling sessions or assessments.

7.2 If a disclosure is made, the next steps should be discussed with the client and the client's views should be taken into account. Ideally, the client's consent should be obtained, since informing outside agencies without informing the client or in contradiction to the client's expressed opinion may irreparably damage the client counsellor relationship and result in a denial by the young person that abuse has taken place. Nonetheless, it may be necessary to disregard the client's concerns since the duty to safeguard children and share information about child protection concerns takes priority over all other considerations, including the confidential nature of the counselling relationship.

7.3 If there is any doubt about whether the concerns warrant a referral to Social Services, the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) should be contacted to discuss the nature of the concern. The MASH Team will be able to give advice on whether to refer the case or not.

7.4 All safeguarding concerns, whether urgent or not, should be recorded as a Note on the WYC client database, Tacklit.

8. Safeguarding Procedures

8.1 These safeguarding procedures are to be used during situations where safeguarding and child protection concerns occur. These situations include:

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| 1. During the referral process, when children and young people are on the waiting list |
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2. During the Initial Consultation, when abuse is suspected or disclosed, or risk of harm to self is disclosed
3. Concerns arise during counselling sessions
4. Client discloses information during sessions

In all cases follow the guidelines for child protection below. You may need to stop the session and escort the child or young person to the reception area to give yourself time to complete the safeguarding procedures and in order to keep the child or young person safe.

In this instance, the counsellor would contact the parent or their emergency contact. The Clinical Lead, Deputy Clinical Lead or Operations Manager (depending on who is available at that time) would make sure the young person is kept safe until a parent or emergency contact arrives.

8.2: When a client or person makes a disclosure, staff and volunteers should:

- **DO** stay calm
- **DO** let the child or young person know that you will need to share what they have told you and refer back to the contract
- **DO** stay with what the child or young person is saying or doing and only intervene if the individual is putting themselves, or others, at risk.
- **DO NOT** promise confidentiality
- **DO NOT** ask any leading questions or probe the child or young person for further information
- **DO NOT** accept any retraction or backtracking from a child or young person. If it has been said, it needs to be reported
- **DO** report the incident immediately according to the following steps.

8.3: If a client discloses possible safeguarding risk, follow the steps on the flowchart:

1) In an emergency, call 999 (if not, proceed to 2).



2) Inform the DSL at the earliest opportunity or the next DSL point of contact available. The DSL will make the referral to the appropriate authority following the steps below. Proceed to **step 7**. If they are unavailable, proceed to **step 3**.



3) If you are unable to reach a DSL contact this is not a reason to delay urgent reporting. You should report this yourself if a delay may put the child at risk. (Notify the DSL of the action taken as soon as possible.)



4) If you are unsure what action to take regarding a referral to Children's Services, discuss the issue with a colleague, consult the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Thresholds Chart, linked [here](#), and/or make use of the Toolkits provided by the Safeguarding Children's Board: [Toolkits](#).



5) If a referral to Children's Services is indicated complete the [Inter-agency referral form](#) as set out in the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub guidance linked [here](#). If there is a risk of harm from the child or young person themselves (suicide risk, self-harm), contact the child or young person's parents, call their GP and contact the DSL at their school.



6) If you are certain that the issue is a Child Protection issue under Section 47, you can call the Hampshire Children's Services Professional's line on **01329 225379** during office hours 8.30am to 5.00pm Monday to Thursday, 8.30am to 4.30pm on Friday. Call the Out of Hours service number **0300 555 1373** at all other times.



7) Prepare a written report of the situation as a Note on Tacklit as soon as possible and ideally within one hour of the disclosure or incident. Select 'Yes' in the 'Safeguarding Alert' box.

In the Note, you need to record:

- a. Your name and role title
- b. Details of concern (where? when? what? who? behaviours? Be factual and precise. Use the child's words.)
- c. Details of actions taken so far, including details of who has been informed.



8) If a serious incident has taken place on the premises of WYC offices, or in a community setting during Nature Therapy, Walk and Talk, a Parent Support Programme or the Wellbeing Walk-In please complete the [Serious Incident Form](#), convert to PDF, and upload to Attachments in the client's Tacklit file. Inform the

DSL.



9) If the child or young person is thought to be a suicide risk, also fill out the [Suicide Risk Form](#). Upload this to the Attachments in the client's Tacklit File. This does not need to be done immediately.



10) Add a note to Tacklit to record the outcome of the safeguarding alert when possible.

Remember, all notes are disclosable during a criminal investigation. Please ensure these are contemporaneous, dated, professional, objective and use the child's own words.

- The DSL (or their substitute) must agree on what course of action is to be taken with the agencies involved i.e. Social Worker, Police Officer and record action decided stating what action is to be taken by whom and when.
- If the counsellor **suspects that the user of the service is putting a third party/individual at risk, especially if that individual is a child, the welfare of the child is paramount.** Where the content of the counselling session raises concerns about child sexual abuse, they can be reported to the Children Service's Team without informing the client of this action. **In the case of possible physical abuse, neglect or emotional abuse the client should be informed that the concerns will be discussed with colleagues and possibly with Hampshire County Council (HCC) Children's Services but that they will be informed should such action be felt to be necessary.**
- Children's services will respond to the DSL with an outcome stating whether they are investigating or that the case requires no further investigation. If you feel unsatisfied with the decision you should always write back for clarification as to why this decision has been made and challenge the outcome in the interests of the child. If you are still dissatisfied with the outcome, follow the [HIPS LSCP escalation policy](#) linked here.

9. Sharing Information

9.1 The sharing of information with child protection teams is fundamental good

practice as it is only by sharing information from various sources that the threshold of concern about a young person will be raised or lowered. It is possible that the local team has already identified concerns about a young person and has started or completed an investigation. The young person's name may already be on the child protection register. Liaison must be undertaken carefully to ensure that all relevant information is shared.

9.2 The DSL will share information with the child's school where this is in the interests of the child as well as other services such as social care, Child Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) and the child's GP where appropriate.

10.Records and Confidentiality

10.1 Anyone using the service needs to know that information is confidential except when the counsellor has concerns or suspects that a client is being abused or a sibling or friend is being abused.

10.2 The client's access to files should not prevent the recording of information which may prove important for the protection of the child. This information may not be shared with parents, carers or clients in some cases. If there is a safeguarding concern relating to a parent then in the best interests of the child/young person a decision would need to be made as to whether it will put the child/young person at more risk by sharing information with the parent

10.3 When child abuse is suspected or alleged, contemporaneous records and case notes should be kept. These should be detailed and accurate with a clear distinction between fact, reported information and opinion (separate pages or paragraphs). The reasons for decisions should be recorded clearly including decision not to refer a child to Children's Services or to the Police.

10.4 Information about clients is confidential to the charity as a whole and not to individual workers, information will be shared on a "need to know" basis and good practice will limit to a minimum the sharing or knowledge within the charity.

10.5 The same expectation of confidentiality shall be in place whether or not a session takes place digitally or in person. Care shall be taken to undertake remote sessions in an appropriate location whether that be in an individual's home or office to ensure information is kept private.

For more information about data sharing and confidentiality please see also:

- WYC Client Agreement
- WYC Internet and Email Policy
- WYC Data Protection policy

11. Procedure for reporting complaints about incorrect behaviour or abuse

11.1 All clients should be made aware of how to make a complaint if they feel a counsellor or staff member has not behaved according to British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP)'s Ethical Code. Details of how to complain are included in the Counselling Contract, which is given to clients in the first session.

11.2 All complaints will be investigated initially by the CEO unless the incident involves the CEO and then it should be dealt with by the Chair of the Board Trustees). If any member of staff, paid or voluntary, is suspected of behaving inappropriately their Clinical Lead will carry out a full investigation in conjunction with a member of the Board of Trustees. The Disciplinary Procedure of WYC will then be followed.

11.3 Any member of staff who feels that another member of staff has acted unethically will be encouraged to discuss their concerns with the clinical lead. The CEO or Board of Trustees will then decide what action should be taken. The welfare and emotional well-being of the clients will be paramount. See additional policy on Management of Allegations.

11.4 For more information about complaints please see also:

- [WYC Whistleblowing and Allegation Management](#)
- [WYC User Feedback and Complaints](#)

12. Reporting allegations of Abuse against Members of Staff.

- The procedures apply to all staff, whether trustees, administrative, management or support, as well as to volunteers. The word "staff" is used for ease of description.
- Because of their frequent contact with adults at risk, staff may have allegations of abuse made against them. Winchester Youth Counselling recognises that an allegation made against a member of staff may be made for a variety of reasons and that the facts of the allegation may or may not be true. It is imperative that those dealing with an allegation maintain an open mind and that the investigations are thorough and not subject to delay.
- See also the WYC Whistleblowing and Allegation Management Policy (11.4). This policy details the management of allegations in line with the [Hampshire and Isle of Wight Allegations Management Framework](#) (see link).

13. Procedure to be followed to ensure that only suitable paid and volunteer staff are recruited

13.1 Winchester Youth Counselling is committed to ensuring that all staff, both paid and voluntary, are suitable to work with children and young people. All staff and volunteer counsellors employed currently hold a Disclosure Barring Service enhanced check.

13.2 Any staff and volunteer counsellors to be recruited in the future will undergo a

relevant interview, two-character references will be obtained, including one from the most recent employer. Potential staff and volunteer counsellors will be asked to complete a DBS enhanced check before they can carry out individual counselling with young people.

13.3 Guidance on the requirements for Disclosure, Vetting & Barring Guidance
Criminal record checks can be found by following this link: [DBS checks: guidance for employers - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/db-checks-guidance-for-employers).

13.4 Further information on safer recruitment is to be found in our [Safer Recruitment Policy](#)

14. Safe working practices

14.1 The minimum safeguarding training is acceptable for the following roles:

Role	Training
Operational Management (CEO)	Safeguarding Children Level 3 Safeguarding Adults Level 3
Clinical Management (Clinical leads, Senior Counsellor, Therapeutic Lead)	Safeguarding Children Level 3 Safeguarding Adults Level 3 Suicide Risk Prevention Training (Annual)
Counsellors (including volunteer and trainee counsellors)	Safeguarding Level 2 Suicide Risk Prevention Training (Annual)
Administrators	Safeguarding Children Level 2 Safeguarding Adults Level 2
Volunteers	Safeguarding Children Level 2 Safeguarding Adults Level 2
Trustees	Safeguarding Children Level 2 Safeguarding Adults Level 2

14.2 If staff have undertaken accredited training at the stated level privately or as part of another role this is permissible. Evidence should be provided to WYC and kept on file. This will need to be updated in line with the recommendation of the training provider in question (usually every 2 years).

14.3 For more information about safer working please see also:

- WYC Safer Recruitment Policy
- [WYC Recruitment of Ex Offenders Policy](#)

14.4 Lone working

14.4.1 Counselling should take place with at least one other employee present in the offices or community settings. The charity does not encourage staff members to work alone but if this cannot be avoided your line manager should be made aware. This is to be expected during outdoor activities such as Walk and Talk therapy. As with all activities, the Health and Safety Policy and Risk Assessment should always be followed.

14.4.2 For more information about Health and Safety please see also:

- WYC Risk Management Policy
- WYC Risk Assessment
- WYC COVID Risk Assessment

14.5 Client contact

14.5.1 Extra care shall be taken, especially in the wake of COVID 19 and remote working, that clear boundaries remain in place between what the service will provide and what is the responsibility of other services. Under no circumstances will any member of WYC staff befriend, communicate with, or contact a young person outside of their professional role.

14.5.2 This includes all social media platforms, messaging apps, text messages and all other forms of digital communication. As per the digital policy, counsellors should always use their WYC email to communicate with clients or parents and use the office administrators to assist with this in the first instance.

15. Review of Safeguarding policy

15.1 The policy is to be reviewed annually by the management team and any changes to be made should be endorsed by the Trustees at the following Board meeting.

15.2 The Clinical management team shall ensure that this policy is implemented correctly and that procedures are followed. Following this policy is an essential expectation of employment for all employees and failure to do so may result in disciplinary action.