

SAFEGUARDING POLICY

Approved by: Board of Trustees

Date approved: 21st May 2026

Next review: May 2027

Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSLs):

- David Barker – David.barker@youthtalk.org.uk 07973102443
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- Sally Sayers
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Designated Trustee for Safeguarding: Gill Targett-Adams, and Gaynor Cashin

1. Policy Statement and Purpose

Youth Talk is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people and adults at risk in all aspects of its work.

This policy:

- Sets out Youth Talk's safeguarding responsibilities
- Provides clear procedures for responding to concerns
- Supports counsellors to manage risk safely
- Ensures legal compliance
- Promotes a culture of openness and accountability

We provide confidential counselling services to young people aged 13–25. We recognise that some service users may be under 18 and others may be adults at risk under the Care Act 2014., this includes:

- Has care and support needs; and
- Is experiencing or at risk of abuse or neglect; and
- Is unable to protect themselves because of those needs.

The welfare of the child, young person or adult at risk is paramount.

2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- Trustees
- Staff
- Counsellors (freelance contracted)
- Supervisors (freelance contracted)
- Volunteers
- Students and trainees
- Anyone acting on behalf of Youth Talk

It applies across all activities including counselling, outreach, fundraising and events.

3. Key Safeguarding Principles

Youth Talk will:

- Act in the best interests of children and adults at risk
 - Take all reasonable steps to prevent harm
 - Create a culture of openness and accountability
 - Ensure safer recruitment and training
 - Respond promptly and appropriately to concerns
 - Work in partnership with statutory agencies
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4. Roles and Responsibilities

Trustees

Trustees have overall responsibility for safeguarding governance, risk management and oversight.

The Designated Trustee for Safeguarding ensures safeguarding remains a standing Board agenda item.

Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSLs)

DSLs:

- Provide advice and guidance
- Support with referrals to statutory services
- Maintain secure safeguarding records
- Escalate concerns where required
- Report serious incidents to the Charity Commission

Ultimate accountability rests with the CEO and Board.

Counsellors, Staff and Volunteers

All must:

- Complete mandatory safeguarding training, (freelance counsellors are expected to update this every two years).
 - Maintain enhanced DBS clearance
 - Follow safeguarding procedures
 - Raise concerns immediately
 - Record all actions
 - Discuss risk in supervision
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5. The 5 R's (Recognise, Respond, Report, Record, and Refer)

Recognise

What it means:

Be able to identify the signs that a child, young person, or vulnerable adult may be at risk of harm or abuse.

This includes:

- Physical signs (unexplained injuries, frequent bruising)
- Behavioural changes (withdrawal, anxiety, aggression)
- Concerning language or disclosures
- Neglect indicators (poor hygiene, hunger, inappropriate clothing)
- Online safety concerns (Stalking, Harassment, Bullying etc.)
- Some other forms of risk and abuse are: Domestic abuse, Child sexual or criminal exploitation, Exploitation of vulnerable adults, Financial abuse (adults at risk), Radicalisation, Self-harm or suicide risk, Grooming (including online), So Called "Honour-based abuse", forced marriage, and Female Genital Mutilation

Advice for professionals:

- Trust your professional curiosity – if something feels "not right," explore it appropriately.
- Notice patterns, not just single incidents.
- Be aware of contextual safeguarding issues (peer-on-peer abuse, exploitation, online harm).
- Keep your safeguarding training up to date.

Respond

What it means:

Take immediate and appropriate action if a concern or disclosure arises.

If someone discloses to you:

- Stay calm.
- Listen without interrupting.
- Believe them.
- Do not promise confidentiality.
- Avoid leading questions.
- Reassure them they've done the right thing by telling you.

Advice for professionals:

- Follow your organisation's safeguarding procedures.
 - If someone is in immediate danger, contact emergency services.
 - Be clear about your role — you are not investigating; you are responding and reporting.
 - Always act promptly. Delays can increase risk.
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Report

What it means:

Pass the concern to the appropriate safeguarding lead or authority.

This may involve:

- Reporting to your Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)
- Contacting children's social care or adult safeguarding
- Making a MARF (Multi-Agency Referral Form), where appropriate

Advice for professionals:

- Never assume someone else will report.
 - If your concern is about a colleague, follow the whistleblowing procedure.
 - If you feel a concern is not being taken seriously, escalate it.
 - **Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.**
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Record

What it means:

Write down what you saw, heard, or were told – accurately and promptly.

Good recording practice includes:

- Date, time, and location
- Exact words used, especially in disclosures (where possible)
- Factual observations (not opinions)
- Your actions taken

Advice for professionals:

- Record as soon as possible after the concern arises.
- Be clear, objective, and concise.
- Sign and date your record.
- Store records securely in line with GDPR and safeguarding policy.

Good records protect both the individual at risk and you as a professional.

Refer

What it means:

Pass the concern to external agencies when the threshold for intervention is met.

This could include:

- Children's Social Care
- Adult Safeguarding Teams
- Police
- Early Help services

Advice for professionals:

- Know your local referral pathways.
 - Understand threshold guidance in your area.
 - When in doubt, consult your DSL.
 - Follow up referrals – ensure action has been taken.
 - Continue to support the individual within your role.
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6. Responding to Risk

Detailed procedures for:

- Suicide risk
- Self-harm
- General safeguarding concerns
- Allegations against staff

(see flow chart and appendix)

7. Confidentiality

Confidentiality will be respected unless:

- There is risk of significant harm
- An adult at risk cannot protect themselves
- A serious crime may occur
- A court order requires disclosure

Information will be shared lawfully, proportionately and on a need-to-know basis. Counsellors should explain limits at Initial Consultation and again when counselling starts.

Always:

- Speak to DSL
 - Document actions
 - Share high risk in team meeting
 - Attach email/referral copies
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8. Safer Recruitment

Youth Talk ensures:

- Enhanced DBS checks
 - Two verified references
 - Safeguarding training
 - Clear safeguarding responsibilities in job descriptions
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9. Allegations Against Staff, Counsellors or other acting on behalf of Youth Talk

Concerns must be reported to:

- DSL or CEO

- If CEO involved → Designated Trustee

Referral to LADO, DBS and/or Charity Commission will be made where appropriate.

10. Monitoring and Review

Safeguarding Policy and Procedure is reviewed **annually** by the Board.

Safeguarding is discussed at every board meeting

The Safeguarding Sub-Group from the Board of Trustees must meet to discuss risk registers, updates, concerns etc.

Safeguarding to be on the agenda for all Clinical Management Meetings (fortnightly) and Clinical Team meetings (weekly)

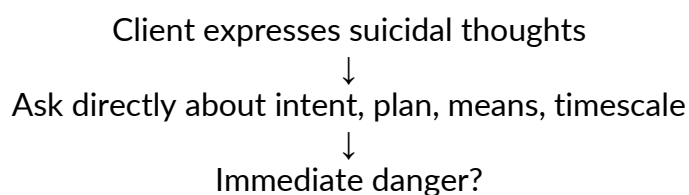
SAFEGUARDING FLOWCHART FOR COUNSELLORS

(see appendix for checklists and safety plans)

SUICIDE RISK:

- Ask directly
- Assess plan, means, timeframe
- Complete Safety Plan
- Consider parent/carer involvement
- Refer to GP / CYPMHS / Adult MH
- Update laptus
- Log everything

Suicide Risk Flowchart:



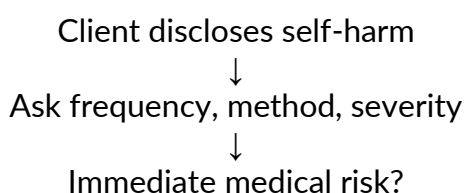
YES	NO
• Call 999 or arrange A&E • Inform DSL	• Complete Safety Plan • Consider informing parent/carer

• Inform parent/carer (if appropriate) • Record immediately	• Refer to GP / CYPMHS / Adult MH • Update laptus risk • Discuss in supervision • Log all actions
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SELF-HARM FLOW

- Ask about frequency & method
- Complete Self-Harm Safety Plan
- Consider medical needs
- Inform parent/carer if needed
- Update laptus
- Supervision discussion

Self-harm Flowchart:



YES	NO
• 999 / A&E	• Complete Self-Harm Safety Plan • Consider parent/carer involvement • Refer as appropriate • Update laptus • Supervision discussion • Log everything

C. OTHER SAFEGUARDING CONCERNS FLOW

- Listen carefully
- Use exact words in notes
- Avoid leading questions
- Check immediate safety
- Inform DSL
- Refer to Social Care if required
- Record clearly

Other risk flowchart:

Disclosure or concern identified



Is child/adult at immediate risk?

YES	NO
• 999 or Police • Inform DSL	• Consult DSL • Consider referral to Social Care • Inform parent/carer (if appropriate) • Record in Safeguarding Log • Follow up outcome
