

Safeguarding Policy

1. Policy statement

Embrace England recognises that the welfare of children and young people is paramount. We are committed to creating and maintaining the safest possible environment for all students, regardless of age, disability, gender, racial heritage, religious belief, sexual orientation, or identity.

We expect all staff, directors, homestay hosts, volunteers, contractors, and others working with us to act as positive role models and to contribute to a caring, safe, and supportive environment in which every student can thrive and reach their full potential.

This policy applies to everyone representing Embrace England. It should be read alongside our Safer Recruitment Policy, Data Protection Policy, and other relevant organisational procedures.

2. Roles and responsibilities

- **Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL):** Has overall responsibility for safeguarding and child protection, and ensures compliance with UK law and statutory guidance. Their contact details are listed in Appendix A
- **Deputy DSL:** Acts when the DSL is unavailable. Their contact details are listed in Appendix A.
- **Directors:** Hold ultimate accountability for ensuring this policy is effectively implemented.
- **All staff, contractors, and homestay hosts:** Must remain vigilant, follow safeguarding procedures, report concerns promptly, and uphold the principles of this policy at all times.

Everyone covered by this policy must complete safeguarding training appropriate to their role, including regular updates and refresher training.

3. Recognising abuse and harm

Abuse can take many forms, including:

- **Physical abuse**
- **Emotional abuse**
- **Sexual abuse**
- **Neglect**

Staff, hosts, and volunteers must also be alert to:

- Bullying (including online or cyberbullying)
- Peer-on-peer abuse
- Child-on-child sexual harassment or violence
- Exploitation (including criminal or sexual exploitation, trafficking, and county lines activity)
- Radicalisation and extremism
- Online safety risks
- All concerns, however small, must be reported.

4. Procedures for responding to concerns

- Any safeguarding concern must be reported immediately to the DSL or Deputy DSL.
- If a child is at immediate risk of harm, emergency services must be contacted without delay.
- All reports will be taken seriously, recorded promptly, and acted on in line with statutory guidance.
- Allegations against staff, homestay hosts, or volunteers will be referred to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) – See Appendix B.
- Where necessary, concerns will be shared with the police, children’s social care, or other relevant safeguarding partners.

5. Safer recruitment and suitability

We follow safe recruitment practices to reduce the risk of unsuitable individuals working with children. This includes:

- Identity checks
- Right-to-work checks
- Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks
- Reference checks
- Verification of qualifications and employment history

6. Training and awareness

- Safeguarding training is given to all staff and homestay hosts.
- Training will be updated regularly, in line with statutory requirements.
- Safeguarding updates will be provided at least annually.

7. Record-keeping and confidentiality

- Accurate and secure records will be kept of all safeguarding concerns, decisions, and actions.
- Information will be shared only on a “need to know” basis, in line with data protection legislation and safeguarding guidance.
- There are kept in line with our Data Protection Policy.

8. Staff & Host Code of Conduct

All employees, homestay hosts, and anyone working with or on behalf of Embrace England are expected to uphold the highest standards of professional behaviour to ensure the safety, welfare, and wellbeing of students. This applies to all interactions, whether in the home, school, or other settings.

General Principles

- Treat all students with respect, fairness, and dignity.
- Avoid actions, language, or behaviour that could be construed as inappropriate or abusive.
- Maintain professional boundaries at all times.

Homestay and One-to-One Situations

Embrace England recognises that students live in homestay environments, which naturally involve private family spaces. Hosts should follow these safeguards:

- Ensure interactions in private spaces are always appropriate, respectful, and professional.
- Prefer shared spaces for activities or discussions when possible, rather than leaving students isolated for long periods.
- Check in regularly if a student is alone in a private room, e.g., sleeping or unwell.
- Avoid physical contact except in a caring or emergency context, such as first aid.
- Obtain the student's consent for personal or potentially sensitive interactions.
- Make students aware of how to contact the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) if they feel unsafe or uncomfortable.

Communication and Social Media

- Staff should not share personal social media accounts with students.
- Do not take photos or videos of students under 18 without explicit consent from parents/guardians and, where relevant, the student.
- Communicate with students using appropriate channels and maintain transparency with parents/guardians.

Alcohol, Drugs, and Smoking

- Do not provide alcohol, drugs, cigarettes, or any intoxicating substances to students under 18.
- Employees and homestay hosts must not consume alcohol or drugs in a way that could compromise the safety or supervision of students.

Private Spaces and Accommodation

- Do not enter a student's private area without permission, except in emergencies.
- If it is necessary to enter a room to check on a student or for health and safety reasons, do so in the student's presence where possible, and preferably with another responsible adult present.

Reporting Concerns

- Any concern regarding the welfare or safety of a student must be reported immediately to the DSL.
- Hosts and employees must be alert to inappropriate behaviour, including one-to-one interactions that may pose a risk, and report these promptly.

Commitment to Training

- Embrace England will provide guidance, support, and safeguarding training appropriate to the role of all employees and homestay hosts.
- Hosts are expected to remain familiar with safeguarding best practice, policies and procedures.

9. Whistleblowing and low-level concerns

Embrace England promotes an open culture where staff and hosts feel confident to raise safeguarding concerns for example, raising:

- Low-level concerns about behaviour that does not meet the threshold for harm will be recorded and reviewed by the DSL.
- Serious concerns about the conduct of staff, directors, or hosts must be reported immediately.
- Whistleblowing protections apply, and individuals will not face victimisation for raising safeguarding concerns in good faith.
- Any breach of this Safeguarding Policy
- Poor or unsafe practice by colleagues or external partners.

How to Raise a Concern:

- Report immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).
- If the concern relates to the DSL, contact the Local Authority Safeguarding Partner (MASH) directly.
- You may also use external channels such as the NSPCC Whistleblowing Helpline.

Protection for Whistleblowers:

- Embrace England will not tolerate victimisation, harassment, or retaliation against anyone who raises a concern in good faith.
- Reports will be treated confidentially, and the identity of the whistleblower will be protected wherever possible.
- Allegations found to be malicious or knowingly false may result in disciplinary action.

10. Policy review

This policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner if there are significant changes to statutory guidance, local procedures, or organisational practice.

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APPENDIX A - DSL and Deputy DSL Contacts

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

- Jon Bell
- Phone: +44 7562185095
- Email: jon@embraceengland.org

Deputy Safeguarding Lead (Deputy DSL)

- Natalie Bell
- Email: natalie@embraceengland.org

Support Outside of Office Hours

- Out of Hours: +44 3301228245
- Note that this number is only available when we are directly caring for young people.

APPENDIX B - City of York MASH Contacts

Our primary basis is York. The city operates a Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) to manage all safeguarding and child protection support within the city. Contact details are as follows:

- Online: <https://www.york.gov.uk/safeguarding-children/child-protection-safeguarding>
- Phone: +44 1904 551900
- Email: mash@york.gov.uk
- Phone (out of office hours): +44 300 131 2131
- Email: (out of office hours): edt@northyorks.gov.uk

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