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Sense Operational Policy

**Safeguarding Children and Young People**

**Northern Ireland**

**Procedure**

**Outcomes**

* Children and young people should be involved as practically possible in the safeguarding process.
* Children and young people are supported to keep themselves safe; they are provided with meaningful information to recognise and report abuse.
* Children and young people are to be engaged in a conversation about how best to respond to their safeguarding situation that enhances involvement, choice and control as well as improving their quality of life, wellbeing and safety.
* Children and young people’s safety is respected and protected.
* Children and young people, family members’ and staff members’ concerns about safeguarding are taken seriously and acted upon appropriately.
* Staff understand safeguarding procedures and feel skilled, knowledgeable, confident and supported to report concerns about abuse.
* Safeguarding issues are dealt with responsively and appropriately, actions are taken to prevent and reduce risks. The organisation promotes best practice in relation to safeguarding and learns lessons from internal and external experience.

**What is this procedure about?**

Safeguarding is working with children and young people with care and support needs to keep them safe from abuse or neglect. Safeguarding is everybody’s business and the responsibility for dealing with it belongs to us all. Sense takes its responsibilities in relation to safeguarding extremely seriously.

For this procedure to be effective it is essential that each person has an understanding of what safeguarding is, knows that safeguarding is everyone’s responsibility, knows how to access safeguarding information, knows of any likely contribution that they may be required to make to safeguard children and young people and how to access further advice, support and services.

Sense has adopted a multi-disciplinary approach to child safeguarding, recognising the importance of working successfully across partner boundaries.

Abuse definition

Abuse is categorised in the following areas:

* Physical abuse
* Emotional abuse
* Sexual abuse
* Neglect
* Fabricated or Induced Illness

**Note**: Please see the Children and Young People’s Safeguarding Guidance for further detailed definitions of the above abuse categories.

Safeguarding principles and promoting the welfare of children and young people

* The child’s welfare must always be paramount, and this overrides all other considerations
* A proper balance must be struck between protecting children and respecting the rights and needs of parents and families; but where there is a conflict, the child’s interests are paramount
* Children have a right to be heard, to be listened to and to be taken seriously. Taking account of their age and understanding they should be consulted and involved in all matters and decisions which may affect their lives

*(Co-Operating to Safeguard Children, 2003, NI)*

**Who is this procedure for?**

* Individuals using Sense services, their families and carers
* All staff (including volunteers), Managers and Operational Managers
* Director(‘s) of Operations and Heads of Operations
* Other professionals, such as social workers, police and therapists, Health and Social Care Trust (HSC Trust)
* Trustees

This procedure is applicable to children and young people aged between 0 years – and 18 years.

All children and young people who receive Sense services are at risk. Sense recognises the increased vulnerability of children and young people who:

* Have a high degree of complex needs resulting from their hearing and visual difficulties
* Have extremely limited / no verbal / no formal communication (communicate differently)
* Have limited / no knowledge of keeping safe
* Have limited mobility
* Rely on others for support with personal care
* Experience social isolation as a result of relying on a small group of support staff

**Note:** All Sense staff have a responsibility and duty of care regarding safeguarding matters with vulnerable and non-vulnerable children and young people.

**Note:** Safeguarding children and young people is everybody’s business, as professionals we are required to be vigilant at all times. We are required to report concerns as well as any suspected, alleged or disclosed abuse. This reporting should take place in relation to any child or young person that we come into contact with.

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**Part One:** General Points

Every person has the right to live a life free from abuse and neglect. Sense has a zero-tolerance approach to abuse. This means that all actual and alleged abuse and concerns must be reported. Concerns should also be included as they may form part of a wider picture of abuse.

All allegations of abuse will be taken seriously and acted upon. Sense is committed to openness and honesty. Most reporting will be done under this procedure, but it is recognised staff may wish to report under the HR05 Whistle-Blowing Policy [HR05 Whistle-Blowing Policy](https://engage.sense.org.uk/sorce/beacon/dmd/100/view/Whistleblowing%2BPolicy%2Band%2BProcedure.docx) .

Sense is committed to the following rights and principles with regards to safeguarding:

Empowerment

Children and young people have the right to:

* Be accorded the same respect and dignity as any other person, by recognising their uniqueness and personal needs
* Guidance and assistance in seeking help as a consequence of abuse
* Be supported in making their own decisions (if appropriate based on age, competence or capacity) about how they wish to proceed in the event of abuse and to know that their wishes will only be over-ridden if it is considered necessary for their own safety or the safety of others. It is important that we acknowledge the beliefs and wishes of the child or young person.
* Be supported in bringing a complaint under any existing complaints procedure
* Be supported in reporting the circumstances of any abuse to independent bodies
* Receive appropriate support, education, counselling, therapy and treatment following abuse
* Seek legal advice or representation on their own behalf
* Seek redress through appropriate agencies

Protection

Children and young people have the right to:

* Live safely, without fear of violence or abuse in any form
* Have alleged, suspected or actual cases of abuse investigated urgently
* Have their rights respected and to have their family, informal carers or advocates act on their behalf as appropriate
* Have their money, goods and possessions treated with respect, and to receive equal protection for themselves and their property through the law

Prevention

Children and young people have a right to:

* Be given access to knowledge and information which they can understand to help them make informed choices
* Information about, and practical help in, keeping themselves safe and protecting themselves from abuse
* Have the right to information about why their wishes are not followed in some cases

Child-Centred Approaches and Multi Agency Working

Safeguarding children is dependent on effective information sharing, collaboration and understanding between families, agencies and professionals. Constructive relationships between individual workers and agencies need to be supported by the organisations senior managers.

For those children who are suffering, or who are at risk of suffering significant harm, multi-disciplinary/agency working is essential to safeguard them. Sense staff should:

* Be alert to potential indicators of abuse, neglect or failure to thrive
* Be alert to the risks which individual abusers, or potential abusers, may pose to children
* Share and help to analyse information so that informed assessments can be made of each child’s needs and circumstances
* Contribute to whatever actions are required to safeguard the individual child and promote his welfare

*(Co-Operating to Safeguard Children, 2003)*

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child says that every child has:

* The right to a childhood
* The right to be educated
* The right to be healthy
* The right to be treated fairly
* The right to be heard

In particular, the following articles of the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child should be paramount in relation to safeguarding children and young people:

**Article 3: Best interests of the child**

The best interests of the child must be a top priority in all actions concerning children

**Article 12: Respect for the views of the child**

Every child has the right to say what they think in all matters affecting them, and to have their views taken seriously.

**Article 13: Freedom of expression**

Every child must be free to say what they think and seek and receive information of any kind as long as it is within the law

**Article 23: Children with disability**

A child with a disability has the right to live a full and decent life in conditions that promote dignity, independence and an active role in the community.

**Part Two:** Practice

You might suspect abuse or have concerns about a child if you recognise some of the symptoms in the guidance. You may have concerns if you see someone behaving in a way that raises your suspicious. This change in behaviour might be seen in the behaviour of the child or young person or in the behaviour of the alleged perpetrator.

Alternatively, a family member, staff member, friend or member of the public might tell you that they are concerned about abuse, or an individual might communicate concerns about abuse or their safety to you.

As a Sense employee you have an obligation to report to the police if a criminal act has occurred where there has been sexual, financial and or physical abuse. Prior to this you should discuss this with your line manager unless there is a risk of immediate danger to the child or young person.

This is what you should do:

**Ensure the child or young person’s immediate safety and medical needs are met.**

**If you are told about a suspicion, listen carefully to what is being said.** Do not make assumptions or accusations. Take what is being said seriously. Find out the basics of what happened, but do not investigate the matter.

**If you observe non-verbal disclosure and see something that concerns you.** Do not make assumptions or accusations. Take what you see seriously. Make clear notes so that you can report your concerns, but do not investigate the matter.

**Do not ask leading questions.** A leading question is a question which contains part of the answer, for example, ‘’that man / woman hurt you on Wednesday, didn’t he / she’’. It is more appropriate to ask an open question, such as ‘’can you tell me what happened on Wednesday’’, or ‘’can you give me more detail?’’.

**Make a clear record of what has been said / seen.** You can include diagrams if it would help to explain what happened. Write the date and time on the recording and sign it.

**Do not guarantee confidentiality.** When a safeguarding issue has been disclosed or suspected, it is not always possible to keep everything confidential. You can assure the child or young person that you will only share information with people if they need to know about it.

**You must tell someone. This is very important. This should be your head of service, line manager, on-call, senior manager or the designated person (in an external environment this could be the head teacher).** If the alleged abuse is about your line manager, you should report the matter to a more senior manager.

Alternatively, you can inform the Head of Safeguarding on:

Email: steve.kiekopf@sense.org.uk
Mobile: 07866 593 863

Address: 750 TouchBase Pears, Selly Oak, Birmingham B29 6NA

In the absence of the Head of Safeguarding contact the Associate Director Of Operations Rebecca Hodgson - Mobile 07572 151284

Or if none of these are contactable email Sense.AbuseReports@sense.org.uk or contact the Quality team via Freephone: 0800 731 9008.

The **police** are to be contacted:

* In an emergency (immediately); or
* If a crime has been committed, after a discussion with a senior manager.
* Services will complete the [What to do if you suspect abuse](https://engage.sense.org.uk/sorce/beacon/dmd/918/view/What%2Bto%2Bdo%2Bif%2Byou%2Bsuspect%2Babuse%2B-%2BFor%2Bdisplay.docx) and display/make available to staff in the service location.

Note: This practice sheet should be made readily accessible to staff.

### What Happens next:

The manager (or on call manager or Designated Officer) will decide what will happen next. The manager should:

* Check further that the child or young person’s needs are being met, i.e. that they are in no immediate danger and that medical assistance, if necessary, has been sought.
* Inform relevant statutory authorities where appropriate, including the Gateway Team, Social Worker, the Police, Head Teacher in external environment, RQIA, etc), **immediately** and within **24 hours** or the next working day. The Local Authority (or the Police) will provide instructions about whether the matter should be investigated.
* Services will complete the [What to do if you suspect form](https://engage.sense.org.uk/sorce/beacon/dmd/28/view/What%2Bto%2Bdo%2Bif%2Byou%2Bsuspect%2Babuse%2B-%2Bform.docx) and display/make available to staff in the service location.

**Note:** Sense appreciates that you may not have all the information you need at the time where an incident of abuse has been alleged/disclosed/suspected.

* The next of kin, carer, family or advocate should usually be informed within a reasonable time. This is immediately or as soon as possible thereafter and no longer than 24 hours after the report or incident. This would not be appropriate if:
	+ The abused child or young person has capacity and makes an informed choice not to inform them (this is only applicable to children and young people over the age of 16 years old)
	+ If the child is under 16 and any of the above are implicated in the concern – direction will be given by the Police, Children’s Social Services or Emergency Duty Team (EDT). This must be followed.
* It will be necessary to notify the applicable funder.
* The manager will, immediately or as soon as possible, inform the relevant senior manager and if necessary, the Director of Operations **(Maria Horton),** 0121 415 2711 / 07917 813996 / maria.horton@sense.org.uk) who will inform the Chief Executive. For example: where a police investigation is likely to occur.
* The manager is responsible for ensuring that all suspected, reported or actual incidents of abuse are recorded on ERIC by completing a Safeguarding notification within five working days.
* Please see the ‘Creating a safeguarding incident’ for more information
* **Note:** In line with GDPR – ERIC is to be used in all circumstances as the most secure place to store information of this nature.
* With an increase across services working arrangements there will be occasions when a (support) staff member will be working within a different service or location. When completing a safeguarding incident on ERIC the service with responsibility for the care and support of the individual at the time of the incident will be allocated the case. The following procedure will need to be followed under these circumstances: [Local Operating Procedure - Allocation of Service.pdf](file:///C%3A%5CUsers%5COS12%20Safeguarding%20Vulnerable%20Adults%5COS12%20Supporting%20Docs%20Live%5CAdditional%20Processes%5CLocal%20Operating%20Procedure%20-%20Allocation%20of%20Service.pdf)
* In the event a staff member is the alleged perpetrator of abuse, Human Resources maybe required to refer the staff member to a professional body such as the Northern Ireland Social Care Council.
* If there is a failure to take appropriate action at any level, staff should contact the Director of Operations (**Maria Horton**) or RQIA / other regulator directly and/or staff may wish to report under the [HR05 Whistle-Blowing Policy](https://engage.sense.org.uk/sorce/beacon/dmd/100/view/Whistleblowing%2BPolicy%2Band%2BProcedure.docx)

**Note:** When a member of Sense staff has discovered / reported abuse internally or to an external agency – there will be times when they may hear no further information regarding the concerns they have raised. This is quite appropriate in circumstances such as formal investigations.

**Note:** It is increasingly best practice and transparent to share concerns with parents and carers of children and young people whereby there is safeguarding concerns. Please seek support and advice from a senior manager.

**Part Three:** Responsibilities

All staff and volunteers must report any concerns or suspicions of abuse to the appropriate person without delay. Suspicions of abuse must not be ignored. Staff and Volunteers, who do not act on such information, consequently, will face disciplinary action.

Children and young people communicate in a range of different ways. It must be possible for them to inform staff that they are being abused. Staff and volunteers should carefully observe changes in behaviour, challenging behaviour and changes in health as potential indicators of abuse.

Sense staff and volunteers will promote inclusion and engagement. Staff will empower children and young people with appropriate information about safeguarding.

All staff and volunteers

* Will respond to safeguarding concerns that are reported to them.

Training for **Operations** Staff:

* This applies to frontline staff who have contact with people we support.
* Year 1: eSafeguarding Awareness for ALL (Level 1) + eSafeguarding Level 2 + Safeguarding (This Time It’s Personal) Level 3 + Safeguarding Competency
* Year 2: Safeguarding Competency
* Year 3: Safeguarding Competency
* Year 4: eSafeguarding Awareness for ALL (Level 1) + eSafeguarding Level 2 (within last 12 months) + Safeguarding Refresher and Safeguarding Competency
* Repeat from year 2-4
* Notes:
* A staff member will be deemed ‘unsafe to work unsupervised’ until they have completed the initial face to face (taught) safeguarding training.
* Sense managers will also need to complete Making Safeguarding Personal for Managers (Level 4) and Safeguarding for Managers (Level 4).
* Non-Operations Staff
* Year 1: eSafeguarding Awareness for ALL (Level 1) + Safeguarding Competency
* Year 2: Safeguarding Competency
* Year 3: Safeguarding Competency
* Year 4: eSafeguarding Awareness for ALL (Level 1) + Safeguarding Competency
* Repeat from year 2-4
* Staff in operational services will familiarise themselves with Local Authority Safeguarding Procedures.
* Staff who work with children and young people must attend training on safeguarding children and young people as part of their induction and ongoing as a refresher via e-learning or face to face.
* Will familiarise themselves with Local Safeguarding Procedures.
* Staff should not assume that someone else will pass on information which they think may be critical to the safety and wellbeing of the adult.
* Where there are concerns about the child’s or young person’s welfare and staff believes they are suffering or likely to suffer abuse or neglect, then they should share the information with their line manager, local authority and or the police if they believe or suspect that a crime has been committed. **Note:** this also includes any other sibling within the family home environment.
* Will inform their line manager if they receive any convictions, cautions or are bound over, which may change their status.

The Safeguarding Board

* Will monitor and evaluate safeguarding practice in Sense.
* Will receive safeguarding reports on reviews of safeguarding systems.
* Will support and promote better learning and safeguarding practice.
* Will make recommendations for areas for development of safeguarding and seek confirmation that these have been considered by senior management groups.
* Will receive reports of specific areas of safeguarding concerns.

The Head of Safeguarding

* Will keep abreast of national policy, best practice, research and development in the area of safeguarding.
* Will liaise with other organisations and networks to enable the ongoing development of best practice in relation to safeguarding.
* Will provide advice to the organisation on safeguarding and implications for practice as well as in relation to specific incidents.
* Will monitor and ensure that corporate systems and processes that enable Sense to receive feedback on its performance are working effectively.
* Will monitor and maintain safeguarding recording systems so that comprehensive and accurate information is available.
* Will advise and support groups and departments in receiving and managing incidents of alleged abuse and in ensuring compliance with Sense policy and procedures.
* Will compile a report for Sense Trustees in order to keep them up to date on safeguarding findings and statistics and implications for practice.

Human Resources Department

The Sense Human Resources Department will complete appropriate checks before employing staff, including:

* Access NI checks
* Two satisfactory written references
* Full employment history

Advise Managers on responding to allegations of abuse against members of staff.

Refer cases on to the Disclosure and Barring Service where this is appropriate.

Learning and Development Team

* Will ensure that children’s safeguarding training is delivered upon induction for staff that work with children and young people.
* Will ensure that full training is given every three years to all service level staff and managers.
* Will ensure annual refresher training is available in the form of questionnaires to ensure competency checks are undertaken annually.

Director of Operations and Heads of Operations

* Directors will commission investigations and appoint investigators where appropriate.
* Monitor and review progress on investigations and ensure any actions as a result of the investigation.

Operations Managers

* Operations Managers will monitor safeguarding incidents in their areas and ensure that staff are appropriately supported.
* Operations Managers will investigate safeguarding incidents in accordance with the instructions of external agencies.
* Provide relevant and appropriate support to their managers and monitor training.

Service Level Managers(including Children’s Specialist Services, Holidays and Events, Residential Service Managers, Education Service Managers and their deputies) – ‘’Designated Person’’

* Will have a sound knowledge of local and inter-agency safeguarding procedures. This will be achieved by accessing local safeguarding training and having a copy of the local authorities safeguarding policy to refer to.
* Will monitor safeguarding incidents in their areas and ensure that staff are appropriately supported.
* Will ensure that initial induction into services includes discussion of this procedure with continuous discussion in team meetings and supervision.
* Will ensure that staff attend appropriate training.
* Will ensure that staff understand and follow this procedure.
* Will ensure that action is taken when safeguarding concerns are reported.
* Will follow both internal and external reporting procedures.
* Will keep accurate records.
* Will ensure that staff can access local contact details for reporting safeguarding concerns. Managers should note that they may have to actively seek out this information and they will need to ensure that the ‘What To Do If You Suspect Abuse’ poster / information is updated and shared with team members and / or is updated and displayed within the service.
* Will complete a fact find and investigate safeguarding incidents in accordance with the instructions of Sense or external agencies.
* Will support the children and young people with whom they work understand how to raise concerns.
* Will ensure as far as possible support young people and their families who have been abused or alleged of being abuse are aware of sources of support. This should include local independent information advice, advocacy services and counselling services.

Support Staff, Volunteers and Leaders

* Will respond to safeguarding concerns by following this procedure and the guidance that accompanies this procedure.
* Will ensure to involve the child or young person in the process.
* Identify and confront colleagues poor practice (safe challenge).
* Will report concerns to a line manager/on call manager/or another appropriate person.
* Will complete accurate notes if they are informed of a safeguarding incident.
* Must undertake training and ask managers if they are unsure about safeguarding procedures.

**Young people**, their **families/carers**, **Sense staff** and **other professionals** are encouraged to be observant and report safeguarding concerns. Sense emphasises the importance of prevention as a way of supporting individuals to keep themselves safe and to assess and manage risk.

If children and young people or their families would like to access the Safeguarding Children and Young People’s Procedure, they can be offered the main procedure and guidance. Alternatively, the Safe Guide *(this can be found in the guidance)* sets out some key principles.

**Part Four:** Sources

* Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP) [*http://ceop.police.uk/*](http://ceop.police.uk/)
* Co-Operating to Safeguard Children [*http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/co-operating\_to\_safeguard\_children\_may\_2003.pdf*](http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/co-operating_to_safeguard_children_may_2003.pdf)
* [Keeping safe resources](https://engage.sense.org.uk/sorce/beacon/dmd/22/view/Keeping%2Bsafe%2Bresources%2B2022%2BOct.docx)
* The Safe Network [*http://www.safenetwork.org.uk/Pages/default.aspx*](http://www.safenetwork.org.uk/Pages/default.aspx)
* UNICEF, UN Convention on the Rights of the Child [*http://www.unicef.org.uk/UNICEFs-Work/Our-mission/UN-Convention*](http://www.unicef.org.uk/UNICEFs-Work/Our-mission/UN-Convention)

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