



Safeguarding Policy

*All Services**

This safeguarding policy sets out our commitment to protect children, young people and vulnerable adults from harm and keeping them safe, across all the services that the Polaris community provides. A **policy** is a statement of intent and is not intended to be implemented as a procedure. As such, you must refer to the relevant Safeguarding **procedure** for full guidance on how to respond to specific situations.

This policy applies to all employees, foster parents, adopters, agency staff, volunteers, trustees, directors and any person working for or on behalf of Polaris across all services.

*Leaving Care Services have a separate Safeguarding Policy

This procedure forms part of the Polaris Quality Management system ISO 9001.

Procedure Owner:	Quality Assurance & Safeguarding Team
Approved by:	Operations Board
Date approved:	13 March 2023 See end of Document for all review dates.
Next review date:	March 2029
Version No:	05
Associated Procedures:	Suite of Safeguarding Procedures and HR Procedures

All Polaris companies are detailed in the current legal structure

Governance & Accountability

- This Policy will be formally reviewed at least every 36 months, or sooner in the event of changes to legislation, statutory guidance, or organisational procedures.
- Polaris has a Head of Safeguarding.
- Each service has a nominated safeguarding lead.
- Directors/Trustees retain ultimate oversight responsibility.
- Managers are responsible for implementing this policy within their services.
- All staff have a personal duty to safeguard.

See the **Polaris Safeguarding Children Procedure** or **Safeguarding Adults Procedure** for full guidance on reporting and responding to concerns.

Polaris operates in accordance with relevant legislation & statutory guidance including:

Legislation

- Children Act 1989 & 2004
- Care Act 2014
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006
- Equality Act 2010
- Children and Families Act 2014

Statutory Guidance

- Working Together to Safeguard Children
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (where applicable to education services)

Polaris also operates in accordance with the safeguarding legislation and statutory guidance applicable within each nation in which it delivers services and will ensure compliance with any subsequent amendments or updates. Please see the end of this document for the relevant legislation and guidance for Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland.

Purpose and Objectives

The Polaris Community provides an extensive range of children's services, including independent fostering agencies, an adoption agency, supportive accommodation, bespoke children's services contracts, residential children's homes and education services. Delivery of these services frequently involves working with children, young people and adults who are vulnerable for a range of reasons. Our responsibilities to safeguard young people and adults are as important as our responsibilities to safeguard children. Polaris is committed to providing opportunities for children, young people and adults to achieve their full potential and to live fulfilling lives in the community.

The welfare of children, young people and adults within the Polaris community overrides all other considerations.

The Polaris community is committed to ensuring safeguarding practice reflects statutory responsibilities, aligns with government guidance and complies with best practice and regulatory requirements. Polaris believes that all children, young people and adults have a right to protection from exploitation, neglect, physical, emotional and sexual abuse.

Policy Statement

Polaris will take all allegations or suspicions of abuse concerning children, young people or adults seriously and will ensure they are reported immediately. Detailed procedures outlining how staff must respond to specific concerns are in place and must be followed whenever applicable. All procedures should be applied in conjunction with the relevant local safeguarding partnership's published guidance.

- Polaris will work in partnership with local authorities/trusts and other agencies to support children, young people and adults in understanding what abuse is and their right to be protected from harm (see the Safer Caring Policy if applicable).
- Polaris will ascertain the wishes and feelings of children, young people and adults in their care or with whom they work, ensure they are informed of their rights, support them to express their views (including through advocacy services where appropriate), and keep them fully informed.
- Polaris will positively promote the needs of children, young people and adults within the community and fully consider all factors such as ethnicity, faith, gender, gender identity, language, religious belief, sexual orientation or disability.
- Polaris will pay attention to the needs of all children and remain mindful that disabled children and adults are statistically at increased risk of abuse and neglect.
- Polaris will provide an effective complaints procedure for all individuals who use its services.
- Polaris will work in partnership with the families of children, young people and adults who have experienced abuse and will keep them fully informed where appropriate.
- Polaris will ensure that confidential, detailed and accurate records of all safeguarding concerns are maintained and stored securely.

- Polaris will provide high quality support and supervision to staff (and foster parents/prospective adopters) to ensure that any safeguarding issues are identified and acted upon promptly.
- Polaris will offer appropriate support to children, young people and adults who have experienced abuse.
- Polaris will use safer recruitment practices to prevent the employment of unsuitable individuals.
- Polaris will provide safeguarding training for all staff as part of their induction and continuous professional development.

SAFEGUARDING IS EVERYBODY'S BUSINESS

All individuals working with or for Polaris have a personal and professional responsibility to safeguard children, young people, and vulnerable adults. Polaris is committed to providing services that are safe, appropriate, and responsive to the needs of those at risk.

Equivalent Legislation in Other UK Nations

Where Polaris delivers services outside England, it operates in accordance with the relevant safeguarding legislation and guidance applicable within that nation, including:

Scotland

- Children (Scotland) Act 1995
- Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014
- National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2021 - updated 2023

Wales

- Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014
- Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016:
- The Regulated Fostering Services (Service Providers and Responsible Individuals) (Wales) Regulations 2019:
- The Fostering Panels (Establishment and Functions) (Wales) Regulations 2018
- The Fostering Services (Wales) Regulations 2003
- The Statutory Guidance on Fostering Services relates to Parts 2 to 16 of the Regulated Fostering Services (Service Providers and Responsible Individuals) (Wales) Regulations 2019.

Northern Ireland

- Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (Northern Ireland) Order 2007
- Safeguarding Board (Northern Ireland) Act 2011
- Children's Services Co-operation Act (Northern Ireland) 2015
- Children (leaving care) Act (NI) 2002

Review Dates

March 2023

March 2026 – Routine Review, added Governance & Accountability & additional legislation.