

Child Protection Policy

Introduction

The Mark Williams Foundation (“the Foundation”) delivers a mentoring programme supporting young people aged **16–25**. Our work brings mentors and young people into trusted, one-to-one and group relationships. We recognise that this places a **heightened responsibility** on the Foundation to safeguard those we work with.

This policy sets out how the Foundation safeguards:

- **Children** (aged 16–17)
- **Young adults aged 18–25 who may be vulnerable**

Safeguarding is everyone’s responsibility. All concerns are taken seriously and acted upon promptly.

2. Scope of the Policy

This policy applies to all individuals involved with the Foundation, including:

- Trustees
- Employees
- Volunteer mentors
- Session facilitators
- Contractors and partner organisations
- Anyone acting on behalf of the Foundation

It applies to all activities, including:

- One-to-one mentoring
- Group mentoring sessions
- Online or remote mentoring
- Events, trips, or workshops

3. Legal and Policy Framework (Scotland)

This policy is informed by and complies with:

- **Children (Scotland) Act 1995**
- **Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014**

- **Protection of Vulnerable Groups (Scotland) Act 2007**
- **National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland (Scottish Government)**
- **Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Act 2007**
- **Data Protection Act 2018 (UK GDPR)**
- **UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act**

4. Policy Statement

The Mark Williams Foundation:

- Believes every young person has the right to feel safe, respected, and supported
- Has **zero tolerance** for abuse, exploitation, or neglect
- Is committed to creating safe mentoring relationships built on trust and boundaries
- Will act in the best interests of the young person at all times
- Will work in partnership with statutory agencies when required

5. Key Definitions

5.1 A Child

Under Scottish law, a **child is anyone under the age of 18**. This policy therefore applies fully to all participants aged 16–17.

5.2 Vulnerable Adult (18–25)

A young adult may be considered vulnerable if they are unable to safeguard their own wellbeing, property, rights, or interests due to factors such as:

- Mental health difficulties
- Learning disabilities
- Care experience
- Trauma or exploitation
- Substance misuse
- Social isolation

6. Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

The Foundation has appointed a Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) with responsibility for safeguarding and protection.

Designated Safeguarding Lead:

Name: Sarah Peacock

Role: Designated Safeguarding Lead

The DSL is responsible for:

- Receiving safeguarding concerns
- Assessing risk and deciding next steps
- Making referrals to Children's Services, Adult Social Work, or Police Scotland
- Maintaining secure safeguarding records
- Advising trustees on safeguarding matters

7. Safeguarding in a Mentoring Context

The Foundation recognises that mentoring relationships involve:

- Power imbalance
- Emotional trust
- Regular one-to-one contact

To manage this safely:

- All mentoring must take place within approved structures
- Boundaries must be clear and maintained at all times
- Mentors must not act as counsellors, social workers, or substitute family members
- Concerns must always be escalated, not handled alone

8. Code of Conduct

All staff, mentors, and volunteers must:

You must:

- Treat young people with dignity and respect
- Maintain professional boundaries at all times
- Communicate in an appropriate, transparent manner
- Act in the best interests of the young person
- Follow safeguarding procedures
- Report concerns immediately

You must not:

- Engage in sexual, abusive, or exploitative behaviour
- Develop dependency or exclusive relationships
- Communicate privately via personal social media accounts
- Share personal contact details without authorisation
- Promise confidentiality to a young person

9. Recognising Abuse and Harm

Abuse may include:

- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse or exploitation (including online)
- Emotional or psychological abuse
- Neglect
- Financial or material abuse (for vulnerable adults)

Concerns may arise through:

- A disclosure from a young person
- Changes in behaviour or wellbeing
- Information shared by a third party

10. Responding to a Disclosure or Concern

If a young person discloses abuse or you have a concern:

1. Stay calm and listen
2. Take the concern seriously
3. Do not promise confidentiality
4. Do not investigate or ask leading questions
5. Report immediately to the DSL

If there is **immediate risk**, call **999**.

11. Reporting and Referrals (Scotland)

The DSL will determine whether to:

- Manage the concern internally
- Refer to the local **Children's Services** (for under 18s)
- Refer to **Adult Social Work** (for vulnerable adults)
- Contact **Police Scotland**
- Notify **OSCR** of a serious incident

All actions and decisions will be recorded.

12. Safer Recruitment and PVG

The Foundation is committed to safer recruitment and will:

- Carry out **PVG Scheme** checks where roles involve regulated work
- Ensure safeguarding is addressed during recruitment
- Provide safeguarding training and induction
- Not allow unsupervised contact until checks are complete

13. Online and Remote Mentoring Safety

For online mentoring:

- Approved platforms only
- No private or disappearing messages
- Clear expectations around communication hours
- Concerns escalated in the same way as in-person sessions

14. Photography and Media

The Foundation will:

- Obtain written consent before using images or quotes
- Use images respectfully and appropriately
- Avoid identifying information
- Respect withdrawal of consent where possible

15. Confidentiality and Information Sharing

Information will be:

- Shared on a need-to-know basis
- Stored securely
- Shared without consent where required to protect a young person from harm

16. Record Keeping

Safeguarding records will:

- Be factual, accurate, and dated
- Be stored securely with restricted access
- Be retained in line with Scottish guidance and legislation

17. Whistleblowing

Anyone who has concerns about safeguarding practice or the conduct of an adult connected to the Foundation must report it. All concerns will be taken seriously and handled appropriately.

18. Review and Approval

This policy has been **approved by the Trustees of the Mark Williams Foundation** and will be reviewed annually or following any safeguarding incident or change in legislation.

Signed on behalf of the Trustees:

Name: _____

Role: Trustee / Chair of Trustees