



SAFEGUARDING POLICY

Ark at Egwood CIC

Ratified by the Board of Directors on 11 February 2026

office@arkategwood.com

Chair: Peter Forgham

ARK at Egwood CIC Safeguarding Policy (Children and Adults at Risk)

Adopted by the Board of the Company on 11 February 2026

1. Introduction

- 1.1 ARK at Egwood CIC ('ARK' 'we', 'us') is committed to proactively safeguarding and promoting the safety and welfare of our staff (including our volunteers) and the people we work with through our activities, in particular children and adults at risk (also referred to as vulnerable adults). We will take reasonable steps to ensure that no-one who comes into contact with our work comes to harm as a result, and will ensure safer recruitment, selection and vetting.
- 1.2 We ask everyone working with us to share this commitment and to work together to help achieve the best outcomes for children and adults at risk and protect them from harm.
- 1.3 This policy sets out our arrangements for safeguarding children and adults at risk and includes the steps that must be taken should you have any concerns about someone's safety or wellbeing.
- 1.4 This policy supports and should be read in conjunction with the Letter of Understanding as well as other applicable policies in place from time to time, which will include any applicable Code of Conduct, our Health and Safety Policy, and the Operations Manual.
- 1.5 This policy should also be used in conjunction with the relevant Local Safeguarding Partnership's Safeguarding Policy and Procedures, and any relevant Practice Guidance issued by it. ARK currently falls within the jurisdiction of the Somerset Safeguarding Children's Partnership and their Safeguarding Adults Board (details of which can be found at the end of this policy – see paragraph 12). Other Local Safeguarding Partnerships may be relevant depending on where an alleged incident has taken place or where the individuals involved live or work.
- 1.6 The policy applies to our Board Members, staff and all others associated with or representing us, including our volunteers (collectively 'you'). All are asked to acknowledge they that they have read and understood this policy and their responsibilities under it and will complete any associated training required in relation to it, as required from time to time. Safeguarding training will be included as part of your induction.
- 1.7 We expect you to read and follow this policy, where applicable to your role with ARK. This and other policies are available from the on-site ARK office and website.
- 1.8 Failure to comply with this policy will be dealt with as a very serious matter.

2. Purpose and some key terms

- 2.1 This policy sets out our arrangements for safeguarding anyone at risk who comes into contact with the Company and the steps that must be taken should you have any concerns about anyone.
- 2.2 Our **Safeguarding Lead** is **Matt Laughton**. If you have any questions about this policy or any concerns about anyone which you think may be a safeguarding concern, even if you are not sure, you should raise this with the Safeguarding Lead. (See more below under ‘Your responsibilities and duty to report concerns or allegations’ at paragraph 6). The Safeguarding Lead’s details are at the end of this policy.
- 2.3 For the purposes of this policy **children** are defined as those under the age of 18.
- 2.4 **An adult at risk** is defined as an adult who has needs for care and support (whether or not the local authority is meeting any of those needs), is experiencing, or is at risk of, abuse or neglect and, as a result of those care and support needs is unable to protect themselves from either the risk of, or the experience of abuse or neglect. This may include, for example, adults with physical, sensory and mental impairments and learning disabilities, however those impairments have arisen, such as whether present from birth or due to advancing age, chronic illness or injury.
- 2.5 **Safeguarding children** means:
- Providing help and support to meet the needs of children as soon as problems emerge;
 - protecting children from maltreatment, whether that is within or outside the home, including online;
 - preventing the impairment of children’s mental and physical health or development;
 - ensuring children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care; and
 - taking action to enable children to have the best outcomes.
- 2.6 **Safeguarding adults at risk** means: protecting an adult’s right to live in safety, free from abuse and neglect.

3. General principles

- 3.1 The welfare of children and adults at risk who come into contact with our work, is paramount and their safety and wellbeing is prioritised at all times. Safeguarding is everyone’s responsibility.
- 3.2 No one will be treated any less favourably than any other in being able to access services which meet their particular needs. All have the right to protection from abuse regardless of their sex, gender identity, race or ethnicity, religion or beliefs, disability, sexual orientation, pregnancy or marital status or age.
- 3.3 All individuals associated with ARK must:
- 3.3.1 recognise and accept that they have a responsibility to protect anyone at risk that fall within their sphere of work or care;
 - 3.3.2 support and empower anyone adult at risk to encourage them to make their

own decisions and give informed consent;

- 3.3.3 be aware of issues which can cause anyone to be at risk of harm and have knowledge of and be able to recognise different types of abuse (physical, psychological and emotional, sexual, financial and material, domestic violence, modern slavery, discriminatory, organisational, neglect and self- neglect – see paragraph 5 below); in respect of adults at risk have due regard for the six principles of adult safeguarding as set out at paragraph 14 of the Care and Support Statutory Guidance (February 2025), namely empowerment, prevention, proportionality, protection, partnership, and accountability – see resources below at paragraph 9;
 - 3.3.4 comply at all times with the requirements of any applicable Code of Conduct; and
 - 3.3.5 immediately report any concerns or allegations in accordance with this policy as set out at paragraph 6 below.
- 3.4 In turn we will ensure that:
- 3.4.1 the safeguarding arrangements and procedures set out in this policy are followed and kept under regular review to ensure compliance with relevant statutory requirements and best practice;
 - 3.4.2 safer recruitment, selection and vetting best practice is followed to help prevent the employment/deployment of inappropriate or unsafe individuals to work with anyone at risk;
 - 3.4.3 appropriate training is provided to all at ARK who require it, to ensure they understand their responsibilities under this policy and are equipped and supported to act in accordance with it; and
 - 3.4.4 we promptly respond to any concerns or allegations, including (where appropriate) making referrals to relevant statutory authorities, in accordance with paragraph 7 below.

4. Positions of trust with children

- 4.1 All adults associated with or representing ARK who work with children are in a position of trust.
- 4.2 A relationship between a Board member, staff member, volunteer or any other individual associated with or representing ARK and a child cannot be a relationship between equals. There is potential for exploitation and harm of vulnerable individuals. Everyone associated with or representing ARK has a responsibility to ensure that an unequal balance of power is not used for personal advantage or gratification.
- 4.3 Wherever possible, you should avoid any behaviour which might be misinterpreted by others, and self-report and record any incident with this potential to the ARK Safeguarding Lead. You should ensure compliance with any Code of Conduct applicable to you and when interacting with children as part of your work or volunteering you should remain mindful of any position of trust you might hold in relation to them.

5. Recognising abuse – what to look out for

5.1 Abuse and neglect are forms of maltreatment which could create a safeguarding concern. Both can involve inflicting or failing to act to prevent harm to children, young people or vulnerable adults. Abuse can be from neglect, physical injury, sexual abuse or emotional abuse or any combination of the following definitions.

5.2 Abuse is a form of maltreatment of a child or adult at risk. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child or adult at risk by inflicting harm or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children or adults at risk may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting by those known to them or, more rarely, by others. Abuse can take place wholly online, or technology may be used to facilitate offline abuse. Children or adults at risk may be abused by an adult or adults, and children may abuse other children. You should have an awareness of safeguarding issues that can put children and adults at risk of harm. In the context of children, behaviours linked to issues such as drug taking, alcohol abuse, deliberately missing education and sexting (also known as youth produced sexual imagery) put children in danger.

Children

5.3 Abuse is a form of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting by those known to them or, more rarely, by others. Harm can include ill treatment that is not physical as well as the impact of witnessing ill treatment of others. Abuse can take place wholly online, or technology may be used to facilitate offline abuse. Children may be abused by an adult or adults or by another child or children. You should have an awareness of safeguarding issues that can put children at risk of harm. Behaviours linked to issues such as drug taking, alcohol abuse, deliberately missing education and sexting (also known as youth produced sexual imagery) put children in danger.

5.4 Physical abuse is a form of abuse which may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child.

5.5 Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to a child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond a child's developmental capability as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child from participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyberbullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, although it may occur alone.

5.6 Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is

aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse. Sexual abuse can take place online, and technology can be used to facilitate offline abuse. Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

- 5.7 Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy, for example, as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to: provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment); protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger; ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-givers); or ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

Adults at risk

- 5.8 Physical abuse encompasses assault, hitting, slapping, pushing, misuse of medication, restraint and inappropriate physical sanctions.
- 5.9 Emotional and psychological abuse can encompass threats of harm or abandonment, deprivation of contact, humiliation, blaming, controlling, intimidation, coercion, harassment, verbal abuse, cyber bullying, isolation, or unreasonable and unjustified withdrawal of services or supportive networks.
- 5.10 Sexual abuse encompasses inappropriate looking or touching, sexual teasing or innuendo, sexual photography, subjection to pornography or witnessing sexual acts, indecent exposure or sexual harassment or assault, to which the adult or child has not consented or was pressured into consenting.
- 5.11 Domestic abuse encompasses psychological, physical, sexual, financial, emotional abuse, or so called 'honour' based violence.
- 5.12 Modern slavery encompasses slavery, human trafficking, forced labour and domestic servitude. Traffickers and slave masters using whatever means they have at their disposal to coerce, deceive and force individuals into a life of abuse, servitude and inhumane treatment.
- 5.13 Financial or material abuse encompasses theft, fraud, internet scamming, coercion in relation to an adult's financial affairs or arrangements, including in connection with wills, property, inheritance or financial transactions or the misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits.
- 5.14 Discriminatory abuse encompasses abuse based on a person's race, sex, disability, faith, sexual orientation, or age; other forms of harassment, slurs or similar treatment or hate crime/hate incident.
- 5.15 Organisational abuse encompasses neglect and poor practice within an institution or a

specific care setting such as a hospital or care home, for example, or in relation to care provided in one's own home. This may range from one off incidents to on-going ill treatment. It can be caused by neglect or poor professional practice as a result of the structure, policies, processes and practices within an organisation.

- 5.16 Neglect encompasses ignoring medical, emotional or physical care needs, failure to provide access to appropriate health, care and support or educational services, the withholding of the necessities of life, such as medication, adequate nutrition and heating.
- 5.17 Self-neglect covers a wide range of behaviour neglecting to care for one's personal hygiene, health or surroundings and includes behaviour such as hoarding. It should be noted that self-neglect may not prompt a formal response from the Local Authority (known as a section 42 enquiry under the Care Act 2014). An assessment should be made on a case-by-case basis. A decision on whether a response is required under safeguarding will depend on the adult's ability to protect themselves by controlling their own behaviour. There may come a point when they are no longer able to do this, without external support.
- 5.18 Anyone can perpetrate abuse against anyone. This could be spouses/partners, other family members, neighbours, friends, local residents, paid volunteers or professionals or strangers. Children can also abuse other children. Abuse can happen anywhere: for example, in someone's own home, in a public place, in hospital, in School, in the community, in a care home or in college. It can take place when an adult lives alone or with others. Abuse can happen online or in-person (or both).

6. Your responsibilities and duty to report safeguarding concerns

- 6.1 If you have any concerns about the welfare or well-being of a child or adult at risk or about the behaviour of an adult or child toward a child or a vulnerable adult ('a safeguarding concern') you should inform the **Safeguarding Lead, Matt Laughton** or seek out another senior member of staff on site without delay, and act in accordance with this policy, or use the contact details at the end of this document.
- 6.2 If someone is in immediate and significant danger or a criminal offence is taking place, you should call 999 without delay. So too, if someone is in need of urgent medical assistance.
- 6.3 If you have:
 - 6.3.1 a safeguarding concern, or
 - 6.3.2 a safeguarding concern in relation to the behaviour of an individual associated with or representing ARK (this may include, for example, concerns of poor practice or possible abuse)

you must not investigate it yourself, and should instead:

- 6.3.3 report this to the Safeguarding Lead immediately (although in an emergency anyone can make a referral to the Police or Local Authority. However, if anyone other than the Safeguarding Lead makes a referral, they should inform them as soon as possible).
- 6.3.4 If the safeguarding concern relates to the Safeguarding Lead or if the

Safeguarding Lead is not available, the matter should be reported to the Chief Executive, Nigel Bell instead; and

- 6.3.5 **as soon as reasonably practicable, and within 24 hours, provide the Safeguarding Lead (or Nigel Bell, if applicable) with a clear and accurate written record of the information (where possible in the words of whoever has made a disclosure) including the time, date and place of the incident(s), persons present and what was said, which should be signed and dated.**
- 6.4 Whoever makes an allegation of abuse or mistreatment by anyone (whether or not that individual is associated with or representing ARK), they should be listened to and given reassurance but should not be probed or asked leading questions. Questions should be limited to the minimum necessary for clarification.
- 6.5 No guarantee of confidentiality should be given to the person making the disclosure; instead they should be informed that the matter will be reported in confidence to the appropriate responsible person/people (as appropriate).
- 7. Manner in which safeguarding concerns will be treated**
 - 7.1 Everyone associated with or representing ARK has a duty to report safeguarding concerns, which will always be taken seriously. Individuals who raise any such concern in good faith will never be subjected to any detriment as a result.
 - 7.2 The Safeguarding Lead will consider all the available information and decide (including, in the case of an adult at risk, taking into consideration paragraph 7.3 below) whether any action needs to be taken. Appropriate referrals will be made to external agencies, such as the Local Authority and/or the Police. Referrals to the Local Authority should be made in accordance with the referral threshold set by the relevant Local Safeguarding Partnership (see paragraph 12). A referral to the Local Authority **must** always be made where there is reasonable cause to suspect significant harm through abuse or neglect; or is likely to suffer significant harm in the future.
 - 7.3 The Company Safeguarding Lead, when assessing whether to make a referral to an external agency in respect of an adult at risk, must consider the views of the abused person in all circumstances where it is possible and safe to seek their views. If the abused person refuses intervention to support them with a safeguarding concern or allegation, this should be respected. There are some exceptions where their wishes may be overridden and a referral made, including but not limited to: where the person does not have the capacity to make the decision, other people are or may be at risk of harm, an individual associated with or representing the Company is implicated, or a serious crime has been committed.
 - 7.4 In all borderline cases (whether involving children or adults at risk) the Safeguarding Lead should discuss the safeguarding concern with the Local Authority. Following the discussion(s), the Safeguarding Lead will be guided by the Local Authority in terms of whether, in their judgement, a referral should be made or what other next steps should be taken.
 - 7.5 The timing of referrals should reflect the level of perceived risk of harm, and be made as soon as reasonably practicable or, if that is not possible, not longer than one working day of identification or disclosure of harm or risk of harm.

8. Prevent and illegal activity

- 8.1 Although not a specified authority subject to the Prevent statutory requirements, ARK is alert to the risks of radicalization, extremism and terrorism and recognises that children and adults at risk may be more susceptible than others to these harms and could constitute a safeguarding risk.
- 8.2 In the event, you believe that someone may be at risk in this way, you should report this to the Safeguarding Lead in accordance with paragraph 6 in this policy.
- 8.3 The Safeguarding Lead, on receiving such a report will assess the matter in accordance with 7 above and may seek advice and guidance from the Local Authority's Prevent Lead and/or Police, in particular in respect of whether a referral to Prevent should be made. Reference will be made to the Prevent Duty Guidance, as appropriate.
- 8.4 The Police should be contacted in the event a crime has or may have been committed.

9. Record-keeping and information sharing

- 9.1 Personal information is processed in accordance with our Privacy Notice. We recognise that information sharing is essential for effective safeguarding and promoting the welfare of everyone who may be at risk.
- 9.2 Insofar as personal information arising from a safeguarding matter is classed as 'special category' (i.e. legally sensitive) personal data – such as information relating to physical or mental health or sexual life – and in respect of personal data relating to criminal convictions and offences, this will be processed in accordance with applicable data protection laws. It may be necessary for ARK to share this information on a need-to-know basis with appropriate persons, whether internally or externally (e.g. where a referral is appropriate).
- 9.3 Where it is not possible, practicable or advisable in the circumstances (considering what is reasonable and supports the safeguarding purpose) to seek the data subject's consent first, any processing of such personal data, including in respect of information sharing, would be carried out on the basis of the safeguarding provisions in the Data Protection Act 2018.
- 9.4 If there are concerns that an individual may present a risk to a person at risk, whether that individual is currently working or volunteering or has previously worked or volunteered with ARK, in such circumstances a referral will need to be made to the relevant authorities, including DBS (where appropriate) and/or multi-agency referral involving the Local Authority or the Police.
- 9.5 All decisions to share any information should be recorded together with the reasons and any relevant context, to be kept securely alongside other records necessary for the safeguarding purpose. We will endeavour to retain any such records only for as long as necessary, but in a safeguarding context this may require long-term or indefinite retention.
- 9.6 Guidance on sharing information for safeguarding purposes is available from the Government, see paragraph 11 below.

10. Safe recruitment, selection and vetting

- 10.1 We will ensure that all appropriate checks are carried out on Board Members, staff

members and volunteers – including DBS checks (where applicable), checking references, requiring proof of identity and relevant qualifications, and carrying out a face-to-face interview, where appropriate.

- 10.2 Volunteers and staff must receive a satisfactory disclosure from the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) or relevant equivalent, at the level of check appropriate for the types of activities that they will be involved in.
- 10.3 Under no circumstances will any individual who is associated with ARK and considered to pose a risk to anyone else be deployed to work or volunteer with others at risk.
- 10.4 We will comply with the DBS Code of Practice and undertake to treat all applicants for positions fairly, and not to discriminate unfairly against any subject of a criminal record check on the basis of a conviction or other information revealed.

11. Further guidance

Please refer to the following for further guidance:

- 11.1 [What to do if you are worried a child is being abused](#) (March 2015)
- 11.2 [Working together to safeguard children](#) (Updated February 2025)
- 11.3 [Care and Support Statutory Guidance](#) (February 2025) – section 14, ‘Safeguarding’
- 11.4 [Somerset County Council Adult Safeguarding Board Guidance](#)
- 11.5 [Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership Procedure](#)
- 11.6 [Information Sharing – advice for practitioners providing safeguarding services to children, young people, parents and carers](#) (May 2024)
- 11.7 [Disclosure and Barring Service](#) (September 2024)
- 11.8 [Prevent Duty Guidance](#) (March 2024)

12. Key contact details

- **ARK**
Safeguarding Lead, Matt Laughton, Tel: 07751645849
Email: matt@arkategwood.com

CEO, Nigel Bell, Tel: 01460391914] Email: ceo@arkategwood.com
- **Police**
(emergency): 999
(non-emergency): 101
- **Somerset Children’s Safeguarding Partnership**
Website: [Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership](#)
Tel: 0300 123 2224

Email: childrens@somerset.gov.uk

- **Somerset Adults Safeguarding Board**
Website: [Report an adult at risk \(somerset.gov.uk\)](https://www.somerset.gov.uk/report-an-adult-at-risk)
Tel: **0300 123 2224**
Email: adults@somerset.gov.uk
- NSPCC helpline
Website: [NSPCC Helpline | NSPCC](https://www.nspcc.org.uk)
Telephone: 0800 800 5000
Email: help@nspcc.org.uk

13. Policy Review

- 13.1 This policy will not form part of any potential employee or worker's contract and may be amended at any time.
- 13.2 The policy will be reviewed by the Board annually or when relevant legislation changes.

Signed:



Nigel Bell, CEO

Date: 11 February 2026