

Expert Link Safeguarding Policies and Procedures

1. Policy Statement

Expert Link is committed to protecting¹ who we work with or provide a service to from all forms of abuse. (See Appendix 1 for definitions of abuse).

The Charity Commission expects trustees and charity staff to proactively safeguard and promote the welfare of their charity's beneficiaries.

Safeguarding and promoting well-being and welfare means:

- Protecting the rights of adults to live in safety free from abuse and neglect.²
- Protecting children from maltreatment; preventing impairment of health or development; ensuring they are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care; and taking action to enable them to have the best outcomes.³

This policy applies to all personnel representing Expert Link, including but not limited to, trustees, staff, volunteers, temporary/agency workers, contractors and associate consultants/trainers (referred to as "staff" in this document).

2. Purpose and Scope

This policy is designed to provide guidance to all individuals involved in Expert Link activities, internal or external, who may have concerns about the abuse of children or adult at risk and feel that they need to raise Safeguarding concerns arising from their work with us. This policy sets out our responsibilities and forms the basis of our safeguarding procedures.^{4,5}

Expert Link is committed to ensuring all staff are appropriately trained in safeguarding and have access to support and advice as required.

All staff have responsibility for any safeguarding alerts that are raised with them as part of their work and the work of their team. They must never ignore, underplay, or pass on responsibility to another member of staff or peer. Managers also have a key role in helping develop understanding, knowledge and confidence to ensure procedures are followed.

¹ An adult at risk is someone who is 18 years or over who: is in need of care and support; and is experiencing or at risk of abuse or neglect; and as a result of their needs is unable to protect themselves from either the risk of, or the experience of abuse and neglect.

² Charity Commission, Strategy for dealing with safeguarding issues in charities, December 2017

³ As set out in s14.2 of the Care and Support Statutory Guidance, Care Act 2014

This policy also supports and ensures that we comply with both the safeguarding statutory requirements set out in Working Together Statutory Guidance 2018 and the Care Act statutory guidance 2014 and 2017

3. Expert Link approach to safeguard individuals.

Expert Links approach to safeguarding is honest, person-centred, and based around the statement of harm to self or others.

4. Expert Link actions to safeguard individuals.

Even though Expert Link's work does not bring staff into contact with children and adults at risk on a regular basis, we recognise our responsibility to protect all those who use our services, directly or indirectly, or who our staff meet during their work.

Expert Link will:

- Provide effective management for staff through supervision, support and training
- Recruit staff safely, ensuring all necessary pre-employment checks are made
- Provide effective induction for all staff
- Provide guidance for staff working remotely
- Record, use and store information professionally and securely in accordance with our data protection procedures
- Ensure we have an effective and accessible complaints and whistleblowing measures in place
- Have a rigorous selection process and code of conduct for trusted suppliers

The CEO will act as the corporate lead for safeguarding. The CEO will:

- Ensure all staff are inducted and trained in safeguarding
- Produce an annual quality assurance report for the board on safeguarding.

In the event of a member of staff is involved in any abuse a serious incident report will be lodged with the Charity Commission.

On the rare occasion a member of staff brings their child, or a child they have caring responsibilities for, to work they are responsible for supervising them at all times.

5. Staff actions to safeguard individuals

The nature of Expert Link's activities means that direct work with children, young people and adults at risk does not form a core aspect of what we do. However, we need to be alert to the possibilities of this occurring and ensure we have suitable procedures in place.

Staff may become aware of safeguarding concerns through a direct concern raised by a service user, for example, when carrying out research, focus group meetings, visits to services, carrying out training at a members' service. Alternatively, for example, a member organisation's own staff or volunteers may raise a concern or ask for advice in a meeting or on a Expert Link training course, or in the circumstances as listed above for service users.

6. Responding to allegations and safeguarding incidents

Expert Link recognises that it has a duty to act on reports, or suspicions of abuse or neglect. If a child or adult at risk discloses information to you or you become concerned that there may be a safeguarding issue.

How to respond if you receive an allegation:

- remain calm and do not panic or show shock or disbelief
- listen to what they are saying and take what the person says seriously
- clarify your understanding of what the person has said but avoid asking detailed or leading questions and do not probe for more information than is comfortably offered.
- reassure the person that they were right to tell, but do not make promises of confidentiality or agree to keep secrets
- be open and honest, explain to them that you will have to share your concerns and tell them what happens next
- do not suggest any action/s or consequences that may be undertaken in response to the disclosure.
- immediately record all details in writing, as far as possible using the child or adult's own words
- complete the Expert Link Safeguarding Record/ Alert Form (see appendix 2) as soon as possible. Include all the details that you are aware of and what was said, using the child or adult's own words.

Remember: Listen – write it down – report it

You are not required to judge or investigate, but to report the concern by raising an alert.

7. Expert Link Safeguarding Procedures

At Expert Link safeguarding concerns are likely to arise in two main settings: at the Expert Link main office and services. The procedures below identify the different responses required by staff in each setting.

7.1. Within Other Services

Where meetings or training is being carried out with a client at their offices, a location arranged by the client or as part of a contract or agreement with that client, wherever possible staff should familiarise themselves with that organisations Safeguarding policy and procedures, especially if they are likely to be in contact and/or working with service users when they are in that service.

If those attending a meeting or training session (e.g. a service user in a clients service) raises any safeguarding concern about themselves or another individual, it is the responsibility of the Expert Link staff member to report this to a member of staff at the service, preferably that organisations 'operational safeguarding lead'. Where appropriate the staff member should record their concerns on the relevant forms and ensure they comply with the services own safeguarding policy.

If the organisation is unable to act on the alert or Expert Link is unhappy with the response the alert should be handled as outlined in section 7.2.1.

In the event of serious immediate safeguarding concerns you should urgently alert a member of staff in the service and where appropriate you should:

- In an emergency, if there is any actual or immediate risk of abuse, call 999 and ask for ambulance if required and/or the police if a crime has been committed.
- Preserve any evidence

- Report all your concerns to the relevant manager in the service and to your line manager.
- Check and confirm that the organisation will be contacting their local Child or Adult Safeguarding Board

Records of all contacts, agreements, follow up contact and the outcome should be recorded using the Expert Link Safeguarding Record/Alert Form and staff should report the incident to their line manager once immediately on their return to the office. A copy of the completed Safeguarding form should be sent to the Expert Link Safeguarding Lead.

7.2. At Expert Link's Office or location arranged by Expert Link.

Any safeguarding concerns disclosed in the Expert Link office, staff should complete the Safeguarding Record/Alert form to record the details. This information should form the basis of the discussion with your Expert Link Safeguarding Lead. If you are unsure, complete the Alert form and discuss with Expert Link Safeguarding Lead.

You should discuss your alert with Expert Link Safeguarding Lead within 1 working day or immediately, if an emergency. If your line manager is unavailable you should inform another line manager.

If you have an immediate concern you should:

- In an emergency, if there is any actual or immediate risk of abuse, call 999 and ask for ambulance if required and/or the police if a crime has been committed.
- Preserve any evidence.
- Report all your concerns directly to a Expert Link Safeguarding Lead or the Chair of the Board.
- Contact the local Child or Adult Safeguarding board.
- If there is doubt about whether a situation amounts to abuse, ask the advice of the local authority safeguarding lead.

The Expert Link Safeguarding Lead or the Chair of the Board in their absence must meet with the alerting staff member as soon as possible and agree any follow up actions that may be necessary. Managers should:

- Ensure that the child or adult at risk remains at the heart of their thinking and actions.
- Seek advice as necessary.
- If the allegation involves a member organisation to be as open and accountable with that organisation as possible.
- If known, respect the wishes of an adult at risk as much as possible.

7.2.1 Responding to safeguarding alerts made in Expert Link office

Expert Link staff are not expected to be experts in safeguarding, so where appropriate they should seek advice from an adult or child safeguarding board, ideally the local boards to the subject of the alert. Any advice offered should be recorded and followed.

- If a safeguarding referral to the adult or child safeguarding board is accepted and Section 42 (adult) or Section 47 (child) are being made, Expert Link will continue to work with board as requested, bearing in mind the limitations of Expert Link role as a non-provider of direct services.
- If an adult or child safeguarding board does not accept a safeguarding referral, managers should identify a suitable agency to identify suitable actions to resolve or mitigate the concerns. Actions could include:
 - Referral to a care or support service
 - Undertaking a risk assessment
 - Case conference
 - A Care or Children's act referral
 - Information and advice
 - Referral to health services.
- All actions should be recorded using the Expert Link Safeguarding Record/Alert form⁶
- It is not unusual for the outcome of a safeguarding alert to be 'no further action'. This can be for a range of reasons; including the person at risk refusing to cooperate with the safeguarding referral, or the abuse the person is subject to is assessed as low risk. In the event of no further action being identified, record this decision and the reason given.
- If the allegation involves a member organisation be as open and accountable with that organisation as possible.

In cases where there is serious risk of harm or threat to life, the police must be contacted immediately.

7.2.2 Recording and monitoring cases

- A Safeguarding Record/Alert form should be completed as soon as the alerter is aware of a safeguarding risk and meet with their line manager as soon as possible to discuss this.
- All contacts, discussions, agreements, actions and outcomes should be recorded using the Safeguarding Record/Alert form.
- The Expert Link Safeguarding lead and Chair of the Board should be notified when a safeguarding alert is received.
- The Expert Link Safeguarding lead will present an annual report to the board.

7.2.3 Closing a case

A case is closed if a Safeguarding board has deemed the case does meets their threshold and they are acting to protect the person from harm.

If the case does not meet a Safeguarding Board's threshold Expert Link will attempt to broker, the best available advice and support. The case is closed when all the identified actions by Expert Link or client organisation are completed.

In the event of 'no action' on an alert the reason for no further action should be recorded before closing the case.

7.2.4 Feedback to staff

Where an Alert has been made the Alerter must be given feedback on the eventual outcome by the Expert Link Safeguarding Lead.

8. Confidentiality

Every effort should be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned. Information should be handled and disseminated on a need to know basis only in-line with Expert Link procedures for handling sensitive or special information.

9. An adult at risk does not want a referral to be made

There may be occasions where an adult at risk expresses a wish for a concern not to be pursued.

Where possible the adult's wishes should not be disregarded except in the following circumstances:

- There are concerns about the adult's capacity
- The failure to act may or will result in serious harm to the adult
- The failure to act may or will result in harm to others
- The possible abuse involves the staff or associates of Expert Link or another professional agency.

If in doubt about how to proceed discuss this with Expert Link's Safeguarding Lead.

10. Young person or child protection concern

For a child or young person under the age of 18 it is not necessary to have their consent to share information. However, where possible the wishes of a child should still be respected. Children and young people have variable capacity depending on their age and other factors, therefore a 16 or 17-year-old will normally have more capacity than a young child and greater effort should be made to respect their wishes where possible.

It remains paramount that the wellbeing of a child is protected and if in doubt advice should be sought, ideally from the child or young person's Child Safeguarding board and any advice acted on.

11. Allegations of abuse against Expert Link staff and associates

Expert Link will ensure any allegations made against members of staff will be dealt with swiftly, following procedures set out in Disciplinary Policy for employees.

Where a member of staff/volunteer is thought to have committed a criminal offence the police will be informed. If a crime has been witnessed the police should be contacted immediately.

When a member of staff is the alleged perpetrator of abuse a referral to the child or adult at risk's safeguarding board must be made.

There may be cases where an allegation is made by a member of staff against other members of staff or others working for Expert Link. If this is the case, staff must follow the process set out in the Whistleblowing Policy. If an allegation has been made about you, notify Expert Link's Safeguarding Lead immediately.

If you believe you have been abused by another Expert Link staff member, or a third party who is not a member of staff of Expert Link, you should follow the guidance set out in the Dignity at Work Policy.

12. Training

All Expert Link staff will receive training in safeguarding awareness, recording and alerting. Refresher training will be provided every three years.

13. Support for staff

In the event of a concern, you are encouraged to talk with your line manager. Witnessing something that is upsetting will happen on very rare occasions.

Expert Link recognises that when safeguarding concerns relate to a colleague's conduct that this can involve additional stress to alerter. Expert Link will fully support and protect all staff who, in good faith (without malicious intent), report concerns about a colleague's practice or the possibility that a child, young person or vulnerable adult may be being abused.

14. Policy review

This policy is due for review every 3 years after approval or in response to changing legislation and/or guidance.

Policy operational date	August 2023 -
Policy prepared by	David Ford
Date approved by Board	August 2023
Policy review date	August 2026

Appendix 1: Definitions of Abuse

Abuse may consist of a single act or repeated acts. It may be physical, verbal or psychological, it may be an act of neglect or an omission to act, or it may occur when a vulnerable person is persuaded to enter into a financial or sexual transaction to which he or she has not consented, or cannot consent.

Abuse can occur in any relationship and it may result in significant harm to, or exploitation of, the person subjected to it.

The Department of Health, No Secrets 2000 Report suggests the following as the main types of abuse:

Physical abuse- including hitting, slapping, pushing, kicking, misuse of medication, restraint, or inappropriate sanctions.

Sexual abuse- including rape and sexual assault or sexual acts to which the vulnerable adult has not consented, could not consent or was pressured into consenting.

Psychological abuse- including emotional abuse, threats of harm or abandonment, deprivation of contact, humiliation, blaming controlling, intimidation, coercion, harassment, verbal abuse, isolation or withdrawal from services or supportive networks.

Financial or material abuse – including theft, fraud, exploitation., pressure in connection with wills, property or inheritance or financial transactions, or the misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits.

Neglect and acts of omission – including ignoring medical or physical care needs, failure to provide access to appropriate health, social care or educational services, the withholding of the necessities of life, such as, medication, adequate nutrition and heating.

Discriminatory abuse- including race, sex, culture, religion, politics, that is based on a person's disability, age or sexuality and other forms of harassment, slurs or similar treatment and hate crime.

Institutional abuse – adults placed in any kind of care home or day care establishment are potentially vulnerable to abuse and exploitation.

Domestic abuse – physical, sexual, psychological or financial violence that takes place within an intimate or family-type relationship and that forms a pattern of coercive and controlling behaviour. It includes forced marriage and 'honour crimes' and a range of abusive behaviours (Women's Aid Definition).

Adult abuse as defined by the Care Act 2014 covers

- Physical
- Emotional and Psychological
- Sexual
- Discriminatory
- Neglect
- Modern Slavery
- Self – Neglect
- Institutional
- Domestic Violence or Abuse
- Financial or Material

Definitions, indicators of the above and other specific abuse of adults at risk can be found at the

Social Care Institute for Excellence website

<https://www.scie.org.uk/safeguarding/adults/introduction/types-and-indicators-of-abuse>

Child and young people's abuse can be defined as:

- Sexual Trafficking
- Physical Online abuse
- Emotional Sexual exploitation
- Neglect Radicalisation

- Exploitation by criminal gangs

Definitions, indicators of the above and other specific abuse of children and young people can be found at the NSPCC website <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/signs-symptoms-effects/>

Appendix 2: Expert Link Safeguarding Record/ Alert Form

This form is for Expert Link employees and Trustees to record and raise any safeguarding concerns or alerts.

If you do not have all the information, please provide the information you know.

1. Your details

Name:

Job title:

Line Manager Name:

Telephone number:

E-mail:

2. Details of the person who the concern/ alert is about

Name:

Contact address:

Telephone number:

E-mail:

3. Details of the alleged perpetrator (if known)

Name:

Contact Details:

Relationship to victim:

Alleged perpetrators vulnerability (if applicable): If the alleged perpetrator is a staff member please provide staff details (E.g. job role, employer, address): Any other details:

4. What is the reason for the concern/ alert? (Describe what you were told and recorded at the time)

5. Details of the alleged incident/harm (including date, time and location):

6. Types of abuse? (Please tick one or more)

Sexual		Physical	
Emotional		Psychological	
Discriminatory		Domestic Abuse	
Financial/ material		Neglect or acts of omission	
Institutional		Self-neglect	
Modern Slavery		Other e.g. suspicious death of service user	

7. In your opinion is the person at risk of harm?

Yes No Don't Know

8. Has the person given consent for this record/ alert (consent is not a requirement for an alert)?

Yes/No/Don't Know

b. Have you made them aware that details of the incident are being recorded and will be investigated? Yes/ No

9. If the concern/ alert arose at an external service provider, please provide the following details:

Name and address of service:

Member of staff referred alert to:

Action taken by the service (if Known):

Outcome (if known):

Who at Expert Link did you report this to? Date:

Any follow up action taken/ Required:

10. If the concern/alert arose at Expert Link's office please provide the following details:

Date and time of concern/alert:

In what context (e.g. training course, focus group, etc.):

Who else was present:

Who referred to:

What date/time:

11. Do you have any other information that you think might be useful?

FOLLOW UP

Internally within Expert Link

Who has this been referred to?

What action was agreed?

What action has been taken and when?

Was this alert referred to the relevant Adult Safeguarding Board?

Yes / No

If no, please provide reasons for this decision:

Response from Adult Safeguarding Board:

Any outcomes or follow up actions:

