STEP IN SUPPORT SERVICES

Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy

Supporting Reintegration Every Step of the Year

Policy owner	Step In Support Services Directors
Approved by	Directors
Version	1.0
Effective from	October 2026
Review due	October 2027 or earlier if guidance/legislation changes

1. Purpose and scope

Step In Support Services is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of every child and young person we work with. Our approach is child-centred, timely, proportionate and coordinated with commissioning schools, local authorities, parents/carers and statutory partners.

This policy applies to all Step In directors, employees, sessional practitioners, associates, volunteers and contractors. It applies to work delivered in schools, homes, community venues, online where agreed, and other off-site locations.

Step In supports young people aged 11-18 through bespoke reintegration programmes combining attendance and engagement work, therapeutic/wellbeing support, educational support, social and personal development, family liaison and multi-agency working.

2. Safeguarding principles

- Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and the welfare and best interests of the child are paramount.
- Concerns are acted on immediately; practitioners must never assume that somebody else will act.
- Young people are listened to, taken seriously and involved in decisions that affect them, in a way appropriate to their age, communication needs and understanding.
- Persistent absence, disengagement, exclusion risk, SEND and SEMH needs can increase vulnerability and are considered within our safeguarding practice.
- Information is shared on a need-to-know basis where necessary to safeguard a child; data protection is not a barrier to appropriate safeguarding information sharing.
- Step In works in partnership with the commissioning school's Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and relevant statutory agencies.

3. Legal and guidance framework

This policy has been developed with regard to current safeguarding expectations in England, including Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 (KCSIE), Working Together to Safeguard Children, the Children Acts 1989 and 2004, the Education Act 2002 where relevant to commissioning schools, the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006, the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 (Prevent duty), the Equality Act 2010, UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018, and the Department for Education's voluntary national standards for non-school alternative provision.

Step In is not a school and does not seek to transfer the statutory safeguarding responsibilities of a commissioning school or local authority. Where Step In is commissioned to support a pupil, safeguarding responsibilities and reporting routes will be agreed before work begins.

4. Safeguarding leadership

Child Safeguarding Lead (CSL/DSL equivalent)	Jhaneice McLean
Deputy / cover safeguarding lead	Matthew Farquarson
Safeguarding email	info@stepinsupportservices.org
Emergency	999 where a child is in immediate danger; otherwise follow the relevant local authority safeguarding referral route

The Safeguarding Lead will maintain appropriate training, advise practitioners, coordinate referrals where Step In is the appropriate referring body, liaise with commissioning-school DSLs, maintain safeguarding records, oversee allegations/low-level concerns and review safeguarding practice.

5. Before a young person starts

- A named school/commissioner contact and DSL contact will be confirmed.
- Step In will obtain relevant safeguarding, SEND, medical, risk, attendance and contextual information necessary to deliver support safely.
- The agreed location, collection/arrival arrangements, emergency contacts and attendance reporting process will be recorded.
- Any known risks associated with home visits, community work, transport, peers, exploitation, self-harm, violence, absconding or missing episodes will inform an individual risk assessment.
- Consent and information-sharing arrangements will be clarified, recognising that safeguarding information may be shared without consent where lawful and necessary.

6. Recognising safeguarding concerns

Practitioners remain alert to indicators of abuse, neglect and exploitation, including physical, emotional and sexual abuse; neglect; domestic abuse; child-on-child abuse; harmful sexual behaviour; criminal or sexual exploitation; county lines; serious violence; radicalisation; online harm; bullying and discriminatory harm; self-harm or suicidal risk; missing episodes; and unexplained or persistent absence from education.

7. Responding to a disclosure or concern

1. Listen calmly and take the young person seriously. Do not investigate, interrogate or ask leading questions.
2. Do not promise confidentiality. Explain that information may need to be shared to help keep them or another person safe.
3. If there is immediate danger or a medical emergency, call 999 and take reasonable steps to secure safety.
4. Record the concern as soon as possible using the young person's own words where relevant, distinguishing fact, observation and professional opinion.
5. Report without delay to the Step In Safeguarding Lead and, where the young person is on a school roll or the commissioning arrangement requires it, to the commissioning school's DSL.
6. The Safeguarding Lead will agree/undertake escalation to children's social care, police, Channel or other statutory services where required and record the decision and rationale.

No delay: A practitioner must not wait for the end of a session or the next working day where a child may be at risk of significant harm.

8. Confidentiality and therapeutic work

Counselling and therapeutic support is confidential within clear safeguarding limits. Young people will be told at the outset that confidentiality cannot be maintained where there is a concern that they or another person may be at risk of harm, where disclosure is required by law, or where information must be shared to deliver safe coordinated support. Only relevant information will be shared.

9. Child-on-child abuse and harmful behaviour

Step In adopts a zero-tolerance approach to dismissing abusive or harmful behaviour as 'banter' or an inevitable part of growing up. Concerns will be recorded, risk assessed and shared with the relevant DSL/commissioner. Support will consider the needs and safety of all children involved.

10. Online Safety, Remote and Electronic Communication

Step In Support Services may provide remote support to young people as part of an agreed programme of intervention. This may include therapeutic mentoring, counselling where appropriate, educational or Functional Skills support, attendance and reintegration work, and individual check-ins.

Remote sessions will be delivered with the same safeguarding standards and professional boundaries that apply to face-to-face work.

- Practitioners will use approved professional communication channels and agreed platforms and will not communicate with young people through personal social-media accounts.
- Remote sessions must form part of an agreed intervention, with appropriate arrangements confirmed with the commissioning school and parent/carer where required.
- The young person's age, individual needs, location, privacy and any known safeguarding risks will be considered when planning remote support.
- Practitioners will conduct remote sessions from an appropriate professional environment that protects confidentiality and maintains professional boundaries. Young people will be encouraged to participate from an appropriate and safe environment.
- Practitioners will remain alert to changes in a young person's behaviour, presentation, surroundings or communication that may indicate a safeguarding or wellbeing concern.
- Concerns involving online grooming, exploitation, harassment, sexual imagery, threats, harmful content or other forms of online abuse will be treated as safeguarding matters and responded to in accordance with this policy.
- If a safeguarding concern arises during a remote session, the practitioner will follow Step In's safeguarding procedures and the agreed safeguarding arrangements with the commissioning school or setting. This may include contacting the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead, parent/carer, Children's Social Care, emergency services or another relevant agency where appropriate.
- Where a young person unexpectedly disconnects or becomes uncontactable during a remote session and there are concerns about their immediate safety, the practitioner will take reasonable steps to re-establish contact and escalate the concern according to the level of risk.
- Remote sessions will not normally be recorded, photographed or captured by screenshot by Step In practitioners. Any exceptional requirement to record a session must have a legitimate professional purpose and appropriate authorisation, consent and data-protection arrangements.
- Personal devices must not be used to take or retain images, recordings or other personal information relating to young people unless specifically authorised for a legitimate professional purpose and appropriate safeguards are in place.
- Any safeguarding concern identified through electronic communication or remote intervention must be recorded and reported in the same way as a concern arising during face-to-face work.

11. Allegations, low-level concerns and conduct concerns

Any concern that a Step In practitioner may have harmed a child, committed an offence against a child, behaved in a way indicating they may pose a risk, or behaved in a way that may indicate they are unsuitable to work with children must be reported immediately to a director who is not implicated. Advice will be sought from the relevant Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) where the threshold may be met. Low-level concerns will also be recorded and reviewed for patterns. Where a director is implicated, the concern must be escalated externally through the appropriate LADO/safeguarding route.

12. Safer working and off-site delivery

All 1:1, home, community and outreach work must follow Step In's Professional Boundaries and Lone Working/Outreach policies. Practitioners must maintain professional visibility, agreed check-in arrangements and dynamic risk assessment. Any unexplained non-arrival, missing episode or loss of contact is managed through the agreed attendance/missing procedure and escalated according to risk.

13. Record keeping and information sharing

- Safeguarding records are factual, dated, timed, attributable and stored securely with access limited to those who need it.
- Records include the concern, actions taken, decisions, rationale, information shared and outcome where known.
- Safeguarding information is kept separate from routine session notes where practicable and transferred securely when required.
- Step In will cooperate with lawful requests and multi-agency safeguarding processes.

14. Training and quality assurance

All practitioners working directly with children will receive safeguarding and child-protection training appropriate to their role at induction and regular updates thereafter. The Safeguarding Lead will complete role-appropriate advanced training and maintain knowledge of local referral pathways. Policy implementation will be reviewed at least annually and following significant incidents, changes in guidance or learning from practice.

15. Related Step In policies

- Safer Recruitment, DBS & Staff Suitability
- Staff Code of Conduct & Professional Boundaries
- Lone Working, Outreach, Home Visits & Health and Safety
- Data Protection, Confidentiality & Privacy
- Equality, Diversity, SEND & Inclusion
- Complaints, Concerns & Whistleblowing
- Quality Assurance, Attendance & Outcomes