STEP IN SUPPORT SERVICES

Policy Handbook 2026-27

Supporting Reintegration Every Step of the Year

Policy owner	Step In Support Services Directors
Approved by	Directors
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About this handbook

This handbook brings together Step In Support Services' eight core policies for work with young people aged 11-18. It is designed for use by practitioners, schools, academy trusts, local authorities, families and other commissioning partners.

Important before publication: Insert the named Safeguarding Lead and deputy/cover arrangements; confirm the legal entity/business address; complete the privacy notice with the organisation's exact data-controller details; and ensure insurance, DBS and training arrangements match actual practice.

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Reference framework: Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026; DfE non-school alternative provision voluntary national standards; applicable safeguarding, equality and data-protection law and guidance.

Policy 1: Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy

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

Policy 2: Safer Recruitment, DBS & Staff Suitability Policy

1. Purpose and scope

Step In will recruit and deploy people who are suitable to work with children and young people and will maintain proportionate, documented checks before unsupervised work begins.

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. Core requirements

- Roles involving direct work with children will have a clear role description, safeguarding responsibilities and person specification.
- Identity, right to work, employment history and relevant qualifications will be checked and recorded.
- References will be obtained and scrutinised, with gaps or inconsistencies explored.
- Enhanced DBS checks, including barred-list information where the role is eligible and constitutes regulated activity, will be obtained before unsupervised work.
- Where relevant, overseas checks and additional suitability checks will be considered.
- At least one interviewer/decision-maker will have safer recruitment knowledge appropriate to the organisation's activity.
- Self-disclosure and ongoing duty-to-report arrangements will be used to identify changes that may affect suitability.

3. Contractors, associates and volunteers

The level of checking will reflect the role and legal eligibility for checks. Step In will not rely solely on another organisation's assurance where it is responsible for deployment; written evidence of relevant checks will be obtained and retained where appropriate.

4. Recruitment process

7. Advert/role information states Step In's commitment to safeguarding.
8. Application/CV history is reviewed and gaps explored.
9. Interview assesses values, boundaries, safeguarding judgement and suitability for 1:1/outreach work.
10. Identity, qualifications, references and required vetting are completed.
11. Induction includes safeguarding, conduct, lone working, data protection and reporting procedures.
12. No practitioner undertakes unsupervised work until required checks and risk controls are confirmed.

5. Ongoing suitability

- Annual safeguarding declarations and policy refreshers.
- DBS Update Service checks where used and lawful.
- Supervision/management oversight, including discussion of boundaries and concerns.
- Prompt review of allegations, low-level concerns, complaints, conduct issues or information that may affect suitability.

- Immediate restriction or suspension from direct work where necessary to protect children while concerns are assessed.

6. Recruitment records

Step In will maintain a secure central record of required checks for its workforce, proportionate to its status and commissioning requirements. Schools/commissioners may receive written safeguarding assurance confirming that appropriate checks have been completed; unnecessary copies of sensitive identity documents will not be shared.

Policy 3: Staff Code of Conduct & Professional Boundaries

1. Purpose and scope

This code sets the expected standard of professional behaviour for everyone representing Step In. It is particularly important because our model involves intensive 1:1 work, therapeutic relationships, outreach and contact with families.

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. Expected conduct

- Act in the young person's best interests and maintain respectful, non-discriminatory relationships.
- Keep relationships professional, boundaried and focused on agreed outcomes.
- Use language, humour and behaviour appropriate to a professional relationship with a child.
- Work within competence, qualifications and agreed role; seek supervision or specialist input when required.
- Record and report safeguarding, attendance, risk and significant incidents promptly.
- Avoid favouritism, dependency, secrecy or relationships that could be perceived as exploitative.

3. Communication, Online Contact and Remote Working

The same standards of professional conduct and boundaries apply to remote and online work as to face-to-face intervention.

- Practitioners must use Step In or commissioner-approved professional communication channels wherever possible.
- Practitioners must not add, follow or accept young people on personal social-media accounts or communicate with young people through personal social media or disappearing-message services for casework.
- Remote sessions must take place through agreed professional platforms and form part of the young person’s agreed Step In support arrangements.
- Practitioners must conduct remote sessions from an appropriate professional environment that protects confidentiality and maintains professional boundaries.
- Language, appearance and behaviour during remote sessions must remain professional and appropriate to the practitioner’s role.
- Contact outside scheduled sessions or agreed working hours should only take place where there is a legitimate service reason and through agreed professional channels.
- Parents/carers and commissioning schools should understand how routine and remote communication will operate, while respecting the young person’s confidentiality, safeguarding needs and the nature of any therapeutic work.
- Practitioners must maintain clear boundaries around their availability and ensure young people understand how and when Step In practitioners can be contacted. Step In does not provide an emergency or crisis-response service.
- Practitioners must not photograph, screenshot or record a young person during remote intervention unless there is an exceptional and legitimate professional reason, appropriate authorisation has been obtained and relevant safeguarding and data-protection requirements have been considered.

- Any communication or behaviour during remote work that raises a safeguarding concern must be recorded and reported in accordance with Step In's Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy.
- Where a young person becomes dependent on, seeks inappropriate personal contact with, or attempts to move communication outside agreed professional channels, the practitioner must maintain appropriate boundaries and seek supervision or management guidance where necessary.

4. Therapeutic and counselling boundaries

- Explain the purpose of the work, confidentiality and its limits at the outset.
- Do not promise secrecy.
- Do not practise beyond competence or present therapeutic mentoring as a clinical service where it is not one.
- Use appropriate professional supervision for counselling/therapeutic work.
- Where needs exceed Step In's remit, discuss referral/escalation with the young person, family and commissioner as appropriate.

5. Gifts, money, transport and personal arrangements

- Do not lend or borrow money from young people or families.
- Gifts should be modest, transparent and consistent with organisational expectations; significant gifts must be declared.
- Transporting a young person must be specifically authorised, risk assessed and covered by appropriate insurance; it is not assumed as part of the service.
- Practitioners must not invite young people to their own homes or arrange private contact outside Step In's service.

6. Physical contact

Physical contact must be appropriate, necessary, proportionate and sensitive to the young person's needs and wishes. Practitioners should avoid contact that could be misinterpreted. Any significant physical intervention or incident must be recorded and reported.

7. Concerns about colleagues

Practitioners must report conduct that may breach safeguarding or professional standards. No person will be penalised for raising a genuine concern in good faith.

Policy 4: Lone Working, Outreach, Home Visits, Remote Working & Health and Safety Policy

1. Purpose and scope

Step In delivers support beyond conventional classrooms. This policy establishes safe systems for 1:1 work in schools, homes, community settings and other agreed locations.

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. Risk assessment before delivery

- Obtain relevant risk, medical, safeguarding and behavioural information from the commissioner.
- Agree the location, session time, arrival/departure arrangements, emergency contacts and responsible adult arrangements where relevant.
- Assess known risks associated with the young person, household, location, travel, community context, peers, animals, substances, weapons, violence, exploitation, absconding or environmental hazards.
- Record control measures and review them when circumstances change.

3. Lone-working controls

- A manager/colleague must know the practitioner's planned location and expected session finish time.
- Use an agreed check-in/check-out process for home/community work.
- Practitioners keep a charged phone available and know emergency/escalation contacts.
- If risk becomes unacceptable, the practitioner may end or relocate the session and must inform Step In/commissioner promptly.
- No practitioner is expected to remain in an unsafe environment.

4. Home visits

- Home visits are purposeful, agreed and recorded; unplanned visits are exceptional and risk-led.
- Where appropriate, a parent/carer or responsible adult should be aware of the visit.
- Work in an appropriate shared space where practicable while maintaining reasonable privacy for therapeutic conversations.
- Practitioners must not enter where there is an immediate threat from violence, intoxication, weapons, aggressive animals or another serious hazard.

5. Community and off-site activity

- Activities must link to the reintegration plan and be age/need appropriate.
- Location-specific risks, travel, road safety, accessibility and supervision are considered.

- High-risk activities require separate approval and specific risk assessment; they are not undertaken simply because a young person requests them.
- The commissioner/parent/carer is informed of agreed off-site arrangements as appropriate.

6. Remote and Online Delivery

Step In may use remote and online intervention to complement face-to-face, school-based, home and community support and to provide continuity between in-person interventions.

- Remote support may include therapeutic mentoring, counselling where appropriate, educational or Functional Skills support, attendance and reintegration work, and individual check-ins.
- Before remote work begins, practitioners should consider the young person's individual needs and any known safeguarding, wellbeing, communication or other risks that may affect safe and effective online engagement.
- Remote sessions must take place through agreed professional platforms and should normally be scheduled in advance as part of the young person's agreed support arrangements.
- Practitioners must conduct remote sessions from an appropriate professional environment that protects confidentiality, maintains professional boundaries and minimises unnecessary interruptions.
- Practitioners should establish, where appropriate, the young person's location at the start of a remote session and be aware of relevant emergency or safeguarding contact arrangements.
- Practitioners must remain alert to changes in the young person's behaviour, presentation, communication or surroundings that may indicate a safeguarding, wellbeing or safety concern.
- Where a young person unexpectedly disconnects or becomes uncontactable and there is concern about their immediate safety, reasonable attempts should be made to re-establish contact and the concern escalated in accordance with Step In's Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy and agreed commissioner arrangements.
- Where remote sessions are repeatedly missed or a young person is unable to engage effectively online, Step In will review the suitability of remote delivery with the young person, parent/carer and commissioning school as appropriate. Increased face-to-face or outreach support may be considered.
- Remote interventions must be recorded in the same way as face-to-face work, including the date, nature of the intervention, engagement, relevant outcomes and any safeguarding or follow-up actions.
- Remote intervention does not replace emergency or crisis services. Where there is an immediate risk to the young person or another person, practitioners will follow Step In's safeguarding and emergency escalation procedures.

7. Missing/non-arrival

13. Check the agreed attendance/collection arrangement and attempt appropriate contact.
14. Inform the named school/commissioner contact promptly where the young person was expected during education time.
15. Consider known safeguarding risks and follow the individual plan.
16. Escalate immediately to the school DSL, parent/carer, police or other agency where risk indicates this is necessary.
17. Record actions and outcome.

8. Accidents, incidents and emergencies

Immediate safety and medical needs take priority. Call 999 where necessary. All significant accidents, near misses, violence, threats, property damage or safeguarding incidents must be recorded and reported. Risk assessments and controls will be reviewed after incidents.

9. First aid and medication

Step In will clarify first-aid arrangements with commissioning settings and for off-site work. Practitioners do not administer medication unless this has been expressly agreed, they are competent/authorised to do so and an appropriate care plan is in place.

Policy 5: Data Protection, Confidentiality & Privacy Policy

1. Purpose and scope

Step In handles personal and sometimes special-category information about children, families and professionals. We will process information lawfully, fairly, transparently, securely and only to the extent necessary for our service and safeguarding responsibilities.

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. Information we may process

- Identity and contact details.
- School, attendance, educational and SEND information.
- Relevant health, wellbeing, risk and safeguarding information.
- Referral information, individual goals, session/engagement records and progress reviews.
- Parent/carer and professional contact/liaison records.
- Complaints, incidents and safeguarding records.

3. Data protection principles

- Lawfulness, fairness and transparency.
- Purpose limitation and data minimisation.
- Accuracy.
- Storage limitation.
- Integrity and confidentiality.
- Accountability and privacy by design.

4. Lawful basis and special-category information

The lawful basis will depend on the commissioning and processing context and may include contract, legal obligation, legitimate interests, vital interests or public task where applicable. Where special-category data is processed, Step In will identify an appropriate Article 9 condition. Consent will not be used as a default where another lawful basis is more appropriate. A data-protection record of processing should document the basis used for each main processing activity.

5. Children and transparency

Privacy information will be concise, clear and accessible. Young people will be told, in age-appropriate language, what information Step In holds, why it is used, who it may be shared with, how long it is kept and how they can raise a concern or exercise applicable rights. Parents/carers and commissioners will also receive appropriate privacy information.

6. Confidentiality and information sharing

- Therapeutic information is treated sensitively and is not routinely shared in unnecessary detail.

- Commissioners receive proportionate information needed for safeguarding, attendance, engagement, progress and agreed outcomes.
- Information may be shared without consent where lawful and necessary to protect a child or another person from harm.
- Only those with a genuine need should access sensitive records.
- Information-sharing decisions should be documented where significant.

7. Security

- Use secure, access-controlled systems and strong authentication.
- Avoid storing case information on personal devices or unapproved cloud services.
- Use secure methods when transferring sensitive information to schools or agencies.
- Report suspected data breaches immediately to a director/data-protection lead for assessment and, where required, notification.

8. Remote Communication and Data Security

Step In Support Services may provide remote therapeutic, educational, attendance and reintegration support. Remote delivery and electronic communication may involve the processing of personal and, where applicable, special-category information and must therefore be managed securely and confidentially.

- Remote sessions and professional communications must be conducted using appropriately secure and Step In or commissioner-approved platforms and communication channels wherever reasonably practicable.
- Practitioners must take reasonable steps to protect confidentiality when delivering remote sessions, including working from an appropriate private environment and taking reasonable precautions to prevent conversations or information being accessed by unauthorised individuals.
- Devices used for Step In work must have appropriate security measures, including password or equivalent access protection, and must not be left accessible to unauthorised individuals.
- Case information should not normally be downloaded, stored or retained on personal devices or unapproved cloud-storage services.
- Practitioners should only access, discuss or display information that is necessary for the purpose of the remote intervention.
- Personal or special-category information shared electronically with schools, families or other professionals must be shared through appropriately secure methods and only with individuals who have a legitimate need to receive it.
- Remote sessions will not normally be recorded, photographed or captured by screenshot by Step In practitioners. Any exceptional recording must have a legitimate professional purpose, appropriate authorisation and a clear lawful basis, with safeguarding, confidentiality, storage and retention requirements considered in advance.
- Young people and families should be advised that remote sessions should not be recorded, photographed, screenshotted or shared without prior agreement.
- Records arising from remote interventions, including relevant session notes, attendance or engagement information, safeguarding concerns and agreed actions, will be managed in accordance with Step In's wider confidentiality, security, retention and information-sharing arrangements.
- Any suspected loss, unauthorised disclosure, accidental sharing or other data-security incident arising during remote work must be reported immediately to the appropriate Step In director/data-protection lead and managed in accordance with Step In's data-breach procedures.

9. Retention and disposal

Step In will maintain a written retention schedule that reflects legal, safeguarding, contractual and insurance requirements. Records will not be kept indefinitely without reason. Secure deletion/destruction will be used when retention periods expire.

10. Individual rights and complaints

Requests relating to access, correction, erasure, restriction, objection or other applicable rights will be handled in accordance with data-protection law. Data-protection concerns may be raised at info@stepinsupportservices.org and individuals may also have the right to complain to the Information Commissioner's Office.

11. Website privacy notice - minimum publication information

- Who Step In is and how to contact us.
- Categories of information collected.
- Purposes and lawful bases.
- Recipients/categories of recipients.
- Retention approach.
- Individual rights and how to exercise them.
- Right to complain to the ICO.
- Any international transfers, automated decision-making or cookies/analytics where applicable.

Policy 6: Equality, Diversity, SEND & Inclusion Policy

1. Purpose and scope

Step In exists to remove barriers to engagement and education. We are committed to equitable, anti-discriminatory and inclusive practice and to making reasonable adjustments so young people can access support meaningfully.

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. Our commitments

- Treat every young person with dignity and respect.
- Challenge discrimination, harassment, prejudice and stereotyping.
- Recognise that SEND, SEMH needs, disability, communication needs, trauma, culture, language, identity, family circumstances and prior educational experiences can affect engagement.
- Make reasonable adjustments to communication, environment, pace, location, materials and delivery where appropriate.
- Use strengths-based, person-centred planning and include young-person voice.
- Avoid lowering aspirations because a young person has experienced absence, exclusion or additional needs.

3. SEND-informed delivery

- Seek relevant information about identified needs and effective strategies before delivery.
- Work with school SENDCos and other professionals where appropriate.
- Break goals into achievable steps and adapt academic/therapeutic approaches to need.
- Use accessible language and communication supports where required.
- Contribute relevant evidence to reviews when commissioned to do so, while not presenting Step In as the statutory decision-maker.

4. Equality in safeguarding

Practitioners recognise that some children face additional barriers to recognising or disclosing harm. A disability, communication need, identity or cultural factor must never be used to explain away possible safeguarding indicators.

5. Monitoring

Step In will review feedback, complaints, access and outcomes for indications that particular groups are experiencing barriers or poorer outcomes and will adjust practice where appropriate.

Policy 7: Complaints, Concerns & Whistleblowing Policy

1. Purpose and scope

Step In welcomes feedback and aims to resolve concerns promptly, fairly and transparently. Children and families should be able to complain without fear that support will be withdrawn or that they will be treated less favourably.

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. What can be raised

- Quality or conduct of support.
- Communication, reliability or professionalism.
- Equality, accessibility or boundaries.
- Data protection/confidentiality concerns.
- Safeguarding practice.
- Billing/commissioning concerns.
- Concerns about wrongdoing or unsafe organisational practice.

3. Complaints process

18. Stage 1 - Informal resolution: raise the issue with the practitioner or service lead where appropriate. Aim to acknowledge within 2 working days and resolve promptly.
19. Stage 2 - Formal complaint: submit to info@stepinsupportservices.org. A director not directly involved should investigate where possible, provide an acknowledgement and issue a written outcome normally within 10 working days.
20. Stage 3 - Review: where the complainant remains dissatisfied, request a review by another director/independent person where available. The review will consider whether the process and outcome were reasonable and identify any further action.

Where a school or local authority commissions the service, the complainant may also use the commissioner's complaints/escalation arrangements where applicable.

4. Safeguarding concerns are not ordinary complaints

A concern that a child is at risk, or an allegation about a practitioner, will be managed immediately under safeguarding procedures and may be referred to the LADO, children's social care or police. The complaints timetable will not delay safeguarding action.

5. Whistleblowing

Workers should raise genuine concerns about unsafe, unlawful or unethical practice with a director who is not implicated. If internal reporting is inappropriate or ineffective, concerns may be raised with an appropriate external body. Safeguarding whistleblowing concerns may also be raised through recognised external safeguarding routes.

6. Learning from complaints

Complaints and concerns will be logged, reviewed for themes and used to improve policy, training and service delivery. Personal information will be restricted to those who need it.

Policy 8: Quality Assurance, Attendance & Outcomes Policy

1. Purpose and scope

Step In is an outcomes-focused reintegration service. This policy explains how we plan, monitor and evidence support without reducing progress to attendance percentages alone.

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. Four areas of the bespoke reintegration plan

Wellbeing & Therapeutic	Educational	Social & Personal Development	Attendance, Family & Multi-Agency
Counselling/therapeutic support, mentoring, emotional wellbeing and strategies to overcome barriers.	Tailored 1:1 learning, curriculum engagement, study skills, learning confidence and preparation for classroom learning.	Confidence, communication, relationships, independence, routines and preparation for wider education/training.	Attendance barriers, personalised reintegration planning, parent/carer liaison, outreach and coordinated professional working.

3. Baseline and individual plan

- Referral reason and desired outcomes.
- Recent attendance/participation pattern and current education offer.
- Young person's strengths, views, interests and perceived barriers.
- Relevant safeguarding, SEND, wellbeing and contextual information.
- Initial engagement/readiness measure and educational starting point where appropriate.
- A small number of clear, achievable individual goals and agreed measures of progress.

4. Attendance and engagement

Attendance is a prominent outcome for Step In, but progress is interpreted in context. For a young person who has been out of education, meaningful progress may include answering the door, leaving home, completing a full Step In session, engaging in tuition, visiting a school site, attending a meeting, tolerating a phased return or increasing hours in education.

- Record every session offered, attended, partially attended, cancelled or not attended.
- Where authorised by the commissioner, maintain relevant school attendance/participation data alongside Step In engagement.
- Identify patterns and barriers quickly and agree practical responses with the young person, family and school.
- Escalate unexplained absence where safeguarding risk or the agreed protocol requires it.

5. Session and progress records

- Brief engagement/session record after each contact.
- Relevant learning/therapeutic focus without unnecessary sensitive detail.
- Progress against individual goals.
- Attendance/participation and barriers identified.
- Significant liaison/actions and next steps.
- Safeguarding information recorded separately and escalated under the safeguarding policy.

6. Reviews and reporting

- Regular practitioner review of the plan and risks.
- For a six-week intervention, a structured midpoint review around week 3 and final review around week 6 unless the commissioner agrees another rhythm.
- Concise school/commissioner reporting focused on attendance/participation, engagement, progress against goals, outcomes, remaining barriers and recommended next steps.
- Young-person voice and, where appropriate, parent/carer feedback are included.
- Reports avoid unnecessary disclosure of confidential counselling content.

7. Quality assurance

- Supervision/management review of casework and boundaries.
- Sample audit of records, risk assessments and reporting quality.
- Monitoring of missed sessions, incidents, complaints and safeguarding themes.
- Feedback from young people, families and commissioners.
- Review of outcome data across referrals to identify what works and where the model needs adjustment.
- Annual policy and service review.

8. Service-level outcomes

- Improved school attendance or participation in education.
- Increased engagement with learning and adults supporting education.
- Improved wellbeing/readiness to engage.
- Successful phased or sustained reintegration where appropriate.
- Greater confidence, independence and access to future education, training or opportunities.