

Mentor Connect Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

Organisation Name: Mentor Connect

Registered Office: Birch Park Community Hub, 83 Birchover Road, Nottingham, NG8 4BW

Email: info@mentorconnect.org.uk

Office Hours: Monday–Friday, 10am–4pm

Applies To: All staff, mentors, volunteers, Directors, contractors, and partner agencies

Age Range of Participants: 11–18 years

1. Policy Statement

Mentor Connect is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all young people aged 11–18 who engage in our structured, personalised one-to-one mentoring programme.

As an organisation focused on empowering young individuals through consistent guidance, emotional support, and positive role modelling, we recognise that safeguarding is central to creating a safe, supportive environment where young people can build confidence, develop resilience, and make informed decisions about their future.

We believe that:

- Every young person has the right to feel safe and protected from harm.
- Safeguarding is everyone’s responsibility.
- The welfare of the young person is paramount.
- Effective safeguarding requires partnership working with families, schools, and community services.

Mentor Connect will take all reasonable steps to prevent harm and respond appropriately where concerns arise.

2. Purpose of This Policy

This policy aims to:

- Protect young people who participate in Mentor Connect programmes.
 - Provide clear guidance to staff and mentors on safeguarding procedures.
 - Ensure safe recruitment, supervision, and training of mentors.
 - Outline procedures for identifying, reporting, and responding to concerns.
 - Promote a culture of vigilance, accountability, and transparency.
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3. Legal and Regulatory Framework

This policy is informed by relevant UK legislation and statutory guidance, including but not limited to:

- Children Act 1989 and 2004
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (latest statutory guidance)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (where applicable in partnership with schools)
- The Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006
- Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR
- Equality Act 2010

Mentor Connect will operate in line with local Nottingham safeguarding partnership procedures.

4. Scope

This policy applies to:

- All paid staff
- All volunteer mentors
- Directors and management
- Contractors and external facilitators
- Partner organisations when working directly with Mentor Connect participants

It covers safeguarding concerns arising during:

- One-to-one mentoring sessions
 - Online mentoring (if applicable)
 - Off-site activities
 - Communications (email, phone, digital platforms)
 - Events or community-based activities
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5. Definitions of Abuse

Abuse is a form of maltreatment and may involve inflicting harm or failing to act to prevent harm. Types of abuse include:

5.1 Physical Abuse

Hitting, shaking, burning, poisoning, or causing physical harm.

5.2 Emotional Abuse

Persistent emotional maltreatment that affects emotional development, including humiliation, intimidation, rejection, or exposure to domestic abuse.

5.3 Sexual Abuse

Forcing or enticing a young person to take part in sexual activities, including online exploitation.

5.4 Neglect

Persistent failure to meet basic physical or psychological needs.

5.5 Additional Safeguarding Concerns

- Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE)
 - Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)
 - Online abuse
 - Grooming
 - Bullying (including cyberbullying)
 - Radicalisation
 - Self-harm or suicidal ideation
 - Domestic abuse exposure
 - Forced marriage or honour-based abuse
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6. Roles and Responsibilities

6.1 Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

Mentor Connect will appoint a Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and a Deputy DSL responsible for:

- Managing safeguarding concerns and referrals
- Acting as the main point of contact for staff and mentors
- Liaising with local safeguarding partners, schools, and social care
- Maintaining secure safeguarding records
- Ensuring policy review and staff training

Contact details of the DSL will be clearly communicated to all staff and volunteers.

6.2 Mentors

All mentors must:

- Complete safeguarding training before working with young people.
- Maintain professional boundaries at all times.
- Report concerns immediately to the DSL.
- Never promise confidentiality where safeguarding concerns are disclosed.
- Provide consistent, safe, and appropriate role modelling.

Mentors are not investigators. Their role is to observe, record, and report.

6.3 Directors and Management

Directors and management are responsible for:

- Ensuring robust safeguarding governance.
 - Reviewing this policy annually.
 - Ensuring safe recruitment procedures are followed.
 - Ensuring adequate insurance and risk management practices are in place.
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7. Safer Recruitment

Mentor Connect is committed to safe recruitment practices, including:

- Enhanced DBS checks with barred list check (where applicable).
- Identity verification.
- Two satisfactory references.
- Interview assessing suitability to work with young people.
- Safeguarding declaration and code of conduct agreement.

No mentor may begin unsupervised work with young people without appropriate checks being completed.

8. Training

All mentors and staff will:

- Receive safeguarding training at induction.
- Receive refresher training at least every two years.
- Be trained in recognising signs of abuse and exploitation.
- Be trained in professional boundaries and appropriate communication.

The DSL will undertake advanced safeguarding training.

9. Professional Boundaries

To maintain a safe mentoring environment:

- Sessions must take place in agreed, appropriate settings (e.g., school, community hub, agreed safe spaces).
 - One-to-one sessions must be transparent and recorded.
 - No meetings in private homes unless formally risk assessed and approved.
 - No inappropriate physical contact.
 - Communication must occur via approved channels only.
 - Mentors must not engage with mentees via personal social media accounts.
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10. Responding to Safeguarding Concerns

10.1 If a Young Person Discloses

Mentors must:

- Stay calm and listen carefully.
 - Reassure the young person they have done the right thing.
 - Not promise confidentiality.
 - Avoid leading questions.
 - Record the disclosure verbatim where possible.
 - Report immediately to the DSL.
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10.2 Reporting Procedure

1. Concern identified.
2. Immediate written record completed.
3. DSL informed without delay.
4. DSL assesses risk and determines next steps:
 - Internal monitoring
 - Discussion with parents/carers (if appropriate)
 - Referral to Children's Social Care
 - Referral to police (if immediate danger)

If a young person is in immediate danger, emergency services (999) must be contacted.

11. Confidentiality and Information Sharing

- Safeguarding information is shared on a need-to-know basis only.
- Mentor Connect will comply with UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018.
- Confidentiality will never prevent sharing information where a child is at risk of harm.

Records will be:

- Securely stored
 - Password protected (if digital)
 - Kept separately from general programme records
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12. Working in Partnership

As Mentor Connect values strong partnerships with schools and community services, safeguarding will involve:

- Clear information-sharing agreements
 - Collaboration with designated safeguarding leads in schools
 - Engagement with parents/carers where safe and appropriate
 - Participation in multi-agency safeguarding meetings where required
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13. Online Safety

Where mentoring includes digital communication:

- Approved platforms must be used.
 - Sessions should be scheduled and recorded in logs.
 - No private messaging outside agreed systems.
 - Appropriate dress and neutral backgrounds must be maintained during video calls.
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14. Managing Allegations Against Staff or Mentors

Any allegation against a staff member or mentor must:

- Be reported immediately to the DSL or Chair of Directors (if the concern involves the DSL).
- Be handled in line with local authority designated officer (LADO) procedures.
- Result in suspension where necessary pending investigation.

Mentor Connect will cooperate fully with statutory agencies.

15. Whistleblowing

Staff and mentors are encouraged to report concerns about poor practice or unsafe behaviour.

Concerns can be raised:

- With the DSL
- With Directors
- Directly to external safeguarding authorities if necessary

No individual will suffer detriment for raising genuine concerns.

16. Risk Assessment

All mentoring activities will be risk assessed, including:

- Venue safety
- Lone working arrangements
- Travel arrangements
- Digital engagement risks

Risk assessments will be reviewed regularly.

17. Complaints

Young people and families may raise safeguarding concerns or complaints by contacting:

Email: info@mentorconnect.org.uk

Address: Birch Park Community Hub, 83 Birchover Road, Nottingham, NG8 4BW

Complaints will be handled promptly, sensitively, and transparently.

18. Monitoring and Review

This policy will be:

- Reviewed annually
 - Updated in line with legislation or guidance changes
 - Approved by Directors
 - Communicated to all staff and volunteers
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19. Commitment to Empowerment

As an organisation dedicated to empowering young people to realise their potential, Mentor Connect recognises that safeguarding is not only about protection from harm but also about creating a safe space where young people feel heard, respected, and valued.

Safeguarding underpins our mission of building confidence, resilience, and informed decision-making for a better future.

Policy Review Date: 9th April 2026

Next Review Due: 10th April 2027

Approved By: Board of Directors Mentor Connect