

SAFEGUARDING POLICY

Useful Contacts

Firstsite Designated Safeguarding Officers

- **George Karaiskou** (Level 3 Safeguarding Lead) — georgek@firstsite.uk
- **Beth Hull** (Level 3 Designated Officer) — beth@firstsite.uk
- **Designated Safeguarding Inbox:** safeguarding@firstsite.uk

Staff Members Trained in Safeguarding

- **George Karaiskou** (Level 3) — georgek@firstsite.uk
- **Beth Hull** (Level 3) — beth@firstsite.uk
- **David Cottle** (Level 2) — david@firstsite.uk
- **Daryl Howlett** (Level 2) — daryl@firstsite.uk
- **Rachel Skillen** (Level 2) — rachel@firstsite.uk
- **Harjeet Kaur** (Level 2) — harjeet@firstsite.uk
- **Ross Mason** (Level 2) — ross@firstsite.uk
- **Thomas Goodall** (Level 2) — tom@firstsite.uk
- **Lorna Redgraves** (Level 2) — lorna@firstsite.uk
- **Jaz Kilnoch** (Level 2) — jaz@firstsite.uk

External Statutory Contacts

- **Essex Children and Families Hub:** 0345 603 7627 (*Available Mon–Fri, 8:45 am–5:15 pm*)
- **Essex Adult Social Care:** 0345 603 7630
- **Essex Out of Hours Service (Children & Adults):** 0345 606 1212
- **Essex LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer):** 03330 139 797 / lado@essex.gov.uk
- **NSPCC Whistleblowing Helpline:** 0800 028 0285
- **Emergency Services / Police:** 999 (*or 101 for non-emergencies*)

Policy Statement

Firstsite is committed to a practice which protects children^[^1] and vulnerable adults^[^2] from harm. We accept and recognise the responsibility to develop awareness of the issues which

cause harm to children and vulnerable adults. We are committed to safeguarding through the following principles:

- **Awareness:** Ensuring relevant staff and others are aware of abuse and the risks facing children and vulnerable adults. Providing effective management for staff and volunteers through supervision, support, and training.
- **Prevention:** Ensuring through awareness and good codes of practice that staff and others minimise the risks facing children and vulnerable adults. Carefully following procedures for recruitment and selection of staff, artists, and volunteers.
 - Carrying out DBS checks for freelancers, volunteers, and staff who directly engage with Firstsite Holiday Fun and/or school sessions, including Duty Managers.
 - Renewing DBS checks every three years.
 - Requiring all new staff and volunteers to complete mandatory Level 1 Safeguarding training via Firstsite's online training platform (Bright HR).
 - Requiring all members of the Senior Management Team, Duty Managers, Holiday Fun leads, and those directly leading school sessions to carry out a minimum of Level 2 Safeguarding Training.
 - Renewing all Safeguarding Training every 2 years.
 - Ensuring a minimum of 2 staff members hold Level 3 Safeguarding Training.
- **Safer Recruitment:** Explicitly stating DBS check requirements, safeguarding duties, and safer recruitment expectations in job descriptions, person specifications, and advert materials for all roles directly engaging with children and/or vulnerable adults.
- **Reporting:** Ensuring that all staff and others involved in our work are clear on what steps to take where concerns arise regarding the safety of children and vulnerable adults.
- **Responding:** Ensuring action is taken to support and protect children and vulnerable adults where concerns arise regarding possible abuse.

Firstsite is committed to reviewing its policy and good practice at regular annual intervals.

Child & Vulnerable Adult Protection Procedures

Firstsite endeavours to safeguard children and vulnerable adults by:

- Recognising that all children and vulnerable adults have a right to freedom from abuse.
- Ensuring that all staff and volunteers are carefully selected and that those in regular contact with children and vulnerable adults have relevant and current Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks.
- Seeking written permission regarding issues such as photography and film, ensuring that all staff and freelancers are trained accordingly.
- Actively discouraging bullying, violent, and degrading behaviour and taking swift measures to deal with such incidents should they arise.

- Responding swiftly and appropriately to all suspicions or allegations of abuse and providing parents/carers and children/vulnerable adults with the opportunity to voice any concerns.
- Disallowing children (including staff and volunteers under 18) from consuming alcohol, drugs, smoking, or carrying offensive weapons.
- Appointing dedicated members of staff who take specific responsibility for Children and Vulnerable Adults safety and act as the main points of contact for parents/carers, children/vulnerable adults, outside agencies, and staff.
- Ensuring access to confidential information is restricted to Firstsite Designated Officers, others on a strictly "need to know" basis, and appropriate external statutory authorities.
- Updating policy when necessary to reflect changing policy and laws (e.g., mandatory reporting requirements).
- **Project & Activity Risk Assessments:** Conducting robust safeguarding risk assessments prior to initiating any project, workshop, or event involving children and/or vulnerable adults, ensuring that Firstsite's safeguarding policy and preventative control measures are embedded directly into activity planning and delivery.

Guidelines for Trustees, Staff, Freelancers, Artists, and Volunteers

- Staff, trustees, freelancers, artists, and volunteers should not spend excessive amounts of time alone with children away from others.
- Meetings with individual children should take place as openly as possible in a public space. If privacy is needed, the door should be left open and other staff members informed of the meeting.
- Avoid unnecessary physical contact. Where physical contact is unavoidable (e.g., reassuring a distressed child or providing physical support during dance/arts workshops), it should only take place with explicit consent (e.g., *"Is it ok if I help you with...?"*).
- It is not good practice to transport children in private cars. Where unavoidable, it must be with the full knowledge and written consent of parents/carers and the Director or Designated Safeguarding Officer.
- Staff and volunteers must not meet with children outside organised activities unless with written consent from parents/carers and the Director or Designated Safeguarding Officer.

Photography, Film, and Web Images

- Commissioned photographers and media must be given a clear brief regarding expectations and child protection requirements.
- Inform participants, parents, and carers prior to events and obtain signed consent forms detailing:
 - Name of subject and contact details of parent/carer.
 - Specific intended uses of the images.

- Consent duration, storage details, and instructions for withdrawing consent.
- Signed declaration stored securely on the Firstsite server.
- Do not allow unsupervised 1-on-1 photo sessions.
- Photographic and recording equipment (including mobile phones) is strictly forbidden in changing areas.
- Avoid using full names (first name and surname) alongside photographs on public websites or social media.
- All media content must be stored on the shared drive, never on personal devices.

Data Protection, GDPR & Confidentiality

Firstsite processes all personal, sensitive, and special category data relating to safeguarding in strict compliance with the UK Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR.

- **Confidentiality & Need-to-Know:** Safeguarding information is confidential and will only be shared internally on a strict "need-to-know" basis to ensure the safety and welfare of children and vulnerable adults.
- **Statutory Sharing:** Information may be shared with external statutory bodies (such as Essex Social Care or the Police) without prior consent where there is a legal duty, or where withholding information would place a child or vulnerable adult at risk of harm.
- **Secure Storage:** All physical notes, digital incident logs, consent forms, and referral records are stored securely in locked cabinets or restricted, password-protected digital files accessible only by Designated Safeguarding Officers.
- **Retention:** Safeguarding records are retained securely in line with Firstsite's Data Retention Schedule and statutory guidance.

Definitions of Abuse

Abuse is any form of physical, emotional, psychological, financial, or sexual mistreatment or lack of care that leads to injury or harm. It commonly occurs within relationships of trust and represents an abuse of power.

- **Physical Abuse:** Physically hurting or injuring a child or adult (hitting, shaking, burning, scalding, poisoning, drowning, suffocation, or Fabricated/Induced Illness).
- **Sexual Abuse:** Forcing or enticing a child or vulnerable adult to take part in sexual activities (penetrative or non-penetrative, physical or non-contact).
- **Emotional Abuse & Neglect:** Persistent emotional ill-treatment causing serious impairment to development or severe distress. Failure to provide basic physical needs (food, clothing, shelter, medical care) or emotional warmth and protection.
- **Contextual Safeguarding:** Risks originating outside familial relationships, including peer-on-peer abuse, criminal exploitation (County Lines), sexual exploitation, gang activity, radicalisation, and modern slavery/trafficking.

Signs and Indicators of Risk

Be alert to the following indicators:

- Unexplained or untreated injuries or bruising.
- Continual unexplained physical ailments (e.g., stomach pain).
- Aggressive or withdrawn behaviour; unexpected fear of adults or flinching.
- Sexually explicit language or behaviour inappropriate for age.
- Unaccounted-for money, new clothing, or devices.
- Changes in appearance, hygiene, weight, or chronic tiredness and hunger.
- Disclosures about being asked to "keep a secret".

Responding to Disclosures & Suspensions

If a child or vulnerable adult discloses abuse to you:

1. **Listen attentively and stay calm.**
2. Reassure them that they were right to speak up and are not to blame.
3. **Do not promise secrecy:** Explain sensitively that you must pass the information to the Safeguarding Officer to help keep them safe.
4. **Do not ask leading questions** or attempt to investigate. Only ask clarifying factual questions if necessary.
5. **Record factual notes immediately:** Write down exact words used, dates, times, and signatures.
6. **Report immediately to a Designated Safeguarding Officer.** Do not attempt to investigate, discuss with colleagues, or approach parents/carers directly.
7. **Parental Consultation:** The Designated Safeguarding Officer will determine if and when it is appropriate to contact parents/carers. Parents/carers will always be consulted to put support in place unless doing so would place the child or vulnerable adult at risk of harm or impede a statutory investigation.

Lost Child Procedure

1. Notify the **Duty Manager immediately** as soon as a child is missing.
2. Duty Managers initiate an immediate building search via radio contact while session leaders remain with the main group.
3. If not located inside the building, call Emergency Services on **999 / 101**.
4. Log incident with the Designated Safeguarding Officer and review risk assessments.

Key Highlights & Immediate Action Summary

Procedure if you have a safeguarding concern at work:

- Record detailed factual notes immediately.

- Do not ask leading questions.
- Report immediately to one of the following:
 - **George Karaiskou** — georgek@firstsite.uk / 07383 993790
 - **Beth Hull** — beth@firstsite.uk / 07434 899136
 - **Safeguarding Inbox** — safeguarding@firstsite.uk
- If unavailable, contact the **Essex Children and Families Hub** (0345 603 7627) or **Essex Adult Social Care** (0345 603 7630).

Escalation Process

Firstsite's escalation procedures ensure that all safeguarding concerns, suspicions, or disclosures are handled promptly and appropriately. Our internal reporting structure directly reflects the **Essex Safeguarding Children Board (ESCB)** and **Essex Safeguarding Adults Board (ESAB)** frameworks.

Level 1 Escalation: Low-Level / Universal Needs

- **Nature of Concern:** Minor behavioural changes, low-level welfare concerns, general queries, or basic on-site support needs.
- **Immediate Action:**
 - The observing staff member, freelancer, or volunteer records clear, objective, and factual notes immediately (including date, time, and exact words used).
 - Do not ask leading questions or attempt to investigate.
- **Reporting Pathway:**
 - Report directly to the **Duty Manager on site** (Level 2 Safeguarding Trained).
 - The Duty Manager monitors the situation and logs details internally, notifying one of the designated officers and/or Safeguarding inbox.

Level 2 Escalation: Early Help & Emerging Needs

- **Nature of Concern:** Moderate distress, recurring welfare concerns, minor disclosures, or targeted needs requiring Early Help or additional internal coordination.
- **Immediate Action:**
 - The Duty Manager (or observing staff member) escalates the matter immediately to Firstsite's Level 3 Designated Safeguarding Officers.
- **Reporting Pathway:**
 - **Beth Hull** (Level 3 Designated Lead) — beth@firstsite.uk
 - **George Karaiskou** (Level 3 Designated Lead) — georgek@firstsite.uk
 - **Designated Safeguarding Inbox:** safeguarding@firstsite.uk
- **Designated Officer Action:**

- The Designated Officer records the incident in the Safeguarding Log Book and determines if an Early Help assessment or internal support plan is required.

Level 3 Escalation: Intensive Needs, Significant Harm & Senior Escalation

- **Nature of Concern:** Disclosures or suspicions of physical, sexual, or emotional abuse or neglect; contextual safeguarding risks (e.g., exploitation, radicalisation); immediate risk of significant harm; or concerns where a Designated Lead is unavailable.
- **Immediate Action:**
 - Escalate immediately to both Level 3 Designated Safeguarding Officer and External Statutory Agencies.
- **External Statutory Referrals:**
 - **Children (Essex Children & Families Hub):** 0345 603 7627 (*Mon–Fri, 8:45 am–5:15 pm*)
 - **Vulnerable Adults (Essex Adult Social Care):** 0345 603 7630
 - **Out of Hours Emergency Service (Children & Adults):** 0345 606 1212
 - **Emergency Services / Police:** 999 (*or 101 for non-emergencies*)

Allegations Against Staff, Volunteers, or Trustees

- **Reporting Procedure:** If a safeguarding concern or allegation involves a Firstsite staff member, freelancer, trustee, or volunteer, do not inform the individual involved. Report the matter directly to a Designated Safeguarding Lead.
- **LADO Referral:** Under statutory guidance, the Designated Lead must report allegations against staff to the **Essex Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)** within **1 working day**:
 - **LADO Contact:** 03330 139 797 / lado@essex.gov.uk

Whistleblowing & Multi-Agency Escalation

- **Whistleblowing:** If a staff member feels a safeguarding concern is not being adequately addressed internally, or feels unable to raise it within the organisation, contact the **NSPCC Whistleblowing Helpline** on 0800 028 0285.
- **Multi-Agency Resolution:** For professional disagreements between Firstsite and external agencies regarding threshold levels or outcomes, refer to the **Essex Safeguarding Children Board (ESCB)** Professional Escalation and Resolution Policy.

Review period: Annually

Last reviewed: August 2026

Date of next review: August 2027

[^1]: Throughout this policy, when reference is made to a child or to children, it is assumed that young people up to the age of 18 are included. [^2]: Throughout this policy, a vulnerable adult is defined as anyone aged 18 years or over who may be in need of community care services by reason of mental or other disability, age, or illness; and who is or may be unable to take care of themselves, or unable to protect themselves against significant harm or exploitation.