Acorn Pregnancy Counselling Centre
Safeguarding Policy

SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AND ADULTS AT RISK: AIMS AND POLICY STATEMENT

As a counselling service, Acorn Pregnancy Counselling Centre (henceforth referred to as "Acorn") recognises that it has a duty of care towards children and adults at risk who access its services or attend its school classes. Some may be victims of neglect or physical, emotional or sexual abuse and the welfare of every person in our remit is of the utmost importance.

Aims of this Policy

- that this policy ensures that members of the counselling team (MCT), schools' workers and anyone else involved in the work of Acorn (henceforth referred to as "the Acorn team" or "the team") adopt safe working practices with children and adults at risk, and respond appropriately when abuse is disclosed or discovered;
- that all legal requirements are carefully noted, adhered to, and taught adequately to the whole team

Policy Statement.

Safeguarding is aimed at people who have care and support needs and / or who may be in vulnerable circumstances and at risk of abuse or neglect. In these cases, Acorn, in co-operation with other relevant local services, will work to spot those at risk and take steps to protect them.
Acorn is committed to:-

1. treating all children and adults at risk with respect and dignity befitting their age and understanding regardless of gender, ethnicity, disability, sexuality and religion;
2. promoting children's and adults at risk, welfare and protection, including facilitating the opportunity for them to express their concerns;
3. recognising that approaches to all persons need to reflect that there are differences between adults and children in regard to the following: legal competence, age appropriateness, parental responsibility, confidentiality and exposure to, as well as protection from, significant harm
4. providing written procedures for recruitment, supervision and training of all the Acorn team, ensuring that the whole team is familiar with them, and updating them regularly on paper and in training
5. providing (local or outsourced) appropriate safeguarding training;
6. adopting a procedure for dealing with concerns about possible abuse;
7. recognising that local authorities have a responsibility to ensure that appropriate services are provided for children and adults at risk who are 'in need' and to protect any such persons or investigate situations where a child or an adult at risk is suffering, or at risk of significant harm;
8. recognising that there may need to be a report to the police;

9. making relevant Acorn policies and procedures available to children and adults at risk when appropriate, and in a form (verbal or otherwise) appropriate to the client.

NOTES:
- Any counselling client can be considered to be a adult or child at risk.
- A child is defined as a young person under the age of 18 years (The Children Act 1989).

A COMMITMENT OF ACORN TO ITS (counselling and schools) CLIENTS

1 to treat equally all persons
2 to promote the welfare of children and adults at risk
3 to recognise the differences between adults and children in regard to
   a) legal competence
   b) age appropriateness
   c) parental responsibility
   d) confidentiality
   e) exposure to, as well as protection from, significant harm
4 to ensure that the entire team is correctly trained and supervised, especially in the area of safeguarding
5 to ensure that all client-facing team members (including MCT), receptionists, Centre Manager, schools team) have correct DBS approval/certification
6 to make available to children and adults at risk using the services of Acorn relevant policies and procedures when appropriate, and in a form (verbal or otherwise) appropriate to the client

SAFE WORKING PRACTICE will involve various aspects of the organisation, as below:

B CENTRE MANAGEMENT

1 safe practice in the premises
   a) office
      Ideally, the outer door should be locked when there is only one person present
   b) counselling room(s)
      There should normally be someone else on the premises when a MCT is seeing a client
2 handling of documents and data
   a) general:
      follow normal procedure under the Acorn Data Protection Policy, with added and particular care where an issue of abuse has arisen (see sec.E + F)
   b) reporting of incidents:
      incidents will normally be reported by a MCT via the Supervisor (see sec C 2 c), but any coming to the attention of the Centre Manager should also be reported to the Lead Trustee for Safeguarding.

C RECRUITMENT

Safer recruitment minimises the likelihood of people being harmed by those in positions of trust. All employees and volunteers with particular roles must undergo a thorough recruitment process.

1 Centre Manager
   a) the Trustees will prepare a full job description and application form, arrange interviews, and take up appropriate references
   b) the Trustees will ensure all applicants are prepared to:
      - apply / have an application submitted for DBS checking
      - be under the line management of the Chair of Trustees or other designated Trustee
      - undertake appropriate training.

2 Members of the Counselling Team and of the Schools Team
   a) Recruitment
      - Applicants must submit an application and self-declaration form, provide references, and complete DBS checks.
   b) training
      - all volunteers will undergo training before commencing their role in Acorn
      - all volunteers will be expected to take part in ongoing training
      - N.B. training may be skills-based for a specific role. Particular requirements are determined by the Trustees in the Training Requirements Policy.
   c) supervision
      all MCT will have regular supervision with the Acorn approved Supervisor

D RECRUITING NEW VOLUNTEERS AND VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT

1 personnel recruitment and management (**sec. C 2** above)
2 behaviour towards clients (see "Commitment of Acorn to its clients" **sec. A 6**)
   a) all clients will be treated equally, regardless of age, race, religion, sexuality and with preferred gender language.
   b) all clients will be treated with respect
   c) the team will demonstrate commitment, sensitivity, compassion and adopting appropriate boundaries around confidentiality.
3 safe practice
   a) all MCT will be expected to keep session notes as laid down in their training
   b) counselling notes are strictly confidential to Acorn, except in the case of a disclosure which requires reporting, or request from an agency legally entitled to make it, e.g. the police.
   c) safety of clients and MCT
      - there should normally be another person on the premises while a MCT sees a client
      - MCT will not see clients in their own homes, nor in any other location other than the designated counselling room, unless specifically approved by the Trustees
      - the above requirements will not apply where telephone/online counselling takes place – see separate Telephone/Online Counselling Policy
   d) supervision procedures
      - the Supervisor employed by or volunteering for Acorn shall be an appropriately qualified counsellor
      - MCT are required to meet with the Supervisor on a regular basis, either in a group or, if necessary, individually

E CONFIDENTIALITY

Counselling - Absolute confidentiality cannot be upheld when a client states that they or someone they know, especially a child or an adult, may be at risk of serious harm. In these circumstances, it may be necessary to share concerns with another professional agency

such as Social Services. The client would need to be informed of this intention and have explained to them what would be communicated.

Where there is doubt concerning confidentiality issues, the MCT will contact the Acorn Supervisor or Lead Trustee for Safeguarding.

F PROCEDURES IN THE EVENT OF A DISCLOSURE

There is a duty to report an incident where a child or adult is experiencing, or is at risk of, abuse or neglect to the relevant authorities, as outlined in the **Care Act 2014, especially sections 42 and 43**.

1. When hearing and responding to a disclosure of abuse, the team member should always be bound by their training and take advice from the Supervisor regarding the exceptions to Acorn's commitment to confidentiality. See also the form "Information for Clients and Commitment Form", which all clients sign.

2. reporting a disclosure of abuse

a) writing up

- Make a clear record of the disclosure including time, setting, people present detailing what the child or adult at risk has said, and their presentation and demeanour. The record should be signed and dated as a confidential document.
- Record any visible bruises or injuries, noting size, colour and date of recording. (This information is strictly confidential and should be kept in a locked cabinet in a folder clearly marked for "Confidential to Lead Trustee for Safeguarding and Centre Manager.")

b) informing Supervisor

- Speak to the Supervisor confidentially for advice on appropriate action. Even if in doubt, it is advisable to mention concern rather than keep silent
- The Supervisor will assess whether information needs to go further, and, if so, will pass on to the Lead Trustee for Safeguarding for any further action.
- NB i) if the Supervisor is the subject of the disclosure, the report should be made directly to the Lead Trustee for Safeguarding and,
- ii) if the Lead Trustee for Safeguarding is the subject of the disclosure, then report should be made to a member of the Trustees.

3. Reporting to the relevant authorities will be as follows:

- If the disclosure is about harm within the home/family or stranger to child, or child on child call WSCC children's social care/MASH (Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub) on 01403 229900. Out of hours: 0330 222 6664. https://www.westsussex.gov.uk/education-children-and-families/keeping-children-safe/request-support-or-raise-a-concern-about-a-child/
- If the disclosure is about a child being harmed by a staff member/volunteer the appropriate contact is the WSCC LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer). Telephone number – 0330 222 6450. https://www.westsussexscp.org.uk/preventing-abuse-neglect-information-pages/reporting-concerns
  If unobtainable, e.g. out of hours, use MASH no. above
- If it is an emergency then call 999
- If the disclosure is about an adult: Go to https://www.westsussex.gov.uk/social-care-and-health/social-care-support/adults/raise-a-concern-about-an-adult/#:~:text=If%20you%20are%20still%20unsure,022%2028400%20(professionals%20only). Or phone: 01243 642121

G SCHOOLS TEAMS

1 Acorn will adhere to the policies of all schools visited concerning DBS and other Safeguarding matters.

2 in the case of a disclosure made to a volunteer during a school visit, the first port of call will be the teacher – UNLESS the teacher is the subject of the disclosure, when an alternative teacher/office manager/etc.) should be found. Acorn staff must report this before leaving the school premises.

3 All schools team members will read and understand the Safeguarding Policy.

H TRAINING

1 regular Safeguarding training will be provided for:

- Centre Manager
- Members of the counselling team
- receptionists / admin assistants

2 Training will always include familiarisation with safeguarding procedures in general and this policy in particular

I TRUSTEES

Trustees must:

1 have read relevant trustee documents concerning their role and requirements general to trustees and specific to Acorn trustees https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-essential-trustee-what-you-need-to-know-cc3/the-essential-trustee-what-you-need-to-know-what-you-need-to-do

2 have read the Safeguarding Policy

3 have safeguarding as a regular item on the Trustees meeting agenda

4 fulfil all relevant requirements for DBS checking

The Lead Trustee for Safeguarding is:

Name: Lucy Bailey **Date 19th November 2025**

Contact info:

Mobile: 0793 660 8087
Email: lucy@acornworthing.org.uk

The following information checked and/or updated November 2025, even if bearing earlier date:

J CONTACT LIST FOR RELEVANT ORGANISATIONS

1 Thirtyone:eight
0303 003 1111

NOTE: Acorn is a member of thirtyone:eight, which is a recognised body and well known to the Charity Commission, and a useful source of info/advice/training.

advice@thirtyoneeight.org
www.thirtyoneeight.org

2 local authority : West Sussex County Council

CARE POINT 1 – for adult referrals:

- 01243 642121 (note that this passes the caller to out-of-hours number automatically where applicable)
- Adults.Carepoint@westsussex.gov.uk OR socialcare@westsussex.gov.uk
- alternatively, online form for referrals at: https://www.westsussex.gov.uk/contact-us/?sc=7942&si=10622

MASH – for child referrals (under 18)

- 01403 229900 during office hours
- 0330 222 6664 out of office hours
- email referrals wschildrenservices@westsussex.gov.uk

3 Police

- if a police referral appears to be needed, call 101 and they will advise

4 if you are not ready to make a referral, but would like advice: LADO@westsussex.gov.uk OR advice@thirtyoneeight.org

K RELEVANT LEGISLATION

Care Act http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/23/contents/
still up to date as of November 2025

L RESOURCES

There are resources available from Thirtyone:eight covering:

- staying safe
- practice guides
- check-list for safeguarding policy
- definitions and signs of abuse

- and much more.

All these are available here: https://thirtyoneeight.org/help-and-resources/publications/and are rigorously kept up to date.

As members, the Centre Manager and the Lead Trustee for Safeguarding have easy access.

IMPORTANT NOTE:
material obtained from Thirtyone:eight is for use within Acorn alone, as a condition of our membership, and should not be passed on to other parties/organisations/etc.

SEE ALSO the following Acorn Policies:

1 DATA PROTECTION POLICY
2 TRAINING REQUIREMENTS POLICY
3 TELEPHONE/ONLINE COUNSELLING POLICY
4 COUNSELLING MINORS

The above Safeguarding Policy was adopted by the Trustees at a meeting on 19 November 2025.