Thread Ahead Safeguarding Policy

Date of most recent annual review: 23rd January 2026

Introduction

Thread Ahead is responsible for ensuring that people benefiting from its services and support, and/or working with it, are not harmed in any way through contact with it.

Thread Ahead has a duty to act prudently and will take all reasonable steps to ensure that this responsibility is carried out. It recognises that some of its service users will be children and adults at risk.

A child is a person under 18 years of age; child abuse consists of anything which individuals, institutions or processes do or fail to do which directly or indirectly harms a child or damages their prospect of safe and healthy development into adulthood.

A person, being aged 18 or over, may be considered to be an adult at risk if that person:

- has needs for care and support (whether or not the local authority is meeting any of those needs) and
- is experiencing, or is at risk of, abuse or neglect and

- as a result of those care and support needs is unable to protect themselves from either the risk of, or the experience of, abuse or neglect

An adult at risk of abuse may:

- have an illness affecting their mental or physical health
- have a learning disability
- suffer from drug or alcohol problems
- be frail

Safer Recruitment

All staff, volunteers and sessional workers at Thread Ahead play an important part in promoting the safety and protection of the children and adults at risk with whom the organisation works.

Thread Ahead will ensure that its recruitment and selection procedures of staff, volunteers, trustees and sessional workers take account of the need to protect children and adults at risk.

For paid staff, two references will be taken up for all successful candidates prior to a formal offer of employment. Where appropriate, referees will be asked to comment on the applicant's suitability to work with children and adults at risk.

All volunteers and sessional workers will receive training and may be asked to participate in an interview too, depending on the role. They may also be required to submit references prior to starting work, depending on what their role entails.

All employees, volunteers, trustees and sessional workers engaged in a regulated activity will be required to have an up-to-date enhanced DBS check, including the Children's Barred List Check where relevant to their role. Thread Ahead will require sight of the original DBS certificate. Thread Ahead will maintain a central record detailing DBS checks. Information disclosed as part of a DBS check will be treated as confidential. It is an offence for information in a disclosure to be passed to anyone who does not need it in the course of their duties. If a conviction or caution is revealed, the Chief Executive and Designated Safeguarding Lead will liaise with the Chair in confidence to produce a risk assessment and discuss how to proceed. In the case of employees, volunteers and sessional workers, the Chief Executive will then write a confidential letter outlining any further action which will be taken. In the case of trustees, this letter will be sent by the Chair. A copy of this letter will be saved in the relevant personnel file. Thread Ahead's policy is to monitor checks via the DBS Update Service where possible or to renew DBS checks for all relevant employees, volunteers and trustees every two years.

Induction for new staff, volunteers and sessional workers will include safeguarding training and information on all relevant policies and procedures, including the protection of children and adults at risk. Refresher safeguarding training must be completed at least every two years. All staff, volunteers and sessional workers will have a designated supervisor who will provide appropriate ongoing support and supervision.

Delivery Partners

Thread Ahead regularly works with partner organisations to provide its services. Appropriate due diligence is carried out on each of these organisations prior to engaging in the partnership.

Reporting Procedure

Abuse of children and adults at risk can take many forms, including physical, emotional, sexual and financial (please see Appendix 1 Definitions of Abuse). It is not the responsibility of anyone working within Thread Ahead, in a paid or unpaid capacity, to decide whether or not abuse has taken place. It is therefore vital that staff and volunteers raise all cases of suspected or alleged abuse in line with the procedures identified in this policy. It is important to do this as there may already have been concerns expressed by other members of staff and volunteers, and failure to report concerns may put children and adults at risk.

Any disclosure or suspicion of abuse should be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead as soon as possible. The Designated Safeguarding Lead must be immediately informed, even if they are off site. The staff member or volunteer, in consultation with the Designated Safeguarding Lead, will gather further information and details by interviewing the person making the report or the service user directly. The Designated Safeguarding Lead will then devise an appropriate plan of action. The exact nature of the action taken will be determined by the individual circumstances, but it may include the involvement of external authorities, such as Social Services, referral organisations and the Police. Where there is an immediate risk of harm, or where a criminal offence may have occurred, a referral will be made to the appropriate statutory authority without delay.

Serious allegations of abuse should be reported to the relevant Local Authority Safeguarding Team for either children or adults. Thread Ahead's local safeguarding board for children is the Southwark Safeguarding Children Partnership. For adults, it is the Southwark Safeguarding Adults Partnership. Contact details for both can be found at the end of this policy. Other local safeguarding boards may be contacted in the case of incidents which take place when the charity is working in other regions.

Any allegation made against a member of staff or volunteer should be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead who will investigate and take action. In the event of an allegation being made against the Designated Safeguarding Lead, or in the event of the Designated Safeguarding Lead's absence, this should be reported to a member of the Board of Trustees. The board includes a trustee with designated responsibility for safeguarding, listed below.

If a disclosure of abuse is made by a service user, care should be taken to explain the procedure that will be followed and they should be told that it may not be possible for Thread Ahead to maintain confidentiality.

If a service user of Thread Ahead makes an allegation about another organisation, this should be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead who will investigate and take appropriate action.

Whistleblowing and Emerging Safeguarding Concerns

Thread Ahead is committed to creating an environment in which staff, volunteers and trustees feel able to raise safeguarding concerns at the earliest opportunity.

Safeguarding concerns may include not only allegations or suspicions of abuse, but also emerging concerns, such as poor practice, breaches of professional boundaries, or behaviours that may not constitute abuse but could give rise to risk if not addressed.

Any safeguarding concern should be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead. Where a concern relates to the Designated Safeguarding Lead, or where an individual feels unable to raise the concern through normal reporting channels, it may be raised with the Trustee Safeguarding Lead or the Chair of the Board of Trustees.

Thread Ahead has a separate Whistleblowing Policy, which sets out in more detail the procedures for raising concerns and the protections available to individuals who do so. No member of staff, volunteer or trustee will suffer detriment as a result of raising a genuine safeguarding concern.

Good Practice

All staff and volunteers should be familiar with and adhere to the following Good Practice guidelines:

- Service users should never be given access to the home address of any volunteer or staff member of Thread Ahead. Service users may be given access to volunteers' or staff members' telephone numbers if this has been cleared by the Designated Safeguarding Lead on a case-by-case basis.
- Service users' contact details should never be disclosed to anyone outside of Thread Ahead without their explicit consent.

- If it is necessary for a member of staff/volunteer to meet a service user outside of a Thread Ahead event, this meeting should be in a public place wherever possible.
- Thread Ahead undertakes to ensure that all volunteers and staff work in pairs and/or in a shared space when working on pop-up events.

- Photos, videos and other media of service users will not be gathered, stored or shared without their consent.

Review of Policy

The Designated Safeguarding Lead and the Trustee Safeguarding Lead will provide regular updates to the Board of Trustees regarding safeguarding.

This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis by the CEO and the Chair of the Board of Trustees to ensure it remains up-to-date and reflects the needs and practices of the organisation.

Key Contacts

Designated Safeguarding Lead:

Saskia Borchardt-Hume
CEO, Thread Ahead
Phone: +44 75723 78713
Email: saskia@threadahead.org

Trustee Safeguarding Lead:

Daniel Adeyemi

Email: daniel@threadahead.org

Southwark Safeguarding Children Partnership

Phone (for the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub, or 'MASH'): 020 7525 1921

Email: sscp@southwark.gov.uk or MASH@southwark.gov.uk

Southwark Safeguarding Adults Partnership

Phone (for the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub, or 'MASH'): 020 7525 1921

Email: SSAB@southwark.gov.uk or MASH@southwark.gov.uk

Appendix 1

Definitions of abuse

Abuse may consist of a single act or repeated acts. It may be physical, verbal or psychological, it may be an act of neglect or an omission to act, or it may occur when a vulnerable person is persuaded to enter into a financial or sexual transaction to which he or she has not consented, or cannot consent.

Abuse can occur in any relationship and it may result in significant harm to, or exploitation of, the person subjected to it.

The Department of Health suggests the following as the main types of abuse:

Physical abuse - including hitting, slapping, pushing, kicking, misuse of medication, restraint, or inappropriate sanctions.

Sexual abuse - including rape and sexual assault or sexual acts to which the adult at risk has not consented, could not consent or was pressured into consenting.

Psychological abuse - including emotional abuse, threats of harm or abandonment, deprivation of contact, humiliation, blaming, controlling, intimidation, coercion, harassment, verbal abuse, isolation or withdrawal from services or supportive networks.

Financial or material abuse - including theft, fraud, exploitation, pressure in connection with wills, property or inheritance or financial transactions, or the misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits.

Neglect and acts of omission - including ignoring medical or physical care needs, failure to provide access to appropriate health, social care or educational services, the withholding of the necessities of life, such as medication, adequate nutrition and heating.

Discriminatory abuse - including race, sex, culture, religion, politics, that is based on a persons disability, age or sexuality and other forms of harassment, slurs or similar treatment and hate crime.

Institutional abuse - Institutional abuse although not a separate category of abuse in itself, requires specific mention simply to highlight that adults placed in any kind of care home or day care establishment are potentially vulnerable to abuse and exploitation. This can be especially so when care standards and practices fall below an acceptable level.

Multiple forms of abuse - Multiple forms of abuse may occur in an ongoing relationship or an abusive service setting to one person, or to more than one person at a time, making it important to look beyond single incidents or breaches in standards, to underlying dynamics and patterns of harm. Any or all of these types of abuse may be perpetrated as the result of deliberate intent and targeting of vulnerable people, negligence or ignorance.

Domestic abuse

Domestic Abuse Act 2021:

Domestic abuse involves any single incident or pattern of conduct where someone's behaviour towards another is abusive, and where the people involved are aged 16 or over and = are, or have been, personally connected to each other (regardless of gender or sexuality). The abuse can involve, but is not limited to:

- Psychological abuse

- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Financial abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Violent abuse
- Threatening abuse
- Controlling or coercive behaviour

'Personal connection' means the individuals concerned:

- are due to be, are currently, or have been, married or civil partners to each other
- are, or have been, in an intimate personal relationship with each other
- are, or have been, parents (or had a parental relationship) to the same child
- are relatives (the Act gives further definitions of 'relatives')

Children are recognised as victims of domestic abuse in their own right if they see, hear or experience the effects of abuse between two personally connected individuals who are aged 16 or over. However, abusive behaviour directed at a person under the age of 16 is child abuse rather than domestic abuse.