

# Sherpa Online Safeguarding Policy

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>2</b>
Scope and Purpose of This Policy	2
Sherpa Safeguarding Statement	2
Abuse	3
Mental Health	4
Definitions of Abuse	4
Physical	4
Emotional	4
Sexual	5
Exploitation	5
Child-on-Child Abuse	5
Neglect	5
Domestic	6
Honour-Based Abuse (HBA)	6
Child Protection	6
Significant Harm	6
<b>Governance</b>	<b>7</b>
Safeguarding roles and responsibilities	7
Sherpa Named Designated Safeguarding Officer	7
Designated Safeguarding Officer	8
Deputy Designated Safeguarding Officer	8
Reviewing and updating this policy based on legislation	8
Sherpa Staff and Tutors	8
<b>Dealing with a safeguarding concern or disclosure</b>	<b>8</b>
Staff and tutors SHOULD and will be trained to:	9
Staff and tutors should NOT:	9
<b>Safeguarding Concern Form</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Sharing Information</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Creating a culture of safeguarding</b>	<b>11</b>
Tutors and Staff	11
Tutor Identity	12
Tutor profile photos:	12
Face Coverings:	12
Compulsory use of Camera:	12
Allegations against Staff	12
DBS Requirement and Duty to Report	13
Learning Lessons	13
Low-Level Concerns	13
What Staff and Tutors should do if they have concerns about poor or unsafe practices within Sherpa	13
<b>Safer Recruitment, Selection and Training</b>	<b>14</b>
Recruitment and Selection	14
Interview and ID Verification	14
<b>Safeguarding Procedures</b>	<b>14</b>
Introduction	14
For Tutors and Wider Staff Members	14
Inappropriate language	15
Inappropriate behaviour	15
Inappropriate or abusive images	15
Disclosure of/witness to abuse towards or in the presence of a student	15
Disclosure of inappropriate/sensitive information	16

For Students	16
Inappropriate language	16
Inappropriate behaviour	16
Inappropriate or abusive images	17
Disclosure of/witness to abuse	17
Disclosure of inappropriate/sensitive information	17
For Parents/Responsible adults	18
For Directors/Management of Sherpa	18
<b>Complaints</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Quality Assurance and Review</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Underpinning Legislation and Guidance</b>	<b>19</b>
Legislation	19
Guidance	20
<b>Self-evaluation of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Consistency Between Stakeholders</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Related Documents</b>	<b>21</b>
Sherpa Safeguarding Concern Form	21

## Introduction

Application Labs Ltd (Sherpa) was set up to help provide accessible, affordable, high-quality tuition to everyone. The platform was developed with the aim of ensuring and maintaining high-quality lessons take place in a safe virtual environment and this is reflected by a number of vital features built directly into the website's functionality.

We are committed to ensuring the highest possible standard of safety, well-being and safeguarding for each stakeholder in Sherpa.

This policy and supporting procedures ensure that Sherpa undertakes its responsibilities sustainably regarding safeguarding children and young people. This policy establishes a framework of support for all stakeholders of Sherpa, protects them against abuse and maltreatment of any nature and clarifies the expectations of the organisation.

## Scope and Purpose of This Policy

The policy below applies to every aspect of Application Labs Ltd with regard to the tutoring brand and service "Sherpa". The policy and procedures apply to all Directors, staff, tutors, teachers, schools and additional stakeholders who are part of or have conducted work on behalf of Sherpa.

Sherpa acknowledges the duty of care it has to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people and is committed to ensuring our safeguarding practices reflect statutory responsibilities, government guidance and reflects best practices.

The purpose of the policy is to ensure, regardless of age, gender, beliefs, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation or socio-economic background, that all stakeholders have a positive experience of Sherpa through the services and support they engage in.

## Sherpa Safeguarding Statement

"Safeguarding is all-inclusive, everyone should be committed to maintaining its practices at all times – Sherpa is committed to promoting safeguarding and the welfare of everyone, including children and young people and expects all stakeholders to accept and share in this commitment".

Sherpa will ensure good governance structures are in place and quality standards are maintained within the organisation and establish clear policies and procedures based on the appropriate legislation and guidance. We

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will apply robust risk management processes for the identification of certain situations that may require us to make professional judgements to protect students from harm.

Confidentiality is a fundamental pillar in the environment of trust we have built with our students, but this will be balanced against our duty to protect children and young people. Sherpa will collectively manage risks and reduce the likelihood of abuse by:

- The provision of up-to-date safeguarding policies and procedures that reflect current safeguarding legislation and guidance
- Have robust safer recruitment, selection and appointment procedures for staff and tutors
- Promoting and using safer working practices for Directors, staff, tutors, teachers and students
- The provision of induction and ongoing training for staff and tutors
- Developing and maintaining a culture of vigilance within all areas of the organisation's work
- Protecting students from harm
- Making sure people can raise safeguarding concerns
- Handling allegations or incidents in accordance with policies and procedures
- Report any allegations or incidents to the relevant authorities

It is the responsibility of all stakeholders to read this policy and supporting procedures and know what to do in the event of a concern relating to safeguarding.

## Abuse

Children are considered to be abused or at risk of abuse by parents/carers when the basic needs of a child are not met through acts of commission or omission. 'Children' relates to everyone under the age of 18 (KCSIE, 2024).

Identifying the early signs of abuse and neglect is vital. All members of staff will be aware of the indicators of abuse and neglect through their experience and training so that they are able to identify cases of children who may be in need of help or protection. If any member of staff is unsure, they should speak to a member of the designated safeguarding team.

All staff should have the awareness of safeguarding issues that can put children at risk of harm. Behaviours linked to issues that include but are not limited to drug taking, alcohol abuse and deliberately missing education put children in danger.

All staff are aware that technology is a significant component in many safeguarding and wellbeing issues and that children are at risk of abuse and other risks online as well as face to face. In many cases abuse and other risks will take place concurrently both online and offline. Children can also abuse other children online, this can take the form of abusive, harassing, and misogynistic/misandrist messages, the non-consensual sharing of indecent images, especially around chat groups, and the sharing of abusive images and pornography to those who do not want to receive such content.

All staff have an awareness of wider safeguarding issues that can put children at risk of harm and that behaviours linked to issues such as drug taking and/or alcohol misuse, deliberately missing education, serious violence (including that linked to county lines), radicalisation and consensual and non-consensual sharing of nude and semi-nude images and/or videos (also known as youth produced sexual imagery) put children in danger.

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is defined as (KCSIE, DfE, 2024):

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- Protecting children from maltreatment
- Preventing impairment of children's mental and physical health or development
- Ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care; and
- Taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes.

## Mental Health

Staff/tutors are aware that mental health problems can, in some cases, be an indicator that a child has suffered or is at risk of suffering abuse, neglect or exploitation. Only appropriately trained professionals should attempt to make a diagnosis of a mental health problem.

Where children have suffered abuse and neglect, or other potentially traumatic adverse childhood experiences, this can have a lasting impact throughout childhood, adolescence and into adulthood. It is key that Sherpa's staff members are aware of how these children's experiences can impact on their mental health, behaviour and education. Staff/tutors are well placed to observe children day-to-day and identify those whose behaviour suggests that they may be experiencing a mental health problem or be at risk of developing one.

If staff have a mental health concern about a child that is also a safeguarding concern, this will immediately be shared with the DSL with a view to referring to appropriate agencies following the referral procedures.

## Definitions of Abuse

A form of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm or failing to act in a way that prevents harm. Children can be abused in a family, institutional or community environment by those known to them or by others. Abuse can take place online, or the technology may be used in a way that facilitates offline abuse. Children may be abused by an adult/s or other children/s.

### Physical

A form of abuse which may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms or deliberately induces illness in a child.

### Emotional

The persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to causes severe and adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to a child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. (KCSIE 2024, para 26)

It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children.

These may include interactions that are beyond a child's developmental capability as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child from participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyberbullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, although it may occur alone.

## Sexual

Involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing.

They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

The sexual abuse of children by other children is a specific safeguarding issue in education and all staff are aware of it and of their organisation's policy and procedures for dealing with it (KCSIE 2024, para 27).

## Exploitation

### *Child Sexual Exploitation and Child Criminal Exploitation*

All staff undertake training which ensures that they understand that child sexual exploitation and child criminal exploitation are both forms of child abuse, as well as how to recognise the warnings, signs and symptoms that a child could or is at risk of exploitation. Staff are trained and aware of how to report any concerns in line with Sherpa's safeguarding procedures.

## Child-on-Child Abuse

All staff are aware that children can abuse other children at any age (often referred to as child-on-child abuse) and that it can happen both inside and outside of their school or college and online.

All staff are trained to recognise the indicators and signs of abuse and know how to identify it and respond to reports, in line with Sherpa's safeguarding procedures.

Child-on-child abuse is most likely to include, but may not be limited to:

- Bullying (including cyberbullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying)
- Abuse in intimate personal relationships between children (sometimes known as 'teenage relationship abuse')
- Physical abuse, which can include hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm
- Sexual violence - for the purposes of this policy and procedures when referring to sexual violence we are referring to sexual offences under the Sexual Offences Act 2003 specifically, rape, assault by penetration, sexual assault and causing someone to engage in sexual activity without consent (KCSIE 2024 Part 5: para 453)
- Sexual harassment, such as sexual comments, remarks, jokes and online sexual harassment

Child on child sexual violence and sexual harassment can happen both inside and outside of education settings. Sherpa staff are clear that there is a zero-tolerance approach to sexual violence and sexual harassment, that it is never acceptable, and it will not be tolerated.

## Neglect

The persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs is likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse.

Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to: provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment); protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger;

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ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-givers); or ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

## Domestic

Domestic violence and abuse are any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. Domestic abuse can be, but is not limited to, psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional. Children can be victims of domestic abuse. They may see, hear, or experience the effects of abuse at home and/or suffer domestic abuse in their own intimate relationships (teenage relationship abuse).

If a member of staff has a concern about or knowledge of any domestic abuse incidents, they will share it immediately with the DSL with a view to referring it to appropriate agencies.

## Honour-Based Abuse (HBA)

So-called 'honour'-based abuse (HBA) encompasses incidents or crimes which have been committed to protect or defend the honour of the family and/or the community, including female genital mutilation (FGM), forced marriage, and practices such as breast ironing. Abuse committed in the context of preserving 'honour' often involves a wider network of family or community pressure and can include multiple perpetrators.

All forms of HBA are abuse (regardless of the motivation) and should be handled and escalated as such. All staff are trained in spotting the signs of HBA and in how to report this.

### Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

All staff have a legal obligation to report to the DSL any cases where it is known that FGM has been carried out on a child, in line with our safeguarding procedures.

### Forced Marriage

A forced marriage is one entered into without the full and free consent of one or both parties and where violence, threats or any other form of coercion is used to cause a person to enter into a marriage. Threats can be physical or emotional and psychological. A lack of full and free consent can be where a person does not consent or where they cannot consent (if they have learning disabilities, for example). Nevertheless, some perpetrators use perceived cultural practices to coerce a person into marriage. (KCSIE, 2024).

Since February 2023, it has become illegal for anyone under the age of 18 to marry, or for anyone to conduct the marriage or be complicit in enabling the marriage to take place. As with the existing forced marriage law, this applies to non-binding, unofficial 'marriages' as well as legal marriages (KCSIE, 2024)

## Child Protection

Is one part of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and refers to the activity that is undertaken to protect children who are suffering, or at risk of suffering significant harm.

## Significant Harm

The definition of significant harm is not prescriptive. The interpretation will depend largely on professional judgement, based on the known facts. It can include inappropriate touching, an assault, or a series of compounding events e.g., bullying. Other factors to be considered include the age and vulnerability of the child, the degree of force used, the frequency of the harm, the nature of the harm in terms of ill-treatment, and the impact on the child's health and development.

(KCSIE, 2024)

# Governance

## Safeguarding roles and responsibilities

Sherpa is committed to providing support to all stakeholders. A clear structure of safeguarding accountability supports everyone to understand their individual and collective responsibilities for safeguarding children.

Sherpa will ensure it has taken the necessary precautions and steps in place to safeguard children and young people in accordance with legislation and statutory guidance.

In order to fulfil this promise, the Board of Directors may delegate these responsibilities to individual directors or members of the leadership team.

Directors are responsible for the following:

- Approving the safeguarding policies and their supporting procedures
- Ensuring adequate resources are available for effective safeguarding practices and training
- Ensuring effective reporting and auditing processes are in place and regularly reviewed
- Retrieving regular safeguarding reports from the leadership team
- Developing a culture within the organisation that promotes effective safeguarding practices

### Sherpa Named Designated Safeguarding Officer

The Named Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO) will be provided with the appropriate level of training to enable them to fulfil their responsibilities in supporting and guiding staff and tutors on safeguarding matters. The training should be updated every year. They are responsible for responding to initial concerns or disclosures.

The Named Designated Safeguarding Officer will:

- Provide ready and accessible support and guidance to all staff, tutors and directors on safeguarding matters
- Manage all safeguarding reports and act as a liaison for statutory services during any criminal or safeguarding investigation
- Ensure that serious incidents relating to safeguarding are reported immediately and managed effectively
- Report allegations against directors, staff, or tutors to the relevant Local Authority and Disclosure and Barring Service as appropriate
- Ensure accurate records of all safeguarding concerns and the secure storage of all safeguarding records
- Provide quality assurance and review standards for all safeguarding concerns
- Work with all the above governance bodies to inform of serious safeguarding incidents as appropriate
- Ensure the adoption, implementation and auditing of all policies and strategies in relation to safeguarding
- Liaise with school Designated Safeguarding Leads on matters of safety and safeguarding, in particular online and digital safety involving Sherpa tutors, when deciding whether to make a referral to the relevant agencies

## Designated Safeguarding Officer

Name: Angela Winters

Phone: 01628337590

Email: [angela@sherpa-online.com](mailto:angela@sherpa-online.com)

## Deputy Designated Safeguarding Officer

Name: Nikki Cooper

Phone: 01628337590

Email: [nikki@sherpa-online.com](mailto:nikki@sherpa-online.com)

## Reviewing and updating this policy based on legislation

As part of our commitment to ensuring a safe environment for all stakeholders, the designated safeguarding leads are constantly reviewing any changes to legislation regarding safeguarding and making necessary changes to this policy and our processes to meet the new or altered legislation.

## Sherpa Staff and Tutors

All Sherpa staff and tutors have a shared responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people. They should know how to recognise, respond to, report and record any safeguarding concerns.

All staff and tutors are responsible for following the organisation's safeguarding procedures for reporting any concerns relating to abuse or neglect or suspected abuse or neglect of any child or young person immediately.

In an emergency staff and tutors will be expected to report urgent concerns directly to the relevant statutory agency.

## Dealing with a safeguarding concern or disclosure

The following procedures have been developed in order to:

- Prevent and reduce the incidence of abuse;
- Increase awareness of issues concerning the abuse of children;
- Provide a process if issues of concern are disclosed or discovered;
- Improve the quality of life and protection of children with whom we work.
- Protect people from harm
- Make sure people can raise safeguarding concerns
- Handle allegations or incidents
- Report to the relevant authorities

We must be alert to the risks from:

- Sexual harassment, abuse and exploitation
- Negligent treatment
- Physical abuse

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- Emotional abuse
- Bullying or harassment
- Health and Safety
- Criminal exploitation
- Radicalisation and extremism
- Forced marriage and honour-based violence
- Trafficking or modern slavery
- Female genital mutilation
- Discrimination on any of the grounds in the equality act 2010
- People targeting our organisation
- The culture within the organisation allows poor behaviour

People abusing a position of trust they hold within Sherpa staff or tutors may have suspicions that a person is either

- at risk of harm or
- suffering abuse or neglect

because of behavioural, emotional and/or physical factors; or symptoms or conversations and/or written or typed evidence which indicates that abuse or neglect may have taken place, or an individual may disclose information that causes a concern for their safety and welfare.

When making difficult judgements around possible signs and symptoms of abuse and neglect it is crucial that all available information and presenting injuries or behaviours are seen in context. e.g. is the change in behaviour a result of a sudden illness, recent bereavement or exam anxiety?

When information is shared with you which causes concerns of possible abuse, your requirement is to accept the information being shared without influencing it, as well as provide support and reassurance to the child and manage expectations.

### Staff and tutors SHOULD and will be trained to:

- Stay calm
- Listen carefully, let the child tell their story and take it seriously
- Keep the child informed about what you are doing and what is happening at every stage
- Reassure them they have done nothing wrong and it is not their fault
- Make a full record of what has been said as soon as possible

### Staff and tutors should NOT:

- Promise confidentiality. You should be honest about your own position, especially who you will have to tell and why
- Ask leading questions (e.g. "Did your father do this to you")
- Press the child for more details

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- Make any promises (e.g. “I’ll make sure this will never happen to you again”)

## Safeguarding Concern Form

Whenever there is a safeguarding concern, either from yourself or one that has been shared with you and not already reported to Sherpa, you should submit a Safeguarding concern form, [found here](#), to Sherpa’s safeguarding team as soon as possible.

Once a disclosure has been made or a concern has been shared, the Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO) or Deputy (DDSO) will consider the information, if necessary, taking advice, and will make a decision to either:

- Keep detailed records of the concern with no further action at this time
- Make a child protection referral to Children Social Care

**Where a child is suffering or is likely to suffer from harm, it is important that a referral to children’s social care (and if appropriate the police) is made immediately.**

Once the decision is made to make a referral the Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO) or Deputy (DDSO) will contact the relevant Children’s Social Care Team and make a telephone referral. This must be followed up in writing within 24 hours.

Within one working day of a referral being made, a local authority social worker should acknowledge receipt to the referrer and make a decision about the next steps and the type of response that is required. This will include determining whether:

- The child requires immediate protection and urgent action is required;
- The child is in need, and should be assessed under section 17 of the Children Act 1989;
- There is reasonable cause to suspect the child is suffering or likely to suffer
- Significant harm, and whether enquiries must be made and the child assessed under section 47 of the Children Act 1989;
- Any services are required by the child and family and what type of services;
- Further specialist assessments are required to help the local authority to decide what further action to take; and
- To see the child as soon as possible if the decision is taken that the referral requires further assessment.

**Reminder:** Should you have a safeguarding concern or one has been shared with you, submit a Safeguarding concern form, [found here](#), to Sherpa’s safeguarding team as soon as possible.

## Sharing Information

Fears about sharing information cannot be allowed to stand in the way of the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people identified as being ‘at risk of abuse or neglect’.

Personal information held by Sherpa is subject to a legal duty of confidentiality and will not normally be disclosed without the consent of a child’s parent/carer. However, the right to confidentiality and respect for private and family life (Article 8, Human Rights Act, 1998) is not absolute.

The only exceptions to this are where confidentiality can be overridden either by a court order or other legal authority (e.g. Prevent Duty) or in the public interest i.e. in order to safeguard a child.

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Public interest justifications usually relate to disclosures to prevent significant or serious harm to third parties or to prevent or prosecute a serious crime. e.g. suicide pacts, and terrorist threats.

### **Sherpa recognises that information sharing between key organisations is essential to safeguard children and young people at risk of abuse, neglect and exploitation.**

Sherpa will ensure that where staff or tutors need to share special category personal data, they are aware that the Data Protection Act 2018 includes 'safeguarding of individuals at risk' as a condition that allows practitioners to share information without consent.

Sherpa will ensure that confidential information is only shared where it is lawful and ethical to do so. All staff and tutors must be clear about situations when they can share information with appropriate agencies i.e. when they believe a child is at risk of harm.

Sherpa staff and tutors will give due regard to relevant legislation and guidance when making decisions on sharing information including the following:

- [The Data Protection Act, 1998 and 2018 \(GDPR\)](#)
- [Information sharing Advice for practitioners providing safeguarding services to children, young people, parents and carers. May 2024](#)
- [Working Together to Safeguarding Children. 2023](#)
- [Keeping Children Safe in Education. 2024](#)

## **Creating a culture of safeguarding**

In order to help promote a culture of safeguarding in Sherpa and all surrounding areas of the business (staff and tutors) we have implemented the following:

- Safeguarding policy and procedures that are understood and accepted by staff and tutors abided by at all times. The policy also details the procedures for dealing with concerns about abuse, disclosures and allegations so all stakeholders are aware of the steps involved.
- We have a designated safeguarding lead, plus a deputy and contact numbers for out-of-hours to ensure there is always a safeguarding lead available. All names and contact details are listed within this safeguarding policy.
- A code of conduct policy and terms of use policy can be found on our website.
- A safer recruitment policy that embeds safeguarding into all areas of the recruitment process.

## **Tutors and Staff**

All tutors and Sherpa staff members confirm they are clear on their specific role around safeguarding through Sherpa by signing our safeguarding policy and other documents that relate to safeguarding.

## Tutor Identity

In order to uphold a higher level of safeguarding on Sherpa, in addition to their safeguarding roles and responsibilities, they must also ensure their identity is clear and not hidden at any time. This requires the following precautions:

### Tutor profile photos:

The profile photo must always be visible and follow these stipulations while an active account exists on the site.

- The photo must be a clear headshot, with your face fully visible.
- No hats or sunglasses should be worn.
- The photo should not include any other individuals.
- Ensure the image is sharp and not blurry.

### Face Coverings:

Face coverings are permitted during introductions and lessons. However, if a tutor chooses to wear a face covering, they must briefly reveal their face at the beginning of the session to confirm their identity. Once the student has confirmed their identity, the tutor may replace the face covering for the remainder of the session.

### Compulsory use of Camera:

Tutors are required to keep their camera on at all times during both introductions and lessons, regardless of whether the student is using the camera or not. All sessions must be conducted in a suitable environment, with the tutor fully visible on camera for the entire duration of the session.

## Allegations against Staff

Sherpa recognises its duty to report concerns or allegations against its directors, staff, tutors, volunteers or contractors. All directors, staff, tutors, volunteers or contractors must comply with the relevant Code of Conduct when performing their role in order to promote safer working practices.

Allegations of abuse against directors, staff, tutors, volunteers or contractors can be made by either a child or an adult and are made immediately to the DSL at Sherpa. Allegations made against the DSL should instead be made to another member of the leadership team who will arrange for a suitable senior member of staff to be appointed to take the place of the DSL in response to the allegation.

This guidance should be followed when any Sherpa representative has:

- Behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child and/or possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child and/or
- behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates he or she may pose a risk of harm to children and/or
- behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children. This includes behaviour that may have occurred inside or outside of Sherpa.

*(KCSIE 2024 para 359-361)*

Sherpa will deal appropriately and promptly with all allegations or concerns and refer all safeguarding concerns or allegations about its directors, staff or tutors immediately to the appropriate local authority designated officer (LADO) in accordance with local safeguarding procedures and practical guidance, in accordance with the statutory guidance Working Together to Safeguard Children, 2018.

Sherpa will consider immediate suspension (without prejudice) if a safeguarding allegation is made against any director, staff member or tutor pending investigation when there is cause to suspect that another child(ren) is/are at risk of harm from their continued contact with children, in line with KCSIE 2024 recommendations.

Suspension will also be considered even if the allegation is not linked to their role or activity with Sherpa.

This document was last reviewed on 10/10/2024 and is scheduled to be next reviewed on 10/10/2025.

## DBS Requirement and Duty to Report

Under legal duties to make referrals to the Disclosure and Barring Service, Sherpa will report any concerns about unsafe practice by any of its directors, staff or tutors to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS). This applies where an individual has engaged in conduct that has either harmed (or is likely to harm) a child; or if a person otherwise poses a risk of harm to a child. (*KCSIE 2024, para 353-358*).

## Learning Lessons

Sherpa is committed to learning any lessons, alongside support and guidance with the LADO to determine whether there are any improvements to be made to our procedures, or to help prevent similar events in the future. This includes lessons learned about suspension, reinstatement after suspension. (*KCSIE 2024, para 427 - 428*).

## Low-Level Concerns

We aim to create a culture where all concerns about all adults working on behalf of Sherpa are dealt with promptly and appropriately.

The term 'low-level' concern does not mean that it is insignificant. A low-level concern is any concern – no matter how small, and even if no more than causing a sense of unease or a 'nagging doubt' - that an adult working in or on behalf of Sherpa may have acted in a way that:

- Is inconsistent with the staff code of conduct, including inappropriate conduct outside of work and
- Does not meet the harm threshold or is otherwise not serious enough to consider a referral to the LADO.

If at any time Sherpa dismisses a director, member of staff or tutor due to relevant conduct, risk of harm or receiving a caution or conviction for a relevant offence (or the person has resigned or left that post in circumstances where they may have been removed), then a referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service will be made by the DSL.

## What Staff and Tutors should do if they have concerns about poor or unsafe practices within Sherpa

Sherpa provides a safe place for students and tutors to learn and educate, and we foster an environment where staff and tutors are easily able to raise concerns about poor or unsafe practices and potential issues with Sherpa's safeguarding processes.

We have a whistleblowing policy in place to allow staff or tutors to (optionally) anonymously report concerns about practices. Staff and tutors are educated about this whistleblowing policy during their induction and safeguarding training, and it allows concerns to be raised with Sherpa's leadership team.

If for any reason, a staff member or a tutor is unable to raise the issue with a manager or feels their concerns are being ignored, they are also informed of and have other channels available to them:

- General guidance on whistleblowing can be found at [Advice on Whistleblowing](#);
- The NSPCC's what you can do to report abuse dedicated helpline is available as an alternative route for staff who do not feel able to raise concerns regarding child protection failures internally or have concerns about the way concern is being handled by their school or college. Staff and tutors can call 0800 028 0285 – line is available from 8:00 AM to 8:00 PM, Monday to Friday and email: [help@nspcc.org.uk](mailto:help@nspcc.org.uk)

Staff and tutors are made aware of these channels during their induction, and safeguarding training and are alerted of any updates to these channels.

## **Safer Recruitment, Selection and Training**

### **Recruitment and Selection**

Sherpa is aware of its responsibilities for ensuring that it carries out appropriate safer recruitment practices for all positions within the organisation. Sherpa has a robust recruitment process which incorporates the specific “Safer Recruitment” requirements highlighted in KCSIE 2024.

When supplying tutoring services to schools and other organisations, we ensure all of the selected tutors and staff involved have an enhanced DBS and barred list check if they work with children or young people.

### **Interview and ID Verification**

All tutors used by Sherpa have been interviewed 1-1 by a member of the Sherpa team, where their proof of identity and proof of address is checked. All DBS certificates are also checked for any reports. Each of the tutors that we use to provide tutoring services to schools or organisations read, understand and sign our safeguarding declaration.

## **Safeguarding Procedures**

Sherpa’s safeguarding procedures should be read alongside the Sherpa Terms and Conditions and the Safeguarding Policy.

### **Introduction**

Sherpa was developed with the aim of ensuring that lessons take place in a safe online environment.

The following sections set out the procedures that should be followed if an incident occurs.

The safety and wellbeing of any student or other person using Sherpa is paramount. These processes aim to ensure a rapid response to any incident and to minimise any further harm to a student or other person.

There are differing severities of behaviour which could be witnessed during a lesson. Some behaviour would warrant only a report to Sherpa. Other behaviour may be of a more serious nature where a direct report to the police may be necessary.

Each section below sets out the recommended procedure which should be followed. It is always the responsibility of the person alerted to the incident to take some action to protect the student or other person. Sherpa will not be responsible for any non-compliance with the recommended procedure.

The processes are not an exhaustive list; therefore if an incident occurs that is not covered in this document you are advised to contact Sherpa or the police, if you believe that it may be a criminal matter.

### **For Tutors and Wider Staff Members**

If a tutor sees/experiences:

This document was last reviewed on 10/10/2024 and is scheduled to be next reviewed on 10/10/2025.

## Inappropriate language

The tutor will request, in a polite manner, that the student or other persons using inappropriate language refrains from doing so during the lesson session. If the language continues the tutor will explain that they will terminate the session due to the language and will report the matter to Sherpa who will decide on any further use of the service by the student or other person involved.

The tutor will have no further contact with the student unless by mutual agreement with Sherpa. Any unsolicited contact from the student or other persons following the termination of the session should be reported to Sherpa.

## Inappropriate behaviour

The tutor will request, in a polite manner, that the student or other persons involved in the inappropriate behaviour refrains from the behaviour during the lesson session. If the behaviour continues the tutor will explain that they will terminate the session due to the behaviour and will report the matter to Sherpa who will decide on any further use of the service by the student or other person involved.

The tutor should have no further contact with the student unless by mutual agreement with Sherpa. Any unsolicited contact from the student or other persons following the termination of the session should be reported to Sherpa.

## Inappropriate or abusive images

Any display of adult pornographic images whilst in the presence of a student may constitute an offence under UK law. Any tutor witnessing the display of adult pornographic images by or towards a student should explain that the images should not be displayed during a lesson, terminate the session and report the matter to Sherpa.

Any display of child abuse images or indecent images of a child (for these purposes, a 'child' is defined as anyone under the age of 18 years) is an offence under UK law.

Any tutor witnessing a display of indecent images of a child by or in the presence of a student should explain that due to the nature of the images they will terminate the session.

The tutor should then inform the UK police. The tutor should also inform Sherpa of the incident to ensure any recordings can be preserved and made available for any police investigation.

The tutor should have no further contact with the student or any other person involved in the incident. Any unsolicited contact from the student or other persons following the termination of the session should be reported to the police and Sherpa immediately.

This action should be taken so that the correct authorities can be alerted and can deal appropriately with the incident.

The display of any other images perceived to be inappropriate, either due to the age of the student or the content of the image shall be reported to Sherpa at the discretion of the parent/responsible adult.

## Disclosure of/witness to abuse towards or in the presence of a student

Any physical or sexual abuse of a child is an offence under UK law. If a tutor receives information about such abuse from the student or other person present they should reassure the person that they can get assistance for them. It is the responsibility of the tutor to contact the UK police and report what has been witnessed.

If the tutor witnesses any such abuse first-hand they should immediately contact the police and report the incident. The tutor should also inform Sherpa of the incident to ensure any recordings can be preserved and made available for any police investigation.

This document was last reviewed on 10/10/2024 and is scheduled to be next reviewed on 10/10/2025.

The tutor should have no further contact with the student or other person involved in the incident. Any unsolicited contact from the student or other persons following the termination of the session should be reported to the police and Sherpa immediately.

## Disclosure of inappropriate/sensitive information

During a lesson sensitive information may be offered by a student or other person present. If the information relates to any kind of abuse the tutor should refer to 'Disclosure of/witness to abuse towards or in the presence of a student', above.

The student or other person present should be discouraged from disclosing sensitive information by the tutor. If the information continues to be shared the tutor will determine the impact of the information and decide whether to continue or terminate the session and report the incident to Sherpa.

Any information disclosed regarding the safety of a child should always be reported immediately to the UK police

## For Students

If a student sees/experiences:

### Inappropriate language

The student will inform a parent/responsible adult of the tutor using inappropriate language. The parent/responsible adult should ask the tutor to refrain from using inappropriate language during the lesson session. If the language continues the parent/responsible adult should explain that they will terminate the session and will report the matter to Sherpa, who will decide on any further use of the service by the tutor.

The student and parent/responsible adult should have no further contact with the tutor unless by mutual agreement with Sherpa. Any unsolicited contact from the tutor after termination of the session should be reported to Sherpa.

If a parent/responsible adult is not present or readily available the student should report the language as soon as possible to a parent/responsible adult who will take the decision to report the incident.

### Inappropriate behaviour

The student will inform a parent/responsible adult of the tutor using inappropriate behaviour. The parent/responsible adult should ask the tutor to refrain from using inappropriate behaviour during the lesson session.

If the behaviour continues the parent/responsible adult will explain that they will terminate the session due to the behaviour and will report the matter to Sherpa who will decide on any further use of the service by the tutor.

The student, parent/responsible adult should have no further contact with the tutor unless by mutual agreement with Sherpa. Any unsolicited contact from the tutor after termination of the session should be reported to Sherpa.

If a parent/responsible adult is not present or readily available the student should report the behaviour as soon as possible to a parent/responsible adult who will take a decision to report the incident.

If the behaviour is of a sexual nature towards a student by a tutor, the student should immediately inform a parent/responsible adult and terminate the session. The parent / responsible adult should inform the UK police and Sherpa immediately.

This document was last reviewed on 10/10/2024 and is scheduled to be next reviewed on 10/10/2025.



## Inappropriate or abusive images

Any display of adult pornographic images whilst in the presence of a student may constitute an offence under UK law. Any student witnessing the display of adult pornographic images by a tutor should immediately terminate the session and report this to a parent/responsible adult who should inform the UK police.

Any display of child abuse images or indecent images of a child (for these purposes, a 'child' is defined as anyone under the age of 18 years) is an offence under UK law. Any student witnessing a display of indecent images of a child should immediately terminate the session and report this to a parent/responsible adult, who should inform the UK police.

The parent/responsible adult should also inform Sherpa of the incident to ensure that any recordings can be preserved and made available for any police investigation. The student, parent/responsible adult should have no further contact with the tutor involved in the incident. Any unsolicited contact from the tutor following the discontinuation of the session should be reported to the police and Sherpa immediately.

This action should be taken so that the correct authorities can be alerted and can deal appropriately with the incident.

The display of any other images perceived to be inappropriate either due to age of the student or content of the image shall be reported to Sherpa at the discretion of the parent/responsible adult.

## Disclosure of/witness to abuse

Any physical or sexual abuse of a person is an offence under UK law. If a student receives information about such abuse from the tutor or other person present they should immediately inform a parent/responsible adult. It is the responsibility of the parent/responsible adult to contact the UK police and report what was witnessed.

If the student witnesses any such abuse first-hand they should immediately contact a parent/responsible adult who should immediately inform the UK police.

The parent/responsible adult should also inform Sherpa of the incident to ensure that any recordings can be preserved and made available for any police investigation.

The student, parent/responsible adult should have no further contact with the tutor involved in the incident. Any unsolicited contact from the tutor following the termination of the session should be reported to the parent/responsible adult immediately.

This action should be taken so the correct authorities can be alerted and can deal appropriately with the incident.

## Disclosure of inappropriate/sensitive information

During a lesson sensitive information may be offered by a tutor (If the information relates to any kind of abuse the student should refer to 'Disclosure of/Witness to abuse').

The tutor should be discouraged from disclosing sensitive information by the student, parent/responsible adult. The parent/responsible adult will determine the impact of the information and decide whether to continue or terminate the session and report the incident to Sherpa.

Any information disclosed regarding the safety of a child should always be immediately reported to the UK police.

Any tutor reported by a parent/responsible adult will be suspended from the site until the incident has been investigated by the appropriate authority. The parent/responsible adult may be informed of the resolution if appropriate.

## For Parents/Responsible adults

As per the policy document, the parent/responsible adult has primary responsibility for the welfare and safety of the student during a lesson and should be present or available to deal with any concerns or incidents reported by the student.

It is also the duty of the parent/responsible adult to ensure the wellbeing of the child if they have been affected by anything said or done by the tutor.

If a parent/responsible adult is alerted by the student to any inappropriate behaviour/language or information by the student or they witness any inappropriate behaviour/language or information by the tutor, they should immediately speak to the tutor, state their concern and inform them they are terminating the session.

The incident should then be reported to Sherpa to take appropriate action. As there is a recording of the session available, the parent/responsible adult may review the session before taking further action.

The parent/responsible adult should have no further contact with the tutor involved in the incident. Any unsolicited communication from the tutor should be reported to the police and Sherpa as soon as possible.

If a parent/responsible adult is alerted by the student to any inappropriate or abusive images or they witness any inappropriate or abusive images displayed by the tutor, they should immediately speak to the tutor, state their concern and inform them they are terminating the session.

The parent/responsible adult should inform the UK police (if appropriate) and (in all cases) Sherpa of the incident to ensure that any recordings can be preserved and made available to any police investigation.

The parent/responsible adult should have no further contact with the tutor involved in the incident. Any unsolicited communication from the tutor should be reported to the police and Sherpa as soon as possible.

As there is a recording of the session available, the parent/responsible adult may review the session before taking further action.

Any tutor reported by a parent/responsible adult will be suspended from the site until the incident has been investigated by the appropriate authority. The parent/responsible adult will be informed of the resolution if appropriate.

## For Directors/Management of Sherpa

The Safeguarding Policy and Safeguarding Procedures of the Sherpa website and services are the responsibility of the Director and management.

Any report of a contravention of the Safeguarding Policy will be reviewed by Sherpa, who may engage independent Child Protection consultants to ensure that an appropriate course of action is taken.

Any incident reported to Sherpa shall be reviewed as soon as possible to ensure a timely resolution.

If a report concerns minor breach of the Safeguarding Policy, Sherpa can make a decision as to appropriate action which may include barring the reported person from using the Sherpa services (also see Safeguarding Policy Section 12.0 Compliance).

If a report is received by Sherpa which concerns the immediate safety of a student or any illegal activity during a lesson, they will be required to contact UK police and report the incident.

# Complaints

We have a system in place to receive complaints and when this does occur, our safeguarding procedures are followed.

If any serious allegations/negative feedback is received in post-lesson reports or during a lesson, video recordings of the lessons can be obtained and reviewed by our safeguarding & partnership team to act on immediately. These recordings will also be monitored in random spot checks during an internal assessment of our safeguarding and quality goals.

# Quality Assurance and Review

Sherpa Online is devoted to providing the safest possible online learning platform and classroom. We actively review our safeguarding systems in place and review the platform to ensure it technically meets our safeguarding requirements.

Messages through the platform are monitored for inappropriate behaviour and intervention is taken if appropriate.

This continuously integrated safeguarding process is continuously reviewed and taken into account in our product and process development.

The leadership team will review the safeguarding policy and supporting procedures annually to ensure they continue to reflect legislation and guidance. Any amendments to the policy and supporting procedures will be submitted to the Directors for approval.

# Underpinning Legislation and Guidance

We have collected the required legislation documents and guidance below for our staff and tutors to refer to.

## Legislation

- Children Act 1989
- Human Rights Act 1998
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1991
- Sexual Offences Act 2003
- Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003
- Children Act 2004
- Modern Slavery Act 2015
- Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015
- Children and Social Work Act 2017
- Data Protection Act 2018
- Safeguarding vulnerable Groups Act 2006
- The Forced Marriage (Civil Protection) Act 2007
- The Equality Act 2010

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- Children and Families Act 2014
- Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014
- The Mental Capacity Act 2005
- Domestic Abuse Act 2021
- Children's Code (issued under S125 DPA 2018, effective Oct 2021)
- The Marriage and Civil Partnerships Act 2022
- Voyeurism (Offences) Act 2019

## Guidance

We have put together a list of resources for our users and staff which address legal requirements as well as guidelines and safe working practices when working with children and young people.

- [Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018](#) places a general duty on schools to work and cooperate with other agencies to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.
- [Child Sexual Exploitation Guidance 2017](#)
- [What to do if you're worried about a Child being Abused, 2015](#)
- [Information Sharing Advice for Safeguarding Practitioners 2018](#)
- [Guidance for Safer Working Practice for those working with children and young people in education settings, May 2019](#)

This document is an update by the Safer Recruitment Consortium of a document previously published for schools by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES). It was initially issued as those working with children had expressed concern about their vulnerability and requested clearer advice about what constitutes illegal behaviour and what might be considered misconduct. Education staff asked for practical guidance about which behaviours constitute the safe practice and which behaviours should be avoided. This safe working practice document is NOT statutory guidance from the Department for Education (DfE); it is for employers, local authorities and/or the Three Safeguarding Partners to decide whether to use this as the basis for their code of conduct/staff behaviour guidelines.

## Self-evaluation of safeguarding procedures

Sherpa is committed to reviewing and evaluating its safeguarding system on a regular basis to ensure it is relevant and upholds safeguarding standards. The leadership team will review the safeguarding policy and supporting procedures every year, or whenever there is a major change in the organisation to ensure they continue to reflect legislation and guidance. Any amendments to the policy and supporting procedures will be submitted to the Directors for approval and dated.

## Consistency Between Stakeholders

Prior to tuition beginning, every stakeholder must have read and understood their roles and responsibilities for reporting safeguarding concerns to comply with Sherpa's terms of service and safeguarding policy. Any correspondence around safeguarding concerns involving stakeholders of the programme are securely stored for Sherpa and to access in line with GDPR guidelines and data protection laws.

This document was last reviewed on 10/10/2024 and is scheduled to be next reviewed on 10/10/2025.

# Related Documents

## [Sherpa Safeguarding Concern Form](#)

It is important that this concern form is fully completed in a timely manner. The details are important. To help the Designated Safeguarding team respond and refer appropriately you should follow the guidance below.

- Only write about one child on each form.
- Remember that concern forms are used in court cases and inquests as evidence.
- Make sure you use the Safeguarding Concern Form to record your concerns and disclosure.
- If you cannot access a copy of the Safeguarding Concern Form then contact the Designated Safeguarding Officer (or Deputy) as soon as you are able to who will supply the form for you.
- Please alert the team as soon as possible. It can take several hours to deal with even urgent concerns and the earlier we start the better.