FFLAG Safeguarding Policy

Introduction

FFLAG is a national voluntary charity dedicated to supporting families and their LGBT+ loved ones. We offer support through our website, email answering service, helpline, National Zoom Group and local affiliated support groups to help parents, families and friends accept and support their LGBT+ members with love and pride. Those that access our services include parents, carers, families, friends and LGBT+ people themselves.

Safeguarding Policy Statement

FFLAG is committed to safeguarding any adults, young people or children using our Services who may be at risk of harm. We are committed to protecting all Service Users in a non-discriminatory way regardless of their race, colour, nationality, ethnicity, religion, gender, marital status, age, sexual identity, medical condition or disability.

The purpose of this policy is to outline a clear framework to protect and safeguard all our Service Users. This ensures that any potential staff, volunteers and other stakeholders have an understanding of what forms abuse may take and that they are aware of their roles and responsibilities in identifying concerns, sharing information and taking appropriate action.

FFLAG believes that:

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. Adults, young people and children should never experience abuse of any kind. We all have a responsibility to promote the welfare of all adults, children and young people, to keep them safe and to practise in a way that protects them.

Policy Remit

This policy applies to all aspects of our work including, but not limited to, our Telephone Helpline, email Support Service, p2p, National Zoom Group, FFLAG's website, Presentations/Training and any other events that the organisation may take part in.

The policy applies to anyone working on behalf of FFLAG including Trustees, paid staff and volunteers. It also applies to the treatment of any staff by other staff and by Service Users. For the purposes of this policy the use of "staff" herein after refers to any Trustee or Volunteer acting on behalf of FFLAG and, include any paid employees of FFLAG and its affiliated organisations.

Local Support Groups affiliated to FFLAG must be aware of and have regard to this policy. In addition they should all have a Safeguarding Statement/Policy which is accessible to their volunteers and group members and to be reviewed on an annual basis.

The policy relates to all adults, young people and children who directly or indirectly use FFLAG's services.

Safeguarding Adults

Definition of an adult at risk

The Care Act 2014 defines an adult at risk as:

Any person who is aged 18 years or over and at risk of abuse or neglect because of their need for care and support. This means that not all adults are at risk but some may be at risk at times and others could be at risk all the time.

Safeguarding adults at risk is defined by CQC as:

"Protecting people's health, wellbeing, and human rights, and enabling them to live free from harm, abuse and neglect."

Definition of abuse

Abuse is a violation of an individual's human and civil rights by any other person or persons.

Categories of adult abuse

- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Psychological/emotional abuse
- Modern slavery
- Financial or material abuse
- Neglect and acts of omission
- Self-neglect
- Domestic violence
- Discriminatory abuse
- Organisational abuse

Six Principles of Adult Safeguarding

The Care Act 2014 sets out the following principles that should underpin the safeguarding of adults. All staff should be aware of these and should follow them whenever they have safeguarding concerns.

Empowerment

People are supported and encouraged to make their own decisions and informed consent

Prevention

It is better to take action before harm occurs

Proportionality

The least intrusive response appropriate to the risk presented

Protection

Support and representation for those in greatest need

Partnership

Services offer local solutions through working closely with their communities. Communities have a part to play in preventing, detecting and reporting neglect and abuse.

Accountability

Accountability and transparency in delivering safeguarding.

Safeguarding Children and young people

Whilst many of our service users are adults their involvement with FFLAG may relate to their children or family members. There is therefore the potential for an adult service user to raise or intimate a concern about a child. There is also the potential for a parent/family member to be the perpetrator of abuse or neglect. In addition as the age at which young people are identifying as LGBT+ is falling we have had calls to the helpline from people as young as 13.

Children are defined as any individual up to the age of 18 (*Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026*).

Safeguarding Children is defined as:

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

"*Working Together to Safeguard Children*" categorises and defines abuse in terms of:

- Physical
- Sexual
- Emotional
- Neglect

Under these four headings abuse can be further defined as:

- Discriminatory
- Psychological
- Financial or material
- Organisational
- Self-neglect
- Modern slavery
- Child sexual exploitation
- Domestic abuse
- Child trafficking
- Female genital mutilation
- Bullying and cyberbullying

Safeguarding Procedures

Reporting Concerns

If any member of staff is concerned about anyone they have contact with in a FFLAG capacity, they should discuss their concerns with either the Safeguarding Lead or the Trustee with Responsibility for Safeguarding in the first instance. The only exception to this is if a crime may have been committed or

there is an immediate concern of danger, in which case, if the staff member has enough identifying information, they should contact the Police on 101 or 999. Due to the anonymous nature of our services this may not be possible.

If in a face to face situation, should a member of staff feel at personal risk they should leave immediately. The Safeguarding Lead should be immediately informed following such a report. A **Safeguarding Report/Concern Form** should be completed within 24 hours of the report having been made.

In the event of a safeguarding issue where there is not a concern of immediate harm or danger the following steps should be followed:

1. Seek consent from the person concerned. If you feel that they do not have the capacity to consent, you can act without consent but you must record your decision.

2. Collect all available relevant facts and appropriate information

3. Make a written record of the concern using the **Safeguarding Report/Concern Form** available on the Safeguarding Section of the G drive.

4. Tell the person involved what you are going to do about the concern and note any views that they might have regarding how they wish the matter to be dealt with.

5. Inform only the Safeguarding Lead or if they are not available the Trustee with Responsibility for Safeguarding. Discuss with them next steps. If there is sufficient identifying information available and a need to report the concerns is indicated, then the staff member raising the concern should contact the relevant Local Authority Safeguarding Team, with appropriate support from the Safeguarding Lead. An online search is usually effective in identifying the relevant Safeguarding Team.

6. Consider the balance between listening to someone's wishes and needing to refer information where others may be at risk.

7. Wherever possible, inform the person involved about the outcome of any process.

8. Safeguarding Report/Concern Form should be completed contemporaneously (within 24 hours whenever possible), signed, dated and timed. They should then be forwarded to the Safeguarding Lead or the Trustee with Responsibility for Safeguarding who should add any points they wish to make regarding the discussion and countersign and date the forms. They should then be kept securely with restricted access.

Safeguarding procedures are outlined in a chart in Appendix B

Retention of Safeguarding Records

Records regarding children should be kept until the child involved has reached the age of 25. Records regarding adults should be kept for 10 years.

Setting this Policy in the Context of FFLAG and its different services

This policy and its procedures relate to all the services that FFLAG provides including email Support, the Helpline, p2p, National Zoom Group, Support Groups, training, talks as well as any additional services that may occur.

How the policy applies and is implemented is likely to be different for each of these contexts. For example it is recognised that FFLAG's Helpline and email Support Service is used by people in an anonymous way most of the time and users of these services rarely give their identifying details. This makes it impossible for a staff member to officially report a safeguarding concern unless the caller wishes them to do so and provides them with identifying and contact details.

Where possible if there is a Safeguarding concern then the staff member involved should inform the person that they have a concern and try to encourage the caller/writer to share their contact details. If service users are reluctant to do so, then every effort should be made to empower them to seek help and/or report the concern themselves.

Reasonable steps to trace anonymous service users should be made but we cannot do more than this. In such a situation a **Safeguarding Report/Concern Form** must always be completed. Should it later come to light that the person involved contacted one of our services then we would have a record of them doing so and that we were unable to take the matter further. This ensures the integrity and reputation of FFLAG.

When we are unable to report our concerns, we should take a preventative approach with service users by:

- Supporting them to have more control over their lives
- Help them recognise abusive situations and how to keep themselves safe
- Supporting them to retain their independence
- Supporting them to make proactive decisions
- Helping them to access appropriate resources and informal networks
- Providing them with information about their rights and where to seek help

Staff members and Trustees should be aware at all times what the purpose and remit of FFLAG is and recognise when we are unable to offer appropriate help or support to service users. In such instances we should make every effort to signpost the person to an appropriate organisation e.g. Childline, Samaritans. (see Appendix C)

Confidentiality Statement

Whilst we rarely have personal identifying information on our Service users, we make clear in our Confidentiality Policy, that where we have such information that we may need to disclose this in the best interests of a Service User or of their child, partner or other relevant person they raise a concern about. If a service user is at risk or suffering significant harm, the law supports you to share information without consent.

Where we have identifying information and the need to either report or discuss a safeguarding concern with a Local Authority Safeguarding Team is indicated then we must do so.

"The Data Protection Act 2018 and the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) supports the sharing of relevant information for the purposes of keeping children safe. Fears about sharing must not be allowed to stand in the way of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children"

From "Working Together To Safeguard Children" 2026

The following safeguards need to be observed:

• Information will only be shared on a need to know basis when it is in the best interests of an adult or child at risk.

• Informed consent should be obtained wherever possible

• Staff members **should not** give assurances of absolute confidentiality in cases where there are concerns about abuse

• If a staff member is in a position to be able to report a safeguarding concern then adults or children at risk, or their carers, should be advised why, and with whom, information will be shared.

• All records of confidential information must be stored safely.

Procedures to respond to allegations involving staff/volunteers

Consideration also needs to be given to the possibility of a staff member of FFLAG perpetrating abuse against a service user or being abused themselves from whatever source. All those involved with FFLAG have a duty to report any suspicions of abuse by a fellow staff member to the Safeguarding Lead. If the Safeguarding Lead is suspected of abuse then this must be reported to the Trustee with safeguarding Responsibility or to the Chair of the Board.

Any allegation will be fully investigated, and staff members will be supported during this process.

It is important that allegations are thoroughly investigated through the Safeguarding process so that either allegations can be proved or disproved for the protection of both Service Users and staff.

If an allegation of abuse is made against any staff member, please refer to the Code of Conduct Policy.

Designated Safeguarding Leads contact details

Safeguarding Lead: Maria Wallser

Mobile No: 07743555989

Email: maria@fflag.org.uk

Trustee with responsibility for Safeguarding: Janis Proudfoot

Mobile No: 07749 258072

Email: janis@fflag.org.uk

Online Safety

It is essential that all staff members maintain a professional distance online and be aware at all times of the potential for online activity and comments to be misinterpreted or taken out of context. The following strategies should be implemented when undertaking online activities:

• Anyone working with service users must not knowingly use their personal social networking account to communicate with service users.

• Staff members must not post or comment on the status, wall or photos of any known service users.

• Only official pages, profiles, groups and sites should be used to share information relating to FFLAG.

Staff members should regularly review that they have no 'Friend' connections on their personal Social Networking Profiles with service users they work with. You should not accept 'Friend' requests from known service users to your personal profile page(s).

Safe recruitment

• All staff members will complete an application form, where they will state whether they have any criminal convictions.

• All shortlisted candidates will be interviewed

• All prospective staff members will be asked to provide photographic evidence of identity.

• Two references will be taken up prior to the appointment of the individual.

Wherever possible these should include at least one reference from their current or most recent employer.

FFLAG Requirements for DBS Checks

1) All Trustees

2) All employees who may have a public facing role

3) All FFLAG volunteers whose role involves them in a direct support role either face to face or online, including the Helpline, email Support, P2P and Zoom Support Meetings.

4) All FFLAG affiliated Group Leaders, Assistant/Deputy Group Leaders, anyone with a group facilitation role.

Office holders/Committee Members (including those from affiliated groups) or anyone who performs an Administrative role are not required to have DBS checks unless they also perform any of the roles above.

FFLAG will cover the costs of DBS checks for all the above categories and the Volunteer Coordinator will be responsible for organising DBS checks for FFLAG and affiliated groups.

Training

Staff members will receive induction training, which will give an overview of the organisation and ensure they know its purpose, values, services and structure.

All staff members will be expected to familiarise themselves with the Safeguarding Policy and with all other policies during their induction.

Safeguarding Training will be delivered at least every three years for all staff members at the level appropriate to their role.

Staff members providing Helpline, email, National Zoom Group and p2p support will be required to fulfil Safeguarding Training relevant to their role, before they begin. This will include recognising and responding to signs of abuse.

Supervision

FFLAG seeks to ensure the wellbeing and emotional health of all our "frontline" staff members and recognises the distress that being involved with safeguarding issues can cause. The term "Supervision" often has a management/authoritative connotation to many in a work situation and can make people wary of engaging. Whilst recognising that the necessity to safeguard our staff and services by providing supervision is crucial, FFLAG wishes to make supervision as useful, supportive and accessible to our staff as possible.

The following supervision processes will be offered. All those providing direct services i.e. email, helpline, National Zoom Group and p2p support will be expected to regularly take part in at least one of these processes. Volunteers will be made aware of the importance and value of taking part in at least one of these processes at Induction and the processes will be outlined in the Volunteer Handboook. The Volunteer Coordinator will monitor engagement and encourage/remind volunteers of the benefits of supervision both to themselves and to FFLAG.

Support Service	**Supervision Arrangement**
Email support	Confidential what's app group
Telephone helpline	Confidential what's app group
National Zoom Group	De-brief immediately after monthly Zoom
P2P	1) 1-2-1 check-in with VEC after first 3 new calls (3 different support seekers) 2) 1-2-1 supervision every 8 weeks with VEC (or 10 calls if that comes first)
CWG	De-brief immediately after monthly meeting
Affiliated Group Volunteers	Responsibility of group leaders Twice yearly Zoom get together arranged by VEC & supported by a Trustee

It is expected that Leaders of FFLAG Affiliated Local Groups will ensure supportive Supervision is provided in an accessible way to all of their volunteers who host meetings, groups or provide any other form of support direct or online. The form in which supervision will be offered should be detailed in each affiliated group's Safeguarding Policy.

It is recognised that on some occasions staff members may require access to professional supervision around safeguarding issues. FFLAG will undertake to have this delivered by an external provider with experience of Safeguarding Supervision.

Any such provision will be funded by FFLAG.

Recognising the need to refer to other agencies

Whilst we are not an emergency service we recognise that many of those who contact us are distressed. However, there are some who in the course of communicating with FFLAG staff cause us to have heightened concern for their wellbeing. Some people might be very specific and say they feel like killing themselves. Any statement like this should be taken seriously and they should be given the contact details of, and urged to seek the support of Samaritans or other appropriate organisations. A list of such support agencies can be found in Appendix C below.

The following is not an exhaustive list but includes some of the phrases that could trigger heightened concern:

"I just want it to stop"

"I don't want to be here anymore"

"I wish I could sleep and not wake up"

"It all seems so pointless"

"I wouldn't mind if I got hit by a bus"

"I just can't do this anymore"

Samaritans contact details:

Tel: 116 123

Email: jo@samaritans.org

Legal Context

This policy pays regards to the following legislation:

Working Together to Safeguard Children
2026 Gov.uk

The Children Act 2004

Working Together to Safeguard People

2019 Welsh Government (updated December 2022)

National Guidance for child protection in Scotland

2021 (updated 2023) Scottish Government

Cooperating to safeguard children and young people in Northern Ireland

2017 NI Executive Government (updated 2024)

Care Act

2014 England and Wales

The Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Act

2007 (updated 2022)

Adult Safeguarding: Prevention and Protection in Partnership

2015 NI Executive Government

Data Protection Act 2018 **/ UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)**

Monitoring and policy review

This policy and procedures will be reviewed on an annual basis by the Safeguarding Lead and Trustee with Responsibility for Safeguarding, with updating undertaken for approval by the Board of Trustees in consultation with volunteers and staff members.

Policy Adopted: December 2020

Last Reviewed: June 2026

Next Review: June 2027

APPENDIX A

Safeguarding Report/Concerns Form

APPENDIX B

FFLAG Safeguarding procedures

APPENDIX C

List of Other Support Agencies