



Irish Literary Society – Safeguarding Policy

1. Purpose of the policy

The Irish Literary Society (ILS) is committed to safeguarding practices that help ensure the safety of children and vulnerable adults whilst taking part in our group activities and in the wider community. This policy helps everyone involved in our group:

- be aware of our legal responsibilities
- understand the safeguarding risks involved in activity related to the Irish Literary Society
- know what to do if they have a concern about the wellbeing or welfare of any child or vulnerable adult that comes into contact with our Society.

This safeguarding policy, and associated procedures, apply to all individuals involved in the Irish Literary Society including trustees, members, volunteers, and staff. The policy applies to all concerns about the safety of children and vulnerable adults while taking part in our Society and the activities we run, or while in the wider community. Although we have historically had little interaction with children at our events, we include this category to ensure that an appropriate code of conduct is in place for all eventualities.

2. Code of conduct

When working with children and vulnerable adults we are acting in a position of trust. We recognise that keeping the ILS safe is everyone's responsibility, and we expect our members, volunteers, staff and trustees to behave according to the following values:

- All children and vulnerable adults have an equal right to protection from abuse and to be kept safe from harm regardless of their age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.
- We recognize some children, and vulnerable adults are additionally vulnerable because of the impact of previous experiences, their level of dependency, communication needs or other issues.
- We listen to and respect everyone in the group.
- We use language that is appropriate for age and ability, and not offensive or discriminatory.

- We encourage a culture of honesty, where everyone feels comfortable to point out attitudes or behaviours they do not like.
- We know it isn't always easy to be vocal about concerns – for ourselves or for other people.
- All allegations and suspicions of neglect and abuse will be taken seriously and responded swiftly and appropriately.

3. Legislation

The ILS recognizes that the local authority has the main legal duty to safeguard adults at risk. We also recognize the importance of 'Working Together to Safeguard Children'. We are committed to working with our local authorities and the Local Safeguarding Children Board.

This policy, and the practices within it, are based on the relevant legislation and guidance seeking to protect children and vulnerable adults, including:

- The Children Acts 1989 and 2004;
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018
- The Care Act 2014
- The Mental Capacity Act 2005 (which protects people's right to make their own decisions in any situation where they are able to do so).

We base our practices on the principles laid out in the Care Act 2014 i.e.

- Empowerment – People being 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 – Local solutions through services working with their communities. Communities have a part to play in preventing, detecting and reporting neglect and abuse.
- Accountability – Accountability and transparency in delivering safeguarding.

4. Definitions

The Children Act 1989 defines a child as: anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday, even if they are living independently, are a member of the armed forces or are in hospital.

Child abuse happens when a person harms a child.

An **adult at risk** is an individual aged 18 years and over who:

- has needs for care and support (whether or not the local authority is meeting any of those needs) AND;
- is experiencing, or 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.

Abuse is a violation of an individual's human and civil rights by another person or persons. It can occur in any relationship and may result in significant harm to, or exploitation of, the person subjected to it. Any or all of the following types of abuse may be perpetrated as the result of deliberate intent, negligence, omission or ignorance. Often the perpetrator of abuse is known to the adult and may be in a position of trust and power.

According to the Care Act 2014 (applicable in England) and other relevant legislation the types of abuse that we need to be aware of are:

Vulnerable adults	Children
Physical Sexual Emotional/Psychological/Mental Neglect and acts of omission Financial or material abuse Discriminatory Organisational / institutional Self-neglect Domestic abuse (including coercive control) Modern slavery	Physical abuse Neglect Emotional abuse Bullying and cyberbullying Child sexual exploitation Child criminal exploitation Child trafficking Domestic abuse Female genital mutilation Grooming Historical abuse Online abuse Radicalisation

5. Recognising safeguarding concerns

There are many signs and indicators that may suggest a child or vulnerable adult is experiencing abuse or neglect. There may be other explanations too, but the ILS will not ignore any of these signs if they are apparent.

A child may confide (disclose) to a trustee, volunteer, or other member of ILS that they are experiencing abuse, inside or outside the activities of the group. Or someone else may notice signs in a particular child.

An adult may confide (disclose) to a trustee, volunteer, or other member of the ILS that they are experiencing abuse, inside or outside the activities of the group. Or someone else may notice signs in a particular individual. The signs we will look out for include:

Different forms of abuse and neglect may have different signs. We will look out for all those listed below.

- Unexplained bruises or injuries
- Belongings or money going missing from the person
- The person no longer attending or enjoying ILS activities, or responding to contact from other members of the group
- A change in the confidence or behaviour of a person e.g. if they are withdrawn and quiet around a particular person or people, when usually they are outgoing and confident.
- A change in the appearance of the person, e.g. losing or gaining weight, deterioration in personal hygiene or way of dressing.
- Someone else (e.g. a parent, carer or family member) always speaking for the person and not allowing them to make their own choices
- The person showing fear of, or not wanting to be around, a particular individual or group of people

6. Responding to concerns

The ILS has a designated safeguarding lead whose contact details are in section 11.

The ILS recognises that it can be difficult for many reasons to speak up if you think a child or vulnerable adult is being abused or neglected. However, we expect our members, volunteers, trustees, and staff to take action in response to any concerns. Our safeguarding lead will support the person raising the concerns, as well as the person at risk of/experiencing abuse.

If anyone in the group notices any signs of abuse or neglect in another person, they should bring these concerns to the safeguarding lead.

If a person discloses to any adult in the group that they are being abused, the response should be as follows:

- Always make sure person speaking up feels they are being listened to and supported
- Don't promise to keep information confidential between you and them. Explain that you need to share the information with someone who will be able to help.
- Tell the designated safeguarding lead about the concerns (unless the safeguarding lead is implicated in causing the harm or perpetrating the abuse. In this situation, information should be shared with a trusted committee member and they will be responsible for taking further action instead of the safeguarding lead)
- Ask for the person's consent to share the information. If they refuse and you are still worried that they or someone else is at immediate risk of harm, you cannot wait for this consent. You must share this information with the safeguarding lead.
- Write a clear statement of what you have been told, seen, or heard

The **designated safeguarding lead (DSL)** is responsible for taking further action once concerns have been raised with them. Throughout the process, the safeguarding lead will record all the information they are given, the actions they take, and why. The procedures they will follow are:

6.1 Initial assessment

As soon as information is shared with the safeguarding lead, they will make an initial assessment of the concern. They will, if possible, talk to the person reporting the concern and gather as much information as possible from them. If the concern is being raised based on a direct disclosure from a child, the safeguarding lead **will not** question the child or ask them to repeat any details. They may, however, tell the child that they have heard the concerns, reassure the child again that they have done the right thing in disclosing, and tell them what the next steps will be.

Key questions for the safeguarding lead to consider:

- What type of concern has been reported? Different actions are required depending on what type of concern it is (see below)
- What action has already been taken?
- Is anyone else in the organisation affected by this situation (e.g. other volunteers or those you work with)? Are there any attitudes or emotions that you may have to be aware of?
- How might this concern affect what the organisation delivers in the short term?
- Who else might need to be informed?
- What other actions now need to be taken?

6.2 Immediate actions depending on what type of concern has been raised

(a) Emergency incidents: this is when there's a life-threatening situation where there's imminent danger and harm to an adult, young person or child.

- Immediately contact the emergency services if they haven't been called already.
- Make sure the current situation is safe.
- Establish how others are coping – do they need any immediate support?
- Inform the senior people in the group

(b) Protection concerns: This is when a person who you believe is unable to protect themselves is at current risk of, or has experienced, abuse or harm.

- If the person is in immediate danger, call the police
- If they're not in immediate danger; you must contact the local authority safeguarding team within 24 hours and make a referral (contact details are in section 10)
- Be guided by the safeguarding team or police on any further actions required of you.

(c) Allegations concerning staff or volunteers: this is when someone has alleged that staff or volunteers from your organisation have harmed or abused an adult at risk.

- Contact the local authority safeguarding team as soon as possible within 24 hours.
- Be guided by them on any further actions required of you.

(d) Welfare concerns: This is when no one has been harmed in any way, but a person shows signs of being in need. It's when you have concerns for their health, wellbeing or safety if they don't get help.

- Within 7 days you, or someone in your organisation, should speak with the person. When it is appropriate, you should also speak with their family or carer. You must explain your concerns and make sure they have the support they need.
- Depending on the conversation, the safeguarding lead may then also:
 - Help the person or their family access services or give them the information they need to do this themselves.
 - Speak to another professional who is already working with the person or family, such as a social worker, about their needs.

(e) Concerns about other organisations: This is a situation where the safeguarding concern is about another organisation, their staff, volunteers or the people they work with.

- As soon as possible within 24 hours contact the designated safeguarding lead of the organisation in question and pass on your concerns, if this has not already happened.
- In some circumstances you may decide to follow up with the organisation to confirm they have acted on the issue.
- If at any point you think the organisation has not acted and someone is at risk, you should contact the local safeguarding team yourself.

(f) Responding to historic or non-recent concerns: You may become aware or been told about a concern from a person relating to an incident which took place in the past, including when they were a child. Historical allegations of abuse should be taken as seriously as contemporary allegations.

- Remember that it's never too late to report abuse. An individual can make a formal complaint to the police about non-recent abuse, ideally in the geographic area in which the abuse is reported to have taken place.
- Establish if the person alleged to have caused the harm works with children or adults at risk. Try to find out their recent or current whereabouts and any contact they have with children or adults at risk. A referral should be made to social services, with the consent of the person who experienced the abuse if possible.
- Consider what consent the person has given for information to be shared. How, when and to whom they share this information should usually be with their consent.
- Signpost the person who experienced the abuse to relevant support groups that can help them.

(g) Supporting those who share a concern with you: Your primary concern should be the best interests of the person who is at risk of harm. However, the person sharing this concern with you may also be distressed by the situation, even if they are reporting on behalf of someone else. Everyone can respond to worries about another differently. If someone has previously experienced trauma they can find it especially upsetting.

- Thank them for bringing this concern to your attention and that they have fulfilled their key responsibility
- Explain that you will now take responsibility in leading management of this concern and any contact with statutory agencies
- Highlight that there may be limited updates that you have or can give them on the situation; that does not mean that it was not important for them to share their concern
- Remind them of the importance of confidentiality and not sharing this information further
- Ensure they have your contact details in case they think of anything else they have not yet shared that they think may be relevant
- Discuss with them what additional support they may require. Consider contacting them later to check in on how they are doing.

7. Keeping records

The ILS recognises that it is vital to record and store details about any safeguarding concerns that arise. We will record information, even if the concerns have not been shared with the police or the local authority safeguarding team. These records are extremely sensitive and will be kept in a locked cabinet or drawer (if hard copy) and/or password protected and stored on a computer with protection against hackers and viruses (if electronic).

It is the responsibility of the designated safeguarding lead to ensure that the following information is recorded about every safeguarding concern:

- The date and time of the incident/disclosure/concern
- The date and time of the report
- The name and role of the person to whom the concern was originally reported and their contact details
- The name and role of the person making the report (if this is different to the above) and their contact details
- The names of all parties who were involved in the incident, including any witnesses
- The name and any other relevant information about the adult who is the subject of the concern (including information about their care and support needs)
- What was said or done and by whom
- Any action taken to look into the matter
- Any further action taken (such as a referral being made)
- The reasons why the organisation decided not to refer those concerns to a statutory agency (if relevant)

Each record will be signed and dated by the person making the report.

8. Confidentiality, consent and information sharing

Timely information sharing is key to keeping children safe and responding appropriately to concerns about their welfare. In general, the ILS expects all committee members, volunteers and staff to maintain confidentiality and act in accordance with the UK General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).

Parents/carers are normally the first point of contact for any concerns about a child. If there is a disclosure or suspicion of abuse, however, we will take guidance from the NSPCC Helpline and/or local authority safeguarding team as to whether we should make parents/carers aware of it or whether it should be left to other authorities to speak with the parent/carers.

We will share information within the group (e.g. with other volunteers) in situations where this is necessary in order to deal effectively with safeguarding concerns or to provide continuity of support. We will share information with other organisations in order to keep a person safe. Whenever the ILS shares information about a child or confidential information about an adult with any other organisation, we will follow the principles below. We will:

- Have a clear and legitimate purpose
- Keep clear records of why we chose to share the information
- Ensure we are not putting the person at risk by sharing information
- Be as factual as possible
- Seek consent. If the adult refuses consent, we may share information **only** if:
 - We think they are at serious risk of harm or abuse, including harming themselves (preservation of life) or other people are being put at risk;
 - Information indicates that a serious crime has been or is going to be committed;
 - We think the person lacks the mental capacity to decide for themselves and we believe it would be in the individual's best interests;
- A child (including unborn baby) is involved;
- Staff or volunteers are implicated;
- Coercion is involved;
- We are required by law e.g. if we suspect FGM, forced marriage, or a possible terrorist threat.

9. Recruiting and training volunteers

ILS volunteers that work with children or adults at risk will be given an induction which covers the safeguarding policy and procedures of the group. They will be trained in: our code of conduct; definitions of abuse and harm; recognising signs of abuse; and how to respond to concerns and disclosures. All volunteers will know who is the designated safeguarding lead, and that they should go to them with any concerns.

The designated safeguarding lead will be offered further training to ensure they are clear about their role, and what action to take in response to different concerns.

We will apply for Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks for all volunteers for whom we are legally required to do so.

10. Reviewing policy and procedures

This policy and its procedures will be reviewed every 2 years. They were last reviewed and updated on 17 June 2024 by the Trustees: Gavin Clarke (Hon. Secretary); James Lazar (Chairman); Dr. Michelle Paull; Peter Power-Hynes (Hon. Treasurer).

11. Key contacts

Irish Literary Society Designated Safeguarding Lead

Name: Gavin Clarke

Contact details: irishlitsoc@gmail.com, 0706435121

As the ILS operates across London and occasionally further afield the relevant local authority safeguarding team to contact to make a referral about a child or adult at risk will vary depending on the report and the particular circumstances of individuals involved. A list of local safeguarding contacts is available here: <https://safeguarding-guide.nhs.uk/contacts/>.

NSPCC Helpline For adults to call for support or advice about child safeguarding concerns 0808 800 5000 help@nspcc.org.uk	Elder Abuse UK Helpline Phone for advice: 080 8808 8141 https://wearehourglass.org/
Childline For children to call for support 0800 1111 24 hours a day, 7 days a week	National Domestic Violence Helpline Freephone, 24 hours a day, for advice: 0808 2000 247 http://www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk