

North East Sling Library

Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy

1. Policy statement

This policy applies to anyone working for or on behalf of North East Sling Library ("the Sling Library"), whether paid staff, trained consultants, committee members or volunteers. It applies to all activities of the Sling Library, including consultations, sling meets, hire sessions, events and online activity (including our website and social media).

The purpose of this policy is to protect children and young people, and to give staff, volunteers and Sling Library users a clear statement of the principles that guide our approach to safeguarding and child protection.

The Sling Library believes that a child or young person should never experience abuse of any kind. A child may be abused by someone inflicting, or failing to prevent, significant harm. Abuse may happen in a family, institutional or social setting, online, by someone known to the child, or, more rarely, by a stranger.

We have a responsibility to promote the welfare of all children and young people we come into contact with, and to keep them safe. We are committed to ensuring that the work of the Sling Library is carried out in a safe way, and we recognise that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility, not just that of the Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO).

2. Legal and policy framework

This policy has been drawn up on the basis of law and statutory guidance that seeks to protect children, namely:

- Children Act 1989 and Children Act 2004
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (HM Government, statutory guidance, current edition)
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989
- Data Protection Act 2018 and the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)
- Sexual Offences Act 2003
- Protection of Freedoms Act 2012 (Disclosure and Barring Service checks)
- Equality Act 2010
- Online Safety Act 2023, so far as it relates to our use of social media and online content
- Charity Commission guidance on safeguarding, where relevant to our governance

This policy and the guidance behind it should be reviewed whenever the law or statutory guidance changes, and at least once every 12 months regardless.

3. Principles

We recognise that:

- The welfare of the child is paramount, as enshrined in the Children Act 1989.
- All children, regardless of age, disability, gender, racial or ethnic origin, religious belief, sexual orientation or gender identity, have an equal right to protection from harm or abuse.
- Some children are additionally vulnerable because of the impact of previous experiences, their level of dependency, communication needs, or other issues, and babies and pre-verbal infants — the core group we work with — are inherently unable to report concerns themselves, which places extra responsibility on us.

- Working in partnership with children, young people, their parents and carers, and other agencies, is essential to promoting welfare and safety.

4. How we keep children and young people safe

We do this by:

- Valuing, listening to and respecting children and their carers.
- Adopting child protection practices through clear procedures, e-safety guidance, and a Code of Conduct for staff, consultants and volunteers.
- Following safer recruitment practices for anyone working with or around children, including seeking references and requiring an enhanced DBS check where a role involves regulated activity.
- Providing induction, support and periodic refresher training on safeguarding for everyone working on behalf of the Sling Library.
- Never leaving a child alone with a single volunteer/consultant where this can reasonably be avoided; where a 1:1 consultation is unavoidable (e.g. a home visit or private fitting), ensuring a parent or carer is always present throughout, since our clients are babies and young children accompanied by an adult.
- Taking care with photography and video: only photographing or filming children with the explicit, informed consent of a parent or carer, only using images for the stated purpose (e.g. social media promotion) they consented to, and storing consent records securely.
- Sharing safeguarding concerns promptly with the agencies who need to know, and involving parents and children appropriately, in line with the reporting procedure below.
- Keeping accurate, confidential records of any concerns raised, stored securely and shared only on a need-to-know basis, in line with our Privacy Policy and data protection law.

5. Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO)

Our Designated Safeguarding Officer is:

- Rachel Coy, Owner — Coy Consultancy Services Limited / North East Sling Library — holds a Level 3 Safeguarding certificate — contact: 07989 242664

As a small, owner-led organisation, there is currently no deputy DSO. Because of this, any concern that relates to Rachel Coy herself, or arises when she is unreachable, should go straight to the NSPCC Helpline or the local authority contacts below rather than waiting. .

The DSO is responsible for: acting as the first point of contact for any safeguarding concern; deciding what action to take, including making referrals to the local authority or police where necessary; keeping confidential records; and ensuring this policy is reviewed and understood by everyone working on behalf of the Sling Library.

6. Recognising abuse

Abuse and neglect generally fall into one of the following categories, and a child may experience more than one type at the same time:

- Physical abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Neglect

Given the nature of our work — hands-on carrier fitting with babies and toddlers — staff and volunteers should also be alert to, and report, any signs of physical harm consistent with unsafe

babywearing practice, as well as the more general indicators of abuse or neglect covered in our safeguarding training.

7. What to do if you have a concern

If a child tells you they are being harmed (a "disclosure"), or you notice something that concerns you:

- Stay calm, listen carefully, and do not promise to keep the information secret.
- Do not question the child or investigate yourself.
- Reassure the child they were right to tell you.
- As soon as possible afterwards, write down what was said or observed, using the child's own words where possible, with times, dates and who was present.
- Report it to the DSO the same day, or immediately if there is a risk of immediate harm.

If you believe a child is in immediate danger, call 999.

If the DSO is not available, or the concern is about the DSO, contact:

- The NSPCC Helpline: 0808 800 5000 (for advice, not an emergency service), or
- The local authority children's social care team for the area the child lives in (for County Durham: Durham County Council's Front Door for Families, 03000 267 979), or
- Police, on 101 for non-emergencies.

Concerns about a member of staff, consultant or volunteer's conduct towards a child (an "allegation") should be reported directly to the DSO, or, if the DSO is implicated, to the local authority designated officer (LADO) via the local authority above, without first raising it with the individual concerned.

8. Online safety and social media

The Sling Library uses Facebook, Pinterest, Twitter/X and YouTube to promote its work. We will:

- Only post images or video of children with a parent or carer's explicit consent, and remove content promptly if consent is withdrawn.
- Avoid naming children in public posts unless a parent/carer has specifically agreed to this.
- Keep professional and personal social media separate, and not contact children or young people directly through personal social media accounts.
- Moderate comments on our public pages and remove or report anything inappropriate or which could put a child at risk.

9. Safer recruitment

Anyone taking on a role that involves regulated activity with children (for example, unsupervised 1:1 consultations) will be asked for:

- Proof of identity.
- At least one reference.
- An enhanced DBS check, renewed periodically in line with current guidance.
- An induction covering this policy, our Code of Conduct, and how to recognise and report concerns.

10. Confidentiality and record keeping

Safeguarding records will be kept separately from general business records, stored securely (password-protected if electronic, locked if paper), and shared only with people who need to know, in line with our Privacy Policy, the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR. Information will always be

shared with the relevant authorities where there is a risk to a child, even without parental consent, if withholding it would put a child at risk of significant harm.

11. Review

This policy was drawn up using guidance from the NSPCC, and has been reviewed with reference to Working Together to Safeguard Children and current Charity Commission/NCVO guidance on safeguarding for small voluntary organisations.

We are committed to reviewing this policy, our procedures and our good practice annually, or sooner if there is a relevant change in the law or guidance, or following any safeguarding incident.

This policy was reviewed on 9 July 2026 and will next be reviewed by 9 July 2027, or sooner if the law, guidance or our activities change.

Signed: Rachel Coy

Role: Owner, Coy Consultancy Services Limited / North East Sling Library

Date: 9 July 2026