

# Best Foot Forward – Safeguarding Adults Policy

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## Safeguarding Adults Policy

### 1. Purpose and Scope

Best Foot Forward is committed to promoting the welfare and safety of all individuals who engage with our provision.

While our work often supports young people, some learners may be aged 18 or over and therefore fall within the scope of **adult safeguarding**.

This policy sets out how Best Foot Forward protects adults who may be at risk of harm or abuse during sessions delivered 1-to-1 in **homes, schools, or community settings**.

It applies to:

- All staff, sessional workers, volunteers, and contractors working on behalf of Best Foot Forward.
- Any adult receiving educational, mentoring, or wellbeing support through our services.

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### 2. Policy Statement

Best Foot Forward believes every adult has the right to live free from abuse, neglect, and exploitation. We recognise our responsibility to safeguard and promote the well-being of adults who may be at risk and to take appropriate action where abuse or neglect is suspected.

We are committed to:

- Protecting the rights, safety, and dignity of adults we support.
- Acting promptly and proportionately to concerns.
- Working in partnership with local authorities, health, police, and other agencies.
- Ensuring staff are trained, confident, and supported in safeguarding practice.

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### 3. Legal and Policy Framework

This policy is underpinned by key UK legislation and guidance, including:

- Care Act 2014
- Mental Capacity Act 2005
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Data Protection Act 2018 / UK GDPR
- Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 (Prevent Duty)
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023) – for cases where adults and children are both present or at risk

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#### 4. Definition of an Adult at Risk

An *“adult at risk”* is defined in the **Care Act 2014** as a person aged 18 or over who:

1. Has needs for care and support (whether or not those needs are being met);
2. Is experiencing, or is at risk of, abuse or neglect; and
3. As a result of those needs, is unable to protect themselves from the abuse or neglect or the risk of it.

Adults at risk may include those with:

- Learning difficulties or disabilities
- Mental health needs
- Physical disabilities or sensory impairments
- Substance misuse issues
- Long-term illness
- Social isolation or dependency on others for care

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#### 5. Types of Abuse and Neglect

The **Care Act 2014** identifies 10 main categories of abuse:

1. Physical abuse
2. Domestic violence or abuse
3. Sexual abuse
4. Psychological or emotional abuse
5. Financial or material abuse
6. Modern slavery
7. Discriminatory abuse
8. Organisational or institutional abuse
9. Neglect and acts of omission
10. Self-neglect

Staff must remain vigilant to all forms of abuse, including coercive control, online exploitation, and radicalisation.

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#### 6. Recognising Signs of Abuse

Possible indicators of abuse include (but are not limited to):

- Unexplained injuries or changes in physical appearance
- Withdrawal, anxiety, or unusual fearfulness
- Poor hygiene, nutrition, or living conditions
- Sudden changes in finances or possessions
- Reluctance to engage with certain people
- Inconsistent or implausible explanations for injuries or events

Staff must not attempt to investigate but must **report any concern immediately** (see section 8).

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#### 7. Roles and Responsibilities

All staff have a duty to:

- Safeguard and promote the welfare of adults at risk.
- Report any safeguarding concern or suspicion immediately.
- Maintain confidentiality and accurate records.

The **Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)** is responsible for:

- Receiving and acting upon safeguarding concerns.
- Liaising with local authority Adult Safeguarding teams.
- Ensuring concerns are logged, stored, and followed up appropriately.
- Providing advice, support, and training for staff.

Deputy DSLs support the DSL and act in their absence.

Contact details for the DSL and Deputy DSLs are shared in staff induction materials and displayed in internal documentation.

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## 8. Reporting and Responding to Concerns

If a member of staff believes an adult is at risk of harm, they must:

1. **Ensure immediate safety** of the person and others.
2. **Report the concern without delay** to the **Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)**.
3. **Record the concern factually** using the organisation's safeguarding reporting form.

The DSL will:

- Consider the nature and urgency of the concern.
- Make a referral to the **Local Authority Adult Safeguarding Team** if criteria are met.
- Liaise with other agencies (police, health, social care) as necessary.
- Record all decisions, actions, and outcomes.

If a crime is suspected (e.g. physical assault, theft, sexual abuse), the police must be contacted immediately.

If staff cannot contact the DSL and believe there is immediate danger, they should **contact the local authority or the police directly** and inform the DSL as soon as possible.

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## 9. Confidentiality and Information Sharing

- Information will be shared on a **need-to-know basis only** and in accordance with data protection law.
- Safeguarding concerns override confidentiality where there is risk of serious harm or abuse.
- Adults have a right to be informed about what will happen with information shared about them, unless doing so would place them or others at greater risk.

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## 10. Mental Capacity and Consent

Under the **Mental Capacity Act 2005**, adults are presumed to have capacity unless proven otherwise.

Before taking action, staff must consider whether the adult can:

- Understand the information relevant to the decision;
- Retain that information;
- Weigh the information to make a decision; and
- Communicate their decision.

Where a person lacks capacity, decisions must be made in their **best interests**, following statutory principles.

## 11. Safer Recruitment and Training

- All staff undergo **enhanced DBS checks** and reference verification before working unsupervised with adults or young people.
- Staff receive **mandatory safeguarding and Prevent training**, refreshed at least annually.
- The DSL receives additional, advanced training and regular supervision.

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## 12. Working in Homes, Schools, and the Community

Given the 1-to-1 nature of Best Foot Forward's work:

- Risk assessments must be completed for all off-site and home-based sessions.
- Staff should maintain professional boundaries at all times.
- Any concerns about home conditions, family dynamics, or risk factors must be reported through safeguarding channels.
- Lone working procedures must always be followed.

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## 13. Record-Keeping

- All safeguarding records must be clear, factual, dated, and signed.
- Records are stored securely in line with the organisation's **Data Protection Policy**.
- Records are retained in accordance with statutory retention periods and securely destroyed thereafter.

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## 14. Prevent Duty

Best Foot Forward recognises its responsibility under the **Prevent Duty** to protect individuals from being drawn into terrorism or extremist ideologies.

Concerns about radicalisation must be referred to the DSL, who will contact the local Prevent lead or police as appropriate.

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## 15. Monitoring and Review

The DSL and management team will:

- Monitor safeguarding activity and outcomes.
- Review lessons learned from cases or incidents.
- Update this policy annually or sooner if legislation or guidance changes.

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## 16. Related Policies

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Code of Conduct
- Lone Working Policy
- Data Protection and Confidentiality Policy
- Health and Safety Policy