



Safeguarding Policy

POLICY STATEMENT

Learn to Love to Read (L2L2R) works with children and families as part of its activities. These include: reading one-to-one with children in partner schools, reading one-to-one with children online via Zoom and running classes for pre-school children and their carers, both face-to-face and online via Zoom.

L2L2R takes the safeguarding of the children and families it works with, and of its staff and volunteers, extremely seriously. We believe that children should never experience abuse of any kind and that we **all** have a role to play in safeguarding. We have a responsibility to promote the welfare of all children and keep them safe. We are committed to practise in a way that protects them.

This policy applies to all paid staff, the board of trustees, volunteers and anyone working on behalf of L2L2R.

The purpose of this policy:

- To protect children who receive L2L2R's services.
- To provide staff and volunteers with the overarching principles that guide our approach to safeguarding and child protection.

Legal framework

This policy has been drawn up on the basis of legislation, policy and guidance that seek to protect children in England, particularly '*Keeping Children Safe in Education: Statutory Guidance for Schools and Colleges*' published by the Department for Education (Sept. 2024). L2L2R's staff and volunteers are required to read and understand these guidelines.

We recognise that:

- The welfare of the child is paramount, as enshrined in the Children Act 1989.
- All children regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation have a right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse.
- Some children are additionally vulnerable because of the impact of previous experiences, their level of dependency, communication needs or other issues.
- Working in partnership with children, young people, their parents, carers and other agencies is essential in promoting young people's welfare.



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We will seek to keep children safe by:

- Valuing them, listening to and respecting them.
- Appointing a staff safeguarding lead and deputy, and a designated safeguarding trustee.
- Developing child protection and safeguarding policies and procedures which reflect best practice.
- Implementing a code of conduct for trustees, staff and volunteers.
- Recruiting trustees, staff and volunteers safely, ensuring all necessary checks are made.
- Providing effective management for staff and volunteers through supervision, support, training and quality assurance measures.
- Recording and storing information professionally and securely and sharing information about safeguarding and good practice with staff and volunteers.
- Using our safeguarding procedures to share concerns and relevant information with agencies who need to know.
- Using our procedures to manage any allegations against staff and volunteers appropriately.
- By having a dedicated safeguarding email address (safeguarding@l2l2r.org) which is monitored by our safeguarding link trustee.
- Ensuring we have an effective problem-solving procedure in place.
- By conducting a full safeguarding audit at least once a year.

Related policies and procedures

We evidence our commitment to follow best practice in safeguarding and promoting the well-being of children through:

- Clear governance structures to provide accountability for how L2L2R addresses issues of safeguarding throughout its work.
- Recruitment, induction, training and supervision processes for staff and volunteers that demonstrate the principles of safer practice.
- Child protection policies and procedures that demonstrate good practice in handling concerns and allegations.
- A safeguarding code of behaviour for trustees, staff and volunteers.



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Contact details

Designated safeguarding lead

Matilda Tuke

matilda@l2l2r.org

Deputy safeguarding lead

Tara Coffin

tara@l2l2r.org

Designated safeguarding trustee

Joanna Henley

safeguarding@l2l2r.org

The designated safeguarding lead and deputy, and designated safeguarding trustee have received safeguarding training.

Anyone who wishes to report a safeguarding incident directly to the charity should use the email address specifically set up for this purpose: safeguarding@l2l2r.org .



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Safer staff and volunteers

Recruitment

All staff, trustees and volunteers must complete an online application form. This form will ask for permission to use and store their data in line with data protection rules. Candidates will also be asked if they would like to disclose anything relevant that might become apparent during a DBS check. If they answer yes to this question, they will be asked to complete a self-disclosure form prior to interview and bring it with them in a sealed envelope. They will be given an opportunity to discuss the contents at interview.

Should applicants flag up an issue on the self-disclosure form, it will be considered by the designated safeguarding lead, the designated safeguarding trustee and the trustee with legal expertise. They will use the Criminal Record Assessment Template from Unlock, an independent award-winning national charity that provides a voice and support for people who are facing stigma and obstacles because of their criminal record, often long after they have served their sentence. The panel will take account of issues such as the relevance and severity of the offence, the number of offences, the date of the offence and the age of the applicant at the time. Should a decision be taken to progress the application, approval must also be sought from the relevant partner school. Details of the decision-making process will be recorded in writing and stored securely.

All applicants must also provide details of two referees. Referees must have known the applicant for a minimum of two years and not be related to them. In cases where a volunteer, trustee or staff applicant has worked or volunteered with children in the past, one referee must be from their most recent setting and from a professional email address. In cases where a volunteer applicant is a parent at a partner school, one referee must be a member of school staff. In cases where a volunteer applicant is a student, one referee must be a college tutor. All other applicants must provide at least one referee from a professional or voluntary capacity and from a professional email address.

Staff, trustees and volunteers will need to pass an L2L2R enhanced DBS check when one is required. Where a member of staff, trustee or volunteer already has an existing DBS and is registered with the DBS Update Service, L2L2R will gain their permission to check the Update Service for the DBS details. Details of the date of issue of a certificate, the name of the subject, the type of certificate requested, the position for which the certificate was requested, and the unique reference number of the certificate will be stored centrally by L2L2R. Volunteers must be aged 18 years or over.

Overseas DBS checks will be carried out by prospective volunteers, trustees and staff as required by Wandsworth Council (if candidates have lived abroad for a period of more than three months since the age of 16). If an overseas DBS check is not available for legitimate reasons, a risk assessment may be carried out by L2L2R and shared with any relevant partner organisations.

If a candidate's DBS check is not returned as 'clear', and they did not indicate on application



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that they should complete a self-disclosure form, the candidate will not be appointed. If they are barred from working with children, L2L2R will report this to the police.

Induction and on-going training

All staff and volunteers will receive safeguarding training prior to starting work in any partner organisation (e.g. a school or children's centre). This will include training on L2L2R's safeguarding policy and the latest policies set out by the relevant partner organisation and the government as appropriate.

All staff and trustees, even if they are not working directly with children, will be required to read L2L2R's safeguarding policy and the latest government policies.

L2L2R will ask continuing staff, trustees and volunteers to refresh this safeguarding training annually. Staff and trustees will be required to attend a suitable safeguarding training course every two years.

Every staff member or volunteer who helps in a school or supports children virtually will be required, prior to starting their volunteering, to make a declaration, via an online survey, to confirm they have read and understood L2L2R's Safeguarding Policy, the latest Department for Education's '*Keeping Children Safe in Education*' document, the NSPCC's Definitions and Signs of Abuse and the school's own safeguarding policy. L2L2R's safeguarding training explains the importance of safeguarding, outlines the responsibility of staff and volunteers, gives guidelines for volunteer and staff conduct and outlines the procedure to follow and the people to inform in case of an incident. L2L2R will ensure all in-school volunteers know the names of the school designated safeguarding leads and know where to access a school safeguarding report form.

L2L2R will renew DBS checks for trustees, staff and volunteers every three years, unless individuals are registered with the DBS Update Service.

Keeping children safe online

L2L2R is committed to keeping children safe during its virtual reading sessions. Parents/carers will first be approached about taking part in the sessions by their children's school or by another partner organisation. We will only instigate contact when parents/carers have consented to their contact information being shared with L2L2R.

All parents/carers are required to give L2L2R their consent for virtual volunteering via an online form before children can take part in a session. The consent form sets out our expectations and how we aim to safeguard children during these sessions.

We ask parents/carers to agree that:

- A parent or carer must be visible to the volunteer at all times during the session
- Children must be in a suitable space (ideally sitting room or kitchen, not bedroom) where they can see and hear the volunteer clearly
- Children should be suitably dressed in appropriate daywear (no night clothes)
- Children under 16 are not allowed to set up their own Zoom account



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- Volunteers will only contact parents and children at the agreed times
- Volunteers should not be invited to Zoom meetings by parents or children
- Parents/carers understand that Zoom collects data from users (www.zoom.us/privacy)
- L2L2R will store contact details in order to contact parents about their child's reading support.

How to spot safeguarding concerns

Disclosure is the process by which children start to share their experiences of abuse with others. This can take place over a long period of time – it is a journey, not one act or action. Children may disclose directly or indirectly and sometimes they may start sharing details of abuse before they are ready to put their thoughts and feelings in order. Not all disclosures will lead to a formal report of abuse, or a case being made or a case being taken to court, but all disclosures should be taken seriously.

How disclosure happens

Children may disclose abuse in a variety of ways, including:

- Directly – making specific verbal statements about what has happened to them.
- Indirectly – making ambiguous verbal statements which suggest something is wrong.
- Behaviourally – displaying behaviour that signals something is wrong (this may or may not be deliberate).
- Non-verbally – writing letters, drawing pictures or trying to communicate in other ways.

Sometimes children make partial disclosures of abuse. This means they give some details about what they've experienced, but not the whole picture. They may withhold some information because of:

- Fear that they will get in trouble with or upset their family.
- Wanting to deflect blame in case of family difficulties as a result of the disclosure.
- Feelings of shame and guilt.

Barriers to disclosure

Some children are reluctant to seek help because they feel they don't have anyone to turn to for support. They may have sought help in the past and had a negative experience, which makes them unlikely to do so again.

They may also:

- Feel that they will not be taken seriously.
- Feel too embarrassed to talk to an adult about a private or personal problem.
- Worry about confidentiality.
- Lack trust in the people around them (including parents) and in the services provided to help them.
- Fear the consequences of asking for help.



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- Worry they will be causing trouble and making the situation worse.
- Find formal procedures overwhelming.

(Mental Health Foundation and Camelot Foundation, 2006).

Spotting the signs of abuse

Children who have been abused may want to tell someone, but not have the exact words to do so. They may attempt to disclose abuse by giving you clues, through their actions and by using indirect words (Allnock and Miller, 2013; Cossar et al, 2013).

You need to be able to notice the signs that a child or young person might be distressed and ask them appropriate questions about what might have caused this. You should never wait until a child or young person tells you directly that they are being abused before taking action.

To find out more on the definitions and signs of child abuse, please read the following document (note - all L2L2R volunteers are asked to read this prior to volunteering):

Definitions and Signs of Child Abuse (NSPCC)

How to respond to safeguarding concerns

Everyone who comes into contact with children and their families and carers has a role to play in safeguarding children. No single person can have a full picture of a child's needs and circumstances.

In order to fulfil this responsibility effectively, we need to make sure our approach is child centred. This means that we should consider, at all times, what is in the best interests of the child.

If you have a concern or receive information about a pupil which causes you concern, you are duty bound to **act quickly** and appropriately to ensure action can be taken to protect the pupil concerned. You must **not** investigate it yourself.

If a child discloses abuse, there are a number of steps you should take:

- Listen carefully to the child without interrupting. Avoid commenting on the matter or showing reactions like shock or disbelief which could cause the child to retract or stop talking.
- Do not ask leading questions, or more questions than you have to – just establish what the child is telling you. If you need to establish whether to be concerned you could use one of the following phrases:

T.E.D.

T = Tell me about ...

E = Explain more about ...

D = Describe ...

- Let them know they've done the right thing. Reassurance can make a big impact on a child who may have been keeping the abuse secret.



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- Tell them it's not their fault. Abuse is never the child's fault and they need to know this.
- Say you will take them seriously. A child could keep abuse secret in fear they won't be taken seriously. They've spoken out because they want help and trust that someone will listen to and support them.
- **Do not** promise the child confidentiality - be honest with the child and explain what will happen next – that this will need to be reported to someone who will be able to help.
- Don't delay reporting the abuse. The sooner the abuse is reported after the child discloses the better. This must be done on the same day as the incident.
- Remain non-judgemental and keep an open mind.

Making notes

It's important to keep accurate and detailed notes of any concerns you have about a child. If the child has made a verbal disclosure, you will need to write down their exact words as far as you can. Ensure your report is factual and unbiased.

Reporting your concerns in school

- You will need to share your concerns and your notes **ONLY** with the school or Children's Centre's designated safeguarding lead (DSL) or deputy. You will have been told their details as part of your annual safeguarding training, or you can ask at the school office.
- You must record the incident on the form provided by the school or Children's Centre **and give this only to the DSL or Deputy**. The school or Children's Centre will then take appropriate action.
- You will also need to report the same details of the incident immediately, including the child's name, to L2L2R's designated safeguarding lead, Matilda Tuke, at matilda@l2l2r.org. This is to ensure all incidents are documented in our confidential Safeguarding Report document. This document is intended to ensure that correct procedures were followed and to highlight any further action required on our part.
- **Do not** mention the incident to or discuss the incident with anyone else.
- L2L2R will check with the designated safeguarding lead at the relevant organisation within one week that any necessary follow up action has been taken.

Reporting online safeguarding concerns

- Volunteers must report the incident to L2L2R's designated safeguarding lead, Matilda Tuke, **immediately** by email at matilda@l2l2r.org.
- This email report should include the following information:
 - Volunteer or staff member's name
 - The name, age and gender of child
 - Clear, concise and factual details of the concern, including exact words of what was said where possible
 - Date and time of disclosure



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- Details of who was present at the time
- The L2L2R designated safeguarding lead will then decide whether any information needs to be shared with the child's school or partner organisation via which the child was referred to L2L2R – if either is relevant. If necessary, a volunteer may need to respond personally to any questions the school/partner organisation may have.
- Where L2L2R's designated safeguarding lead decides that follow-up action is appropriate for a child who is not at school, the Wandsworth LADO (Local Authority Designated Safeguarding Officer) will be contacted for advice, using Wandsworth Safeguarding Children Partnership's *Thresholds for Intervention* document for guidance. Acting on advice from the LADO, L2L2R's designated safeguarding lead may then be required to complete Wandsworth's Multi-Agency Referral Form (MARF) which is then triaged and passed to the correct service.
- All incidents are documented in our confidential Safeguarding Report document. This document is intended to ensure that correct procedures were followed and to highlight any further action required on our part.
- Volunteers **must not** discuss the incident with anyone else.
- If the incident has merited reporting to a child's school, L2L2R will check with the designated safeguarding lead at the relevant partner school within three days that appropriate follow up action has been taken.

Procedure for reporting an adult

If you feel uncomfortable about the behaviour of a staff member or volunteer you must pass on any concern to L2L2R's designated safeguarding lead. You have th

e right to report concerns or suspicions in confidence. Do not try to investigate concerns yourself. If you have a concern, or want to make a complaint or allegation against another adult (either from L2L2R or any other setting), please:

- Make notes about your concerns as soon as you can.
- Contact, in confidence, **only** the L2L2R designated safeguarding lead or deputy.
- If it is inappropriate for the matter to be dealt with by either of these two people, a meeting or conversation can be arranged with designated safeguarding trustee, Joanna Henley.
- The designated safeguarding lead or designated safeguarding trustee will make notes of your conversation. You should also write up a full account of your concern or allegation.
- The designated safeguarding lead or designated safeguarding trustee will investigate the matter and let you know of any further steps taken. They may at this point consult and/or report to a statutory child protection agency.



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SAFEGUARDING CODE OF CONDUCT

Purpose

This code outlines the conduct L2L2R expects from our staff, trustees and volunteers. It aims to help us protect children and young people from abuse and reduce the possibility of unfounded allegations being made. Every staff member, trustee or volunteer will be required to make a declaration saying they have read and understood L2L2R's Safeguarding Code of Conduct before taking up their role.

The role of staff, trustees and volunteers

When working with children you are acting in a position of trust. You are likely to be seen as a role model and must act appropriately.

When working with children face-to-face:

Do:

- Treat all children fairly and without prejudice or discrimination.
- Listen to and respect children at all times.
- Understand that children are individuals with individual needs.
- Model good behaviour for the children to follow.
- Ensure your contact with children is appropriate and relevant to L2L2R's work in which you are involved.
- Allow children to take care of personal needs themselves or ask an appropriate person (e.g. teacher or parent) to help them.
- Always work in a public space, never an enclosed space alone with a child. If you are in a room keep the door open and make sure someone knows you are there.
- Encourage children to challenge attitudes or behaviour they are uncomfortable with.
- Report allegations or suspicions of abuse following L2L2R's reporting procedures.

Don't:

- Instigate significant physical contact with a child such as hugging, sitting them on your knee, or cuddling while reading. Never escalate affection the child has instigated. Gently and kindly move away.
- Take photographs of a child or use mobile phones during the session.
- Give a child any type of personal gift.
- Engage in inappropriate behaviour with the children or make inappropriate remarks, even in fun.
- Allow concerns or allegations to go unreported.



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When working with children virtually via Zoom:

Do:

- Ensure your background while video conferencing is neutral and avoids displaying personal information such as family photographs.
- Ensure you show your L2L2R lanyard to confirm your identity
- Use your L2L2R Zoom and email accounts when sending invitations and running online reading sessions
- Ensure your location is quiet and interruption-free
- Ensure your phone is on silent and not in view
- Only communicate via the agreed channels – your L2L2R Zoom and L2L2R email
- Only contact families at the agreed time
- Report allegations or suspicions of abuse following L2L2R's reporting procedures

Don't:

- Use personal Zoom or email accounts to contact families
- Record virtual reading sessions unless agreed in writing beforehand with all parties, including L2L2R
- Allow concerns or allegations to go unreported

You should always follow this code of conduct and never rely on your reputation or that of our organisation to protect you. If you become aware of any breaches of this code by any individual, you must report them to the L2L2R designated safeguarding lead or deputy. If required, a meeting or conversation can be arranged with the designated safeguarding trustee.



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Safer recruitment

The Law

Across the UK, statutory guidance highlights the responsibility of those in the education, community and care sectors to have policies and procedures in place that ensure they only employ suitable people to work or volunteer with children. In England, the statutory guidance is Working together to safeguard children (PDF) (Department for Education, 2018b). This highlights the responsibility of all organisations working with children to have safe recruitment practices in place. English schools and colleges must follow Keeping children safe in education: Statutory guidance for schools and colleges (Department for Education, 2023). This gives school governing bodies the responsibility to ensure safer recruitment practices are put into place. Part 3 gives guidance on safer recruitment. The Department for Education (DfE) has provided statutory guidance about disqualification under the Childcare Act 2006 for local authorities, maintained schools, academies and free schools (DfE, 2018a).

It is against the law to treat someone less favourably than someone else because of a personal characteristic such as religion, sex, gender reassignment or age. Discrimination can include:

- not hiring someone
- selecting a particular person for redundancy
- paying someone less than another worker without good reason

You can discriminate against someone even if you do not intend to. For example, you can discriminate indirectly by offering working conditions or rules that disadvantage one group of people more than another.

If someone applies to volunteer with us who appears on a barred list maintained by the Disclosure and Barring Service, we will report this to the police.

Our Commitment

This policy applies to anyone responsible for recruiting, selecting and inducting staff, trustees and volunteers at L2L2R and all who participate in shortlisting and interview panels.

L2L2R is committed to promoting the welfare of children and young people and keeping them safe. Further details on safe recruitment are also included in the Safeguarding Policy.

We are also committed to equality, valuing diversity and working inclusively across all our activities.

We aim to have a team (both paid staff, trustees and volunteers) that represents a variety of backgrounds and cultures and can provide the relevant knowledge, abilities and skills for our organisation.



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The purpose of the policy

- to recruit and select the best people available to join our team
- to take all reasonable steps to prevent unsuitable people from joining our organisation
- to recruit, select and manage our staff and volunteers in a way that complies with legislation designed to combat inequality and discrimination
- to do all we can to achieve and maintain a diverse team
- to ensure that our recruitment and selection processes are consistent and transparent
- to ensure candidates are judged to be competent before we make them an offer of a job
- to ensure that new members of staff and volunteers are given a proper induction.

We recognise that:

- our staff and volunteers are our most important resource
- unsuitable individuals sometimes seek out opportunities via employment or volunteering to have contact with children in order to harm them
- some groups face unfair discrimination in the workplace
- children, young people and families benefit from our efforts to recruit and select a skilled and committed team from a diverse range of backgrounds
- new staff and volunteers cannot perform their role effectively unless they are inducted properly and receive ongoing support and supervision.

We recruit and induct our team by:

- advertising all paid posts through appropriate media, for example L2L2R's website, to enable us to attract high quality applicants from diverse backgrounds
- providing relevant information for anybody who expresses an interest in an advertised job
- ensuring that all applications for both paid and volunteer positions are made using a standard application form
- obtaining two reference checks; one which must be from a work related professional and ideally within the last two years. This should come from a professional email address.
- involving more than one person to shortlist applicants for paid roles for interview
- having at least two people conducting a face-to-face interview with anyone we may want to appoint to a paid or voluntary position
- ensuring those involved in interviewing for staff and volunteer positions have completed Safer Recruitment Training
- ensuring a self-declaration form is completed by shortlisted candidates to discuss at interview if appropriate
- requiring that all staff, trustees and volunteers have an up-to-date relevant DBS check where their post is eligible for this (including a check against the barred list if the post involves regulated activity)



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- the local authority (Wandsworth) requires all applicants working with children who have lived abroad for more than three months since the age of 16 to obtain police checks from those countries. In situations where this is not possible (e.g. where countries have no procedure for obtaining this information), we will carry out a risk assessment for the candidate which will include obtaining extra references .
- providing an appropriate induction for all new staff, trustees and volunteers which includes safeguarding training
- ensuring that all staff, trustees and volunteers are made aware, during their induction period, of how to keep children and young people safe in our organisation
- using the list of processes above to follow a consistent procedure for recruitment, selection and induction.

We are committed to reviewing our policy and good practice annually.