

Online Safeguarding Policy

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Policy Statement

Doorstep Library acknowledges its responsibility to protect, promote and safeguard the welfare of children and adults at risk. It is committed to having in place safeguarding practices and procedures which comply with statutory responsibilities and guidelines, and which embed best practice in its culture. Doorstep Library recognises that our online platform provides us with a new and innovative way of reaching families; however, it can also present risks and challenges. Therefore we undertake to keep our online user safe by

- appointing a Designated Safeguarding Lead (contact details at the end of this policy)
- providing clear and specific directions to staff and volunteers on how to behave online through our 'Online Reading Volunteer Training'
- supporting and encouraging parents and carers to do what they can to keep their children safe online within our sessions and in general
- developing consent forms for use with young people and their parents/carers, and volunteers
- following clear and robust procedures to enable us to respond appropriately to any incidents of inappropriate behaviour, whether by an adult or a child/young person
- reviewing and updating the security of our information systems regularly
- ensuring personal information about the adults and children who are involved in our programmes are held securely and shared only as appropriate and in line with our Data Protection Policy and Privacy Policy.

This policy is intended to be read as part of [Doorstep Library's Safeguarding Policy](#).

Policy Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide staff and volunteers with the overarching principles that guide our approach to online safety and ensure that, as an organisation, we operate in line with our values and within the law in terms of how we use the online platform. It will create an environment which ensures that, during online Doorstep Library sessions staff, volunteers, parents/carers, children, young people and adults at risk are protected from harm; that all stakeholders are able to effectively raise safeguarding concerns; and that staff and volunteers are able to confidently handle allegations or incidents if and when they arise.

Who is covered by this policy?

This policy applies to all employees, trustees and volunteers. It also applies to the children and young people and their families that Doorstep Library works with and a version will be made available on our website. This policy must be read in conjunction with Doorstep Library's Safeguarding Policy.

General Safety

Doorstep Library will ensure that safeguarding children, adults at risk, staff and volunteers extends to any online activity the organisation undertakes.

Contacting Families

It is essential that any contact with families via our online platform conforms to the following:

- Is carried out via the Doorstep Library secure database with the correct settings in place
- Is documented afterwards by volunteers in the 'post-visit records'

- Has the verbal consent of a parent/known adult over 18 at the beginning of each session
- Has a parent/known adult over 18 supervising for the duration of the session for any child aged 3 and under

Any other contact needed between volunteers and families must

- only happen during the allotted hours of a volunteer shift
- have consent from both sides via our Doorstep Library Consent Forms
- be via the volunteer's phone for a phone call, and the Doorstep Library database for all text messages
- only be with parents/carers/adults over 18 years of age (Doorstep Library will not use or record children's phone numbers)
- not be established through any other medium; for example, volunteers and staff must not make or accept connection requests from parents or children on any social media platforms.

Phone requirements for volunteers

During a volunteer shift, volunteers' phones must:

- Be in close proximity
- Be charged or plugged in
- Have the following key numbers saved (available from the Doorstep Library Dashboard):
 - Team Leader's phone number
 - Volunteer partner's phone number
 - Programme Manager's phone number
 - Designated Safeguarding Lead's phone number
 - CEO and Safeguarding Trustees phone numbers
 - Relevant families' anonymised phone numbers (DL + family ID)

Volunteers must delete families' phone numbers when no longer volunteering for Doorstep Library. Stand-in volunteers are not required to save family phone numbers due to the volume of different families they are visiting.

Training for Volunteers

Volunteers will be fully trained according to our Online Reading Volunteer Training Programme. This includes sections on confidentiality, safeguarding, and maintaining boundaries, alongside all relevant supporting documents. These training sessions will ensure that staff and volunteers are fully aware of the risks associated with using an online platform, know how to reduce these risks, are able to deal with any risks should they arise, and understand the reporting process. They will know how to protect themselves from harm as well as the families they are in contact with.

Volunteers must not:

- Record or screenshot any online contact between themselves and families, unless specifically instructed by a member of staff (in which case parental consent will have already been gained and additional procedures followed)
- Conduct a reading session with a bed in view
- Conduct a reading session in a public or private space where they may be interrupted, overheard or their screen viewed by somebody else.

Reporting Concerns

Any safeguarding incident or concern that occurs during an online activity will be treated with the same urgency and importance as that which occurs during a face-to-face activity. Reporting procedures differ for an online activity in that:

- The volunteer will record any concerns or ongoing observations, in the relevant section of the post-visit records
- This will generate a notification to the Team Leader who will review it within 24 hours and contact the volunteer for further information should it be needed

However, should a serious incident occur, where volunteers might witness abuse, are concerned that a child or adult is at risk of serious immediate harm, or receive a disclosure, they must follow the same processes as detailed in Doorstep Library's Safeguarding Policy; calling the Designated Safeguarding Lead immediately, or 999 if anyone is in immediate danger.

In the case that the Designated Safeguarding Lead is not available, all relevant phone numbers to escalate a serious safeguarding issue will be available on the volunteers' database dashboard (and are in Appendix 1 at the bottom of this policy). Volunteers are also required to save these numbers in their phone for immediate access and for reasons such as internet issues preventing connection to the database. The Designated Safeguarding Lead will email a password to the person making the referral to access the Logging Form, which must be completed and returned within 24 hours at the latest.

Online Reading Sessions

An Online Reading Session consists of two volunteers and one family and lasts approximately 20 minutes. It is hosted via Zoom which is integrated into our internal secure database. The volunteers will read stories with the children or listen to the children read aloud. A parent may not be present on screen, but volunteers will ensure parental consent is gained at the start of every session.

Ahead of a child's first reading session it is the parent/carer's responsibility to ensure that their children are aware of online behaviour expectations as highlighted in the parent consent form. Volunteers must conduct their online sessions in-line with the following procedures.

Procedures for sessions

Presence of Adults

- For all children, when you first say hello there must be an adult present to give consent. If no adult is visible, ask 'Is a grown-up there?' (as volunteers are requested to do on a face-to-face visit). It is acceptable for a parent/carer to provide consent to a volunteer off-screen (they may not want to appear), however **they must be aware of the online visit before it can go ahead**. If consent is not available, the volunteers must end the session.
- For younger children (aged 3 and under), there must be an adult supervising at all times, whether on or off screen. This is in case the child puts itself in a position where they could cause an accident that the volunteer is unable to prevent (for example disappears from screen, throws things at the screen, turns off the screen, climbs on the furniture etc.) If it becomes clear that a child is not being supervised and is unsafe, the parent should be called.

Presence of Volunteers

- There should **never** be one volunteer on a video call with a child alone. Both volunteers must be present before the family are admitted into the session. If one volunteer does not arrive, their partner should ring them to check whether they are joining. If the volunteer is unable to join, the family should be called via phone and told that the session is cancelled. Inform the Team Leader.
- If one volunteer drops off the online session part way through, the other volunteer must follow this protocol:
 - Continue the session for 2 minutes to see if the partner volunteer re-enters the session
 - If the partner volunteer does not re-enter, the remaining volunteer should explain to the family that they must pause the session to call them. Volunteers must mute themselves before making the call
 - If the other volunteer cannot be reached or is unable to get back online, it must be explained to the family that unfortunately the session will need to end
 - If either volunteer is unable to get back online for any subsequent reading sessions, the Team Leader needs to be informed. The Team Leader may be available to step in. If they are not, volunteers are asked to phone all subsequent families to explain what has happened, apologise, and say that the session will resume next week.

Inappropriate Content

Should a child or family display inappropriate content through sharing their screen or otherwise, volunteers should ask that they stop or the session will be ended. Either way, volunteers should call the Team Leader, and log this in the relevant section of the post-visit record. If the content is a safeguarding concern volunteers should action the 'Online Safety' process above and immediately contact the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Online Read and Play Group Sessions

An Online Read and Play Group Session consists of two volunteers, one Team Leader/moderator, and a number of parents and children **aged 0-4**. It lasts approximately 25-30 minutes and is hosted via Zoom which is integrated into our internal secure database. The volunteers will read stories, sing songs and play games with the families. A parent/carer must always be in the room, supervising the child at all times.

Procedures for Volunteers and Team Leaders

- The Team Leader will be in the session, listening in with their video turned off (but may not always be watching the screen). Volunteers will know in advance how to alert the Team Leader if they are worried about anything – for instance having their phone number available to text, or calmly asking them to return to the session out-loud.
- There should never be one Doorstep Library volunteer on a video call with children or families alone. That means if one volunteer drops off the session for any reason the remaining volunteer must make sure the Team Leader's attention is drawn to this through the methods as above. The Team Leader must immediately turn their video on and have a visible presence on the call.

Procedures for Team Leaders/Moderators:

- Turn a family's video off if something is happening on screen that other families shouldn't see (for instance a child takes their underwear off)
- Ring a parent if there is a clear, immediate danger / something looks unsafe /

- the video has had to be turned off by Team Leader
- If a parent isn't visible but the child is engaging and safe then there's no need to call the parent straight away (they may be attentive but just behind/holding the screen), however keep an eye on the child and call parent if it becomes clear they are not being supervised and are unsafe
- If a child is with just an older sibling aged 6 and over, and is engaging and safe then no need to call the parent
- If a parent does not reappear at the end of session the Team Leader must call the parent to ask them to leave the session, to ensure that child is safe
- If there are any concerns over parental supervision during the session, the Team Leader must call the parent before the next one and reiterate our requirements
- The Team Leader does not end the meeting – but allow families to leave one by one.

Zoom Logistics and Safety

Zoom sessions, whether Online Reading Sessions or Group Sessions, will always be facilitated via a Doorstep Library account integrated into our internal secure database. Sessions will never be scheduled via the personal accounts of staff, volunteers, or families.

Running a Zoom Session

Both volunteers must be set as 'host' and 'co-host' in advance so that a family is never automatically assigned as host should a volunteer drop out of the session.

Sessions with families must never be recorded via Zoom or any other platform. If this is done inadvertently it must be immediately deleted from any place it has been manually or automatically stored, and the Designated Safeguarding Lead must be informed.

To ensure no one unexpected or with intent to cause harm can join the Zoom sessions, we have the following procedures in place to reduce the likelihood the link could be intercepted by anyone other than the intended recipient:

- All Zoom sessions are generated by our internal database; a different link for each new session
- The link a family receives is unique to them only, and directs them to our database first before being redirected to the general Zoom link for that session
- For Group sessions, the database detects each family who joins and marks them as 'attended'
- For both types of sessions, the waiting room must be enabled so families can't join without being admitted by the host. If all participants are already on the call no one else must be admitted.

Uninvited/Unauthorised Guests

If someone with intent to cause harm or who obviously doesn't belong in the session is admitted by accident, the volunteers or moderator must immediately remove the person or end the meeting for all as appropriate, and without explanation. All hosts must be aware of how to do this. In the case of an unauthorised participant, follow the procedures below

- If the person had been causing harm and the call was ended, do not try to log back on to the call
- If the person was removed, the session can be continued if appropriate to do so, assuring others in attendance that they were admitted by accident and will not be able to re-join

- Volunteers must contact the Team Leader immediately
- Staff must contact the Designated Safeguarding Lead to report what happened (or a member of the Safeguarding team if unavailable)
- Log the incident on the Post-Visit Record for that session, and on the Logging Form sent by the Designated Safeguarding Lead if necessary.

Appendix 1 Contact details

In the event of any safeguarding concern or query, contact the Designated Safeguarding Lead. If the Designated Safeguarding Lead is absent or unavailable, contact another member of the Safeguarding Team as appropriate.

Name	Title	Phone numbers	Email
Lead: Katie Bareham	CEO	07557 790925 (9am-6pm Mon-Fri) or 07836 250134 (if unavailable or outside of working hours)	katie@doorsteplibrary.org.uk
Trustee: Liz Dawson	Safeguarding Trustee	07775591282	safeguardingtrustee@doorsteplibrary.org.uk