



SURVIVORS OF
BEREAVEMENT
BY SUICIDE

Safeguarding Policy

April 2021

This policy supersedes all previous versions

To be reviewed April 2022



SAFEGUARDING POLICY

We at Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide (SoBS) have a clear Duty of Care to all within our organisation and all who turn to us for help, whose vulnerability derives from their traumatic bereavement.

However, this does not mean that we fail to give proper consideration to a number of important issues that could be categorised under the general heading of 'safeguarding' in its broadest sense. Although The Care Act 2014 outlines the way in which local authorities should carry out care assessments our policy and procedures are based around this framework.

The Care Act 2014

The Act refers to an adult at risk as someone who:

- a) Has needs for care and support (whether or not the Local Authority is meeting any of those needs).
- b) Is experiencing, or is at risk of abuse or neglect, and
- c) As a result of those needs, is unable to protect himself or herself against the abuse or neglect or the risk of it.

The Act sets out the statutory framework for adult safeguarding which stipulates local authorities' responsibilities and those with whom they work, to protect adults at risk of abuse or neglect.

SoBS will

- ensure the safety and wellbeing of people
- manage services in a way which promotes safety and prevents abuse
- Recruit Staff and Volunteers safely, ensuring all necessary checks are made
- Provide effective management for Staff, Trustees and Volunteers through support and training

SoBS will

- Ensure that all Trustees, Staff, Volunteers and services users are familiar with this policy and procedures
- Inform the relevant organisations if there is a person who is in danger or at risk

Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide (SoBS) provides a peer to peer to peer support service to adults over the age of 18 years who have lost a loved one to suicide. We deliver our support across a range of platforms including face-to-face groups, virtual groups, a national telephone helpline and email support. In addition to these we also have a Punjabi speaking virtual group and a men only virtual group. We are not able to visit survivors in their own homes or provide a counselling service.

The following policy has been designed to ensure the welfare and protection of any person who accesses services provided by SoBS or who support or work to provide these services. SoBS is committed to the belief that the protection of people from harm and abuse is everybody's responsibility and the aim of these procedures is to ensure that all managers, trustees of the organisation, staff and volunteers act appropriately in their responses to any concerns around safeguarding.

Safeguarding is extremely important to SoBS and sits at the heart of all our services and events. We believe that no one should ever experience abuse, harm, harassment, bullying, exploitation or neglect.

SoBS have a clear Duty of Care to safeguard all within our organisation and all who turn to us for help. We are committed to creating an environment which ensures all those accessing our services, our volunteers and those working with SoBS enjoy opportunities to thrive, develop to their full potential and can feel safe from abuse. We do this by developing habits, practices rules and procedures which will keep everyone safe.

It is everyone's responsibility to safeguard those at risk from abuse and to respond safely and well when we are made aware of the risk of harm or if there is a problem.

SoBS is committed to putting in place safeguards and measures to reduce the likelihood of abuse taking place within the services it offers and that all those involved within SoBS will be treated with respect.

Therefore, this policy needs to be read in conjunction with the SoBS Charity Handbook and the Volunteers Operating Manual as well as specific policies identified in Appendix A

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is:

- to **protect** adults at risk who engage with SoBS's activities
- to uphold safer recruitment practices to **prevent** those intent on or using opportunities to harm to engage with SoBS
- to ensure we recognise, **respond, record and report** safeguarding concerns or disclosure

SoBS recognises that many of our office activities, our services, and events are centred around creating trusted spaces for sharing traumatic life experiences which could increase the likelihood of those who engage with SoBS activities disclosing recent or past experiences of suicide. This makes SoBS commitment to, and responsibility for, safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all at risk, central to our practice.

SoBS is committed to safer recruitment policies and practices for paid staff, trustees and volunteers. Staff, trustees and volunteers will be required to provide two references.

SoBS will work within current legal frameworks for reporting staff, trustees or volunteers that are abusers.

SoBS is committed to ensuring that all staff, trustees and volunteers recognise signs and symptoms of abuse.

What is abuse?

Abuse comes in many forms. It can lead to a violation of someone's human and civil rights by another person or persons. It can be as a result of an act or a failure to act. Abuse can occur in any relationship and may result in significant harm or exploitation. Abuse may be carried out deliberately or unknowingly. Abuse may be a single act or repeated acts.

People who behave abusively come from all backgrounds and walks of life. They may be doctors, nurses, social workers, advocates, staff members, volunteers or others in a position of trust. They may also be relatives, friends, neighbours or people who use the same services as the person experiencing abuse.

Abuse includes:

- **Physical abuse:** including hitting, slapping, punching, burning, misuse of medication, inappropriate restraint,
- **Domestic abuse:** including psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional abuse. It also covers 'honour' based violence
- **Sexual abuse:** including rape, indecent exposure, sexual harassment, indecent assault, inappropriate looking or touching, exposure to pornographic material or sexual acts, sexual teasing or innuendo, sharing intimate photos without consent (revenge porn), sexual assault or sexual acts that the adult did not consent to or was pressured into consenting.
- **Psychological or emotional abuse:** including belittling, name calling, threats of harm, intimidation, isolation
- **Financial or material abuse:** including stealing, selling assets, fraud, misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits
- **Neglect and acts of omission:** including withholding the necessities of life such as medication, food or warmth, ignoring medical or physical care needs
- **Discriminatory abuse:** including racist, sexist, that based on a person's disability and other forms of harassment, slurs or similar treatment
- **Institutional or organisational:** including regimented routines and cultures, unsafe practices, lack of person-centred care or treatment
- **Modern slavery:** including slavery and domestic slavery, human trafficking and forced labour.

Survivors of bereavement by suicide are deemed at risk due to their vulnerability following their bereavement.

Safeguarding reporting

SoBS will ensure that any allegations made against, staff, trustees and volunteers will be dealt with swiftly through the Safeguarding process.

In the case of an allegation being made against a member of staff, trustee or volunteer a risk assessment, to assess whether it is safe for them to continue in their role within the organisation, will be undertaken. Where a member of staff, trustee or volunteer is thought to have committed a criminal offence the police will be informed. If a crime has been witnessed, the police should be contacted immediately.

SoBS has a Whistleblowing Policy in the Charity Handbook. Staff and trustees will be supported to use this policy.

Confidentiality

SoBS is committed to maintaining confidentiality wherever possible and information around safeguarding should only be shared with those who need to know. In the event of a disclosure and/or where there is concern for the immediate safety of a person at risk, SoBS will take the necessary appropriate action including informing the necessary authorities. The safety of the person(s) concerned is paramount. For further information, please see SoBS Confidentiality Policy.

SOBS has a duty to record all safeguarding concerns, disclosures or allegations and take action in response.

All allegations/concerns should be recorded and should be based on factual events and not based on opinions. There should be a record detailing what the person has disclosed, what has been seen and witnessed if appropriate.

The information that is recorded (please see appendix B) will be kept secure and comply with GDPR (General Data Protection Regulations, please see policy for further details).

Access to this information will be restricted to either Staff or Chair of Board of Trustees.

Appendix A

This policy should be read in conjunction with Section 6 of the Volunteer Operating Manual.

Links to other relevant policies and documents:

Safeguarding Reporting Procedure April 2021

Safeguarding Reporting Form April 2021