

Safeguarding Policy

1. Statement of Commitment

CASK Research Foundation is dedicated to promoting the safety, dignity and well-being of all individuals who engage with our work, including children and vulnerable adults. While the Foundation operates primarily as a research, awareness and support charity and does not provide direct care services, we recognise that safeguarding responsibilities extend to all activities we organise — particularly our annual family meet-up and any future events involving young people.

This policy explains how we protect children and vulnerable adults during charity-organised events and how we protect personal data and maintain confidentiality. It outlines the responsibilities of trustees, volunteers and employees.

2. Definitions

For the purposes of this policy:

- A **Child** is any individual under the age of 18.
- A **Parent** includes any legal guardian or caregiver responsible for a child's welfare.
- **CASK disorder** refers to any condition within the CASK gene spectrum.
- A **Vulnerable Adult** refers to an individual aged 18 or over who may require additional support due to disability, illness, or other circumstances.

3. Scope of This Policy

This policy applies to all trustees, staff, volunteers, contractors, partners and affiliates acting on behalf of the Foundation. It covers interactions through research activities, data collection and handling, communications, public engagement, fundraising, and any activity where access to personal data of children or vulnerable adults is involved.

4. Organisational Context and Boundaries

CASK Research Foundation **does not provide care services** and does not undertake activities where staff or volunteers assume responsibility for children or vulnerable adults.

At present, the only activity that brings charity representatives into direct proximity with children or vulnerable adults is the **annual family meet-up**.

Important safeguarding boundaries:

- Children and vulnerable adults **remain under the full supervision and responsibility of their parents, guardians or carers at all times**.
- Volunteers and employees must **never take sole responsibility** for a child or vulnerable adult.
- No staff member or volunteer may be alone with a child or vulnerable adult.

Should the nature of the charity's activities change in the future, this policy will be reviewed and updated accordingly.

CASK Research Foundation will:

- Put the protection and dignity of children and vulnerable adults first in all decisions and operations.
- Respect the rights to privacy and protection of individuals whose information is held or processed.
- Act in accordance with relevant UK law, data protection standards (including UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018), and recognised safeguarding guidance.
- Promote a culture of awareness, prevention, and responsiveness to safeguarding concerns.
- Ensure decisions are rights-based, equitable and culturally sensitive.

5. Leadership and Accountability

The Board of Trustees retains overall accountability for safeguarding within the organisation. Senior leadership delegates day-to-day responsibilities but remains responsible for oversight, ensuring compliance with legal and ethical standards.

6. Safeguarding Roles

The Foundation designates specific individuals to support safeguarding:

- **Safeguarding Lead:** (Laura Hattersley / Director & trustee) – point of contact for reporting concerns, ensuring proper escalation and data safeguarding standards.
- **Deputy Safeguarding Lead:** (Elizabeth Cook / Treasurer/Trustee) – supports the lead and covers their responsibilities if needed.

These roles include:

- Coordination of training and awareness.
- Oversight of incident response and reporting.
- Maintaining safeguarding records in secure systems.
- Liaising with relevant authorities when appropriate.

7. Responsibilities of Staff and Volunteers

All employees and volunteers must:

- Familiarise themselves with this safeguarding policy
- Complete safeguarding awareness training appropriate to their role
- Maintain professional boundaries at all times

Under no circumstances should a volunteer or employee:

- Assume supervisory responsibility for a child or vulnerable adult
- Be alone with a child or vulnerable adult
- Transport a child or vulnerable adult
- Engage in behaviour that could be misinterpreted

8. Recognising and Responding to Concerns

All personnel should be alert to signs of harm, neglect, exploitation or inappropriate conduct — whether physical, emotional, or digital.

When a concern arises:

- **Observe** carefully and objectively.
- **Respond** with sensitivity and without making promises of confidentiality.
- **Report** the matter promptly to the Safeguarding Lead using the designated reporting form or channel.
- In cases of imminent danger, contact emergency services immediately.

9. Code of Conduct at Events and Public Activities

During charity events, including the annual family meet-up:

Professional Behaviour

- Volunteers and staff must act respectfully, professionally and with sensitivity to differing levels of understanding.
- Communication should always be appropriate, inclusive and supportive.

Physical Contact

- Physical contact is not permitted.
- An exception may apply only where a legal guardian specifically requests assistance in a genuine medical emergency.

Behavioural Support

- Charity representatives are not trained in behavioural management.
- Volunteers or staff must not intervene in behavioural incidents unless necessary to protect themselves from harm.

10. Data Protection and Confidentiality

We handle personal data with the highest standards of confidentiality and security:

- Safeguarding records are stored separately from general research files and are encrypted.
- Information is shared strictly on a need-to-know basis and only in compliance with legal requirements.
- Consent and data minimisation principles guide all data use activities.

Our approach also reflects respect for participants' rights to privacy and control over their information.

11. Recruitment and Selection

To reduce the risk of harm through recruitment:

- Roles involving access to personal data undergo appropriate background checks (e.g., identity verification, references).
- Job descriptions explicitly state safeguarding responsibilities.
- All new personnel receive safeguarding information during induction.

12. Training and Awareness

Every employee, trustee, volunteer or contractor will receive safeguarding awareness training appropriate to their role. Training is refreshed regularly and updated whenever significant legal or organisational changes occur.

Training may include:

- Recognising signs of harm or neglect
- Understanding reporting procedures
- Maintaining professional boundaries

Refresher training will be provided periodically or when legal requirements change.

13. Whistleblowing and Reporting Culture

We promote an open environment in which anyone can raise concerns without fear of reprisal. Reports can be made to:

- The Safeguarding Lead or Deputy.
- The Chair of Trustees.
- The appropriate regulatory body or safeguarding authority where necessary.
- Independent services (e.g., NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line) if internal reporting is not appropriate.

If a concern involves immediate danger, emergency services should be contacted without delay.

14. Online and Digital Safety

To ensure digital environments are safe:

- Only secure, authorised platforms are used for data collection, processing and storage.
- Personal data is not shared publicly without explicit consent.
- Systems are protected by industry-standard encryption and access controls.

15. Oversight, Monitoring and Review

The Board will review safeguarding matters at least annually, including:

- Trends in safeguarding reports.
- Effectiveness of training.
- Changes in legislation or best practice that affect policy.

The policy itself is reviewed every year or sooner if required by legal changes or organisational needs.

16. Recruitment and Background Checks

CASK Research Foundation is committed to safer recruitment practices.

Currently our activities do not require volunteers to undertake Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks however the Lead safeguarding officer and deputy safeguarding officer are DBS checked and these roles will always require DBS checks.

If the charity's activities expand in a way that changes this position, DBS checks and enhanced vetting procedures will be introduced as required by law.

17. Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Safeguarding Officer and the Board of Trustees.

It will also be reviewed if:

- Legislation changes
- Charity activities expand or change
- A safeguarding incident highlights the need for amendment

Any breaches of this policy will be addressed promptly and appropriately.

18. Adoption and Communication

This policy is formally adopted by the Board of Trustees of CASK Research Foundation.

It will be:

- Provided to all volunteers and employees
- Made available to families upon request
- Published in an accessible format where appropriate

19. Conclusion

CASK Research Foundation is committed to ensuring that all children and vulnerable adults involved in our events are protected from harm and treated with dignity and respect.

While parents and carers retain full responsibility for supervision during our activities, we recognise our duty to provide a safe, professional and well-governed environment.

All representatives of the charity are expected to uphold this policy and contribute to a culture of safeguarding awareness and accountability.

The Following Trustees have been DBS checked and undergone safeguard training: Laura Hattersley & Elizabeth Cook – Oct 2025

Last reviewed and/or updated: April 2024

Last reviewed and/or updated: 20/10/2025

Next review: Oct 2026