THE MAZE GROUP CIC

Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy

Issued: April 2026

Version: 4.0

Policy Approval

Author	Director of Operations
Approved By	Board of Directors
Date	14 April 2026

Issue and Revision Log

Issue	Date Issued	Date for Review	Notes
1.0	June 2021	June 2022	
2.0	July 2022	July 2024	
3.0	May 2025	May 2027	
4.0	April 2026	April 2028	Rewritten at request of SNEE ICB

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1. Aims

- This policy provides the framework that ensures a robust and safe system is in place to safeguard children and young people at risk who access The MAZE Group CIC's ("MAZE") services.
- This policy sets out the roles and responsibilities of MAZE in working together with other professionals and agencies in promoting the welfare of children and safeguarding them from abuse and neglect.
- This policy should be read in conjunction with:
  - The MAZE Group CIC Adults at Risk Policy
  - The MAZE Group CIC Prevent Policy
  - The MAZE Group CIC Mental Capacity and Deprivation of Liberty Policy

  This policy outlines how MAZE fulfils its statutory duties to safeguard children and young people at risk. The policy is underpinned by legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to:

  - The Children Act 1989 and 2004
  - Working Together to Safeguard Children (HM Government, 2023)
  - Human Rights Act 1998
  - Domestic Abuse Act 2021
  - Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003 (as amended by the Serious Crime Act 2015)
  - Sexual Offences Act 2003
  - Modern Slavery Act 2015
  - Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 (Prevent Duty)
  - Mental Capacity Act 2005

  Local safeguarding procedures are followed in line with:

  - Suffolk Safeguarding Partnership (SSP)
  - Southend, Essex and Thurrock (SET) Safeguarding and Child Protection Procedures

The legal definition of 'children' applies to those under 18 years of age. For the purposes of this policy the term 'children' applies to babies, children and young people.

This policy applies to anyone working on behalf of MAZE, including senior managers and the board of trustees, paid staff, volunteers, sessional workers, contractors and students (together to be referenced as "staff").

References to local safeguarding procedures, including the SET Safeguarding and Child Protection Procedures, relate to live online guidance that is regularly updated. All staff must ensure they are accessing the most current version available.

2. Introduction

The fact that a child has reached 16 years of age, is living independently or is in further education, is a member of the armed forces, is in hospital, in Local Authority Care, or in custody in the secure estate, does not change their status or entitlements to services or protection.

MAZE has a statutory duty to ensure that it makes arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of young children, young people and adults. This policy pulls together statutory guidance for safeguarding children, to incorporate a 'think family' approach and shared responsibility when considering safeguarding arrangements.

MAZE is committed to working in partnership with both the Suffolk Safeguarding Partnership (SSP) and the Essex Safeguarding Children's Board (ESCB) to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people and to have in place systems and processes to support the multi-agency policies and procedures of both the Suffolk and Essex Safeguarding Partnerships (www.suffolksp.org.uk and www.escb.co.uk).

MAZE is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and in doing so discharging in full their duties under Section 11 of the Children Act 2004. This places a statutory duty on key people and bodies to make arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. These arrangements require:

- Senior management committed to the importance of safeguarding and promoting children's welfare.
- A clear statement of its responsibilities towards children available for all staff.
- Training on safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children for all staff working with, or in contact with, children and families.
- Safe recruitment procedures in place.
- Effective information sharing.

MAZE is committed to equality, diversity and inclusion in safeguarding practice. Safeguarding responses must be anti-discriminatory and compliant with the Equality Act 2010, ensuring that all children and young people receive equitable protection regardless of background, identity or circumstance.

3. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to outline how MAZE fulfils its statutory duties and the approach to safeguard babies, children and young people, promoting the welfare of children.

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. It is about people and organisations working together to prevent and stop both the risks and experience of abuse or neglect, while at the same time making sure that the wellbeing, views, wishes and beliefs of adults and children are actively heard and promoted within safeguarding arrangements.

All babies, children and young people have the right to live their lives free of abuse and neglect and have the right processes in place to ensure they are safeguarded and free from harm.

All staff have a role in raising awareness of safeguarding concerns and connecting with MAZE's safeguarding team for advice when required.

See clause 15 for the safeguarding teams contact details.

Managers are responsible for ensuring that practice reflects the standards within this policy and that staff are given adequate resources and support to comply with them.

4. Definitions

Safeguarding and Promoting the Welfare of Children is defined within 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' (HM Government, 2023) as:

- Protecting children from maltreatment;
- Preventing impairment of children's health or development;
- Ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care; and
- Taking action to enable all children to have best outcomes

Child Protection is part of safeguarding and promoting welfare. This refers to the activity that is undertaken to protect specific children who are suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm.

Child in Need defined as being "in need" when they are unlikely to reach or maintain a satisfactory level of health or development, or it will be significantly impaired without the provision of services (Children Act 1989 Section 17).

Contextual Safeguarding: Refers to safeguarding risks that occur outside of the family home, including within peer groups, schools, online environments and the wider community.

Transitional Safeguarding: Recognises that safeguarding needs may continue beyond the age of 18, particularly for vulnerable young adults moving into adulthood.

The term **'Looked After Child/ren'** (LAC) was introduced by The Children Act 1989 and refers to a child or young person: who is 'accommodated' by the Local Authority, a child who is subject to an Interim Care Order, Full Care Order or Emergency Protection Order; or a child who is remanded by a court into Local Authority accommodation or Youth Detention accommodation.

Looked After Children may be placed with parents, foster carers (including relatives and friends), in Children's Homes, in Secure Accommodation or with prospective adopters.

The term *children in care* is increasingly used in place of *looked after children*, reflecting the voices and preferences of children and young people themselves. MAZE recognises both terms may be used in legislation and guidance.

Care leavers are entitled to ongoing support under relevant legislation and guidance, and MAZE recognises that safeguarding responsibilities may extend beyond the age of 18 where vulnerability persists.

Private Fostering describes an arrangement that lasts for 28 days or more, where a child (under 16 years, or 18 years if disabled) is cared for by someone who is not a close relative. Close relative means a grandparent, uncle, aunt, stepparent or older brother or sister.

By law, parents and carers must notify their local authority of any private fostering arrangement. Further information regarding Private Fostering can be located on www.escb.co.uk.

Parental Responsibility and Consent refers to the legal rights, duties, powers and responsibilities that a parent or person with parental responsibility has for a child. Where children are Looked After, parental responsibility may be shared between parents and the Local Authority, depending on the legal status of the child.

Staff must ensure that consent for involvement, information sharing or decision-making is sought from the appropriate person or authority, and that this is recorded in line with statutory guidance and local procedures.

5. Categories of Abuse

Physical Abuse: may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child.

This category includes Fabricated or Induced Illness, see appendix for further information.

Emotional Abuse: the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent effects on the child's emotional development.

Sexual Abuse: involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening.

Sexual abuse includes **child sexual exploitation** including online abuse (grooming, sextortion, livestreaming) (see appendix)

Neglect: the ongoing failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of a child's health or development.

Included in the four categories of child abuse and neglect, are a number of factors relating to the behaviour of the parents and carers and threats from others which have significant impact on children, such as domestic abuse and gang violence. Refer to SET Safeguarding and Child Protection Procedures for further guidance.

Child Abuse Linked to Faith or Belief may also include:

- Honour based abuse (including female genital mutilation)
- Forced marriage of a child
- Male circumcision
- Spirit possession or witchcraft

(See appendix for further guidance)

Domestic abuse is defined (Home Office) as *'Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality.'* The abuse can encompass, but is not limited to:

- psychological
- physical
- sexual
- financial
- emotional

A child is also to be regarded as a victim of domestic abuse if they see, hear or experience the effects of the abuse and are related to the abuser or victim.

Where a child is identified as experiencing domestic abuse, including witnessing or being affected by abuse, this constitutes a safeguarding concern and must result in a referral to Children's Social Care in line with local safeguarding procedures.

6. PREVENT

The Prevent Duty, established under the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015, requires organisations to safeguard individuals from being drawn into terrorism.

MAZE implements this duty in line with current national guidance, including updates following the Independent Review of Prevent (2023).

Refer to The MAZE Group CIC's Prevent Policy.

7. Safeguarding Roles and Responsibilities

Responsibility of ALL Staff

All staff must be alert to the possibility of a child being at risk of significant harm. They should be able to recognise the signs of abuse and neglect and know how to respond appropriately, with a depth of knowledge proportionate to their role.

All staff must understand the particular vulnerabilities of some children, including those who are disabled, Looked After, or privately fostered. Looked After Children, in particular, are at increased risk of poor outcomes and may be more susceptible to exploitation and risk-taking behaviours.

Staff working with adults who are parents or carers must consider how issues such as domestic abuse, mental ill-health, substance or alcohol misuse, learning disabilities, or lack of support may impact parenting capacity and children's wellbeing.

All staff must recognise that timely information sharing is essential to effective safeguarding and that concerns about a child's welfare can override any perceived duty of confidentiality.

Staff should also be aware of the implications of the Mental Capacity Act 2005, particularly when supporting young people aged 16–18 and must follow The MAZE Group CIC's Mental Capacity and Deprivation of Liberty Policy when assessing capacity and supporting decision-making.

8. Procedural Requirements

What to do if you are worried about the safety of a child or young person

If at any time, a member of staff feels that a child needs urgent medical assistance, they have a duty to call for an ambulance or arrange for a doctor to see the person at the earliest opportunity.

If at the time, staff have reason to believe the child is in immediate and serious risk of harm or that a crime has been committed the police must be called.

If anyone believes that a child or young person may be suffering, or may be at risk of suffering significant harm, they should always refer their concerns to their local Children's Social Care and/or the Police.

Suffolk
The Suffolk Safeguarding Partnership (SSP) provides guidance on safeguarding procedures. These can be accessed at:
www.suffolksp.org.uk

Essex (North East Essex)
The Southend, Essex and Thurrock (SET) Safeguarding and Child Protection Procedures provide guidance on safeguarding processes.

All referrals in Essex must be made via the online portal:
Report a concern about a child – Essex County Council
Paper forms are no longer in use.

If concerns are not acted upon appropriately, or there is professional disagreement, staff must escalate concerns in line with the relevant Safeguarding Partnership Escalation Policy.

9. Parental Responsibility, Consent and Decision-Making

When working with children and young people, MAZE staff must consider who holds parental responsibility and whether consent is required for information sharing or intervention.

Young people aged 16–17 may have the legal capacity to make decisions about their care and support. Where there is doubt about capacity, staff must seek advice from the Safeguarding Lead and follow the principles of the Mental Capacity Act 2005.

Safeguarding concerns may override the requirement for consent where there is a risk of harm to a child or young person.

Where the Mental Capacity Act 2005 applies (particularly for young people aged 16–17), staff must ensure that decisions are made in accordance with the five statutory principles of the Act, are in the young person's best interests, and represent the least restrictive option, while taking into account their wishes, feelings and developing autonomy.

10. Information Sharing

Where there are safeguarding concerns, staff have a duty to share relevant and proportionate information.

Information sharing must be lawful and in accordance with the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018.

Confidentiality must always be respected; however, it must never be a barrier to sharing information where there is a safeguarding concern**.** The safety and welfare of the child is the overriding priority.

Effective safeguarding relies on timely and appropriate information sharing and strong multi-agency collaboration. MAZE will work in partnership with local authorities, health services, education, police and safeguarding partnerships to ensure coordinated responses.

11. Safeguarding Training, Assurance and Compliance

All staff working on behalf of MAZE will receive safeguarding training appropriate to their role at induction and at regular intervals thereafter.

Training will be delivered in line with the Intercollegiate Document:
Safeguarding Children and Young People: Roles and Competencies for Healthcare Staff (2025).

Training levels will be proportionate to role and responsibilities, and compliance will be monitored through supervision, appraisal and organisational oversight.

Where learning from safeguarding incidents, audits or reviews identifies additional training needs, this will be implemented promptly.

12. Safeguarding Standards in Recruitment and Employment

MAZE adopts safer recruitment procedures when employing or engaging staff. There is a statutory scheme for vetting people working with children and adults at risk of abuse and neglect. It is administered by the Disclosure and Barring Service. This system provides checks on people entering the workforce and maintains lists of individuals who are barred from undertaking regulated activity with either children or adults at risk of abuse and neglect. DBS checks are carried out on all staff.

13. Allegation Of Abuse Against A Staff Member

Staff should always act in such a manner as to safeguard and promote the interests of individuals – all allegations of child abuse by MAZE staff must be taken seriously.

Concerns may not be solely in connection with what happens in the working environment. The actions of an individual in their personal life may indicate that their behaviour could be at risk of harm to children they work with e.g., perpetrators of domestic violence, neglect of their own children.

This procedure applies when an allegation or suspicion arises during a member of staff's work, with his or her own children, with other children living outside the family and historical allegations.

This procedure outlines how, as an organisation, MAZE will effectively fulfil its legal duties and statutory responsibilities with regard to managing safeguarding allegations against staff.

In accordance with Working Together 2023, this section of the policy relates to staff who may have:

- Behaved in a way that has harmed a child or may have harmed a child.
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child.
- Behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates he or she would pose a risk of harm to children. This may be in their professional or personal life.
- Behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children.

Any member of staff who becomes aware about an allegation of concern in relation to safeguarding children by an employee, contractor or volunteer of MAZE must report it to the nominated Child Protection Lead, Sue Anderton (sue.anderton@themazegroup.co.uk).

The Safeguarding Lead will ensure that the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) is informed within one working day of any allegation that a member of staff may have:

- Behaved in a way that has harmed a child or may have harmed a child
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child
- Behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm

This requirement applies regardless of how the allegation is received and includes situations where the individual has resigned or left their role.

Essex LADO Duty Line: 03330 139 797

Compromise agreements are not acceptable in such circumstances and may put others at risk in the future. The Child Protection Lead works collaboratively with other agencies contributing to a strategy meeting and taking appropriate action as agreed.

Consideration is given in regard to Disciplinary Procedures e.g., suspension, referral to Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS). Employees, contractors and volunteers must be aware that abuse is a serious matter that can lead to a criminal conviction. Where applicable the organisation's Disciplinary Policy will be implemented.

If concerns arise externally about a staff member's behaviour towards any vulnerable individual, Social Care and/or Police must inform the organisation in order to assess whether there may be implications for children or adults at risk.

14. Review and Maintenance of this Policy

Learning from Safeguarding Reviews

MAZE is committed to learning from safeguarding reviews, audits and investigations at local and national level. This includes, but is not limited to, Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews, Rapid Reviews, Child Death Reviews, Domestic Homicide Reviews and Safeguarding Adult Reviews, where these relate to the work of the organisation or highlight learning relevant to MAZE services.

Where MAZE is requested to contribute to a statutory or multi-agency review, the organisation will cooperate fully and share relevant information in line with information-sharing legislation and safeguarding duties.

Learning from reviews, serious incidents or safeguarding failures will be embedded into practice through service improvement, staff briefing, training updates and policy review. Where learning identifies organisational weaknesses or errors, these will be escalated appropriately to senior management and the Board of Directors to ensure accountability and oversight.

Duty of Candour and Organisational Accountability

MAZE is committed to openness, transparency and accountability in safeguarding practice. Where a safeguarding incident occurs as a result of organisational error, omission or failure, the organisation will act in line with the principles of duty of candour.

This includes acknowledging when things have gone wrong, taking timely action to safeguard individuals from further harm, learning from the incident, and reporting concerns through appropriate governance structures.

Serious safeguarding concerns, systemic failures or patterns of risk will be reported to the Board of Directors to support organisational learning, quality improvement and assurance.

Multi-Agency Reviews and Learning

MAZE will participate in Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (CSPRs) and other statutory or multi-agency reviews where required and will contribute to shared learning to improve safeguarding practice.

Audit and Quality Assurance

MAZE will undertake regular safeguarding audits and quality assurance activities. Findings will be reported through governance structures and used to inform service improvement, staff development and policy updates.

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed bi-annually or sooner where there are changes to legislation, statutory guidance, or learning from safeguarding practice reviews or incidents. The Board of Directors has oversight of safeguarding governance and will be informed of significant safeguarding issues, themes and learning to support continuous improvement.

15. Contact details

Nominated child protection lead

Name: Sue Anderton

Email: sue.anderton@themazegroup.co.uk

Appendix 1

Child Abuse Linked to Faith, Culture and Exploitation

Abuse linked to faith, culture, or belief may include honour-based abuse, forced marriage, female genital mutilation (FGM), and abuse linked to spirit possession or witchcraft. These forms of abuse may involve multiple perpetrators and require a sensitive but robust safeguarding response.

Additional safeguarding guidance, referral pathways and practical tools can be accessed via the Suffolk Safeguarding Partnership and Essex Safeguarding Children Board websites.

Honour-Based Abuse (HBA)

Honour-based abuse involves violence, coercion or control carried out to protect perceived family or community honour. This may include physical, emotional, sexual, or financial abuse, and may be linked to forced marriage or FGM.

All staff must:

- Treat all concerns as safeguarding matters
- Not inform or engage with family members where risk is suspected
- Report concerns immediately to safeguarding leads and statutory services

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

FGM is a form of child abuse and is illegal in the UK.

All staff have a legal duty to report to the police where:

- A girl under 18 discloses FGM
- FGM is visually identified

All staff must also:

- Refer to Children's Social Care where risk is identified
- Consider risks to siblings and other children

Forced Marriage

Forced marriage is a criminal offence and a form of abuse.

All staff must:

- Treat all concerns as safeguarding concerns
- Not approach family members
- Refer to Children's Social Care and/or police

Support is available via the Forced Marriage Unit.

Child Exploitation (CSE & CCE)

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) involve coercion, manipulation, or exploitation of a child.

Children experiencing exploitation:

- Must be treated as victims
- May require multi-agency intervention

Trafficking and Modern Slavery

Children may be trafficked for exploitation including sexual exploitation, forced labour, or criminal activity.

All concerns must be referred in line with safeguarding procedures.

Gang Violence and Serious Youth Violence

Children affected by serious violence or gang activity may be at risk of significant harm and require safeguarding intervention.

Domestic Abuse

Children who see, hear, or experience domestic abuse are victims in their own right.

Where identified, this must result in a referral to Children's Social Care.

Fabricated or Induced Illness (FII)

FII occurs where a caregiver fabricates or induces illness in a child.

All concerns must be reported immediately to the Safeguarding Lead.

Appendix 2

SAFEGUARDING CONCERN / INCIDENT REPORTING FORM

(Children and Young People)

This form must be completed as soon as possible following any safeguarding concern, disclosure, allegation, incident, or observation involving a child or young person and submitted to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (Sue Anderton – sue.anderton@themazegroup.co.uk) or in their absence the Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (Amanda Rowe – amanda.rowe@themazegroup.co.uk).

SECTION 1 – BASIC DETAILS

Date of Report:

Time of Report:

Name of Person Completing Report:

Role/Position:

Contact Number:

Email Address:

SECTION 2 – CHILD / YOUNG PERSON DETAILS

Full Name:

Preferred Name:

Date of Birth / Age:

Gender:

Ethnicity:

Home Address:

Parent / Carer Name(s):

Parent / Carer Contact Details:

Does the child have additional needs/disabilities?

☐ Yes
☐ No

If yes, provide details:

Is the child:

☐ Looked After / In Care
☐ Care Leaver
☐ Subject to Child Protection Plan
☐ Child in Need Plan
☐ Unknown

Details (if known):

SECTION 3 – DETAILS OF THE CONCERN

Date incident/concern occurred:

Time incident/concern occurred:

Location of incident/concern:

Nature of Concern
(Tick all that apply)

Abuse Categories

☐ Physical Abuse
☐ Emotional Abuse
☐ Sexual Abuse
☐ Neglect

Additional Safeguarding Concerns

☐ Domestic Abuse
☐ Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)
☐ Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE)
☐ Online Abuse
☐ Honour-Based Abuse
☐ Forced Marriage
☐ Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)
☐ Gang / Serious Youth Violence
☐ Trafficking / Modern Slavery
☐ PREVENT / Radicalisation
☐ Fabricated or Induced Illness (FII)
☐ Mental Health Concern
☐ Self-Harm
☐ Missing Child
☐ Unsafe Home Environment
☐ Peer-on-Peer Abuse
☐ Other (please specify)

SECTION 4 – DETAILS OF INCIDENT / DISCLOSURE / OBSERVATION

Provide a factual account of what happened or what was observed.

Include:

- What was seen/heard
- Exact words used by the child where possible
- Injuries/behaviours/presentation
- Who was present
- Dates/times if known

(Do not include opinion or assumptions.)

SECTION 5 – IMMEDIATE RISK

Is the child currently at immediate risk of harm?

☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Unsure

If YES, explain:

Was emergency action taken?

☐ Ambulance called
☐ Police contacted
☐ Children's Social Care contacted
☐ Safeguarding Lead informed
☐ Other

Details:

Date/Time emergency action taken:

SECTION 6 – DISCLOSURE INFORMATION

Did the child make a direct disclosure?

☐ Yes
☐ No

If yes:

- Record the child's words exactly where possible.
- Do not ask leading questions.

SECTION 7 – INFORMATION SHARING / CONSENT

Was consent sought to share information?

☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Not appropriate due to safeguarding risk

If consent was not sought, explain why:

(e.g. risk of harm, immediate safeguarding concern, risk of evidence being destroyed, risk from family member etc.)

Does the child appear to have capacity to understand the process?

☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Unsure

SECTION 8 – ACTIONS TAKEN

Who was informed?

Name	Role/Agency	Date/Time Contacted

Referral Made To:

☐ Children's Social Care
☐ Police
☐ LADO
☐ PREVENT Team
☐ Early Help
☐ Other

Details/reference numbers:

SECTION 9 – SAFEGUARDING LEAD REVIEW

Name of Designated Safeguarding Lead / Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead:

Date Reviewed:

Outcome / Decision:

☐ Monitor
☐ Early Help
☐ Refer to Social Care
☐ Refer to Police
☐ Strategy Discussion Required
☐ No Further Action
☐ Other

Details:

SECTION 10 – FOLLOW-UP ACTIONS

Required Actions:

Person Responsible:

Review Date:

SECTION 11 – CONFIDENTIALITY

This form contains confidential safeguarding information and must be stored securely in accordance with:

- UK GDPR
- Data Protection Act 2018
- The MAZE Group CIC Safeguarding Policies

Information must only be shared on a need-to-know basis in line with safeguarding procedures.

KEY SAFEGUARDING CONTACTS

MAZE Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)
Sue Anderton – Executive Director
sue.anderton@themazegroup.co.uk

Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL)
Amanda Rowe – Head of Programmes
amanda.rowe@themazegroup.co.uk

Essex LADO Duty Line
03330 139 797

Suffolk Safeguarding Partnership
www.suffolksp.org.uk

Essex Safeguarding Procedures
Report a concern about a child – Essex County Council

This form has been developed in accordance with:

- Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023)
- Children Act 1989 & 2004
- The MAZE Group CIC Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy (April 2026)