

# SAFEGUARDING POLICY

This safeguarding policy sets out how Stephanie Morris Mediation, as a sole practitioner family mediation practice, is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people, and vulnerable adults who engage with mediation services.

As a sole practitioner, I recognise that safeguarding responsibilities rest personally with me as the mediator. I am committed to meeting the requirements of the Family Mediation Council ("**FMC**") and to acting promptly, appropriately, and professionally where safeguarding concerns arise.

I recognise that:

- the welfare of the child is paramount;
- all children and vulnerable adults have the right to be protected from abuse, neglect, and exploitation; and
- family mediation may involve disclosures of harm, risk, or abuse.

This policy applies to all mediation work undertaken by Stephanie Morris Mediation, including individual intake meetings, mediation sessions, and any associated family resolution services.

## LEGAL AND PROFESSIONAL FRAMEWORK:

This policy is written to meet the requirements of the FMC. It complies with and is informed by the following UK legislation, statutory guidance, and professional standards:

- FMC Code of Practice and Practice Standards
- FMC requirements on safeguarding, domestic abuse screening, and suitability for mediation
- Children Act 1989 and Children Act 2004
- Working Together to Safeguard Children
- Care Act 2014
- Domestic Abuse Act 2021
- Serious Crime Act 2015
- UK General Data Protection Regulation and Data Protection Act 2018

## DEFINITIONS:

**"Safeguarding"** - protecting children and vulnerable adults from maltreatment, preventing impairment of health or development, and ensuring safe and effective care.

**"Child"** - any person under the age of 18 years.

**"Vulnerable Adult"** - an adult who may be unable to protect themselves from harm or exploitation due to age, disability, illness, mental health difficulties, or other factors.

**“Abuse”** - includes, but is not limited to physical abuse, emotional or psychological abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, domestic abuse (including coercive control), and financial or economic abuse.

#### **PRINCIPLES OF SAFEGUARDING IN FMC MEDIATION PRACTICE:**

In line with the FMC Code of Practice, Stephanie Morris Mediation recognises that:

- safeguarding is an ongoing responsibility throughout mediation, not a one-off assessment;
- screening for domestic abuse, power imbalance, and risk is mandatory at the individual intake meeting and is thereafter reviewed continuously;
- mediation must not proceed where it is assessed as unsafe, inappropriate, or unfair; and
- the welfare of any child is a primary consideration in all family mediation work.

Mediators have a professional duty to decline, pause, or terminate mediation if safeguarding concerns arise that cannot be safely managed.

#### **CONFIDENTIALITY AND SAFEGUARDING:**

Information shared during mediation is confidential except where there is a disclosure or evidence of serious harm or risk of harm to a child or vulnerable adult, where there is a risk of serious harm to a participant or another person, or where disclosure is required by law or court order. Participants are informed of these limits to confidentiality at the outset of mediation and within the Agreement to Mediate.

#### **RECOGNISING SAFEGUARDING CONCERNS:**

Safeguarding concerns may arise through direct disclosure by a participant or child, observations of behaviour, presentation, or interaction, or information provided by third parties or professionals. Indicators may include (but are not limited to), fear, distress, or withdrawal, inconsistent accounts, signs of coercion or control, and disclosures of violence, neglect, or exploitation.

#### **RESPONDING TO SAFEGUARDING CONCERNS:**

Where a safeguarding concern arises during an individual intake meeting or mediation session, I will act in accordance with the FMC Code of Practice and my professional judgment.

I will:

1. Listen carefully and respond appropriately without investigation or leading questions;
2. Make clear the limits of confidentiality and not give assurances that information will be kept secret;
3. Record concerns accurately, distinguishing between fact, disclosure, observation, and professional opinion;

4. Assess risk and suitability, including whether mediation should continue;
5. Consult promptly with my Professional Practice Consultant (“PPC”); and
6. Take appropriate action, which may include suspending or terminating mediation, encouraging self-referral to safeguarding services, making a referral to Children’s Services or Adult Safeguarding where required, and contacting emergency services if there is an immediate risk of serious harm.

Where mediation is terminated on safeguarding grounds, this will be explained to participants in a clear and appropriate manner.

#### **SAFEGUARDING RESPONSIBILITY:**

As a sole practitioner, I act as the Safeguarding Lead for the practice.

**Name:** Stephanie Morris

**Role:** Family Mediator and Safeguarding Lead

**Contact details:** stephanie@stephaniemorrismediation.com

In this role, I am responsible for identifying and responding to safeguarding concerns, consulting promptly with my PPC, making referrals to statutory safeguarding agencies where required, and maintaining accurate safeguarding records. Where appropriate, I will seek guidance from my PPC or other relevant professional bodies to support safe decision-making.

#### **RECORD KEEPING:**

As a sole practitioner, I am responsible for ensuring that all safeguarding records are made promptly and accurately, are factual, clear, and objective, and are stored securely in line with UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018.

Safeguarding records are kept separately from general mediation notes where appropriate, and are accessible only to me, unless disclosure is required by law or for safeguarding purposes.

Records will clearly distinguish between fact, observation, disclosure, and professional opinion.

#### **SAFER PRACTICE, SCREENING AND SUITABILITY FOR MEDIATION:**

In accordance with FMC standards, Stephanie Morris Mediation ensures that:

- individual intake meetings are conducted to assess suitability and risk;
- domestic abuse screening is undertaken using recognised screening approaches;
- power imbalance, coercive control, and participant vulnerability are actively considered;
- shuttle mediation, online mediation, or additional safeguards are used where appropriate; and
- mediation does not proceed where safeguarding risks cannot be safely managed

I will end mediation if continued participation would place a child or adult at risk or compromise fairness or safety.

#### **TRAINING, SUPERVISION, AND FMC COMPLIANCE:**

All FMC Registered Mediators working with Stephanie Morris Mediation will maintain FMC registration and comply with their Member Organisation requirements. They will undertake regular safeguarding and domestic abuse training in line with FMC standards, participate in ongoing professional supervision with an FMC-approved PPC, and reflect on safeguarding practice as part of supervision and CPD. Safeguarding competence forms part of mediator fitness to practise.

#### **ALLEGATIONS AGAINST THE MEDIATOR:**

Any allegation that I, as the mediator, have caused harm to a child or vulnerable adult, or acted in a way that raises safeguarding concerns, will be taken seriously and managed in line with FMC requirements. In such circumstances I will inform my PPC promptly, follow the complaints and disciplinary procedures of my FMC Member Organisation, and where appropriate, referrals will be made to statutory authorities or the FMC. If necessary, I will suspend mediation activity while concerns are addressed.

#### **REVIEW OF POLICY:**

This policy will be reviewed annually, or following any significant safeguarding incident, or when there are changes in legislation or professional guidance

**Last review date:** 19/01/2026

**Next review date:** 19/01/2027

I confirm that I have read, understood, and agree to adhere to this Safeguarding Policy.

**Name:** Stephanie Morris

**Role:** Sole Practitioner Family Mediator

**Date:** 19/01/2026

**Signature:**

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized loop followed by a horizontal line ending in a small dot.