



## **CHILD PROTECTION and SAFEGUARDING POLICY**

### **Updated September 2017**

#### **STATEMENT**

This policy applies to all paid staff, the director and board of trustees, volunteers and learners and everyone working on behalf of People and Work.

We are aware that many children and young people are the victims of different kinds of abuse and that they can be subjected to social factors that have an adverse impact upon their lives – including domestic violence, substance misuse, bullying, online dangers, child prostitution and ritualistic abuse. We aim to work with partners to create and maintain a safe environment within which children and young people can thrive and adults can work with the security of clear guidance.

The specific legal frameworks which provide law and guidance in our work are:

- Children Acts 1989 and 2004
- Children and Families Act 2014
- United Convention of the Rights of the Child 1991

People and Work's duty is to protect children and young people (anyone under the age of 19) to whom we offer a service (including the children of adults who use our services) and to provide ongoing information and training to staff and volunteers on the principles and procedures which guide the company's approach to child protection.

People and Work will ensure that:

- children and young people, regardless of age, disability, gender, race, religious belief, sexual orientation or identity have a right to be protected from all types of harm or abuse;
- all children are listened to, valued and respected;
- staff are aware of the need to be alert to the signs of danger or abuse and know what to do with their concerns;
- all paid and unpaid staff are subject to rigorous recruitment procedures and checks;
- all paid and unpaid staff are given appropriate ongoing support and training;

- all child protection concerns will be acted upon immediately.

## **GUIDELINES and PROCEDURES**

### **1. RECOGNISING SIGNS OF ABUSE**

It can often be difficult to recognise abuse. The signs listed in these guidelines are only indicators and many can have reasonable explanations. Children may behave strangely or seem unhappy for many reasons, as they move through the stages of childhood or their family life changes. It is nevertheless important to know what could indicate that abuse is taking place and to be alert to the need to consult further.

Someone can abuse a child by actively inflicting harm or by failing to act to prevent harm. Abuse can take place within a family, in an institutional or community setting, by telephone or on the internet. Abuse can be carried out by someone known to a child or by a complete stranger.

If you are worried about a child it is important that you keep a written record of any physical or behavioural signs and symptoms. In this way you can monitor whether or not a pattern emerges and provide evidence to any investigation if required.

#### ***Physical Abuse***

Physical abuse can involve bullying, hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, scalding, drowning, and suffocating. It can also result when a parent or carer deliberately causes the ill health of a child in order to seek attention; this is called fabricated illness, or Munchausen's Syndrome by Proxy. Signs that may indicate physical abuse include:

- bruising in or around the mouth, on the back, buttocks or rectal area;
- finger mark bruising or grasp marks on the limbs or chest of a small child;
- bite marks;
- burn and scald marks; small round burns that could be caused by a cigarette;
- fractures to arms, legs or ribs in a small child;
- large numbers of scars of different sizes or ages.

#### ***Emotional Abuse***

Emotional abuse happens when a child's need for love, security, praise and recognition is not met. It usually co-exists with other forms of abuse. Emotionally abusive behaviour occurs if a parent, carer or authority figure is consistently bullying, hostile, rejecting, threatening or undermining. It can also result when children are prevented from social contact with others, or if developmentally inappropriate expectations are imposed upon them. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of someone else. Signs that can indicate emotional abuse include:

- excessively clingy or attention-seeking behavior;

- very low self-esteem or excessive self-criticism;
- excessively withdrawn behavior, watchfulness or fearfulness;
- despondency;
- lack of appropriate boundaries with strangers; too eager to please;
- eating disorders.

### ***Neglect***

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, causing damage to their health and development. It may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food, shelter or clothing, failing to protect a child from harm or danger, or failing to access appropriate medical care and treatment when necessary. It can exist in isolation or in combination with other forms of abuse. Signs of physical and emotional neglect can include:

- inadequate supervision; being left alone for long periods of time;
- lack of stimulation, social contact or education;
- inadequate nutrition, leading to ill-health;
- constant hunger; stealing or gorging food;
- failure to seek or to follow medical advice such that a child's life or development is endangered;
- inappropriate clothing for conditions.

### ***Sexual Abuse***

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. This may include physical contact, both penetrative and non-penetrative, or involve no contact, such as watching sexual activities, or looking at pornographic material. Encouraging children to act in sexually inappropriate ways is also abusive, which can also occur on line. Under the Sexual Offences Act 2003, any sexual activity, contact or non-contact, such as online 'grooming' - with a child under the age of 16, is a crime. Signs of physical sexual abuse can include:

- allegations or disclosure;
- genital soreness, injuries or discomfort;
- sexually transmitted diseases; urinary infections;
- excessive preoccupation with sexual matters; inappropriately sexualized play, words or drawing;
- a child who is sexually provocative or seductive with adults;
- repeated sleep disturbances through nightmares and/or wetting;
- depression;
- drug and/or alcohol abuse;
- eating disorders; obsessive behaviours;
- self-mutilation; suicide attempts;
- school/peer/relationship problems.

### **Online Abuse**

Children and young people may experience cyberbullying, grooming, sexual abuse, sexual exploitation or emotional abuse. Children can be at risk of online abuse from people they know, as well as from strangers. Online abuse may be part of abuse that is taking place in the real world (for example bullying or grooming). Or it may be that the abuse only happens online (for example persuading children to take part in sexual activity online). Children can feel as if there is no escape from online abuse – abusers can contact them at any time of the day or night, the abuse can come into safe places like their bedrooms, and images and videos can be stored and shared with other people. This can lead to despair and possible suicide attempts.

Signs of online abuse can include:

- spending lots, much more or much less time online, texting, gaming or using social media;
- being withdrawn, upset or outraged after using the internet or texting;
- being secretive about who they're talking to and what they're doing online or on their mobile phone;
- having lots of new phone numbers, texts or e-mail addresses on their mobile phone, laptop or tablet.

## **2. WHAT TO DO WITH YOUR CONCERNS**

In the event that a child makes an allegation or disclosure of abuse against an adult or another child or young person, admits to feeling threatened online, or appears at risk of harm to themselves or others it is important that you:

- listen to them and/or closely observe their presentation and behaviour;
- let them know that you take what they are saying seriously;
- do **not** attempt to question or interview them yourself;
- let them know that you will need to tell someone else in order to help them;
- do not promise to keep what they tell you secret;
- inform your Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO) as soon as possible;
- make a written record of the incident or events.

Sometimes you may just feel concerned about a child but do not know whether your concerns are justified. In this situation you should always speak to your DSO, who will help you to decide what to do. The responsibility for investigating allegations of abuse, whether they result from the disclosure of a child or the concerns of an adult, lies with social workers and the Police Child Abuse Investigation Team (CAIT). It is normally the responsibility of the DSO to make a referral to these agencies.

If an agency decides to pursue a child protection investigation, you should:

- work closely and collaboratively with all professionals involved in the investigation, in order to keep the child safe;
- attend a child protection conference if you are invited. You will be asked to provide information about your involvement with the child, which is why it is important to keep records of your concerns;
- attend any subsequent child protection review conferences.

### **3. ALLEGATIONS AGAINST STAFF OR VOLUNTEERS**

Staff that work or come into contact with children and young people need to be aware of the possibility that allegations of abuse may sometimes be made against members of staff. Allegations will usually be that some kind of abuse has taken place. They can be made by children and young people and they can be made by other concerned adults. Allegations can be made for a variety of reasons. Some of the most common are:

- abuse has actually taken place;
- something happens to a child that reminds them of an event that happened in the past –the child is unable to recognise that the situation and the people are different;
- children can misinterpret your language or your actions because they are reminded of something else;
- some children know how powerful an allegation can be; if they are angry with you about something they can make an allegation as a way of hitting out;
- an allegation can be a way of seeking attention.

All staff should be aware of the potential for such accusations and take appropriate steps to protect themselves, including ensuring that when working alone with a child they can be observed by others at all times.

All allegations should be brought to the notice of the DSO immediately. In cases where the allegation is made against the DSO, the complainant should approach the director of People and Work. If any allegation is made, People and Work will:

- make sure that the child in question is safe and away from the alleged abuser;
- contact the Children's Services Referral and Assessment Team relevant to where the child lives;
- contact the parents or carers of the child if advised to do so by the social worker/officer in charge of allegations;
- irrespective of any investigation by social workers or the police, inform the staff member of the appropriate disciplinary procedure; common practice is for the alleged abuser to be suspended from work until the outcome of any investigation is clear;
- consider whether the person has access to children anywhere else and whether those organisations or groups need to be informed;

- act upon the decisions made in any strategy meeting.

All incidents will be investigated internally after any external investigation has finished, to review organisational practice and put in place any additional measures to prevent a similar thing happening again.

## **SAFE RECRUITMENT**

People and Work recognises the need for rigorous procedures for the recruitment of any staff who come into contact with children, both directly and indirectly. The following standards are followed:

- all prospective workers complete an application form which asks for details of their previous employment and the names of two referees;
- all prospective workers who will work with children and vulnerable adults have a DBS check (enhanced with list checks) before they start employment with People and Work;
- all prospective workers are reminded that under the provisions of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 and the Exceptions Order 2013, 'protected' convictions, such as minor cautions and convictions cannot be taken into account by the company, but all specified serious violent or sexual offences relevant to the safeguarding of children or vulnerable adults, and any convictions resulting in a gaol sentence will be disclosed in any DBS check;
- all prospective workers are interviewed to establish previous experience of working in an environment where there is contact with children;
- nobody will start work before references and the results of a DBS check have been received. Referees should be reminded that references should not misrepresent the candidate or omit to say things that might be relevant to their employment;
- new members of staff will work to an agreed job description;
- these guidelines are available to everyone and fully discussed as part of an induction process.

## **GOOD PRACTICE**

People and Work will ensure that:

- all staff responsible for children while on activities they are running or assisting to run must make sure that health and safety guidelines are adhered to;
- all staff working with children should receive basic child protection training;
- no member of staff should be left alone with a child where they cannot be observed by others;

- where possible there should always be at least two adults present with a group of children – it is vital that the ratio of adult to child is adequate to ensure safety. For children under eight the ratio should be no more than 1:8; for children under 5 it should be no more than 1:6;
- staff should be alert to strangers frequently waiting outside a venue with no apparent purpose. Children should not be collected by people other than their parents unless notification has been received;
- if a child is not collected after a session it is reasonable to wait approximately half an hour for a parent or carer to arrive. If the parent or carer cannot be contacted, staff should contact the relevant Children and Families Duty Team or the police and request assistance.

#### **CURRENT TRAINING SITUATION (September 2017)**

- Three staff members have undertaken Level 3 training recently
- A refresher course is planned for all staff in November 2017
- Safeguarding training and awareness is on the Agenda for Board Meetings

#### **CONTACTS**

If you are concerned that a child might be at risk or is actually suffering abuse, you should immediately report this to the Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO).

Your DSO is: James Hall

Tel: 07800 957512.

If the designated officer is not available, speak to the director, Sarah Lloyd-Jones

Tel: 029 2048 8536.