

HOST Safeguarding Policy

Principles

The following Principles are key for all staff:

- The interests of the child and vulnerable adults are paramount.
- In cases of suspected child abuse all staff have a responsibility to take action in the ways set out in this procedure.
- Immediate action, to refer or consult, is required where there is suspicion of abuse.
- Investigation is the responsibility of the relevant Children's Social Care Department and the Police. These agencies have to balance the necessity for action to protect the child with the potential adverse effects of an investigation on the family and/or others.
- Record keeping is essential at each stage and all documents should be kept to the standards outlined in the agency's recording procedures.
- This procedure also covers disclosures made in electronic communications (e-mail or text messaging).

Procedure

Responding to a Disclosure

If someone tells you that they, or someone they know, is being abused:

- Believe what the person is saying and take it seriously.
- Reassure the person who has made the disclosure to you that they have done the right thing.
- Give the person time to talk and do not probe or ask leading questions. Investigation is not your responsibility.
- Do not promise to keep secrets. All allegations of harm or potential harm must be acted upon.
- Explain to the person that you will share this information with a senior member of staff who will ensure the appropriate procedures will be followed.
- E-mails or text messages received detailing details of suspected abuse should be immediately responded to within 24 hours by contacting the person by phone or face-to-face to obtain further information.
- Record the event in accordance with member agency procedure.
- The timing of referrals must reflect the perceived risk, and should normally be within one working day of recognition. If, for any reason, you cannot contact the designated officer in your agency you should go ahead and contact Children's Social Care, if necessary.
- When a referral is made to Children's Social Care you must agree with them what the young person and parents will be told, by whom and when. Do not just leave messages. Always speak to someone. You must confirm verbal and telephone referrals in writing, within 48 hours (sometimes you will be asked to use a multi-agency referral form (MARF)). Any Common Assessment Framework (CAF) that has been undertaken should be attached to the referral. Children's Social Care should acknowledge your written referral within one working

day of receiving it. Should you not have had a response within 3 working days, contact them again.

- Under no circumstances should you speak to or confront the abuser. Do not share suspicions or information with any other person other than your line manager, Children's Social Care and the Police. Information given to Children's Social Care or the Police will be taken seriously, handled sensitively and shared only on a 'need to know' basis, wholly to protect the child. However, in order to ensure that children are safeguarded on the basis of proper evidence, the source of the referral cannot be kept anonymous.

Acting on Concerns Regarding an Adult's Behaviour

If you have any concerns about an adult's behaviour towards children or young people (not an employee or volunteer working for the company):

- Do not ignore it – the service will take any concerns very seriously.
- You must discuss your concerns with the designated officer in your company, who will support you in liaising with the statutory agencies should any child protection matter arise.
- Do not confront the adult but seek the advice of the Designated Officer. If they are not available seek advice from your line manager or from Children's Social Care.

Acting on a Disclosure from an Adult that they are involved in the abuse of a child or young person

If someone not employed by the agency discloses that they are involved in the abuse of a child or young person, YOU MUST TAKE ACTION:

- Believe what they are saying and take the allegation seriously.
- Record details of what you have been told as soon as possible on the appropriate form.
- Report it to the Designated officer, who will ensure the appropriate actions are taken, also explaining the limits of confidentiality.
- If for any reason you cannot immediately contact the Designated officer, then you must directly contact either Children's Social Care or the Police. Your actions must be communicated to the Designated officer as soon as possible.

Acting on Allegations against any Employee or Volunteer Working for your Agency

- If you believe there to be a Child Protection issue directly relating to an employee or volunteer working for your agency the designated officer for child protection must be informed. All such allegations or concerns should be referred to and discussed with the person with specialist responsibility for child protection and safeguarding. They will refer on to the Children's Social Care Duty Team. In most cases, a child protection strategy meeting will be called to discuss how to proceed with regard to police investigation, child protection enquiries and/or disciplinary investigation.
- All allegations, even those that appear less serious, need to be followed up and examined objectively by someone independent of the organisation concerned. All allegations will be considered by Designated Officer.

Staff Conduct

The following guidelines apply to all employees and volunteers whether acting in a paid or unpaid capacity:

- Always avoid unnecessary physical contact.
- Wherever possible avoid taking a child alone in a car, however short the journey.
- Do not take a child to the toilet unless another adult is present or only if another adult is aware.
- If you find you are in a situation where you are alone with a child make sure that others can clearly observe you.
- Maintain appropriate relationships with a child or vulnerable adult.
- Do not divulge personal contact details such as email address or telephone number.
- Do not make suggestive or inappropriate remarks to or about a child, even in fun, as this could be misinterpreted.
- If a child or vulnerable adult makes any kind of accusation regarding a member of staff, you should report this immediately to the Designated officer.
- Participate in any training which is available to you to support you in your work with children
- Remember that those who abuse children and vulnerable adults can be of any age (including other children and vulnerable adults), gender, ethnic background or class, and it is important not to allow personal preconceptions about people to prevent appropriate action taking place.
- Good practice includes valuing and respecting children and vulnerable adults as individuals, and the adult modelling of appropriate conduct - which would exclude bullying, aggressive behaviour, racism, sectarianism or sexism.
- Except in the case of an emergency, no employee should be alone with an individual attendee.

Unaccompanied Children in Public Settings

There will be situations when young children visit public settings unaccompanied by their parent or carer. Whilst not wishing to discourage children from visiting places such as libraries, information centres and play or educational facilities, staff need to take reasonable steps to ensure the safety of the child and to inform parents / carers of their responsibilities.

The way in which staff deal with unaccompanied children must be based on awareness of the responsibility of the parent or the loco parentis carer (i.e., the one taking the responsibility of parent), and the duty of care the service to all children on the premises. In no instance would staff be expected to take on parental responsibilities for children in these settings.

A suitable notice should be clearly displayed and staff should point to this poster when appropriate but especially if parents / carers are about to leave their children on the premises. For example:

NOTICE INFORMATION FOR PARENTS AND CARERS

Welcome. We hope you enjoy your visit. Please remember, this is a community space, open to all. Keep your child safe: please don't leave them unaccompanied. Children under 10 must never be left unaccompanied. Parents and Carers remain responsible for their children at all times.

A good practice response on discovering an unaccompanied child on the premises is to:

Try to avoid being left alone with a child. Try to ensure colleagues are present when you are dealing with unaccompanied children.

Try to establish whether the child is allowed by the parent / carer to come and go alone. If you are satisfied that the child is allowed to come and go alone, then allow the child to leave. If you gather this information only from the child then you will need to use your judgement to ascertain whether the child is competent to leave alone.

Relevant factors may be:

- Whether the child exhibits signs of nervousness
- Whether the child appears to clearly understand your questions
- Whether the child seems physically capable
- Whether the child appears to know clearly and readily where he or she lives
- How far the journey is
- Whether you know of any particular hazards on the journey
- The child's age and vulnerability

If you are in doubt, encourage the child to remain on the premises until you have been able to contact a parent or carer. Children under 10 years of age should not normally be allowed to leave alone unless you know that in the particular case the parent / carer allows it.

Ask the child if s/he is expecting to be collected by an adult. Even if the child is expecting to be collected soon, do not wait until closing time before taking the next step.

Try to contact the parent or carer. Ask the child for an address or telephone number.

Training

All staff must ensure that attend child protection training.

To meet the requirements of the LSCB Partnership Agreement, the LSCB statutory member agencies will ensure that single agency and multi-agency training on safeguarding and promoting welfare is provided in order to meet local needs. This covers both the training provided by single agencies to their own staff, and multi-agency training where staff from different agencies train together.

The partner agencies will support the LSCB in evaluating the quality of this training, ensuring that it is provided within individual organisations, and checking that training is reaching the relevant staff.

Training will be organised and delivered in accordance with the requirements of 'Working Together to Safeguard Children'. The training will be informed by the Berkshire multi-agency Child Protection Procedures and prospectus of the Common Core of Skills and Knowledge of the Children's Workforce of which safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is one of the six key areas. Learning and development will also incorporate the Common Assessment Framework, and successor guidance such as 'Safeguarding Children in Education' (DfES 2003) and 'What To Do If you're Worried A Child is Abused' (DfES 2003).

Staff with responsibility for child protection training within individual agencies will monitor attendance at relevant training to ensure all relevant staff are aware of the procedures and have received relevant training. Attendance at training events will be reported to the LSCB via the training sub group.

Safer Workforce

Recruitment and Selection

Advertisement of posts and application packs should make explicit reference to the commitment of the organisation to Safeguarding, including:

- Intention to seek enhanced CRB disclosures;
- Clear statements in the Job Description and Person Specification that explicitly reference the individual's safeguarding responsibilities;
- Providing information about Safeguarding Policy and Practices to applicants. The selection process should:
 - seek an enhanced CRB disclosure;
 - always use applications forms (CVs should not be accepted); a minimum of two people should check for any gaps in employment history and explore these gaps during interview;
 - ensure at least one reference is from a previous employer and specifically asks if there have been any concerns or allegations about the applicants behaviour towards children; any disciplinary action; and confirmation of the applicant's responsibilities.
 - Compare this information with that provided by the applicant. Any inconsistencies or concerns regarding the information provided in a personal reference must be followed up directly with the referee;
 - ensure that any concerns arising from the applicant's medical reference are followed up directly with the applicant and with the employing agency's medical adviser.
 - seek to explore the applicants attitudes towards children and young people, their motivation for pursuing the role, and managing boundaries, at interview.
 - Always ensure that any other uncertainty or inconsistency about the information provided about the applicant is followed up and resolved.

If you need support with the process, seek advice on recruitment and selection from your HR advisors.

Allegations

Concerns for the safety and well-being of children could arise in a number of different ways and in a range of settings. It is essential to act quickly and effectively if an allegation is made, or if there is suspicion or concern about a professional or volunteer's relationship with a child, young person or group of children/young people, particularly if they have:

- Behaved in a way that has harmed, or may have harmed, a child;
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to, a child; or
- Behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates she/he is unsuitable to work with children.

If an allegation is made, or a concern arises, about a member of staff or volunteer, ensure that the Nominated Officer in your agency is informed immediately and Bracknell Forest Social Care Duty Service (01344 351582) are informed.

The Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) is available to provide advice or support in any allegations process, including advising whether or not immediate suspension of the person concerned should be initiated. Senior Managers must ensure that HR Advisors are made aware of concerns and advice is sought at the earliest opportunity.

If there is any concern about the immediate welfare of a child/young person or if the information suggests that a criminal offence may have been committed the Police and Social Care Duty/Out of Hours Services should be informed immediately.

Records should be secured will be strictly limited to relevant staff and external professionals on a need to know basis.

The member of staff or volunteer should be treated fairly and honestly, helped to understand the concerns expressed, the process being followed and any outcomes of the process. Senior managers should seek advice from the LADO and Social Care/Police before informing the person who is subject to an allegation.

Detailed guidance is available in Section 12 of the Berkshire Local Safeguarding Children Boards' Child Protection Procedures Manual 2006.

E-Safety

Children and young people can be vulnerable to exploitation or abuse through the medium of Information Technology. It is important that staff and volunteers are alert to potential risks children or young people may be exposed to, and that steps have been taken to mitigate the risk of this occurring, with specific reference to:

Content – e.g. exposure to age inappropriate material, inaccurate or misleading information, socially unacceptable material (e.g. inciting violence, hate or intolerance) and illegal material (including images of child abuse);

Contact – e.g. grooming using communication technologies leading to inappropriate behaviour or abuse;

Commerce – e.g. exposure to inappropriate advertising, online gambling, identity theft and financial scams;

Culture – e.g. bullying via websites, mobile phones or other communication technologies, or inappropriate downloading of copyright materials (i.e. music, films, images); exposure to inappropriate advertising, online gambling and financial scams;

Addressing these issues through training for staff and volunteers, and awareness raising with service users, or members of the community, will be undertaken by the service. If there is any indication that a child or young person is experiencing difficulties in this area (for instance if they are reported to be spending long periods of time using a PC on their own or if they appear unnecessarily defensive, secretive or anxious about their PC use), then this must be taken seriously.

Settings offering ICT access to members of the public or children and young people should consider placing restrictions on ICT access, developing an 'acceptable use policy', and having an agreement about the conditions in which children will be able to access ICT equipment unsupervised.

For more detailed information about E-Safety please refer to:

<http://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/learning/learn-schools/learn-curriculum/learn-ks3-ict.htm>

Monitoring Arrangements

The designated officer will check that all agency procedures, including the use and storage of documentation, comply with the Berkshire Child Protection Procedures. Where inconsistencies or shortcomings are identified, remedial action will be taken.

APPENDIX A: Risk Assessment Guidance

A written risk assessment is required for every process involving children including those that involve only brief contact. Where a risk assessment already exists this must be consulted and action taken as necessary.

A risk assessment should be completed before any new or changed event/visit. This should incorporate standard health and safety risk assessment procedure;

- identify the nature, length and frequency of the contact;
- consider children who are particularly at risk;
- consider whether any children have allergies; are on medication; have any disabilities (physical or mental) or behavioural difficulties;
- identify any potential areas for harm and detail action to prevent harm occurring, which might include consideration of alternative working practices;
- identify those situations that would require a criminal record check to be undertaken (see Section 4. below).

NB. Risk assessments must be signed off by an officer designated and trained to deal with child protection matters, not the member of staff arranging the visit or event in question.

Completed risk assessments must be stored together in a separate file which is kept by a designated child protection officer.