



## **The Suffolk Parent Carer Forum Safeguarding Policy**

The aim of this policy is to provide the members, employees, Experts by Experience and volunteers of Suffolk Parent Carer Forum (SPCF) with clear guidance about their role and responsibilities in safeguarding children and young people and to provide information for parents and carers about the safeguarding measures that the organisation employs to ensure that it meets its responsibilities to promote the welfare of, and safeguard children and young people. Suffolk Parents Carer Forum has a culture of listening to children and young people and taking account of their wishes and feelings, both in individual decisions and the development of services.

### **Legislation and guidance that underpins this policy**

This policy and procedures have been developed in line with the principles of The Children Act 1989 and 2004 and Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015 and with reference to the following:

- What to do if you're worried a child is being abused (2006)
- Every Child Matters (2004)
- Non-Statutory Guidance on Safeguarding Disabled Children (2009)
- UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

### **The principles behind the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy**

- In today's world all agencies and individuals now share the responsibility to protect children from harm or the risk of harm. We live and work in a climate where we, as adults, "have a duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children".
- Promoting children and young people's well-being and safeguarding them from significant harm depends crucially upon effective information sharing, collaboration and understanding between agencies and professionals.
- The application of the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and Procedures is based on the following key principles:
  - The welfare of the child is paramount
  - All children have the right to:
    - Be healthy
    - Stay safe
    - Enjoy and achieve
    - Make a positive contribution
    - Achieve economic wellbeing
- All children, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious belief and/or sexual identity have the right to protection from abuse
- Whilst it is not the responsibility of this organisation to determine whether or not abuse has taken place (this is undertaken in liaison with external child protection professionals), it is everyone's responsibility to report any concerns in relation to children, young people and/or vulnerable adults to the relevant authority.

- All members, employees, representatives and volunteers are expected to be familiar with, and comply with, this policy and its procedures.

## **Policy**

- Parent/carers of children and young people who attend or who are members of the organisation need to be aware that any concerns that a child, young person or vulnerable adult has, or may be experiencing harm, which comes to the attention of members, employees or volunteers may be referred to the local statutory agency.
- Employees and volunteers will be recruited using safe recruitment practices (including the taking up of references and a DBS check) to ensure they are suitable individuals to take on a role which brings them into contact with many parent/carers.
- Members, employees and volunteers will be provided with induction and training to assist them to fulfil their duties.

## **Procedures**

- Whilst recognising that employees and volunteers will have SPCF direct contact with children and young people, the organisation's work with parent/carers means that they may indirectly have contact with children and young people, and will certainly have contact with parent/carers who often live in particularly challenging situations.
- Therefore, these procedures are designed to support the recognition of abuse of children and young people and to provide clear guidance about what processes and actions should be taken if this is identified to ensure that children and young people are safeguarded and protected.

## **Definitions and Signs of Abuse**

There are four recognised types of abuse and it is important that all staff and volunteers know what they are and how to recognise them. Abuse is a form of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting by those known to them or, more rarely by others (e.g. via the internet). They may be abused by an adult or adults, or another child or children. The following definitions are based on those from Working Together to Safeguard Children (DCSF 2015):

- **Physical Abuse**  
Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, ill health to a child whom they are looking after. A person might do this because they enjoy or need the attention they get through having a sick child. Physical abuse, as well as being a result of an act of commission, can also be caused through omission or the failure to act to protect.
- **Emotional Abuse**  
Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on that child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or value only insofar as they meet the need of another person. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond the child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child

participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyber bullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

- **Sexual Abuse**

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, including prostitution, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (e.g. rape, buggery or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual online images, watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet). Boys and girls can be sexually abused by males and/or females, by adults and by other young people. This includes people from all different walks of life.

*Child Sexual Exploitation*

Child Sexual Exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse, it occurs where an individual or group take advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants and/or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if sexual activity appears consensual. Child Sexual Exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.

- **Neglect**

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born it may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, failing to protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger, failure to ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care givers) or the failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

## **Safeguarding Disabled Children and Young People**

There is clear evidence that disabled children and young people have an increased vulnerability to being abused, and that the presence of multiple impairments further increases their vulnerability. There are many reasons for this, and it is important that all those who work with disabled children and young people have some understanding of these reasons and ensure that they offer appropriate support to any child or young person who discloses abuse.

## **Guidance on how to respond to a child/young person/vulnerable adult disclosing abuse**

**DO:**

- Treat any allegations extremely seriously and act at all times towards the child as if you believe what they are saying.
- Tell the child they are right to tell you.
- Reassure them that they are not to blame.
- Be honest about your own position, who you have to tell and why.

- Tell the child what you are doing and when and keep them up to date with what is happening.
- Take further action – you may be the only person in a position to prevent future abuse – tell your nominated person immediately.
- Write down everything said and what was done.

**DON'T :**

- Make promises you can't keep.
- Interrogate the child or young person – it is not your job to carry out an investigation – this will be up to the police and Children's Social Care, who have experience in this regard.
- Cast doubt on what the child has told you, interrupt or change the subject.
- Say anything that makes the child feel responsible for the abuse.
- Do nothing – make sure you tell the nominated Safeguarding Advisor immediately – they will know how to follow this up and where to go for further advice.

**Should we tell parent/carers if we are going to make a referral?**

It is good practice to be as open and honest as possible with parent/carers about any concerns and if you need to make a referral to social care, you should normally discuss this with the parent/carer before you do. However, inability to inform parent/carers should not prevent a referral being made. It would then be a joint decision with Children's Social Care about how and when the parent/carer should be approached and by whom.

However, you should **NOT** discuss your concerns with parent/carers in the following circumstances:

- Where sexual abuse or sexual exploitation is suspected.
- Where organised or multiple abuse is suspected.
- Where Fabricated or Induced Illness (previously known as Munchausen Syndrome is suspected.
- Where Female Genital Mutilation is the concern.
- In cases of suspected Forced Marriage.
- Where contacting or discussing the referral would place a child, yourself or others at immediate risk.

**Guidance on how to respond to a parent/carer disclosing abuse**

**DO:**

- If you enter into a discussion with a parent/carer who you believe may begin to disclose information which leads you to believe that a child has suffered, or may suffer, harm make sure they know as soon as possible that you will not be able to keep this information to yourself
- Treat any allegations extremely seriously and act at all times towards the parent/carer as if you believe what they are saying
- Tell the parent/carer they are right to tell you
- Be honest about who you have to tell and why
- If a referral needs to be made to safeguarding, encourage the parent/carer to make the referral themselves. Support them if necessary, however, be clear that if they won't do this you will have to do this
- Make sure you are clear (if possible) where the child/young person or vulnerable adult is at the current time and consider their immediate safety

- If you have to make the referral, do tell the parent/carer what you are doing and when and keep them up to date with what is happening
- Write down everything said and what was done.

#### **DON'T :**

- Make promises you can't keep, e.g. tell people they can tell you things in confidence.
- Interrogate the parent/carer – it is not your job to carry out an investigation – this will be up to the police and Children's Social Care, who have experience in this regard.
- Do nothing – make sure you tell the nominated Safeguarding Advisor immediately – they will know how to follow this up and where to go for further advice.

### **Reporting Procedures – DO NOT DELAY**

In the first instance, an individual should contact the Safeguarding Advisor for advice. If the Safeguarding Advisor is not available and there is an immediate danger, the individual should follow the guidelines below:

- **Emergency situations:** If emergency medical attention is required, this can be secured by calling an ambulance (dial 999) or by taking a child to the nearest Accident and Emergency Department (A & E). The latter should only be considered if there are two people who are able to take the child, individuals should not be transporting children/young people to A & E on their own.
  - If a child or young person is in immediate danger the police should be contacted (dial 999) as they alone have the power to remove a child immediately if protection is necessary, via their powers to use Police Protection.
- **Other situations:** It is vitally important that any disclosure made in confidence is recorded factually as soon as possible; this is whether or not the matter is taken to another authority.

An accurate account should be made of:

- Date and time of what has occurred and the time the disclosure was made
- Names of people who were involved
- What was said, or done, and by whom
- Any action taken by the group or individual to gather information and refer on
- Any further action, e.g. suspension of a worker or volunteer
- Where relevant, reasons why there is no referral to a statutory agency
- Names of person reporting and to whom reported.
- The designated Safeguarding Advisor should then use the appropriate reporting systems for the situation. This may be reporting the matter to the Local Authority's Children's Social Care (previously known as Social Services) or the police. This is why recording all information impartially and accurately is vital as this could be used for evidence for later use.
- The Local Safeguarding Children's Board will be able to provide Inter-agency referral forms to report a concern. Completed forms and any written information regarding Safeguarding Children issues concerning an individual should be kept in a safe locked place to ensure confidentiality.
- If the Safeguarding Advisor and individual feel that there is cause for concern, but that they need further clarification before referral, they should agree a course of action with a timescale. This may include, for example, further discussion with the child or another person or Children's Social Care but the purpose to the discussion should be only to obtain basic information about whether to take action. **Staff must never undertake their own child protection investigation.**
- Whilst the organisation has no legal requirement to assist in a Child Protection investigation, there is a strong expectation and moral obligation that organisations will

co-operate fully during any process and it is the organisation's intention to support any investigation as appropriate.

### **Recruitment, Selection and Vetting Process**

- Employees will be subject to a rigorous recruitment process, which includes a vetting process with DBS checks and references obtained, as well as a formal interview process.
- Volunteers will also be vetted to ensure that they are suitable individuals to take on a role which places them in contact with a large number of families. This will include the taking up of references and a DBS check.
- Employees and volunteers will be provided with induction and training to assist them to fulfil their duties.
- Regular refresher training courses on child protection issues will also be made available and identified staff and volunteers will be expected to attend that training as required.

### **Allegations against adults who work with children and young people**

If you have information which suggests an adult who works with children or young people (in a paid or unpaid capacity) has:

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

You should speak immediately with the designated Safeguarding Advisor. The Safeguarding Advisor will consult with/make a referral to the Local Authority Delegated Officer (LADO) for the relevant area, who will advise on the most appropriate course of action.

### **Code of Conduct**

- The organisation has a Code of Conduct with which all employees and volunteers are expected to comply at all times.
- To minimise any allegations against members of staff or volunteers, individuals should adhere to lone working best practice wherever possible. For situations where this might not be possible, employees and volunteers should consider how else they might minimise any risk, including holding meetings/sessions in appropriate rooms and places.
- Employees and volunteers must inform the Chair of Trustees about any personal difficulties that might affect their ability to exercise their responsibilities appropriately or risk bringing the name of the organisation into dispute.
- The following are examples of types of circumstances:
  - Any child protection or safeguarding concern relating to children, young people and/or vulnerable adults
  - Any allegation that an individual may have committed, or is being investigated in relation to having committed, a crime.
- Where an allegation is made against an employee, that individual may be suspended on full pay until such time any investigation is completed. The employee may be liable to action under the Disciplinary Procedure and they will be informed of that at the time. Employees will, therefore, need to ensure that they have a sufficient support network outside the organisation should the Disciplinary Procedure be invoked.
- Where an allegation is made against a SPCF team member, it will be standard practice for that member to stand down until the issues are resolved. This is a neutral and non-judgmental position, designed to protect the organisation and the individual, and to ensure the individual involved can focus all their attention on the issue at hand.

- Where an allegation is made against a volunteer, it will be standard practice to ask the volunteer not to attend until the issues are resolved. If an allegation against a volunteer is found to be true, then that volunteer will be asked to leave the organisation.
- Any member of staff who has been involved in a child protection concern or disclosure will be expected to give a full account of the incident or their concerns and may be called on as a witness in any subsequent proceedings.

### **Designated Safeguarding Advisor**

The designated Safeguarding Advisors are:

**Sue Willgoss** (Chair of Operations)

**Brian Devine** (Chair of Trustees)

Suffolk Parent Carer Forum will attend relevant safeguarding boards and forums on behalf of the organisation and will bring back information regarding new developments. The Safeguarding Advisors will ensure the management committee are made aware of any safeguarding concerns and will also take responsibility for ensuring that all staff and volunteers have been appropriately trained in relation to safeguarding.

The Committee will take leadership and safeguarding arrangements.

Contact details are as follows: -

- Sue Willgoss – [sue.willgoss@suffolkpcf.co.uk](mailto:sue.willgoss@suffolkpcf.co.uk)
- Brian Devine – [confidential@suffolkpcf.co.uk](mailto:confidential@suffolkpcf.co.uk)

### **Overall responsibility for the organisations**

The role of the designated Safeguarding Advisors are to:

- Provide a single point of contact between the organisation and the statutory child protection agencies, including Children's Social Care and the police
- Offer consultation and advice about safeguarding and child protection concerns pertaining to the activity of the organisation.

In any situation where this is suspected or potential risk of abuse of a child or young person, it is the responsibility of that individual to discuss such concerns with the Safeguarding Advisor. All discussions between individuals and the Safeguarding Advisor will be recorded in writing and a note placed on file.

### **Whistleblowing**

- It is important that the organisation has procedures for enabling employees to share, in confidence with a designated person, concerns they may have about a colleague's behaviour. This may be behaviour linked to abuse of a child, young person or vulnerable adult, or behaviour that pushes boundaries beyond acceptable limits.
- The organisation is fully supportive of 'whistleblowing' for the sake of the child, young person or vulnerable adult, and will provide support and protect those who 'whistle blow'. While it is difficult to express concerns about colleagues, it is important that these concerns are communicated to the Safeguarding Advisor or the Chair of Trustees. All employees, representatives and volunteers will be encouraged to talk to the Safeguarding Advisor if they become aware of anything that makes them feel uncomfortable.

## **Complaints**

- The organisation is committed to continual improvement of its services and facilities. It recognises that complaints are a valuable tool for addressing problems and will endeavour to ensure that all complaints are investigated and acted upon fairly.
- A copy of the organisation's Complaints Procedure can be obtained from the Safeguarding Advisors.

## **Equality and Diversity**

- Child abuse occurs in all types and structures of families regardless of gender, race, culture, sexual orientation, religion or class. In situations where an individual is concerned about the care or treatment of a child or young person, it is important to be mindful that there are many different ideas and attitudes about how children should be brought up. However, this does not mean that an individual should ignore a situation where children are clearly at risk on the grounds that the family concerned has a different set of beliefs.
- It is important to be mindful of assumptions as to what is appropriate in terms of caring for children with learning disabilities. Sometimes practices that would clearly be seen as unacceptable in general terms are not challenged when the child has learning disabilities.
- For young people with learning disabilities there can be additional issues in relation to child abuse. Children and young people with learning disabilities may have greater difficulty in being heard when trying to disclose situations of abuse.
- The organisation is mindful of the issues raised under this clause and will seek to work within equality and diversity guidelines to ensure that matters relating to safeguarding and child protection are handled effectively and appropriately.

## **Confidentiality**

The organisation respects everyone's right to confidentiality, however, it believes that the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults has to take priority and has a duty to disclose abuse and relevant information to the appropriate agency if deemed necessary.

## **Monitoring and Review**

The Safeguarding Advisor/s will coordinate an annual review of this policy and procedures to ensure they are kept up-to-date and are operating effectively. Any revision of the policy or procedures relating to safeguarding will be communicated to all employees and volunteers in a timely manner.

Date adopted: 21st October 2021

Date of policy review: 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023

Date of next review: March 2024



**Agreement**

I have received a copy of the Safeguarding Policy and I have read, understood and agree to follow its content.

Signed:

Date:

Print: