



Safeguarding Children & Vulnerable Adults Policy

Designated Safeguarding Officer

Gary Lambert-Snaith

Deputy Safeguarding Officer

Shaun Scanlon

Linda Jethwa

Sonita Turner

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Signed by Chief Executive Officer:



Introduction

Waltham Forest Community Hub (the Organisation) believes that it is always unacceptable for a child or vulnerable person to experience abuse or harm of any kind and recognises its responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children, young people and vulnerable adults by a commitment to a practice that protects them.

Principles

- The welfare of children and vulnerable adults is paramount
- All children and vulnerable adults (whatever their background and culture, maternity or pregnancy status, age, disability, gender, racial origin, religious belief, sexual orientation and/or gender identity) have the right to participate in society in an environment which is safe and free from violence, fear, abuse, bullying and discrimination
- All children and vulnerable adults have the right to be protected from harm, exploitation and abuse and to be provided with safe environments to live and play
- Working in partnership with children, their parents, carers and vulnerable adults and other agencies is essential in promoting children and vulnerable people's welfare
- The Organisation has a duty to promote the well-being of children and young people and to cooperate with the London Borough of Waltham Forest (LBWF) in delivering its safeguarding duties
- The Organisation is responsible for establishing appropriate policies and procedures to ensure that the Centre's activities promote the safety and wellbeing of children and vulnerable adults, e.g. safe recruitment policies, safe working practice

Purpose

This policy demonstrates how the Organisation will meet its legal obligations and reassure members of the public, service users, volunteers and employees:

- What they can expect the Organisation to do to protect and safeguard children and vulnerable adults
- To provide staff with guidance on the procedures that they should adopt in the event that they suspect a child or vulnerable adult may be experiencing, or be at risk of harm

- To voice any concerns they may have through an established procedure
- That there is an effective recording and monitoring system in place
- That employees and volunteers receive the appropriate training

Policy Statement

The Organisation is committed to safeguarding children and vulnerable adults and protecting them from abuse when they are engaged in services organised and provided by, or on behalf of, the Organisation. The Organisation will ensure through its Recruitment Policy and Recruitment of Ex-Offenders Policy that suitable people are selected for working with children and vulnerable adults. The Organisation will take any concern made by an employee, volunteer, child or vulnerable adult seriously and sensitively. Referrals made by an employee or volunteer cannot be anonymous and should be made in the knowledge that, during the course of enquiries, the agency who made that referral will be made clear as individuals may be required as prosecution witnesses. The Organisation will not tolerate harassment of any employee, volunteer, child or vulnerable adult who raise concerns of abuse. The Organisation will work in cooperation with LBWF; it will comply with the Waltham Forest Safeguarding Children Board (WFSCB) and Waltham Forest Safeguarding Adults at Risk Partnership Board Inter-Agency procedures and will respond positively to any recommendations regarding the improvement of its safeguarding policies and procedures.

Aims

- Respecting the rights, wishes, feelings and privacy of children and vulnerable adults by listening to them and minimising risks that may affect them
- Preventing abuse and harm by good practice, creating a safe and healthy environment to avoid situations where abuse or allegations of abuse occur
- Ensuring that employees and volunteers understand the Organisation's relevant Codes of Conduct and Safeguarding Policy
- Raising awareness among employees of the safeguarding duty the Organisation has in relation to the Children and the Safeguarding Vulnerable Group Acts
- Responding to any allegations appropriately and implementing the appropriate disciplinary and appeals procedures
- To ensure clear procedures are in place, promoted and implemented in line with LBWF Inter-Agency procedures for safeguarding children and vulnerable adults
- To share information about concerns with agencies that need to know, and involving parents, children and vulnerable adults appropriately

To achieve these aims, we will:

- Ensure that training appropriate to the level of involvement with children and vulnerable adults is available for employees and volunteers
- Respond appropriately to concerns reported
- Develop and implement effective procedures for recording and responding to incidents and accidents
- Develop and implement effective procedures for recording and reporting to LBWF, any allegations or suspicions of harm or abuse
- Promote the welfare and wellbeing of children and vulnerable adults during and within the Organisation's services, including in the planning of services
- Maintain a good level of safe working practice at all times to minimise risk to children and vulnerable adults that come into contact with employees and volunteers

Scope of this Policy

This Safeguarding Policy is for employees and volunteers that come into contact with children or vulnerable adults. Safe Working Culture and Practice should be used on all occasions where employees or volunteers come into contact with children or vulnerable adults.

Safe recruiting is of particular importance in the following instances:

- School talks and events
- Work experience
- Community engagement
- Sports and leisure activities

Some Definitions

When the term 'children' is used in this document, this also includes 'young people' and 'young persons'. The phrase 'children and vulnerable adults' (or 'children, young people and vulnerable adults') refer to:

- Anyone under the age of 18 years
- A person aged 18 years or over and who may be unable to take care of themselves, or protect themselves from harm or from being exploited

This may be because they:

- Have a mental health problem or illness, including dementia
- Have a disability
- Have a sensory impairment
- Are old and frail and or experiencing a temporary illness
- People with a substance misuse or an alcohol problem

When the term 'parents' is used, we mean it in the broadest sense to include parents, carer(s) and guardians.

Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Safer Recruitment Decisions

Disclosure should only be sought where individuals have substantial or regular or unsupervised contact with children or vulnerable adults as part of their duties or responsibilities for or on behalf of the Organisation. DBS checks only guarantee that the person concerned doesn't have a relevant criminal conviction up to the date that the certificate is issued.

Risk assessments will be undertaken on job descriptions within the Organisation to identify which jobs are likely to involve regular and/or substantial unsupervised contact with children and vulnerable adults. DBS checks will be undertaken appropriate to the right level of contact. The risk assessment for an adult working with vulnerable adults must also taking into account other forms of potential abuse which do not necessary apply when working with children (i.e. financial abuse).

When posts are advertised, applicants are notified if they are subject to a DBS check. Checks are usually undertaken at 3-year intervals.

For further information about the Disclosure and Barring Service DBS, please check their external website (<https://www.gov.uk/disclosure-barring-service-check/overview>).

Recognising Potential Abuse

In this policy, abuse covers physical, emotional, sexual and mental abuse including bullying. Abuse can also be financial for vulnerable adults. Child abuse and the abuse of vulnerable adults are difficult issues and present challenges to all who provide services for these groups. Even for those experienced in working with child abuse, it is not always easy to recognise a situation where abuse may occur or has already taken place. People working for the Organisation (whether in a paid or voluntary capacity) are not experts at such recognition. However, they do have a responsibility to act if they have any concerns about the behaviour of someone (an adult or another child) towards a child or vulnerable adult. The Organisation will therefore encourage and expect staff (or anybody working on behalf of the Organisation, either paid or unpaid) to discuss

any concerns they may have about the welfare of a person immediately with their reporting or line manager, or a Designated Safeguarding Officer.

It is not the responsibility of employees or volunteers to determine if abuse is taking place. It is however their responsibility to follow the appropriate procedure within this policy should an alert be received or concern raised that abuse may be taking place. Following the correct procedure will ensure the correct people/agencies are informed and the appropriate action taken.

Data Protection, Record Retention and Storage of Information

Copies of safeguarding referrals and any other relevant documents or records (e.g. telephone calls, CCTV information, etc.) relating to the incident will be securely stored. This information will be retained in accordance with data protection periods and retention guidelines.

All staff and volunteers must also comply with the Organisation's internet and email policies.

Information relating to an employee will be retained in their personal file. Access to Safeguarding incident records will only be available to Designated Safeguarding Officers and Senior Managers.

Confidentiality and Information Sharing

Confidentiality is a key issue in Safeguarding. Safeguarding children and vulnerable adults is more important than the privacy of another person. Sometimes sharing information is necessary to establish the level of risk to a child or vulnerable adult. Ask yourself; is it safe for me NOT to share the information? Decisions on who needs to be informed are set out in the Waltham Forest Safeguarding Children Board (WFSCB) and Waltham Forest Safeguarding Adults at Risk Partnership Board Information Sharing Protocols. It is important that information is shared appropriately and sensitively with relevant agencies. This will be the decision of the appropriate Designated Safeguarding Officer. Always record what you have shared, with whom and why. If an allegation is made towards another member of staff, full support will be given.

Involving of Children, Families and Carers

There is always a commitment to work in partnership with parents or carers where there are concerns about their children. Therefore, in most situations, it would be appropriate to talk to parents or carers to help clarify any initial concerns.

Decisions should be made with the agreement of children and their parents whenever possible, unless to do so would place the child at risk of significant harm, and this would be in their best interest. Failure to obtain parental agreement should not be seen as a factor to delay making a referral.

When it is not Appropriate to Share Concerns with Parents

Information obtained about individuals should usually be shared with them unless sharing the information would be likely to result in serious harm to the individual, a child or another person, or the information relates to a third party who expressly indicated the information should not be disclosed. (e.g. where a parent/carer may be responsible or accused for the abuse or not able to respond to the situation appropriately).

Where information is obtained and recorded which should not be shared with the individual concerned for one of the above reasons, it should be noted on the record and the reasons recorded.

Complaints

All complaints relating to safeguarding issues will be dealt with in line with the Organisation's Complaints Procedure and safeguarding processes may run in parallel.

Implementation and Monitoring

Roles and Responsibilities

Designated Safeguarding Officer is responsible for:

- Attending relevant training for designated officers and other relevant training
- Acting as a source of advice on all safeguarding matters
- Being familiar with the Safeguarding procedures of LBWF to ensure that systems are in place for effective record keeping
- Ensuring there are effective internal procedures to handle concerns
- Being the link person with the individual or organisation that have raised a concern
- Deciding as to whether to involve referral agencies (e.g. Children and Young People Services, Protection of Vulnerable Adults) including Common Framework Assessments
- Helping people making referrals complete any forms, as appropriate
- Being the link person with relevant local agencies and consult with them on concerns that have been raised
- Considering the need for support for those involved disclosures when cases of poor practice or abuse arise.
- Dealing with enquires / information requests from other agencies in relation to safeguarding concerns

- Ensuring that records are kept and that they are safe and secure at all times
- Ensuring that the Policy, Procedures and Action Plan are reviewed on an annual basis to ensure compliance with Safeguarding legislation
- Providing regular progress reports

Managers are responsible for ensuring that staff they are responsible for receive the training they need, commensurate with their responsibilities. They must also ensure that their staff are subject to appropriate Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks and that their staff comply with the Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy and Procedures.

All Members of Staff and Volunteers are responsible for carrying out their duties in a way that safeguards and promotes the welfare of children and vulnerable adults. They must also act in a way that protects them from wrongful allegations of abuse as far as possible, in line with this policy. They must bring matters of concern about safety and welfare of children and vulnerable adults to the attention of an appropriate Designated Safeguarding Officer.

Reporting and Monitoring

Understanding and compliance with procedures will be monitored through a range of mechanisms including: audits, one to ones, employee feedback and ad-hoc checks.

Communication

In order for this policy to be successfully implemented, it is essential that it be effectively communicated to all staff, volunteers, children, parents/carers and anybody else affected.

It is the responsibility of managers to ensure that all employees are familiar with the policy and procedures and the responsibility for all staff to ensure that the policy is advocated and promoted to parents and children and vulnerable adults.

Misuse of the Procedure

Malicious complaints and/or serious and/or persistent abuse of these safeguarding policies and procedures will not be tolerated and will be dealt with through the Organisation's disciplinary process.

Equality and Inclusivity

An equality impact assessment has been undertaken and the findings have been used to inform and develop this policy. Children and vulnerable adults, no matter what their circumstances or personal characteristics, have the right to be protected from harm and abuse. Whilst the policy has been designed to support children and vulnerable adults, potential barriers in relation to reporting were identified and mitigation and/or actions put in place to simplify the process and to make it more accessible.

Mobile Phone Use

Some of the issues related to the use of mobile phones at the youth club are:

- They are valuable items which can be lost, stolen or damaged
- When used inappropriately, cyberbullying incidents can take place
- Internet access can allow members to access unsuitable sites
- Mobile phones with integrated cameras could lead to child protection, bullying and data protection issues with regards to inappropriate capture, use or distribution of images of members, volunteers or staff

The youth club has a landline that can be used if a member needs to contact their parent/carer or if a parent/carer needs to contact the youth club. This means that it is not necessary for members to have a mobile phone. It is the decision of the Youth Workers whether they allow mobile phones to be used during the session. If mobile phones are allowed then it is on the understanding that only appropriate sites are accessed, video/photos are not taken of other members without their consent and any misuse of the phone will result in the phone being confiscated and being held in a secure place until the end of the session.

If you don't believe the risk requires immediate action, contact the Waltham Forest Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (**MASH**) team to discuss concerns: **Telephone:** 020 8496 2310 (Monday - Thursday 9am - 5.15pm, Friday 9am - 5pm) or 020 8496 3000 (out of hours).

Policy Review

This Safeguarding Policy will be reviewed once a year or in the event of changes in legislation, or to take into account changes in working practices which may result from incidents or allegations occurring.