

## ST. MATHEW'S CHILDREN'S ACTION GROUP

### SAFEGUARDING POLICY

The What Cabin aims to promote the welfare of the children that attend at play sessions.

The Children's Act makes it clear that the welfare of the child is paramount, and it gives everyone involved in the care of children a responsibility for the protection of those children. It is also essential that we honour the trust of those who allow us to care for their children.

Therefore, it is necessary that all concerned have an understanding of the issues involved and that procedures are in place and are understandable to anyone providing a service to young people and easy to implement.

#### Definitions and indicators of abuse.

Obvious sudden behaviour changes, non-age appropriate behaviour or activity, isolation, language.

Physical	Burns, bruising that is recurrent, bites, scolds, unexplained pain, black eyes, withdrawn, arms legs covered, improbable excuses to bruising.
Emotional	Fear of new situations, over reaction to mistakes, sudden speech disorders, self-mutilation, extreme passivity/ aggression.
Neglect	Poor hygiene, hungry, clothing, lice, unfit, unhealthy, home alone, stealing, scavenging for food, low self-esteem, constant tiredness.
Sexual	Inappropriate language/ art work physical play, physical signs, bleeding, sore, repeat they are bad/ dirty, become hysterical when clothing is removed, wetting themselves, eating disorder, suicidal.

#### How to recognise abuse

- Unexplained or suspicious injuries such as bruising, cuts or burns, particularly if situated on a part of the body not normally prone to such injuries;
- The child describes what appears to be an abusive act involving him or her;
- Someone else (child or adult) expresses concern about the welfare of another child;
- Unexplained changes in behaviour such as becoming very quiet; withdrawn or displaying sudden outbursts of temper.
- Inappropriate sexual awareness;
- Engaging in sexually explicit behaviour;
- Distrust of adults, particularly those with whom a close relationship would normally be expected;
- Difficulty in making friends.

If you notice any social changes in the behaviour of a child, worrying marks or bruises or hear a child/children talking about things which give cause for concern then your first responsibility is to the child.

Signed: Supna Thadha  
Position: Chair

Date: 19<sup>th</sup> April 2022  
Review Date: 19<sup>th</sup> April 2023

It is not safe to assume that someone else will take action. As an adult you have a duty to take appropriate action. Recognising and coping with child abuse is very stressful and the person reporting the concern will not have to cope alone.

### **What to do if you suspect abuse**

If a child spontaneously talks of experiences which give cause for concern you should:

- Explain to the child that if he/she discloses information which leads you to believe they are being abused, you will be unable to keep it confidential.
- Listen to the child without questioning him/her. Be aware of your own reactions as showing disapproval may stop the child from continuing with their disclosure.
- Do not try to stop the child from recalling events. Make a note of what is said, in what context, the setting, the timing and which people were present. (complete a log if you have one)
- Inform the designated child protection worker immediately or if they are unavailable an appropriate senior member of staff immediately. If you are unsure of what action to take it would be appropriate to seek advice from either the police or social services department.
- The child protection worker will contact the appropriate authorities including the Duty Social Worker in the area where the child lives as soon as possible.

Allegations of abuse will be treated similarly whether the disclosure is relating to an individual from within or externally from **SMCAG**. The information should be passed onto the designated child protection worker and handled in the same way. Social Services will also follow the same procedure as they do to investigate allegations of abuse for a family.

The designated child protection worker in **SMCAG** is **Kuljit Singh Walia** who can be contacted by the telephone **07966637659**. Any concerns or reports of abuse must be reported to this individual as soon as possible.

Please contact the Local Authority designated Officer (**LADO**) who needs to be informed of any allegation made against a person who works with children. This applies to anyone who works with children including: self-employed workers, settings in the private and voluntary sector, volunteers and local authority employees. The LADO will provide advice, guidance and help in resolving the situation.

Your Local Authority Designated Officer is **Jude Atkinson** and contact details are email: [Lado-allegations-referrals@leicester.gov.uk](mailto:Lado-allegations-referrals@leicester.gov.uk) or telephone **0116 4542440**.

If you have concerns for the health and wellbeing of a child, contact the Duty and Advice Service on **0116 454 1004**. A social worker will talk to you about your concerns and will advise of any action required. The service is open 24 hours, 7 days a week, all year. The service is also the first point of contact for all new referrals to children's services and will deal with anything that relates to city children.

### **How to make a referral**

In the first instance contact **0116 4541004** to discuss your concerns. You will be advised at this point if you need to complete a Multi Agency Referral Form (MARF).

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You will be expected to provide the following information (where possible):

- Parents details
- Home address
- Ethnic origin
- Religion
- Details of any other key agencies involved.
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You may be asked for more information if there is insufficient to make an assessment. If this is the case it will be because you already have a relationship with the child or deemed to be best placed to get the information.

If a referral is made on behalf of a parent or carer, permission to share their information is required unless doing so would place the child at risk of harm.

The thresholds for access to services for children and families in Leicester are available at Leicester Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB). The threshold documents will support you in making the referral.

If you are a professional working with a child and their family, you will be required to provide details of the assessment work you have already undertaken.

If you are unable to complete the MARF online, please request a copy of the MARF in an alternative format by contacting the Children's Social Care Services on **0116 4541694** or alternative formats of the MARF will need to be sent securely to [das-team@leicester.gov.uk](mailto:das-team@leicester.gov.uk).

Children & Young Peoples services is a 24 hour line and will be called in emergencies when the child is at risk of immediate harm on **0116 4541004** and are based at 1 Grey Friars, Leicester, LE1 5PH.

**Ofsted** also need to be notified of any allegations of abuse made against staff and can be contacted on **0300 1231231**.

### **Further Measures**

Extra measures will be adopted to ensure the safeguarding of young people in this organisation.

- We aim to ensure that recruitment of all staff and volunteers is conducted in a way to safeguard young people and undergo a standard / enhanced CRB (criminal records bureau) disclosure as part of this process. And now this has been replaced by a DBS for existing and new employees.
- All workers and volunteers will be given a copy of the policy and receive training as part of their induction to the organisation.

### **Prevent**

If children are talking and encouraging terrorism or are talking about radicalisation then staff are encouraged to follow our British Values & Prevent Policy.

For prevent advice and referrals contact:

Police Team - [prevent.team@leicestershire.pnn.police.uk](mailto:prevent.team@leicestershire.pnn.police.uk)

Or call 0116 222222

### **Protecting Leaders**

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- Never believe that “it could never happen to you”.
- If you suspect that a young person is developing an affection for you discuss it with other leaders and explore constructive ways of dealing with it.
- If you develop an abnormal affection for a young person withdraw from the situation and discuss the matter with a trusted friend.
- Be aware that young people can fabricate stories that can place you in a bad light. Do not take any chances nor allow yourself to be in a situation where stories can be given credence.
- Always report and record any allegations made by children. Do not let them go unchallenged.

### **Behaviour guidelines for those working with young people**

The aim of these guidelines is to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all young people and to support in providing a safe, caring environment.

#### **DO's**

- Always be publicly open when working with children.
- Avoid being alone with children unnecessarily. Where possible avoid taking children alone on car journeys unless there is no other option and the child's parents have given permission.
- Where possible parents should take responsibility for their own children.
- Set an example of appropriate behaviour. Young people learn by example.
- Offer respect to the young person at all times and strive to be sensitive to their feelings.
- Good behaviour should be positively encouraged.

#### **DON'TS**

- Never engage in rough, physical or sexually provocative games, including horseplay. Nor engage in inappropriate touching of any form.
- Avoid using sarcasm or discrimination, direct criticism, labelling and unnecessary competition or comparison.
- Never physically punish any young person.
- Do not deprive any young person of, or force any child to consume food or drink.
- Do not humiliate or frighten any young person.

### **Whistle Blowing and Complaints**

#### **Allegations against a member of staff**

**Working Together to Safeguard Children** identifies a new framework for managing allegations and concerns about people who work with children, which should be used in respect of all cases in which it is alleged that a person 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

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- Behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates s/he is unable to work with children

**SMCAG** will assure all staff/volunteers that it will fully support and protect anyone, who in good faith reports his or her concern that a colleague is, or may be, abusing a child. Where there is a complaint against a member of staff there may be three types of investigation:

- A criminal investigation,
- A child protection investigation,
- A disciplinary or misconduct investigation.

The results of the police and child protection investigation may well influence the disciplinary investigation, but not necessarily.

### **Action if there are concerns**

#### **1. Concerns about poor practice:**

- If, following consideration, the allegation is clearly about poor practice; this will be dealt with as a misconduct issue.
- If the allegation is about poor practice by the Designated Child Protection worker or if the matter has been handled inadequately and concerns remain, it should be reported to the Chair who will decide how to deal with the allegation and whether or not the organisation should initiate disciplinary proceedings.

#### **2. Concerns about suspected abuse**

- Any suspicion that a child has been abused by either a member of staff or a volunteer should be reported to the Designated Child Protection worker, who will take such steps as considered necessary to ensure the safety of the child in question and any other child who may be at risk.
- The Designated person will refer the allegation to the social services department who may involve the police or go directly to the police if out-of-hours.
- The parents or carers of the child will be contacted as soon as possible following advice from the social services department.
- If the Designated Person is the subject of the suspicion/allegation, the report must be made to the appropriate **Manager or Chair** who will refer the allegation to Social Services.

#### **3. Internal Enquiries and Suspension**

- The Designated Child Protection worker will make an immediate decision about whether any individual accused of abuse should be temporarily suspended pending further police and social services inquiries.

Irrespective of the findings of the social services or police inquiries the organisation will assess all individual cases to decide whether a member of staff or volunteer can be reinstated

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and how this can be sensitively handled. This may be a difficult decision; particularly where there is insufficient evidence to uphold any action by the police. In such cases, the organisation must reach a decision based upon the available information which could suggest that on a balance of probability, it is more likely than not that the allegation is true. The welfare of the child should remain of paramount importance throughout.

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