

# CHILD AND VULNERABLE ADULTS PROTECTION AND SAFEGUARDING POLICY

Next review: May 2025

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## 1 Policy statement and principles

This policy is one of a series in the company's integrated safeguarding portfolio including the staff code of conduct.

Our core safeguarding principles are:

- the company's responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of children is of paramount importance;
- all representatives of the company will be involved in policy development and review;
- policies will be reviewed at least annually unless an incident or new legislation or guidance suggests the need for an interim review.

### Child protection statement

We recognise our moral and statutory responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children and young people. We endeavour to provide a safe and welcoming environment where children are respected and valued. We are alert to the signs of abuse and neglect and follow our procedures to ensure that children receive effective support, protection and justice.

The procedures contained in this policy apply to all staff and are consistent with those of the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB).

### Policy principles

- Welfare of the child is paramount.
- All children have equal rights to protection.
- All staff have an equal responsibility to act on any suspicion or disclosure that may suggest a child is at risk of harm.
- Children and staff involved in child protection issues will receive appropriate support.

### Policy aims

- To provide all staff with the necessary information to enable them to meet their child protection responsibilities.
- To ensure consistent good practice.
- To demonstrate the company's commitment with regard to child protection to.

### Terminology

*Safeguarding* and promoting the welfare of children refers to the process of protecting children from maltreatment, preventing the impairment of health or development, ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care and taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes.

*Child protection* refers to the processes undertaken to protect children who have been identified as suffering or being at risk of suffering significant harm.

*Staff* refers to all those working for or on behalf of the company, full time or part time, temporary or permanent, in either a paid or voluntary capacity.

*Child* includes everyone under the age of 18.

*Parent* refers to birth parents and other adults who are in a parenting role, for example step-parents, foster carers and adoptive parents.

## **2 Safeguarding guidance**

Research suggests that around ten per cent of children will suffer some form of abuse and disabled children are three times more likely to be abused. Due to their day-to-day contact with children, staff are uniquely placed to observe changes in children's behaviour and the outward signs of abuse. Children may also turn to a trusted adult when they are in distress or at risk. It is vital that staff are alert to the signs of abuse and understand the procedures for reporting their concerns. The company will act on identified concerns and provide early help to prevent concerns from escalating.

## **3 Roles and responsibilities**

### Key personnel

The Designated Child Protection Co-ordinator (DCPC) for child protection is  
Contact details:

Name: Dan Winsbury

Email: [daniel@margateyouthfc.co.uk](mailto:daniel@margateyouthfc.co.uk) Tel: 07989 217961

The DCPC:

- has the status and authority within the company to carry out the duties of the post, including committing resources and supporting and directing other staff;
- acts as a source of support and expertise to the company;
- encourages a culture of listening to children and taking account of their wishes and feelings;
- is alert to the specific needs of children in need, those with special educational needs and young carers;
- has an understanding of locally agreed processes for providing early help and intervention;
- keeps detailed written records of all concerns, ensuring that such records are stored securely.
- refers cases of suspected abuse to children's social care or police as appropriate;
- ensures that all staff sign to indicate that they have read and understood the child protection policy;
- ensures that the child protection policy is regularly reviewed and updated annually;

#### **4 Good practice guidelines and staff code of conduct**

To meet and maintain our responsibilities towards all children staff must follow the company's staff code of conduct. All staff are expected to:

- treat all children with respect;
- set a good example by conducting themselves appropriately;
- involve children in decisions that affect them;
- encourage positive, respectful and safe behaviour;
- be a good listener;
- be alert to changes in child behaviour and to signs of abuse and neglect;
- recognise that challenging behaviour may be an indicator of abuse;
- read and understand the company's child protection policy and guidance documents on wider safeguarding issues, for example bullying, behaviour, physical contact and information-sharing;
- asking the child's permission before initiating physical contact, such as assisting with dressing, physical support during PE or administering first aid;
- maintain appropriate standards of conversation and interaction with and between children and avoid the use of sexualised or derogatory language;
- be aware that the personal and family circumstances and lifestyles of some people lead to an increased risk of abuse;

#### **5 Abuse of trust**

All staff are aware that inappropriate behaviour towards young people is unacceptable and that their conduct towards young people must be beyond reproach.

In addition, staff should understand that, under the Sexual Offences Act, it is an offence for a person over the age of 18 to have a sexual relationship with a person under the age of 18, where that person is in a position of trust, even if the relationship is consensual. This means that any sexual activity between a member of the staff and someone under 18 may be a criminal offence, even if that person is over the age of consent.

#### **6 Missing children**

A child going missing is a potential indicator of abuse and neglect, including sexual abuse and sexual exploitation.

#### **7 Helping children to keep themselves safe**

Our approach is designed to help children to think about risks they may encounter and with staff work out how those risks might be overcome. Discussions about risk are empowering and enabling for all children and promote sensible behaviour rather than fear or anxiety. Children are taught how to conduct themselves and how to behave in a responsible manner. Children are also reminded regularly about e-safety and tackling bullying procedures.

#### **8 Support for those involved in a child protection issue**

Child abuse is devastating for the child and can also result in distress and anxiety for staff who become involved.

We will support young people, their families, and staff by:

- taking all suspicions and disclosures seriously;
- nominating a link person who will keep all parties informed and be the central point of contact;
- where a member of staff is the subject of an allegation made by a child, separate link people will be nominated to avoid any conflict of interest;
- responding sympathetically to any request from children or staff for time out to deal with distress or anxiety;
- maintaining confidentiality and sharing information on a need-to-know basis only with relevant individuals and agencies;
- storing records securely;

- offering details of help-lines and external support as needed;
- following the procedures laid down in our whistleblowing, complaints and disciplinary procedures;
- co-operating fully with relevant statutory agencies

## **9 Complaints procedure**

Our complaints procedure will be followed where a child or parent raises a concern about poor practice towards a child that initially does not reach the threshold for child protection action.

## **10 If you have concerns about a colleague**

Staff who are concerned about the conduct of a colleague towards a child are undoubtedly placed in a very difficult situation. They may worry that they have misunderstood the situation and they will wonder whether a report could jeopardise their colleague's career. All staff must remember that the welfare of the child is paramount.

## **11 Allegations against staff**

When an allegation is made against a member of staff, set procedures must be followed. It is rare for a child to make an entirely false or malicious allegation, although misunderstandings and misinterpretations of events do happen.

A child may also make an allegation against an innocent party because they are too afraid to name the real perpetrator. Even so, we must accept that some professionals do pose a serious risk to young people and we must act on every allegation. Staff who are the subject of an allegation have the right to have their case dealt with fairly, quickly and consistently and to be kept informed of its progress. Suspension is not the default option and alternatives to suspension will always be considered. In some cases, staff may be suspended where this is deemed to be the best way to ensure that children are protected.

## **12 Staff training**

All staff have training to enable them to recognise the possible signs of abuse and neglect and to know what to do if they have a concern. New staff will receive an explanation during their induction which includes the company's child protection and safeguarding policy, reporting and recording arrangements, the staff code of conduct and details for the DCPC.

## **13 Safer recruitment**

Our company endeavours to ensure that we do our utmost to employ 'safe' staff by following the guidance in *Keeping Children Safe in Education* together with the company's individual procedures

Safer recruitment means that all applicants will:

- complete an application form which includes their employment history;
- provide two referees, including at least one who can comment on the applicant's suitability to work with children;
- provide evidence of identity and qualifications;
- be checked in accordance with the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) regulations as appropriate to their role;
- provide evidence of their right to work in the UK;
- be interviewed.

All staff sign to confirm they have received a copy of the child protection and safeguarding policy.

### Volunteers

Volunteers, will undergo checks commensurate with their work.

### Supervised volunteers

Volunteers who work only in a supervised capacity and are not in regulated activity will undergo the safe recruitment checks appropriate to their role.

### Contractors

The school checks the identity of all contractors working on site and requests DBS checks where appropriate.

## **14 Photography and images**

The vast majority of people who take or view photographs or videos of children do so for entirely innocent, understandable and acceptable reasons. Sadly, some people abuse children through taking or using images, so we must ensure that we have appropriate safeguards in place.

To protect people we will:

- seek their consent for photographs to be taken or published (for example, on our website or in newspapers or publications);
- seek parental consent;
- use only the first name with an image and ensure children are appropriately dressed;
- encourage children to tell us if they are worried about any photographs that are taken of them.

## **15 Child protection procedures**

### Recognising abuse

To ensure that young people are protected from harm, we need to understand what types of behaviour constitute abuse and neglect.

Abuse and neglect are forms of maltreatment; abuse may be committed by adult men or women and by other children and young people.

There are four categories of abuse: physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse and neglect.

#### *Physical abuse*

Physical abuse is a form of abuse which 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, illness in a child. (This used to be called Munchausen's Syndrome by Proxy, but is now more usually referred to as fabricated or induced illness.)

#### *Emotional abuse*

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to a child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or "making fun" of what they say or how they communicate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond a 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, although it may occur alone.

### *Sexual abuse*

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

### *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, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to:

- provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment);
- protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger;
- ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-givers); or
- ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

*[Definitions taken from Working Together to Safeguard Children.]*

### Bullying

While bullying between children is not a separate category of abuse and neglect, it is a very serious issue that can cause considerable anxiety and distress. At its most serious level, bullying can have a disastrous effect on a child's wellbeing and in very rare cases has been a feature in the suicide of some young people.

### Indicators of abuse

Physical signs define some types of abuse, for example, bruising, bleeding or broken bones resulting from physical or sexual abuse, or injuries sustained while a child has been inadequately supervised. The identification of physical signs is complicated, as children may go to great lengths to hide injuries, often because they are ashamed or embarrassed, or their abuser has threatened further violence or trauma if they "tell". It is also quite difficult for anyone without medical training to categorise injuries into accidental or deliberate with any degree of certainty. For these reasons it is vital that staff are also aware of the range of behavioural indicators of abuse and report any concerns to the designated senior person.

It is the responsibility of staff to report their concerns. It is not their responsibility to investigate or decide whether a child has been abused.

A child who is being abused or neglected may:

- have bruises, bleeding, burns, fractures or other injuries;
- show signs of pain or discomfort;
- keep arms and legs covered, even in warm weather;
- be concerned about changing for PE or swimming;
- look unkempt and uncared for;
- change their eating habits;
- have difficulty in making or sustaining friendships;
- appear fearful;
- be reckless with regard to their own or other's safety;
- self-harm;
- frequently miss school or arrive late;
- show signs of not wanting to go home;
- display a change in behaviour – from quiet to aggressive, or happy-go-lucky to withdrawn;

- challenge authority;
- become disinterested in their school work;
- be constantly tired or preoccupied;
- be wary of physical contact;
- be involved in, or particularly knowledgeable about drugs or alcohol;
- display sexual knowledge or behaviour beyond that normally expected for their age.

Individual indicators will rarely, in isolation, provide conclusive evidence of abuse. They should be viewed as part of a jigsaw, and each small piece of information will help the DCPC to decide how to proceed.

It is very important that staff report their concerns – they do not need ‘absolute proof’ that the child is at risk.

#### Impact of abuse

The impact of child abuse should not be underestimated. Many children do recover well and go on to lead healthy, happy and productive lives, although most adult survivors agree that the emotional scars remain, however well buried. For some children, full recovery is beyond their reach, and the rest of their childhood and their adulthood may be characterised by anxiety or depression, self-harm, eating disorders, alcohol and substance misuse, unequal and destructive relationships and long-term medical or psychiatric difficulties.

#### Taking action

Any child, in any family in any school could become a victim of abuse. Staff should always maintain an attitude of “it could happen here”.

Key points for staff to remember for taking action are:

- in an emergency take the action necessary to help the child, for example, call 999;
- report your concern to the DCPC by the end of the day;
- do not start your own investigation;
- share information on a need-to-know basis only – do not discuss the issue with colleagues, friends or family;
- complete a disclosure form to record your concerns;
- seek support for yourself if you are distressed.

#### If you are concerned about a child's welfare

There will be occasions when staff may suspect that a young person may be at risk, but have no “real” evidence. It is fine for staff to ask the person if they are OK or if they can help in any way. The member of staff should discuss their concerns with the DCPC.

#### Discloses to you

It takes a lot of courage for a child to disclose that they are being abused. They may feel ashamed, particularly if the abuse is sexual; their abuser may have threatened what will happen if they tell; they may have lost all trust in adults; or they may believe, or have been told, that the abuse is their own fault.

If a child talks to a member of staff about any risks to their safety or wellbeing, the staff member will need to let the child know that they must pass the information on – staff are not allowed to keep secrets. The point at which they tell the child this is a matter for professional judgement. If they jump in immediately child may think that they do not want to listen, if left until the very end of the conversation, the child may feel that they have been misled into revealing more than they would have otherwise.

During their conversations with the person staff will:

- allow them to speak freely;
- remain calm and not overreact – the person may stop talking if they feel they are upsetting their listener;

- give reassuring nods or words of comfort – “I’m so sorry this has happened”, “I want to help”, “This isn’t your fault”, “You are doing the right thing in talking to me”;
- not be afraid of silences – staff must remember how hard this must be.
- under no circumstances ask investigative questions – such as how many times this has happened;
- at an appropriate time tell the person that in order to help them, the member of staff must pass the information on;
- tell the person what will happen next. The child may agree to go to see the designated senior person. Otherwise let them know that someone will come to see them before the end of the day;
- report verbally to the DCPC even if the child has promised to do it by themselves;
- write up their conversation as soon as possible on the company’s disclosure form and hand it to the designated person;
- seek support if they feel distressed.

#### Referral to children’s social care

The DCPC will make a referral to children’s social care if it is believed that a child is suffering or is at risk of suffering significant harm. The person (subject to their age and understanding) and the parents will be told that a referral is being made, unless to do so would increase the risk to the child.

#### Confidentiality and sharing information

All staff will understand that child protection issues warrant a high level of confidentiality, not only out of respect for the child and staff involved but also to ensure that information being released into the public domain does not compromise evidence.

Staff should only discuss concerns with the designated senior person. That person will then decide who else needs to have the information and they will disseminate it on a ‘need-to-know’ basis.

Child protection information will be stored and handled in line with Data Protection Act 1998 principles. Information is:

- processed for limited purposes;
- adequate, relevant and not excessive;
- accurate;
- kept no longer than necessary;
- secure.

Disclosure forms and other written information will be stored in a locked facility and any electronic information will be password protected and only made available to relevant individuals.

Every effort will be made to prevent unauthorised access and sensitive information should not be stored on laptop computers, which, by the nature of their portability, could be lost or stolen.

Child protection records are normally exempt from the disclosure provisions of the Data Protection Act, which means that children and parents do not have an automatic right to see them.

The Data Protection Act does not prevent staff from sharing information with relevant agencies, where that information may help to protect a child.

#### Reporting directly to child protection agencies

Staff should follow the reporting procedures outlined in this policy. However, they may also share information directly with children’s social care, police or the NSPCC if:

- the situation is an emergency and the designated senior person is unavailable;
- they are convinced that a direct report is the only way to ensure the person’s safety;
- for any other reason they make a judgement that direct referral is in the best interests of the child .



**16 Looked after children**

The most common reason for children becoming looked after is as a result of abuse or neglect. The school ensures that appropriate staff have information about a child's looked after status and care arrangements.

**17 Radicalisation and Extremism**

The company has procedures in place to ensure that all staff have an awareness of issues around Radicalisation and Extremism (the Channel General Awareness module is undertaken by all staff). Clear procedures are in place for protecting children at risk of radicalisation and referred to the Safeguarding coordinator for intervention, interview, logging and referral to the Channel programme if appropriate.