

2. CHILD SAFEGUARDING

2.1 POLICY

“The welfare of the child is paramount”

At Volunteer Centre Sutton (VCS) the safety and welfare of children and young people is of the utmost importance. It is the responsibility that all adults working in VCS must protect children from harm and abuse and be aware that any child or young person may be abused or at risk of abuse.

This policy and procedure accords with the London Child Protection Procedures (London Safeguarding Children Board 2018 and Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018) Children’s Act 1989 and 2004, plus the Care Act 2004, Safeguarding Disabled Children’s Act 2009 which sets out the procedures we must follow in order to safeguard children and promote their welfare in the home and within the community. VCS also takes into account information provided by the Sutton Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) and due to our close work in the youth stream and education, we refer to the Department for Education (DfE) published statutory safeguarding and child protection guidance for schools in England, Keeping children safe in education (KCSIE)2023.

AS part of our work includes supporting within health and social care, vulnerable children, young people and adults, VCS has a responsibility to care for individuals, promote their wellbeing, and prevent them from anything that results in harm. This is our legal duty of care and something we always abide by.

2.1.1 DEFINITION

Child protection relates to protecting individual children (under 18) identified as either suffering, or at risk of suffering, significant harm as a result of physical injury, neglect, emotional or sexual abuse/exploitation.

Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes 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 the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology. Like all forms of child sexual abuse, child sexual exploitation can affect any child or young person (male or female) under the age of 18 years, including 16 and 17-year old’s who can legally consent to have sex.

2.1.2 RECOGNITION

The first indication of concern about a child’s welfare is not necessarily the presence of a serious injury. Concerns may be aroused by:

- Bruises or marks on a child’s body;
- Remarks made by the child, another child, a parent or another adult;
- Observations of the child’s behaviour or personality;
- Unexplained changes in the child’s behaviour or personality;

- Evidence of disturbance or explicit detail in a child's play, drawing or writing;
- Evidence of neglect, failure to thrive or exposure to unnecessary risks;
- Information about the parents/carers or the child's home or background.
- Female Genital Mutilation
- Prevent
- Knife crime

The Department for Education (DfE) has published an updated version of the statutory safeguarding and child protection guidance for schools in England, Keeping children safe in education (KCSIE) that came into force on 1 September 2023.

The guidance sets out what schools and colleges in England must be aware of with clarification around the roles and responsibilities of education staff in relation to filtering and monitoring of young people and clarification that being absent, as well as missing, from education can be warning sign of a range of safeguarding concerns, including sexual abuse, sexual exploitation or child criminal exploitation.

2.1.3 DESIGNATED PERSON FOR CHILD SAFEGUARDING

Our designated member of staff is the **CEO Anita Maullin** who is responsible and accountable for all safeguarding issues. There is an additional member of staff, the MAPS Manager, Louise Storey, who supports the designated lead. These people constitute the Safeguarding Team. Any member of staff concerned about a child should tell a member of the Safeguarding Team immediately.

The designated person has responsibility to:

- Track and monitor safeguarding cases;
- Develop and review relevant policies and procedures;
- Support staff dealing with safeguarding concerns;
- Act as the contact person within VCS;
- Coordinate action within VCS on child safeguarding issues;
- Ensure that staff and volunteers are familiar with this policy and procedure;
- Raise awareness about child safeguarding and arrange training for staff and volunteers;
- Arrange child safeguarding training for all appropriate staff upon employment and a refresher every 3 years;
- Ensure that records about safeguarding concerns are maintained and kept securely.

VCS Trustee Yvonne McPhee is our trustee safeguarding lead, call 02086615900 and is available and works with the CEO on all matters, including the tracking bimonthly or when required in all trustee meetings.

2.1.4 THE ROLE OF INDIVIDUAL STAFF MEMBERS / VOLUNTEERS

Everyone in VCS must be aware that a child may be the victim of abuse and must be familiar with these procedures. **If a child is in immediate danger appropriate authorities will be notified straight away i.e. police/LADO(Local Authority Designated Officer)/CFCS (Children's First Contact Service).** Phone number is 0208776001 or out of hours 02087705000;

Concern about a child must be discussed with a member of the safeguarding team immediately so that, if necessary, a referral can be made without delay.

Members of staff should not investigate child safeguarding concerns. This will be done by CFCS or relevant professional. However, if a child says something, it is vital to listen carefully to enable the staff member to report it accurately.

Individual members of staff are responsible for:

- Liaising with CFCS (Children's First Contact service), Police, LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer) or Social Care on individual cases of suspected or identified child safeguarding concerns;
- Liaising with staff on a 'need to know' basis so that children's rights to confidentiality are ensured;
- Delivering any actions as required in line with Safeguarding protocols or as delegated by the Safeguarding Team or other professionals;
- Overseeing the planning of any ongoing provision;
- Representing VCS at child safeguarding meetings.

Due to the nature of our work with vulnerable Adults and Children, young people, all staff, volunteers and Trustees will be DBS checked. Specific roles that do not come into contact with vulnerable people and are not designated as regulated activity do not require DBS checks. DBS check details are held within a DBS portal and details can be found within our DBS policy.

All staff and volunteers undergo training in safeguarding on acceptance of their role. The level of safeguarding training will depend upon the individual role. This information is kept securely within our database to ensure refresher training is provided bi-annually or if changes are made.

2.1.5 CONFIDENTIALITY

Children and young people have the right to expect that all staff will deal sensitively and sympathetically with their situation. It is important that information is only available to those who 'need to know' it, in the best interests of the child. All members of staff must respect issues of confidentiality and data protection. Child safeguarding issues relating to individual cases must not be the subject of open discussion in VCS. Our privacy statement on vcsutton.org.uk provides detail on how, why and where we keep all private data. This includes media consent.

VCS takes online safety seriously and all staff, volunteers must abide by our social media policy.

2.1.6 CODE OF CONDUCT

The Trustees expect Volunteer Centre Sutton (VCS) staff and volunteers to conduct themselves in a professional way at all times. Clause 20 of VCS's Contract of Employment states that:

"The public is entitled to expect of an employee of Volunteer Centre Sutton conduct of the highest standard, which in no way could be influenced by improper motives. Employees' off-duty hours are their personal concern but they should not subordinate duty to private interests or put themselves in a position where their duty and their private

interests may be seen to conflict. If any serious criticism of an employee's professional conduct arises, it will be handled via the disciplinary procedure".

All Volunteers will abide by the Volunteer Code of Conduct as stipulated in the volunteer handbook.

3. CHILD SAFEGUARDING

3.1 PROCEDURES

VCS's Child Safeguarding policy and procedure must be observed by all employees and volunteers at all times. They will be reviewed as required in line with changes to local or national guidance. Concerns may arise from observations of the child, by a volunteer, employee, another professional or any other child or adult.

These concerns may be as a result of injury, behaviour, appearance, or something said by the child or someone else. Consideration must be given to child exploitation and all forms of abuse.

In the case of a child raising a concern with an advocate, the advocate may enable and support a young person to raise their own safeguarding alert, if they wish to. The advocate can support the child, monitor and track the progress and escalate where necessary

If concerns are raised the following procedures will apply:

3.2.1 DO NOT DELAY

- **When the matter is already severe or serious, early referral gives more time for others to protect the child. If a child is in immediate danger notify the authorities straight away i.e. call the police/LADO(Local Authority Designated Officer)/CFCS (Childrens First Contact Service) Phone number is 0208776001 or out of hours 02087705000;** a simple single referral and assessment pathway who share information appropriately and securely on children or young people in order to take timely and appropriate actions. The CFCS is the referral route for MASH, Early help requests and assessment, Children with Disabilities and Parenting Plus referrals.
- Tell a member of the safeguarding team as soon as you can;
- Early referral gives more time to offer help to the child and family before the situation escalates;

3.2.2 MAKE WRITTEN NOTES- MONITOR WHEN NEEDED

- At the earliest opportunity, make a written record of your concerns. This must include the following:
 - Your name, signature, date and add the time. Record all facts accurately using the actual words used by the child wherever possible and be clear when you are expressing an opinion and what this is based on. This applies to both volunteers and employees;
- **These notes must be emailed direct to the safeguarding team (using safeguarding@vcsutton.org.uk) as soon as possible** to ensure accuracy in recalling events later;

- Employees must carry out any tasks delegated by the safeguarding team, or within the context of their role, to ensure the safeguarding team are updated on all actions and outcomes relating to individual cases.
- The safeguarding team will review the case and escalate the concern to the appropriate person.

3.2.3 RECORDING

- All physical records relating to child safeguarding concerns will be kept at VCS and stored securely on the safeguarding log and within each individual file;
- The safeguarding log will be updated immediately and reviewed weekly by the safeguarding team. Information will be tracked with copies made of all communications and actions, with requests by the safeguarding team to staff or volunteers for further information when required. If it is felt a satisfactory resolution has not been made, the safeguarding lead will escalate the matter to an appropriate person until it is felt there is a satisfactory outcome for the person in question. All stages and communications will be logged onto the secure log.
- All electronic records relating to child safeguarding concerns can only be accessed by those with relevant permissions;
- All safeguarding records are classified as 'Official - Sensitive';
- Information from records will only be used on a 'need to know' basis;
- Children's records will remain on file for 12 years post completion of engagement with VCS;
- Records will be kept in accordance with VCS data protection and information governance policies and procedures;
- All safeguarding concerns that need to be addressed are recorded by the safeguarding team on the 'VCS Safeguarding Log' which is monitored on a weekly basis, to ensure active cases are being managed.
- In cases where Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is thought to be a risk, concerns must be reported to MASH. FGM is an illegal act (FGM Act 2003) and mandatory reporting duties apply in cases where FGM has, or is thought to have, taken place this must be reported to the police (Duty came in to force October 2015).

3.2.4 CONCERNS ABOUT A VCS EMPLOYEE OR VOLUNTEER

- If you have a concern about a Volunteer Centre Sutton member of our staff or volunteer, you should contact LBS directly, Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) 020 8770 4776 lado@sutton.gov.uk (secure email)
- Allegations or concerns about an employee or volunteer must immediately be notified to the Chief Executive (CEO) Anita Maullin (or the Chair of the Trustees if the concern is about the Chief Executive);
- Following consultation, the CEO (or Chair of Trustees) will discuss with appropriate action:
 - Immediate referral to LADO; and/or
 - Internal investigation; and/or
 - Consideration of disciplinary proceedings.
- The CEO (or Chair of Trustees) will always consult the LADO;
- It is important to bear in mind that although concern may relate to an individual child, other children may also be at risk;
- Support for staff is available through supervision and/or the Peninsula Employee Assistance Programme (EAP).
- The NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line offers free advice and support to professionals with concerns about how child protection issues are being handled in their own or another organisation.

3.2.5 GUIDELINES

CONCERN FOR SOMETHING THE CHILD SAYS:

- Listen – Do not ask questions or interrogate.
- Remain calm – If you are shocked, upset or angry the child or young person will pick this up and it may stop them from saying more.
- Reassure – The child has done nothing wrong. Tell them it is ok to talk.
- Do not promise to keep it secret – Tell the child you cannot keep the matter secret and will need to take advice from someone who can help.

REMEMBER:

- If in doubt, consult with the safeguarding team;
- Do not ignore concerns – even if these are vague;
- Your first responsibility is to the child;
- If you need help or support to manage your own feelings, this can be provided.

DEALING WITH REQUESTS FOR ASSISTANCE BY OTHER AGENCIES

- VCS is required to assist MASH and the LADO when they are making enquiries about the wellbeing of children;
- Information about a child must be shared on a 'need to know' basis with other agencies;
- When telephone requests for information are received, always maintain security by verifying the name, role and agency of the person enquiring, if they are not known to you;
- Any information provided to other agencies should be objective and distinguish between fact, observation, allegation and opinion.

FEEDBACK

- VCS will regularly review our processes for any lessons learnt, identifying best practice for improvements.

3.2.6 SAFER RECRUITMENT

Along with DBS checks, VCS will obtain references and undertake a panel recruitment and interview process to ensure all safer recruitment processes are carried out. See our Recruitment and Selection policy for further details.

VCS undertakes safer recruitment guidelines to ensure all staff and volunteers are suitable to be working with clients and the general public. VCS applies for an Enhanced Disclosure from the DBS in respect of certain positions involving a “regulated activity” as defined in the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 (as amended).

It is VCS policy that the DBS disclosure must be obtained before the commencement of employment of specific new employees or volunteers undertaking regulated activities, as defined by the act.

It is VCS policy to re-check those designated employee's/volunteers DBS Certificates every three years and in addition any employee/volunteer that takes leave for more than three months (ie: maternity leave, career break etc) must be re-checked before they return back to work. If a volunteer/employee utilises the online update service, the checks will not be needed.

Members of staff/volunteers at VCS are aware of their obligation to inform the line manager or CEO of any cautions or convictions that arise between these checks taking place. DBS checks will still be requested for applicants with recent periods of overseas residence and those with little or no previous UK residence.

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