

Safeguarding Children Policy and Procedure

Our Policy

Working Families believes that no child or young person should experience abuse of any kind. We have a responsibility and duty of care to promote the welfare of everyone who uses our services, staff, and volunteers and to keep them safe and protected from all forms of harm including physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, and neglect. We are committed to practice in a way that protects them.

All employees and volunteers at Working Families have a duty to safeguard children.

Safeguarding means protecting a child's right to live in safety, free from abuse and neglect.

Everyone has a right to be safeguarded from abuse or neglect.

We will do this by:

- Taking any concerns seriously, valuing listening to and respecting children
- Adopting safeguarding children practices through procedures and a code of conduct for staff and volunteers
- Providing effective management for staff and volunteers through supervision, support, and training
- Recruiting staff and volunteers safely, ensuring all necessary checks are made
- Sharing information about the Safeguarding Children policy and good practice with staff and volunteers
- Sharing concerns with agencies who need to know; involving parents and children appropriately.

The policy sets out Working Families policy and practice guidance for all staff and volunteers including the Senior Leadership Team and the board of trustees, paid staff, volunteers and interns, agency staff, students or anyone working on behalf of Working Families.

This document represents best practice, and all staff and volunteers must follow this policy and practice guidance.

The purpose of the policy is:

- To protect and safeguard children and young people who come into contact with Working Families. This includes the children of adults who use our services and staff working for Working Families;
- To provide staff and volunteers with the overarching principles that guide our approach to safeguarding.
- Make all staff and volunteers aware of their responsibilities in relation to safeguarding children.
- Provide staff and volunteers with a framework within which to safely manage any concerns they have regarding the welfare of children.

A child is defined as '*Anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday. The fact that a child has reached 16 years of age, is living independently or is in further education, is a member of the armed forces, is in hospital or in custody in the secure estate, does not change their status or entitlements to services or protection.*' (Working Together to Safeguard Children: A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. Department for Education, March 2018.)

We recognise that:

- The welfare of the child is paramount, as enshrined in the Children Act 1989
- No child or group of children must be treated any less favourably than others in being able to access services which meet their needs

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- All children without exception have the right to protection from abuse regardless of gender, ethnicity, disability, sexuality, or beliefs

Procedures for reporting suspected abuse or harm

The protection of children is never someone else's responsibility and all Working Families staff and volunteers are urged to maintain constant and high levels of vigilance in the light of the prevalence of abuse.

Staff and volunteers are always encouraged to communicate and consult upon any concerns they have, and to respond to disclosures of abuse and emergencies in a prompt and collaborative way so that the right support and protection is available.

1. Procedure for dealing with specific incidents or concerns of abuse

The following procedures relate to any incidents arising that may cause Working Families staff or volunteers concern for the welfare and safety of a child. This includes suspicions or allegations by the child, adult or another person and "disclosures of abuse or harm". It is essential that all cases of concern are passed on to one of Working Families Safeguarding Officers.

2. Responding to disclosures, suspicions, and allegations of abuse

Staff and volunteers need to feel educated and empowered to know what to do if they have concerns about a child. Working Families has Safeguarding Officers who are available for advice at any time. *It is not the role of staff or volunteers to discuss or contact anyone outside the organisation unless there is a concern that a child is in imminent risk of significant harm.*

The role of Working Families Safeguarding Officers

1. The Safeguarding Officers can offer reassurance and advice to you on the situation you have faced.
2. If the situation is deemed to be of a legitimate concern, the Safeguarding Officers will decide if a referral is made. They will then action this within 24 hours.
3. The Safeguarding Officers will ensure Working Families safeguarding files are kept up to date, and that notes of any concerns are recorded in the correct way.
4. The Safeguarding Officer will seek support and advice from Working Families CEO, if required.
5. If a referral has been made to local Safeguarding Children Board, then the Safeguarding Officer will follow up any telephone referral within 48 hours. If they have not received an acknowledgement within three working days, they will contact again.
6. If the Safeguarding Officer feels that the case has not been responded to appropriately, they should discuss with the CEO and consider taking steps to escalate the case
7. The Safeguarding Officers will store the information at Working Families in a secure file.
8. The Safeguarding Officers will ensure all staff and volunteers are trained and supported in safeguarding, as appropriate.

Allegations against staff/volunteers

It is essential in all cases of suspected abuse that action is taken quickly and professionally whatever the validity. It is the responsibility of staff to bring any concerns they have to a Safeguarding Officer as soon as possible. This may then be referred to the Senior Leadership Team for appropriate action. If the allegations refer to the Chief Executive, then this will be referred to the Chair of the Board of Trustees.

The member of staff against whom allegations are made will be advised to keep records of all conversations, meetings, letters, and phone calls relating to the allegations

If a decision is made to pursue the allegation of abuse against a member of staff, this will be processed under Working Families disciplinary procedures. The allegation of abuse will also be reported to the Local Authority Safeguarding Adults Team or Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) for the area where the staff member works.

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Sharing information

Working Families staff and volunteers will conform to the Procedures of the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) local to the child. If any concerns for the welfare of children come to the attention of staff or volunteers, the concerns should be discussed without delay with a Working Families Safeguarding Officer.

All staff should be aware that the threshold for sharing information by making a child referral is *a concern that a child may be at risk of significant harm*. Certainty or proof of harm is not necessary.

As far as possible, the confidentiality of all individuals involved in any allegation, investigation or resulting disciplinary proceedings will be respected. However, there may be circumstances in which it is necessary to share information with parties such as social services, the police, or other relevant parties. We cannot therefore guarantee that the confidentiality of disclosures can be maintained in all circumstances and Service Users are informed of this when contacting Working Families.

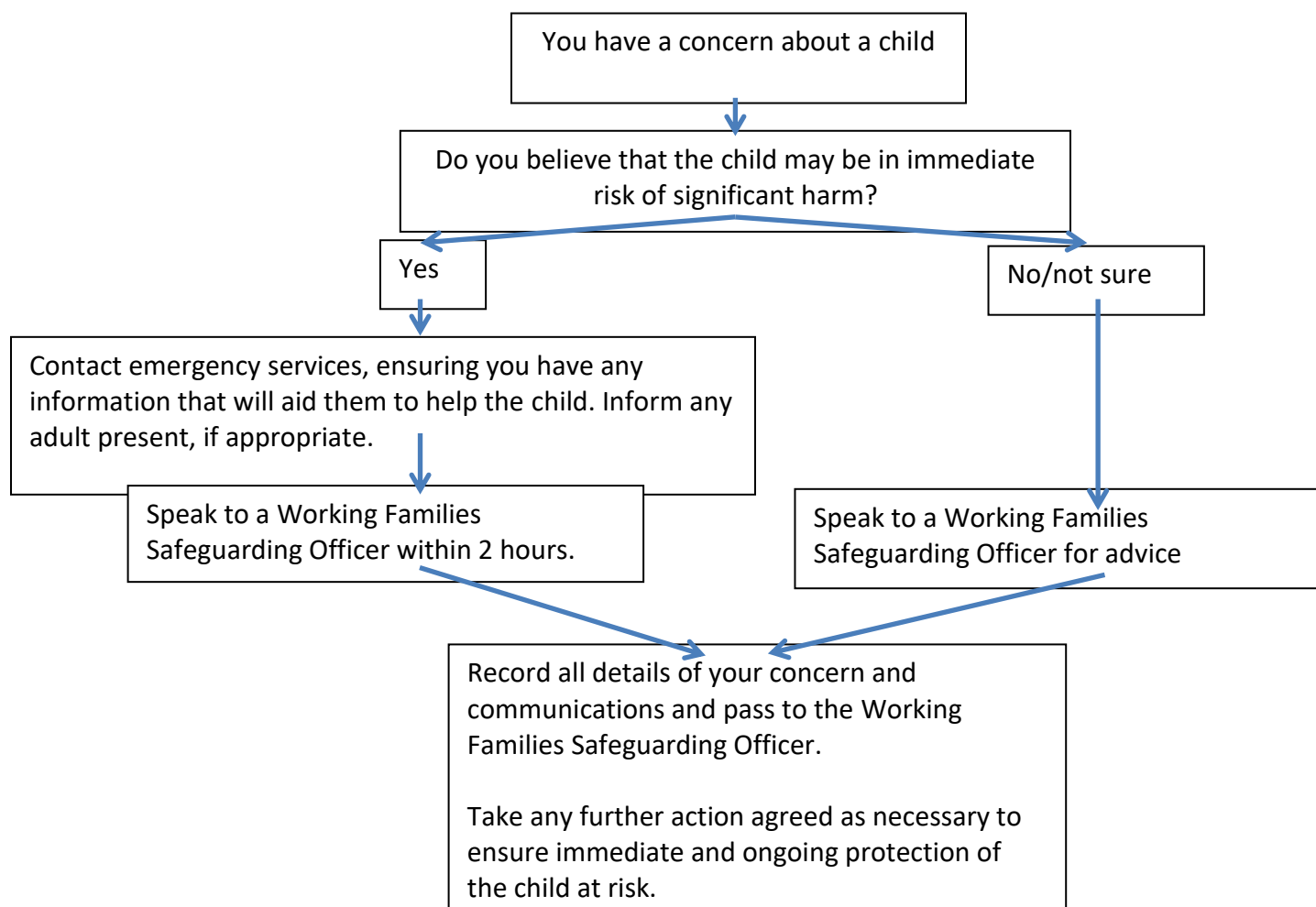
Training

All employed staff will receive basic Safeguarding training as part of their induction and at regular intervals throughout their employment (at least every 3 years). Volunteers will be trained as appropriate for their specific role but as a minimum should be alerted to the fact that if they become concerned about the welfare of a child or adult at risk, they should always contact a Working Families Safeguarding Officer without delay and share their concern. All staff and volunteers will be updated on this Policy on an annual basis and/or when relevant changes come into effect. A record of safeguarding training undertaken is held within BreatheHR.

Staff Supervision and Support

In addition to training, internal arrangements are in place to support staff through stressful situations, including dealing with child welfare concerns. All employed staff have an identified line manager and are appraised annually and have regular one-to-one meetings.

If you are concerned about a child, use the following flowchart:



How to respond:

- Ask for support and advice if you have any concern
- Be clear and honest about the limits of confidentiality if this is raised, and never promise to 'keep a secret', especially in relation to Child Protection
- If the Safeguarding Officer does not pursue the matter, or the member of staff reporting feels that their concerns have not been taken seriously, then they should raise this with Working Families CEO.

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Appendix 1

Background and Scope of policy

Working Families provides information to working parents and carers through a telephone helpline and email service.

The helpline is open during school terms between 11am and 2pm. The email service response operates between Monday and Friday 9am to 5.30pm.

The risk of staff and volunteers coming into contact with a child during the working day is very low. Working Families will ensure that all staff and volunteers comply with this policy and procedure by attending. They will be inducted and supported to enable them to identify and appropriately manage child protection issues.

Service users will be made aware of the procedures for reporting suspected abuse or neglect. This policy is referenced when service users access Working Families, including in the procedure for making a complaint.

Legal Framework – Children Safeguarding

This policy has been drawn up based on national and international law and guidance that seeks to protect children, namely:

- Children Act 1989, 2004
- United Convention of the Rights of the Child 1991
- Working together to safeguard children: A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children March 2018

Safeguarding Children

Safeguarding children is defined as the action we take to promote the welfare of children:

- Protecting children from maltreatment;
- Preventing impairment of children's health and development;
- Ensuring the 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. (Working Together 2018)

The concept of significant harm

In the Children Act (1989) the concept of significant harm is defined as:

“ill-treatment or the impairment of health or development including, for example, impairment suffered from seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another”; ill-treatment includes sexual abuse and other forms of ill-treatment which are not physical, and includes impairment of physical or mental health, and of physical, intellectual, emotional, social, or behavioural development.

There are no absolute criteria for how to judge what constitutes significant harm.

Appendix 2: Types of Abuse

No list of abuse can be comprehensive, and Working Families staff, volunteers and others at Working Families are encouraged to report any concerns.

Abuse can take many forms, and incidents of abuse may be one-off or multiple, and affect one person or more. Abuse may also be very subtle and therefore we draw your attention to the following types of abuse which you may come across. Professionals and others should look beyond single incidents or individuals

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to identify patterns of harm. This list is not exhaustive, and we therefore encourage you to be alert and take the initiative to spot these forms of abuse as well as other forms that might occur:

- **Physical abuse:** including hitting, slapping, scratching, pushing, rough handling, kicking, misuse of medication, restraint without justifiable reasons, inappropriate sanctions including deprivation of food, warmth, clothing, and health care needs.
- **Sexual abuse:** including rape, indecent exposure, sexual harassment, inappropriate looking or touching, unwanted sexual text messages, sexual teasing or innuendo, sexual photography, subjection to pornography or witnessing sexual acts, indecent exposure and sexual assault or sexual acts to which the adult has not consented or was pressured into and sexual coercion.
- **Emotional or Psychological abuse:** including threats of harm or abandonment, deprivation of contact, humiliation, ridicule, blaming, controlling, intimidation, coercion, unwanted communication, stalking, harassment, inappropriate messaging; with kisses attached, verbal abuse and cyber bullying, isolation or unreasonable and unjustified withdrawal from services or supportive networks. Deliberate denial of religious or cultural needs and failure to provide access to appropriate skills and educational development.
- **Domestic abuse:** including psychological, physical, sexual, financial, emotional abuse; so-called 'honour' based violence. And can affect those it is not aimed at within the home.
- **Financial or material abuse:** including misuse or theft of money, fraud, extortion of material assets or inappropriate requests for money, pressure in connection with wills, property or inheritance of financial transactions, or the misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions, or benefits.
- **Neglect and acts of omission:** including ignoring medical or physical care needs, failure to provide access to appropriate health, social care and support or educational services or equipment for functional independence, the withholding of the necessities of life, such as medication, adequate nutrition, heating, and lighting. Failure to give privacy and dignity.
- **Modern slavery:** encompasses slavery, human trafficking, forced labour and domestic servitude. Traffickers and slave masters use whatever means they have at their disposal to coerce, deceive, and force individuals into a life of abuse, servitude, and inhumane treatment.
- **Discriminatory abuse:** including forms of harassment, slurs, or similar treatment; because of race, colour, language, gender and gender identity, age, disability, sexual orientation, or religion. Hate crime
- **Institutional or Organisational abuse:** including neglect and poor care practice within an institution or specific care setting such as a hospital or care home, for example, or in relation to care provided in one's own home. This may range from one-off incidents to on-going ill-treatment. It can be through neglect or poor professional practice because of the structure, policies, processes, and practices within an organisation.
- **Self-Neglect:** this covers a wide range of behaviour, neglecting to care for one's personal hygiene, health or surroundings and includes behaviour such as hoarding. Safeguarding within the Affiliated Group

Appendix 3

Responding to a child: RECEIVE, REASSURE, RESPOND

Receive

- Listen, do not look shocked or disbelieving
- Do not be judgmental
- Take what they are saying seriously and believe them
- Do not make the child feel bad, for example by saying things like “You should have told me earlier”

Reassure

- Stay calm, tell them that they have done the right thing in telling you
- Acknowledge how hard it must have been to tell you.
- Tell them that they are not to blame.
- Empathise – but do not tell them how they should be feeling.
- Do not promise confidentiality – explain that only those that need to know will be told (i.e., the Safeguarding Officer)
- Be honest about what you can and cannot do

Respond

- Do not interrogate - let them tell you as far as possible;
- Do not ask probing questions or suggest answers: it's not your job to find out “who, where, when?”
- Refer your concern to the Safeguarding Officer
- Record the date and time and any information given to you; always use the words said to you; never interpret what was said and put it in your own words (this information could be used as evidence)
- Make a note and record what you did next and with whom you shared the information, ensuring that this is in line with the safeguarding children procedures
- Sign and date everything that you record
- Do not criticise or judge the abuser: they may have feelings for him or her; remember abuse often happens by someone known and trusted by the victim
- Try to follow things through yourself so they do not need to repeat their story to other staff (if this is in line with the safeguarding children procedures)
- Explain what will happen next e.g., the designated safeguarding officer will be informed, and they may want to speak to the child further; if it is safe, a non-abusing parent or carer might also be informed; the police and social services might also be informed
- Get support for yourself: it can be distressing dealing with disclosure.

Key statements following disclosure

- “I believe you, thank you for telling me.”
- “I am concerned about your safety.”
- “The violence is not about you, it's him/her.”
- “You are an expert on what you need and what you would like to happen next.”
- “There is help available” (provide specific information)
- “You have the right to be safe.”