



## **CHILD PROTECTION POLICY AND PROCEDURES**

*Enfield Carers Centre (hereinafter “the Centre”) recognises its responsibility to make a positive contribution to safeguarding children in Enfield. This policy applies to trustees and employees of the Centre and is also for the information and advice of all users of the Centre in whatever capacity.*

### **1 Policy**

1.1 The Centre will endeavour to safeguard children by:

- Adopting child protection guidelines through a code of behaviour for staff and volunteers.
- Sharing information about child protection and good practice with children, parents, staff and volunteers.
- Sharing information about concerns with agencies who need to know, and involving parents and children appropriately.
- Following the agreed procedures for recruitment and selection of staff and volunteers who may be working with children.
- Providing effective management for staff and volunteers through supervision, support and training.

1.2 The Centre recognises the significance of abuse within our society and the very damaging consequences, both for those who suffer the abuse and those who perpetrate it. The protection of children from abuse is a responsibility of all citizens in the UK and a shared responsibility within the Centre.

1.3 In all its undertakings, the Centre will:

- Maintain a clear focus on the interest and rights of the child.
- Respect everyone who receives or provides its service.
- Be supportive to children in order to help prevent abuse occurring or to mitigate its effect.
- Co-operate with other agencies in dealing with actual or likely abuse.
- Support staff and volunteers in working in this area of activity.

### **2 Guiding principles**

2.1 The child’s interests are paramount and his or her safety and welfare will always be given first priority.

- 2.2 A child's concern will be listened to carefully and will always be taken seriously.
- 2.3 Where appropriate the limits of confidentiality in the context of child protection will be explained to service users at the time of their initial involvement with the charity.
- 2.4 Care will be taken not to infringe privacy and confidentiality any more than is necessary to safeguard the welfare of the child.
- 2.5 In assessing the need for action when faced with child protection concerns, staff will consider the situation in the context of family relationships, religion and culture.
- 2.6 Staff will use plain, jargon-free language appropriate to the age and culture of each person and will explain any unavoidable technical or professional terms.
- 2.7 The Centre will ensure that all staff, including volunteers, understand the charity's child protection procedures and are given appropriate levels of training in child protection matters.
- 2.8 The Centre will ensure that training programmes take account of the latest Government guidance and requirements, together with relevant research, and operate within an anti-discrimination framework.
- 2.9 The Centre will ensure that the child protection procedures for the authorities within which it operates are understood in order that good working relationships and appropriate levels of co-operation can be maintained should the occasion arise.
- 2.10 The Centre will ensure that all staff receive appropriate supervision on a regular basis and have access to a line manager in the event of the need for an urgent case discussion.
- 2.11 The Centre's Board of Trustees will designate a trustee to have responsibility for safeguarding, who will report any safeguarding issues to the Charity Commission. Guidelines for this role are given in the Charity Commission publication ["Safeguarding and protecting people for charities and trustees"](#).

### **3 Code of behaviour for staff and volunteers**

- 3.1 The Centre seeks to have a child-centred approach to its work with children. We recognise the need to:
  - Listen to children.
  - Value and respect children as individuals.
  - Involve children in decision making, as appropriate.
  - Encourage and praise children.

It is also important, for the protection of all concerned, that staff, volunteers, children and young people have guidelines on what is expected, and what is not accepted, with respect to their behaviour.

### **Guidelines for staff and volunteers**

- Staff and volunteers must not spend excessive amounts of time alone with children, away from others.
- Meetings with individual children or young people must take place as openly as possible.
- If privacy is needed, the door must have a see-through glass panel or the door left open and other staff or volunteers informed of the meeting.
- Staff and volunteers are advised not to make unnecessary physical contact with children and young people.
- However there may be occasions when physical contact is unavoidable, such as providing comfort and reassurance for a distressed child, or physical support, for example in sports activities.
- In all cases, physical contact should only take place with the consent of the child or young person.
- It is not good practice to take children alone in a car on journeys, however short. Where this is unavoidable, it should be with the full knowledge and consent of the parents and the person employed by the Centre who has management responsibility for the activity.
- Staff and volunteers should not meet with children outside organised activities, unless it is with the knowledge and consent of parents and the person employed by the Centre who has management responsibility.
- Leaders who are involved in relationships with other adults within an activity group should ensure that their personal relationships do not affect their leadership role.
- ECC Senior staff will continue to attend and be active members of both the Adult and Child Safeguarding Boards in Enfield
  
- Staff and volunteers should never:
  - ~ engage in rough physical games, including horseplay, apart from structured sports activities;
  - ~ allow the use of inappropriate language unchallenged;
  - ~ make sexually suggestive comments about or to a child, even in fun;
  - ~ let allegations a child makes go without being addressed and recorded;

- ~ do things of a personal nature for children that they can do themselves.

#### **4 Protecting Children from Harm**

- 4.1 Protecting Children from harm requires maximum cooperation between children, their families, communities and professionals.
- 4.2 Registration of all children and young people taking part in our activities is a basic requirement. Workers should take details of the child's full name, address, date of birth, parent/guardian and GP, along with any special needs e.g. health issues.
- 4.3 Manager should ensure that all those working with children and young people in our projects are familiar with the following reporting procedures:
  - Managers should identify a designated person in each project to have responsibility for dealing with concerns. This will usually be the Manager him/herself.
  - In the absence of the manager staff should take any concerns to the Chief Executive. Managers should ensure that contact details for these named persons and the local Social Services Department are freely available.
  - Managers should ensure that a copy of the relevant Local Authority child protection procedures is available at the appropriate office/project base.

#### **What to do where there are concerns about a child's welfare or in the event of disclosure of potential abuse**

- 4.4 It is not the responsibility of the Centre or any of its staff or volunteers to undertake an investigation of potential abuse. The role of the Centre is to listen carefully, note what is said, give reassurance where appropriate and seek advice as soon as practicable to do so.
- 4.5 Where any worker or volunteer is concerned about the welfare of a child, or has suspicions about any physical injuries they should share this concern immediately with their Manager. If the concerns remain, the Manager should liaise with the relevant Social Services Department who will decide on the next course of action. The manager should keep the Chief Executive apprised of all such concerns.
- 4.6 If any child or adult user asks the worker to keep information about potential or actual abuse secret, the worker must explain immediately and

straightforwardly that such information cannot be kept secret and will be discussed with their line manager.

4.7 An adult may reveal information about potential abuse without realising the significance of what he or she is saying. The worker should discuss the situation with their line manager at the termination of the session. Where, taking account of all circumstances, the manager assesses a referral to the relevant Social Services Department is necessary, she/he should first liaise with the Chief Executive.

4.8 A child or young person may make a clear statement about the occurrence of abuse now or in the past. It will be important to:

- Listen to the child, rather than asking questions of him/her directly.
- Offer him/her reassurance without making promises and take seriously what the child says.
- Avoid overreaction and interrupting a child who is freely recalling significant events.
- Avoid questioning or interrogating the child.
- Explain what you have to do next, and whom you have to tell.
- Record the discussion accurately, as soon as possible after the event, even if it is information you do not fully understand or like writing down (see 5.1 below).

The worker should discuss the matter as soon as possible with the manager who should refer the matter to the relevant Social Services Department in keeping with the local area child protection committee procedures.

4.9 In exceptional circumstances, when it is judged that the child or young person is in immediate danger, the worker/manager should take steps to keep them safe until appropriate action can be taken by Social Services. A decision to take such action requires *immediate* discussion with the Chief Executive.

4.10 In situations where an adult openly refers to abuse or expresses concern about their or a partner's treatment of a child, the worker should check what is being said and make it clear that he or she will need to discuss with their manager what happens next. Upon receipt of any such information the manager should discuss the matter *immediately* with the Chief Executive.

4.11 Where, following consultations with the Chief Executive, it is decided that an immediate child protection referral to the Social Services Department is required, the manager should make a telephone referral to the Local Authority. This should be followed up by a report in writing detailing the concerns. N.B: in any such circumstances it is for the Local Authority to decide and negotiate as to who undertakes any investigation.

- 4.12 Managers and workers should always respect the right of parents, young people and children to be kept informed throughout the process of identifying concerns and referral onto Social Services. The wishes and feelings of the child or young person should always be ascertained and wherever possible followed but the worker's primary consideration must always be the safety and welfare of the child or young person.

**Action in relation to adult victims of abuse**

- 4.13 Adult services users may disclose that they have been abused as children. The abuse may even have continued into adulthood. They may not want to take any further action; it may be sufficient that the abuse is acknowledged. They may, however, ask for or be assessed as needing help in dealing with these past events because of the impact upon their current behaviour and, possible effects on any children for whom they have responsibility. In these circumstances the worker should liaise with their line manager to:

- Discuss a referral for counselling. A referral should only be made with the agreement of the service user.
- Consider referring the matter to the police. No matter how old the abuse, it is not too late for a prosecution, although this will be for the police to decide in conjunction with the Crown Prosecution Service. Before any decision to refer to the police, the manager should first liaise with the Chief Executive. Careful thought will need to be given to how the service user feels if he/she makes a statement to the police. Such a step requires much courage on the part of the service user. It is important to understand that the outcome may be that no further action is possible either because of a lack of corroborating evidence or because the police assess that the individual complaint will not be able to withstand a detailed cross examination by the defence solicitor.

- 4.14 Where it is alleged by a service user that there are children currently living with an alleged perpetrator, the worker should inform the manager immediately who should then liaise with the Chief Executive. The manager will usually be directed to refer to the Social Services Department within which the children are resident. In the first instance it is for the Social Services Department to make a decision about involving the police.

- 4.15 The service user may indicate that he/she is unwilling to make a statement to the police or talk to Social Services staff. A referral should nonetheless be made if it is decided that the allegation is of sufficient substance and concern to be likely to merit further investigation.

- 4.16 As regards the possible abuse of those over the age of 18 please consult the Centre's "Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults" policy document.

## **5 Record Keeping**

- 5.1 It is essential that a careful record is made as soon as possible or in any case within twenty four hours of any of the above events. This record should include what was said by whom, the decisions made and the reasons for them, the action taken and any outcome. In any circumstances where the protection of a child has been discussed the record, together with any other relevant comments or information, should be countersigned by the manager.

## **6. Sharing Information: confidentiality in child protection**

- 6.1 keeping children safe from harm requires professionals and others to share information:

- About a child's health and development and exposure to possible harm:
- About a parent who made need help to care, or may not be able to care adequately and safely, for a child.
- About those who may pose a risk of harm to a child.

- 6.2 Often, it is only when information from a number of sources has been shared and is then looked at in its totality that it becomes clear that a child is at risk of or is suffering significant harm. Sometimes staff will question their right to pass on information about a family to the Social Services department because it will break confidentiality with the family. Managers should explore this issue regularly in supervision in order that staff are clear about their responsibilities towards children's well-being and their protection from harm.

## **7 Allegations of abuse against staff or volunteers**

- 7.1 If an allegation is made to a staff member (who is not the subject of the allegation) as full information as possible must be obtained from the informant. This includes the nature of the alleged abuse, when it is thought to have occurred, how often, and how the informant knows of incident(s). The date, time and nature of the allegation should be recorded.

- 7.2 Where a child or young person makes an allegation of abuse now or in the past by a worker, the recipient of the allegation should:

- Listen to the child, rather than asking questions of him/her directly.

- Offer him/her reassurance without making promises and take seriously what the child says.
  - Avoid overreaction and interrupting a child who is freely recalling significant events.
  - Avoid questioning or interrogating the child.
  - Explain what you have to do next and whom you have to tell.
  - Record the discussion accurately, as soon as possible after the event, even if it is information you do not fully understand or like writing down.
- 7.3 As soon as possible after the receipt of the information the staff member must share the information with their line manager to enable an assessment to be made of any immediate danger.
- 7.4 In exceptional circumstances, when it is judged that the child or young person is in immediate danger the manager should take steps to keep them safe until appropriate action can be taken by Social Services. A decision to take such action requires immediate discussion with the Chief Executive.
- 7.5 If following consultation with the line manager there are concerns about the risk to the child's welfare from the worker who is the subject of the allegation, the matter should be referred immediately to the Chief Executive.
- 7.6 Consideration will be given to what action is necessary to protect the child and what action is necessary in relation to the employee or volunteer. The range of options will include all or some of the following:
- A change of role for the staff member/volunteer
  - Liaison with and referral to Social Services or the police for them to decide what action to take.
  - Suspension of the worker/volunteer to allow further investigation of the circumstances.
  - The appointment of an independent person to support and assist the person against whom the allegation is made.
  - Discussion with the Centre Board of Trustees
- 7.7 Where circumstances dictate the Centre will:
- Co-operate with any investigation undertaken by the police or local authority.
  - Consider and address the impact of any such allegations upon other children and parents receiving a service from the project.
  - Consider and address the impact of any such allegations upon the staff and volunteers of the charity

## **8 Child protection and recruitment and selection**

- 8.1 The vast majority of people who want to work with children and young people are well motivated. Nevertheless, good recruitment and selection procedures will help screen out those who are not suitable. The following procedure should always be followed and applies to all those charged with responsibility for recruiting and selecting staff. It should also be remembered that, no matter how good the recruitment and screening procedures may be, they are not fool proof. Good patience and vigilance in management and supervision of staff and volunteers after appointment is also important.
- 8.2 Create a job description and person specification for each post, which will identify the kind of person most suitable.
- 8.3 Ask all applicants to supply information in writing by completion of a Centre application form – either for volunteers or for specific paid posts.
- 8.4 Ask for documentation to confirm the identity of the applicant.
- 8.5 Ask for written references. These may be followed up with a telephone contact.
- 8.6 Meet with applicants. Explore information contained in the application form and check out attitudes. Meeting with applicants for paid posts will be via a formal interview panel. Meeting with volunteers may be done through individual discussion with the Chief Executive or other delegated appointee.
- 8.7 The Chief Executive should take responsibility for ensuring the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) enhanced check is undertaken for all prospective employees or volunteers wishing to work for Enfield Carers Centre and who may be working with children or young people.
- 8.8 Please consult also the Centre's Employment and Recruitment Procedures policy document.

Policy Date:  
Review Date:  
Reviewed By: