

## **Safeguarding Policy**

PSC is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults, engaged in the breadth of its activities.

The purpose of this policy is to outline the duty and responsibility of staff, volunteers and trustees working on behalf of PSC in relation to the protection of children and young people and from abuse. PSC has a separate policy in respect of the protection of adults.

All children have the right to be safe from harm and should be able to live free from fear of abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

The key objectives of this policy are:

- To protect the children and young people who use PSC services. This includes the children of parents and carers who use PSC services.
- To explain the responsibilities the staff, volunteers and trustees of PSC have in respect of child protection.
- To provide staff, volunteers and trustees with an overview of child protection
- To provide a clear procedure that will be implemented where protection issues arise.

### **Children and young people**

For the purpose of this document, and in accordance with United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and UK law, a child is defined as a person under the age of 18.

All children have the right to protection from all forms of abuse including exploitation, neglect, physical and mental abuse regardless of their age, gender, disability, culture, language, racial origin, religious beliefs or sexual orientation.

PSC recognises that disabled children as well as those with additional needs and/or trauma are at increased risk of abuse. PSC also recognises that children who are neurodiverse, or who are diverse in terms of their physical ability, appearance or gender non-conformity, may be subject to prejudice, discrimination and misunderstanding and may be at greater risk of abuse.

### **The role of staff, volunteers and trustees**

All staff, volunteers and trustees working on behalf of PSC have a duty to promote the welfare and safety of children.

Staff, volunteers and trustees may receive disclosures of abuse and observe children who are at risk. This policy will enable staff/volunteers to make informed and confident responses to specific protection issues.

## What is abuse?

Abuse is a violation of an individual's human and civil rights by any other person or persons.

### Abuse of children

**Child abuse** is any avoidable act, or avoidable failure to act, which adversely affects the physical, mental, or emotional well-being of a child.

**Significant Harm** (introduced by The Children Act 1989) is the threshold that justifies compulsory intervention in family life in the best interests of children.

**Harm** with reference to children is defined as the ill treatment or impairment of health and development. This definition was clarified in section 120 of the Adoption and Children Act 2002 (implemented on 31 January 2005) so that it may include "for example, impairment suffered from seeing or hearing the ill treatment of another. There are no absolute criteria on which to rely when judging what constitutes significant harm. Sometimes a single violent episode may constitute significant harm but more often it is an accumulation of significant events, both acute and longstanding, which interrupt, damage or change the child's development. The concept of Significant Harm is therefore relative to each individual concerned. The determination of what constitutes significant harm in each individual case is made by the relevant children's services team, contact details of which are given below on p8.

### Types of abuse

Abuse is a form of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting by those known to them or, more rarely, by others (eg. via the internet). They may be abused by an adult or adults, or another child or children.

- **Physical abuse** - 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.
- **Emotional abuse** - 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, though it may occur alone.

- **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.
- **Child sexual exploitation** - 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.
- **Neglect** - 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.

The above definitions are extracted from *Working Together to Safeguard Children*, HM Government, March 2018):

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2>

PSC also recognizes the following additional forms of abuse:

- **Grooming** is when someone builds a relationship, trust and emotional connection with a child so they can manipulate, exploit and abuse them. Children who are groomed can be sexually abused, exploited or trafficked. Anybody can be a groomer, no matter their age, gender or race. Grooming can take place over a short or long period of time – from weeks to years, and can be done in person or online. Groomers may also build a relationship with the young person's family or friends to make them seem trustworthy or authoritative. (Reference: NSPCC)
- **Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)** comprises all procedures involving partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs. It is illegal in the UK and a form of child abuse with long-lasting harmful consequences. The age at which girls undergo FGM varies enormously, according to the community that they belong to however the majority of cases of FGM are thought to take place between the ages of 5 and 8 and therefore girls within that age bracket are at a higher risk. If you believe there is a risk of FGM you must notify children's services immediately, without seeking consent from the family. The Serious Crime Act 2015 introduced a duty on all teachers and registered health and social care professionals to notify the police of any known cases where FGM has taken place on a child (i.e. anyone under the age of 18). If you fall into one of these categories it is therefore your duty to report it directly to the Police, as well as notifying the designated lead for safeguarding, Mrs Ruth Pearse. (Reference: Safeguarding Network)
- **Cyber-Bullying**, or online bullying, can be defined as the use of technologies by an individual or by a group of people to deliberately and repeatedly upset someone else. (Reference: Childnet, 2017) "Upsetting" someone can take a variety of forms. It can involve threatening, distressing or humiliating a target, and, as such, encompasses a wide range of behaviours.
- **Honour-based abuse** is an incident or crime involving violence, threats of violence, intimidation, coercion or abuse (including psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional abuse), which has or may have been committed to protect or defend the honour of an individual, family and or community for alleged or perceived breaches of the family and / or community's code of behaviour. (Reference: Crown Prosecution Service). Honour-based abuse is often carried out as a result of the victim bringing shame on their family or the wider community. For example, it may be committed against people who:
  - Become involved with a boyfriend or girlfriend from a different culture or religion;
  - Want to get out of an arranged or forced marriage;
  - Want to get out of a forced marriage;
  - Wear clothes or take part in activities that might not be considered traditional within a particular cultureWomen and girls are the most common victims of honour based violence; however it can also affect men and boys.

- **Radicalisation** is the process through which a person comes to support or be involved in extremist ideologies. It can result in a person becoming drawn into terrorism and is in itself a form of harm. (Reference: NSPCC) During that process it is possible to intervene to prevent vulnerable people being drawn into terrorist-related activity.

## Safeguarding children who attend PSC events and groups

In the case of children who use our services, we will promote awareness of safeguarding issues directly by the provision of easy-to-access information. This will include information about:

- Who to talk to if they are worried about an issue relating to their safety
- Safe use of phones, including social media and the sharing of photographs

Detailed information about our procedures for keeping children and young people safe at PSC events can be found in our 'Procedure for safeguarding at PSC events attended by children and young people'.

PSC also recognizes the risks posed to young people from online abuse. PSC has drawn up a series of principles and guidelines to promote online safety – see 'PSC Online Safety Policy'.

## Designated Lead for Safeguarding

The Designated Lead for Safeguarding (DSL) at PSC is the CEO, to whom all concerns should in the first instance be raised (at any time).

*Mrs Ruth Pearse, 0118 986 532 (PSC office) or 07876 275731*

In her absence, matters will be dealt with by the Director of Family Services, Mrs Zobia Kalim

*Mrs Zobia Kalim, 07557 102623*

*Mrs Fiona Joy, lead trustee for safeguarding, 07931359050*

If a safeguarding concern arises and neither the CEO nor the Director of Family Services can be contacted, the PSC member must take action to report the matter to the relevant authority. Concerns about a child must be reported as soon as identified. See further "Who to contact if there is a concern", below.

## Responsibilities of the designated lead for safeguarding

The CEO of PSC, as designated lead for safeguarding, will:

- co-ordinate action within PSC and liaise with social care and other agencies over cases of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE), abuse and suspected abuse

- Undergo training as needed to update and refresh knowledge in any changes in legislation, and be trained in the responsibilities for the Designated Person which includes child protection and inter-agency working (updated every two years) and practice in safeguarding children;
- act as a source of advice within PSC
- ensure that staff, volunteers and trustees are familiar with PSC policy and procedure
- make child protection referrals, recording and reporting accordingly
- liaise with agencies about individual cases
- organise training on safeguarding and child protection within PSC
- ensure that appropriate strategies for recording and reporting incidents are kept within PSC
- provide appropriate feedback to members of staff as and when necessary
- be responsible for referring cases of suspected abuse or allegations to the Local Authority according to the procedures established by the Berkshire West Safeguarding Children Partnership (BWSCP).

## **PROCEDURES**

### **Is the child/adult in immediate danger?**

The staff member must consider whether the matter is an emergency. An emergency is when a child or vulnerable adult is at immediate risk of significant harm. If there is immediate risk of harm, call the Police on 999.

### **Responding to an allegation of abuse**

It is important to remember that the person who first encounters a case of alleged abuse is not responsible for deciding whether abuse has occurred. Any suspicion, allegation or incident of abuse must be reported to the DSL, Ruth Pearse, or the Director of Family Services , Zobia Kalim, on the same day where possible (see “Who to contact if there is a concern”, below)

### **Procedure in the event of a disclosure**

All complaints, allegations or suspicions must be taken seriously. Allegations may be made against a parent, carer or other person known to a child, or they may be made against a PSC staff member or volunteer. In the latter case, this may require the involvement of the Local Authority Designated Officer in accordance with the Berkshire West Safeguarding Children Partnership procedure, and in these circumstances the PSC ‘Procedure for dealing with allegations made against an employee/volunteer’ should also be used.

The procedure below must be followed whenever an allegation of abuse is made or when there is a suspicion of abuse.

Promises of confidentiality should not be given as this may conflict with the need to ensure the safety and welfare of the individual (see more on confidentiality below).

A full record shall be made as soon as possible of the nature of the allegation and any other relevant information. This should include information in relation to the date, the time, the place where the alleged abuse happened, the name of the person to whom the allegation is disclosed and the names of others present, the name of the complainant and, where different, the name of the person who has allegedly been abused, the nature of the alleged abuse, a description of any injuries observed and the account which has been given of the allegation.

In the event of an incident or disclosure:

## **DO**

- Make sure the individual/child is safe
- Assess whether emergency services are required and if needed call them
- Listen
- Offer support and reassurance
- Ascertain and establish the basic facts
- Make careful notes and obtain agreement on them
- Ensure notation of dates, time and persons present are correct and agreed
- Take all necessary precautions to preserve forensic evidence
- Explain that promises of confidentiality cannot be made
- Explain to the individual making the allegation if appropriate that you are required to report it to the DSL or the Director of Family Services
- Immediately refer the matter to the DSL or the Director of Family Services

## **DON'T**

- Confront the alleged abuser
- Be judgmental or voice your own opinion
- Be dismissive of the concern
- Investigate or interview beyond that which is necessary to establish the basic facts
- Disturb or destroy possible forensic evidence
- Consult with persons not directly involved with the situation
- Ask leading questions
- Assume information
- Make promises
- Ignore the allegation
- Elaborate in your notes
- Panic

## **Who to contact if there is a concern**

### **Who to contact if you are worried about a child**

If the matter is not an emergency, all concerns should in the first instance be reported to the DSL, Ruth Pearse, or the Director of Family Services, Zobia Kalim, on the same working day that concerns arise, or the following morning if it relates to an evening contact. In the unlikely event that neither the CEO nor the Director of Family Services has responded to contact during

that same working day, or the following morning if it relates to an evening contact, the member of staff should make contact with children's services as per the local authority where the child resides (during office hours):

Reading Borough Council: Brighter Futures for children, Children's Single Point of Access (CSPA)	0118 937 3641
Wokingham Borough Council, Referral & Assessment Team	0118 908 8002
West Berkshire Council, Contact Advice and Assessment Service (CAAS)	01635 503190
Slough Borough Council, MASH	01753 875362
Bracknell Forest, MASH	01344 352005
Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead, MASH	01628 683150

**Out of hours**, the staff member should contact the Emergency Duty Team (Berkshire Wide) – 01344 786543

PSC understands that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and any staff member, volunteer or trustee reporting a concern, or making an emergency referral, should proactively seek feedback to ensure that action has been taken. The CEO or the Director of Family Services should respond promptly to such requests .

### **Who to contact if an allegation is made against PSC staff or volunteer**

In the event of an allegation made against a PSC staff member or volunteer, please refer to the PSC 'Procedure for dealing with allegations made against an employee/volunteer, as well as the PSC Disciplinary Procedure (if a member of staff) or Volunteer Policy, if a volunteer.

The DSL or Director of Family Services will follow procedure as set out by the Berkshire West Safeguarding Children Partnership (BWSCP) and if appropriate seek the advice of the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO). The LADO provides advice and management of allegations against members of staff and volunteers between 9am and 5pm during weekdays (except public holidays).

Contact the LADO for the local authority area in which the child lives:

<b>Reading</b>	0118 937 3555 or 07841 253871 Email: lado@brighterfuturesforchildren.org
<b>West Berkshire</b>	01635 503153 Email: LADO@westberks.gov.uk
<b>Wokingham</b>	0118 974 6141 Email LADO@wokingham.gov.uk
<b>Slough</b>	07927 681858 or 01753 690906 Email: LADO@sloughchildrenfirst.co.uk
<b>Bracknell</b>	01344 351572 Email: lado@bracknell-forest.gov.uk
<b>Windsor and Maidenhead</b>	0208 8917370 or 07774 332675 LADO@achievingforchildren.org.uk

BWSCP procedures can be found at:

<https://www.berkshirewestsafeguardingchildrenpartnership.org.uk>



## **SUMMARY PROCEDURE IN THE EVENT OF AN INCIDENT OR ALLEGATION INVOLVING PSC STAFF**

The following summarises the action to take if an allegation is made against a member of PSC staff, or if a PSC staff member witnesses behaviour by a PSC colleague that gives grounds for concern. Please refer to the PSC "Procedure for dealing with allegations made against an employee/volunteer" for full guidelines as to how these situations will be handled.

### **Is the child in immediate danger?**

#### **YES**

- Call the police and ambulance if needed
- Seek help from a first aider
- Contact the DSL (Mrs Ruth Pearse) or the Director of Family Services (Zobia Kalim) to alert them to the incident. They will inform the child's family.

#### **NO**

- Make notes of the basic facts, including dates, times and persons involved
- Contact the DSL or Director of Family Services and report the matter to them. If you are unable to contact the DSL or Director of Family Services the same working day, or the following morning if it relates to an evening contact, you must take responsibility for contacting the relevant children's services team yourself.

### **Is the person at the centre of the allegation working with children now?**

#### **YES**

- Discuss immediately with the DSL and the person's line manager.
- Remove the staff member or volunteer from direct contact with children.
- Refer to the PSC "Procedure for dealing with allegations made against an employee/volunteer"

#### **NO**

- Discuss immediately with the DSL and the person's line manager.
- Refer to the PSC "Procedure for dealing with allegations made against an employee/volunteer"

An investigation will ensue.  
The DSL will seek advice from the LADO.

## Confidentiality

PSC is committed to ensuring the confidentiality of its service users, as well as its staff, trustees and volunteers, according to the PSC Confidentiality Policy.

The duty to safeguard children overrides the need for confidentiality where there is concern that an individual may be at risk. Where there is concern that an individual is at risk, staff, volunteers and trustees have a responsibility to share relevant information with other professionals, particularly investigative agencies and social services.

If a child confides in a member of staff, volunteer or trustee and requests that the information is kept secret, it is important that the member of staff, volunteer or trustee tells the child or adult sensitively that they have a responsibility to refer cases of alleged abuse to the appropriate agencies. Within that context, the child or adult should, however, be assured that the matter will be disclosed only to people who need to know about it.

Where possible, consent should be obtained from the child or adult before involving other agencies. In some circumstances obtaining consent may be neither possible nor desirable. If the PSC staff member, volunteer or trustee has concerns that seeking consent would place themselves in a vulnerable position then consent should not be sought. The safety and welfare of all involved, including of the PSC staff member (or volunteer or trustee), is the priority.

## Recruitment

PSC recognises that robust recruitment, selection, induction and supervision processes help engage candidates who are well suited to the organisation and who are less likely to harm children, intentionally or accidentally.

PSC operates procedures that take account of the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, including arrangements for appropriate checks on new staff, volunteers and trustees. PSC undertakes to ensure that at least one member on any recruitment panel has undertaken Safer Recruitment training.

New employees, volunteer peer supporters and trustees will be required to provide two references and undertake face-to-face interviews prior to any offer of employment or confirmation of the role of trustee or peer supporter.

PSC will request enhanced DBS checks on all new members of staff, trustees and volunteers and this check must be completed to the satisfaction of the CEO before the member of staff, trustees or volunteer undertakes any activity that brings them into direct contact with service users, including telephone contact.

Records of these checks are maintained in a secure database by PSC administrative staff.

Staff, volunteers and trustees are encouraged to subscribe to the DBS update service. See <https://www.gov.uk/dbs-update-service>

Where this is not the case, renewal of DBS checks will be undertaken every 3 years.

## Where an employee is the subject of an allegation

In the event that an employee or volunteer of PSC is subject to an allegation of abuse, the PSC 'Procedure for dealing with allegations made against an employee/volunteer' will be followed and if appropriate the disciplinary process will be invoked in accordance with the PSC Disciplinary Policy (for staff member) or Volunteer Policy (for a volunteer).

## Training

PSC is committed to ensuring that its staff, volunteers and trustees have an appropriate level of training to enable them to understand and fulfil their responsibilities towards safeguarding children and vulnerable adults. PSC also recognises the possibility of staff or volunteers being groomed by potential abusers as a pathway to children and the need to ensure robust training and support of staff to safeguard against this.

### Training requirements of staff and trustees

Safeguarding training forms part of the induction process for new employees. As a fundamental part of this, all new employees, as well as staff and trustees, should familiarise themselves with the content of this policy.

All staff and trustees are required to undertake training in:

- Universal Safeguarding (to be renewed every three years) – within three months of taking up employment or being formally elected as a trustee
- Adult safeguarding (to be renewed every three years) for those working directly with vulnerable adults
- Child Sexual Exploitation – within six months of taking up employment or being formally elected as a trustee
- Prevent duty (protection against radicalisation) – within six months of taking up employment or being formally elected as a trustee
- Any other aspect of safeguarding as the need arises, in accordance with legislation, statutory guidance or emerging best practice
- Safeguarding supervision is offered to all staff on a regular basis

Records of when this training was undertaken are held in a secure database by PSC administrative staff. PSC recognises that many PSC staff, volunteers and trustees will have received safeguarding training through other job roles and, where this training is relevant and up-to-date, and certificates are provided, this is likely to be sufficient for the purposes of PSC.

### Training requirements of volunteers

PSC Service Managers, in consultation with the CEO, are responsible for assessing the safeguarding training needs of their volunteers. Requirements are likely to be as follows:

- **Peer supporters** will be required to undertake safeguarding training as part of their training programme.
- **Volunteers whose role includes contact with service users**, undertake Universal Safeguarding Training, as they may receive a disclosure.
- **Volunteers whose role is limited to administrative functions** where there is no contact with service users are not required to undertake any specific safeguarding training.

## Associated PSC documents and policies

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following other PSC policies:

### Safeguarding policies

- PSC Safeguarding Policy for peer supporters
- PSC Procedure for dealing with allegations made against an employee/volunteer
- Procedure for safeguarding at PSC events attended by children and young people
- PSC Online Safety Policy

### Other related policies

- PSC Confidentiality Policy
- PSC Disciplinary Policy and Procedure
- PSC Complaints and Feedback Policy
- PSC Whistleblowing Policy
- PSC Recruitment and Selection Policy

## Legislation underpinning this policy

PSC is aware of its statutory obligation under section 11 of the Children Act 2004 to discharge its duties with regard to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/31/section/11>

## Resources used to draw up this policy.

This policy has been developed from the previous PSC safeguarding policy and has used as a reference the RVA safeguarding policy as well as best practice guidelines from the Charities Commission.

This policy was also drawn up with reference to

- The RVA Safeguarding policy and 2020 guidance on DBS checks (<http://rva.org.uk/article/dbs-guide-for-working-with-adults-in-the-charity-sector/>)
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (HM Government, 2018)
- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2>
- Children Act 2004, Section 11: [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/31/section/11](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/31/section/11)
- CWDC 12 Steps to Safer Recruitment
- Safe Network Standards 2013/14
- NSPCC safeguarding guidelines
- BWSCP guidance and procedures

## **Review of this policy**

This policy will be reviewed annually by the PSC board of trustees.

This policy was adopted by the trustees in June 2016

Reviewed: October 2018, amended January 2019

Reviewed: March 2020, amended March 2020

Reviewed: April 2021, amended July 2021

Amended May 2022

Amended November 2023

ENDS