

KEYNSHAM & DISTRICT MENCAP SOCIETY

SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN POLICY

Keynsham & District Mencap Society believes that children have the right to be completely secure from both the fear and reality of abuse, and we are committed to protecting all the children in our care from harm.

Purpose of a Safeguarding Policy

The whole Safeguarding Policy will provide clear direction to staff and others about expected practice in dealing with issues. It makes explicit Keynsham & District Mencap's commitment to the development of good practice and sound procedures, ensuring that Safeguarding concerns and referrals are handled sensitively, professionally and in a way which supports the needs of the individuals.

This policy applies to all Staff, Volunteers, Trustees and Students

Underpinning Principles

- The welfare of the child is paramount
- Staff and Volunteers are responsible for their own actions and behaviour and should avoid any conduct which would lead any reasonable person to question their motivation and intentions.
- Staff and Volunteers should work, and be seen to work, in an open and transparent way.
- Staff and volunteers should discuss and/or take advice promptly from their line manager or another senior member of staff over any incident which may give rise to concern.
- Records should be made of any such incident and of decisions made/further action agreed, in accordance with organisational policy for keeping and maintaining records.
- Staff and Volunteers should apply the same professional standards regardless of gender or sexuality.
- All staff and volunteers should know the name of their designated person for safeguarding, be familiar with local Safeguarding arrangements and understand their responsibilities to safeguard and protect children and adults at risk.
- Staff and volunteers should be aware that breaches of the law and other professional guidelines could result in criminal or disciplinary action being taken against them.
- Keynsham & District Mencap operates a zero tolerance policy of abuse and neglect.

Commitment

Keynsham & District Mencap Society will:

- Establish and maintain an ethos where children feel secure and are encouraged to talk and are listened to. We will ensure that children know that there are people they can approach if they are worried or in difficulty.
- Ensure that wherever possible every effort will be made to establish effective working relationships with parents/carers and colleagues from other agencies.
- Be vigilant in cases of suspected abuse, recognising the signs and symptoms, have clear procedures whereby all adults report such cases to the Designated Member of Staff, Laura Jefferies (Manager) and in her absence Kath Dawson (Chair), and be aware of local procedures so that information is effectively passed on to the relevant professionals.
- Provide and support Safeguarding training for all staff and volunteers (including Trustees if appropriate) and in particular for the designated officers to ensure their skills and expertise are up to date.
- Strive to assist children to understand and to be aware of behaviour towards them that is not acceptable and how they can help keep themselves safe.
- Provide clear policy statements for parents and carers, staff, volunteers, trustees and members.

- Have a clear understanding of the various types of bullying - physical, verbal, cyber and indirect, and act promptly and firmly to combat it, making sure that everyone is aware of Keynsham & District Mencap's position on this issue.
- Have a clear policy about the handling of allegations of abuse by members of staff, ensuring that all staff are fully aware of the procedures and that they are followed correctly at all times.

What is meant by 'abuse'?

Harm includes any of the following:

- ill treatment (including sexual abuse, exploitation and forms of ill treatment which are not physical)
- the impairment of health (physical or mental) or development (physical, intellectual, emotional, social or behavioural)
- neglect
- unlawful conduct which adversely affects property, rights or interests (for example, financial abuse)

Abusive acts that result in harm may be:

- a single act or repeated acts
- an act of neglect or a failure to act
- multiple acts, for example, an adult at risk may be neglected and also financially abused.

Intent is not an issue at the point of deciding whether an act or a failure to act is abusive; it is the impact on the person concerned and the harm or risk of harm to that individual.

The following factors should be considered when assessing the seriousness of the risk to the person:

- the vulnerability of the person
- the nature and extent of the abuse/neglect
- the length of time the abuse or neglect has been occurring
- the impact of the alleged abuse on the adult at risk
- the risk of repeated or increasingly serious acts of abuse or neglect
- the risk that serious harm could result if no action was taken
- the illegality of the act or acts

Abusive or harmful acts can take different forms:

- physical
- sexual
- psychological/emotional
- financial and material
- neglect and acts of omission
- discriminatory
- institutional

Recognising Child Abuse

Child abuse manifests itself in a variety of different ways, some overt and others much less so. All staff have child protection training and will be vigilant to signs and evidence of physical, sexual and emotional abuse or neglect.

Physical Abuse: This involves hitting, shaking, throwing, burning, suffocating or any other physical harm. Deliberately causing a child's ill health also constitutes physical abuse.

Sexual Abuse: This involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including

penetrative or non-penetrative acts. Showing children pornographic materials, sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways also constitutes sexual abuse.

Emotional abuse: Varying degrees of emotional abuse is present in virtually all child protection incidents, but can also constitute abuse in its own right. Emotional abuse involves persistent or severe emotional ill-treatment or torture causing, or likely to cause, severe adverse effects on the emotional stability of a child. Such behaviour may involve conveying to a child that they are worthless, unloved, or inadequate, or making them feel unnecessarily frightened or vulnerable.

Neglect: Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical, emotional or psychological needs, such as is likely to have a severe impact on their health, development or emotional stability. Neglect may involve failing to provide adequate food, shelter or clothing for a child, or failing to adequately protect them from physical harm or ill health. Neglect can also manifest itself in a failure to meet the basic emotional needs of child.

Appointment of Staff and Volunteers

All staff and volunteers are carefully recruited, have two references and have full and up to date Disclosure and Barring Service checks. Prior to completion of DBS new volunteers may complete taster/shadow sessions with experienced volunteers who are DBS checked. New volunteers are not to be left unsupervised and must not assist with personal care or toileting.

Declaration of Conviction and the Recruitment of Ex-Offenders

Under the provisions of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 2023, applicants for employment which is concerned with the provision of personal support and which would enable the applicant to have access to people receiving this support in their normal duties will be required to disclose spent convictions.

Keynsham & District Mencap complies fully with the Disclosure and Barring Service Code of Practice. We undertake to treat all applicants for positions fairly and not to discriminate unfairly against the subject of a Disclosure on the basis of a conviction or other information revealed.

Keynsham & District Mencap will request a disclosure only where this is considered proportionate and relevant to the position concerned

At interview or in a separate discussion if requested, we ensure that an open and measured discussion takes place on the subject of any offences or other matters that may be relevant to the position. Failure to reveal information that is directly relevant to the position could lead to a withdrawal of the offer.

Keynsham & District Mencap will ensure that all those involved in the decision making aspect of the recruitment process have been suitably trained to identify and assess the relevance and circumstances of Disclosure information and the relevant legislation.

Employees who are convicted of an offence whilst in Keynsham & District Mencap's employment are required to inform the Operations Manager in writing detailing the offence and outcome. The Operations Manager in conjunction with the Chair Person will then consider the implications for employment and take appropriate action.

Failure to disclose a spent conviction when required to may lead to disciplinary action or dismissal. A person who has disclosed a spent conviction and is offered employment will be afforded equal opportunities. However, should an employee's job content or duties change the spent conviction will be reconsidered in the context of the new job role.

Having a criminal record will not necessarily bar you from employment with Keynsham & District Mencap. This will depend on the nature of the position, the circumstances and the background of the offence.

Staff Support and Training

Keynsham and District Mencap Society is committed to ensuring that it meets its responsibilities in respect of child protection through the provision of support and training to staff. Therefore, the society will ensure that:

- All staff are given a copy of the Safeguarding Children Policy during their induction, and have its implications explained to them.
- All staff receive regular training and supervision in safeguarding children issues and are provided with any relevant information and guidance.
- All staff are aware of the main indicators of child abuse.
- All staff are aware of their statutory requirements in respect of the disclosure or discovery of child abuse and the procedure for doing so. All students and volunteers are instructed to report the disclosure or discovery of abuse to the Operations Manager.

The society will take appropriate action in relation to the findings of any investigation into allegations of abuse, consistent with its duties to protect the safety of children and uphold fair processes for staff, students and volunteers.

Any member of staff, a student or volunteer under investigation for the alleged abuse of a child, will be subject to the provisions of the Staff Disciplinary Policy.

Safe Caring

All staff understand the society's child safeguarding procedures and have had appropriate training and guidance in the principles of safe caring. To this end:

- Every effort will be made to avoid or minimise time when members of staff, students or volunteers are left alone with a child. If staff are alone with a child, the door of the room should be kept open and another member of staff should be informed.
- When dealing with sensitive circumstances such as soiling the child or young person will be treated sensitively, and in private, with 2 members of staff / volunteers.
- If a child makes inappropriate physical contact with a member of staff, students or volunteer, this will be recorded fully in an Incident Report.
- Staff will never carry out a personal task for children that they can do for themselves. Where this is essential, staff will help a child whilst being accompanied by a colleague. Unless a child has a particular need, staff should not accompany children into the toilet. Staff are aware that this and other similar activities could be misconstrued.
- Staff will be mindful of how and where they touch children, given their age and emotional understanding. Unnecessary or potentially inappropriate physical contact will be avoided at all times.
- All allegations made by a child against a member of staff will be fully recorded, including any actions taken, in an Incident Report. In the event of there being a witness to an incident, they should sign the records to confirm this.

Dealing With Allegations

The society is committed to ensuring that it meets its responsibilities in respect of child protection by treating any allegation seriously and sensitively.

The society will not carry out any investigation itself into a suspected child abuse incident. On discovering an allegation of abuse, the Operations Manager will immediately refer the case to the local statutory child protection agencies.

Further to this, the following principles will govern any suspected or reported case of abuse:

- Where actual or suspected abuse comes to the attention of staff, they will report this to the Operations Manager at the earliest possible opportunity.
- Staff are encouraged and supported to trust their professional judgment and if they suspect abuse has, or is taking place, to report this.
- Full written records of all reported incidents will be produced and maintained. Information recorded will include full details of the alleged incident; details of all the parties involved; any evidence or explanations offered by interested parties; relevant dates, times and locations and any supporting information or evidence from members of staff. The society will demonstrate great care in distinguishing between fact and opinion when recording suspected incidents of child abuse.
- The Operations Manager will be responsible for ensuring that written records are dated, signed and kept confidentially.
- If an allegation of abuse is made against the Operations Manager the Committee will be informed as soon as possible. They will then assume responsibility for the situation or delegate this role to a senior member of staff.
- Staff will ensure that all concerns and allegations are treated with sensitivity and confidentiality.
- Any children involved in alleged incidents will be comforted and reassured.

Responding to a Disclosure

The person first becoming aware of potential abuse does not have the responsibility to make judgements about the validity of allegations or the seriousness of such but must make his/her concerns known immediately to the responsible person.

In circumstances where a child makes an allegation or a disclosure, the member of staff concerned will:

- **Listen carefully to the person making the allegation**
Remember the person has chosen you as someone they trust to talk to about the abuse they are suffering.
Stay calm and listen patiently to what is said, how it is being said, and the person's body language whilst talking to you.
Don't interrupt or ask leading questions - wait for them to explain what has happened in their own words.
Don't dismiss what you are being told or change the subject.
Offer reassurance that the person is doing the right thing in telling you about what has happened/is happening.
Explain what will happen next - that you will need to tell someone about what they have told you.
- **Record as accurately as possible what was said to you, as soon as possible after the disclosure, on an Incident Record Form.**
Use a blank piece of paper if you don't have the correct form.
Sign, date, and add the time you heard the disclosure to the record.
Do not adjust the language or grammar even if this results in an incoherent account.

Whistle-Blowing

Whistle blowing is the mechanism by which staff can voice their concerns, made in good faith, without fear or repercussion. Further details are available in Keynsham & District Mencap Society's Whistle Blowing policy.

Staff should acknowledge their individual responsibilities to bring matters of concern to the attention of senior management. This is particularly important where the welfare of children may be involved.

This means adults should report any behaviour by colleagues that raise concern.

All adults working with Keynsham & District Mencap Society should know the name of the society's designated officer for Safeguarding, and know and follow relevant safeguarding policy

and procedures. All staff have a duty to report any safeguarding concerns to their designated person for Safeguarding.

Referring Allegations to Child Protection Agencies

If the Operations Manager has reasonable grounds for believing that a child has been – or is in grave danger of being – subject to abuse, the following procedure will be activated:

- Contact will be made, at the earliest possible opportunity, with the local social services department.
- The Operations Manager will communicate as much information about the allegation and related incidents as is consistent with advice given by social services and the police.
- At all times, the safety, protection and interests of children concerned will take precedence. The Operations Manager and staff will work with and support parents/carers as far as they are legally able.
- The society will assist the social services and the police, as far as it is able, during any investigation of abuse or neglect. This will include disclosing written and verbal information and evidence.

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