

MESH

Safeguarding Children Policy

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Policy approved by: Carol Borrill, Chair of Trustees

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MESH Safeguarding Children Policy

MESH is fully committed to safeguarding the welfare of all children and young people. It recognises its responsibility to take all reasonable steps to promote safe practice and to protect children from harm, abuse and exploitation. MESH acknowledges its duty to act appropriately in response to any allegations, reports or suspicions of abuse.

The primary responsibility for safeguarding children and young people rests with their parents/carers. However, there are times when it is necessary to refer a child/young person or an adult to statutory services, whose intervention may be necessary to adequately ensure their protection.

This Policy overrides the client's confidentiality statement, as a Child's welfare is paramount. Data protection procedures **should not** be used as a barrier preventing information sharing with the relevant authorities where there is a safeguarding concern.

Paid staff and volunteers will work together to encourage the development of an ethos which embraces difference and diversity as well as respecting the rights of children, young people and adults.

MESH will carry out DBS checks on staff and volunteers, on a case by case basis, referring to the guidance [here](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/dbs-eligibility-guidance) relating to the frequency and nature of contact with children. (<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/dbs-eligibility-guidance>)

Safeguarding Framework

In implementing this child protection policy MESH will:

- Ensure that all workers and board members understand their legal, professional and moral responsibility to safeguard children and young people from harm, abuse and exploitation.
- Ensure that all workers and board members understand their duty to report concerns that arise about a child/young person, or a worker's conduct towards a child/young person, to the organisation's named person for safeguarding.
- Ensure that the named person understands his/her responsibility to refer any child protection concerns to the statutory safeguarding agencies (i.e. Police and/or Social Work).
- Ensure that any procedures relating to the conduct of workers are implemented in a consistent and equitable manner.
- Provide opportunities for all workers and board members to develop their skills and knowledge particularly in relation to the welfare and safeguarding of children and

young people; A Nominated Board Member/member of staff will undertake relevant safeguarding training, as required.

- Ensure that children and young people are enabled to express their ideas and views on a wide range of issues and will have access to the organisation's *Complaints Procedure*.
- Endeavour to keep up-to-date with national developments relating to the welfare and safeguarding of children and young people.

Introduction

This policy works alongside our *MESH Safeguarding Children and Adults Procedures* document. The MESH safeguarding children policy and procedures have been designed to ensure that the safety of any child/young person who accesses the services provided by MESH or with whom MESH workers come into contact with whilst carrying out their role. MESH is committed to the belief that safeguarding children and young people is everybody's responsibility and therefore the aim here is to provide guidelines that will enable all workers, board members and volunteers to act appropriately to any concerns that arise in respect of a child/young person.

Definition

The definition of 'a child' in England and Wales is a person who is under the age of 18. There is no legal definition of 'young person' and, whilst giving due regard to the age, knowledge and experiences of older young people when assessing concerns, all MESH staff should be clear that any person under the age of 18 is legally a child and will have a parent/carer who holds parental responsibility towards them.

Recognising the Signs and Symptoms of Abuse

A list of the full revised definitions as outlined in *Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018* is included in Appendix 1 to this Policy, and in the *MESH Safeguarding Children and Adults Procedures* document. All staff and Volunteers need to familiarise themselves with these definitions.

MESH will ensure that all employed staff and freelance mediators as well as a Board Member Rep whether paid or unpaid, undertake training to gain a basic awareness of the signs and symptoms of child abuse.

A safeguarding concern may come to light by the following examples:

- a child or young person alleges that abuse has taken place or that they feel unsafe;
- a third party or anonymous allegation is received;
- a child or young person's appearance, behavior, play, drawing or statements cause suspicion of abuse and/or neglect;
- a child or young person reports an incident(s) of alleged abuse which occurred some time ago;
- A report is made regarding the concerns about the behaviour of a MESH worker towards a child/young person.

A Named Person(s) for Safeguarding

Every organisation that works with children or young people should have in place a named person who is responsible for dealing with Safeguarding issues that may arise. A deputy must be made available in their absence. These individuals must be trained in Safeguarding and their responsibilities clearly stated within your procedures.

MESH has an appointed individual who is responsible for dealing with any Safeguarding concerns. In their absence, a deputy is available for workers to consult with. The named persons for Safeguarding within MESH are:

Named Person for Child Protection: Jenny Owen
Mobile number: 07812 501424

Deputy Name of contact person: Jo Buchanan
Mobile number: 07966 103499

The role and responsibilities of the named person(s) are:

- > To ensure that all staff are aware of what they should do and who they should go to if they are concerned that a child/young person may be subject to abuse or neglect.
- > Ensure that any concerns about a child/young person are acted on, clearly recorded, referred on where necessary and, followed up to ensure the issues are addressed.
- > The Named Person(s) will record any reported incidents in relation to a child/young person or breach of safeguarding policies and procedures. This record will be kept in a secure place and its contents will be confidential.

Stages to Follow if you are Worried about a Child

MESH recognises that it has a duty to act on reports or suspicions of abuse or neglect. It also acknowledges that taking action in cases of child abuse is never easy. However MESH believes that the safety of the child must override any doubts or hesitations, and will support staff in taking action.

For full details of dealing with suspected or reported safeguarding concerns see *MESH Safeguarding Children and Adults Procedures* document.

When a member of staff has a safeguarding concern about a child they will:

Stage 1

- If appropriate, talk to a child/young person about what you are observing. It is ok to ask questions, for example: "I've noticed that you don't appear yourself today, how is everything? But never use leading questions. A

leading question is one where you give the child information that they haven't first given you, i.e. "You don't seem ok today. Has someone hurt you?"

- Listen carefully to what the young person has to say and take it seriously.
- Never investigate or interrogate the child as this is not your role. You should try to gain just enough information to establish if you need to pass the concern on to the Safeguarding lead.
- Always explain to children and young people that any information they have given will have to be shared with others. Never promise to keep secrets.
- Notify the organisation's Named Person for Safeguarding straight after the concern is raised, or their deputy if not available. (Jenny Owen 07812 501424, Jo Buchanan, 07966 103499)
- Record what was said as soon as possible after any disclosure. The person who receives the allegation or has the concern should complete the report and ensure it is signed and dated.
- Respect confidentiality and file documents securely but don't use concerns about confidentiality and data protection as a reason not to make a safeguarding referral where you have concerns.

Stage 2

- The Named person(s) will take immediate action if there is a suspicion that a child has been abused or likely to be abused. In this situation the Named Person will contact the police and/or Sheffield's local authority children's department. (See *MESH Safeguarding Children and Adults Procedures*).
- The named person can also seek advice and clarity about a situation that is beginning to raise concern through the NSPCC National Child Protection Helpline on 0800 800 5000.
- A flow chart of the process is included in the *MESH Safeguarding Children and Adults Procedures* document

Managing Allegations made against a member of Staff or Volunteer

MESH will ensure that any allegations made against members of staff are dealt with swiftly and in accordance with these procedures:

- The worker must ensure that that the child is safe and away from the person against whom the allegation is made.
- The named person for safeguarding should be informed immediately. In the case of an allegation involving the named person, alternative arrangements

should be sought to ensure that the matter is dealt with by an independent person. (Note: this could be a board member or anyone within the organisation that is in a senior position within the organisation and believed to be independent of the allegations being made).

- The named person should contact the local authority designated officer (LADO - who is based at the Child Protection Unit) for advice on how to proceed with the immediate situation. Outside of working hours the Emergency Duty Team can give advice and/or in the event of an emergency situation arising, the police.
- The individual who first received/witnessed the concern should make a full written record of what was seen, heard and/or told as soon as possible after observing the incident/receiving the report. It is important that the report is an accurate description. The named person (if appropriate) can support the worker during this process but must not complete the report for the worker. This report must be made available on request from either the police and/or social services.
- Regardless of whether a police and/or social services investigation follows, MESH will ensure that an internal investigation takes place and consideration is given to the operation of disciplinary procedures. This may involve an immediate suspension and/or ultimate dismissal dependant on the nature of the incident. If a police/social services investigation does take place, MESH's own investigation will be put on hold until the outcome of this statutory investigation is known, to avoid prejudice.

Recording and managing confidential information.

Whatever the outcome, the person who raised the safeguarding concern must complete a Safeguarding Report Form (See *MESH Safeguarding Children and Adults Procedures*) and return marked "**Strictly Confidential**", to:-

**Chair of the Board of Trustees, MESH, Scotia Works,
Leadmill Road, Sheffield S1 4SE. Telephone 0114 241 2771**

All safeguarding information must be filed in a secure location, accessible only to those who require access.

Appendix 1

Definitions of Abuse as cited in: Working Together to Safeguard Children, 2018.

Abuse

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. Abuse can take place wholly online, or technology may be used to facilitate offline abuse. Children may be abused by an adult or adults, or another child or children.

Physical abuse

A form of abuse which 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. Sexual abuse can take place online, and technology can be used to facilitate offline abuse. Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children. Child sexual 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.

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: a. provide adequate food,

clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment) b. protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger c. ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate caregivers) d. ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

Extremism

Extremism goes beyond terrorism and includes people who target the vulnerable – including the young – by seeking to sow division between communities on the basis of race, faith or denomination; justify discrimination towards women and girls; persuade others that minorities are inferior; or argue against the primacy of democracy and the rule of law in our society Extremism is defined in the Counter Extremism Strategy 2015 as the vocal or active opposition to our fundamental values, including the rule of law, individual liberty and the mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs. We also regard calls for the death of members of our armed forces as extremist.

Useful Contacts/Support Organisations

If you have concern that a child is being harmed as a result of abuse or neglect, you must not keep these concerns to yourself. Keeping children safe is everyone's responsibility.

You need to ensure that you speak to the appropriate organisations that can listen to and record your concern, and then take appropriate action.

In Sheffield, these are the numbers that you can ring for advice and to make a referral:

Sheffield Safeguarding Hub - 0114 273 4855

Multi Agency Support Teams - 0114 2037485.

Safeguarding Adults Office - 0114 273 6870

If you have reason to believe that a child is at immediate risk of harm, or you do not know the name/address of a child, contact the police on **999**.

The NSPCC Child Protection Helpline is a free 24-hour service that provides counselling, information and advice to anyone concerned about a child at risk of abuse. Telephone: 0800 800 5000.