



## **Safeguarding Policy**

### **Children & Young People**

Telford and Wrekin Council for Voluntary Service (CVS) is committed to delivering services that promote good practice and protect children and young people from harm.

Telford and Wrekin CVS will seek to protect the safety of children and young people and provide a safe environment by employing people who are suitable for working with children and young people, or to have contact with children and young people, by vetting the background of persons prior to their being appointed (in either a paid or voluntary capacity).

This policy has been developed with reference to Telford & Wrekin safeguarding procedures. Information is also provided on contacting Shropshire and Staffordshire authorities at page 9.

### **Policy Statement**

Telford and Wrekin CVS confirm its commitment to making sure that children and young people are protected and kept safe from harm whilst they are being supervised or supported by employees and volunteers of this organisation.

Telford and Wrekin CVS will, therefore, endeavour to safeguard children and young people by: -

- Adopting child protection guidelines through this policy for employees and volunteers.
- Sharing information about child protection and good practice.
- Sharing information about concerns with agencies that need to know and involving parents, carers and children appropriately.
- Taking appropriate action to respond to issues of child protection, which occur on the CVS premises, activity schemes or involve its employees or volunteers.
- Continuous training and engagement with our partners to include West Mercia Police CSE training for staff, volunteers and service users including young carers.

### **Definition**

In context of this policy a young person is defined as anyone under the age of 18.

## **What is Child abuse?**

Abuse and neglect are forms of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse a child by inflicting significant harm, or by failing to act to prevent significant harm or by neglect. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting.

They may be abused by one adult or several adults or by a child or children. Although these people may be strangers, most frequently they are people the child knows.

Employees and volunteers should: -

- Be alert to potential indicators of abuse or neglect.
- Be alert to the risks that abusers may pose to children.
- Share concerns so that information can be gathered to assist an assessment of the child's needs and circumstances.
- Work with agencies to contribute to actions that are needed to safeguard and promote the child's welfare.

## **Definitions of Abuse**

- **Physical Abuse**

Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise, causing physical harm.

Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness of a child.

- **Emotional Abuse**

Persistent emotional maltreatment of a child, such as to cause severe and persistent effects on the child's emotional development.

It may involve: -

- Conveying to children that they are worthless, unloved or inadequate.
- Conveying to children that they are valued only in so far as they meet the needs of another person.
- Featuring age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond the child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction.
- Seeing or hearing the ill treatment of another.
- Serious bullying causing children to feel frightened or in danger.
- 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**

Forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities including prostitution, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening.

Activities may involve: -

- Physical contact, including penetrative or non-penetrative acts.
- Non-contact activities such as involving children looking at, or the production of, pornographic material.
- Watching sexual activities.
- Encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

Children under the age of 18 sometimes sexually abuse other children.

- **Neglect**

Persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and / or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of a child's health or development.

Neglect may occur in 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 and clothing, shelter including exclusion from home or abandonment.
- Failing to protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger.
- Failure to ensure adequate supervision including the use of inadequate care providers / baby sitters / child minders etc.
- The failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.
- Neglect of or unresponsiveness to a child's basic emotional needs.

- **Bullying**

- Recognise that bullying is a form of abuse.
- Bullying can take many forms.

Action to help the victim and prevent bullying: -

- Take all signs of bullying seriously.
- Encourage all children to speak and share their concerns. If anyone talks about or threatens suicide, seek professional help immediately. Help the victim to speak out and tell your line manager.
- Investigate all allegations and take action to ensure the victim is safe. Speak with the victim and the bully (ies) separately.
- Reassure the victim that you can be trusted and will help them although you cannot promise to tell no one else.
- Keep records of what is said (*what happened, by whom, when*).

- **What should you do if you suspect child abuse?**
  - Seek advice from your line manger.
  - When speaking to the child remember to use open questions, i.e. *tell me, explain, describe*.
  - **Do not** examine a child. Seek medical advice as necessary.
  - Discuss your concerns with your line manager.
  - Your line manager will decide if a referral to Telford & Wrekin Family Connect or Shropshire Council's Children's Social Care is necessary.
  - Follow up the referral in writing within 24 hours.
  - Complete your records.
  - Co-operate with the investigation and inform your line manager, gaining guidance where required.
  - Attend the Child Protection Conference if invited – if you are unable to attend send a representative and a written report.

### **Good Practice Guidelines**

All Telford and Wrekin CVS staff and volunteers should be encouraged to demonstrate exemplary behaviour in order to protect themselves from false allegations. The following are examples of how to create a positive culture and climate.

#### **Good practice means: -**

- Always working in an open environment avoiding private or unobserved situations and encouraging open communication.
- Treating all children / young people equally with respect and dignity.
- Always putting the welfare of each young person first.
- Being an excellent role model – this includes not smoking or drinking alcohol in the company of young people.
- Giving enthusiastic and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism.
- Securing parental consent in writing to act in loco parentis, if the need arises to administer emergency first aid and / or other medical treatment.
- Keeping a written record of any injury that occurs along with the details of any treatment given.
- Request written parental consent if you are required to transport children / young people in your car and **do not** transport a child on your own.

#### **Practices never to be sanctioned: -**

The following should **never** be sanctioned. You should **never**: -

- Engage in rough physical or sexually provocative games, including horseplay.
- Share a room with a child.
- Allow or engage in any form of inappropriate touching.
- Allow children to use inappropriate language unchallenged.
- Make sexually suggestive comments to a child, even in fun.
- Reduce a child to tears as a form of control.
- Allow allegations made by a child to go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon.

- Do things of a personal nature for children.
- Invite or allow children to stay with you at your home unsupervised.
- Make inappropriate remarks / jokes that could be misinterpreted.

## **Recruitment and training of staff and volunteers**

Telford and Wrekin CVS recognise that anyone may have the potential to abuse children in some way and that all reasonable steps are taken to ensure unsuitable people are prevented from working with children.

Pre-selection checks must include the following: -

- All staff and volunteers should complete an application form.
- Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service checks must be completed before taking up work.
- Two confidential references including one regarding previous work with children. These references must be taken up before employees or volunteers join the organisation.
- Evidence of identity should be provided (e.g. passport or driving licence with photograph).

## **Interview and induction**

All employees and volunteers will be required to undergo an interview carried out to acceptable protocols and recommendations.

- All employees and volunteers should receive formal or informal induction during which a check should be made that the application form has been completed in full (including sections on criminal records and self disclosures).
- Their qualifications should be substantiated.
- The job requirements and responsibilities should be clarified.
- Child protection procedures are explained, and training needs are identified and met by appropriately qualified trainers.

## **Training**

In addition to pre-selection checks, the safeguarding process includes training after recruitment to help staff and volunteers to: -

- Analyse their own practice against established good practice, and to ensure their practice is likely to protect them from false allegations.
- Recognise their responsibilities and report any concerns about suspected poor practice or possible abuse.
- Respond to concerns expressed by a child or young person.
- Work safely and effectively with children.
- Continuously develop staff and volunteer awareness and proactivity in the area of safeguarding.
- Attend regular refresher safeguarding training to include Child Sexual Exploitation training as part of their performance and development plan.

## Responding to allegations or suspicions

It is not the responsibility of anyone working for Telford and Wrekin CVS in a paid or unpaid capacity to decide whether or not child abuse has taken place. However, there is a responsibility to act on any concerns through contact with the appropriate authorities. See contacts on page 9.

Telford and Wrekin CVS Trustees will assure all staff and volunteers that the CVS will fully support and protect anyone who in good faith reports his / her concerns that a colleague is, or may be, abusing a child.

Where there is a complaint against a member of staff or a volunteer there may be three types of investigation: -

- A criminal investigation
- A child protection investigation
- A disciplinary or misconduct investigation

The results of the police and child protection investigation may well influence the disciplinary investigation, but not necessarily.

## Action

**NB: IF YOU WITNESS ABUSE OR SUSPECT THAT A CHILD IS IN IMMINENT DANGER, CALL THE POLICE IMMEDIATELY.**

- **Concerns about poor practice**
  - If, following consideration, the allegation is clearly about poor practice the Line Manager will deal with it as a misconduct issue.
  - If the allegation is about poor practice by the Line Manager, or if the matter has been handled inadequately and concerns remain, it should be reported to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) who will decide how to deal with the allegation and whether or not to initiate disciplinary proceedings.
  - If the allegation is about poor practice by the CEO, or if the matter has been handled inadequately and concerns remain, it should be reported to the Chair of the Board of Trustees who will decide how to deal with the allegation and whether or not to initiate disciplinary proceedings.
- **Concerns about suspected abuse**
  - Any suspicion that a child has been abused by either a member of staff or a volunteer, should be reported to the CEO who will take such steps as considered necessary to ensure the safety of the child in question and any other child who may be at risk.
  - The CEO will refer the allegation to Family Connect who may involve the police or go directly to the police if out of hours.
  - Family Connect will refer the matter to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) who will ensure that a proper investigation is completed.

- The parents or carers of the child will be contacted as soon as possible following advice from Family Connect.
- The CEO should also notify the Chair of the Board of Trustees who will deal with any media queries.
- If the CEO is the subject of the suspicion / allegation, the report must be made directly to the Chair of the Board of Trustees.

- **Confidentiality**

Every effort should be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned. Information should be handled and disseminated on a need to know basis only.

This includes the following people: -

- The line manager involved and their senior manager.
- The parents / carers of the person who is alleged to have been abused.
- The person making the allegation.
- Children's Social Care / Police.
- The alleged abuser (and parents / carers if the alleged abuser is a child).

Seek Family Connect's advice on who should approach the alleged abuser.

Information should be stored in a secure place with limited access to designated people in line with Data Protection laws (e.g. that information is accurate, regularly up-dated, relevant and secure).

- **Internal enquiries and suspension**

- The CEO will make an immediate decision about whether any individual accused of abuse should be temporarily suspended pending further investigation and Children's Social Care enquiries.
- Irrespective of the findings of the Children's Social Care or Police enquiries, the CEO and Trustees will assess all individual cases to decide whether a member of staff or volunteer can be reinstated and how this can be sensitively handled. This may be a difficult decision, particularly where there is insufficient evidence to uphold any action by the police. In such cases they must reach a decision based upon the available information which could suggest that on a balance of probability it is more likely than not that the allegation is true. The welfare of the child should remain of paramount importance throughout.

- **Allegation of previous abuse**

Allegations of abuse may be made some time after the event (e.g. by an adult who was abused as a child or a member of staff and volunteer who is still currently working with children).

Where such an allegation is made, Telford and Wrekin CVS should follow the procedures as detailed above and report the matter to Children's Social Care or the Police. This is because other children may be at risk from this person. The senior management team and Trustees of the CVS need to consider exclusion from working

with children of anyone with a previous criminal conviction for offences related to abuse.

- **Information for Children's Social Care or the Police about suspected abuse**

- ✓ The correct procedures should be obtained from the appropriate local authority (See page 9)
- ✓ To ensure that this information is as helpful as possible, a detailed record should always be made at the time of the disclosure / concern, which should include the following: -
  - The child's name, age and date of birth.
  - The child's home address and telephone number.
  - Whether or not the person making the report is expressing their own concerns or those of someone else.
  - The nature of the allegation. Include dates, times, any special factors and other relevant information.
  - Make a clear distinction between what is fact, opinion or hearsay.
  - A description of any visible bruising or other injuries. Also, any indirect signs such as behavioural changes.
  - Details of witnesses to the incident.
  - The child's account, if it can be given, of what has happened and how any bruising or other injuries occurred.
  - Have the parent / carers been contacted?
  - If so, what has been said?
  - Has anyone else been consulted? If so, record details.
  - If the child was not the person who reported the incident, has the child been spoken to? If so, what was said?
  - Has anyone been alleged to be the abuser? Record details.
  - Where possible referral to the Police or Children's Social Care should be confirmed in writing within 24 hours and the name of the contact that took the referral should be recorded.

### **Support to deal with the aftermath of abuse**

Consideration should be given to the kind of support that children, parents / carers and members of staff and volunteers may need. Use of helplines, support groups and open meetings will maintain an open culture and help the healing process. Further information is available at <https://telford.mylifeportal.co.uk/safeguarding>

In line with Telford & Wrekin Safeguarding Board, the Child Protection Officer within Telford and Wrekin CVS will be the line manager of each project and supported by the CEO.

## CONTACTS

Referrals of abuse within Telford & Wrekin should be made to the Family Connect on (01952) 385385 or on (01952) 676500 out of office hours. They will be investigated in accordance with the Telford Safeguarding Children Board Protection Procedures. These are available on <https://telford.mylifeportal.co.uk/safeguarding>

Referrals of abuse within Shropshire should be made to Shropshire Council's Children Services on 0345 678 9021 or on 08456 789040 out of office hours. They will be investigated in accordance with Shropshire Safeguarding Children Board's Child Protection Procedures. These are available on <http://shropshirechildcare.proceduresonline.com/>

Referrals of abuse within Staffordshire should be made to Staffordshire Children and Family Services on 0800 1313 126 or on 0345 604 2886 out of office hours. They will be investigated in accordance with Staffordshire Children and Family Services Child Protection Procedures. These are available on <https://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/health/childrenandfamilycare/homepage.aspx>