



Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy and Procedure

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1.Introduction

Good Practice in Safeguarding Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults

1.1 This policy seeks to ensure that Bacup Family Centre (BFC) undertakes its responsibilities regarding the protection of children, young people and vulnerable adults responding to concerns appropriately. The policy establishes a framework to support staff and volunteers in their practices and clarifies the organisation's expectations. The policy is designed to protect children, young people, and vulnerable adults and those who work with them and to continue the openness and trust between all parties involved in our work.

1.2 BFC recognises the right of every individual to stay safe, making a positive contribution to building a strong and safe community. We commit to caring in a professional manner for the children, young people, and adults we serve, some of whom are vulnerable. We want our service users to come to us knowing that they will be safe in our care.

2. The Policy

2.1 A safe environment

To ensure a safe environment all work and activities are planned to minimise opportunities for the abuse of children, young people, and vulnerable adults and for unsubstantiated accusations being made against adults as far as this is practicable.

3. Recognition of Abuse

Abuse is a selfish act of oppression, injustice, exploitation, and manipulation of power and control by those in a position of authority. Abuse can be caused by those inflicting harm or those who fail to act to prevent harm. Abuse is not restricted to any socio-economic group, gender, or culture. It can take any number of forms, including but not limited to the following:

- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Psychological abuse
- Bullying / harassment / intimidation
- Discriminatory Abuse
- Child trafficking
- Neglect
- Financial abuse
- Spiritual Abuse
- Domestic Abuse

- Female Genital Mutilation
- Digital abuse/cyberbullying

4. Definition of a child.

A child is anyone under the age of 18 as defined in the United Nations convention on the Rights of a Child. Child protection guidance points out that even if a child has reached 16 years of age and is: living independently, in further education, a member of the armed forces, in hospital; or in custody in the secure estate, they are still legally children and should be given the same protection and entitlements as any other child (Department for Education, 2023).

5. Definition of a vulnerable adult.

BFC recognises that vulnerable adults can also be victims of abuse. A vulnerable adult is a person aged 18 years or over who may not be able to fully care for him/herself or protect him/herself from harm or exploitation. This inability to care may be due to a mental health problem, disability, sensory impairment, old age and frailty, or some form of illness.

The people most likely to be the subject of mistreatment, are people who: -

- Are elderly and frail
- Have a mental illness including dementia
- Have a physical or sensory disability
- Have a learning disability
- Have a severe physical illness
- Are emotionally dependant on others
- Are substance misusers
- Are homeless
- Are immigrants or refugees.

6 Definitions of abuse.

- **Physical abuse** - When a child/adult is deliberately hurt causing physical harm including hitting, biting, slapping, shaking, poisoning, suffocating, pushing, kicking, misuse of medication, restraint, or inappropriate sanctions.
- **Sexual abuse** - Including rape and sexual assault or sexual acts to which the vulnerable child or adult has not consented or could not consent or was pressured into consenting. The forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities. Sexual abuse can involve contact and non-contact abuse.

- **Psychological abuse** - including emotional abuse, threats of harm or abandonment, deprivation of contact, humiliation, blaming, controlling, intimidation, coercion, harassment, verbal abuse, isolation or withdrawal from services or supportive networks.
- **Spiritual Abuse** - Spiritual abuse is a form of emotional and psychological abuse. It is characterized by a systematic pattern of coercive and controlling behaviour in a religious context.
- **Financial or material abuse** - Including theft, fraud, exploitation, pressure in connection with wills, property or inheritance or financial transactions, or the misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions, or benefits.
- **Neglect and acts of omission** - Including ignoring medical or physical care needs, failure to provide access to appropriate health, social care or educational services, the withholding of the necessities of life, such as medication, adequate nutrition, and heating.
- **Discriminatory abuse** - may manifest as racism or sexism, it could be directed at a person's disability, and it includes other forms of harassment, slurs or similar treatment.
- **Bullying or Harassment / Intimidation** - Bullying is behaviour that hurts someone else. It includes name calling, hitting, pushing, spreading rumours, threatening or undermining someone. Includes Cyber bullying.
- **Child Trafficking** – Trafficking of children is a form of human trafficking and is defined by the United Nations as the "recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring, and/or receipt" kidnapping of a child for the purpose of slavery, forced labour and exploitation.
- **Domestic Abuse** – Including coercive control - Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence, or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality.
- **Female Genital Mutilation** - FGM is when a female's genitals are deliberately altered or removed for non-medical reasons. It's also known as 'female circumcision' or 'cutting' but has many other names.

7. Child/adult abuse may be suspected for a number of different reasons e.g.

- They may tell you outright that they are being abused
- You may notice bruises unexplained injuries that cause you concern
- Another child/adult may alert you to someone they know who is being ill-treated
- An adult may admit they've harmed a child/adult in some way
- An allegation may be made on a child's/adult's behalf by a friend, parent, or carer.

- By a change in behaviour that the abused person displays.

8. Staff and volunteer responsibilities.

All staff and volunteers must follow the guidance laid out in this policy and related policies, and to pass on any welfare/safeguarding concerns using the required procedures and specified in this document. BFC expects all staff / volunteers to promote good practice by being an excellent role model, contribute to discussions about safeguarding and to positively involve people in developing safe practices.

8.1. Staff/volunteer contact with service users.

All staff and volunteers must adhere to service user and BFC professional boundaries. A personal relationship or friendship between a member of staff/volunteer and a service user who is a current service user is not allowed. This includes relationships through social networking sites such as Facebook. It is also forbidden to engage in a personal relationship or friendship with a person who has been a service user during the previous 12 months.

9. Disclosure and Barring Service.

All staff and volunteers, without exception, will be recruited under the DBS registration covered by this policy, including:

- Those involved in groupwork
- Those who visit people living in their own homes
- Those who undertake outreach work
- Those who offer transport services
- Those who undertake lone working with vulnerable adults
- Those who undertake befriending and mentoring with children and young people
- Those who are Centre based
- Those involved with general community/Centre groups and activities
- Those who are office based
- Those who offer advice, support and hospitality.

10. Effective links with other agencies.

BFC will develop and maintain effective links with relevant agencies and other professionals in support of providing for and supporting all services users e.g. through attendance at strategy meetings, initial case conferences, core groups, review meetings, all Local Authority Safeguarding meetings.

11. Procedure.

11.1 Staff and volunteers must inform/speak to the project manager and or their appointed supervisor or trustee as soon as possible with any concerns or disclosure, failure to do so could result in the on-going abuse and harm of others.

11.1 There will be a minimum of 2 workers within any group, and where possible and appropriate additional support from volunteer staffing

11.2 Where possible and as appropriate, except for befriending and mentoring where privacy may be required, an individual child/adult will not be left alone with a person unless they can be clearly observed by other workers nearby.

11.3 Wherever possible, leaders of each gender are to be present in mixed gender groups.

11.4 Staff must be intentionally conscious of how their words and actions can be misinterpreted by others as harmful and or threatening.

11.5 Staff and volunteers are trained to identify child and vulnerable adult abuse. In addition to this training, we rely on those people closest to children and adults in spotting the signs that something is wrong. As staff and volunteers, we have an individual and collective responsibility to look out for and ensure the safety and well-being of children and adults, those experiencing difficulties and at risk of harm.

12. Recruitment of Staff and Volunteers.

- All staff members and volunteers have an Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service check (DBS) disclosure.
- Having a clear DBS is a recruitment process requirement,
- Initial and future working and volunteering are on the conditional basis that a clear DBS is received.
- During the DBS checking period staff and volunteers must not work unsupervised.
- Full details, guidance and support will be given to the applicant for their DBS application.

- DBS applications will be sent completed manually to 'Thirty-one: eight' for processing.
- Upon successful receipt of a DBS check the applicant may then begin working with children and/or young people/vulnerable adults.
- If there is a concern raised by a disclosure, a risk-assessment will be conducted in line with an advisor regarding the individual's work with children, young people, and vulnerable adults. Dependant on the outcome the applicant may/may not be recruited.
- The whole application process will be conducted in a professional and confidential manner.
- All staff and volunteers who are recruited project workers will carry identification for their role and official records of their jobs description and role will be kept at BFC.

13. Staff and volunteer responsibilities:

- a. Report all suspected acts of abuse
- b. Be alert to what abuse is and take seriously any disclosures
- c. Assess what is observe and ask if it is acceptable practice and behaviour
- d. Ensure the safety of the person you suspect is being harmed and suffering abuse
- e. Ensure your own safety
- f. Contact the emergency services first, e.g., police, ambulance, if in a life-threatening situation
- g. To be alert to hints, signals and non-verbal communication that could indicate abuse, which is being denied or deliberately hidden.
- h. Work strictly in accordance with anti-discriminatory policy and procedure
- i. Communicate concerns immediately with your line manager/appropriate person and safeguarding lead
- j. Discuss with the parents of child or with vulnerable person to obtain permission to make referral 'if safe and appropriate' to reduce the risk further harm
- k. If needed seek advice from the Children and Adult Social Care Services
- l. Complete the Local Authority Safeguarding referral form if required and submit to the local authority within 24 hours of making contact
- m. Ensure that feedback from the Local Authority is received and their response is recorded
- n. Seek medical attention for the vulnerable person if needed

- o. Staff must not use their position of authority to control, abuse or cause harm
- p. Should a staff member or volunteer be implicated in the suspected abuse of a child or adult then staff/volunteers should speak to their line manager/project manager or trustee as appropriate.

14. When someone discloses abuse to a staff member or volunteer you must:

- a. Stay calm and try not to show shock.
- b. Listen carefully and do not ask questions directly about the abuse
- c. Be supportive and reassuring.
- d. Explain at the start of the possible disclosure that the information they are sharing may have to be shared and passed on, that you cannot ensure confidentiality.
- e. In the event that someone is being harmed and the option as to whether to continue making a disclosure.
- f. Be aware of the possibility that medical evidence might be needed
- g. Ensure the disclosure and observations have been recorded in a factual, accurate manner, as they may be required at a later date if legal proceedings are to be undertaken
- h. Pass the information on
- i. Tell the person that they did right to speak out, reassure them that the information will be treated seriously, and it was not their fault and that their information will be shared with someone who can help.

3.10 Do not:

- a. Promise to keep secrets: i.e. that the information will be kept confidential,
- b. Press the person for more details, let them speak, don't interview them the appropriate service will do this i.e., Police, safeguarding team.
- c. Make promises that you cannot keep (such as "this will not happen to you again")
- d. Contact the alleged abuser
- e. Be judgemental e.g. "Why didn't you run away or tell someone?"
- f. Pass on information to anyone who doesn't "need to know" i.e. do not gossip!
- g. Stop someone who is freely recalling significant events as they may not tell you again

3.11 For all contact with children, young people and adults, staff and volunteers must keep a detailed record of the visit / contact

3.12 All registration / consent forms will be completed, and permission gained to speak to other agencies at the earliest opportunity.

4. Dissemination

4.1 This Policy and Procedure can be located in the Policy and Procedure Manual in the Centre Office. It is the responsibility of trustees and employees to ensure they are using the most recent version of this document.

5. Training/Awareness Arrangements

5.1 Training and awareness of this document will be undertaken by line managers and will include the use of sign off sheets for the training.

5.2 Training will be revisited at such time as the document is updated.

6. Review Arrangements

6.1 This Policy and Procedure will be reviewed by the author annually or earlier should a change in legislation or other change dictate.

7. Non-compliance

7.1 Failure to comply with the requirements of this Policy and Procedure Document will invoke the organisation's Disciplinary Policy.

7.2 Any suspected abuse of this policy will be investigated and, if necessary, disciplinary action may be taken.

8. Further Information

Resources:

<https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/child-abuse-and-neglect>

www.gov.uk/topic/schools-colleges-childrens-services/safeguarding-children

<https://www.lancashire.gov.uk/health-and-social-care/safeguarding/>

Contacts:

Lancashire County Council Social Care (Adults & Children) – 0300 123 6720

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