



## 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, young people and vulnerable adults from abuse.

All children and adults 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 and vulnerable adult protection.
- To provide staff, volunteers and trustees with an overview of child and vulnerable adult protection
- To provide a clear procedure that will be implemented where protection issues arise.

### Vulnerable adults

For the purpose of this document 'adult' means a person aged 18 years or over. This includes vulnerable adults who access PSC services as well as vulnerable young people above the age of 18 in the care of adults who are accessing support.

Some adults are less able to protect themselves than others, and some have difficulty making their wishes and feelings known. This may make them vulnerable to abuse. The broad definition of a 'vulnerable adult' referred to in the 1997 Consultation Paper 'Who decides?' issued by the Lord Chancellor's Department, is a person:

*"Who is or may be in need of community care services by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness; and who is or may be unable to take care of him or herself, or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation".*

The first priority should always be to ensure the safety and protection of vulnerable adults. To this end it is the responsibility of all staff, volunteers and trustees to act on any suspicion or evidence of abuse or neglect (see the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998) and to pass on their concerns immediately (on the same day where possible) to the CEO of PSC [or named trustee for safeguarding in their absence].

## Children and young people

For the purpose of this document 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 and young people as well as those with additional needs and/or trauma are at increased 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 vulnerable adults and children.

Staff, volunteers and trustees may receive disclosures of abuse and observe vulnerable adults and 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

Extracted from *Working Together to Safeguard Children*, DfE, March 2015):

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 (e.g. 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.
- **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.

### **Abuse of adults**

The following descriptions have been adapted from information from The Social Care Institute for Excellence.

- **Physical abuse** - For example, hitting, pushing, pinching, shaking, misusing medication, scalding and the misuse or illegal use of restraint.
- **Emotional abuse** - including threats, deprivation of contact, shouting, ignoring, cruelty, bullying, humiliation, coercion, isolation or withdrawal from services or supportive networks, negating the right of the adult at risk to make choices and undermining self-esteem
- **Sexual abuse** - the direct or indirect involvement of the adult at risk in sexual activity or relationships, which they do not want or have not consented to
- **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** - this can be a feature of any form of abuse of an adult at risk, but can also be motivated because of age, gender, sexuality, disability, religion, class, culture, language, and race or ethnic origin.

## **We will seek to keep young people safe by:**

In the case of children and young people 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'.

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

The designated lead for safeguarding 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 named trustee for safeguarding:

***Mrs Sarah Bamford, 07939 857083 or 0118 966 5091***

If a safeguarding concern arises and neither the CEO nor the named trustee can be contacted, the PSC member must consider whether the matter constitutes an emergency. An emergency is when a child or vulnerable adult is at immediate risk of significant harm.

Emergency contacts are as follows:

***Children's Single Point of Access (formerly MASH), Reading: 0118 937 3641  
Emergency Duty Team (Berkshire Wide) out of hours: 01344 786543***

If the matter is not an emergency, the PSC member should continue to seek to make contact with the CEO and/or the named trustee.

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 named trustee should respond promptly to such request.

In the event of an allegation made against a PSC staff member or volunteer, the CEO or named trustee should follow procedure as set out by the Berkshire West Safeguarding Children Partnership (BWSCP) (formally the Reading, West Berkshire and Wokingham Local Safeguarding Children Boards, which merged in 2019) and seek the advice of the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) in accordance with the PSC 'Procedure for dealing with allegations made against an employee/volunteer'.

Contact details are:

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

LADO: 0118 937 3555 or [LADO@reading.gov.uk](mailto:LADO@reading.gov.uk)

## **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
- 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 trained in the responsibilities for the Designated Person which includes child protection and inter-agency working (updated every two years);
- be responsible for referring cases of suspected CSE, abuse or allegations to the Local Authority according to the procedures established by the Berkshire West Safeguarding Children Partnership (BWSCP)

## **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 CEO of PSC [or named trustee for safeguarding in their absence] on that day where possible.

The PSC CEO or named trustee for safeguarding shall telephone and report the matter to the appropriate local social services duty social worker.

If the disclosure raises concern about a PSC member of staff or volunteer the concerns will be investigated in line with the PSC Disciplinary Procedure/Complaints procedure.

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

All complaints, allegations or suspicions must be taken seriously. Allegations made against a PSC staff member or volunteer 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 be used.

The procedure 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 CEO or named trustee for safeguarding
- Immediately refer the matter to the CEO of PSC or named trustee for safeguarding

### **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

#### If a child or vulnerable adult is at risk:

If a member of staff, a volunteer or a trustee is concerned that a child or adult is at risk of abuse they should report the matter immediately to the CEO or named trustee for safeguarding.

## **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 and vulnerable adults 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 or vulnerable adult 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 he or she has 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, such as the Children's Single Point of Access. 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 vulnerable adults and 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.

## **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.

### 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
- 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

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 Coordinators, 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**, even where this is only over the telephone, should, as a minimum, 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 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 should be read in conjunction with:

- PSC Safeguarding Policy for peer supporters
- PSC Confidentiality Policy
- PSC Disciplinary Policy and Procedure
- PSC Complaints and Feedback Policy
- PSC Whistleblowing Policy
- PSC Recruitment and Selection Policy
- PSC Procedure for dealing with allegations made against an employee/volunteer
- Procedure for safeguarding at PSC events attended by children and young people

### **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 was 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 (DfE, March 2015)
- 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
- Reading Local Safeguarding Children Board 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

ENDS