



SEND THE RIGHT MESSAGE SAFEGUARDING & CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

The purpose of this policy is to outline the duty and responsibility of all staff, volunteers and trustees working for **SEND THE RIGHT MESSAGE** in relation to safeguarding children's procedures.

The policy works alongside a clear procedure that will be implemented where safeguarding issues arise.

We recognise that:

- The welfare of the child/young person is paramount.
- All children have the right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse.
- Working in partnership with children, young people, their parents, carers and other agencies is essential in promoting young people's welfare.
- Disabled children are children first. We will seek to safeguard children and young people by:
 - Valuing them, listening to and respecting them.
- Recruiting staff and volunteers safely, ensuring all necessary checks are made.
- Sharing information about child protection and good practice with children, parents, staff and volunteers.

For more information see our website www.sendtherightmessage.co.uk

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- Sharing information about concerns with agencies who need to know, and involving parents and children appropriately.
- Providing effective management for staff and volunteers through supervision, support and training.
- Cultural sensitivity

SEND THE RIGHT MESSAGE seeks to work in ways which are culturally sensitive and that respect the diverse nature of people.

Supervision

Supervision by appropriately trained staff should provide opportunities for staff and volunteers to:

- Discuss any issues concerning children's development or well-being
- Identify solutions to address issues as they arise.
- Staff and volunteers to receive training to improve their personal effectiveness.

The Role of Staff, Volunteers and Trustees

All staff, volunteers and trustees work on behalf of **SEND THE RIGHT MESSAGE** have a duty to promote the welfare and safety of children.

Staff, volunteers and trustees may receive disclosures of child abuse **and observe children who are at risk.**

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This policy will enable staff/volunteers to make informed and confident responses and decisions to any child protection issues that may arise.

What is Child Abuse?

Abuse and neglect are forms of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm, or failing 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 a stranger.

They may be abused by an adult or adults, or another child or children (for more information refer to Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015).

The 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' guidance defines four categories of abuse as follows:

1. Physical abuse – This may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, scalding, burning or otherwise causing physical harm to a child.
2. Emotional abuse – This is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development.

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3. Sexual abuse - This type of abuse involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware what is happening.

4. Neglect - This is the persistent failure to meet the child's basic physical or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health and development. It can include failing to provide adequate food, clothing and shelter, adequate supervision or failing to provide medical help when needed.

Self-harm must also be taken seriously and may include self-mutilation, eating disorders, suicide threats and other gestures by a child. The possibility this may be caused by any form of abuse or neglect should not be overlooked. Individuals must always be seen as children in need and offered help via available services.

A child may be experiencing abuse if he or she is:

- frequently dirty, hungry or inadequately dressed
- left in unsafe situations or without medical attention
- constantly "put down", insulted, sworn at or humiliated
- seems afraid of parents/carers
- severely bruised or injured

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- displays sexual behaviour which doesn't seem appropriate for their age
- growing up in a home where there is domestic violence
- living with parents or carers involved in serious drug or alcohol abuse.

This list is not exhaustive, and you may see other things in the child's behaviour or circumstances that worry you and may indicate child abuse.

Procedure in the Event of a Disclosure

It is important that children are protected from abuse.

All complaints, allegations or suspicions must be taken seriously.

This procedure must be followed whenever an allegation is made that a child has been abused or when there is a suspicion that a child has been abused.

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If the complainant is the child, questions should be kept to the minimum necessary to understand what is being alleged.

Listening to the Child

DO • Listen carefully

- Make accurate notes using the child's own words, sign and date it and hand immediately to **SEND THE RIGHT MESSAGE** safeguarding officer

- Tell the child that they have done the right thing by telling you

DON'T • Ask leading questions

- Use your own words to describe events

- Investigate

- Promise confidentiality 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.

That is the task for the professional child protection agencies, following a referral from **SEND THE RIGHT MESSAGE**' designated child protection officer.

Any suspicion, allegation or incident of alleged abuse must be immediately reported to **SEND THE RIGHT MESSAGE** designated **child protection officer**.

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No professional has the right or responsibility to withhold information or to respect a child/young person's wish for confidentiality.

Safeguarding Children and Young People with Disabilities

Any concerns about the welfare of a child or young person with disabilities should be acted upon in the same way as any other child/young person although there is a need for a greater awareness of the possible indicators of abuse and/or neglect.

When considering whether a child/young person with disabilities has been abused and/or neglected, ensure that the disability does not mask or deter an appropriate investigation of child protection concerns.

Where a child or young person has disabilities, such as communication impairment or learning disabilities, special attention should be paid to communication needs, and to ascertain the child/young person's perception of events and their wishes and feelings.

SEND THE RIGHT MESSAGE staff/volunteers must be alert to how a child/young person with disabilities may convey anxiety or duress through methods other than verbal communication.

Role of Designated Child Protection Officer

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The role of the designated child protection officer is to deal with all instances involving child protection that arises within **SEND THE RIGHT MESSAGE**.

They will respond to all child protection concerns and enquiries.

The designated child protection officer for **SEND THE RIGHT MESSAGE** is Maggie Cleary and in absence the deputy designated child protection officer is Vicki Lamb.

The designated child protection officer responsibilities are:

- To refer suspected cases/allegations to Social Care/Police, ensuring that full explanation of any needs of the child/young person specific to their disability are supplied (include communication issues, how the disability affects the child/young person on a day to day basis etc)
- To be a source of expertise and advice
- Induction and ongoing training for all staff at least every three years
-

To ensure **SEND THE RIGHT MESSAGE** child protection procedure is updated and understood by all employees and volunteers

- To know Southend Safeguarding Children's Board and case conferences work, and attend and contribute as required
- Keep clear child protection records
- Attend relevant or refresher training at least every three years

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- Keep a record of decisions to share information with parents/social care Record Keeping Good record keeping for all child protection issues is essential. Decisions made not to refer must also be recorded.
 - Detailed child information (name (aka), address, dob, those with parental responsibility, primary carers, emergency contacts)
 - Up to date chronology including all concerns, discussions, decisions, actions taken (signed, dated and timed)
 - Key contacts in other agencies
- Disclosures: Make brief notes in child's own words at the time and write them up as soon as possible
- Do not destroy original notes (hand-written) recorded during meeting with the child/carer.
- Records should be objective and evidence based and be a statement of facts and observable things
 - Non-verbal behaviours
- Keep separate from other information on the family, in a locked cabinet If a case is closed too quickly and the designated child protection officer does not agree with the outcome made by Social Care, **SEND THE RIGHT MESSAGE** can fully question their decision and ask to be talked through how the decision was made.

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If the designated child protection officer now agrees the case doesn't meet the guidelines but feel that the family may still need help, they can monitor and review the process.

On the other hand, if the designated child protection officer doesn't agree with the decision made by Social Care, the case can be re-referred to Social Care.

Confidentiality

All matters relating to child protection are confidential.

The designated person will disclose personal information about a child to other members of staff on a need to know basis.

All staff and volunteers have a professional responsibility to share relevant information about the protection of children with other agencies.

Staff cannot promise a child to keep secrets which might compromise the child's safety or well-being to that of another.

SEND THE RIGHT MESSAGE should inform children, young people and families on how information will be shared and seek their consent.

If there is significant change in the way the information is to be used, or a change in the relationship between the agency and the individual, consent should be sought again. It must be remembered that individuals have a right to withdraw or limit consent at any time.

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Informed consent means that the person giving consent needs to understand why information would be shared, who will see their information, what it will be used for and the implications of sharing that information.

Whose Consent Should be Sought?

Seeking consent principle should always be one of openness with both parents and children.

Adults (but also young people over the age of 16) are presumed to have capacity to give or withhold their consent to sharing of confidential information, unless there is evidence to the contrary under the Mental Capacity Act.

A child, who is able to understand and make their own decisions, is able to give or refuse consent to share information. Every case should be assessed to gauge a child's understanding of consent explaining the information to the child in a way which is suitable for the child's age and likely understanding and through using their preferred method of communication.

Where a child cannot consent, one person with parental responsibility should be asked to consent on behalf of the child.

In these circumstances it remains important that practitioners seek **the child's views as far as possible.**

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When seeking parental consent, practitioners should ensure proper consideration is given to whose consent to seek.

For example where parents are separated consent should be sought from the parent with whom the child resides. Where a child is able to give informed consent the practitioner must consider their consent or refusal even where a parent disagrees. In such circumstances the practitioner must encourage the child to discuss the issue with their parents and agree how this will be managed.

Practitioners must not withhold any service on the condition that parents are informed.

When Consent Should not be Sought

Wherever possible practitioners should seek consent to share information at their first contact whenever they are concerned about a child with additional needs, a child in need or a child in need of protection.

There may however be some circumstances where they should not seek consent initially but even so should obtain consent when it is appropriate to do so.

For example, if doing so would:

- place a person (the individual, family member, yourself or a third party) at increased risk of significant harm if a child, or serious harm if an adult.
- prejudice the prevention, detection or prosecution of a serious crime

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- lead to an unjustified delay in making enquiries about allegations of significant harm to a child, or serious harm to an adult
- lead to the risk of loss of evidential material

Information Sharing

When deciding how much detail you should share with Social Care and/or Police, there are seven golden rules for information sharing:

1. Remember that the Data Protection Act is not a barrier to sharing information
2. Be open and honest with the person (unless it is unsafe or inappropriate)
3. Seek advice if you are in any doubt, without disclosing the identity of the individual involved where possible
4. Share with consent where appropriate and, where possible, respect the wishes of those who do not consent to share confidential information
5. Consider safety and well-being
6. Necessary, proportionate, relevant, accurate, timely and secure

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7. Keep a record of your decision and the reasons for it – whether it is to share information or not Safeguarding Children and Young People Online

SEND THE RIGHT MESSAGE promotes the safe use of technology and social media for staff and volunteers as well as children and young people who use technology during services at **SEND THE RIGHT MESSAGE**.

For a full copy of **SEND THE RIGHT MESSAGE** Social Media and IT policy please contact **SEND THE RIGHT MESSAGE**.

SEND THE RIGHT MESSAGE Code of Conduct policy and film Policy outlines when we may use photos and filming.

Any photos/video of children will not be placed on any of **SEND THE RIGHT MESSAGE** open social media accounts or website without the written permission of the child's parent/carer.

Allegations of Child Abuse Made Against Staff or Volunteers of **SEND THE RIGHT MESSAGE**.

Any allegation of abuse made against staff or volunteers must be dealt with fairly, quickly and consistently to provide effective protection for the child and at the same time supports the person who is subject to the allegation.

The initial consideration/discussion is to consider the nature, content and context of the allegation and agree a course of action. Where an allegation is made against a member of staff or a volunteer, then they **must be informed of the allegation as soon as possible.**

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They should also be:

- Advised at the outset to seek relevant advice e.g. from CAB or a solicitor.
- Treated fairly and honestly and helped to understand the concerns expressed, processes involved and the possible outcomes.
- They must be kept clearly informed of the progress of the case and clearly informed of the outcome of any investigation and the implications for disciplinary or related processes.
- Provided with appropriate support during the case.
- Be kept informed about workplace developments if suspended.

Consideration of Suspension

- The possible risk of harm posed by an accused person needs to be effectively evaluated and managed. In some cases this will require **SEND THE RIGHT MESSAGE** to consider suspending the person.
- A decision to suspend or to temporarily re-deploy staff is made without prejudice.
 - Suspension should not be automatic, but should be considered in any case where:

Not to suspend may continue or increase the risk of significant harm for any child or

Not to suspend may hamper investigations or

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The allegation warrants investigation by the police or

The allegation is so serious that it might be grounds for dismissal.

- Where suspension is not appropriate, consideration should be given to putting safeguards in place to protect child/ren and the adult involved. If a suspended person is to return to work, appropriate help/support must be considered e.g. phased return and/or provision of a mentor and how to manage the person's contact with any child/ren that made the allegation.

All investigations into allegations should be completed and the outcome recorded, regardless of whether the person involved resigns his/her post, responsibilities or position of trust even if the person refuses to co-operate with the process.

'Compromise agreements' where a person agrees to resign without any disciplinary action and agreed future reference, must not be used in these cases.

Disciplinary Procedures

Any disciplinary process must be separated from child protection enquiries.

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Child protection enquiries take priority over any disciplinary investigations and will determine whether investigations can be carried out concurrently. It may be that the allegation was prompted by inappropriate behaviour, not considered sufficiently harmful under the child protection procedures, but which may still need to be considered under the disciplinary procedures Safer Recruitment **SEND THE RIGHT MESSAGE** operates procedures that take account of the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people, including arrangements for checks on new staff, volunteers and trustees.

In line with legislation including the Children Act 2004, in order to help safeguard and promote the welfare of all children, **SEND THE RIGHT MESSAGE** is committed to a thorough and consistent safer recruitment policy, comprising of the following recruitment and vetting checks for all employees:

References; Previous Employment History; Identity Checks; DBS Disclosure; Overseas Checks All new members of staff undergo an induction that includes familiarisation with **SEND THE RIGHT MESSAGE** child protection policy and identification of their child protection training needs.

All staff and volunteers working on behalf of **SEND THE RIGHT MESSAGE** will be given a copy of this policy within their staff or volunteers pack and also be alerted to the procedure for reporting concerns over child abuse.

They will be made aware of and work within the guidelines of the SET (Southend, Essex and Thurrock) Child Protection Procedures as **outlined by the Southend Safeguarding Children Board.**

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A copy of the SET safeguarding and child protection procedures 2018 is available to all staff and volunteers on the Southend Safeguarding Children Board website

Southend Safeguarding Partnership Website:

Adults: **SET Safeguarding Adults Guidelines (July, 2020)**

<https://safeguardingsouthend.co.uk/downloads-adults/?search=SET+Safeguarding+Adults+Guidelines+%28July%2C+2020%29>

Children: **SET Safeguarding and Child Protection Procedures (Oct.2019)**

<https://safeguardingsouthend.co.uk/downloads-children/?search=SET+Safeguarding+and+Child+Protection+Procedures+%28Oct.2019%29>

Related Policies Complaints Policy,
Code of Conduct for Staff/Volunteers,
Code of Conduct for Parents on social media.

References Children Act 1989 (And Children's Act 2004)

Working Together To Safeguard Children 2015 - Department of Health

SET Child Protection Procedures 2018,

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ESCB Guidance for Threshold of Need & Intervention 2013

Safeguarding Disabled Children:

Practice Guidance 2009 Evaluated and updated annually by the Trustees

All policies approved by trustees annually.

Circulated to all staff during training.

The Director is responsible for ensuring effective implementation.

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