

Introduction

This policy has been developed in accordance with the principles established by the Childrens Acts 1989 and 2004; the Education Act 2002, and in line with government publications 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' 2015, Revised Safeguarding Statutory Guidance 2 'Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families' 2000, 'What to do if you are Worried a Child is Being Abused' 2015. The Guidance reflects 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' 2016

Engaging Potential (EP) takes seriously its responsibility to protect and safeguard the welfare of children and young people in its care and to work together with other agencies to ensure adequate arrangements are in place within our setting to identify, assess and support any children suffering from harm.

We recognise that all adults, including temporary staff, volunteers and management have a full and active part to play in protecting our children and young persons from harm, and that their welfare is our paramount concern.

Aims

The aims of this policy are:

- To support the child/young person's development in ways that foster security, confidence and independence;
- To provide an environment in which they feel safe, secure, valued, respected and confident and that they know how and when to approach adults if they are experiencing difficulties;
- to provide staff and volunteers with guidance on procedures they should adopt in the event that they suspect a child or young person may be experiencing, or be at risk of harm;
- To provide a means of monitoring children/young persons known or thought to be at risk of harm;
- To develop and promote effective working relationships with other agencies especially the Police and Social Care;
- To ensure that all staff working at EP and who have substantial access to our children and young persons have been checked as to their suitability, including verification of their identity, qualifications and a satisfactory DBS check and that a central record is kept for audit purposes.

This policy applies to all staff, including managers, paid staff, volunteers and sessional workers, agency staff, or anyone working on behalf of EP.

We will seek to safeguard children and young people by:

- Establishing and maintaining an environment where children and young person feel safe and secure and are encouraged to talk, and are listened to;
- Including in the curriculum activities and opportunities for PHSE, which equip children and young persons with the skills they need to stay safe from abuse;
- Including in the curriculum, material which will help children and young persons develop realistic attitudes to the responsibilities of adult life, particularly with regard to childcare and parenting skills;
- Ensuring that wherever possible every effort will be made to establish effective working relationships with parents and colleagues from partner agencies;
- Ensuring that there is at least one person on every recruitment panel that has completed Safer Recruitment training;
- A senior member of staff has Lead Designated Safeguarding Officer responsibility;
- A senior member of staff is nominated to liaise with the Local Authority and child protection issues;
- This policy is reviewed annually and is available on our website;

EP are also committed to reviewing this policy and good practice annually as part of their annual review cycle, and in line with developments in safeguarding policy.

Designated Safeguarding Officers

All adults working with or on behalf of children/young persons have a responsibility to protect them. Any safeguarding concern should be acted upon immediately. If a member of staff is concerned that a child / young person might be at risk or is actually suffering abuse, they must tell a designated safeguarding officer without delay. This person will be responsible for contacting the West Berkshire Contact, Advise and Assessment Team (CAAS) –

Children's Services. They will also ensure that the safeguarding policy is put into practice within all levels of the organisation and within all policies and procedures.

It is recognised that EP is responsible for contacting CAAS and not for making enquiries and investigating.

The CAAS is the initial contact for all members of professional agencies that need to make an enquiry with regards to a child or young person they have concerns about, this includes whistleblowing. If an enquiry is made to the CAAS team, decisions will then need to be made to decide if social work intervention is required on a Child Protection (CP S.47) or Child in Need (CIN S.17).

A single assessment or an investigation of the child/young person's circumstances can occur, often through working jointly with all professionals involved. Police will be contacted where there is allegations of harm to children / young people or child protection issues.

If the enquiry does not meet the threshold for Children's Services, you can consider the Help for Families Team who will be able to offer advice and support.

Children Services will confirm any actions agreed within this consultation in a letter addressed to designated persons.

Additional guidelines can be found on the shared drive/Safeguarding and include;

- What to do if you're worried a child is being abused (DfES 2015)
- Guidance for staff faced with an allegation (West Berkshire LSCB 2009)

In addition to this all Department for Education guidance can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/childrens-services/safeguarding-children>

The Incident of Concern tab on the MIS should be used to record any information and communications.

The Duty social worker will advise EP when or whether to inform the child's parents or carers about any concerns. If they decide to pursue a safeguarding investigation, we should:

- Work closely and collaboratively with all professionals involved in the investigation, in order to keep the child safe;
- Attend a safeguarding conference if we are invited. We will be asked to provide information about our involvement with the child, which is why it is important to keep records of our concerns;
- Attend any subsequent safeguarding review conferences.

Our designated officers are: Tracy Watson and Paul Blount

Telephone number: 07789 758299 / 07500448590

If a designated officer is not available, speak to a senior member of staff.

Training and Support

All staff who work with children and young persons will undertake appropriate child protection awareness training to equip them to carry out their responsibilities for child protection effectively, that is kept up to date by refresher training at three yearly intervals. This includes agency and temporary staff.

The Head will ensure that all staff complete the awareness training and that this is refreshed every three years. Staff training records will be kept up to date to monitor this.

Designated Person/s and any nominated Deputy's will complete local authority Designated Person Training and this will be refreshed every two years. This will be recorded on staff training records and monitored by the Head.

Where there are concerns and queries about child protection support will be available for all staff from the Designated Person/s. The Designated Person will seek support, as necessary from appropriate local authority staff where needed.

Records, Monitoring and Confidentiality

Any member of staff receiving a disclosure of abuse or noticing signs or indicators of abuse, must make an accurate record as soon as possible noting what was said or seen, putting the event in context, and giving the date, time and location. All records will be dated and signed and will include the action taken. Making the record should not delay referring the disclosure to the Designated Person or appropriate authority.

The purpose of confidentiality in this respect is to benefit the child.

A member of staff must never guarantee confidentiality to a child/young person nor should they agree with a pupil to keep a secret, as where there is a child protection concern this must be reported to the Designated Person/s and may require further investigation by appropriate authorities. The child/young person can be reassured that only the people who "need to know" will be informed, that this will be the minimum necessary and that information will not become common knowledge.

Staff will be informed of relevant information in respect of individual cases regarding child protection on a 'need to know basis' only.

Safeguarding and recruitment

EP's recruitment processes are set out in our Recruitment Policy and ensures that anyone recruited to work with our children and young persons have been appropriately vetted.

At least one member of every recruitment and selection panel will have completed safer recruitment training (which will be renewed every 3 years).

Pupils at risk - Recognising signs of abuse

It can often be difficult to recognise abuse. Children / young people may behave strangely or seem unhappy for many reasons, as they move through the stages of childhood or their families experience changes. It is nevertheless important to know what could indicate that abuse is taking place and to be alert to the need to consult further.

Someone can abuse a child / young person by actively inflicting harm or by failing to act to prevent harm. Abuse can take place within a family, in an institutional or community setting, by telephone or on the Internet and can be carried out by someone known to a child / young person or by a complete stranger.

If a member of staff is worried about a child / young person it is important that they keep a written record of any physical or behavioural signs and symptoms. In this way they can monitor whether or not a pattern emerges and provide evidence to any investigation if required.

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse can involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, scalding, drowning, and suffocating. It can also result when a parent or carer deliberately causes the ill health of a child / young person in order to seek attention; this is called fabricated illness, or Munchhausen's Syndrome by Proxy.

Symptoms that indicate physical abuse include:

- Bruising in or around the mouth, on the back, buttocks or rectal area
- Finger mark bruising or grasp marks on the limbs or chest of a small child / young person
- Bites
- Burn and scald marks; small round burns that could be caused by a cigarette
- Fractures to arms, legs or ribs in a small child / young person
- Large numbers of scars of different sizes or ages

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse happens when a child / young person's need for love, security, praise and recognition is not met. It usually co-exists with other forms of abuse. Emotionally abusive behaviour occurs if a parent, carer or authority figure is consistently hostile, rejecting, threatening or undermining. It can also result when children / young people are prevented from social contact with others, or if developmentally inappropriate expectations are imposed upon them. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of someone else. Symptoms that indicate emotional abuse include:

- Excessively clingy or attention-seeking behaviour
- Very low self esteem or excessive self-criticism
- Excessively withdrawn behaviour or fearfulness; a 'frozen watchfulness'
- Despondency
- Lack of appropriate boundaries with strangers; too eager to please
- Eating disorders

Neglect

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child / young person's basic physical and/or psychological needs, causing damage to their health and development. It may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food, shelter or clothing, failing to protect a child / young person from harm or danger, or failing to access appropriate medical care and treatment when necessary. It can exist in isolation or in combination with other forms of abuse. Symptoms of physical and emotional neglect can include:

- Inadequate supervision; being left alone for long periods of time
- Lack of stimulation, social contact or education
- Inadequate nutrition, leading to ill-health
- Constant hunger; stealing or gorging food
- Failure to seek or to follow medical advice such that a child / young person's life or development is endangered
- Inappropriate clothing for conditions

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child / young person is aware of what is happening. This may include physical contact, both penetrative and non-penetrative, or involve no contact, such as watching sexual activities or looking at pornographic material. Encouraging children / young people to act in sexually inappropriate ways is also abusive. Under the Sexual Offences Act 2003, any sexual activity – contact or non-contact – with a child under the age of 13, is a crime. Symptoms of sexual abuse include:

- Allegations or disclosure
- Genital soreness, injuries or discomfort
- Sexually transmitted diseases; urinary infections
- Excessive preoccupation with sexual matters; inappropriately sexualized play, words or drawing
- A child / young person who is sexually provocative or seductive with adults
- Repeated sleep disturbances through nightmares and/or wetting

Older children and young people may additionally exhibit:

- Depression
- Drug and/or alcohol abuse
- Eating disorders; obsessive behaviours
- Self mutilation; suicide attempts
- School/peer/relationship problems

Some members of our communities hold beliefs that may be common within particular cultures but which are against the law in England. EP does not condone practices that are illegal or harmful to children / young people. Examples of particular practices are:

Forced Marriages

No faith supports the idea of forcing someone to marry without their consent. This should not be confused with arranged marriages between consenting adults.

Under-age Marriages

In England, a young person cannot legally marry or have a sexual relationship until they are 16 years old or more.

Female Circumcision

This is against the law yet we know that for some in our communities it is considered a religious act and a cultural requirement. It is also illegal for someone to arrange for a child / young person to go abroad with the intention of having her circumcised.

Ritualistic Abuse

Some faiths believe that spirits and demons can possess people (including children / young people). What should never be condoned is the use of any physical violence to get rid of the possessing spirit. This is physical abuse and people can be prosecuted even if it was their intention to help the child / young person.

Other Safeguarding Issues

Staff will be made aware that safeguarding issues can manifest themselves in many ways and can often overlap with one another. Some behaviours linked to drug taking, alcohol abuse, truanting, gender based violence and sexting also put children in danger.

EP recognises that children are capable of abusing their peers. EP does not tolerate sexting and incidents will be dealt with under the School's Anti-bullying Policy. The School also recognises the different gender issues that can be prevalent in peer on peer abuse, for example, girls being sexually touched or boys being subjected to initiation/hazing type violence. All peer on peer abuse will be managed in accordance with this policy; a bullying incident will be treated as a child protection concern where there is reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm and will warrant a response under these procedures.

A student against whom an allegation of abuse has been made may be suspended from EP during the investigation. EP will take advice from West Berkshire CAAS team on the investigation of such allegations and will take all appropriate action to ensure the safety and welfare of all students involved including the alleged victim and perpetrator. If it is necessary for a pupil to be interviewed by the police in relation to allegations of abuse, EP will ensure that, subject to the advice of CAAS, parents are informed as soon as possible and that the students involved are supported during the interview by an appropriate adult and until the investigation is completed. Confidentiality will be an important consideration for EP and advice will be sought as necessary and appropriate.

Victims and perpetrators of peer on peer abuse will be offered support by EP as appropriate, for example counselling.

We recognise that it is a key role of EP to support children and that school may provide stability in the lives of children who may be at risk of harm. We also recognise that our students can be vulnerable and exploited by others. Staff will be alert to the signs of vulnerability and/or susceptibilities to any extremist indoctrination.

Staff acknowledge the need for a culture of vigilance to be present in the School to support safeguarding. This includes awareness and sensitivity to attitudinal changes of students which may indicate they are at risk of radicalisation and may need help or protection. However, staff acknowledge that there is no single way of

identifying an individual who is likely to be susceptible to an extremist ideology and family, friends and online influences can all play a major factor in the radicalisation of young people.

Staff will consider the level of risk to identify the most appropriate referral, which could include reference to CAAS. Contact details for support and advice on the Prevent Duty can be found below.

Allegations made against staff or volunteers

Due to the nature of our work, EP is aware of the possibility that allegations of abuse will be made against members of staff. Allegations will usually be that some kind of abuse has taken place, and can be made by children, young people and by other concerned adults. Allegations can be made for a variety of reasons. Some of the most common are:

- Abuse has actually taken place;
- Something happens to a child / young person that reminds them of an event that happened in the past – the child / young person is unable to recognise that the situation and the people are different;
- Children / young people can misinterpret language or actions because they are reminded of something else;
- Some children / young people know how powerful an allegation can be; if they are angry with a member of staff about something they can make an allegation as a way of hitting out;
- An allegation can be a way of seeking attention.

All allegations must be brought to the notice of a designated safeguarding officer immediately. In cases where the allegation is made against both designated safeguarding officers, the complainant should approach another senior member of staff. On being informed of the alleged abuse, the safeguarding officer will:

- Make sure that the child in question is safe and away from the alleged abuser;
- Contact the CAAS Team - No internal investigation can take place until CAAS have been contacted. They will then advise on the actions to be taken.
- Contact the parents or carers of the child if advised to do so by CAAS
- Where necessary, follow EP's disciplinary procedure, irrespective of any investigation by social workers or the police; in cases of alleged abuse, this may mean the alleged abuser being suspended from work until the outcome of any investigation is clear; It should be noted that suspension is NOT automatic and alternatives will be considered. EP will take into account the views of Police and Social Care if they are involved. Suspension will be considered in all cases where:
 - There is cause to suspect a child is at risk of significant harm, or
 - The allegation warrants a police investigation, or it is serious enough to be grounds for dismissal
- Consider whether the alleged abuser has access to children anywhere else and whether those organisations or groups need to be informed;
- Act upon the decisions made in any strategy meeting.

All incidents must be investigated internally after any external investigation has finished, to review organisational practice and put in place any additional measures to prevent a similar thing happening again.

More information on the processes surrounding allegations against volunteers and staff can be found in the leaflet "A guide for staff faced with an allegation of abuse" (April 2009), published by West Berkshire Council. A copy of this leaflet is kept in the office, and on the shared drive/safeguarding.

If a member of staff or a volunteer is dismissed or removed because they have harmed a child or a vulnerable adult, or would have been if they had not left, then EP observes its responsibilities in regard to informing the Disclosure and Barring Service.

Whistleblowing

EP encourages its employees who have concerns about suspected serious misconduct to come forward and express these concerns without fear of retaliation or unfair treatment. Further details can be found in EP's Whistleblower policy, stored in the Staff Handbook and on the shared drive.

Supervision

Regular supervision is provided for all staff and volunteers and progress is reviewed on a regular basis. Supervision sessions include individual casework issues, safeguarding concerns, and professional practice issues linked to observation and support.

Full details about supervision and the associated procedures can be found in the Supervision policy in the Staff Handbook and the shared drive.

Good Practice / Code of Behaviour

All staff and volunteers are expected to demonstrate exemplary behaviour in order to protect themselves from false allegations.

Staff and volunteers must **always**:

- Work in an open environment, avoiding private or unobserved situations and encouraging open communication
- Treat all young people equally with respect and dignity
- Provide an example of good conduct they wish others to follow
- Always put the welfare of each young person first
- Maintain a safe and appropriate distance with children / young people (e.g. it is not appropriate for staff or volunteers to have an intimate relationship with a child or to share a room with them)
- Build balanced relationships based on mutual trust and empower children to share in decision making
- Make programmes fun, enjoyable and promote a sense of self-worth
- Ensure that, if any form of manual/physical support is required, it should be provided openly. Some parents are becoming increasingly sensitive about manual support and their views should always be carefully considered
- Involve parents/carers wherever possible. If groups have to be supervised in the changing rooms, always ensure staff work in pairs
- Ensure that if mixed sex groups are taken away for the day or night, a male and female member of staff always accompanies them. However, remember that same gender abuse can also occur
- Ensure that at residential events, adults do not enter children's rooms or invite children into their rooms
- Be an excellent role model – this includes not smoking or drinking alcohol in the company of children
- Give enthusiastic and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism
- Recognise the developmental needs and capacity of young people – avoid excessive competition and do not push them against their will
- Secure parental consent in writing to act in loco parentis, if the need arises, to administer emergency first aid and/or other medical treatment
- Keep a written record of any injury that occurs, along with the details of any treatment given
- Request written parental consent if staff are required to transport young people in the minibus and personal vehicles
- Ensure that, whenever possible, there is more than one adult present during activities with children and young people or at least that members of staff are within sight or hearing of others
- Respect a young person's right to personal privacy/encourage young people and adults to feel comfortable and caring enough to point out attitudes or behaviour they do not like
- Remember that someone else might misinterpret actions, no matter how well-intentioned
- Be aware that physical contact with a child or young person may be misinterpreted
- Recognise that special caution is required when you are discussing sensitive issues with children or young people
- Operate within EP's values, guidance and Safeguarding policy
- Challenge unacceptable behaviour and report all allegations/suspensions of abuse.

Staff / Volunteers must **never**:

- Spend excessive amounts of time alone with children away from others
- Have inappropriate physical or verbal contact with children or young people. Do not 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 that they can do for themselves
- Invite or allow children to stay with them at their home unsupervised
- Allow themselves to be drawn into inappropriate attention-seeking behaviour
- Make suggestive or derogatory remarks or gestures in front of children or young people
- Jump to conclusions about others without checking facts
- Either exaggerate or trivialise child abuse issues
- Show favouritism to any individual
- Rely on their good name or that of EP to protect them
- Believe "it could never happen to me"
- Take a chance when common sense, policy or practice suggests another more prudent approach.

Staff and volunteers should give guidance and support to inexperienced helpers.

NB It may sometimes be necessary for staff or volunteers to do things of a personal nature for children, particularly if they are young or are disabled. These tasks should only be carried out with the full understanding and consent of parents and the children involved. There is a need to be responsive to a child / young person's reactions. If a child / young person is fully dependent on a member of staff, they should talk with him/her about what the member of staff is doing and give choices where possible. This is particularly so if they are involved in any dressing or undressing of outer clothing, or where there is physical contact, lifting or assisting a child / young person to carry out particular activities. Staff should avoid taking on the responsibility for tasks for which they are not appropriately trained.

Contacts

Contact, Advise and Assessment Team – Children's Social Services (CAAS Team):

01635 503090 (During Office Hours)

01344 786543 (Out of Office Hours)

Prevent Education Link

01635 519014

West Berks LADO (Debi Miles)

01635 503153

cpadmin@westberks.gov.uk

Thames Valley Police:

0845 8505505

NSPCC Helpline:

0808 8005000

Childline:

0800 1111