

Child Protection / Safeguarding Policy



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Contents

Ref	Subject	Page(s)
1.0	Introduction	2
2.0	Statement of Policy	2
3.0	Policy Aim	3
4.0	Definitions	3
5.0	Indicators of Abuse	5
6.0	Methods	6
7.0	Contact Details for Further Advice and Support	7
8.0	Related Policies & Procedures	8

Child Protection / Safeguarding Policy

1.0 Introduction

Footprints Conductive Education Centre will review this policy annually or more frequently where there have been significant changes to Footprints Conductive Education Centre or the nature of the Footprints activities. Footprints will ensure that its staff and associates, where appropriate, are adhering to the policy and will undertake to act wherever possible to meet best practices'.

2.0 Statement of Policy

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.

Footprints Conductive Education Centre fully recognises its responsibilities for protecting and safeguarding the welfare of all children. We will work closely with families and cooperate fully with other agencies to take all reasonable steps to minimise the risks of harm to a child or young person's well-being. Where we have concerns about the welfare of children and young people, Footprints Conductive Education Centre will take appropriate action to address those concerns by working to agreed procedures with families and our partner agencies.

This policy applies to all trustees, ambassadors, staff, and volunteers working in, or for the benefit of, Footprints Conductive Education Centre. Footprints Conductive Education Centre extend the guidelines to include any independent contractors undertaking direct work with children on behalf of the charity.

Footprints Conductive Education Centre will fulfil our responsibilities as a charity by:

- Being alert to potential indicators of abuse or neglect.
- Being alert to the risks.
- Ensuring our trustees, staff and volunteers receive appropriate safeguarding training.
- Implementing systems and processes which facilitate the sharing and analysis of information so that assessments can be made of the child's needs and circumstances.
- Contributing to whatever actions are needed to safeguard and promote the child's welfare.
- Taking part in regularly reviewing the outcomes for the child against specific plans.

- Working in partnership with the child’s parents/carers unless this is inconsistent with the child’s safety.

A ‘child’ is defined as anyone who has not reached their 18th birthday. The fact that the child has reached 16 years of age is living independently or is in further education, is a member of the armed forces or is in custody in a secure setting for children and young people does not change his/her status or entitlement to services and protection under The Children Act (Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018).

3.0 Policy Aim

To ensure that the Footprints Conductive Education Centre policy on Child Protection and Safeguarding is well-defined, and that trustees, staff, ambassadors, and volunteers are clear about their responsibilities and duties.

4.0 Definitions

Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018) defines Safeguarding as:

HM Government (2018) Working together to Safeguard Children

“Protecting children from maltreatment; preventing impairment of children’s mental and physical health or development; ensuring that children grow up in the circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care; and taking action to enable all children have the best outcomes”.

Child Abuse and Neglect: Abuse and neglect are forms 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 an institutional or community setting; by those known to them or, more rarely, by others. They may be abused by an adult or adults or another child or children.

Physical Abuse: Physical abuse may involve (but is not limited to) 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: Is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent effects on the child’s emotional development, and may involve:

- Conveying to the child that they are worthless or unloved; inadequate; or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person.
- Imposing age or developmentally inappropriate expectations on the child. 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, e.g., where there is domestic violence and abuse.
- Serious bullying, causing the child to feel frightened or endangered frequently.
- Exploiting and (or) corrupting a child.

Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, although it may occur alone.

Sexual Abuse: This type of abuse involves forcing or enticing a child 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 (e.g., rape or oral sex), or non-penetrative acts such as kissing, rubbing, and touching outside of clothing or masturbation. Sexual abuse includes non-contact activities such as involving a child in looking at (including online and with mobile phones), or in the production of pornographic materials, watching sexual activities or encouraging a child to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet).

Adult males do not solely perpetrate sexual abuse. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

Sexual Offences Act (2003)

Neglect: is 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 or alcohol misuse, maternal mental ill health or learning difficulties or a cluster of other issues. Where there is domestic violence or abuse towards a parent/carer, the needs of the child may be neglected.

Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent /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 caregivers).
- Ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.

It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional, social, and educational needs.

Disabled Children: Children with a disability are children first and foremost and deserving of the same rights and protection as other children. A child can be considered to be disabled if he/she has significant problems with communication, comprehension, vision, hearing, or physical functioning, including a learning difficulty or developmental delay.

Many factors can make a disabled child more vulnerable to abuse than a non-disabled child of the same age. Safeguarding disabled children demands a greater awareness of their vulnerability, individuality, and particular needs. Disabled children may be especially vulnerable to abuse for several reasons such as;

- Having fewer social contacts than other children.
- Receiving intimate care from carers which may increase the risk of exposure to abusive behaviour and make it more difficult to set and maintain physical boundaries.
- Having an impaired capacity to resist or avoid abuse.
- Having communication difficulties that make it difficult to tell others what is happening.
- Feeling unable to complain for fear of losing services.
- Being especially vulnerable to bullying and intimidation.
- Being more vulnerable than other children to abuse by their peers.
- Dependence on carers could result in the child having difficulties recognising abuse. The child may have little privacy, a poor body image or low self-esteem.
- Carers may lack the ability to communicate adequately with the child.
- Lack of continuity of care leading to an increased risk that behavioural changes may go unnoticed.
- Lack of access to 'keep safe' strategies available to others.
- Some abusers may target disabled children believing they are less likely to be detected.

- Signs and indicators can be inappropriately attributed to the disability.
- Disabled children are less likely to be consulted in matters affecting them, and as a result, may feel they have no choice about whether to accept or reject sexual advances.
- Parents / carers own needs and ways of coping may conflict with the needs of the child.

Disabled children are particularly vulnerable to over-medication, poor feeding and toileting arrangements, issues around control of challenging behaviour, lack of stimulation and emotional support.

Harm: Is defined as the ill-treatment or impairment of health and development.

This definition was expanded in Section 120 of the Adoption and Children Act (2002) so that it may include ‘impairment suffered from seeing or hearing the ill treatment of another’ for example, where there are concerns of domestic violence and abuse.

Significant Harm: The Children Act (1989) introduced the concept of significant harm as the threshold that justifies compulsory intervention in family life in the best interests of children. It gives local authorities a duty to make enquiries (Section 47) to decide whether they should take action to safeguard or promote the welfare of a child who is suffering, or likely to suffer significant harm.

There is no absolute criteria on which to rely when judging what constitutes significant harm. Consideration of the severity of ill-treatment may include the degree and extent of physical harm, the duration and frequency of abuse and neglect, the extent of premeditation, and the presence or degree of threat, coercion, sadism and bizarre or unusual elements. Sometimes a single, traumatic event may constitute significant harm (e.g., a violent assault, suffocation, or poisoning). More often, significant harm is a compilation of significant events, both acute and long-standing, which interrupt, change, or damage the child’s physical and psychological development.

Each of these elements have been associated with more severe effects on the child, and/or relatively greater difficult in helping the child overcome the adverse impact of maltreatment.

5.0 Indicators of Abuse

In addition to the indicators of abuse described in the definitions section of this policy, the following abusive behaviours should also be considered for children with disabilities;

- Force-feeding.
- Unjustified or excessive physical restraint.
- Rough handling.
- Extreme behaviour modification including the deprivation of food, medication, or clothing.
- Misuse of medication, sedation, heavy tranquillisation.
- Invasive procedures against the child’s will.
- Failure to accept the child’s disability.
- Deliberate failure to follow medically recommended programmes.
- Non-compliance with programmes or regimes.
- Failure to address ill-fitting equipment, e.g., callipers, sleep boards, inappropriate splinting.
- Misappropriation/misuse of a child’s finances.
- Over-protective parenting/caring; limiting social activities.

Signs to look for if a member of staff is grooming a child;

- Inappropriate handling of the child.
- Constantly hugging.

- Excessive 1:1 time spent.
- Meeting outside the work environment.
- Taking of photos/video of the child.
- Discussing intimate and personal information.
- Taking pictures of the child/children with a mobile phone or other devices without permission.
- Introducing strangers to the setting without previous clearance.
- Passing information about children and (or) the setting to others without permission.

6.0 Methods

Footprints Conductive Education Centre practice safer recruitment in checking the suitability of staff and volunteers to work with children.

- A statement about Footprints Conductive Education Centre commitment to safeguarding is included on all job descriptions and applicants will be made aware that our positions are exempt from the provision of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act (1974).
- All shortlisted candidates seeking employment at Footprints Conductive Education Centre will be interviewed and asked to provide two references which will be followed up, one reference from the current or most recent employer. In the case of applicants with unexplained gaps in their employment history, or who have moved rapidly from one job to another, explanations will be sought.
- Appropriate checks are undertaken on all staff and volunteers before commencing work at Footprints Conductive Education Centre. An offer of employment will only be confirmed following receipt of a clear, enhanced level DBS Check and two satisfactory references.
- All our staff and volunteers are carefully selected, inducted, supervised, and trained according to Footprints Conductive Education Centre recruitment and selection policies.
- All staff will work a pre-agreed probationary period (generally between 3-6 months).

Providing appropriate training to our staff and volunteers:

- Footprints Conductive Education Centre will seek out training opportunities for trustees, staff and volunteers involved with Footprints Conductive Education Centre to ensure they recognise the signs and symptoms of possible physical abuse, neglect, emotional abuse, and sexual abuse.
- Our trustees, staff, and volunteers (as appropriate) are required to attend appropriate training in Child Protection & Safeguarding.
- New employees / volunteers / students will be required to familiarise themselves with our Child Protection & Safeguarding and related policies at the start of their employment / assignment / placement.

Footprints Conductive Education Centre will implement and follow best practice guidance:

- The nominated senior persons (**Stephen Frew Manager, and Erika Juhasz**) with designated responsibility for 'Child Protection & Safeguarding' within Footprints Conductive Education Centre. Any concerns are to be reported to either of these individuals immediately.
- Every member of staff (including sessional staff and our volunteers) will know the name and role of the designated senior persons responsible for 'Child Protection & Safeguarding' at Footprints Conductive Education Centre.

- Ensure all staff and volunteers understand their responsibilities in being alert to the signs of abuse and responsibility for referring any concerns to either of the named, designated senior persons.
- Ensure that our parents / carers have an understanding of the responsibility placed on Footprints CEC and its staff for safeguarding by setting out its obligation.
- Ensure that all parents / carers, staff, and visitors are aware of the strict policy about the use of mobile phones, cameras, iPods, and similar equipment on the premises.
- Notify social care if there is an unexplained absence of more than two consecutive sessions of a child who is subject to a child protection plan.
- Develop effective links with relevant agencies and cooperate as required with enquiries regarding child protection matters, including attendance at case conferences where necessary.
- Keep written records of concerns about children, even where there is no need to refer the matter immediately.
- Ensure all records are kept securely in a locked cabinet.

Whenever worrying changes are observed in a child’s behaviour, physical condition or appearance, a specific and confidential record will be set up, quite separate from the usual on-going records of development and progress. The record will include name, address, age of child; timed and dated observations, describing objectively the child’s behaviour/appearance, without comments or interpretations; where possible the exact words spoken by the child; the dated name and signature of the recorded. Such records will be kept in the children’s own file once signed by the DSL to assist in better tracking for worrying trends. Once a concern is identified the documents will be moved to a separate file and will not be accessible to people in Footprints CEC other than the Manager & Trustee with designated responsibility for Safeguarding. Other staff will be allowed access as appropriate.

- Follow the procedures set out in our policy ‘Allegations of abuse concerning staff or volunteers’.
- Adults will not be left alone¹ for long periods with individual children or small groups. An adult who needs to take a child aside, for any reason, will leave the door ajar following our ‘open door’ policy.

Students or work experience persons will never be left unsupervised with children.

7.0 Contact Details for Further Advice and Support

- Stephen Frew (Manager) 0115 9586641 or Stephen.Frew@footprintscec.org
- Erika Juhasz (Head of Service) 0115 9586641 or Erika.Juhasz@footprintscec.org
- Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) 0115 87 65166
- MASH (Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub)² 0300 500 8090 for children who live in Nottinghamshire.
- Children and Families Direct 0115 8764800 for children who live in Nottingham City
- Nottingham Police (Child Abuse Investigation Unit) 0115 9670999 or 101
- County Children’s Social Care-Urgent Concerns 0300 456 4546 (Ask for duty officer)
- City Emergency Duty Team 0115 8761000
- NSPCC Free Advice Helpline (open 24/7) 0808 800 5000

MASH deals with new safeguarding concerns and is open Monday-Thursday 8.30-5 and Friday 8.30-4

8.0 Related Policies & Procedures

- Allegations of Abuse against Staff Policy
- Extremism and the Prevent Duty Policy
- Footprints 'Offsite Injury' Form
- Lone/Home-Working Procedure for Staff & Volunteers
- Mobile Phone & Mobile Devices Policy
- Remote Working Policy (including Virtual Conductive Education Sessions)
- Social Media and email Policy
- Student Placement Policy
- Visitor Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy