



PositivePath Foundation

SAFEGUARDING POLICY 2022

Registered Charity No: 1185186

Policy statement and principles

Our safeguarding policy ensures that vulnerable adults and children are treated with respect and dignity, taught to treat each other with respect, feel safe, have a voice, and are listened to.

Our core safeguarding principles are:

A responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of our vulnerable adults and children is of paramount importance and here at Positive Path we recognise that children and vulnerable adults are at increased risk of abuse.

Policies will be reviewed at least annually unless an incident or new legislation or guidance suggests the need for an interim review.

Protection statement

We recognise our moral and statutory responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of all vulnerable adults and children. We endeavour to provide a safe and welcoming environment where vulnerable adults and children are respected and valued. We are alert to the signs of abuse and neglect and follow our procedures to ensure that members receive effective support, protection and justice.

Policy principles

The welfare of the vulnerable adults and children is paramount.

All vulnerable adults and children, regardless of age, gender, ability, culture, race, language, religion or sexual identity, have equal rights to protection.

All staff have an equal responsibility to act on any suspicion or disclosure that may suggest a Vulnerable adult or child is at risk of harm.



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Policy aims

To provide all staff with the necessary information to enable them to meet their responsibilities.

To ensure consistent good practice.

To demonstrate our commitment with regard to protection to parents, carers and other partners involved.

Safeguarding legislation and guidance

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of vulnerable adults and children refers to the process of protecting them from maltreatment, preventing the impairment of health or development, ensuring that they grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care and taking action to enable all vulnerable adults and children to have the best outcomes.








‘Vulnerable adults and child protection’ refers to the processes undertaken to protect those who have been identified as suffering, or being at risk of suffering significant harm.

‘Staff’ refers to all those working for or on behalf of Positive Path Foundation, full time or part time, temporary or permanent, in either a paid or voluntary capacity.

‘Parent’ refers to birth parents and other adults who are in a parenting role, for example step-parents, foster carers and adoptive parents.

Good practice guidelines and staff code of conduct

Good practice includes:

-  Treating all vulnerable adults and children with respect
-  Setting a good example by conducting ourselves appropriately
-  Involving vulnerable adults and children in decisions that affect them
-  Encouraging positive, respectful and safe behaviour among vulnerable adults and children
-  Being a good listener
-  Being alert to changes in vulnerable adults and children behaviour and to signs of abuse, neglect and exploitation
-  Referring all concerns about a vulnerable adults and children safety and welfare to the founder or, if necessary directly to police or social care

All staff are aware that inappropriate behaviour towards vulnerable adults and children is unacceptable and that their conduct towards vulnerable adults and children must be beyond reproach.

Staff understand that under the Sexual Offences Act 2003 it is an offence for a person over the age of 18 to have a sexual relationship with a person under the age of 18, where that person is in a position of trust, even if the relationship is consensual. This means that any sexual activity between a member of the staff and a vulnerable adult or child under 18 may be a criminal offence.



Children & Adults who may be particularly vulnerable

Some may have an increased risk of abuse. Many factors can contribute to an increase in risk, including prejudice and discrimination, isolation, social exclusion, communication issues and reluctance on the part of some adults to accept that abuse can occur. To ensure that all of our vulnerable adults and children receive equal protection, we will give special consideration to:

- 🌸 Disabled or have special educational needs
- 🌸 Young carers
- 🌸 Affected by parental substance misuse, domestic violence or parental mental health needs
- 🌸 Asylum seekers
- 🌸 Living away from home
- 🌸 Vulnerable to being bullied, or engaging in bullying
- 🌸 Living in temporary accommodation
- 🌸 Live transient lifestyles
- 🌸 Living in chaotic and unsupportive home situations
- 🌸 Vulnerable to discrimination and maltreatment on the grounds of race, ethnicity, religion,
- 🌸 Disability or sexuality
- 🌸 Have a parent in jail
- 🌸 At risk of sexual or criminal exploitation
- 🌸 Do not have English as a first language
- 🌸 At risk of female genital mutilation (FGM)
- 🌸 At risk of forced marriage
- 🌸 At risk of being drawn into extremism

This list provides examples of additionally vulnerable groups and is not exhaustive. Special consideration includes the provision of safeguarding information and resources in community languages and accessible formats for those with communication needs.

Whistle blowing if you have concerns about a colleague

Staff who are concerned about the conduct of a colleague towards vulnerable adults and children are undoubtedly placed in a very difficult situation. They may worry that they have misunderstood the situation and they will wonder whether a report could jeopardise their colleague's career. All staff must remember that the welfare of the vulnerable adult or child is paramount. Staff need raise concerns or allegations, initially in confidence and for a sensitive enquiry to take place.

All concerns of poor practice or possible child abuse by colleagues should be reported to the Founder, Jane Atkinson - [07745 182122](tel:07745182122) or [07979 691429](tel:07979691429).

Staff may also report their concerns directly to social care or the police if they believe direct reporting is necessary to secure action.



Staff training

It is important that all staff receive training to enable them to recognise the possible signs of abuse, neglect and exploitation and to know what to do if they have a concern.

New staff will receive a briefing during their induction, which includes the staff behaviour policy. All staff will receive training that is regularly updated. All staff will also receive safeguarding and child protection updates via staff meetings throughout the year.

Volunteers

Volunteers will undergo checks commensurate with their work for Positive Path. Under no circumstances will a volunteer who has not been appropriately checked be left unsupervised. Volunteers will be required to complete a standard DBS check which will be repeated every three years.

Off-site arrangements

All extended and off site activities are subject to a risk assessment to satisfy health and safety and safeguarding requirements.

Child & Vulnerable adults Protection Procedures

Recognising abuse

To ensure that vulnerable adults and children are protected from harm, we need to understand what types of behaviour constitute abuse and neglect.

Abuse and neglect are forms of maltreatment. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm, for example by hitting them, or by failing to act to prevent harm, for example by leaving a small child home alone.

Abuse may be committed by adult men or women and by other children and young people.






Bullying

While bullying is not a separate category of abuse and neglect, it is a very serious issue that can cause anxiety and distress. All incidences of bullying, including cyber-bullying and prejudice-based bullying should be reported and will be managed by our Founder, Jane Atkinson.



Taking action

Any child or vulnerable adults, in any family could become a victim of abuse. Staff should always maintain an attitude of “it could happen here”. Key points for staff to remember for taking action are:

-  in an emergency take the action necessary to help the individual, if necessary, call 999
-  report your concern as soon as possible to the Founder , by the end of the day if not immediately
-  do not start your own investigation
-  share information on a need-to-know basis only – do not discuss the issue with colleagues, friends or family
-  seek support for yourself if you are distressed.

If you are concerned about an individual’s welfare



There will be occasions when staff may suspect that a vulnerable adult or child may be at risk. The individual’s behaviour may have changed, their artwork could be unusual, they may write stories or poetry that reveal confusion or distress, or physical signs may have been noticed. In these circumstances, staff will try to give the individual the opportunity to talk and ask if they are OK or if they can help in any way.

Staff should record these early concerns. If the individual does reveal that they are being harmed, staff should follow the advice below. Following an initial conversation with the individual, if the member of staff has concerns, they should discuss their concerns with the Founder.

If an individual discloses to you

It takes a lot of courage for an individual to disclose that they are being abused. They may feel ashamed, particularly if the abuse is sexual; their abuser may have threatened what will happen if they tell. They may have lost all trust in adults; or they may believe, or have been told, that the abuse is their own fault.

Sometimes they may not be aware that what is happening is abusive. If an individual talks to a member of staff about any risks to their safety or wellbeing, the staff member will, at the appropriate time, let the individual know that in order to help them they must pass the information on to the Founder. The point at which they tell the individual this is a matter for professional judgement. During their conversations, the staff will:

-  Allow them to speak freely
-  Remain calm and not overreact with any emotion



If an individual discloses to you cont/...

- 🌸 Give reassuring nods or words of comfort – ‘I’m so sorry this has happened’, ‘I want to help’, ‘This isn’t your fault’, ‘You are doing the right thing in talking to me’ not be afraid of silences
- 🌸 Under no circumstances ask investigative questions – such as how many times this has happened, whether it happens to siblings, or what does their mother think about it
- 🌸 At an appropriate time tell the individual that in order to help them, the member of staff must pass the information on and explain to whom and why
- 🌸 Not automatically offer any physical touch as comfort
- 🌸 Avoid admonishing them for not disclosing earlier. Saying things such as ‘I do wish you had told me about this when it started’ may be interpreted to mean that they have done something wrong
- 🌸 Tell the individual what will happen next
- 🌸 Report verbally to the Founder even if the individual has promised to do it by themselves
- 🌸 Make a record of what the vulnerable adult or child has disclosed to you as soon after the event to ensure no detail is missed

Notifying parents

We will normally seek to discuss any concerns about an individual with their parents/carers.

Our focus is the safety and wellbeing of the individual. Therefore, if we believe that notifying parents/carers could increase the risk to the individual or exacerbate the problem, advice will first be sought from social care and/or the police before parents/carers are contacted.

Confidentiality and sharing information

All staff will understand that protection issues warrant a high level of confidentiality, not only out of respect for the individual and staff involved but also to ensure that information being released into the public domain does not compromise evidence.

Staff should only discuss concerns with the Founder. That person will then decide who else needs to have the information and they will disseminate it on a ‘need-to-know’ basis.

Information sharing is guided by the following principles. The information is:

- 🌸 necessary and proportionate
- 🌸 relevant
- 🌸 adequate
- 🌸 accurate
- 🌸 timely
- 🌸 secure



Information sharing decisions will be recorded, whether or not the decision is taken to share.

Any written information and cases that are currently still paper based are stored securely.

Protection information will be stored separately from the individual's member file.

The Founder will normally obtain consent from the individual and/or parents/carers to share sensitive information with outside agencies. Where there is good reason to do so, the Founder may share information without consent and will record the reason for not obtaining consent.

Protection records are normally exempt from the disclosure provisions of the Data Protection Act, which means that children and parents do not have an automatic right to see them. If any member of staff receives a request from a member or parent to see child protection records, they will refer the request to the Founder.

The Data Protection Act does not prevent staff from sharing information with relevant agencies, where that information may help to protect an individual.




Referral to social care

The Founder will make a referral to social care if it is believed that an individual is suffering or is at risk of suffering significant harm. The individual (subject to their age and understanding) and the parents/carers will be told that a referral is being made, unless to do so would increase the risk to the vulnerable adult or child.

Any member of staff may make a direct referral to social care if they genuinely believe independent action is necessary to protect a vulnerable adult or child.

Reporting directly to Child Protection Agencies

Staff should follow the reporting procedures outlined in this policy. However, they may also share information directly with children's social care, police or the NSPCC if:

-  the situation is an emergency and the Founder is unavailable
-  they are convinced that a direct report is the only way to ensure the child's safety
-  for any other reason they make a judgement that direct referral is in the best interests of the child.

County Lines

County lines is a term used to describe gangs and organised criminal networks involved in exporting illegal drugs in one or more 'importing' areas within the UK. They use dedicated phone lines or 'deal lines'. Children and vulnerable adults are exploited to move drugs and money. Offenders will often use coercion, intimidation and violence to ensure compliance.

All staff are aware that indicators such as missing episodes of school or children appearing to have an unusual amount of money must be reported to the Founder.



Private fostering arrangements

A private fostering arrangement occurs when someone other than a parent or a close relative care for a child for a period of 28 days or more, with the agreement of the child's parents. It applies to children under the age of 16 or aged under 18 if the child is disabled. By law, a parent, private foster carer or other persons involved in making a private fostering arrangement must notify children's services as soon as possible.

Where a member of staff becomes aware that an individual may be in a private fostering arrangement, they will raise this with the Founder and the Founder will notify the local authority of the circumstances.

Special Circumstances

Looked after children

The most common reason for children becoming looked after is a result of abuse or neglect. Positive Path Foundation ensures that staff have the necessary skills and understanding to keep looked after children safe. Appropriate staff have information about a child's looked after legal status and care arrangements, including the level of authority delegated to the carer by the authority looking after the child.

Indicators of abuse

Physical signs define some types of abuse, for example, bruising, bleeding or broken bones resulting from physical or sexual abuse, or injuries sustained while an individual has been inadequately supervised.

The identification of physical signs is complicated, as individuals may go to great lengths to hide injuries, often because they are ashamed or embarrassed, or their abuser has threatened further violence or trauma if they 'tell'.

It is also quite difficult for anyone without medical training to categorise injuries into accidental or deliberate with any degree of certainty. For these reasons it is vital that staff are also aware of the range of behavioural indicators of abuse and report any concerns to the designated safeguarding lead.



It is the responsibility of staff to report their concerns. It is not their responsibility to investigate or decide whether a child has been abused.

An individual who is being abused, neglected or exploited may:

- 🌸 have bruises, bleeding, burns, fractures or other injuries
- 🌸 show signs of pain or discomfort
- 🌸 keep arms and legs covered, even in warm weather
- 🌸 be concerned about changing for an event such as swimming
- 🌸 look unkempt and uncared for
- 🌸 change their eating habits
- 🌸 have difficulty in making or sustaining friendships
- 🌸 appear fearful
- 🌸 be reckless with regard to their own or other's safety
- 🌸 self-harm
- 🌸 frequently missing events
- 🌸 show signs of not wanting to go home
- 🌸 display a change in behaviour – from quiet to aggressive, or happy-go-lucky to withdrawn
- 🌸 challenge authority
- 🌸 become disinterested
- 🌸 be constantly tired or preoccupied
- 🌸 be wary of physical contact
- 🌸 be involved in, or particularly knowledgeable about drugs or alcohol
- 🌸 display sexual knowledge or behaviour beyond that normally expected for their age
- 🌸 acquire gifts such as money or a mobile phone from new 'friends'.

Individual indicators will rarely, in isolation, provide conclusive evidence of abuse. They should be viewed as part of a jigsaw, and each small piece of information will help the authorities to decide how to proceed.

