



Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

Introduction and Policy Statement

This policy applies to all staff, volunteers and The Board of Trustees and has been drawn up based on law and guidance that seeks to protect children, namely:

- Children Act 1989;
- Working together to Safeguard Children 2015;
- Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children's Board Guidance

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Protect children and young people who receive a service from Be Free Young Carers;
- Provide staff and volunteers with the framework and principles that guide our approach to safeguarding and child protection

Be Free Young Carers takes very seriously its responsibility for Safeguarding and Child Protection towards all young carers with whom it engages and seeks to provide an environment where all young carers are safe, secure, valued, respected, happy and listened to.

Be Free Young Carers understands the term Safeguarding to mean that we will take all reasonable measures to ensure that the risk of harm to children's welfare and development is minimised. We also understand that where we have any concerns about a child's welfare we will take all appropriate action to address those concerns by working in full partnership with other agencies. In particular we will:

- Always follow safe recruitment procedures for staff and volunteers, including an enhanced check through the DBS process, so that we can be confident that all adults working for Be Free Young Carers are safe to do so;
- Raise awareness of child protection issues and equip young carers with the skills needed to keep them safe;
- Implement procedures for identifying and reporting suspected cases of abuse;
- Support young carers who are the subject of a child protection plan;
- Establish a safe and nurturing environment where young carers feel safe, secure, valued, respected, happy and listened to.

This policy should be read alongside Be Free Young Carers' policies and procedures on:

- Lone Working
- Recruitment
- Staff and Volunteer Code of Conduct
- Whistleblowing
- Confidentiality
- Health and Safety

Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy

Be Free Young Carers recognises that its staff and volunteers who work regularly with children are best placed to notice changes in behaviour and/or physical injuries or receive disclosure from children about possible risk of harm. Be Free Young Carer staff and volunteers will therefore –

- Report any unusual/inappropriate behaviour to their designated staff member for child protection;
- Ensure that children and young people know they can approach any of the adults in our establishment if they are worried about something and that they will receive a consistent, supportive response.

Be Free Young Carers' staff and volunteers will follow the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board procedures in all cases of suspected abuse. These can be found at www.oscb.org.uk

We will therefore ensure that:

- We have a designated lead staff member for safeguarding and child protection. In our organisation that person is the Director, **John Tabor**;
- All staff, whether permanent or temporary, and volunteers know which staff members have been designated overall responsibility for child protection and safeguarding;
- In the absence of the designated person, Be Free Young Carers has other members of staff who have the knowledge and skills necessary to deputise;
- Our lead staff member and Volunteer Coordinator attend Designated Lead training, refreshed every two years;
- Our client facing staff and volunteers receive Specialist Safeguarding training, refreshed every two years;
- All other staff, Trustees and volunteers receive Generalist Safeguarding training every three years;
- All staff and volunteers have read and understand this child protection and safeguarding policy;
- Accurate written records are kept of concerns about young carers where a referral is not appropriate immediately;
- All staff and volunteers, are recruited safely and have had the appropriate checks, (e.g Enhanced DBS with children's' barred list check);
- All interview panels include staff who are Safer Recruitment trained;
- All staff and volunteers are aware that they must refer any allegations against a member of staff or a volunteer to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) on 01865 815232;
- This policy is reviewed by the Board of Trustees annually or more frequently as circumstances require;
- The Be Free Young Carers' Safeguarding Policy and associated procedures are implemented in line with Oxfordshire Safeguarding Board Policies, including implementation of the S11 standards, annual review of practice against standards, and presentation of an annual Safeguarding Report.

We recognise that children who have been abused, or witness violence, may find it difficult to develop a sense of self worth. They can feel helplessness, humiliation and a sense of blame. Our organisation may provide the only stability in the lives of some children and we will endeavour to support them by:

- Liaising with other agencies that support children, (e.g. Social Care and Health) where appropriate;
- Providing opportunities for children to discuss and explore issues around safety and ensuring children know who to talk to in our organisation if they need help;
- Promoting a positive ethos within our organisation, giving children the sense of being safe, supported, respected and valued.

Procedure

ALL STAFF and VOLUNTEERS have a responsibility for action in cases of suspected child abuse. The following procedure must be followed if a member of staff or volunteer has concerns about the safety of a child or if a disclosure is made:

KEEPING CHILDREN SAFE

Child Protection - Responding to concerns about individual children

All young carers attending Be Free Young Carers services must be able to place their trust and confidence in any adult working for the organisation. They must feel sure that they can speak about any worries or concerns they may have and that they will be listened to, taken seriously and responded to appropriately. All staff and volunteers must therefore know what to do if a child chooses to talk to them about any matter which raises child protection concerns.

All staff and volunteers must:

- Not promise confidentiality, explain that it may be necessary to consult a senior colleague;
- Listen to what the child is saying without interruption and without asking leading questions;
- Respect the child's right to privacy but not promise confidentiality;
- Reassure the child that he/she has done the right thing in telling;
- Explain to the child that in order to keep him/her safe from harm the information that has been shared must be passed on;
- Report what has been disclosed to the Designated Person as soon as practical;
- Record, as soon as practicable, what was said using the child's actual words;
- Sign and date the record.

The Designated Person for Child Protection will:

- Assess any urgent medical needs of the child;
- Consider whether the child has suffered, or is likely to suffer significant harm;
- Check whether the child is currently subject to a Child Protection Plan or has been previously subject to a Plan;
- Confirm whether any previous concerns have been raised by staff or volunteers;
- Consider whether the matter should be discussed with the child's parents or carers or whether to do so may put the child at further risk of harm because of delay or the parent's possible actions or reactions;
- Seek advice if unsure that a child protection referral should be made.

If a referral is not considered appropriate at that stage, the Designated Person will make full written records of the information that they have received detailing the reasons for their judgement that the matter was not referred to the local authority.

If you cannot find/contact your lead person for child protection and have an immediate concern about a child, call the Oxfordshire Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub, **MASH**, as soon as possible on 0345 050 7666. (This number will take you through to Customer Services who will ask a series of questions and triage into MASH where safeguarding concerns are raised.) or 0800 833 408 (outside office hours)

If you want to speak with someone about an already open case, contact the relevant Children's Social Care Team.

If you are unsure whether to make a referral, contact the Locality and Community Support Service (**LCSS**) and request a 'no names' consultation (meaning you do not give the child's name). You can then discuss the situation with them and they will advise you on what to do next and if a referral needs to be made.

- LCSS Central - 03452 412 705
- LCSS North (Banbury, Bicester, Carterton, Witney and Woodstock) - 03452 412 703
- LCSS South (Abingdon, Didcot, Faringdon, Henley, Thame, Wantage) - 03452 412 608

Child Protection - Recognition and Response to Abuse

Owing to the nature of the relationship young carers have with Be Free Young Carers staff, all adults working for Be Free Young Carers are well placed to notice any physical, emotional or behavioural signs that a child may be suffering significant harm. We understand that harm means the ill-treatment or impairment of a child's health and/or development, including that caused as a result of witnessing the ill-treatment of another person and we understand that not all children will choose to talk, but may communicate through different ways. We will always be aware of and alert to any possible indicators that a child is suffering harm.

All staff and volunteers will report any concerns to the Designated Person for Child Protection.

All adults working for Be Free Young Carers will receive regular Child Protection training in order that their awareness to the possibility of a child suffering harm through physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse and neglect remains high.

We will ensure that the training our staff undertake contains opportunities for learning about those specific areas of child protection about which everyone should be aware of and alert to:

- Child Sexual Exploitation
- Bullying/Cyberbullying
- Domestic Violence
- Use or abuse of drugs
- Fabricated or induced illness
- Faith abuse
- Female Genital Mutilation
- Forced Marriage
- Gangs and Youth Violence
- Mental Health
- Private Fostering
- Radicalisation
- Sexting
- Teenage relationship abuse
- Trafficking

Safeguarding - Providing a Safe Environment

All parents and carers of young carers engaging with Be Free Young Carers must feel secure in the knowledge that they are entrusting their children to adults who will strive to keep them safe.

We will do this by:

- Promoting a caring, safe and positive environment;
- Ensuring that our staff and volunteers are appropriately trained in safeguarding and child protection according to their role and responsibilities and keep a record of all training undertaken;
- Encouraging the self-esteem and self-assertiveness of all young carers engaging with Be Free Young Carers through our services so that the young carers themselves become aware of danger and risk and what is acceptable behaviour and what is not;
- Working in partnership with all other services and agencies involved in the safeguarding of children;
- Including detail contact numbers for child protection help-lines in our newsletters;
- Always following Safer Recruitment procedures when appointing staff or volunteers;

- Undertaking risk assessments when planning all activities, trips and training.

Safeguarding and Child Protection in Specific Circumstances

Behaviour of Young Carers

We will always aim to maintain a safe and calm environment by expecting good behaviour from young carers in line with our behaviour code of conduct.

We are aware that any physical response from a member of staff or volunteer to a young carers' poor behaviour could lead to a child protection concern being raised by the child or parent/carer.

1. No member of staff or volunteer will use force when dealing with a young carers' breach of our behaviour code of conduct unless the potential consequences of not physically intervening are sufficiently serious to justify such action;
2. We will always record any occasion when physical intervention has been necessary;
3. We will always notify parents or carers of any such incident.

Health & Safety

Be Free Young Carers has a Health and Safety Policy which demonstrates the consideration we give to minimising any risk to young carers when on Be Free Young Carers' activities under the supervision of our staff.

Confidentiality

Information about young carers given to us by the children themselves, their parents or carers, or by other agencies will remain confidential. Staff and volunteers will be given relevant information only on a 'need to know' basis in order to support the child, if that is necessary and appropriate.

We have a duty to share any information which is of a child protection nature. We understand that this is in the best interests of the child and overrides any other duties we have regarding confidentiality and information sharing.

We have a duty to keep any records which relate to child protection work undertaken by us or shared with us by agencies and to ensure that these are stored securely and only accessible to key members of staff.

ADULTS WORKING WITH YOUNG CARERS

Safer Recruitment

All Be Free Young Carers' staff and volunteers working with young carers will be recruited safely:

1. Preparation

We will always consider the vacancy that has arisen within the context of safeguarding children and ensure that we include the responsibility to safeguard children within the requirements of the role.

We always consider carefully the knowledge skills and experience required to safeguard children and include these within a person specification.

2. Advertising

We will always advertise our vacancies in a manner that is likely to attract a wide range of applicants.

The advertisement will always include a statement about our commitment to safeguarding children and our expectation that all applicants will share that commitment.

The advertisement will state that the post is subject to a Disclosure and Barring check.

3. Applications

We will ensure that applications enable us to gather information about the candidates' suitability to work with children.

4. References

We will not accept open references or testimonials.

We will ask for the names of at least two referees.

We will take up references and ask specific questions about the candidate's previous employment or experience of working with children.

We will follow up any vague or ambiguous statements.

5. Interviews

We will always conduct a face to face interview even when there is only one candidate.

Our interview panel will always contain at least one member trained in safer recruitment practice.

Our interview questions will seek to ensure we understand the candidate's values and beliefs that relate to children.

All candidates will be asked to bring original documents which confirm their identity, qualifications, and right to work.

6. Appointments

Our offer of appointment will be conditional on all requested checks having been returned as satisfactory.

We will refer to the Disclosure and Barring Service any person whose checks reveal that they have sought work when barred from working with children.

7. Induction

We will always provide newly appointed staff and volunteers with appropriate guidance about safe working practice, boundaries and propriety and explain the consequences of not following the guidance.

8. Continuing Professional Development

We will ensure that all staff and volunteers receive regular training in Child Protection.

9. Supervision

We will always supervise staff and act on any concerns that relate to the safeguarding of children.

10. Allegations

We will always follow our locally agreed procedures for the management of allegations against staff and or volunteers.

11. Dismissal

We will always refer to the Disclosure and Barring Service any member of staff or volunteer who is dismissed because of misconduct relating to a child.

Safe Practice

We understand that all adults working for Be Free Young Carers have a duty to safeguard children and promote their welfare.

We aim to provide a safe and supportive environment for young carers through the relationship we have with them and their parents or carers and will always seek to ensure that all adults working for Be Free Young Carers behave in a manner that fosters this relationship.

We will ensure that all staff are clear about the expectations we have of their behaviour towards all young carers and that any incident that falls below our expected standards will be dealt with appropriately without delay.

Safe Practice for Staff and Volunteers

We aim to provide a safe environment for our staff and volunteers and will ensure that in undertaking their roles our staff and volunteers are not put at unforeseen risk. This element of the Safeguarding Policy should be read in conjunction with the Employee and Volunteers Lone Working Guidance, the Whistleblowing Policy and the Staff conditions of employment .

The underpinning principles for safeguarding our staff and volunteers are:

- The welfare of the child is paramount

- Staff and volunteers should understand their responsibilities to safeguard and promote the welfare of our clients
- Staff and volunteers are responsible for their own actions and behaviour and should avoid any conduct which would lead any reasonable person to question their motivation and intentions;
- Staff should work, and be seen to work, in an open and transparent way;
- Staff should acknowledge that deliberately invented/malicious allegations are extremely rare and that all concerns should be reported and recorded;
- Staff should discuss and/or take advice promptly from the Director if they have acted in a way which may give rise to concern;

MANAGING ALLEGATIONS AGAINST STAFF/VOLUNTEERS

Allegations and complaints against staff/volunteers can be minimised by having:

- Safer Recruitment strategies in place;
- Appropriate induction and training;
- Open and transparent safeguarding ethos;
- Professional code of conduct;
- Regular briefing and discussion of safeguarding issues;
- Ensuring that children are aware of safeguarding issues.

An allegation is any information which indicates that a member of staff/volunteer may have:

- behaved in a way that has harmed a child or may have harmed a child;
- possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child; or
- behaved towards a child or children in such a way that indicates he or she would pose a risk if harm if they worked regularly or closely with a child.

This applies to any child the member of staff/volunteer has contact with in their personal, professional or community life.

All staff/volunteers will be aware of who they should take their concern to.

Safeguarding or child protection allegations about members of staff/volunteers must be reported immediately to the Director as safeguarding lead. Allegations against the Director should be taken to the Chair of Trustees. This procedure should be read in conjunction with Be Free Young Carers Policies and procedures on Lone Working, Recruitment, Staff and Volunteer Code of Conduct, Whistleblowing and confidentiality and the organisation's Grievance Procedure.

Be Free Young Carers has a duty of care to its employees and volunteers and will ensure that effective support for anyone facing an allegation is provided and provide the employee with a named contact if they are suspended.

Key issues

- Priority will be given to resolving the matter as soon as possible (usually within one month);
- Staff/volunteers will not be automatically suspended;
- Allegations found to be false, unfounded or malicious will be removed from personnel records;
- Malicious allegations will face appropriate sanctions.

To be considered under these guidelines, the allegation must meet the following criteria. The person must have:

- Behaved in a way that has harmed a child or may have harmed a child;
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child; or
- Behaved towards a child or children in such a way that indicates he or she would pose a risk if harm if they worked regularly or closely with a child.

Any cases which do not meet the criteria above will be dealt with through disciplinary procedures.

Initial Considerations

Where the concern meets the criteria, the Director, will immediately contact the Chair of Trustees or in the case of a concern involving the Director, the Chair of Trustees will contact the Trustee Board for an initial discussion. The initial discussion will consider the nature of allegation and the course of action.

Actions to be agreed

- What further information is required?
- Whether any immediate action needs to be taken to protect young people;
- When and what should the parents be told;
- What should be said to the adult facing the allegation?
- Whether suspending the member of staff/volunteer is required;
- Suspension will not be an automatic response;
- Suspension will only be considered where:
 - Children are at risk of serious harm;
 - Where the concern is so serious that it would result in immediate dismissal;
 - The reason for suspension must be communicated to the person in writing within one day;
 - Alternatives to suspension might include alternative work, the deployment of another adult to work alongside the accused person or reallocating the work involved.

Possible outcomes of the initial discussion

- Strategy Meeting (sometimes called a 'Management Planning Meeting') normally held within three days
- Referral to Social Care
- Referral to Police for investigation
- No further action (NFA)

In the case of NFA, Be Free Young Carers will then decide how to proceed further, which may include internal disciplinary action. Informal action will be resolved within in a timely fashion. Most cases should be concluded within one month. Any investigation will be undertaken by the Director and/or a Trustee or if required an independent person.

After consulting the appropriate person, the accused person will be told about the allegation. The person will be told about the likely courses of action and advised to contact their professional association. Be Free Young Carers will appoint a named person to offer support to the affected person. It is important that confidentiality is maintained. No information will be offered to the media nor any details published that would identify any person under investigation, unless or until the person has been charged with an offence.

Outcome of Allegations

The outcome of allegation investigations will be identified as one of the following:

Outcome Type	Definition	Action after investigation	Recording
Substantiated	There is sufficient evidence to prove the allegation.	Discussion with HR and/or other professionals, about referral to DBS for Disciplinary Hearing	We will record a clear and comprehensive summary of the allegation, details of how the allegation was followed up and resolved, and a note of any action taken and decisions reached. This will be kept in the confidential personnel file of the accused, and a copy provided to the person concerned. We will retain the record for at least until the accused has reached normal pension age or for a period of 10 years from the date of the allegation if that is longer.
False	There is sufficient evidence to disprove the allegation.	Where the allegation is found to be false, unsubstantiated, or malicious, the information will not be included in any reference.	
Unsubstantiated	This is not the same as a false allegation. It means that there is insufficient evidence to prove or disprove the allegation. The term does not imply guilt or innocence.		
Malicious	There is sufficient evidence to disprove the allegation and there has been a deliberate act to deceive.		Details of allegations that are found to have been malicious will be removed from personnel records.
Unfounded	There is no evidence or proper basis which supports the allegation being made. It might also indicate that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the person making the allegation misinterpreted the incident or was mistaken about what they saw or they may not have been aware of all the circumstances. 		