



## **9Sefton Parent Carer Forum Safeguarding and Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy**

**Approved by: SPCF Management Committee**

**Approved on: May 2024**

**Next review due: May 2025**

### **1. PURPOSE**

This document is the Policy for the Safeguarding and Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults for Sefton Parent Carer Forum (SPCF), which will be followed by all SPCF staff, representatives and volunteers of SPCF, and followed and promoted by the Trustees and Steering Group of SPCF.

SPCF does not undertake activities with children or vulnerable adults in the absence of their parents/carers but has the opportunity to observe the child's/vulnerable adult's welfare at SPCF events. Parents/carers remain responsible for their children's welfare throughout all the work undertaken by SPCF.

Any child or vulnerable adult can be vulnerable to abuse. The purpose of this policy is to make sure that the actions of any adult in the context of the work carried out by SPCF are transparent, and safeguard and promote the welfare of all children and vulnerable adults.

If any parent or young person/child has any concerns about the conduct of any member of the organisation, this should be raised in the first instance with Monica Wright, or Sue Swinchin, the two designated child protection contacts.

### **2. DEFINITIONS**

#### **Child**

In the context of this policy, a child is a person under the age of 18.

#### **Vulnerable adult**

In the context of this policy, a vulnerable adult is someone aged 18 or above who may need community care services for reasons like mental health issues, disability, age or illness. They may not be able to take care of themselves or protect themselves from harm or exploitation.

## **Safeguarding**

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and vulnerable adults means taking action to:

- protect them from being mistreated
- make sure their health or development is not impaired
- make sure that they grow up in an environment that provides safe and effective care
- help them to have the best possible life chances, and to enter adulthood successfully.

## **Child Protection**

Child protection is a part of safeguarding. It means taking action to protect the small number of children and young people who are suffering, or are at risk of suffering, significant harm through child abuse.

## **Child Abuse**

Child abuse is the term used to describe how children are harmed, often by adults but also by other children and young people. Abuse or neglect of a child is caused by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm.

Children with special needs are particularly vulnerable and in need of special care. 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.

## **Physical Abuse**

Physical abuse may involve 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 feigns the symptoms of, or deliberately causes, ill-health to a child whom they are looking after. This situation is commonly described using terms such as, fabricated illness by proxy or Munchausen Syndrome by proxy.

## **Emotional Abuse**

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional ill-treatment of a child, such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only in so far as they meet the needs of another person. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. It may involve causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill treatment of a child though it may occur alone.

## **Sexual Abuse**

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative or non-penetrative acts. They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, pornographic material, or watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

## **Neglect**

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. It may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, failing to protect a child from physical harm or danger, or

the failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

### **Safeguarding disabled children and young people**

There is clear evidence that disabled children and young people have an increased vulnerability to being abused, and that the presence of multiple impairments further increases their vulnerability. There are many reasons for this, and it is important that all those who work with disabled children and young people have some understanding of these reasons and ensure that they offer appropriate support to any child or young person who discloses abuse.

### **3. STATEMENT OF INTENT**

SPCF is committed to the following statements:

- the welfare of the child / vulnerable adult is paramount
- all children and vulnerable adults have the right to protection from abuse regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, disability, sexuality or beliefs
- the policy is approved and endorsed by the board of trustees
- the policy applies to all trustees, staff and volunteers and will be included in their induction
- children and parents will be informed of the policy and procedures as appropriate
- all concerns and allegations of abuse will be taken seriously by trustees, staff and volunteers and responded to appropriately. This may require a referral to children's services and, in emergencies, the police.
- safe recruitment, selection and vetting procedures will be followed
- appropriate legislation and guidance will be complied with
- the policy and procedure will be evaluated and reviewed
- the policy and procedure will cross-reference with associated policies and procedures which promote children's safety and welfare

### **4. POLICY**

SPCF has a Code of Conduct which all Steering Group members are expected to comply with. The Code of Conduct has a clear section in relation to action taken should a safeguarding issue be raised in relation to a member of the Steering Group.

Steering Group members must inform the Chair about any personal difficulties that might affect your ability to exercise your responsibilities appropriately or risk bringing the name of SPCF into disrepute.

In these situations, it will be standard practice to ask the Steering Group member to temporarily stand down until the issues are resolved. This is a neutral and non-judgemental position, designed to protect the organisation and the individual, and to ensure the individual involved is able to focus all of their attention on the issue at hand. It is felt necessary however to insist on this protocol to safeguard both SPCF and the individual involved.

In order to protect children/vulnerable adults from abuse, the SPCF Steering Group will:

- Ensure that all workers and at least two Steering Group Members have undertaken appropriate Child Protection training
- Appoint a minimum of two designated Child Protection Officers from the Steering Group, to respond to allegations and concerns
- Ensure that appropriate recording and monitoring systems are in place
- Operate safe recruitment procedures including using application forms, asking on the form about past convictions and pending cases, taking up references, following up employment histories, interviews with trained panels, verifying identity and (if appropriate) workers and volunteers to be Criminal Records Bureau checked before starting work
- Organise induction and training for workers and volunteers in safeguarding issues (where appropriate)
- Confirm that projects and activities are adequately supervised, taking into account visitors and guests and any necessary consent required from parents/carers
- Provide guidance on how to respond to a person disclosing abuse
- Set up a reporting procedure with information about when and how to contact social services.
- Provide contact details for local support services including the police, children & vulnerable adults social services and the NSPCC Child Protection Helpline.

## **5. PROCEDURES**

The Child Protection Officers for SPCF is Monica Wright and the deputy is Sue Swinchin.

### **Immediate Action to Ensure Safety**

IN ALL CASES IT IS VITAL TO TAKE WHATEVER ACTION IS NEEDED TO SAFEGUARD THE CHILD:

- If emergency medical attention is required, an ambulance should be called (dial 999) or the child taken to the nearest Accident and Emergency Department.
- If a child is in immediate danger, the police should be contacted (dial 999), as they alone have the power to remove a child immediately if protection is necessary, via Police Protection Order.

### **Recognition of Abuse or Neglect**

Individuals within SPCF need to be alert to the potential abuse of children, including abuse by members of the organisation.

It is good practice to be as open and honest as possible with parents/carers about any concerns.

However, you must not discuss your concerns with parents/carers in the following circumstances:

- where sexual abuse is suspected
- where organised or multiple abuse is suspected
- where fictitious illness by proxy (also known as Munchausen Syndrome by proxy) is suspected
- where contacting parents/carers would place a child, yourself or others at immediate risk.

### **What to do if children or vulnerable adults talk to you about abuse or neglect**

It is recognised that a child or vulnerable adult may seek you out to share information about abuse or neglect, or talk spontaneously, individually or in groups, when you are present.

In these situations you must:

- Listen carefully to the child / vulnerable adult. DO NOT directly question the child / vulnerable adult
- Give the child / vulnerable adult time and attention
- Allow the child / vulnerable adult to give a spontaneous account; do not stop a child / vulnerable adult who is freely recalling significant events
- Make an accurate record of the information you have been given, taking care to record the timing, setting and people present, the child's / vulnerable adult's presentation, as well as what was said. Do not throw this away as it may later be needed as evidence
- Use the child's / vulnerable adult's own words where possible
- Explain that you cannot promise not to speak to others about the information they have shared
- Reassure the child / vulnerable adult that you are glad they have told you; they have not done anything wrong and what you are going to do next
- Explain that you will need to get help to keep the child / vulnerable adult safe
- Do NOT ask the child / vulnerable adult to repeat his or her account of events to anyone.

### **Consulting about your concern**

The purpose of consultation is to discuss your concerns in relation to a child or vulnerable adult and decide what action is necessary. You may become concerned about a child or vulnerable adult who has not spoken to you, because of your observations of, or information about that child or vulnerable adult.

It is good practice to ask a child / vulnerable adult why they are upset, or how a cut or bruise was caused, or respond to a child / vulnerable adult wanting to talk to you. This practice can help clarify vague concerns and result in appropriate action.

If you are concerned about a child or vulnerable adult, you must share your concerns. Initially you should talk to one of the people designated as responsible for child protection

within SPCF. If that person is implicated in the concerns, you should discuss your concerns directly with Social Services (**Call 0345 140 0845, 0151 934 4545**)

**You should consult externally with Sefton Social Services in the following circumstances:**

- when you remain unsure, after internal consultation, as to whether child protection concerns exist
- when there is disagreement as to whether child protection concerns exist
- when you are unable to consult promptly, or at all, with your designated internal contact for child

protection

- when the concerns relate to any member of the Steering Group.

**Consultation is not the same as making a referral but should enable a decision to be made as to whether a referral to Social Services or the Police should progress.**

**Making a referral**

A referral involves giving Social Services or the Police information about concerns relating to an individual or family, in order that enquiries can be undertaken by the appropriate agency followed by any necessary action.

In certain cases the level of concern will lead straight to a referral without external consultation being necessary.

Parents/carers should be informed if a referral is being made, except in the circumstances outlined in section 5 (Recognition of Abuse or Neglect) of this policy.

However, inability to inform parents for any reason should not prevent a referral being made. It would then become a joint decision with Social Services about how and when the parents should be approached and by whom.

If your concern is about abuse or risk of abuse from someone not known to the child / vulnerable adult or their family, you should make a telephone referral directly to the police and consult with the parents.

If your concern is about abuse or risk of abuse from a family member, or someone known to the child/vulnerable adult, you should make a telephone referral to your local Social Services Office.

**Information required**

Be prepared to give as much of the following information as possible (in emergency situations all of this information may not be available). Unavailability of some information should not stop you making a referral.

- Your name, telephone number and position, and request the same of the person to whom you are speaking
- Full name and address, telephone number of family, date of birth of child / vulnerable adult and siblings
- Gender, ethnicity, first language, any special needs

- Names, dates of birth and relationship of household members and any significant others
- The names of professionals known to be involved with the child/vulnerable adult/family e.g. GP, Health Visitor, school
- The nature of the concern and foundation for it.
- An opinion on whether the child / vulnerable adult may need urgent action to make them safe
- Your view of what appears to be the needs of the child / vulnerable adult and family
- Whether the consent of a parent with parental responsibility has been given to the referral being made.

### **Action to be taken following the referral**

- Ensure that you keep an accurate record of your concern(s) made at the time
- Put your concerns in writing to Social Services following the referral (within 48 hours)
- Accurately record the action agreed, or that no further action is to be taken, and the reasons for

this decision.

### **Confidentiality**

SPCF will ensure that any records made in relation to a referral will be kept confidentially and in a secure place.

Information in relation to child protection concerns should be shared on a “need to know” basis. However, the sharing of information is vital to child protection and, therefore, the issue of confidentiality is secondary to a child’s need for protection.

### **Contact details**

#### **Children and Families Services**

- Call **0151 934 4545** between 9am and 4pm
- Contact the emergency duty team on **0151 934 3555** for urgent advice outside of office hours (from 5.30pm Mon to Thurs, and 4pm Friday and weekends). If you think a child is in immediate danger call for police assistance.

More information about getting help from Social Care Services can be found on the Sefton Council website: [Report a Concern \(sefton.gov.uk\)](https://www.sefton.gov.uk)

#### **NSPCC**

If you're worried about a child, even if you're unsure, contact our professional counsellors for help, advice and support.

- Email: [help@nspcc.org.uk](mailto:help@nspcc.org.uk)
- Call: 0808 800 5000

#### **Childline**

Childline offers free, confidential advice and support whatever your worry, whenever you need help.

- Call: 0800 1111

### **Vulnerable Adults**

Do you think a vulnerable adult is being harmed or is at risk of being harmed by someone else or is neglecting themselves?

Are you worried that a vulnerable adult is living in circumstances (at home or in care) where they are being treated badly or neglected?

If you've answered yes to either of these questions, then please call **0345 140 0845** to report your concerns.

More information about safeguarding vulnerable adults can be found on the Sefton Council Website

- [Worried about an adult \(sefton.gov.uk\)](http://sefton.gov.uk)