



Safeguarding Children Policy and Procedures

MCFT's Safeguarding Children Policy and procedures is part of a suite of policies designed to support and safeguard young people in their interaction with MCFT staff, volunteers trustees contractors and others in the course of projects and activities delivered by MCFT, partners and hirers.

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Policy Statement

MCFT believes that all children and young people have the right to live and grow up without abuse or harm of any kind. MCFT acknowledge their responsibilities and undertake to promote the welfare of children and young people and to keep them safe in all that we do. We are committed to work in a way that protects all children and young people.

The purpose of this policy is to set a framework within which we:

- Protect children and young people receiving services from MCFT and all our associated projects, including the children of the adults who use our services
- Provide staff, trustees, contractors and volunteers with the overarching principles that guide our approach to safeguarding children and young people.

This policy has been developed on the basis of law and guidance, including:

- The Children Act 1989 and 2004
- The Children and Social Work Act 2017
- Working together to Safeguard Children: a guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children; HM Government 2018
- Surrey Safeguarding Board guidance

Supporting documents

This policy statement should be read alongside MCFT's other organisational policies and documents including:

- Codes of conduct for staff, trustees and volunteers
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy
- GDPR and privacy policy
- Managing complaints policy
- Health and safety policy
- Induction, training, supervision and support
- Lone worker policy
- Safeguarding vulnerable adults policy
- Safer recruitment and DBS policy
- Whistleblowing policy

Policy Scope

This policy applies to those working on behalf of MCFT, including Trustees, paid staff, volunteers, sessional workers, contractors and anyone else working on our behalf.

This policy also covers expectations and contracts with organisations and individuals hiring spaces from us and otherwise working in partnership with MCFT.

The Board of Trustees has specific responsibility for the effective implementation of this policy and its procedures. All staff, trustees, contractors, volunteers and hirers also have an individual responsibility to abide by the policy and its procedures to help create an environment in which safeguarding children and young people is our paramount objective.

MCFT Commitments

MCFT recognises that the welfare of the child is paramount, as enshrined in the Children Act 1989, and that all children regardless of age, disability, gender, racial heritage, religious belief, sexual orientation or identity have a right to equal protection from all types of harm.

We also understand that some children are additionally vulnerable because of the impact of previous experiences, their level of dependency, communication needs or other issues.

MCFT acknowledges that:

- everyone who works with children has a responsibility for keeping them safe
- everyone who comes into contact with children and families has a role to play in sharing information and identifying concerns.

MCFT is committed to

- Valuing and listening to children and respecting their views
- Ensuring our paid staff, volunteers and trustees have access to safeguarding training and updates
- Providing basic safeguarding awareness to our staff, trustees and volunteers through induction training and regular update training
- Appointing a member of staff as Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and identifying a Designated Lead Trustee for Safeguarding (DLT)
- Ensuring, where relevant, that anyone hiring spaces from MCFT has in place appropriate safeguarding policies
- Including safeguarding risk assessments in all projects
- Providing effective management for staff and volunteers through supervision, support and training
- Recruiting staff and volunteers safely, ensuring all necessary checks are made
- Recording and storing information professionally and securely, and sharing information about safeguarding and good practice with children, their families, staff, trustees and volunteers
- Sharing concerns and relevant information with agencies who need to know, and involving children, young people, parents, families and carers appropriately
- Managing any allegations against staff and volunteers appropriately and with advice and support from the Surrey County Council LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer)
- Ensuring we have effective complaints and whistleblowing measures in place
- Ensuring that we provide a safe physical environment for children and young people, staff and volunteers, by applying health and safety measures in accordance with the law and regulatory guidance
- Ensuring recruitment and hiring practices are safe and meet up to date guidance and legislation
- Ensuring that our safeguarding policies are kept up to date and reflect current legislation and best practice

Responsible partners

Local safeguarding partners are responsible for child protection policy, procedure and guidance at a local level. The local safeguarding arrangements are led by three statutory safeguarding partners:

- the local authority
- the integrated care board (ICB, previously clinical commissioning group or 'CCG')
- the police.

Working together with other relevant agencies, they must co-ordinate and ensure the effectiveness of work to protect and promote the welfare of children, including making arrangements to identify and support children at risk of harm.

Information sharing

Timely sharing of information is key to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. Safeguarding is a clear and legitimate reason for sharing information and data protection law does not prevent this from happening.

Sharing information to safeguard children includes:

- Preventing harm
- Identifying risk to prevent harm
- Promoting the welfare of the child

People who work with children, in both paid or voluntary roles may need to share information about children and families they have contact with for a number of reasons including:

- Making a referral to arrange support for someone in the family
- Someone from another agency has asked for info about a child or family
- Someone in the family has asked to be referred for further help
- A statutory court order requires information to be shared
- You are concerned that a child or a member of their family may be at significant risk of harm
- You think a serious crime may have been committed or is about to be committed which involves someone in the family

What to do if you need to share information

- Ask advice from the MCFT DSL or Local Authority SPA if you are unsure, you can do this without sharing specific personal info relating to the child.
- Share what you need to and keep a record of the reasons why you are sharing
- Consider whether sharing puts the child's welfare or safety at risk
- Always seek consent to share information about the child and their family, unless in seeking consent this puts the child's welfare or safety at risk
- Even if consent is not given information can still be shared with relevant professionals for example if you are protecting a child from significant harm

Recognising Abuse

The following applies to all MCFT staff, trustees, contractors and volunteers working at MCFT and will be supported by training to enable everyone to understand their roles and responsibilities. The aim is to provide a robust framework which enables staff and volunteers to take appropriate action when they are concerned that a child is being harmed or abused or

is at risk of harm or abuse. The prime concern at all stages must be the interests and safety of the child. Where there is a conflict of interest between the child and an adult, the interests of the child must be paramount.

Children experiencing abuse often experience more than one type of abuse over a period of time. Children who experience abuse may be afraid to tell anybody about the abuse. They may struggle with feelings of guilt, shame or confusion – particularly if the abuser is a parent, caregiver or other close family member or friend.

Many of the signs that a child is being abused are the same regardless of the type of abuse. Anyone working with children or young people needs to be able to recognise the signs. These include a child:

- being afraid of particular places or making excuses to avoid particular people
- knowing about or being involved in 'adult issues' which are inappropriate for their age or stage of development, for example alcohol, drugs and/or sexual behaviour
- having angry outbursts or behaving aggressively towards others
- becoming withdrawn or appearing anxious, clingy or depressed
- self-harming or having thoughts about suicide
- showing changes in eating habits or developing eating disorders
- regularly experiencing nightmares or sleep problems
- regularly wetting the bed or soiling their clothes
- running away or regularly going missing from home or care
- not receiving adequate medical attention after injuries.

These signs do not necessarily mean that a child is being abused. There may well be other reasons for changes in a child's behaviour such as a bereavement or relationship problems between parents or carers. However, if there are any concerns about a child's wellbeing, they should be reported following MCFT's safeguarding procedures.

Children and young people who have been abused may want to tell someone, but not have the exact words to do so. They may attempt to disclose abuse by giving adults clues, through their actions and by using indirect words. Very young children and those with disabilities, special needs or with language delay may be more likely to communicate concerns with behaviours rather than words.

Adults need to be able to notice the signs that a child or young person might be distressed and ask them appropriate questions about what might have caused this.

Recognising Child Exploitation and Trafficking

Child Sexual Exploitation

Child sexual exploitation (CSE) is a type of sexual abuse. It happens when a child or young person is coerced, manipulated or deceived into sexual activity in exchange for things that they may need or want like gifts, drugs, money, status and affection. Children and young people are often tricked into believing they're in a loving and consensual relationship so the sexual activity may appear consensual. This is called grooming and is a type of abuse. They may trust their abuser and not understand that they're being abused. CSE does not always involve physical contact and can also occur through the use of technology.

CSE can happen in person or online. An abuser will gain a child's trust or control them through violence or blackmail before moving onto sexually abusing them. This can happen in a short period of time.

When a child is sexually exploited online they might be persuaded or forced to:

- send or post sexually explicit images of themselves
- film or stream sexual activities
- have sexual conversations.

Once an abuser has images, video or copies of conversations, they might use threats and blackmail to force a young person to take part in other sexual activity. They may also share the images and videos with others or circulate them online.

Gangs use sexual exploitation:

- to exert power and control
- for initiation
- to use sexual violence as a weapon.

Children or young people might be invited to parties or gatherings with others their own age or adults and given drugs and alcohol. They may be assaulted and sexually abused by one person or multiple perpetrators. The sexual assaults and abuse can be violent, humiliating and degrading. It's important to remember an intoxicated person cannot give consent to sexual activity.

Child Trafficking

Trafficking is where children and young people are tricked, forced or persuaded to leave their homes and are moved or transported and then exploited, forced to work or sold. Children are trafficked for:

- sexual exploitation
- benefit fraud
- forced marriage
- domestic slavery like cleaning, cooking and childcare
- forced labour in factories or agriculture
- committing crimes, like begging, theft, working on cannabis farms or moving drugs.

Trafficked children experience many types of abuse and neglect. Traffickers use physical, sexual and emotional abuse as a form of control. Children and young people are also likely to be physically and emotionally neglected and may be sexually exploited.

Children and young people can be trafficked into or within the UK for sexual exploitation. They're moved around the country and abused by being forced to take part in sexual activities, often with more than one person. Young people in gangs can also be sexually exploited.

Sometimes abusers use violence and intimidation to frighten or force a child or young person, making them feel as if they've no choice. They may lend them large sums of money they know can't be repaid or use financial abuse or blackmail to control them.

Anybody can be a perpetrator of CSE, no matter their age, gender or race. The relationship could be framed or viewed as friendship, someone to look up to or romantic. Children and young people who are exploited may also be made to 'find' or coerce others to join groups.

It's important to recognise that although the age of consent is 16 years old, children and young people over 16 can be exploited. Child sexual exploitation is a very complex form of abuse. It can be difficult for parents and carers to understand and hard for the young person to acknowledge that they are being exploited.

Action to be taken when abuse, exploitation or trafficking is suspected or disclosed

Action must be taken where a disclosure is made by the child OR where the disclosure is made by a third party OR where no disclosure is made but there is concern or suspicion arising due to behaviours, communication or physical signs of injury eg knocks and bumps in children, signs of pain or bruising etc in all children but especially in those who have limited mobility.

In all cases the member of staff, trustee or volunteer must:

1. Make an initial record of the information related to the concern.
2. Report it to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) immediately. If they are not available, then report it to the most senior MCFT staff member available on site and if that is not possible to the Designated Lead Trustee (DLT).
3. The DSL will consider if there is a requirement for immediate medical intervention, however, urgent medical attention should not be delayed if the DSL is not immediately available.
4. Make an accurate record (which may be used in any subsequent court proceedings) as soon as possible and within 24 hours of the occurrence, of all that has happened, including details of:
 - Dates and times of their observations
 - Dates and times of any discussions in which they were involved and the people concerned.
 - Any injuries that are evident
 - Explanations given by the child / adult
 - Rationale for decision making and action taken
 - Any actual words or phrases used by the child
5. The records must be signed and dated by the author or / equivalent on electronic based records
6. In the absence of the DSL, staff must be prepared to refer directly to Surrey Children's Single Point of Access (SPA) (and the police if appropriate) if there is the potential for immediate significant harm

DSL Actions following a report of concerns

1. Using the Surrey Safeguarding Children Boards (SSCB) Levels of Need, decide whether or not there are sufficient ground for suspecting significant harm, in which case a referral must be made to the Surrey Children's Single Point of Access (SPA). and the police if it is appropriate.
2. Normally the DSL should try to discuss any concerns about a child's welfare with the family/guardian and where possible to seek their agreement before making a referral to the Surrey Children's Single Point of Access (SPA). However, this should not be done when it will place the child at increased risk or could impact a police investigation. The child's views should also be taken into account.
3. If there are grounds to suspect a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm or abuse the DSL must act as follows:
 - a. **During normal office hours** contact the Surrey Children's Single Point of Access (SPA) which is available on **Tel 0300 470 9100**
 - b. **Out of hours Tel:** 01483 517898 to speak to the Local Authority emergency duty team
 - c. **Email:** cspa@surreycc.gov.uk Emails are only dealt with in normal office hours
 - d. If a child is in immediate danger and urgent protective action is required, the Police (dial 999) must be called. The DSL must also notify SPA of the occurrence and what action has been taken.
4. If the DSL feels unsure about whether a referral is necessary, they can phone the SPA or out of hours duty team to discuss concerns and seek advice
5. Where there are doubts or reservations about involving the child's family, the DSL should clarify with the SPA or the police whether the parents should be told about the referral and, if so, when and by whom. This is important in cases where the police may need to conduct a criminal investigation.
6. When a child is in need of urgent medical attention and there is suspicion of abuse the DSL, or in their absence the senior staff member or DLT should accompany the child to the accident and emergency unit at the nearest hospital, having first notified the SPA. Advice about what action the SPA will take and about informing the parents must be sought, remembering that parents should normally be informed that a child requires urgent hospital attention.

Monitoring and review

Any incident that raises safeguarding concerns, whether this is progressed by the responsible local authority or not, will be reported to the Trustee Board, to help inform overall understanding of the nature of safeguarding issues. Any safeguarding issues raised will help inform developments to this policy.

If in doubt seek advice, protecting children and young people is the paramount consideration.

Useful Contacts and information

MCFT Designated Safeguarding Officer: Sandy Weller - 01737 333 461 or 07476 053954

MCFT Designated Lead Trustee for Safeguarding: Dr David Aslett 07834163018

Contacting SPA

If you are concerned about the safety of a child or young person you can contact the Surrey Children's Single Point of Access (SPA). The SPA provides residents and people who work with children in Surrey with direct information, advice and guidance about where and how to find the appropriate support for children and families.

Opening times: 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday, Phone: 0300 470 9100

Out of hours phone: 01483 517898 to speak to the Local Authority emergency duty team.

Email: emails are dealt with during normal office hours

- For concerns for a child or young person: csmash@surreycc.gov.uk or cspa@surreycc.gov.uk
- For concerns for an adult: ascmarsh@surreycc.gov.uk

In an emergency, where there is immediate risk of harm to a child or young person, call the police on 999.

Concerns about the actions of staff or volunteers must be reported to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) **0300 123 1650** or LADO@surreycc.gov.uk

For further information about Surrey's Safeguarding Children Procedure see the Surrey Safeguarding Children Partnership website <https://surreyscb.procedures.org.uk/>

Signed:



Chair of Trustees

Date: 20.7.24

Date agreed by MCFT trustees: 29.5.24