

Safeguarding Policy and Procedure

Our policy statement sets Families Empowered beliefs and values to support the safeguarding of children and young people. Our procedures set out what to do if a child discloses abuse or makes an allegation.

Introduction

Families Empowered work with Local Authorities and Adoption Agencies to provide a range of therapeutic services and interventions to adoptive families, special guardians, foster carers, social care professionals and schools.

Families Empowered agree that “nothing is more important than children’s welfare” (*Working Together 2018*) and that everybody has a responsibility to safeguard children and promote their welfare.

If anyone working for Families Empowered is concerned that a child or vulnerable adult is being abused, or if a child or vulnerable adult makes a disclosure of abuse, we will act under our duty of care to report this.

The Purpose And Scope Of This Policy Statement

The purpose of this policy statement is:

- To protect children and young people who receive Families Empowered services from harm. This includes the children of adults who use our services.
- To provide staff and volunteers, as well as children and young people and their families, with the overarching principles that guide our approach to safeguarding and child protection.

This policy applies to anyone working on behalf of Families Empowered, including the director, management, employed staff, sessional workers, volunteers, students.

What Is Safeguarding?

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is defined by Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018) and recognised by Families Empowered as:

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

A Child-centred Approach To Safeguarding

Working together 2018 gives an insight into what children have said they want from a safeguarding system:

- vigilance: to have adults notice when things are troubling them
- understanding and action: to understand what is happening; to be heard and understood; and to have that understanding acted upon
- stability: to be able to develop an ongoing stable relationship of trust with those helping them
- respect: to be treated with the expectation that they are competent rather than not
- information and engagement: to be informed about and involved in procedures, decisions, concerns and plans
- explanation: to be informed of the outcome of assessments and decisions and reasons when their views have not met with a positive response
- support: to be provided with support in their own right as well as a member of their family
- advocacy: to be provided with advocacy to assist them in putting forward their views
- protection: to be protected against all forms of abuse and discrimination and the right to special protection and help if a refugee.

Legal Framework

This policy has been drawn up on the basis of legislation, policy and guidance that seeks to protect children in England including;

- The Children Act (1989),
- The Children Act (2004)
- Children and Social Work Act (2017)
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018)

How We Safeguard Children

Families Empowered Recognises That:

- The welfare of children is paramount in all the work we do and in all the decisions we take
- All children, regardless of age, disability, sex, gender, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation have an equal right to protection from all types of harm and abuse
- Some children are additionally vulnerable because of the impact of previous experiences, their level of dependency, communication needs or other issues
- Working in partnership with children, young people, their parents, carers and other agencies is essential in promoting young people's welfare

We Will Seek To Keep Children Safe By:

- Valuing, listening to and respecting them.
- Having a Designated Child Protection Lead

- Adopting child protection and safeguarding best practice through our policies, procedures and code of conduct for staff and volunteers and monitoring this through regular management meetings
- Developing and implementing an effective online safety policy
- Providing effective management for staff and volunteers through supervision, support, training and quality assurance measures so that all staff and volunteers know about and follow our policies and procedures confidently and competently.
- Ensuring all staff receive regular safeguarding training and provide regular opportunities to update training and knowledge, including any learning from Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (SPRs) - previously called serious case reviews
- Recruiting and selecting staff and volunteers safely, ensuring all necessary checks are made.
- Recording, storing and using information professionally and securely in line with data protection legislation and guidance (more information about this is available from the Information Commissioner's Office: ico.org.uk/for-organisation)
- Sharing information about safeguarding and good practice with children and their families
- Making sure that children, young people and their families know where to go for help if they have a concern
- Using our safeguarding policy and procedures to share concerns and relevant information with agencies who need to know and involving children, young people, parents, families and carers appropriately
- Using our procedures to manage any allegations against staff and volunteers
- Creating and maintaining an anti-bullying environment and ensuring that we have a policy and procedure to help us deal effectively with any bullying that does arise
- Ensuring that we have effective complaints and whistleblowing measures in place
- Ensuring that we provide a safe physical environment for our children, young people, staff and volunteers, by applying health and safety measures in accordance with the law and regulatory guidance.
- Building a safeguarding culture where staff and volunteers, children, young people and their families, treat each other with respect and are comfortable about sharing concerns

Supporting Documents

This policy statement should be read alongside the Families Empowered policies, procedures, and other related documents, including:

- Role description for the designated safeguarding officer
- Code of Conduct
- Privacy Policy
- Recruitment Policy
- Online safety
- Anti-bullying Policy
- Complaints Policy and Procedure
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Health and Safety Policy

- Employees' Guide
- Induction and supervision Policies

In addition to the above, staff will find a range of supporting legislation, guidance, Serious Case Reviews and Local Authority Safeguarding information in the Safeguarding area of the Families Empowered Business Library folder.

An overview of child safeguarding practice reviews can be access via the NSPCC website at:

[Search for a case review](#)

What Is Child Abuse

Child abuse is when a child is harmed by an adult or another child, either by commision or omission and can be over a period of time or as a result of a one-off action. It can be physical, sexual, neglect or emotional and it can happen in person or online.

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse is when someone hurts or harms a child or young person on purpose. It includes:

- hitting with hands or objects
- slapping and punching
- kicking
- shaking
- throwing
- poisoning
- burning and scalding
- biting and scratching
- breaking bones
- drowning.

It's important to remember that physical abuse is any way of intentionally causing physical harm to a child or young person. It also includes making up the symptoms of an illness or causing a child to become unwell.

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse includes:

- humiliating or constantly criticising a child
- threatening, shouting at a child or calling them names
- making the child the subject of jokes, or using sarcasm to hurt a child
- blaming and scapegoating
- making a child perform degrading acts
- not recognising a child's own individuality or trying to control their lives
- pushing a child too hard or not recognising their limitations
- exposing a child to upsetting events or situations, like domestic abuse or drug taking
- failing to promote a child's social development
- not allowing them to have friends
- persistently ignoring them

- being absent
- manipulating a child
- never saying anything kind, expressing positive feelings or congratulating a child on successes
- never showing any emotions in interactions with a child, also known as emotional neglect.

Sexual Abuse

There are 2 types of sexual abuse – contact and non-contact abuse. And sexual abuse can happen in person or online.

Contact abuse is where an abuser makes physical contact with a child. This includes:

- sexual touching of any part of a child's body, whether they're clothed or not
- using a body part or object to rape or penetrate a child
- forcing a child to take part in sexual activities
- making a child undress or touch someone else.
- Contact abuse can include touching, kissing and oral sex – sexual abuse isn't just penetrative.

Non-contact abuse is where a child is abused without being touched by the abuser. This can be in person or online and includes:

- exposing or flashing
- showing pornography
- exposing a child to sexual acts
- making them masturbate
- forcing a child to make, view or share child abuse images or videos
- making, viewing or distributing child abuse images or videos
- forcing a child to take part in sexual activities or conversations online or through a smartphone.

Neglect

Neglect can be a lot of different things, which can make it hard to spot. But broadly speaking, there are 4 types of neglect.

- Physical neglect
A child's basic needs, such as food, clothing or shelter, are not met or they aren't properly supervised or kept safe.
- Educational neglect
A parent doesn't ensure their child is given an education.
- Emotional neglect
A child doesn't get the nurture and stimulation they need. This could be through ignoring, humiliating, intimidating or isolating them.
- Medical neglect
A child isn't given proper health care. This includes dental care and refusing or ignoring medical recommendations.

Other areas of abuse

Child Abuse could also come from the from the following:

- Bullying and Cyberbullying
- CSE
- Child Trafficking
- Criminal Exploitation and Gangs
- Domestic Abuse
- FGM
- Online Abuse

Some Common Signs Of Child Abuse

The signs of child abuse aren't always obvious and a child might not feel able to tell anyone what's happening to them. Sometimes, children don't even realise that what's happening to them is abuse (NSPCC)

Although the following does not necessarily mean that a child is being abused, there are some common signs that there may be something concerning happening in a child's life, including:

- unexplained changes in behaviour or personality
- becoming withdrawn
- seeming anxious
- becoming uncharacteristically aggressive
- lacks social skills and has few friends, if any
- poor bond or relationship with a parent
- knowledge of adult issues inappropriate for their age
- running away or going missing
- always choosing to wear clothes which cover their body

Child Protection Procedures – Responding To Concerns About Abuse – Managing Disclosure And Concerns

Effective sharing of information between practitioners and local organisations and agencies is essential for early identification of need, assessment and service provision to keep children safe. Serious case reviews (SCRs) have highlighted that missed opportunities to record, understand the significance of and share information in a timely manner can have severe consequences for the safety and welfare of children (Working Together 2018).

How To Respond To A Concern

If a child tells you something has happened you should:

- Stay calm and caring - do not let your own feelings be seen by the child, such as anger or shock)
- listen carefully to what they're saying
- let them know they've done the right thing by telling you and you will take them seriously
- tell them it's not their fault
- do not asking leading questions
- explain what you'll do next
- Don't make promises you cannot keep, such as saying you will keep what they have said a secret
- don't confront the alleged abuser
- Write down what the child said as soon as possible, using the child's own words - do not give your opinion but state what you have been told - use the Families Empowered Safeguarding Reporting Form, which can be found in the Business Library under Safeguarding
- Contact the Families Empowered Designated Safeguarding Lead or the Director immediately following the disclosure to report the information and to get further advice and support

Recording Concerns And Disclosures

An accurate and timely account of any disclosure by a child will be needed as soon as possible so it is important to contact the Designated Safeguarding Lead or the Director immediately following any concern or disclosure to ensure that Families Empowered takes the appropriate action effectively and promptly. Having an accurate written record will also make information sharing easier. The information you need to include can be found on the Families Empowered Safeguarding Recording Form and should include:

- Name, age, gender and ethnicity of the child
- Details of the injury or abuse
- Date and time of the incident or disclosure
- Who was present at the time

- Details of who raised the concern if it was another adult or child
- What the child was doing before or during the time when the concern was raised
- Who said what - using exact words
- Details of any action taken
- Name of the person the concern was reported to with date and time
- Name of the person reporting the concern

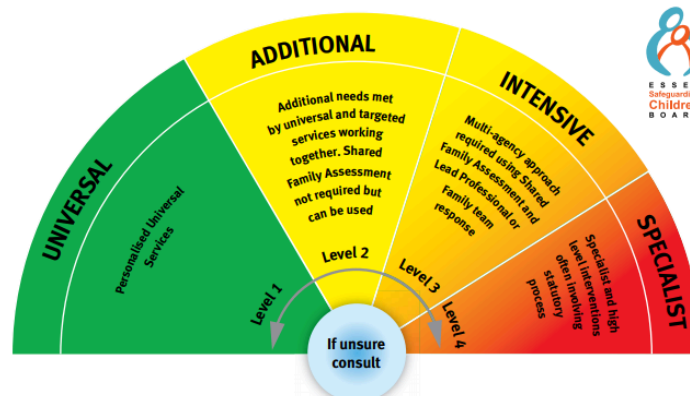
What Happens Next?

The Designated Safeguarding Lead or Director will contact the relevant Local Authority and use that authority's own procedures and paperwork as necessary. The Local Authority will then follow their procedures, using the 'thresholds' guidance to investigate and determine what action, if any, is to be taken and what, if any, intervention is needed. An example of a threshold overview is given below but full details can be found in each authority's multi-agency guidance. The Local Authority will contact Families Empowered if any further information is needed.

If a concern involves an adult who works with children or vulnerable adults, we will need to consult with the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO). See the section below on what happens if the concern involves someone undertaking work for Families Empowered.

The Essex Effective Support Windscreen

Multi Agency Guidance: Working in partnership to help children and families improve their lives



All partners working with children, young people and their families will offer support as soon as we are aware of any additional needs. We will always seek to work together to provide support to children, young people and their families at the lowest level possible in accordance with their needs.

Once a decision is made by the Local Authority, feedback should be given to the referrer on the decisions taken within one working day. Where appropriate, this feedback should include the reasons why a case may not meet the statutory threshold and offer suggestions for other sources of more suitable support. Practitioners should always follow up their concerns if they are not satisfied with the Local Authority children's social care response and should escalate their concerns if they remain dissatisfied. An explanation of the processes used by Local Authorities to manage cases and the flowcharts for those processes can be found in Working Together

(2018), a copy of which can be found in the Families Empowered Business Library under Safeguarding.

Contact details for a Local Authority can be found via its Local Safeguarding Partnership website page by doing an internet search for the name of the Local Authority and adding 'Local Safeguarding Partnership'. This will also give guidance on thresholds and advice for partner agencies.

Families Empowered currently works with the following Local Authorities and the links to reporting concerns, with telephone numbers, is given for each below:

Essex - [Concerns about the welfare of a child](#)

Hertfordshire - [Hertfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership](#).

Cambridge - [Concerned? | Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Safeguarding Partnership Board](#)

Redbridge - [Redbridge - Child protection](#)

Suffolk - [Concerned? » Suffolk Safeguarding Partnership](#)

Southend <http://www.safeguardingsouthend.co.uk/>

Hillingdon - [Concerned about a child's safety? - Hillingdon Council](#).

Devon - [Children's social care - Devon County Council](#).

Nottingham - [Worried about a Child - Nottingham City Council](#).

Havering - <https://safeguardinghavering.org.uk/childrenpartnership/worried-about-a-child/>

Wolverhampton - <https://www.wolverhamptonsafeguarding.org.uk/report-a-concern>

(Adoption at Heart)

Norfolk - <https://norfolkscp.org.uk/people-working-with-children/how-to-raise-a-concern>

Many Local Authorities also have a professional consultation service with their MASH teams (Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub) which can be called if safeguarding advice is needed. Their details are given on their advice and information pages as well as contact details for referrals made out of office hours.

This is the link to the effective support booklet for all practitioners and a process map for support from Essex:

[escb-effectivesupportbooklet2021v7.pdf](#)

[Essex LA - candf-hub-partner-process-map.pdf](#)

If A Concern Or Allegation Is Made Against A Member Of Staff

Families Empowered will take any concerns raised about staff or volunteers seriously, regardless of who the person is, how long they've been involved with the organisation, or whether they are directly employed.

If an allegation or safeguarding concern is raised against a member of staff, we will not attempt to investigate the matter, but will gather the facts and keep written records. If an allegation is made that a staff member or volunteer has:

- behaved in a way that has harmed, or may have harmed a child
- possibly committed a criminal offence against, or related to, a child

- behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm
- behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children to children

The Designated Safeguarding Office, Director or member of staff will contact the LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer) for the authority where the alleged allegation took place for discussion and instruction

The LADO will lead and guide on the procedure for managing the allegation and has management and oversight of the investigation process from beginning to end following an allegation against people in a position of trust who work with children.

The LADO is not the decision maker – this remains with the employer, but they will provide advice and guidance, liaise with police and other agencies and monitor progress of cases to ensure they are dealt with as quickly as possible, consistent with a fair and thorough process.

There may be up to three strands in the consideration of an allegation:

- The enquiry and assessment by Children and Young People's Services about whether a child is in need of protection or in need of services.
- A police investigation of a possible criminal offence.
- Consideration by an employer of disciplinary action in respect of the individual.

Staff may be asked not to continue work until the investigation has reached its conclusion. Employed staff who are asked not to undertake further work will be given paid leave until the investigation has been concluded. All staff are expected to cooperate with safeguarding enquiries as part of their work contract and as part of our Code of Conduct.

Historical Abuse

Disclosures of historical abuse will be reported to relevant authorities as a safeguarding measure but this will be done tactfully and with sensitivity. It has to be borne in mind that an abuser may still pose a risk to children and for this reason historical abuse has to be considered as significant.

All concerns about historical abuse should be reported to the relevant authorities – i.e. police, children's social worker or Ofsted, Lado or Local Authority Safeguarding Team. Children will have to be informed of this action in a tactful manner that helps them to feel safe.

If You Are Not Happy With The Outcome Of A Concern

If you are not happy with the outcome decided by the Local Authority you should speak to the Designated Safeguarding Lead to discuss your ongoing concerns. Your Local Safeguarding Partnership will have details of what you can do if you remain unhappy with the outcome of an investigation.

The Data Protection Act 2018 and General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)

The Data Protection Act 2018 and GDPR do not prevent the sharing of information for the purposes of keeping children safe. Fears about sharing information must not be allowed to stand in the way of the need to promote welfare and protect the safety of children. To ensure effective safeguarding arrangements:

- Staff should follow the Families Empowered Privacy Policy for sharing information.
- Information critical to a child's safety may be shared with others who may be involved in a child's life in order to safeguard them
- Practitioners should not assume that someone else will pass on information that they think may be critical to keeping a child safe
- GDPR provides a number of bases for sharing personal information. It is not necessary to seek consent to share information for the purposes of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of a child provided that there is a lawful basis to process any personal information required. The legal bases that may be appropriate for sharing data in these circumstances could be 'legal obligation' or 'public task' which includes the performance of a task in the public interest or the exercise of official authority (WT 2018)
- Ensuring sharing of information is necessary, proportionate, relevant, adequate, accurate, timely and secure: ensure that the information you share is necessary for the purpose for which you are sharing it, is shared only with those individuals who need to have it, is accurate and up-to-date, is shared in a timely fashion, and is shared securely

Storing Information

All safeguarding concerns will be held electronically and securely on the Families Empowered Workspace Google Drive and access will only be available to the Director and Safeguarding Manager. Records will be held for a period of 7 years after the child's 18th birthday and will be reviewed annually by the Director.

Whistle Blowing

If you have any concerns relating to Safeguarding within Families Empowered please contact the Director or Designated Safeguarding Lead. If you feel your concerns are not taken seriously you can report them to relevant authorities such as Ofsted or LADO.

Lone Working And Professional Boundaries

In line with our Health & Safety Policy, we advise staff to risk assess any situation in which they work alone with children. It is best to see children with their parents in proximity or to make sure that doors to rooms are open and that children can call parents or gain access to adults whenever needed. Staff should never befriend children, adults or vulnerable adults outside of their work with them.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead

The Designated Safeguarding Lead will ensure that all employees, staff, students and volunteers working with Families Empowered by working with the Director to:

- Ensure that staff keep up to date with safeguarding information and training
- Update safeguarding policies and procedures and ensure staff are familiar with them
- Be a source of safeguarding advice for staff
- Lead on safeguarding referrals and support staff involved in safeguarding referrals
- Ensure safer recruitment policies are in place
- Ensure that staff know who the safeguarding lead and who to contact when the safeguarding lead is not available
- Keep safeguarding records safe and secure
- Ensure that Induction and supervision processes are in place
- Encourage a culture of open communication

Safeguarding Lead Contact Details

Designated Safeguarding Lead and Director lead for Safeguarding and Child Protection

Deborah Sharratt

07917 440683

deborah@familiesempowered.co.uk

Monitoring and Review

This policy statement came into force on 1 April 2020.

We are committed to reviewing our policy and good practice annually.

Signed 

| Version | Reason for Revision | Reviewer | Date |
|---------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|-----------------|
| 2 | Revised and updated Policy and Procedure, change of safeguarding lead | Wendy Edgell - DSL | January 2021 |
| 3 | Annual Review and addition of links for LAs we are working with and addition of information around child safeguarding practice reviews | Wendy Edgell - DSL | 19 January 2022 |
| 4 | Update for section on Allegations against staff | Wendy Edgell DSL | 20 March 2022 |
| 5 | Review and update of Local Authority safeguarding websites | Wendy Edgell DSL | 20/03/2023 |
| 6 | Addition of safeguarding contacts for LAs and procedures around allegations for staff following updated training | Wendy Edgell DSL | 2/11/2023 |
| 7 | Update to DSL and Manager Lead | WE | 12.4.24 |