



Allsorts Safeguarding Children Policy

Purpose

This policy provides protection for the children who receive Allsorts services and provides staff and volunteers with guidance on procedures they should adopt in the event that they suspect a child may be experiencing, or be at risk of, harm.

This policy applies to all staff, including managers and committee members, paid staff, volunteers, students or anyone working on behalf of Allsorts.

Practice

Allsorts believes that it is unacceptable for a child or young person to experience abuse of any kind and recognises its responsibilities to safeguard the welfare of all children, by a commitment to practice which protects them.

We recognise that:

- The welfare of the child is paramount.
- All children regardless of age, disability, gender, racial heritage, religious belief, sexual orientation or identity have the right to equal protection from all types of harm and abuse.
- Working in partnership with children, their parents, carers and other agencies is essential in promoting young people's welfare.

This policy applies to all staff, including managers and committee members, paid staff, volunteers, students or anyone working on behalf of Allsorts.

We will endeavour to safeguard children by:

- Valuing them, listening to them and respecting them.
- Adopting child protection guidelines through procedures and a code of conduct for staff and volunteers.
- Recruiting staff and volunteers safely, ensuring all necessary checks are made.
- Sharing information about child protection and good practice with children, parents, staff and volunteers.

- Sharing information about concerns with agencies who need to know and involving parents and children appropriately.
- Providing effective management for staff and volunteers through supervision, support and training.

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

Safeguarding Procedures

At Allsorts we have a designated person for dealing with these issues at each setting.

Types of abuse:

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 fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child.

Physical abuse, as well as being a result of an act of commission, can also be caused through omission or the failure to act to protect.

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 insofar as they meet the needs of another person.

It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond the child's developmental capabilities, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction.

It may involve seeing or hearing the ill treatment of another. It may involve causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploration 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, including prostitution, 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.

Boys and girls can be sexually abused by males and/or females, adults and by other young people. This includes people from all different walks of life.

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. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food and clothing, shelter including exclusion from home or danger, failure to ensure adequate supervision including the use of adequate care-takers, 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.

Signs of Abuse

Physical abuse

Most children will collect cuts and bruises in their daily life. These are likely to be in places where there are bony parts of their body, like elbows, knees and shins. Some children however will have bruising which can almost only have been caused non- accidentally. An important indicator of physical abuse is where bruises or injuries are unexplained or the explanation does not fit the injury. A delay in seeking medical treatment for a child when it is obviously necessary is also a cause for concern. Bruising may be more or less noticeable on children with different skin tones or from different racial groups and specialist advice may need to be taken.

Patterns of bruising that are suggestive of physical child abuse include:

- Bruising in children who are not independently mobile
- Bruising in babies
- Bruises that are seen away from bony prominences
- Bruises to the face, back, stomach, arms, buttocks, ears and hands
- Multiple bruises in clusters
- Multiple bruises of uniform shape
- Bruises that carry the imprint of an implement used, hand marks or fingertips

Although bruising is the most common injury in physical abuse, fatal non- accidental head injury and non- accidental fractures can occur without bruising. Any child who has unexplained signs of pain or illness should be seen promptly by a doctor.

Other physical signs of abuse may include:

- Cigarette burns
- Adult bite marks
- Broken bones
- Scalds
- Injuries to the mouth including cuts, sores or broken skin.

Changes in behaviour which can also indicate physical abuse

- Fear of parents being approached for an explanation
- Aggressive behaviour or severe temper outbursts
- Flinching when approached or touched
- Reluctance to get changed, for example wearing long sleeves in hot weather
- Running away from home

Emotional Abuse

The physical signs of emotional abuse may include

- A failure to thrive or grow, particularly if the child puts on weight in other circumstances e.g. in hospital or away from their parent's care
- Sudden speech disorders
- Developmental delay, either in terms of physical or emotional progress

Changes in behaviour which can also indicate emotional abuse include

- Neurotic behaviour e.g. sulking, hair twisting, rocking
- Being unable to play
- Fear of making mistakes
- Self-harm
- Fear of parents being approached regarding their behaviour

Sexual Abuse

The physical signs of sexual abuse may include

- Pain or itching in the genital/anal areas
- Bruising or bleeding near genital/ anal areas
- Sexually transmitted diseases
- Vaginal discharge or infection
- Stomach pains
- Discomfort when walking or sitting down
- Pregnancy

Changes in behaviour which can also indicate sexual abuse include

- Sudden or unexplained changes in behaviour, e.g. becoming aggressive or withdrawn
- Fear of being left with a specific person or group of people
- Having nightmares
- Running away from home
- Sexual knowledge which is beyond their age or developmental level
- Sexual drawings or language
- Bedwetting
- Eating problems such as overeating or anorexia
- Self-harm or mutilation, sometimes leading to suicide attempts
- Saying they have secrets they cannot tell anyone about
- Substance or drug abuse
- Suddenly having unexplained sources of money
- Not being allowed to have friends (particularly in adolescence)
- Acting in a sexually explicit way towards adults

Neglect

Neglect can be a difficult form of abuse to recognise, yet have some of the most lasting and damaging effects on children.

The physical signs of neglect may include

- Constant hunger, sometimes stealing food from other children
- Constantly dirty or smelly
- Loss of weight, or being constantly underweight
- Inappropriate dress for the conditions

Changes in behaviour which can also indicate neglect may include

- Complaining of being tired all the time
- Not requesting medical assistance and/or failing to attend medical appointments
- Having few friends
- Mentioning their being left alone or unsupervised

The above list is not meant to be definitive but as a guide to assist you. It is important to remember that many children and young people will exhibit some of these indicators at some time and the presence of one or more should not be taken as proof that abuse is occurring. There may well be other reasons for changes in behaviour, such as a death or the birth of a new baby in the family, relationship problems between their parents/ carers etc.

Responding to signs or suspicions of abuse

- Stay calm
- Report signs or suspicions to designated person or person in charge
- Record signs
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Responding to a child disclosing abuse

- Stay calm
- Listen carefully to what is being said
- Find an appropriate early opportunity to explain that it is likely that the information will need to be shared with others - do not promise to keep secrets
- Allow the child to continue at his/her own pace
- Ask questions for clarification only, and at all times avoid asking questions that suggest a particular answer
- Reassure the child that they have done the right thing in telling you
- Tell them what you will do next and with whom the information will be shared
- Record in writing what was said using the child's own words as soon as possible- note date, time, any names mentioned. To whom the information was given and ensure that the record is signed and dated
- Contact your designated person

Concerns about a child's safety and welfare

Parents or carers should inform Allsorts via phone, family, or email if their child is unable to attend their usual session for any reason, at their earliest convenience.

If a child is absent for an extended period or is absent without prior notification from the parent or carer, Allsorts has a duty to attempt to contact the child's parents or carers to understand the reason for the absence. If the parent or carer cannot be reached, the child's emergency contacts will be contacted instead until a response is obtained.

The information regarding the child's absence will help Allsorts identify patterns and trends in attendance. This information, along with the family's and child's personal circumstances, including any vulnerabilities, combined with the Designated Safeguarding Lead's professional judgment, will determine whether the child's absence should be classified as prolonged. If there are concerns regarding attendance, especially if it persists for an extended period, a referral will be made to the local children's services, and/or a police welfare check may be requested.

What the designated person will then do

- Check all records
- Gather all information
- Contact local authority children's services and/or police
- Follow up referral in writing within 48 hrs

Contact numbers are as follows

- Weymouth Children's services- 01305 760139
- Children's services out of hours service- 01202 657279
- Police (emergency) 999
- Police (non-emergency) 01202 222222

Responding to allegations of abuse against a staff member, other worker or volunteer

Each allegation will be handled appropriately according to the situation. It would be usual for the manager to immediately contact the Children's Services local office to report the allegation to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) (01305 221122).

In the event of this happening the staff member, volunteer or other worker will be informed immediately of the allegation and in confidence asked to give a report of the situation. The staff member will then usually be asked to take paid leave with immediate effect whilst further investigation is made for a period of up to 2 weeks.

Any allegations of abuse against a staff member will be immediately reported to Children's Services and will not be investigated by the setting unless asked to do so by authorities. After this period a decision will be made by the relevant authorities, and possibly the Committee and Director as to whether further investigation time is needed or other action needs to be taken. The committee will be informed immediately and Ofsted will also be informed.

If necessary, the police will be called in and full support given to the authorities investigating the allegation.

The grievance and disciplinary procedure will be followed to deal with the issue. Confidentiality will be maintained.

Any family concerned will receive the settings full support while the investigation is ongoing. All procedures will be recorded and kept securely.

Dependant on the investigation result the staff member will also receive the settings support. It must be noted that dismissal may well be a result of allegations depending on the investigation.

Recording information

Any information recorded will be kept securely and confidentially and only shared with relevant agencies. Information will be factual and not supposition.

Any marks or injuries noticed on a child will be recorded on a body diagram. If a child arrives at a session with noticeable marks and injuries, we will again record them with the parent's acknowledgement via Family.

Staff members witnessing incidents, being told information or noticing signs and symptoms will record such information with support from the designated person.

Legislation / guidance

We give regard to legislation, government guidance and standards which are designed to ensure that children are protected from harm such as:

Prevent Duty Guidance 2015

Equality Act 2010

The Children Act 1989,2004

The Childcare Act 2006

The Human Rights Act 1998 and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

Protection of Children Act 1999

The Police Act 1997

Disclosure and Barring Service

Interagency Working Together to Safeguard Children -2013

What to do if you are worried a child is being abused -2006

Extremism and radicalisation

See Prevent Duty Policy

Confidentiality and Information sharing

- Children will be explained to at the outset, openly and honestly, what and how information will or could be shared and why, and seek their agreement. The exception to this is where to do so would put the child or others at increased risk of significant harm, or if it would undermine the prevention, detection or prosecution of a serious crime including where seeking consent might lead to interference with any potential investigation.

- We will ensure that the information we share is accurate and up to date, necessary for the purpose for which it is being shared, sharing only with those people who need to see it and shared securely.
- The reasons for sharing or not sharing information will also be recorded.

Safe practice

Birth certificates

All new families will need to show birth certificates for the child they are registering with us.

Recruitment and adults within the setting

When recruiting staff references will be taken from work and character referees before starting work as well as enhanced DBS checks completed on all staff. Staff will be employed on a 6-month probation period and will be closely supervised during that period. Any adult that has regular contact with the children will be required to have an enhanced DBS. Any employment within the setting is excluded from the 'Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974'. Any known offenders with crimes against children or violence will not be allowed access to the setting or the children.

No adult without an enhanced DBS will accompany children to the toilet. References will always be followed up to further ensure a staff member's suitability.

Qualifications will be checked by seeing original documents and checking the authenticity of the qualification. During the recruitment procedure there will be no discrimination under the 9 'protected characteristics'.

Induction, training and supervision

On induction all staff will be given a copy of the settings policies and procedures. The area of safeguarding will be discussed and made sure is understood. This is enhanced by asking each new employee to complete a paragraph on their understanding of their role in safeguarding as part of their induction. In house and external training on child protection issues will be given to all employees and each setting will have a designated person responsible for Safeguarding Children. In house updates will be completed yearly in staff meetings and external level 2 training, every 2 years for staff, DSL update training every 2 years for the DSL.

Training must be renewed every two years. Providers may consider whether any staff need to undertake annual refresher training during any two-year period to help maintain basic skills and keep up to date with any changes to safeguarding procedures or as a result of any safeguarding concerns that occur in the setting.

All new employees, students and volunteers will be closely supervised and it is usual to have 2 staff or adults in any room at a time wherever possible. All children will at all times be supervised and children will be encouraged to gain confidence and independence and learn appropriate ways to express themselves. Posters are around the setting showing what to do if you are worried a child is being abused. Safeguarding will also be a recurrent theme at staff meetings and addressed at set Supervision times. The Designated safeguarding officer is clearly identified within the setting.

Appropriate behaviour

No staff member should be in an enclosed area alone with a child. If this is necessary for any reason other staff members should be informed. At least 2 staff members should always be in any room or area at any time when children are present or should at least be visible and within calling distance of other staff.

Although comfort and cuddles are needed in children of preschool age it is inappropriate for any one staff member (student or volunteer) to do so for prolonged periods. In children older than preschool age it should not be necessary to cuddle a child except in emergency situations of illness or injury.

It is important that no staff member shows favouritism to any child. Staff should ensure they are dressed appropriately according to staff uniform policy. Language used in the setting should be appropriate to the ages of the children. Staff should ensure they do not give gifts to any child or accept gifts from children or families except at the usual times of Christmas and on leaving.

Confidentiality

Staff or adults, students, volunteers in the setting should maintain confidentiality at all times with regard to our confidentiality policy

Offenders

It is Allsorts policy to exclude known convicted child abusers from the premises and grounds of all Allsorts settings. In the case of sex offenders this will also apply to suspected offenders. This exclusion includes functions, fundraising events and activities such as sports day, nativity play etc.

If a known offender comes onto the grounds Allsorts will contact agencies such as police and Children's Services immediately.

Whistle blowing

See Whistle Blowing Policy.

This policy and procedure document has been written with regard to

- Local Safeguarding Children Board guidance
- Working together to safeguard children document
- What to do if you're worried a child is being abused document
- Ofsted recommendations

Safeguarding Training

At Allsorts, we prioritise safeguarding as a core component of our culture. Our staff receive support in applying their safeguarding training through clear, accessible, and regularly updated policies. These policies help practitioners understand their roles and responsibilities when responding to concerns.

We encourage open communication and foster trusting relationships, ensuring staff feel respected and heard through discussions and information sharing. Staff are not expected to conduct safeguarding investigations. Instead, they follow a robust internal reporting structure when a safeguarding concern arises. They are aware of who the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and Deputy DSL are, so they can pass on relevant information, and they know these professionals are available to provide advice, offer support, and liaise with external authorities.

All staff are encouraged to build strong relationships with parents to facilitate effective communication and the right support regarding safeguarding their children. Safeguarding is a standing agenda item in staff meetings to ensure that everyone stays updated on changes in regulations and information about vulnerable children in the setting.

Supervisions are conducted each term, providing practitioners with the opportunity to discuss concerns, reflect on their practice, and build confidence in implementing safeguarding procedures. However, we maintain an open-door policy and encourage staff to have important discussions as soon as possible, rather than waiting for their scheduled supervisions.

All staff at Allsorts participate in regular safeguarding training conducted through the Dorset Council Safeguarding Training Programs every two years. The DSL and Deputy DSL are trained to Level 3, while all other staff receive training at Level 2