



## **Play Midlothian**

### **Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy**

#### **Introduction**

Play Midlothian is committed to the protection of children and young people and regards the safeguarding and promotion of their interests and wellbeing as of paramount concern.

The purpose of this policy is:

- To protect children and young people who receive Play Midlothian's services from harm
- (this includes the children of adults who use our services)
- To provide staff and volunteers, as well as children, young people and their families, with the overarching principles that guide our approach to child protection

This policy applies to anyone working on behalf of Play Midlothian, including senior managers and the board of trustees, paid staff, volunteers, casual workers, agency staff and students.

We believe that:

- Children and young people should never experience neglect or abuse of any kind
- We have a responsibility to promote the welfare of all children and young people, to keep them safe and to practise in a way that protects them

We recognise 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, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation have an equal right to protection from all types of harm or 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.

A breach of this policy will be treated as a disciplinary matter.

#### **Responsibilities**

It is the duty of all those involved with, representing or employed by the organisation to prevent the physical, sexual or emotional abuse of all children and young people (defined as anyone under 18) with whom they come into contact with - this is not only our service users or children who are our focus, it is any child.

All employees and volunteers have a duty to:

- Familiarise themselves with this policy and procedures
- Report child protection concerns to social work or the police (then later inform the safeguarding officer for record keeping)
- Raise general concerns about children's wellbeing with the safeguarding officer
- Advise their line manager immediately if they are under suspicion or accused of any conduct which may affect their suitability to work with children

Line managers have a duty to:

- Empower staff to immediately report child protection concerns to social work or the police
- Be responsive and supportive to any service user, employee or volunteer who so raises a concern

## **Definitions**

### ***Child***

The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 defines a child as someone under the age of 18. However, the Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Act 2007 can be applied to over-16s where the criteria are met. The individual young person's circumstances should be considered, however the priority is to ensure that a vulnerable young person who is, or may be, at risk of significant harm is offered support and protection.

### ***Safeguarding***

Safeguarding is what we do to ensure safe and effective care of children at Play Midlothian, for example safe recruitment practices and using the Getting It Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) framework. The majority of this policy is focused on child protection, however there is also further information about safeguarding in practice.

### ***Child protection***

Child protection means protecting a child from child abuse or neglect. Abuse or neglect need not have taken place; it is sufficient to have identified a likelihood or risk of significant harm from abuse or neglect.

### ***Abuse and neglect***

Abuse and neglect are forms of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting, or by failing to act to prevent, significant harm to the child. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional setting, by those known to them or, more rarely, by a stranger.

The following definitions show some of the ways in which this may be experienced by a child but are not exhaustive, as the individual circumstances of abuse will vary from child to child.

- Physical abuse: This may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning or suffocating. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer feigns the symptoms of, or deliberately causes, ill health to a child they are looking after
- Emotional abuse: Persistent emotional neglect or ill treatment that has severe and persistent adverse effects on a child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to a child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may involve the imposition of age or developmentally inappropriate expectations on a child. It may involve causing children to feel frightened or in danger, or exploiting or corrupting children.

- Sexual abuse: Any act that involves the child in any activity for the sexual gratification of another person, whether or not it is claimed that the child either consented or assented, and 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 the production of indecent images or in watching sexual activities, using sexual language towards a child 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. It may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, to protect a child from physical harm or danger, or to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or failure to respond to, a child's basic emotional needs. Neglect may also result in the child being diagnosed as suffering from 'non-organic failure to thrive', where they have significantly failed to reach normal weight and growth or development milestones and where physical and genetic reasons have been medically eliminated.

### **What to do if a child tells you they are being abused/neglected or at risk of abuse/neglect OR you suspect they are**

You must report this to social work or the police immediately. Every one of us holds this same individual responsibility, regardless of our roles in the organisation. Do not delay reporting to speak with a colleague - every minute of delay adds risk to that child's safety. It is your individual responsibility to report it to social work or the police right away.

You can reach Midlothian Council's Children's Services duty team on 0131 271 6674 (office hours) or 0800 731 6969 (out of hours) or the police on 101 (or in an emergency 999).

Afterwards, you should update the safeguarding officer so that they can maintain the appropriate records and provide you with support.

Feedback on the outcome of social work investigations should be requested by the safeguarding officer.

### **What to do if you have general concerns about a child**

Sometimes it can be difficult to know if a child is being abused or is at risk of abuse. You might have general concerns about a child but be unsure whether or not there is a child protection issue.

Remember, you have an individual responsibility to report a child protection concern to social work or the police. If Play Midlothian's safeguarding officer is available there and then, you may wish to seek advice, however you should be the person who contacts social work or the police about your concern. You have a personal responsibility to decide whether or not to report a concern that same day, and you should not delay on this.

If in doubt, it is better to go ahead and report your concern. You are always doing the right thing to raise a concern with social work or the police - they will make the decision on the significance of the information and what should happen next (if anything). Remember, they may hold other information about the child and your concern may be an important piece of this jigsaw.

You can reach Midlothian Council's Children's Services duty team on 0131 271 6674 (office hours) or 0800 731 6969 (out of hours) or the police on 101 (or in an emergency 999).

Afterwards, you should update the safeguarding officer so that they can maintain the appropriate records and provide you with support.

Feedback on the outcome of social work investigations should be requested by the safeguarding officer.

If you decide not to report the matter as a child protection concern, you should instead handle this as a wellbeing concern in relation to GIRFEC, and refer to our Child Protection and Safeguarding SOP for how to proceed.

### **Guidelines for supporting children**

#### Do

- Listen, support and respect the child
- Listen to the child's wishes though be clear about what is outwith your control
- Re-assure the child that they have done the right thing by speaking to you
- Report any concern immediately
- Record the information gathered as soon as possible using Play Midlothian's recording method
- Be mindful of changes in a child's behaviour, both physical and emotional presentation and any increased vulnerabilities
- Where possible ensure that more than one adult is present or you are at least within sight and hearing of others
- Show interest in hearing what children have to say and make time to talk to them
- Only share concerns with those outlined in this Child Protection Policy - otherwise the matter should remain strictly confidential

#### Don't

- Make false promises - what the child wants to happen may be the opposite of what needs to happen
- Promise confidentiality
- Interview the child or ask any leading questions

### **Record keeping**

- Record information shared as soon as possible including the date and time.
- Record any information shared in the child's own words.
- Differentiate between and state what is fact and what is opinion.
- Record the presentation and emotional state of the child.
- Record information on the wellbeing / child protection form for filing.
- Play Midlothian's safeguarding officer stores the information in a locked cabinet at Play Midlothian's office.
- Record information at Play Midlothian's office so that it can immediately be stored securely.

### **Information sharing**

- Never promise a child confidentiality and remind them that any child protection concerns will be shared and with who.
- When you have a child protection concern, the consent of the child or parent is not needed - and you must share the information with the police or social work.

- When you have a lower level wellbeing concern, and for example wish to refer a child to another services, or speak with their Named Person, this should be with the knowledge and consent of the family.

### **Allegations against Play Midlothian staff, trustees or volunteers**

All allegations against anyone within Play Midlothian are taken very seriously and investigated. It is important we believe it could happen here. It could - it can happen anywhere.

Allegations against any Play Midlothian staff and volunteers (including trustees) should in the first instance be taken to the designated safeguarding officer, who will raise the matter with the Chief Executive. If the allegation is against the safeguarding officer, it should be taken straight to the Chief Executive. If the allegation is against the Chief Executive, or they are not contactable, the safeguarding officer should take the matter to Play Midlothian's Chairperson. Any queries should be directed to the safeguarding officer (unless the allegation pertained to them).

Any allegations made will be shared with Police Scotland. If you cannot reach anyone listed above, then you should report the allegation to Police Scotland yourself.

Under the Protection of Vulnerable Groups (Scotland) Act 2007, Play Midlothian has a duty to make a referral to Disclosure Scotland.

### **Training**

Training on child protection and Play Midlothian's Child Protection Policy will be provided to new employees and volunteers and thereafter refreshed annually. This should be a face-to-face full course at least every three years, but can be via e-learning or in-house refreshers in the intermediate years.

### **Designated Safeguarding Officer**

Play Midlothian's designated safeguarding officer is Play Midlothian's Operations Manager. In their absence, the role is covered by the Chief Executive. In the unlikely event both are unavailable, for example off sick, please contact the Chairperson for any of the below listed responsibilities.

It should be noted that it is not the safeguarding officer's special role to report child protection concerns to social work or the police. We each hold that role - child protection is everyone's responsibility. Additionally, we each have varying roles in safeguarding children - with the Chief Executive retaining the policy responsibility. However, the designed safeguarding officer plays a vital support role in child protection and safeguarding:

- Takes a lead role in developing and reviewing Play Midlothian's child protection and safeguarding operational procedures
- Makes sure that everyone working or volunteering with or for children and young people at Play Midlothian, including the Board of Trustees, understands the child protection policy and procedures and knows what to do if they have concerns about a child's welfare
- Makes sure children and young people who are involved in activities, and their parents, know who they can talk to if they have a welfare concern and understand what action the organisation will take in response

- Is responsive and supportive to any service user, employee or volunteer who raises a concern
- Receives and records information from anyone who has concerns about a child who takes part in our activities, and the decision made about what to share with whom and why
- Follows up on referrals that have been made, liaising with social work for more information, and establishing what needs to happen at Play Midlothian next
- Stores and retains child protection records according to legal requirements and the organisation's safeguarding and child protection policy and procedures.
- Works closely with the Chief Executive and Board of Trustees to ensure they are kept up to date with safeguarding issues and are fully informed of any concerns about organisational safeguarding and child protection practice
- Reports regularly to the Chief Executive and Board of Trustees on issues relating to safeguarding and child protection
- Is familiar with and works within inter-agency child protection procedures developed by the local child protection agencies
- Is familiar with issues relating to child protection and abuse, and keeps up to date with new developments in this area
- Attends regular training in issues relevant to child protection (and aimed at child protection leads) and shares knowledge from that training with everyone who works or volunteers with or for children and young people at Play Midlothian

### **Safeguarding in practice**

We will seek to keep children and young people safe by:

- Valuing, listening to and respecting them
- If enabling access to the internet for children, first of all developing and implementing an effective online safety policy and related procedures
- Making sure that children, young people and their families know where to go for help if they have a concern
- Checking parental permission before capturing or using images of children, and establishing and respecting children's own feelings about being filmed or photographed
- Adopting child protection and safeguarding best practice through our policies and procedures
- Recruiting and selecting staff, freelancers and volunteers safely, ensuring all necessary checks are made
  - References will be taken up prior to appointment
  - A PVG for regulated work and a Basic Disclosure for any other position will be in place before commencing work or volunteering (including on the board)
  - Where a record shows a conviction, we will take into consideration whether the conviction is relevant to the position being offered, following guidance available from Disclosure Scotland
  - Evidence of their identity will be checked and records maintained of those checks
- Re-checking people with a PVG Update or Basic Disclosure every three years
- 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, procedures and behaviour codes confidently and competently

- Using our safeguarding and child protection procedures to share concerns and relevant information with agencies who need to know, and involving children, young people, parents, families and carers appropriately
- 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

#### Links to other sources of information

- NSPCC Helpline: 0808 800 5000 or [help@nspcc.org.uk](mailto:help@nspcc.org.uk)
- National Guidance for Child Protection (2014): [www.gov.scot/Publications/2014/05/3052](http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2014/05/3052)
- Public Protection in East Lothian and Midlothian (including guidance on interagency procedures and information sharing) - [www.emppc.org.uk](http://www.emppc.org.uk)
- Getting it Right for Every Child Guidance: [www.gov.scot/Topics/People/Young-People/gettingitright](http://www.gov.scot/Topics/People/Young-People/gettingitright)
- Protection of Vulnerable Groups (Scotland) Act 2007: [www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2007/14/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2007/14/contents)

Owned by:	Chief Executive
Approval date:	03.08.21
Review date:	03.08.23