

CHILD PROTECTION AND SAFEGUARDING POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy

- It is the belief of Lifeskills Solutions that the well being of all children and vulnerable young people is given paramount consideration.
- All members of staff share in the responsibility for safeguarding and protecting children and vulnerable young people from harm whilst they are attending Lifeskills Solutions.
- All children and vulnerable young people regardless of age, disability, gender, racial heritage, religious belief, sexual orientation or identity have the right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse

We will endeavour to safeguard children and young people by:

- Valuing them, listening to 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, including CRB and ISA checks. CRB checks will be reapplied for every three years. When a CRB is updated any previous CRB paperwork will be destroyed and only the current CRB will be held on file
- 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 of staff and volunteers through supervision, support and training

Children and Vulnerable Young People's Rights

Children and vulnerable young people have the right to protection from neglect, physical, emotional and sexual abuse.

All citizens, as well as professionals, have a responsibility for the protection of children and vulnerable young people for reporting concerns about a child's/ vulnerable young person's welfare or safety.

Putting Children/Vulnerable Young People First

The well being of the child/vulnerable young person is the paramount consideration in all protection work.

In any conflict between the needs of the child/ vulnerable young person and those of the parents/carers, the needs of the child/ vulnerable young person must be put first.

Treating Children/ Vulnerable Young People as Individuals

Children / vulnerable young people must be listened to and taken seriously, whatever their level of development or communication.

Children/vulnerable young people's wishes and feelings are to be taken into account; children/vulnerable young people will be involved in decisions about their future in ways appropriate to their age and understanding.

Work with children/vulnerable young people will be sensitive to the child/vulnerable young person as an individual with particular needs and circumstances.

All children/vulnerable young people will be treated with respect and accorded full civil and legal rights.

Equality

Each child/vulnerable young person and family is unique with differing experiences, circumstances and perspectives.

Professionals concerned with child protection and safeguarding investigations must make every effort to identify and make improvements to any areas arising from ethnic origin, culture, religion, language, gender, sexual orientation, class, disability or age. Particular attention should be paid to the vulnerability of children/young people with any disabilities, special needs or communication difficulties.

Confidentiality

All matters to do with Lifeskills Solutions children/vulnerable young people and their families are subject to clear standards of respect and confidentiality.

Guidance in relation to confidentiality at Lifeskills Solutions can be found in the Confidentiality and Secrecy Agreement, which forms a part of the staff induction pack.

However sharing information with the appropriate agencies and professionals is essential if children/ vulnerable young people are to be protected. Research has shown that it is often the failure to share information that has put children/ vulnerable young people at risk.

There are clear legal frameworks that support and promote the sharing of information in a child protection and safeguarding context.

Lifeskills Solutions provides a designated member of staff who is the Child Protection coordinator. Trisha Shah will be available to provide advice, guidance and decision making in respect of any child protection concerns.

A child or young person may share information that gives you cause for concern or you may observe something which leads to belief that a child or young person has suffered harm or may be at risk from harm.

Staff will be aware of the need to make a distinction between, on the one hand, behavior which amounts to serious physical assault, intimidation and sexual assault which requires external Child Protection intervention and possibly criminal investigation and, on the other hand, normal childhood/ young people behavior or sexual exploration which the Line Manager will inform the Managing Director and the Child Protection coordinator should any issues arise.

Staff should also be aware of Lifeskills Solutions Policies on:

Staff Dignity at Work Equality and Diversity

What should you do?

Always stop and listen straight away.

Write brief notes as soon as possible, or at the time if it is not disruptive to information sharing.

Keep your originals, no matter how scruffy.

Explain that you might not be able to keep a secret, if you are going to be told something very important that needs to be sorted out, and then you need to tell the people who can sort it!

Don't ask leading questions.

The child or young person's first words are important to note and try to allow the child or young person to express themselves freely rather than ask questions. Questions to clarify the account may be helpful but it is important not to ask leading questions as these might influence and possibly distort the account given by the child/ vulnerable young person.

Never attempt to carry out a formal interview of a child/ young person yourself; this must be left to other professionals (Police and Social Workers) responsible for child protection investigations.

Immediately consider the need to make the child/ young person safe from further harm or from harming others and seek help from colleagues in doing this. Consider the need for hospital or medical attention if there are urgent health needs but be aware of the possible need to retain evidence of harm or assault.

Accumulative Concerns

It may be that the incident you are dealing with, does not in itself appear significant or of a serious nature. It may be one of a series of incidents over time and it is important that The Managing Director is made aware of such incidents so that the necessary information can be collated.

Allegations Concerning Staff

Allegations that concern colleagues are extremely challenging to other staff and to Lifeskills Solutions but in spite of our commitment to colleagues we must also allow ourselves to think the unthinkable and keep an open mind to the possibility that a staff member may be implicated.

Never think that abuse is impossible in Lifeskills Solutions or that an allegation against someone you know well is bound to be wrong.

In such instances Lifeskills Solutions own disciplinary procedures will run alongside the child protection investigation and possible Police investigation.

You should report your concerns **IMMEDIATELY** to your Line Manager who will then inform Leon Barnasconi (01502 512839) the Child Protection Coordinator immediately.

Should Leon Barnasconi be un-contactable your Line Manager will inform Nick Bailey (07739 747901).

Along with this immediate action, it is **essential** that a written record with clear dates, times and names is begun and kept up to date.

Then What Happens?

The Child Protection coordinator will:

Immediately respond to the concerns raised by staff (or students) and decide the appropriate course of action.

Ensure that the identified child/children/ young person/ people are protected from harm.

Collate the available information concerning the allegation/incident.

Make a Child Protection referral to:

Leon Barnasconi -The Child Protection Coordinator
28 Gordon Road
Lowestoft
Suffolk
NR32 1NL
Tel: 01502 - 512839

There may be unusual circumstances in which it is best to inform the Police first, for example when there is direct evidence that a serious crime has been committed or the child/young person is in such immediate danger that the protective powers of the Police are needed. In such circumstances the Social Service Department should also be informed immediately as well.

The Managing Director will take responsibility for informing the "home authority" for the child/ young person. In normal circumstances the child/ young person's parents should also be informed as soon as possible and indeed their permission may need to be sought for some elements of the investigation, e.g. a medical.

However in some cases where allegations might implicate parents then The Managing Director will need to take advice from the local Child Protection professionals about when to inform the parents of the child, in case that doing so would impede the investigation.

If you have any queries about Child Protection, or this policy document, please speak to the Child Protection coordinator.

Lifeskills Solutions accepts responsibility for establishing the above procedures, for responding to allegations of abuse and for providing guidelines for good practice.

Lifeskills Solutions will ensure that staff who are employed, those who volunteer and others who have substantial access to children/ young people are checked through the Police service and other appropriate sources.

In some residential settings it has been known for senior staff to be involved in the harm and abuse of children and young people. In such situations it is difficult for other staff members to know how best to raise their concerns.

Consequently in the spirit of openness that Child Protection Procedures demand, Lifeskills Solutions will develop a type of "whistleblower" policy where staff will be able to make direct contact with outside support and guidance.

In the meantime should such an extreme situation arise then staff should contact either the Managing Director or the Child Protection Co-ordinator.

What is Child Abuse?

Definitions

The Children Act 1989 provides the legal framework for defining the situations in which local authorities have a duty to make enquiries about what, if any, action they should take to safeguard or promote the welfare of children/ young people.

The Act requires that if the local authority has 'reasonable cause to suspect that a child who lives or is found in their area is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm, they must make, or cause to be made, such enquiries as they consider necessary....'

'**Child**' means any child or young person under the age of 18 years old.

The Concept of Significant Harm

Under Section 31(9) of the Children Act 1989:

'Harm' means ill-treatment or the impairment of health or development;

'Development' means physical, intellectual, emotional, social or behavioural development;

'Health' means physical or mental health;

'Ill treatment' includes sexual abuse and forms of ill treatment, which are not physical.

Under Section 31 (10) of the Act:

Where the question of whether harm suffered by the child is significant, turns on the child's health and development. His or her health or development shall be compared with that which could reasonably be expected of a similar child.

There are no absolute criteria on which to rely when judging what constitutes significant harm. Consideration of the severity of ill-treatment may include the degree and the extent of physical harm, the duration and frequency of abuse and neglect and the extent of premeditation, degree of threat and coercion, sadism, and bizarre or unusual elements in child sexual abuse.

Each of these elements has been associated with more severe effects on the child, and/or relatively greater difficulty in helping the child overcome the adverse impact of the ill treatment.

Sometimes a single traumatic event may constitute significant harm, e.g. a violent assault, suffocation or poisoning. More often, significant harm is an accumulation of significant experiences, both acute and long-standing, which interrupt, change or damage the children's physical and psychological development.

Some children live in family and social circumstances where their health and development are neglected. For them, it is the corrosiveness of long-term emotional, physical or sexual abuse that causes impairment to the extent of constituting significant harm. In each case, it is necessary to consider any ill treatment alongside the family's strengths and supports.

To understand and establish significant harm, it is necessary to consider:

- The family context, education, or living situation
- The child's development within the context of their family and wider social and cultural environment
- Any special needs, such as a medical condition, communication difficulty or disability
- that may affect the child's development and care within the family
- The nature of harm, in terms of ill-treatment or failure to provide adequate care
- The impact on the child's health and development
- The adequacy of care.

It is important always to take account of the child's reactions and his or her perceptions, according to their age and understanding.

Categories of child 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 in a child whom they are looking after. This situation is commonly described using terms such as 'factitious illness by proxy' or 'Munchausen's Syndrome by Proxy'.

Emotional abuse - 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 - 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 (e.g. rape or buggery) 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 - 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, including non-organic failure to thrive. It may involve the 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 treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to a child's basic educational or emotional needs.

E- Safety

At Lifeskills Solutions, we understand the responsibility to educate our learners on eSafety issues; teaching them the appropriate behaviors and critical thinking skills to enable them to remain both safe and legal when using the internet and related technologies, in and beyond the context of the classroom.

Teaching and learning

Why the internet and digital communications are important

- The Internet is an essential element in 21st century life for education, business and social interaction. Lifeskills Solutions has a duty to provide learners with high-quality Internet access as a part of the learning experience.
- Internet use is a part of the statutory curriculum and a necessary learning tool for staff and learners
- Internet is an entitlement for learners who show a responsible and mature approach to its use

Internet use will enhance and extend learning

- Lifeskills Solutions internet access will be designed for the learners use and includes appropriate filtering
- Clear boundaries will be set for the appropriate use of the Internet and digital communications and discussed with staff and learners
- Learners will be educated in the effective use of the Internet in research, including the skills of knowledge location, retrieval and evaluation

E-mail

- Learners may only use approved e-mail accounts that Lifeskills Solutions have set up for them
- Learners must immediately tell a member of staff if they receive and offensive e-mail

- The use of obscene, profane, vulgar, rude, inflammatory, threatening, harassing or disrespectful language is not permitted and may be subject to Lifeskills disciplinary procedures. It may also be contrary to current legislation and therefore subject to possible legal proceedings
- In e-mail communication, learners must not reveal their personal details or those of others, or arrange to meet anyone without specific permission
- The forwarding of chain letters is not permitted

Publishing learners' images and work

- Photographs that include learners will be selected carefully so that individual learners cannot be identified or their image misused
- Learners full names will not be used anywhere on Lifeskills solutions website or other on-line space, particularly in association with photographs
- Written permission from parents or carers will be obtained before photographs of learners are published on the Lifeskills website

Social Networking

- Lifeskills will control access to social networking sites, and consider how to educate learners in their safe use
- Newsgroups will be blocked unless a specific use is approved
- Learners will be advised never to give out personal details of any kind which may identify them, their friends or their location

Managing emerging technologies

- Emerging technologies will be examined for educational benefit and a risk assessment will be carried out before use
- Mobile phones will not be used during lessons. The sending of abusive or inappropriate text message is forbidden
- Learners must not use camera phones to take or distribute photographs of other learners or staff without their knowledge or consent

Assessing Risks

- Lifeskills Solutions will take all reasonable precautions to prevent to inappropriate material.
- Lifeskills should audit ICT use to establish if the e-safety policy is adequate and that the implementation of the e-safety policy is appropriate and effective

Handling e-safety complaints

- Complaints of Internet misuse will be dealt with by a senior member of staff
- Any complaint about staff misuse must be referred to the Centre Manager
- Complaints of a child protection nature must be dealt with in accordance with Lifeskills child protection procedures

Introducing the e-safety policy to learners

- E-Safety rules will be posted in all rooms where computer are used
- Learners will be informed that network, email and Internet use will be monitored

Spencer Fearn
Managing Director

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