

This policy has been written in line with guidance issued by the Kent and Medway Safeguarding Children Boards. This guidance is constantly updated online and can be accessed and checked as necessary through the following links:

www.kscb.org.uk

www.msrb.org.uk

1 Scope of Policy

This policy applies to work with all children, defined as anyone under the age of 18. West Kent has an obligation to safeguard the welfare of children ensuring that they are:

- Protected from maltreatment
- Not impaired in their health or development
- Growing up in circumstances that provide safe and effective care

In delivering this we make the distinction between those staff and volunteers that deliver services directly to children and their supervisors, upon whom additional responsibilities lie, and the remainder of West Kent staff who have a general obligation to promote the welfare of children and young people and be vigilant of and report any child protection concerns. This policy has been drawn up with regard to law and guidance that seeks to protect children, namely:

- Children Act 1989 and 2004
- United Convention of the Rights of the Child 1992
- Data Protection Act 1998
- Sexual Offences Act 2003
- Care Act 2014
- Children and Families Act 2014
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015
- Guidance issued by Kent and Medway Safeguarding Children Boards
- The Equality Act 2010
- Children and Social Work Act 2017

This policy works alongside West Kent's Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults policy and procedures. Other relevant policies and procedures include the Code of Conduct, Safeguarding: Safer Recruitment DBS procedure, Operational Guidelines for Work with Children and Young People, Domestic Abuse Policy, Social Media Guidelines, Volunteer Policy and Good Practice Statement

2 Responsibility

All West Kent staff and volunteers, including contractors and partner agencies, are required to take shared responsibility for the welfare of children who are encountered in the course of our work. Some West Kent staff are in a direct position of trust, in particular those who support, guide or in any way interact with children and young people either in the West Kent workplace or in the community. Other staff working with adult service users who are parents, or working in family homes, should be mindful of child welfare and alert to any behaviour from service users which might impact on their children.

Concerns about the welfare of a child may be identified by a staff member or disclosed to West Kent by another concerned adult (including members of the public) or the child themselves. We are responsible for recording and responding to all concerns, however raised, in line with our child protection procedures. This includes any reports of non-recent or historical abuse which may be made by or about an adult relating to incidents which took place when the alleged victim was under 18.

Where services are delivered under contract to a statutory body West Kent has a statutory responsibility to ensure the welfare and safety of children under section 11 of the Children's Act 2004. In all other circumstances, it has a duty to be vigilant to safeguarding issues.

The Head of Communities has responsibility for the oversight of the Safeguarding Children policy and is the senior member of staff responsible for child safeguarding issues or the **Child Protection Co-ordinator** (CPC). There is also delegated responsibility to line managers in implementing this policy.

West Kent will consider any equality and diversity issues of targeted service users. The managerial responsibility for any programme or activity accessed by children rests with the individual who is directing or organising the activity. That person is expected to:

- a) Ensure that the activity is planned, organised and delivered in accordance with the Safeguarding Children Policy.
- b) Consider safeguarding issues when completing the health and safety risk assessment.
- c) Arrange the appropriate checking, training, induction and guidance for all staff and volunteers.
- d) Inform the Child Protection Co-ordinator and complete the appropriate documentation in case of any incident.

3 Child Safeguarding Procedures

All West Kent staff must contact the Child Protection Co-ordinator if they have any cause to believe a young person involved in any activity with West Kent is in any way at risk. The Child Protection Co-ordinator may delegate responsibility to the line manager to follow the relevant procedures.

A full set of procedures for recognising and reporting a child protection concern are set out in the attached appendices. All issues must be reported in line with current Kent and Medway

procedures and a copy of the single request for support form or file note must be provided to West Kent's Child Protection Co-ordinator to allow West Kent to maintain appropriate records.

If you believe that a child is in immediate danger you should call 999 without delay.

4 Establishing a Caring Environment

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 or abuse. We recognise that some children may be additionally vulnerable because of their circumstances and experiences, including special educational needs, communication issues, a disability or care need. All staff delivering direct services to children are responsible for making West Kent a safe and caring environment for all.

A Safe and Caring Environment is an environment:

- in which the health, safety and welfare of young people has been assessed and catered for.
- in which staff are alive to the possibility of abuse and take measures to prevent that possibility.
- where there is a sound and known reporting system for any incident.
- where staff take reasonable and practical precautions to avoid any suspicions of abuse being brought against them.

5 Confidentiality and Consent

When abuse is disclosed or suspected, information will be restricted to those who need to know, and West Kent will adhere to the Data Protection Act 1998, its Data Protection Policy and confidentiality as set out in the Code of Conduct.

It should be noted that the consent of children and young people should be considered in the same way as for an adult regarding matters of data protection, and as part of good practice and effective safeguarding which is child centred and supports the voice of the child. Consent from the family or child should be sought when carrying out a consultation with other agencies (if not done anonymously) or making a referral. But do not contact the family if this could indirectly put the child at risk. If consent is not given, you may still share information in order to protect children from significant harm. West Kent recognises the vital importance of inter-agency co-operation and partnership working in order to safeguard children.

6 Staff recruitment

Some West Kent staff are in a position of trust, in particular those staff who support, guide, or in any way interact with children and vulnerable adults and those that supervise them.

Such staff must be aware of this and to act accordingly at all times and in line with the Staff code of conduct.

Staff are recruited in line with West Kent's Safeguarding: Safer Recruitment DBS Procedure. Staff who will be in regular or significant occasional contact with under-18s in the course of their work, and their direct supervisors, must hold satisfactory Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) certificates. A 'satisfactory' check is defined as having no criminal convictions (including cautions, reprimands and final warnings) relevant to the post. When Staff obtain a valid DBS there must let HR see their valid copy.

The interview process for roles which will work with children and young people will include questions to assess candidate's understanding of safeguarding and address suitable personal behaviours for applicants to these roles. Once appointed line managers will ensure staff are made familiar with this policy and procedures as part of their induction and are trained and competent to work safely with children and young people in line with these.

All staff or volunteers employed to work with children must report any subsequent criminal convictions to Head of Human Resources and the Child Protection Co-ordinator. Failure to do so may result in disciplinary action being taken.

7 Reporting and Monitoring Procedures

All staff and volunteers working closely with children must be alert to possibilities of abuse or maltreatment of a child, whether it is perpetrated by an adult or another child. Concerns should be reported to the Child Protection Co-ordinator who will decide what further action to take in conjunction with the person making the report and any other relevant parties. In cases where the Child Protection Co-ordinator is not available and the concern involves immediate risk of significant harm, the decision to report to Social Services should not be delayed and discretion must be applied by the most senior staff member available.

It is the duty of staff to inform **only** not to investigate – this is the role of the Police and Social Services. If staff, in the course of their work at West Kent, have a child safeguarding issue brought to their notice, this must be treated as a priority over all other work. Guidance regarding a specific incident may be obtained from the Child Protection Co-ordinator.

A report should be provided to the Child Protection Co-ordinator who will keep a confidential record of any such incidents. See the procedures in the attached appendices for further detail.

8 Allegations of abuse or inappropriate behaviour involving staff

Allegations involving a member of staff and a person under-18 will be dealt with the strictest confidence and reported immediately to the Head of Human Resources and relevant Department Director. Consideration will be given as to whether the situation falls within the definition of safeguarding children. The situation will be dealt through West Kent's disciplinary procedure and /or reported to appropriate agencies.

9 Training

West Kent will ensure that all staff understand what action to take if they identify a child protection issue, or have one reported to them. This will include how to handle a disclosure, how to report a concern, and the importance of confidentiality and consent through the process.

In addition to training on health and safety, confidentiality, and professional boundaries, dedicated safeguarding training is available and recommended to all West Kent staff, volunteers and partnering contractors. This includes Child Protection Basic Awareness, which is freely available through E-Learning, and Safeguarding Snapshot Sessions, which cover both safeguarding children and vulnerable adults in the context of West Kent's work.

Safeguarding training is mandatory for staff and volunteers working in identified roles with children and young people. As a minimum, this will include a basic Child Protection course which will be refreshed every 3 years. Staff working within our youth work teams will also attend Kent Safeguarding Children Board Core, Priority, Level 2 and 3 training courses as relevant to their service and role. These will be identified at induction and/or supervision and will cover a range of topics including online safety, sexual health, neglect, self-harm, substance use, child sexual exploitation, Prevent and other key current topics and campaigns identified and led by the Safeguarding Boards (including those set out in Appendix E).

Additional safeguarding training is mandatory for the Child Protection Co-ordinator, including Child Protection for Designated Staff training (refreshed every three years); Information Sharing, Data Protection and Consent; Understanding Thresholds and Essential Safeguarding – Early Help to Referral.

10 Relationships with young people aged 16-18

It should be noted that whilst a young person can consent to sexual activity once they reach the age of 16, the Sexual Offences Act 2003 makes it a criminal offence for a person to engage in any kind of sexual activity with a person under 18 where the adult is in a position of trust.

11 Media Relations

For any West Kent activity involving children or young people, parents or guardians must be given the opportunity to refuse permission for photographs, videos or other images to be made of them, their children and for the children to be interviewed by press, broadcasters or other media.

12 Health and Safety

All West Kent services users must be made aware of Health and Safety requirements and be prepared to abide by them.

13 Review

This policy and procedure will be regularly monitored and reviewed:

- In accordance with changes in legislation and guidance set out by the Kent and Medway Safeguarding Children Boards.

- Following any issues or concerns raised about the safeguarding of children or within West Kent.
- In all other circumstances, at least annually. All reported suspicions or allegations of abuse will be recorded and monitored to ensure the procedures are followed, and so any patterns may be identified. Outcomes will be monitored to check West Kent is meeting its aims relating to safeguarding children.

The Head of Communities will report annually to West Kent's Executive Team and notify Operational Management Team, West Kent and West Kent Extra Boards on any child incidents or related issues of concern. These reports will not contain specific names or contact details.