



Bench Outreach

Safeguarding Children Policy

Policy statement

At Bench Outreach we believe every child has the right to live in safety, free from abuse. Child protection/safeguarding is the term used to describe the process and activity of protecting children from abuse. Protecting children from harm and promoting their welfare depends on a shared responsibility and effective joint working.

Housing has a key role in safeguarding children (Section 11 Children Act 2004). Bench Outreach is committed to taking a proactive approach to the safeguarding requirements and furthermore, to ensuring all our staff understand their individual responsibilities to children who live in our housing, visit or work in our services and, children within the wider community and, are supported to act accordingly. This includes ensuring our organisation and individual staff members are active partners with the key stakeholders in each locality who are concerned with child safeguarding and with the relevant multi-agency procedures.

This document has been designed to set out the safeguarding children policy statement, standards and procedures in a manner that recognises the diversity of roles, responsibilities, degree and mode of contact with tenants. The document is designed for clarity and quick reference in day to day operations. However, it is paramount that every staff member initially reads all of the policy, attends the safeguarding training appropriate to their role and reflects on their understanding and practice in supervision.

Policy aims

- To provide guidance for staff to be able to recognise and identify the types and signs of abuse or neglect.
- To provide guidance for staff to enable them to feel confident to act on and report suspected or actual incidents of abuse or neglect of a child including responding to any immediate safety needs.
- To identify the reporting pathway for raising an alert and making a safeguarding children referral.
- To ensure that staff are able to record any concerns about the welfare of a child and the action taken.
- To clarify the support and advice available to staff who are involved in a child safeguarding situation.

- To clarify the organisational structure and governance arrangements in relation to safeguarding children including those under 18 years old who we may employ as apprentices or for whom we provide volunteer/student placements.
- To ensure that if abuse is suspected, the immediate action is to protect the child and prevent further abuse from taking place.

The policy

This policy and associated procedures apply to:

- All Bench Outreach employees, including members of the Board
- All contractors to Bench Outreach
- Volunteers and students working within any department within Bench Outreach

What do we mean by child safeguarding?

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is defined in both the Children Act (2004) Section 11 Guidance and Working Together to Safeguard Children (2010).

Child safeguarding is defined as:

- Protecting children from maltreatment
- Preventing impairment of child's health and development
- Ensuring that children are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care
- Enabling children to have optimum life chances and to enter adulthood successfully.

Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LCSB) are responsible for developing local procedures and it is the responsibility of children's social care services to investigate cases of child protection.

Who is defined as a child?

For the purpose of safeguarding, a child is anyone who has not reached their 18th birthday. However, there are special circumstances where the age is extended beyond this e.g., for children with disabilities and Looked After Children.

What do we mean by abuse and neglect?

Abuse can take many forms and may consist of a single act or repeated acts. It may constitute a crime and be a serious violation of the human and civil rights of the child.

A person may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm directly or by failing to act to prevent harm.

Children may be abused by an adult or another child. They may be abused within their family or an institution e.g., school, a community setting e.g., recreation park or via social media websites.

The following are the categories of abuse commonly used. The examples to illustrate each type of abuse are not exhaustive. It should be remembered that several types of abuse may be happening to the same person by the same or different perpetrators.

Physical abuse: such as hitting, pushing, pinching, shaking, scalding, poisoning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to the child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces illness in a child.

Emotional or psychological abuse: threats, deprivation of contact, shouting, ignoring, cruelty, bullying (including cyber bullying), humiliation, coercion, enforced isolation, and undermining self-esteem or conveying to the child they are worthless, unloved or inadequate. Not giving the child opportunity to express their views or preventing the child from participating in normal social interaction.

Sexual abuse: forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. This may include indirect contact activities with the child as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities or encouraging them to behave in sexually inappropriate ways. This includes grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet).

Child sexual exploitation: a type of sexual abuse in which children are sexually exploited for money, power or status. Some children are trafficked into or within the UK for the purpose of sexual exploitation. Sexual exploitation can also happen to young people in gangs.

Child trafficking: is where children are recruited, moved or transported and then exploited, forced to work or sold.

Neglect: persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs that includes failing to:

- Provide adequate food clothing and shelter (including abandonment and exclusion from the home)
- Protect a child from physical or emotional harm or danger
- Ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care givers)
- Ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment

Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance misuse or abuse. It may also include neglect or, or unresponsiveness, to a child's basic emotional needs

Domestic violence: The Adoption and Children Act 2002 in the definition of significant harm includes emotional harm to children who witness domestic violence or who are aware of domestic abuse in the home environment. The new definition of domestic violence and abuse now states:

“Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality” Home Office (2013)

Radicalisation and extremism: safeguarding people, often young children and adults, from extremism and violence. To report something, you've seen or heard which could be connected to terrorism, please contact the Confidential Anti-Terrorist Hotline on 0800 789 321.

For more information about how to report, what to report and what happens when you make a report, please visit www.gov.uk/ACT

In the case of an emergency, or an immediate threat, always call 999.

Discriminatory abuse: occurs when values, beliefs or culture result in a misuse of power that denies opportunity and includes racial, religious, gender-based abuse, or abuse based upon an enduring condition or disability.

The prevention of abuse and neglect

The first component of any safeguarding children strategy is prevention. Bench Outreach as an organisation and its individual employees can make a huge difference to the lives of children and their families by early intervention and/or preventing a deterioration in their situation. This includes:

Early identification: There are several situations where Bench Outreach employees may be in a position to spot early indications of a family's support needs or a situation that requires a child protection referral. This includes when signing up a tenancy, visiting a property, investigating anti-social behaviour or harassment complaints, dealing with rent arrears or property condition that presents health and safety risks. Similarly, housing professionals are well placed to notice families that have occupied a number of properties in a short period of time, a known indicator of potential concerns along with parental risk factors such as domestic abuse, drug and alcohol abuse, history of abuse or offending.

Note: When dealing with radicalisation and extremism safeguarding concerns involving young people the following factors need to be considered:

- *Recognise the hidden nature of behaviour associated with radicalisation*
- *Relationships between colleagues and customers – and how this impacts on ability to recognise changes in behaviour and spotting the warning signs of radicalisation*

Community Cohesion Issues – be aware of any wider signs of tensions within individual communities.

Neighbourhood Management and Partnership working – value of networking and maintaining close links to all partner agencies working in our communities.

Good governance: putting systems in place within the organisation to identify and reduce risks to children and young people in relation to abuse. This includes collecting and analysing relevant data e.g., number of evictions, ASB complaints etc. and lessons learned from safeguarding incidents and ensuring action is taken to prevent recurrence. A serious incident policy and procedure, robust investigation process and information sharing is crucial.

Access to clear information for all staff on safeguarding children: ensuring all staff have access to, and understand, the child safeguarding and whistleblowing policies and procedures that are underpinned by a zero tolerance approach to abuse. Coherent linking of related policies such as those concerned with Anti-Social Behaviour, Domestic Violence, etc.

Clear operational policies and procedures for staff who provide care and support: ensuring staff have clear standards and information relating to the safety of children visiting Bench Outreach services.

Recruitment: ensuring vigilance in recruitment practice specifically, references and appropriate use of Disclosure and Barring Services for all customer facing employees including contractors. Clear expectations and standards of conduct for staff, including contractors and volunteers and consideration of the specific needs of staff/students who are under 18 years of age.

Training and supervision: development of staff understanding and practice of safeguarding children, reinforcing of policies and sharing lessons learned.

Information for children and young people: helping children, and their families, to understand their rights and what to do if they feel they are at risk or experiencing abuse.

Accessing natural and universal supports: encouraging the use of facilities or groups in their local areas that can provide support to children and their families and reduce isolation.

Prevention as part of everyday work: information to support safety, health and wellbeing such as dealing with fuel poverty, healthy lifestyles, safer neighbourhoods, home security measures etc.

Partnership working and information sharing: collaboration with local agencies concerned with safeguarding children such as police, GP's, NHS, local authority and regulators is a key aspect of effective practice. This includes ensuring there is a local agreement or protocol setting out the principles and process for sharing information about a child at risk or potential/actual perpetrator of abuse.

Roles and responsibilities

The Chief Executive has responsibility for ensuring that the organisation meets the legislative and regulatory duties relating to safeguarding children. S/he also has responsibility for ensuring the roles described below are filled by competent staff as the organisation grows and becomes operational with residents – fulfilling the duties of each role until it is filled.

Strategic lead for safeguarding has responsibility within the organisation for:

- Ensuring that Bench Outreach complies with local multi-agency policies and procedures for safeguarding children.
- Monitoring organisational implementation and compliance with the standards and requirements detailed in the Bench Outreach Safeguarding Children Policy and

procedure. This includes initiating a review of the policy, procedure and any related protocols in line with organisational, local or national requirements.

- Chairing the Bench Outreach Safeguarding committee and maintaining the organisational safeguarding register and action plans re- lessons learned from safeguarding incidents. Reviewing incident reports, ASB complaints and other proxy indicators to determine any pattern that may have implications for child safeguarding.
- In partnership with the Chief Executive or HR, allocating and coordinating investigations into allegations of abuse in relation to the allegations against employees.
- Ensuring Bench Outreach responds appropriately to requests to contribute to, and attend, as required processes and meetings relating to child safeguarding including but not limited to, local safeguarding children boards, Multi-agency Risk Assessments (MARAC) and Multi-agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) and Serious Case Reviews (SCR's).

Operational lead for safeguarding has responsibility within the organisation for:

- Supporting the Strategic Lead in ensuring that the Safeguarding Children and Adults policies and departmental procedures are implemented and updated as required.
- Maintaining a list of Designated Safeguarding Persons (DSP's) and ensuring that information related to this is kept up to date and that staff are informed.
- Providing support and advice to the Designated Safeguarding Persons and facilitating a community of practice for this group.
- Liaising with Learning & Development to ensure that training content is aligned to organisational policies and procedures and achieving required outcomes.
- Maintaining a list of staff who are trained to 'make enquiries' or undertake investigations internally that may have a safeguarding element e.g. medication errors.
- Maintaining a list of safeguarding groups and attendance at these.
- Orchestrating and undertaking audits and other quality assurance initiatives as required, in collaboration with the membership of the Safeguarding Committee.
- Reviewing and sign off of Safeguarding Action Plans at the final stage. Providing support and advice to DSP's

Heads of service have responsibility for:

- Ensuring this policy, procedures and protocols are implemented and adhered to within their sphere of responsibility.
- Ensuring the swift reporting, management and follow up of safeguarding children within their department are dealt with in a timely and organised manner.
- Ensuring multi agency policies and procedures are adhered to when a concern is raised and facilitating the attendance of staff when required at relevant safeguarding meetings and forums.
- Reviewing, disseminating and ensuring appropriate action on 'lessons learned'.

- Working in partnership with the training department to ensure staff have access to the training opportunities relating to safeguarding.
- Considering the impact of reporting a safeguarding concern on a team member and any action that may be required including appropriate feedback on outcomes and any additional support or access to counselling.

Designated safeguarding persons (DSP) have responsibility for:

- Being a point of contact for advice, delegating and monitoring action, and ensuring support for frontline staff, whilst not replacing the individual's responsibility for safeguarding or, their line managers.
- Initiating referrals through the Multi Agency Procedures and using the agreed Multi Agency Risk Support tool / Threshold tool for the relevant local authority.
- Seeking advice and guidance from the Operational Lead for Safeguarding or appropriate Local Authority lead if unsure what course of action to take
- Ensuring appropriate reporting to CQC for services providing regulated activities.

All staff have responsibility for:

- Taking seriously, listening carefully and reporting appropriately any child safeguarding concerns reported to you.
- Ensuring immediate action is taken if the child/children are in serious danger or a crime is likely/or has been committed as per policy.
- Ensuring you keep accurate records of the allegation, your initial enquiries and action and complete appropriate paperwork/forms as instructed by this policy.
- Acting in accordance with this policy, procedure and protocols and attendance at appropriate training and supervision.
- Understanding the Whistleblowing policy and their obligation to report suspected or actual abuse or neglect.

It is important that all staff understand that they must take responsibility for reporting anything they hear regarding the safeguarding of children at risk, including what may be described as 'hearsay'. This will ensure that any concerns are dealt with swiftly and mitigate the risk of assumption that someone else is dealing with it when in reality; it may not have been reported properly.

Agencies involved with safeguarding children:

There are a number of agencies involved with the safeguarding of children, these include:

- Local Authorities
- NHS
- Police
- Education
- Housing
- Voluntary and charitable groups
- Advocacy

It is important that Bench Outreach works in partnership with these and other agencies as required to support the prevention of abuse and to deal swiftly and decisively to secure the protection of children and young people at risk.

Confidentiality and consent

It is always good practice to seek consent from the child or parent/carer but there may be occasions when consent cannot be obtained or is withheld (for example when the parent is the perpetrator). It may be the situation that by seeking consent you may jeopardise a potential police investigation or increase the risk of harm to the child. If you believe the child to be at significant risk of harm then their protection is of overriding concern and gaining consent is not necessary.

The law recognises that disclosure of confidential information without consent or a court order may be justified in the public interest to prevent harm to others. Generally, the amount of confidential information disclosed without consent should be no more than is necessary to protect the health and wellbeing of the child.

Record keeping of a safeguarding concern

It is paramount that all staff keep accurate records of any safeguarding concerns and actions. In making any record, staff need to remember to:

- Make a record as soon as you are able to safely do so in order that important details are not forgotten.
- Ensure you record the date, time and setting and what you witnessed or, was reported to you clearly and using the person's own words as told to you.
- Be objective and ensure fact and opinions are clearly indicated.
- Handwritten notes must be legible. Remember they may be required as part of future legal or a disciplinary action.
- If you make any notes, remember to keep them safe until you can hand it to your line manager or designated safeguarding person (DSP)

Support for staff

Reporting alleged abuse and witnessing children in abusive or neglectful situations can be distressing and traumatic for staff. Line managers should ensure staff has support and opportunity to de-brief and discuss their experiences and concerns.

Bench Outreach will provide counselling should staff request it. It is important that staff who report potential or actual abuse or neglect are kept informed at each stage of the process and provided with appropriate feedback in relation to outcomes.

Apprentices, students or work placement learners

It is recognised that Bench Outreach will have, from time to time, employees, students or volunteers, who are under 18 years old. We want these young people to have a safe, positive work experience and to understand that concerns about them may be referred to safeguarding agencies.

This policy may therefore apply to them in two ways:

- As they are engaged in working within the organisation they must comply with the requirements of the policy as any other employee in terms of reporting any safeguarding concerns they have relating to children or adults at risk.
- They may be in a situation where there are safeguarding concerns that relate to them and/or they make a disclosure about themselves e.g. that they have been the alleged victim or abuse or neglect.

Moreover, Bench Outreach is responsible for ensuring that in the course of their duties they are safeguarded from any situations that may cause harm or neglect as defined in section 4 of this policy. The immediate supervisor of the young person needs to complete a risk assessment to determine which activities they may participate in and how; for example eviction proceedings or hoarding situations which may be particularly distressing.

Allegations of abuse against staff

Any allegation against Bench Outreach staff including students and volunteers as potential perpetrators or allegations that relate to staff under 18 years old as potential victims must be taken seriously. It is important to report the allegation immediately to the person's line manager or, if unobtainable or implicated then contact a designated safeguarding person (DSP). This includes any allegations that relate to any Bench Outreach apprentice, student or workplace learner who is aged under 18 years.

The Designated Safeguarding Person will seek advice from the HR department when operational or Chief Executive and be responsible for logging and reporting to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO). A key consideration for the Chief Executive or HR will be whether the staff member should be suspended from active duties.

The role of the LADO is to provide advice and guidance to employers where allegations are made against adults who work with children and young people. The LADO will liaise with the police, monitor the progress of cases and provide Bench Outreach with advice on the situation and next steps.

Reporting and monitoring

Until such time as an internal Safeguarding Committee can be created, the Chief Executive will be responsible for the main vehicle for monitoring and assurance of safeguarding and will set standards and performance indicators as relevant to the organisation.

Equality and diversity implications

This policy, by its nature and focus, supports the needs and promotes the safety and wellbeing of children and young people as defined by the nine protected characteristics (Equality Act 2010). We are aware there is good practice in safeguarding the needs of particular groups of children and have listed a selection of resources below.

- Reporting incidents of radicalisation and extremism – www.gov.uk/ACT

- National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/>
- Hate Crime Reporting <https://www.gov.uk/report-hate-crime> Disability Hate Crime Network: <http://dhcn.info/>
- Ann Craft Trust: <http://www.anncrafttrust.org/>
- National Domestic Violence Helpline: <http://www.nationaldomesticviolencehelpline.org.uk/>

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