

Safeguarding Children Policy

The Ark will comply with its obligations under The Children Act 1989, The Children Act 2004, the Human Rights Act 1998, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (ratified by the UK Government in 1991) and the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) (2018)

The Ark has a duty to be aware that abuse does occur in our society. This statement lays out the procedures that will be taken if we have reason to believe that a child in our care is subject to either emotional, physical or sexual abuse or neglect. Our primary responsibility is the welfare and well-being of all children in our care. As such we believe we have a duty to the children, parents/main carers and staff to act quickly and responsibly in any instance that may come to our attention.

The Ark has a duty to report any suspicions around abuse whether this stems from allegations against staff, volunteers, carers or the general public. The Ark will follow the procedures set out in the Dorset Safeguarding Children Board safeguarding standards policy and procedure document and will seek their advice on all steps taken subsequently.

This policy applies to all staff, including the board of Directors, paid staff, volunteers, agency staff, students or anyone working on behalf of The Ark.

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
- 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 are committed to reviewing our policy and good practice annually

Safeguarding Procedure

The designated members of staff for safeguarding children are Sarah McNab and Carly Ricketts.

The Ark will notify Ofsted if Social Services are investigating a safeguarding children matter related to the group. Our local Social Services office is the North Dorset Local Office at Bath Road, Sturminster Newton, Dorset DT10 1DR, tel. 01258 472652.

When responding to signs of abuse staff should

- Stay calm
- Listen carefully to what is 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 her/his own pace – where necessary use T.E.D (Talk, Explain, Draw)
- 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 them
- Tell the child they 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 the record is signed and dated
- Contact the designated person – Sarah McNab or Carly Ricketts

REMEMBER:

It is important that everyone at The Ark is aware that the person who first encounters a case of alleged or suspected abuse is not responsible for deciding whether or not abuse has occurred. That is a task for the professional child protection agencies following a referral to them of concern about a child

Sarah/Carly will take the lead in dealing with any concerns raised initially, and will take advice from Social Services, or the police. If it is decided to discuss such issues with the parents/carers of the child Sarah/Carly will facilitate the discussions (although no discussions will take place if it is believed this would place the child at risk of significant harm).

An allegation of child abuse or neglect could lead to a criminal investigation so staff will not do anything that may jeopardise a police investigation, for example, ask a child leading questions or attempt to investigate the allegations of abuse

Social Services takes the lead role in enquiring about safeguarding children issues related to the child whilst the employer retains the responsibility for disciplinary actions related to their staff member or volunteer.

1. 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 or deliberately induces illness in a child. Physical abuse can also be caused through omission or the failure to act to protect.

Procedure

- Any sign of a mark/injury to a child when they come *into* The Ark will be recorded by the designated member of staff for safeguarding children, discussed with the parent, and the parent will be asked to countersign a record
- The incident will be discussed with the parent/ carer
- Such discussion will be recorded and the parent/carer will have access to such records (Discussion will take place unless it is believed that this would place the child at risk of significant harm)
- If there appear to be any queries regarding the injury, Social Services and/or the police will be notified

2. 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 way. Boys and girls can be abused by males and/or females, by adults and by other young people.

Procedure

The observed instances will be reported by the designated member of staff for safeguarding children to Social Services and/or the police.

3. 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 they are worthless or unloved, inadequate or only valued 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 capability, 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.

Procedure

- The concern will be discussed with the parent/ carer by the designated member of staff for safeguarding children

- Such discussion will be recorded and the parent/ carer will have access to such records. (Discussion will take place unless it is believed that this would place the child at risk of significant harm)
- If there appear to be any queries regarding the circumstances, the matter will be referred to Social Services and/or the police

4. 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.

Procedure

- The concern will be discussed with the parent/carer by the designated member of staff for safeguarding children
- Such discussion will be recorded and the parent/carer will have access to such records
- (Discussion will take place unless it is believed that this would place the child at risk of significant harm)
- If there appear to be any queries regarding the circumstances Social Services and /or the police will be notified

Below are aspects of Safeguarding that can be found under other policy headings:

- **Unauthorised Collection of Children**
- Please see our Delivery and Collection of Children Policy on page 14
- **Use of Mobile Phones and Cameras in the Setting**
- Please see Photograph and Filming Policy and Procedure on page 37
- **Employment, Recruitment and Selection** Please see page 15 - 17
- **Training and Induction** Please see page 51
- **Supervision** Please see page 48 - 50

Safe working practice

The vast majority of adults who work with children provide a safe and supportive environment for children in their care. However, it is essential that all possible steps are taken to safeguard children and ensure that the adults working with them are safe to do so. Staff must follow the Safe Working Practice guide in the Staff Handbook.

- **E-safety Policy** Please see page 18-19
- **Intimate Care Policy** Please see page 23

Allegations against member of staff or volunteer

Action will be taken under this heading if allegations of child abuse/neglect are made against a member of staff or a volunteer. Please also see Complaints/Policy on page 6 and Whistle

blowing Policy on page 52. An allegation against a member of staff/volunteer may arise from a number of sources (e.g. a report from a child, a concern raised by another adult in the organisation, or a complaint by a parent).

The person to whom an allegation or concern is first reported should treat the matter seriously and keep an open mind.

S/he should not:

- Investigate or ask leading questions if seeking clarification
- Make assumptions or offer alternative explanations
- Promise confidentiality, but give assurance that the information will only be shared on a 'need to know' basis.

S/he should:

- Immediately report the matter to the designated safeguarding officer (Sarah McNab), or deputy (Carly Ricketts) in her absence, or where the designated safeguarding officer is the subject of the allegation, to the designated safeguarding director, Pauline Pinkney.
- As soon as possible make a written record of the information (where possible in the child / adult's own words), including the time, date and place of incident(s), persons present and what was said
- Sign and date the written record

Initial action by the designated safeguarding officer

When informed of a concern or allegation, the designated safeguarding officer should not investigate the matter or interview the member of staff, the child concerned or any potential witnesses.

He / she should:

- Obtain written details of the concern / allegation, signed and dated by the person receiving (not from the child / adult making the allegation)
- Countersign and date the written details
- Record any information about times, dates and location of incident(s) and names of any potential witnesses
- Record discussions about the child and/or member of staff, any decisions made, and the reasons for those decisions

The designated safeguarding officer should report the allegation to the Local Authority Designated Officer Patrick Crawford (LADO) 01305 221122 promptly, at least within 1 working day. If there is any doubt regarding whether the allegation meets the criteria, advice should be sought from the LADO. Referral should not be delayed in order to gather information. Any failure to follow procedures is a potential disciplinary matter.

If an allegation requires immediate attention, but is received outside normal office hours, the senior manager should consult the LA Children's Services emergency duty team (tel: 01202 45800) or local police and inform the LADO as soon as possible.

The allegation will also be reported to Ofsted.

Confidentiality

The aim of The Ark is to promote an environment of respect with reference to confidential information relating to the children, families or The Ark users and The Ark's business (please see our confidentiality policy).

All staff understand their responsibilities under the General Data Protection Regulations and the circumstances under which they may share information about you and your child with other agencies.

If it becomes necessary to disclose information concerning a child and/or member of staff (if the allegation is made against a staff member/volunteer) to an outside agency, the following procedure will be followed:

- The consent of the parent/carer of that child and/or the consent of the staff member to the disclosure will be sought first (unless it is believed that obtaining such consent would place the child at risk of significant harm).

PLEASE NOTE: THERE ARE EXCEPTIONS TO THE ABOVE PROCEDURES. IF ANY CHILD IS THOUGHT TO BE IN IMMEDIATE DANGER, THE ARK STAFF WILL CONTACT SOCIAL SERVICES AND/OR THE POLICE IMMEDIATELY.