

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 Cedar House, 1 Cedar Office Park, Cobham Road, Ferndown Industrial Estate, Wimborne, Dorset,

BH21 7SB tel. 01202 877445. We will also contact the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) 01202 228866.

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
- Ask questions for clarification only, and at all times avoid asking questions that suggest a particular answer Use Tell Explain Draw (TED)
- Reassure the child that they have done the right thing in telling them
- Tell the child what 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.

Abuse of children can be physical, emotional, sexual or neglect. We ensure that all staff have an understanding of the additional vulnerabilities that arise from special educational needs and or disabilities, plus inequalities of race, gender, language, religion, sexual orientation or culture and that these receive full consideration in relation to child, young person or vulnerable adult protection.

When children are suffering from physical, sexual or emotional abuse this may be demonstrated through:

- significant changes in their behaviour
- deterioration in their well being
- their comments which may give cause for concern or the things they say (direct or indirect disclosure)

- changes in appearance, behaviour or play
- unexplained bruising, marks signs of possible abuse or neglect

The Ark staff are aware of the 'hidden harm' agenda concerning parents with drug and alcohol problems and consider other factors affecting parental capacity and risk, such as social exclusion, domestic violence, radicalisation, mental or physical illness and parent's learning disability.

Children's vulnerability is potentially increased when they are privately fostered and when The Ark's staff know that a child is being cared for under a private fostering arrangement, we will inform our local authority children's social care team.

The Ark staff will take action if we have concerns about the welfare of a child who fails to arrive at a session when expected. The designated person, Sarah McNab or Carly Ricketts will take immediate action to contact the child's parent to seek an explanation for the child's absence and be assured that the child is safe and well. If no contact is made with the child's parents and the designated person has reason to believe that the child is at risk of significant harm, the relevant professionals are contacted immediately and LSCB procedures are followed. If the child has current involvement with social care the social worker is notified on the day of the unexplained absence.

Other factors that affect children's vulnerability that may affect, or may have affected, children and young people using our provision, such as abuse of children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities; fabricated or induced illness; child abuse linked to beliefs in spirit possession; sexual exploitation of children, including through internet abuse; Female Genital Mutilation and radicalisation or extremism.

In relation to radicalisation and extremism, The Ark staff will follow the Prevent Duty guidance for England and Wales published by the Home Office and LSCB procedures on responding to radicalisation.

The designated person completes online Channel training, online Prevent training and attends local WRAP training where available to ensure they are familiar with the local protocol and procedures for responding to concerns about radicalisation.

The Ark staff are aware of the mandatory duty that applies to teachers, including early years practitioners, and health workers to report cases of Female Genital Mutilation to the police.

The Ark staff are aware that some children and young people are affected by gang activity, by complex, multiple or organised abuse, through forced marriage or honour based violence or may be victims of child trafficking. While this may be less likely to affect young children in our care, we may become aware of any of these factors affecting older children and young people who we may come into contact with.

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, Lucy Brown.
- 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.

S/he 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.