



HR POLICY AND PROCEDURES

SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN

<u>Group</u>	<u>Date Approved</u>
WLT	N/A
SCG	N/A
HR Sub Committee	August 2019
Finance Sub Committee	N/A
Board of Trustees	September 2019

<u>Group</u>	<u>Date Approved</u>
CMT	N/A
SCG	N/A
HR Committee	April 2018
Finance Committee	N/A
Board of Trustees	May 2018

Compiled By:
Next Review Date:

Designated Safeguarding Officers
September 2020

SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN POLICY AND PROCEDURE

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

All Link4Life services which make provision for children and young people must ensure that:

- The welfare of the child is paramount;
- All children, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious beliefs and/or sexual identity have the right to protection from abuse;
- All suspicions and allegations of abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly;
- All staff and volunteers working in the Trust have a responsibility to report any concerns to the appropriate Manager.
- Staff should never ignore a concern, do nothing or assume that any agency/professional will act or is acting
- Staff should never attempt to resolve the matter themselves

Staff/volunteers are not trained to deal with situations of abuse or to decide if abuse has occurred.

2.0 POLICY STATEMENT AND AIMS

Link4Life has a duty of care to safeguard all children and young people involved in any of the facilities or activities managed by the Trust. All children have a right to protection. Link4Life will ensure the safety and protection of all children and young people through adherence to Greater Manchester Safeguarding Children Procedures. Link4Life is represented at the Rochdale Borough Community Safeguarding Forum.

Policy Aims:

The aim of the Safeguarding Children Policy is to promote good practice by:

- Providing children & young people with a safe environment whilst using Link4Life services;
- Allowing all staff (including volunteers) to make informed and confident responses to specific child protection issues.

3.0 CHILD PROTECTION PROCEDURES AND GUIDANCE FOR STAFF

Anyone under the age of 18 years (including pre-birth) should be considered as a child for the purpose of this policy and 19 years for those with a disability.

It is the responsibility of every adult to protect children from abuse. Child abuse and in particular child sexual abuse can provoke strong emotions in those facing such a situation. It is important to understand these feelings and not allow them to interfere with your judgement about any action to be taken.

Abuse can occur in many situations including the home, school and in the leisure/cultural environment. Some individuals will actively seek employment or voluntary work with children in order to harm them. Everyone working within Link4Life in either a paid or voluntary capacity, together with those working in affiliated organisations and user groups e.g. National Governing Bodies, arts organisation or swimming clubs, have a role to play in safeguarding the welfare of children and preventing abuse.

A coach, teacher or volunteer may have regular contact with children and be a very important link in identifying cases where a child needs protection. When establishing

guidelines concerning the protection of children it is important to recognise that the organisation has both a moral and a legal obligation to ensure that when it is given responsibility for children it provides them with a safe environment to participate in activities.

All staff must recognise that they have a responsibility to:

- Safeguard and promote the interests and wellbeing of children who use our facilities or access our organised activities.
- Take all reasonable practical steps to protect them from harm, discrimination or degrading treatment.
- Respect their rights, wishes and feelings.

Link4Life is committed to sound recruitment, the provision of support, appropriate training and adequate supervision of all our staff so that they work together with parents/carers and other organisations to ensure that the needs and welfare of children remains paramount.

Working in partnership with children and their parents/carers is essential for the protection of children. Link4Life recognises the statutory responsibilities of Rochdale Borough Council to ensure the welfare of children and is committed to working with the Rochdale Borough Safeguarding Children Board (RBSCB) and complying with the Greater Manchester Safeguarding Children Procedures. Further information can be found at <http://greatermanchesterscb.proceduresonline.com>.

4.0 RECOGNITION OF ABUSE

It is not always easy to recognise a situation where abuse may occur or has already taken place. All staff are expected to discuss any concerns they may have about the welfare of a child with a Line Manager immediately and follow the Safeguarding Flow Chart (see Appendix A).

If the Line Manager is not available, or the concern is about the Line Manager, the person in receipt of the information should contact the Designated Safeguarding Officers directly.

Indications that a child is being abused may include:

- Unexplained or suspicious injuries such as bruising, cuts or burns, particularly if situated on a part of the body not normally prone to such injuries.
- An injury for which the explanation seems inconsistent.
- The child describes what appears to be an abusive act involving him/her.
- Someone else, a child or adult expresses concern about the welfare of another child.
- Unexplained changes in behaviour, e.g. becoming very quiet, withdrawn, or displaying sudden outbursts of temper.
- Inappropriate sexual awareness.
- Engages in sexually explicit behaviour in games.
- Is distrustful of adults, particularly those with whom a close relationship would normally be expected.
- Has difficulty in making friends.
- Is prevented from socialising with other children.
- Displays variations in eating patterns including overeating or loss of appetite.
- Losing weight for no apparent reason.

- Becomes increasingly dirty or unkempt.

It must be recognised that the above list is not exhaustive and that the presence of one or more of the indicators is not proof that abuse is taking place.

A referral must also be made if you becoming aware of a private fostering arrangement which has not been notified to the Local Authority.

A private fostering arrangement is one where children under the age of 16 (18 in the case of a disabled child), are cared for and provided with accommodation in the carer's own home, by a carer who is not their parent or close relative and this arrangement lasts for greater than 28 days.

5.0 THE MAIN FORMS OF ABUSE

• Physical Abuse

Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child.

It may also be caused when a parent / carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces illness to a child.

• Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child 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 acts (e.g. rape, buggery or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts.

They may include non-contact activities such as involving children in looking at or in the production of sexual online material, watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

• Emotional Abuse

The persistent emotional mal-treatment of a child causing severe & persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development i.e. conveying to children that they are worthless/unloved / inadequate or only valued because 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 child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection & limitation of exploration & learning or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction.

It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another; serious bullying or causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children.

• 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 can occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance misuse.

Once a child is born it may involve a parent / carer failing to;

- Provide adequate food & clothing, shelter including exclusion from home or abandonment
- Protect a child from physical harm or danger,
- Ensure adequate supervision including the use of inadequate caregivers
- Ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.

It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

6.0 LISTENING TO THE CHILD

If a child indicates that he or she is being abused, or information is obtained which gives concern that a child is being abused, the person receiving this information should:

- Be accessible and receptive;
- Listen carefully and uncritically, at the child's pace;
- Take what is said seriously;
- Reassure children that they are right to tell;
- Tell the child that you must pass this information on;
- Make sure that the child is ok ;
- Make a careful record of what was said (see Recording Information – Section 7).

You should NEVER

- Investigate or seek to prove or disprove possible abuse;
- Make promises about confidentiality or keeping 'secrets' to children;
- Assume that someone else will take the necessary action;
- Jump to conclusions, be dismissive or react with shock, anger, horror etc;
- Speculate or accuse anybody;
- Investigate, suggest or probe for information;
- Confront another person (adult or child) allegedly involved;
- Offer opinions about what is being said or the persons allegedly involved;
- Forget to record what you have been told;
- Fail to pass this information on to the correct person (i.e. the Designated Safeguarding Office).

If you do need to ask questions, what is and isn't OK?

- Never asked closed questions i.e. ones which children can answer yes or no to eg did he/she touch you?
- Never make suggestions about who, how or where someone is alleged to have touched, hit etc eg top or bottom, front or back?
- If we must, use only 'minimal prompts' such as 'go on ... tell me more about that ... tell me everything that you remember about that '
- Timescales are very important: 'When was the last time this happened?' is an important question.

7.0 CONFIDENTIALITY

Confidentiality is an issue which needs to be discussed and fully understood by all those working with children, particularly in the context of Child Protection. Professionals and agencies can only work together to safeguard children if there is an exchange of relevant information between them.

Normally, personal information should only be disclosed to third parties (including other agencies) with the consent of the subject of that information (*Data Protection Act 1998, European Convention on Human Rights, Article 8*). Wherever possible, consent should be obtained before sharing personal information with third parties. However, the law permits the disclosure of confidential information necessary to safeguard a child or children.

- **Feedback to Staff Who Report Concerns to the Designated Safeguarding Officer**

Rules of confidentiality dictate that it may not always be possible or appropriate for the Designated Safeguarding Officer to feedback to staff who report concerns to them. Such information will be shared on a 'need to know' basis only and the Designated Safeguarding Officer will decide which information needs to be shared, when and with whom. The primary purpose of confidentiality in this context is to safeguard and promote the child's welfare

8.0 RECORDING INFORMATION

All information must be recorded on the Link4Life Safeguarding Record Form (see Appendix C). All copies must be forwarded promptly to the Human Resources Manager and relevant agency (as Safeguarding Flow Chart) and archived for a minimum of 5 years within the Central Filing System managed by Human Resources.

Recordings should:

- State who was present, time, date and place;
- Be written in ink and be signed by the recorder;
- Use the child's words wherever possible;
- Be factual/state exactly what was said or observed;
- Differentiate clearly between fact, opinion, interpretation, observation and/or allegation.

Reporting the matter to the Designated Safeguarding Officer should not be delayed by attempts to obtain more information.

9.0 REFERRAL OF CASES

The Designated Safeguarding Officer will refer any relevant cases to the appropriate agency and should consider the following:

- Am I dealing with 'risk' or 'need'? (By definition, a child at risk is also a child in need. However, what is the priority / level and immediacy of risk / need/ think about the Rochdale Children's Needs and Response Framework)
- Can the level of need identified be met:
 - By Link4Life or by accessing universal services/without referral
 - By working with the child, parents and colleagues?
 - By completion of a Common Assessment Framework with parents/carers/child & other professionals

- What resources are available to me/Link4Life and what are their limitations?
- Is the level of need such that a referral needs to be made?
- Is the level and/or likelihood of risk such that a Child Protection referral needs to be made (i.e. a child is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm)?
- What information is available to me: Child, Parents, Family & Environment?
- What information is inaccessible and, potentially, how significant might this be?
- Who do I/don't I need to speak to now and what do they need to know?
- Am I going to refer?
- Where can I access appropriate advice and/or support? (see below)

If there are two 'non-reportable' cases regarding the same child, the details will be referred to targeted services.

If you feel a child or young person is in immediate danger please contact the police on 999. Alternatively, advice may be available from the following:

- Rochdale Children's Social Care, Floor 4, Number One Riverside Smith Street Rochdale OL16 1XU Tel: 0300 303 0440 Email: social.services@rochdale.gov.uk, Minicom: 0845 226 5570
- Out of hours emergencies 6pm-8am Monday-Friday and anytime weekends and Bank Holidays Tel: 0300 303 8875
- Rochdale Safeguarding Children Board Floor 4, Number One Riverside Smith Street Rochdale OL16 1XU Tel: 0300 303 0350 Email: rbscb.admin@rochdale.gov.uk
- NSPCC 24/7 on 0808 800 5000
- If the child is not in immediate danger the police can be contacted on 101

10.0 PHOTOGRAPHS - PROCEDURE

To protect our staff and children using our facilities, the following applies:

- Within the centre's there are a number of 'No Phone Zones', for example in changing areas and toilets. This includes the use of all phones, tablets, cameras and other mobile devices.
- Staff will challenge unauthorised photography or videoing of children.
- During public sessions there should be a complete ban on the use of photographic and video equipment in all areas of the facilities unless permission has been granted.
- Mobile phones should not be used to make or receive calls in sensitive areas, all changing areas, toilets, showers or spectator areas.
- If someone is observed using either photographic or video equipment without permission or a mobile phone in an unauthorised area action must be taken to prevent this use immediately. Front line staff can consult their Duty Manager or confront the individual (depending on the circumstances).
- If you do identify someone using either photographic equipment or a mobile phone you need to make them aware of the reasons why this equipment should not be used (i.e. child protection issues and that our procedure is also about promoting good practice for the protection of all centre users including themselves).
- Individuals wishing to take photographs/ film must request permission by completing an authorisation form giving their details, the reason for the photography/filming and confirming that the children's parents' consent has been received.

- If a photograph of a child/adult is required permission should be sought by the individual or the parent/guardian using the Photographic Approval Form
- The procedure for the use of photographic equipment must be followed at all times.
- Staff must remain vigilant at all times.
- If staff experience any problems they should contact the Supervisor or Facility Manager immediately.

Further information can be found in the QMS document 1.15 (Photography)

11.0 ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE AGAINST MEMBERS OF STAFF OR VOLUNTEERS

Link4Life will fully support and protect anyone who, on good faith reports a concern that a member of staff or volunteer is or may be behaving inappropriately towards a child. Where appropriate, their line manager will be informed and regularly updated.

Where an allegation is made against a member of staff or a volunteer and the threshold for referral to LADO is met; this being that they are in regulated activity with children and have:

- Behaved in a way that has harmed, or may have harmed, a child;
- Committed a criminal offence against, or related to, a child;
- Behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates they pose a risk of harm to children.

Then Link4Life will contact the LADO immediately. The LADO is responsible for managing and overseeing concerns, allegations or offences relating to staff and volunteers in any organisation across a local authority area.

If there is a complaint of abuse against a member of staff, there may be three distinct strands in the investigation which may not be in isolation.

1. A criminal investigation.
2. A child protection investigation.
3. A disciplinary or misconduct investigation.

The result of any Police or Rochdale Children's Safeguarding Unit investigation may well influence the disciplinary investigation, but not necessarily.

- If following consideration the allegation is clearly about poor practice within a session or organised activity, the Line Manager will deal with it appropriately.
- The appropriate Head of Service must be briefed in all cases where a report or complaint is made regarding alleged inappropriate behaviour by a volunteer/parent/guardian or member of staff to a Line Manager.
- The parents or carers of the child will be contacted as soon as possible following advice from the Rochdale Children's Safeguarding Unit and/or other appropriate agencies.
- Every effort should be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned.
- Irrespective of the findings of any police enquiry, Link4Life will assess all individual cases under the appropriate procedure.
- Consideration should also be given to what support may be appropriate to children, parents and members of staff.

12.0 ALLEGATIONS OF PREVIOUS ABUSE

Allegations of abuse may be made some period of time after the event. For example, by an adult who was abused as a child by a member of staff who is still working with children. Where such an allegation is made the department should follow the procedures given above and report the matter to the Rochdale Children's Safeguarding Unit or the Police. This is because other children may still be at risk from this person.

13.0 PROMOTING GOOD PRACTICE TO REDUCE THE LIKELIHOOD OF ABUSE BY MEMBERS OF STAFF

All children have a right to be safe and to be treated with dignity and respect.

False allegations of abuse are rare but the following basic guidelines will help safeguard children, staff, volunteers and the Department.

- **Recruitment and selecting staff and volunteers.**

Safe recruiting practices will be followed for all staff where regulated activity occurs. The definition of regulated activity relating to children concerns those who deliver the following:

- Unsupervised activities: teach, train, instruct, care for or supervise children, or provide advice/guidance on well-being, or drive a vehicle only for children;
- Work for a limited range of establishments ('specified places'), with opportunity for contact: for example, schools, children's homes, childcare premises.

This will include:

- Any significant gaps in employment history or voluntary activity should be explored.
- Enhanced DBS checks
- Relevant references
- Probationary Period Reviews

- **Training**

Link4Life will ensure that all Designated Safeguarding Officers will attend Working Together to Safeguard Children within three months of taking up the role. This will be followed by further training at intervals of no longer than 2 years; this may be done via face to face delivery or e-learning.

For all other staff:

- all new employees (including volunteers) will receive basic safeguarding training from a Designated Safeguarding Officer as part of their induction;
- all staff will then complete the RBC Me Learning training at least every 3 years.

- **Good practice in the care of children**

You can reduce the situations that make it possible for abuse to take place by promoting good practice. There will be times when elements of individual care programmes for children will require a variation from the general rules set below.

- **General guidance notes**

- Always be publicly open when working with children. Avoid situations where staff and children are completely unobserved.
- Do not assist a child to dress, shower or use the toilet.

- Do not enter a cubicle or toilet with a child.
- Do not stand and watch a child change, shower or use the toilet.
- A general culture of 'limited touch' should be adopted. Never instigate unnecessary or secretive physical contact. For guidance please see appendix D.
- Avoid physical restraint unless absolutely necessary for the safety of the child or others
- Where possible the parents should take responsibility for their children in the changing rooms.
- Do not lift a child out of the water unless as part of a team during a rescue
- Do not accept or offer gifts to or from children, including sweets and drinks
- Do not close a door unless it is absolutely necessary
- Where practical you should be accompanied if carrying out first aid
- When administering first aid ensure the child does what it can for its self ie holding dressings in place, rubbing a muscle to relieve cramp etc
- Where possible, female staff should deal with female casualties and male staff should deal with male casualties.
- Do not remove articles of clothing unless it is absolutely necessary or without a parent or guardians permission or assistance

- **Relationships with children**

Never:

- Intimidate them to get them to comply to instructions
- Threaten
- Taunt
- Shout at
- Degrade, especially in front of their peers
- Physically remove them from an area
- Force them to sit/stand on poolside or areas of extreme temperature for extended periods of time.
- Engage in rough, physical or sexually provocative games, including horseplay.
- Allow or engage in inappropriate touching of any form.
- Allow children to use inappropriate language unchallenged.
- Make sexually suggestive comments to children even in fun.
- Let allegations children make up go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon.
- Do things of a personal nature that the child can do for itself.
- Communicate/befriend via social media for personal reasons e.g. Facebook
- Take children to your home/in your car/company vehicle where they will be alone with you.

Where cases arise and it is unavoidable they should occur only with the full knowledge and agreement of the Line Manager.

If during your care of a child you accidentally hurt them, the child seems distressed in any manner, appears to be sexually aroused by your actions or misunderstands or misinterprets something you have done, report it immediately to another colleague and make a brief written note of it. Parents or carers should be informed of the incident.