



Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy

Statement of intent /policy statement

This policy needs to be read in conjunction with the South West Child Protection Procedures available electronically on; <https://sscb.safeguardingsomerset.org.uk/about-us/> and information available on the Somerset Local Safeguarding Children's Board website, www.somersetsafeguardingchildrenboard.org.uk

The Balsam Centre works with children and their families to ensure their safety, ensure that they achieve better outcomes and the best possible start in life.

We will focus on building open, trusting, supportive and respectful relationships with the families we serve.

Aim/purpose

The Balsam Centre will:

- Create an environment which encourages children to develop a positive self-image, regardless of race, language, religion, culture or home background
- Help children to establish and sustain satisfying relationships within their families with peers, and with other adults
- Encourage children to develop a sense of autonomy and independence
- Enable children to have the self-confidence and the vocabulary to resist inappropriate approaches
- Work with parents/carers to build their understanding of, and commitment to, the welfare of all our children

Scope

- This policy applies to everyone in the Centre including staff, volunteers, families, visitors and other agencies (e.g., Health Service)
- The Safeguarding/Child Protection Lead Person is the Chief Executive Officer.

Legal context

This policy is covered by:

- The Protection of Children Act 1999
- The Children Acts 1989 & 2004
- Adoption and Children Act 2002
- Early Years Foundation Stage Framework 2021
- Statutory Guidance: Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018
- Information Sharing advice for practitioners working with children, young people parents & carers 2018
- Sexual Offences Act 2003
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups 2006
- Keeping children safe in education 2020
- UN Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989

This policy also takes account of:

- The Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974
- Human Rights Act 1998
- General Data Protection Act 2018

Mandatory systems and procedures

Recruitment and Staffing Procedures

- Applications for staff and volunteer positions are exempt from the 1974 Rehabilitation Act (above), and therefore have to declare previous convictions. Candidates are informed of the need to carry out checks before posts can be confirmed. If an applicant is rejected because of information which has been disclosed in the checks, s/he has a right to know and to challenge incorrect information
- All applicants have police checks by the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS).
- References are checked and gaps in employment history are explored
- We abide by Ofsted requirements regarding references and police checks for staff and volunteers, so that no disqualified or unfit person works at the Centre or has access to children
- Volunteers do not work with children unsupervised
- No unauthorised person has unsupervised access to children
- Details of all visitors to the Centre are requested and there are security steps in place to prevent unauthorised access to the Centre. In the case of unauthorised access to the site, the Police will be called if necessary

- We respect all requirements in the 1999 Protection of Children Act regarding any person who is dismissed from our employment, or resigns in circumstances that would otherwise have led to dismissal, for reasons of child protection concern
- Adequate staff ratios are observed in accordance with Ofsted requirements for childcare
- At induction new staff are taken through all the procedures concerning child protection and safeguarding, so that if an incident arises, all staff know how to react
- There is an established process for contacting Children's Social Care and the relevant contact numbers are easily located in case of emergency within the Centre's Project Office
- The Centre has access to the South West Child Protection Procedures on which is available for staff, volunteers and families to see.

Good Practice in Family Sessions

- Parents will be responsible for their own children during family sessions unless they are in an identified separate crèche. Sessions/ rooms will display notices to that effect
- In case of crèche, all childcare staff will hold a minimum NVQ level 2 childcare qualifications while the leader will hold a level 3. In addition, all Ofsted requirements will be observed. If however, the crèche facility has not received Ofsted approval, the crèche will not last for longer than 2 hours
- Only the child's parent, or a DBS checked adult may take a child to the toilet or complete any intimate procedures i.e. toileting and changing.
- The Centre will not tolerate smacking or physical punishment of any kind by staff, volunteers or families. Staff will challenge such behaviour clearly, while also offering alternative strategies and support. They will involve other members of the centre staff as necessary

Dealing with Allegations or Concerns – Procedures

Disclosures

Where a child makes a disclosure to a member of staff, s/he will

- Offer reassurance to the child
- Listen to the child
- Give reassurance that action will be taken

Responding to Suspicions of Abuse

- In line with the South West Child Protection Procedures staff will: **Notice, Listen, Record and Refer** all suspicions

- It is acknowledged that abuse of children can take many different forms; physical, emotional, sexual and neglect. Even if a child shows signs and symptoms of 'failure to thrive' or neglect, staff will make the appropriate referrals
- Staff will deal with children in these circumstances with particular sensitivity. Moreover, staff will take great care not to influence the outcome of any suspicion or concern either in the way that they speak to children, or in the questions that they might ask
- If staff members are unsure of how to proceed, or indeed whether they should proceed, they must speak to the Chief Executive Officer as the Safeguarding/Child Protection Lead Person. There should be no delay with this, since this might threaten the welfare of a child in an emergency situation
- The first point of contact with the Local Authority is through Childrens Social Care who are contacted on;
0300 123 2224 or by email at childrens@somerset.gov.uk
It is important to recognise that staff from the Children's Social Care Team are also available for advice and guidance, as well receiving referrals for Safeguarding/Child Protection issues

Recording Suspicions of Abuse and Disclosures

Examples of possible indicators of abuse that staff should be aware of include:

- Any changes in the child/ren's behaviour or appearance
- Remarks made by the child or his/her parents or friends
- Indications that the family is under extreme stress

In these cases, it would be acceptable for Centre staff to discuss this initially with the child/ren's parent/carer, **unless doing so may place the child at further risk**. Examples of these exceptions may include incidents of fabricated or induced illness. Again, guidance is found in the South West Child Protection Procedures on www.sscb.safeguardingsomerset.org.uk

In all cases staff must consider whether a record may need to be made. If this is the case, then the following should be recorded as soon as possible after the incident or conversation:

- The child's name
- The child's address
- The age of the child
- The date and time of the observation or the disclosure
- An objective record of the observation or disclosure
- The exact words spoken by the child
- The name of the person to whom the concern was reported, with date and time
- The names of any other person present at the time

If the conversation is undertaken on the telephone the same procedure will apply and, if necessary, will become a referral with immediate action.

Concerns will be logged on incident sheets. All staff should have access to blank incident forms. These are kept in Reception at the Centre.

Once completed this form will be signed and dated by the staff member and then shared with the relevant line manager on the same day. If the staff member is from a commissioned agency or from the Health Service, action is taken through that external agency, while also informing the Chief Executive Officer as the Safeguarding/Child Protection Lead Person

The respective line manager will then decide if a referral is needed to the Local Authority's Children's Social Care team. If this is the case, then s/he will be responsible for making the referral, again on the same day.

Allegations against staff

The same guidance from the South West Child Protection Procedures (see www.sscb.safeguardingsomerset.org.uk) followed when investigating an allegation that a member of staff or volunteer has abused a child. This would involve using similar disclosure and recording procedures just as if it were an allegation of abuse by any other person.

All allegations against staff need to be reported to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) **0300 123 2224**

You also need to contact Ofsted on 0300 123 4666 (8.00am – 6.00pm).
Ofsted **must** be informed within 14 days of receipt of the allegation.

Informing Parents

- Parents are normally the first point of contact **unless doing so may place the child at further risk**
- If a suspicion of abuse is recorded, parents are informed directly after the report is made

Complaints

- We will ensure that all parents/carers know how to complain about staff or volunteer activity within the centre, which may include an allegation of abuse
- This will be done by use of appropriate signage and written guidelines made available for all those using services in the Centre

Implementation, methods

Liaison with other Bodies

- All staff in the Centre work within local Somerset procedures and the South West Child Protection Procedures. A copy of this is electronically accessible for staff, volunteers and parents/carers to access
- All staff members have the www.sscb.safeguardingsomerset.org.uk icon on the desktop of their computer screens for easy access. If they do not have their own computer then the Chief Executive Officer must ensure that they have access to a computer with the South West Procedures on the desktop.
- There is a clearly defined procedure for contacting the Local Authority on **0300 123 1231** through which access can be gained to the local Children's Social Care team. This will ensure that in an emergency the Centre and Social Care staff can work effectively together
- If a report on a family is made to the Social Care staff, the Centre will act within the South West Child Protection Procedures in deciding whether to inform the child's parents at the same time
- For staff working with families during out of hours contact [1700 – 0830] the Emergency Duty Team is available in emergency situations, on **0300 123 2327**. Involving the Police is appropriate if immediate support is needed. The Police Child Abuse Investigation Team number is **01934 638171** or **01934 638281** but they may not always be available. The Police can also be contacted routinely on **101** or, in an emergency, on **999**
- Should a member of staff be involved in an out of hours emergency contact, then the Chief Executive Officer must be informed as soon as possible on the following day with a full account of the incident which then needs to be completed in writing
- Approaches to Centre staff from the Police, CAFCASS [Children and Families Court Advisory Support Service] or solicitors regarding families, must be passed to the Chief Executive Officer for an initial response
- Staff should not give interviews to anyone alone either by telephone, mail, or in person, and if needed, will be supported by the Chief Executive Officer

Confidentiality

- Confidentiality is a priority for the Centre. All documented concerns and allegations are kept confidential and shared only with key members of staff who may need to know; such staff will ensure that their own record-keeping is appropriate to their level of professional responsibility
- Any information which needs to be shared falls strictly under the guidance of the County Council Information Sharing documentation. In cases of child protection then everything must be shared with the Children's Social Care Team. In other cases, information must be

shared in accordance with the green flowchart on page 10 of the above document

- Parental consent must be given before liaison with other agencies (e.g., the Health Service) outside the Centre in the absence of child protection concerns
- Refer to the Centre policy on Information Sharing and Confidentiality

Family Support

- The Centre take every step within its power to build up trusting and supportive relations with families, staff and volunteers. With the proviso that the care and safety of the child is paramount, the Centre will always do everything in its power to support and work with the child's family
- In the event of any child protection investigation, and subject to a satisfactory health and safety risk assessment, family support and child support will continue to be made available for families

Record Keeping

- Any records that need to be kept on a child will be kept in a safe, secure and confidential location
- The contents of these records will only be available to staff who have a legitimate need, or right, to view them
- They should contain any concerns and/or discussions about the child, decisions made and also the reasons for those decisions; they should be based on actual fact rather than opinion and speculation
- All notes made should be signed legibly, dated and kept in order; there should also be an up-to-date chronology which reflects this process

Mobile/Camera Phones

The use of modern technology to support children's learning and development and ensuring that children are kept safe can cause a conflict for both staff and parents.

To ensure the children in the Centre/Nursery benefit from technology and reassure parents procedures are in place to keep their children safe the following steps will be taken:

- Staff and volunteers must leave personal mobile/camera phones and cameras in the office during opening hours
- Parents and visitors to the Centre/Nursery will not be left unsupervised looking after other people's children
- Staff and volunteers must use the Centre or Nursery telephone number as first point of contact in an emergency

- The Centre/ Nursery Manager will authorise the use of the Centre/Nursery camera. This should only be used for recording activities and children's development
- Children will not be photographed unless prior permission has been received in writing from the parent or carer with main parental responsibility.

Internet Access/Use

The internet can provide valuable information for supporting staff development, improving quality delivery and as a learning tool for children and young people. While the benefits are recognised, we also have to consider the possible misuse.

To ensure Centre staff and volunteers, also the children and young people themselves benefit from this resource and reduce inappropriate use thereby keeping children safe the following steps will be taken:

- Staff and volunteers must first seek permission from the Chief Executive Officer to use the internet
- The Chief Executive Officer/person in charge will regularly monitor the use of the internet, ensuring only relevant and appropriate sites are being accessed
- In the event when only one person is using the computer in the room the door must be left open or ajar
- Young children will only have supervised access to selected programmes
- Children and young people must first seek permission from the Chief Executive Officer before using the computer.
- The person in charge will regularly monitor use of the internet ensuring only relevant and appropriate sites are being accessed

Staff Training

The Chief Executive Officer will ensure that all staff members understand the procedures for recording and reporting their concerns around child protection. Training is provided for all staff and volunteers to help them recognise children who may be suffering, or be at risk of suffering, significant harm and to understand their own and others' role, with such children. This will include their responsibilities to these children.

Mandatory training will be held every three years and focus on:

- The recognition of signs and symptoms of possible physical, emotional, sexual abuse and neglect
- The Local Authority guidelines for making a referral
- The procedures for recording and reporting their concerns in the Centre

- Their responsibility to contribute, as necessary, to multi agency assessments, planning and provision for vulnerable children and families

Monitoring and reviewing

- It is the responsibility of the Chief Executive Officer to monitor and review the effectiveness of all policies relating to the centre
- The Chief Executive Officer will review and update this policy as needed
- The Chief Executive Officer will update and amend this policy and its procedures in line with any emerging and relevant government legislation or County Council guidance

Related policies

The following policies may be read in conjunction with this document:

- Use of Centres by other agencies
- Home-visiting and lone-working
- Student placement
- Use of volunteers
- Information sharing and confidentiality
- Staff induction
- First aid
- Partnership with parents
- Security

For further information please contact:

The Balsam Centre
Balsam Park
Wincanton
Somerset
BA9 9HB

01963 31842

info@balsamcentre.org.uk
sueplace@balsamcentre.org.uk

It is intended that by adopting this policy and keeping staff, volunteers, families and the management committee informed, trained and up-to-date with procedures, the centre can avoid the need for complaints.

However, the Chief Executive Officer is the first point of contact should you have any queries over this policy and its related procedures

Policy endorsement

Signed by:

Name: Sarah White
Position: Trust Board Member
Date:
Review Date: