

The Community Farm

Child safeguarding policy and procedures

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Key Acronyms and Definitions

- Child: Any person under 18
- DSL: Designated Safeguarding Lead
- Team Member – Staff, Volunteers and Management Committee
- LADO - Local Authority Designated Officer

Policy statement

The Community Farm is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all children at risk who use our services. We believe safeguarding is everyone's business. Safeguarding is a specific activity that is undertaken to protect children and adults at risk who are suffering, or are at risk of suffering, significant harm.

Additionally, The Community Farm is committed to keeping our staff and volunteers protected from all forms of abuse in the workplace.

Section 17 and 47 of the 1989 Act imposed a positive duty on all organisations to safeguard and promote the welfare of children (See Appendix 1).

This document sets out The Community Farm's approach to protecting children at risk from abuse.

This document sets out The Community Farm's overall approach to protecting adults at risk from abuse. It includes;

- Policy: definition and scope
- Actions taken by The Community Farm as an organisation to support the policy
- Key roles responsible for upholding policy
- Procedures which describe how this policy is to be carried out by all team members to include staff, volunteers, and Management Committee Members.

This policy will be reviewed annually.

Everyone who The Community Farm works with will be informed of our policy statement as part of an explanation of the limits of confidentiality. Confidentiality in this respect refers to the requirement not to share anything about anyone without their consent to anyone outside of The Community Farm. It is vital that information is shared with relevant individuals within the organisation so that the safest decisions are made.

A copy of this policy and procedure is made available as appropriate and is also available on The Community Farm's website.

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Definition and scope

What is child safeguarding?

Child safeguarding is a specific activity that is undertaken to protect children who are suffering, or are at risk of suffering, harm.

What is abuse?

Abuse and neglect of children includes physical, sexual and psychological abuse and neglect.

See Appendix 1: What is abuse? For detailed information on abuse types and indicators.

The Community Farm actions

The Community Farm will:

1. Ensure all Team Members and visitors are aware of, and adhere to, our Safe Space Promise.
2. Recruit staff and volunteers safely with appropriate skills, experience and reference checks
3. Ensure that all Team Members have a Disclosure Barring Service (DBS) checks relevant to the work they undertake and are precluded from involvement in the organisation as appropriate.
4. Provide clear and detailed procedures on decision-making, accountability and recording of child safeguarding situations, primarily but not exclusively through this policy document.
5. Provide thorough and effective training to Team Members on child safeguarding policies and procedures. All new Team Members will familiarise themselves with The Community Farm's safeguarding policies and procedures. All staff will be required to review the safeguarding policies and procedures annually, to be monitored as part of the bi-annual review process.
6. Appoint a member of staff to be the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and a Management Committee Member to be the Safeguarding Advisor.
7. Provide regular and consistent supervision and support to Team Members, focusing on the safety and welfare of everyone visiting The Community Farm.
8. Ensure that the organisation can learn from specific child safeguarding situations and review policy and procedures as a result.
9. DSL to maintain a current knowledge of child safeguarding procedures nationally and within the Bath and North East Somerset area.
10. Review this policy and procedure at least once a year and always following a serious incident.

No referrals will be made to external agencies in respect of suspected abuse of a child without prior discussion and agreement from the DSL. However, if it is an emergency, the emergency services should be called immediately, and the DSL informed as soon as possible.

All discussions about specific safeguarding situations need to be recorded by the Team Member, regardless of the eventual action taken.

Role description for Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL): Managing Director

Responsible for:

- Being the main contact within The Community Farm in relation to child and adult safeguarding.
- Being the main contact for Community Farm Team Members to discuss safeguarding concerns.
- Being named contact for Child and Adult Safeguarding Services.
- Ensuring notes are maintained and updated.
- Discussing safeguarding with Safeguarding Advisors from safeguarding teams in local authorities.
- Oversight of The Community Farm's safeguarding training and induction programme.
- Ensuring that policies and procedures relating to safeguarding are up-to-date and reflect best practice and current guidelines.
- Ensuring that the Senior Team are informed of formal safeguarding referrals.
- Reporting safeguarding referrals and serious safeguarding incidents to The Community Farm's Management Committee, Funders and Partners as appropriate.
- Ensure that appropriate procedures are followed when it is identified that a Team Member is not applying this policy to a satisfactory standard and that any related current risks are safeguarded accordingly.

Not responsible for:

- Making all necessary safeguarding referrals.

Arrangements during absence:

The role of Designated Safeguarding Lead is held by the Assistant Managing Director in the absence of the DSL. In the absence of both the Managing Director (DSL) and Assistant Managing Director, the Chair of the Management Committee and Safeguarding Advisor should be contacted.

Safeguarding procedures

This section sets out what action will be taken if it is suspected that a child is at risk of harm, through abuse or neglect.

General procedure

The DSL for The Community Farm is the Managing Director.

No Team Member will be expected to make a decision regarding the safeguarding of children alone.

1. A Team Member may be given direct information about a child who is currently at risk of significant harm, or they may be given information which leads them to a professional judgement that a child is being harmed or is at risk of harm.
2. The Team Member with concerns about safeguarding should consult the DSL immediately.
3. If possible, a conversation with the person who made the disclosure will then take place.
4. If a referral is appropriate and the person raising the concern is an adult, they will be strongly encouraged to contact social services themselves (with support from The Community Farm). If this is not completed within the agreed timeframe, The Community Farm will make a referral (see Referral procedure, below).
5. All discussions and subsequent decisions will be recorded at the earliest possible opportunity, and within 24 hours.
6. Where the child is not at immediate risk, the DSL will be consulted at the earliest opportunity (not more than 24 hours) and the procedures will be followed as above.

Irrespective of the outcome, any remaining concerns or uncomfortable feelings experienced by the Team Member raising the safeguarding concern should be discussed with the DSL.

Breaching confidentiality

Unless it is an emergency, confidentiality will only be breached by a member of staff when authorised by the DSL (or Assistant Managing Director in the absence of DSL).

No Team Member should make a referral regarding a child who may be at risk or break confidentiality without the agreement of their Team Leader/Manager.

Confidentiality in this respect refers to the requirement not to share anything about anyone without their consent to anyone outside of The Community Farm. It is vital that information is shared within the organisation so that the safest decisions are made.

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Maintaining confidentiality is a vital part of the ethos of the organisation and generally, this can be assured. However, if a Team Member has reason to believe that a child may be at risk of harm, the responsibility to safeguard that child overrides the right to confidentiality. Team Members MUST break confidentiality in these circumstances.

If confidentiality cannot be maintained, the information will only be shared with relevant people.

In many situations consent to take action to safeguard a child can be sought from the person concerned and will be given, but consent must not be sought if it may place someone at greater risk.

Referral procedure

Safeguarding referrals can only be made where The Community Farm has sufficient information about the child concerned (one or more of the following: name, address, contact details, date of birth, parent/carer's name).

After following the steps described under "General procedure," and ascertaining that a referral is appropriate, the following actions will be taken:

1. The DSL will contact the local authority by phone or online (see Appendix 2 for B&NES contact details), provide the requested information and follow the advice given.
2. The DSL will inform the Team Member of the outcome of the referral, and this will be communicated to the primary client/parent/carer if they are still in contact.

Whistle blowing

Whistleblowing is the reporting of suspected wrongdoing or dangers in relation to our activities. This includes bribery, fraud or other criminal activity, miscarriages of justice, health and safety risks, damage to the environment and any breach of legal or professional obligations to the people who use our service, employees, or the wider community.

The Community Farm aims to encourage and enable our staff and volunteers to raise their concerns and to do so without fear of victimisation or discrimination and will respond to all such concerns. Where a raised concern relates to the safety of a child, the terms of this safeguarding policy and procedures will be applied.

Allegations made against The Community Farm Team Members

1. If the information regarding risk to a child relates to alleged abuse by a member of The Community Farm, the DSL should immediately be informed in the first instance, or if the allegation concerns the DSL the Team Member should speak directly to the Chair of the Management Committee.
2. The Team Member should not discuss the allegations with other Team Members. The DSL will ensure that the person reporting the allegation has appropriate practical and emotional support in place, signposting externally where appropriate.
3. The DSL will immediately consult the appropriate Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) and follow actions as agreed.
4. The individual concerned will immediately be suspended from duties pending investigation. This is not an assumption of guilt but serves to allow the appropriate investigation to take place and protects the Team Member from further allegations.
5. The scope of the investigation will be determined by the nature of the concern and all investigations will be thorough and impartial.

Record keeping

Details of the initial safeguarding concern must be recorded by the Team Member who identified the concern. All subsequent discussions, actions and decisions must be updated by the Team Member involved in that particular action. All records will be recorded at the earliest opportunity, and within 24 hours.

All records must be:

1. Accurate, to include
 - The date/time of the disclosure.
 - The date/time of the initial report.
 - The name/contact details and role of the person to whom the concern was initially reported
 - The names, and where relevant and legal, the contact details of all parties involved including witnesses.
2. Factual, to include
 - A clear report of the initial concern/disclosure. This will include what has been seen, heard or said. All reports must be recorded with the date and Team Member's name.
 - A clear dated record of all further action taken.
 - If relevant, the reasons why a concern was not referred to a statutory agency.
3. Separate opinion or judgement

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- It is acceptable to have an informed opinion or judgement, but this must be clearly stated as opinion. Any interpretation or inference drawn from what was observed, said or alleged must be clearly recorded as such.
- Records must be written mindful that people may request access to any records kept about them.

Record retention

All records are kept in accordance with The General Data Protection Regulations 2018 (GDPR) as laid out in The Community Farm's Privacy and Data Protection Policy.

Staff support

The Community Farm recognises that working with trauma can impact staff and that this can be particularly relevant when working with safeguarding concerns. The Community Farm will support staff by providing regular debriefing and, where necessary and appropriate, offering additional wellbeing support.

Appendix 1: What is abuse?

The following is an extract from the NSPCC website 2024.

There are four main types of abuse.

Physical abuse

This is when someone hurts a child on purpose and with the intent to cause harm. This can include:

- hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, drowning, or suffocating.
- If it causes them physical harm, such as cuts, bruises, broken bones or other injuries, it is physical abuse.
- Anyone can hurt a child - a relative, friend or stranger. It can also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child.

Signs of physical abuse

- Children with frequent injuries
- Children with unexplained or unusual fractures or broken bones
- Children with unexplained:
 - bruises or cuts
 - burns or scalds
 - bite marks
- Children may be more at risk if their parents have problems with drugs, alcohol and mental health or if they live in a home where domestic abuse happens. Babies and disabled children also have a higher risk of suffering physical abuse.

Emotional abuse

Emotional abuse is when a child's feelings and emotions are manipulated or shamed on purpose. This can take different forms, for example:

- when a child is unfairly blamed for everything
- told they are stupid, worthless or ugly
- ignored or never shown any emotion in interactions
- Emotional abuse is the severe and persistent ill treatment of a child. It can have long-lasting and devastating effects on a child's emotional health and development.

Signs of emotional abuse

- The child is excessively withdrawn, fearful, or anxious about doing something wrong

- Parents or carers who withdraw their attention from their child, giving the child the 'cold shoulder'
- Parents or carers blaming their problems on their child
- Parents or carers who humiliate their child, for example, by name-calling or making negative comparisons.
- Emotional abuse may be the only form of abuse suffered by a child, or it might be part of a wider pattern of abuse.

Sexual abuse and exploitation

Sexual abuse is any sexual activity with a child, or inducing a child to act in sexually inappropriate ways. Many children and young people do not recognise themselves as victims. A child may not understand what is happening and may not even understand that it is wrong. The sexual abuse of children is more than just physical sexual contact. It includes:

- sexual touching, masturbation, kissing, rubbing - clothed or unclothed
- all penetrative sex
- intentionally engaging in sexual activity in front of a child
- making, showing, or distributing indecent images of children.
- grooming children for future abuse - in person or online

Signs of sexual abuse

- displaying knowledge or interest in sexual acts inappropriate to their age
- using sexual language or have sexual knowledge that you wouldn't expect them to have
- asking others to behave sexually or play sexual games
- exhibiting physical sexual health problems, including soreness in the genital and anal areas, sexually transmitted infections or underage pregnancy
- Sexual abuse is not only perpetrated by adult males. Women can commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

Child sexual exploitation

- Child sexual exploitation is a form of sexual abuse. This is when an individual or group takes advantage of a child (anyone under 18) to coerce, manipulate or deceive them into sexual activity. This is done in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, or for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator.
- Even if the activity appears consensual, the victim still may have been sexually manipulated. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact, and can also occur online or through social media.

Signs of child sexual exploitation

- appearing regularly with unexplained gifts or new possessions
- associating with other young people involved in exploitation
- having older boyfriends or girlfriends
- suffering from sexually transmitted infections or pregnancies
- changes in emotional well-being
- misuse of drugs and alcohol
- going missing for periods of time or regularly coming home late
- regularly missing school or not taking part in education

Neglect

Neglect is where a child is not looked after. It is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic and essential needs. This can include:

- not providing adequate food, water, clothing, and shelter
- leaving a child alone in dangerous situations, or to watch after themselves when they are very young
- failure to provide medical care
- failure to meet the child's emotional needs

Warning signs of neglect

- living in a home that is indisputably dirty or unsafe
- persistent hunger and signs of malnutrition
- lack of hygiene - dirty clothes and hair that may lead to lice or nits
- lack of adequate clothing for the time of year - such as not having a winter coat
- living in dangerous conditions, i.e. around drugs, alcohol or violence
- often acting angry, aggressive or self-harming
- failing to receive basic health care
- parents who fail to seek medical treatment when their children are ill or injured
- If a child does not have a safe and stable home, this is neglect.

Appendix 2: Contacts

South West Child Protection <https://www.proceduresonline.com/swcpp/> offer a clear guide and step by step approach to what to do if you are concerned about a child or young person under 18 in any of the Avon and Somerset localities.

If you are concerned about the immediate safety of a child, the Police should be telephoned on 101 at any time (or in emergencies on 999).

Bath & North East Somerset Council
Regular Social Work Team: 01225 396111 or 01225 477929
Emergency Duty Out of Hours 01454 615165
Website: https://bcssp.org.uk/p/report-a-concern

Further Useful Contacts:

- NSPCC 24 hour Helpline for adults concerned about a child, including if a child is involved in or at risk from gangs, or radicalisation: 0800 800 5000 or email help@nspcc.org.uk.
- Childline 24 hours Helpline for children/young people: 0800 1111
- NSPCC FGM Helpline [0800 028 3550](tel:08000283550) or email fgmhelp@nspcc.org.uk
- NSPCC Helpline extension to report abuse related to the Church of England, the service offers advice and statutory referrals. Information will only be shared if the referrer gives express permission: 0800 80 20 20 or email: help@nspcc.org.uk
- NSPCC dedicated helpline details can be found here: <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/reporting-abuse/dedicated-helplines/>
- CEOP Child Exploitation and Online Protection provide information about online sexual abuse <https://www.ceop.police.uk/safety-centre/>