



## **Child Protection Policy**

The Faithworks Wessex policy surrounding the protection of children and young people is based on both our Christian ethos and then on the Bournemouth, Poole and Dorset Multi-Agency Adult Protection Policy and Procedures, which governs all agencies within the area dealing with abuse issues and concerns.

Faithworks Wessex (hereafter The Organisation) takes seriously its responsibility to protect and safeguard the welfare of children and young people contacted through the work of its projects and to reduce the risk of staff being falsely accused of improper or unprofessional conduct. Staff/volunteers have a crucial role to play in shaping the lives of young people. They have a unique opportunity to interact with children and young people in ways that are both affirming and inspiring.

Our policy applies to all staff and volunteers directly connected with any of our projects. There are five main elements to the policy:

- ❖ Ensuring we practice safe recruitment in checking the suitability of staff and volunteers to work with children.
- ❖ Raising awareness of child protection issues and equipping children with the skills they need to make them safe.
- ❖ Developing and then implementing procedures for identifying and reporting cases, or suspected cases of abuse.
- ❖ Supporting children who have been abused in accordance with their agreed protection plan.
- ❖ Establishing a safe environment in which children can develop and flourish.

### **Underlying Principles**

- ❖ The welfare of the child is paramount.
- ❖ Staff/volunteers are responsible for their own actions and behaviour and should avoid any conduct which would lead any reasonable person to question their motivation and intentions.
- ❖ Staff/volunteers should work, and be seen to work, in an open and transparent way.
- ❖ Staff/volunteers should discuss and/or take advice promptly from their line manager, or another senior member of staff, over any incident which may give rise for concern.
- ❖ Records should be made of any such incident (see attached Record of Concern) and of decisions made/further actions agreed, in accordance with social services policy for keeping and maintaining records.

- ❖ Staff/volunteers should apply the same professional standards regardless of ethnicity, gender or sexuality.
- ❖ All staff/volunteers should know the name of the designated person(s) within Faithworks Wessex for child protection (see below for details), and understand their responsibilities to safeguard and protect children and young people. Staff should be familiar with Faithworks Wessex's child protection policy and procedures, as well as local child protection inter-agency arrangements. Faithworks Wessex will provide access to the necessary training on Child Protection and undertakes to inform all staff/volunteers of the organisation's policy and procedures.
- ❖ Staff/volunteers should be aware that breaches of the law and other professional guidelines could result in criminal or disciplinary action being taken against them.
- ❖ A record should be made of any incident, concern, disclosure or allegation **as soon as possible** after the event. This should include a clear account of further discussions with the designated person for child protection within the organisation, the decisions made and actions taken, including timescales for completion.

### **Duty of Care**

- ❖ All staff/volunteers have a duty to keep young people safe and to protect them from physical and emotional harm.
- ❖ When individuals accept a role that involves working with children and young people, they need to understand and acknowledge the responsibilities and trust inherent in that role.
- ❖ There should be no conflict between an employer's duty of care (as stated in the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974) and the staff duty of care towards children.
- ❖ Individuals are expected to make judgements about their behaviour in order to secure the best interests and welfare of the children in their charge; and in so doing will be seen to be acting reasonably.

### **Recruitment procedures**

- ❖ All potential staff/volunteers will be interviewed to ascertain their suitability for working with children. Successful applicants will have to provide two satisfactory references and undergo a DBS (formerly Criminal Records Bureau check) (cost to be met by Faithworks Wessex or the relevant project if under agreement with Faithworks Wessex) before being allowed to work with children. This will include a check against the DBS barred lists.
- ❖ All staff/ will be subject to a probationary period, regular supervision and appraisal, during which issues relating to child protection can be discussed.

### **Power and Positions of Trust**

- ❖ Wherever possible, staff/volunteers should avoid behaviour which might be misinterpreted by others, and report and record any incident with this potential.

- ❖ Where a person aged 18 or over is in a position of trust with a child under 18, it is an offence for that person to engage in sexual activity with, or in the presence of that child; or to cause or incite that child to engage in, or watch, sexual activity (Sexual Offences Act 2003 Sections 16-22).
- ❖ An individual's behaviour, either in or out of the workplace, should not compromise his/her position within the work setting.
- ❖ Staff/volunteers should ensure they are dressed decently, safely and appropriately for the tasks they undertake. Those who dress or appear in a manner which could be considered as inappropriate could render themselves vulnerable to criticism or allegation.
- ❖ Staff/volunteers should treat all children and young people with dignity and respect in attitude, language used and actions.

### **Confidentiality**

- ❖ All records should be kept securely in a locked cabinet.
- ❖ Confidential information about a child or young person should never be used casually in conversation, or shared with any person other than on a need to know basis. In circumstances where the child's identity does not need to be disclosed the information should be used anonymously.
- ❖ There may be some circumstances in which a member of staff/volunteer may be expected to share information about a child, for example when abuse is alleged or suspected. In such cases, individuals have a duty to pass information on without delay, but only to those with designated child protection responsibilities (the organisation's Child Protection Officer).
- ❖ The Booklet "What To Do If You're Worried A Child is Being Abused" contains further guidance on sharing information to protect children. (Available on request from the Faithworks Wessex office).

### **Social and Physical Contact**

- ❖ Staff/volunteers should not give their personal details such as home/mobile phone number or home or e-mail address to children.
- ❖ Appropriate physical contact is an essential part of life and necessary for basic care, reassurance, communication and praise. It should be safe, public, appropriate, (given their age, stage of development, gender, ethnicity and background) and not overdone. Touch can be perceived as a sign of warmth and friendliness or as a sign of dominance. Any physical contact must always be related to the child's needs and not that of the staff/volunteer and it should be initiated by the child. \*
- ❖ All children have the right to decide how much or how little physical contact they have with others. Except in exceptional circumstances, such as where they need medical attention, their wishes should always be respected. It is appropriate to hold and comfort a distressed child, but be aware that the child may not interpret this contact in the manner in which you intend it. \*

(\* Adapted from "Safe & Sound" Safeguarding Policies for Ministry with children in the Salvation Army. ©2007 The Salvation Army UKT)

- ❖ Extra caution may be required where a child has suffered physical abuse or neglect. In the child's view, physical contact might be associated with such experiences and lead to staff/volunteers being vulnerable to

allegations of abuse. It is recognised that many children are extremely needy and seek out inappropriate physical contact. In such circumstances staff/volunteers should deter the child sensitively by helping them to understand the importance of personal boundaries.

- ❖ Any sexual behaviour by a member of staff with or towards a child or young person is both inappropriate and illegal. Children and young people are protected by the same laws as adults in relation to non-consensual sexual behaviour. They are additionally protected by specific legal provisions regardless of whether the child or young person consents or not.
- ❖ Talking with young people can sometimes lead to unplanned discussion about subject matter of a sexually explicit or otherwise sensitive nature. Responding to young people's questions can require careful judgement and staff may wish to take guidance in these circumstances from a line manager.

### **Children in Distress**

- ❖ There may be occasions when a distressed child needs comfort and reassurance. This may include age-appropriate physical contact. Staff should remain self-aware at all times in order that their contact is not threatening, intrusive or subject to misinterpretation.
- ❖ Where a member of staff/volunteer has a particular concern about the need to provide this type of care and reassurance they should seek further advice from a line manager.

### **One to One Situations**

- ❖ Staff/volunteers working in one to one situations with children and young people may be more vulnerable to allegations. Workers should recognise this possibility and plan and conduct meetings accordingly. Every attempt should be made to ensure the safety and security needs of both staff and children.
- ❖ In the event of an incident occurring, which may result in an action being misinterpreted and/or an allegation being made against a member of staff/volunteer, the relevant information should be clearly and promptly recorded and reported to the line manager. Early discussion with a parent/carer/social worker could avoid any misunderstanding.

### **Transporting Children/Young People**

- ❖ Where possible and practicable, parental consent must be obtained before the journey.
- ❖ Children and young people should not travel in the front of the car and should not sit behind the driver. Ideally another adult should be present.
- ❖ Staff should ensure that their behaviour is safe and that the transport arrangements and the vehicle meet all legal requirements. They should ensure that the vehicle is roadworthy and appropriately insured and that the maximum capacity is not exceeded.
- ❖ The regulations regarding transporting children i.e. the use of car seats and wearing seatbelts, can be accessed at :

[www.direct.gov.uk/en/Parents/Yourchildshealthandsafety/Roadandtravelsafety/DG\\_10037077](http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/Parents/Yourchildshealthandsafety/Roadandtravelsafety/DG_10037077)

### **Actions Checklist when a concern or allegation is disclosed**

- ❖ Do not interview the child but use the incident report form (see attached) to record all the details given – the aim of this is to ascertain and record the facts as far as the child gives them but not to question their view of events or ask leading questions.
- ❖ Reassure the child and be clear about what will happen next.
- ❖ Report promptly to the designated person, or in their absence, their deputy who will consult and/or refer to Children & Family Services or the Police. If referring to the designated person would involve an unnecessary delay which might place a child at risk of further harm, to consult with Children & Families and/or the Police as to what steps to take.

### **Definitions**

- ❖ “CHILDREN” & “YOUNG PEOPLE” are interchangeable terms used throughout, all refer to children under the age of 18 years.
- ❖ “ALLEGATION” means any information that suggests an adult has caused or may cause hurt or harm to a child or young person.
- ❖ “ABUSE or NEGLECT” are forms of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting, by those known to them or, more rarely, by a stranger. They may be abused by an adult or adults, or another child or children.
- ❖ “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 of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child.
- ❖ “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 (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 images, watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.
- ❖ “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, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment)
  - protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger
  - ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-givers)

- ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.
  - It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.
- ❖ "EMOTIONAL ABUSE" is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only 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 serious bullying, causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

### Contacts

- ❖ Faithworks Wessex's Child Protection Officer is currently Alistair Doxat-Purser, Chief Executive, who can be contacted on 01202 429037 or 07425 159879. He is supported by Dawn Cuthbertson, trustee, who is available on 01202 709828.
- ❖ The Borough of Poole Children and Families Services can be contacted on 01202 714790 (daytime) and 01202 657279 out of hours.
- ❖ Concerns may also be expressed to the Chair of Faithworks Wessex, Ian Bromilow, who can be contacted on 01258 880044.

Child Protection Contacts		
Name	Role	Tel. number
Alistair Doxat-Purser	Chief Executive	01202 429037
Dawn Cuthbertson	Trustee	01202 709828

### Appendices

- ❖ Responding to concerns: Referrals to Children and Families Services, Guidance notes for Referring agencies.
- ❖ Booklet and flowchart "What to Do if a Child is Being Abused"

### Review of this policy

This policy will be reviewed regularly by the trustees of Faithworks Wessex.