

St Mary's Contact Centre - Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy

1. BASIC PRINCIPLES

St Mary's Contact Centre (subsequently referred to as SMCC):

1.1 believes that children and young people need safe environments in which they can grow and develop in confidence. It recognises that child abuse occurs in all religions, all cultures and all social classes and that both women and men are capable of perpetrating all types of abuse.

1.2 recognises that organisations working with and supporting children and young people have a duty to keep them safe.

1.3 places safeguarding children and young people at the centre of its activities.

Is committed to and working towards the objectives as defined in Working Together to Safeguard Children - a guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children July 2018 (HM Government).

1.4 believes that children and young people should not be exposed to negligence or avoidable risks.

1.5 recognises that Safeguarding and Child Protection are emotive issues that need to be handled both sensitively and carefully.

1.6 is committed to creating and implementing policies and procedures that will ensure that any risks to children and young people are minimised and carefully managed.

1.7 recognises the difference between Child Protection and Safeguarding, namely:

- Child Protection is the process of protecting individual children identified as either suffering or likely to suffer significant harm as a result of abuse or neglect. It involves recognising signs and symptoms of physical, sexual or emotional abuse or neglect, and acting upon them.
- Safeguarding involves keeping children and young people safe from a much wider range of potential dangers and/or harm. It looks at preventative action rather than just reactive action.

1.8 is committed to ensuring that its staff and volunteers are aware of, kept up to date with and operate in accordance with good practice in relation to Safeguarding and Child Protection. This will mean that they have the ability to recognise, respond to, report, record and refer issues of Safeguarding and Child Protection.

1.9 believes that all children, regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation have an equal right to protection from all types of harm or abuse. Some children are additionally vulnerable because of the impact of previous experiences, their level of dependency, communication needs, or other issues. Extra safeguards may be needed to keep children who are additionally vulnerable safe from abuse.

2. ACCOUNTABILITY

2.1 A copy of this policy and the accompanying Child Protection Procedure will be given to the Co-ordinator, to all volunteers and Trustees. All will be required to sign the statement of commitment in duplicate and return one copy.

2.2 SMCC will ensure that users and referrers are aware that the centre has a Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy which they can see upon request.

2.3 SMCC will not knowingly accept a referral (or a volunteer application) from somebody who has been convicted of an offence relating to physical or sexual abuse of a child, unless there are exceptional circumstances and appropriate professional advice has been sought and followed.

3. MANAGING SAFEGUARDING AND CHILD PROTECTION WITHIN SMCC

3.1 The prime responsibility for managing Child Protection matters rests with the Co-ordinator or the Acting Co-ordinator in their absence.

3.2 The welfare of the child is paramount. Confidentiality issues will be overridden by the need to act for the welfare of the child.

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3.3 Responsibility for children using the Contact Centre rests with their parent, not volunteers. Nevertheless, every volunteer is responsible for:

- i preventing the physical, sexual and emotional abuse of children whilst using the Contact Centre.
- ii listening to concerns expressed by parents or children and advising them how to report any suspected abuse.
- iii reporting abuse themselves in certain circumstances.

3.3 There is a recognised procedure for the Contact Centre volunteers and staff to record and report allegations of or suspected child abuse.

3.4 Volunteers are aware that in most situations parents should accompany children to the toilet. If there has been a request for a volunteer to take a child to the toilet, or there is concern about a parent doing so, they should be accompanied by another volunteer. Volunteers should not take children to the toilet on their own.

We will seek to keep children and young people safe by:

- Valuing, listening to and respecting them.
- Appointing a nominated child protection lead for children and young people, a deputy, and a lead trustee/board member for safeguarding.
- Adopting child protection and safeguarding best practice through our policies, procedures, and code of conduct for staff and volunteers.
- Developing and implementing an effective online safety policy and related procedures.
- Providing effective management for staff and volunteers through supervision, support, training, and quality assurance measures so that all staff and volunteers know about and follow our policies, procedures, and behaviour codes confidently and competently.
- Recruiting and selecting staff and volunteers safely, ensuring all necessary checks are made.
- Recording and storing and using information professionally and securely, in line with data protection legislation and guidance, more information about this is available from the Information Commissioner's Office: ico.org.uk.
- Sharing information about safeguarding and good practice with children and their families via leaflets, posters, group work and one-to-one discussions.
- Making sure that children, young people, and their families know where to go for help if they have a concern.
- Using our safeguarding and child protection procedures to share concerns and relevant information with agencies who need to know, and involving children, young people, parents, families, and carers appropriately.
- Using our procedures to manage any allegations against staff and volunteers appropriately.
- Creating and maintaining an anti-bullying environment and ensuring that we have a policy and procedure to help us deal effectively with any bullying that does arise.
- Ensuring that we have effective complaints and whistleblowing measures in place.
- Ensuring that we provide a safe physical environment for our children, young people, staff, and volunteers, by applying health and safety measures in accordance with the law and regulatory guidance
- Building a safeguarding culture where staff and volunteers, children, young people, and their families, treat each other with respect and are comfortable about sharing concerns.

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4. RECRUITMENT

4.1 The risk of volunteers being potential, actual or convicted perpetrators is reduced by the following taking place prior to their appointment:

- i an interview
- ii obtaining references from two people with first-hand knowledge of them
- iii making appropriate checks with the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)
- iv making any appointment conditional on the successful completion of a probationary period of up to four sessions

4.2 DBS checks on staff, volunteers and any trustees who regularly attend the Centre should be repeated every three years.

5. EDUCATION AND TRAINING

5.1 All volunteers will receive training in what constitutes child abuse and the procedures that need to be followed to report or prevent it. This training should be repeated on an annual basis and updated to reflect any changes in legislation and guidance.

5.2 SMCC will issue certificates upon the satisfactory completion of training and will keep a record of training attended.

6. SUPPORT, SUPERVISION AND ADVICE

6.1 An appropriate support structure is in place for the St Mary's Contact Centre Coordinator.

6.2 All volunteers are familiar with the National Association of Child Contact Centres' Saturday safeguarding helpline number and have access to local emergency numbers.

6.3 Appropriate support will be made available to all volunteers who have to deal with a family where there has been alleged or actual child abuse.

7. REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed annually. Changes to take account of new legislation and practice directions will be made as and when required.

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STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT TO SMCCC'S CHILD PROTECTION AND SAFEGUARDING POLICY

I have read and understood the principles and guidelines outlined in SMCC's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy. I agree with the principles and accept the importance of implementing them in my capacity as an employee, volunteer or trustee.

.....Print name

.....Signature

.....Role

..... Date

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