

# Children & Vulnerable Adults Protection & Safeguarding Policy

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## 1. Policy

West Kent Mediation(WKM)believes that it is always unacceptable for a child young person or vulnerable adult to experience abuse of any kind and recognises it has responsibility to safeguard the welfare of all children, young people and vulnerable adult, by a commitment to practices which protects them.

1.2 This policy applies to all Staff, Volunteers and Trustees working on behalf of WKM.

## 2. Safeguarding has been defined as:

2.1 All agencies working with children, young people, vulnerable adults and their families must take all reasonable measures to ensure that the risks of harm to children's and vulnerable adult's welfare are minimised.

2.2 Where there are concerns about children, young people or vulnerable adult's welfare, all agencies take appropriate actions to address those concerns, working to agreed local policies and procedures in full partnership with other local agencies.

## 3. We recognise that:

3.1 The welfare of the child/young person or vulnerable adult is paramount.

3.2 All children and vulnerable adults, regardless of age, disability, gender, racial heritage, religious belief, sexual orientation or identity, have the right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse.

3.3 Working in partnership with children, young people and vulnerable adults, their parents, carers, family, extended family and other agencies is essential in promoting their welfare.

## 4. The purpose of the policy:

4.1 To provide protection for the children, young people and vulnerable adults who receive WKM's services, including the children of adult members or users.

4.2 To provide Staff and Volunteers with guidance on procedures they should adopt in the event that they suspect a child, young person or vulnerable adult may be experiencing, or be at risk of, harm.

## 5. We will seek to safeguard children, young people and vulnerable adults by:

5.1 Valuing them, listening to and respecting them.

5.2 Adopting child protection and vulnerable adults guidelines through procedures and a code of conduct for all Staff and Volunteers.

- 5.3 Recruiting Staff and Volunteers safely, ensuring all necessary checks are made.
- 5.4 Sharing information about safeguarding and good practice with children, vulnerable adults parents/carers, staff and volunteers.
- 5.5 Sharing information about concerns with agencies who need to know, and involving parents/carers, children and vulnerable adults appropriately.
- 5.6 Providing effective management for Staff and Volunteers through supervision, support and training.

## 6. Recruitment

- 6.1 The recruitment of WKM Staff and Volunteers will be in line with their Safer Recruitment Policy and Procedures (policy no.17).

## 7. Child & Vulnerable Adults protection - Nominated person

- 7.1 WKM believes that every child or vulnerable adult regardless of age has at all times and in all situations a right to feel safe and protected from any situation or practice that results in being physically or psychologically damaged.
- 7.2 WKM have appointed a Safeguarding Officer who shall be responsible for ensuring these policies are fully implemented.  
Amanda Bell, Chief Executive Officer, office 01732 469696, mobile 07808 767314.

**In the event of an emergency situation someone may feel there is an immediate danger and they are instructed to ring 999.**

- 7.3 If any Staff member or Volunteer who, in the course of their work, has reason to believe that a child or vulnerable adult is at serious risk, they **MUST** share their concern with the person responsible for Safeguarding within the organisation, who will take the following action:
  - 7.3.1 Clarify the urgency of the situation with the Staff member/Volunteer.
  - 7.3.2 If the situation is clearly an urgent case, the child is too frightened to go home or there are serious doubts about the child or vulnerable adult's safety within the home, the KCC County Duty Services Team Service will be contacted immediately.

### **During the day and in office hours Kent County Council contact details**

**Concerned about an adult?** Call 03000 41 61 61 (text relay 18001 03000 41 61 61) or email [social.services@kent.gov.uk](mailto:social.services@kent.gov.uk).

**Concerned about a child?** Call 03000 41 11 11 (text relay 18001 03000 41 11 11) or email [social.services@kent.gov.uk](mailto:social.services@kent.gov.uk).

### **Out of hours and in an emergency**

if you need to contact us outside of normal office hours, for example during the night, call 03000 41 91 91.

**If you think someone is in immediate danger, the best thing to do is call 999 for the emergency services.**

- 7.3.3 If the concern is more general, this will be discussed with the Staff member/Volunteer to agree whether a referral should be made to the KCC County Duty Services Team.
- 7.3.4 Accurately record any information given by the child/vulnerable adult or suspicions, including what has been seen, heard or known at the time and to retain a log of contact details made to Social Services and the Police.
- 7.4 The Nominated person for Safeguarding is responsible for ensuring:
  - 7.4.1 That the Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adult Procedure is reviewed annually unless new or revised legislation or guidance from an acknowledged authority demands otherwise.
  - 7.4.2 That the Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adult Procedure is distributed to all Staff and Volunteers and ensure that they have read and understood its contents.
  - 7.4.3 Promoting and maintaining links with KCC Social Services, Children and Families Team in relation to both general and specific child protection matters.
  - 7.4.4 That the KCC County Duty Services Team contact number is clearly displayed in the main office.
  - 7.4.5 WKM Staff and Volunteers are not trained to decide if abuse has occurred.

## 8. Sharing Information

- 8.1 WKM will manage information in line with statutory requirements and in accordance with the organisation's own values of being straightforward, accessible, and professional. WKM handles sensitive personal information about people, and must ensure that there is no unauthorised access, loss, misuse, modification or disclosure of this information. When safeguarding Children and adults at risk, there may be a need to disclose personal or sensitive information to someone from another organisation. WKM will only do this where the law permits, and where disclosure is considered to be in its client's best interests (safeguarding) including the prevention of a crime.
- 8.2 Case records and any other notes or correspondence kept as a hard copy or electronically in the office must be kept securely. If the office is broken into and confidential records stolen, the theft must be reported to the Police and to the Board of Trustees. The confidential nature of the papers should be emphasised when reporting to the Police. (*see Data Protection Policy, no.13*)

## 9. Procedures for working with Children and Vulnerable Adults

- 9.1 All Staff members and Volunteers must at all times:
  - 9.1.1 Be vigilant about their own actions so they cannot be misinterpreted.
  - 9.1.2 Acknowledge the age group they work with.
  - 9.1.3 Never trivialise or exaggerate child/vulnerable adult abuse issues.
  - 9.1.4 Allow the child/vulnerable adult time to speak and not interrupt nor make suggestions to them which could imply making an investigation.

- 9.1.5 Reassure the child/vulnerable adult that they are glad she or he has told what has happened and that it was right to tell.
- 9.1.6 Not interrogate or question other than to clarify understanding.
- 9.1.7 Be honest and tell the child/ vulnerable adult what they have said cannot be kept a secret and that they will have to talk to someone else that can help.
- 9.1.8 Remain calm, not showing anger, disgust, disbelief.
- 9.1.9 As soon as practical, write down all the child/vulnerable adult has revealed and discuss the situation only with the Safeguarding Officer, or in their absence other member of Staff.
- 9.2 Transport
  - 9.2.1 Written parental/guardian consent **must always** be obtained prior to any member of Staff or Volunteer transporting a child to any previously arranged destination to attend a mediation or training course.
  - 9.2.2 There must be two Staff members and/or Volunteers in the car at all times when transporting a child/vulnerable adult to any previously arranged destination.
  - 9.2.3 Anyone transporting children/vulnerable adult's in their own car must ensure the insurance covers this service.
- 9.3 Home visits
  - 9.3.1 All home visits to children must be conducted with the prior permission and arrangement of their parent/guardian/carer.
  - 9.3.2 No child will be visited at home unless a parent/guardian/carer is present.
- 9.4 Office visits
  - 9.4.1 Any child visiting the WKM office for a mediation interview must be accompanied by a parent/guardian/carer who must remain on the premises at all times.
  - 9.4.2 If a child adult is taking part in a mediation interview being conducted in the mediation room in the office, the door to the room must remain open at all times.
- 9.5 Peer Restorative Mediation Training
  - 9.5.1 The minimum ratio of adults to children in all training provision should be no less than 1 adult for every 10 children unless the training is taking place in school during normal school hours.
  - 9.5.2 For any training session outside of a school premises, a register must be held of every child involved including relevant medical details together with a contact name and number in case of emergencies.
  - 9.5.3 For all training sessions held outside of school premises, a member of the school staff should be present. Where this is not to be the case, parental/guardian permission should be obtained from each child on the course.

## 10. Procedures relating to allegations concerning Staff and Volunteers

- 10.1 The following procedures deal primarily with Safeguarding of Children and Vulnerable Adult enquiries and any subsequent criminal investigations as distinct from complaints of poor practice:
  - 10.1.1 Any allegation of abuse, however minor, by a Staff member or Volunteer will be reported to WKM's Safeguarding Officer or in their absence other member of Staff who will immediately pass this information onto KCC Social Services, Children and families Team.
  - 10.1.2 A member of Staff or Volunteer will be suspended until the outcome of any investigation is concluded.
  - 10.1.3 Any Staff member or Volunteer receiving allegations about both WKM Staff or Volunteers who does not pass this information onto WKM's Safeguarding Officer at the earliest opportunity will be subject to disciplinary procedures.
  - 10.1.4 It may be the allegation was prompted by inappropriate behaviour, not considered sufficiently harmful under Safeguarding procedures but may still need to be considered under WKM's disciplinary procedures.

## 11. Training

- 11.1 The Safeguarding Officer will arrange for all Staff and Volunteers to gain a general awareness for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and vulnerable adults.
- 11.2 All Staff and Volunteers to be made aware of the document "What to do if you're worried a child is being abused" [www.education.gov.uk/publications](http://www.education.gov.uk/publications)

## 12. Steps for WKM Staff/Volunteers to take if they have concerns about a child or vulnerable adult's welfare

- 12.1.1 Staff member/volunteer discusses concerns with nominated person/Chief Executive Officer.
- 12.1.2 Concerns remain.
- 12.1.3 Chief Executive Officer or nominated person refers to KCC Social Services, Children and Families Team.
- 12.1.4 Confirmation of concerns put in writing to KCC within 48 hours.
- 12.1.5 KCC and CEO acknowledge receipt of referral.
- 12.1.6 Decision taken on course of action to be followed.
- 12.1.7 KCC gives feedback to WKM on next course of action.
- 12.1.8 Social work continues until concerns are ended.

## 13. Definition of Abuse:

- 13.1 *Children/vulnerable adults may be in need of protection where their basic needs are not being met, in a manner appropriate to their age and stage of development, and they will be at risk through avoidable acts of commission or \*omission on the part of their parent(s), sibling(s) or other relative(s), or a carer (i.e. the person(s) while not a parent who has actual custody of the child).*

\*NB this means children/vulnerable adults at risk through either something a person has done to them or something a person is failing to do for them. References: 'Protecting Children: A Shared Responsibility', 'Office of the Public Guardian, Safeguarding Policy', May 2013.

- 13.1.1 Physical: Physical abuse may involve a person poking, pushing, hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, suffocating, cuts, bruising, beating etc. a child or vulnerable adult causing him/her harm.
- 13.1.2 Emotional: Persistent emotional ill treatment that is likely to cause serious harm to the child/vulnerable adult's emotional health. This may involve name calling, conveying to the child/vulnerable adult they are worthless, unloved, and inadequate and can make them feel frightened, in danger, exploited or corrupted.
- 13.1.3 Sexual: Forcing or enticing a child/vulnerable adult to take part in sexual activities, whether or not they are aware they are happening. This may involve physical contact, penetrative or non penetrative acts, and also includes encouraging the child/vulnerable adult to look at pornographic material or sexual acts.
- 13.1.4 Neglect: The inability of a carer to meet a child/vulnerable adult's basic physical and psychological needs, which result in serious impairment to their health and development, is deemed to be persistent and severe neglect. This may be a failure to provide food, shelter, clothing or a failure to protect the child/vulnerable adult from physical harm and danger. It may also include neglect of a child/vulnerable adult's basic emotional needs.
- 13.1.5 Financial: Financial abuse can range from failure to access benefits, through inadvertent mismanagement and opportunistic exploitation to deliberate and targeted abuse, often accompanied by threats and intimidation. It can include theft, fraud, exploitation, pressure in connection with wills, property or inheritance or financial transactions, overcharging or carrying out unnecessary work, or the misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits.
- 13.1.6 Discriminatory: Includes ageist, racist, sexist, that based on a persons disability, and other forms of harassment, slurs or similar treatment.
- 13.1.7 Institutional: The mistreatment or abuse or neglect of an adult at risk by a regime or individuals within settings and services that adults at risk live in or use, that violate the person's dignity, resulting in lack of respect for their human rights. Institutional abuse occurs when the routines, systems and regimes of an institution result in poor or inadequate standards of care and poor practice which affects the whole setting and denies restricts or curtails the dignity, privacy, choice, independence or fulfilment of adults at risk.
- 13.1.8 Abuse of trust: A relationship of trust is one in which one person is in a position of power or influence over the other person because of their work or the nature of their activity. There is a particular concern when abuse is caused by the actions or omissions of someone who is in a position of power or authority and who uses their position to the detriment of the health and well-being of a person at risk, who in many cases could be dependent on their care. There is always a power imbalance in a relationship of trust.
- 13.1.9 Mate crime: Mate crime a type of hate crime where perpetrators befriend a person with a disability but in fact soon begin to exploit, hurt or harm them. This can include sexual abuse, forced prostitution, financial exploitation, physical abuse, violence and even murder.