



Safeguarding Policy

Date of Amendment: January 2020

Next Review Date: January 2021

Safeguarding Policy

Introduction

The characteristics of adult or child abuse can take several forms and cause victims to suffer pain, fear and distress reaching well beyond the time of the actual incident(s). Victims may be too afraid, unable or embarrassed to raise any complaint. They may be reluctant to discuss their concerns with other people or unsure who to trust or approach with their worries.

There may be some situations where victims are unaware that they are being abused or have difficulty in communicating this information to others.

The aim of this policy is to ensure the safety of vulnerable adults and children by outlining clear procedures and ensuring that all staff and self-employed members are clear about their responsibilities.

Designated Safeguarding Officer: Luke Whiting

lukew@mindflex.org.uk

General

Mindflex Psychology Limited completes enhanced DBS checks on all employees, self-employed members and volunteers in order to assess their suitability for working with vulnerable adults and children.

Mandatory training is provided for all staff and self-employed members who deal with learners in high-risk groups. A comprehensive sign-posting list is available for all staff and self-employed members to ensure that there is easy access to expert advice and guidance.

Appropriate insurance is in place at Mindflex Psychology, and Health and Safety vetting checks are carried out to ensure that all placements/employers are adequately covered.

Definition of a Vulnerable Adult

A vulnerable adult is a person aged 18 years or over who may be unable to take care of themselves or protect themselves from harm or from being exploited.

This **may** include a person who:

- Is elderly and frail
- Has a mental illness including dementia
- Has a physical or sensory disability
- Has a learning disability
- Has a severe physical illness
- Is a substance misuser
- Is homeless

Definition of a Vulnerable Child

The process of protecting children from abuse or neglect, preventing impairment of their health and development, and ensuring they are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care that enables children to have optimum life chances and enter adulthood successfully

Section One: Abuse

Types and Signs of Abuse

There are several types of abuse:

- **Physical** - when responsible adults deliberately injure a vulnerable adult or do nothing to prevent it. This not only includes physical violence but also giving vulnerable adults alcohol or drugs. The most serious cases can result in brain damage and even death.
- **Emotional** - when responsible adults continuously fail to show love and affection to a vulnerable adult. This might include sarcasm, threats, criticism, yelling and taunting. The effects are serious and long-lasting.
- **Neglect** - when responsible adults fail to meet a vulnerable adult's basic needs for food, warmth, clothing or medical attention.
- **Sexual** - when an adult uses a vulnerable adult for sexual gratification. This might mean forcing a vulnerable adult to carry out sexual acts, or deliberately showing a vulnerable adult, magazines or adult pornographic videos, and filming or photographing children in a sexual way. The effects of sexual abuse are enduring and highly damaging.
- **Financial** - when a responsible adult poses improper pressure to sign over money from pensions or savings, and even theft.
- **Discriminatory** - when a vulnerable adult is being harassed due to their ethnic origin, sex or religious beliefs.
- **Personal exploitation** - any person's involvement in denying an individual his/her right or forcing him/her to perform tasks that are against his/her will.
- **Violation rights** - when any person tries preventing an individual speaking his/her thoughts and opinions.
- **Institutional** - when responsible adults fail to provide a choice of meals or failure to ensure privacy or dignity.

The following are typical signs that could point towards abuse. Be aware that there can be many other, non-abuse related, reasons for these behaviours.

Common Signs of Abuse

Sexual Abuse

- Being overly affectionate or knowledgeable in a sexual way inappropriate to the vulnerable adult
- Medical problems such as chronic itching, pain in the genitals, venereal diseases

- Other extreme reactions, such as depression, self-mutilation, suicide attempts, running away, overdoses, anorexia
- Personality changes such as becoming insecure or clinging
- Sudden loss of appetite or compulsive eating
- Being isolated or withdrawn
- Inability to concentrate
- Lack of trust or fear of someone they know well, such as not wanting to be alone with a relative or family friend
- Becoming worried about clothing being removed
- Suddenly drawing sexually explicit pictures
- Trying to be 'ultra-good' or perfect; overreacting to criticism

Physical Abuse

- Unexplained recurrent injuries or burns
- Improbable excuses or refusal to explain injuries
- Wearing clothes to cover injuries, even in hot weather
- Bald patches
- Chronic running away
- Fear of medical help or examination
- Self-destructive tendencies
- Aggression towards others
- Fear of physical contact - shrinking back if touched
- Admitting that they are punished, but the punishment is excessive
- Fear of suspected abuser being contacted

Emotional Abuse

- Physical, mental and emotional development lags
- Sudden speech disorders
- Continual self-deprecation ('I'm stupid, ugly, worthless, etc')
- Overreaction to mistakes
- Extreme fear of any new situation
- Inappropriate response to pain ('I deserve this')
- Neurotic behaviour (rocking, hair twisting, self-mutilation)
- Extremes of passivity or aggression

Neglect

- Constant hunger
- Poor personal hygiene
- Constant tiredness
- Poor state of clothing
- Untreated medical problems
- No social relationships
- Compulsive scavenging
- Destructive tendencies

Financial

- Reluctant to discuss financial circumstances
- Recent poverty
- Unexplained inability to pay bills or buy food or other essentials
- Missing belongings or money

If you suspect abuse, discuss this firstly with your line manager. Do not under any circumstances discuss this with the learner or your colleagues before you have informed your line manager of your concerns. This is for **your** protection as much as for the protection of the learner

Section two: Responsibilities of Mindflex Psychology staff and self-employed members:

1. When any person has knowledge or suspicion that a vulnerable adult or child is either being abused, or is at risk of abuse, they have a personal duty to report this to the Safeguarding Officer. If this is not possible, it should be reported to a member of the SMT.
2. Concerns may be as a result of information other than direct observation or evidence of abuse to a vulnerable adult or child, such as evidence of domestic violence or substance abuse.
3. However, **the role of staff or self-employed members is to make referrals, not to investigate.** Therefore, you should not seek to try and determine whether any concern of description of abuse is valid. There are, however, actions we are expected to have taken before making a referral and you may also be asked to assist with assessments where appropriate.
4. **All staff and self-employed must be aware of definitions and indicators of abuse. (See Section 1)**
5. **All staff and self-employed must be aware of the course of action to follow** when they have a concern or have received a direct description of abuse.
6. **All staff and self-employed members are required to attend appropriate training opportunities.**
7. **Any referral must be confirmed in writing, using a copy of the referral form. (See Section 4 Annex A).**
8. All staff and self-employed members must undergo DBS clearance.

Section three: Reporting Concerns to the Social Services or the Police

If a crime is suspected or has occurred, the Designated Safeguarding Officer, or an appropriate member of the SMT should contact the Police for consultation, advice and/or information.

A first consultation with the police can be made without identifying individuals. The Safeguarding Officer or SMT member, will make the decision about whether contact with the police is simply for consultation, advice or information or an actual referral. It is the police's job to investigate crime. The consultation with the police is usually the first strategy discussion if a crime is involved and will lead to a decision about how to/who will investigate, if an investigation is needed.

All allegations or suspicions relating to the abuse of a vulnerable adult must also be reported by the Safeguarding Officer of SMT member to Social Services:

This person should follow up their local policy for respective reporting mechanisms to Social Services.

A named worker will usually be responsible, unless directed otherwise by the Safeguarding Officer/SMT Member, for arranging a Strategy meeting or discussion usually within 48 hours; this will include a representative from the Trust, Social Services and the police, if a crime is suspected. The purpose of the Strategy meeting or discussion is to decide whether to proceed further and if so, who will be responsible for leading the investigation.

Dealing with allegations against staff or self-employed members

- If there is clear actual or circumstantial evidence to support the allegation, for example, the incident was witnessed, or if there are strong indications that the incident took place, then the matter **must** be discussed with the Safeguarding Officer, **and a Vulnerable Adult or Child Protection referral MUST be made**
- If the allegations appear to be unlikely, for example the circumstantial evidence does not appear to support the allegation, then the same action should be taken, **but it is the decision of the Safeguarding Officer whether to refer the matter to Social Care or to deal with it internally.**
- If the allegations are demonstrably false, for example the alleged perpetrator was known not to be anywhere in the vicinity of the vulnerable adult, then the same action is taken as above, **but there would be no referral to Social Care, and the matter would only be investigated internally.**
- If the allegations are related directly to the Safeguarding Officer, then this should be reported directly to the Director, Luke Whiting. Then the same action is taken as above, **whereby a decision will be made to either investigate internally, or refer to the Social Care, and/or Police where necessary.**
- In all of these situations, it is essential that appropriate records are made and kept regarding the concerns, evidence collected, and action taken, so that these are available for external monitoring, and further intervention in future, if appropriate. Mindflex Psychology have a duty to report any incidents whereby us as an institution or our contractors are subject to investigation. We are required to send details of the situation to:
Enquiries.EFA@education.gov.uk.
- Consideration should always be given to the possibility that the vulnerable adult may be displacing abuse that is happening elsewhere in their lives.

Section four: General Advice and Guidance

General Dos and Don'ts

All this may sound a little legalistic and unfriendly, however the welfare and safety of the individuals in question is paramount. During any safeguarding activity, it is your responsibility to ensure safety of the individual above all else.

Keeping this in mind may help you understand the reasons for the following list of do's and don'ts:

- Do not touch the learners. Resist a comforting hug or pat on the back. There is a fine line in a learners' perception of where comfort stops, and harassment/assault starts.
- Do not make jokes about students' personalities, gender, ethnic status, appearance, family, religion, etc.
- Be on the lookout for anyone looking worried or upset. Let your line manager know about such learners.
- Do not spend any time alone with a learner in a room, unless unavoidable. If the situation cannot be avoided, always inform another member of staff either before or immediately afterward.
- Remember: we are not going to be able to solve every issue and all problems for learners. We don't have to be experts on everything; but we do need to know where to refer learners for more expert help.
- If a serious problem arises, do not feel you must handle it on your own. There should always be at least one person in a position of management in any premises.
- Please do not threaten learners with serious sanctions unless these sanctions are clearly documented and have been discussed in advance with the learner
- In conversation with students, do not be overly familiar, and do not be sarcastic, whatever the provocation. Respect all confidences. Do not talk about one learner to another under any circumstances.
- NEVER promise complete confidentiality. We may not always be able to keep to this as in any real emergency or serious situation we will be legally forced to contact carers/guardians with information that we feel they need to know.

Information for Delivery Staff and self-employed members

- Learners should always be supervised whilst in a learning situation.
- You should have a list of learners that you expect to attend your session. A register should be completed.
- Please do not release learners early from a session without advance notice.
- Mobile telephones: insist that they are not to be used and that they must be switched off in all your sessions.

External Visits

In accordance with our Health and Safety policy and procedures, Mindflex Psychology will ensure all locations are properly insured and properly aware and concerned about safety aspects of the visit. This includes the safeguarding of all learners.

Here are some general points about visits you need to be aware of:

- You need to be sure of who is and who isn't in your party. You should have a copy of a register.
- As an escort on visits, you need to make sure that your learners do not engage in any dangerous behaviour at any time.
- Please do report serious incidents as soon as possible to the Safeguarding Officer or Health and Safety Officer. Do not hesitate to seek assistance. We should be over- rather than under-protective. Do not let anyone in your party go off on their own anywhere.
- Please do not condone bad or irresponsible behaviour.
- Remember, however, that external trips and activities are designed to be fun and part of widening learners' horizons. Use your good judgment and experience to decide when a line has been stepped over.

Safeguarding Reporting Form

Learner Name:

Date:

Learner Contact Details:

Work Placement (if applicable):

Manager (if applicable):

Work Placement Telephone Number (if applicable):

Please state safeguarding issues (including incident, location, persons involved):

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Did the learner disclose this information to you: YES / NO

If no please state how you came about this information:

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Have you informed the learner of the information you have received: YES / NO

If yes have you carried out a review of the situation: YES / NO (if yes please attach review)

Have you reported this matter to the Designated Safeguarding Officer: YES / NO

What is your view on the above issues:

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Action required:

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Form Completed By:

Signature:

Date: