



Marsh Street Arches and Garden CIC

Child Protection Policy

Author Graham Bromley



Marsh Street Arches and Garden Community Interest Company

Child Protection Policy and Procedures

1. INTRODUCTION

We aim to safeguard the welfare of children and young people participating in Marsh Street Arches and Garden Community Interest Company activities. In order to give young people protection from potential and actual child abuse, it is important that all concerned have a basic understanding of the issues involved and that procedures are in place that are understandable and easy to implement by anyone providing a service to young people at Marsh Street Arches and Garden Community Interest Company. Marsh Street Arches and Garden Community Interest Company are committed to creating an environment that enables children and young people to learn, develop and express themselves in a safe, understanding and encouraging environment. Parents trust us to look after their children, to care for them, to give encouragement and to keep them safe. We need to ensure that we honour their trust.

2. BACKGROUND

Child abuse is a difficult issue and presents challenges to all that provide services for young people. Many people feel uncomfortable with the subject. It is not easily recognisable and individuals often fear reading too much into a situation. Many young people experience minor accidents causing injuries, but there may be occasions where you are concerned over the nature and frequency of injury.

This document contains information on some of the signs that may give cause for concern. This document is based on the principle that:

"It is not your responsibility as members of Marsh Street Arches and Garden Community Interest Company to decide whether or not child abuse is occurring, but it is your responsibility to act on those concerns and do something about it."

3. WHAT IS CHILD ABUSE

Do not ever think that you could never be placed in the position of reporting child abuse.

The term 'child abuse' is used to describe ways in which young people are harmed by someone in a position of power. There are many different ways in which children can be harmed, all with a common factor that the child feels under-valued and worthless.

Abuse can happen anywhere, but research indicates that the predators of such abuse are likely to be known and trusted by the child.

4. TYPES OF ABUSE

• PHYSICAL ABUSE

Physical abuse includes hurting or injuring a child. It might also occur if a child is forced to do something beyond their capabilities. Bullying is likely to fall under this category.

We believe that you could ask the child about the injury and if you are not happy with the explanation given then report your suspicions to the Local Authority Child Protection Unit.

• SEXUAL ABUSE

Sexual abuse is where children are encouraged or forced to observe or participate in any form of sexual activity. This could also occur through unnecessary or inappropriate physical contact or through suggestive comments or verbal innuendo.

Indications of sexual abuse: Emotional or behavioural changes, for example a normally quiet child may become loud and aggressive or a boisterous child may suddenly become quiet and passive. Such examples are sexually explicit talk and behaviour, inappropriate to the child's age, uncharacteristic eating disorders, depression and suicide attempts.

• EMOTIONAL ABUSE

Emotional abuse occurs when a child is not given love, help, encouragement and attention and is constantly deprived or ridiculed or perhaps even worse, ignored. This can also occur when a child is over protected. It can be present in the unrealistic expectations of teachers and parents over what children can achieve. The use of abusive language of any sort constitutes emotional abuse and it can be a feature of bullying.

The child may have extreme difficulty in forming friendships, thus becoming a 'loner'. The child frequently is being used as a 'scapegoat' by other children. The child may become withdrawn, introverted and depressed and have low self esteem and lack of confidence.

• NEGLECT

Neglect usually means failing to meet children's basic needs such as food, warmth, adequate clothing, medical attention etc. It could also mean failing to ensure they are safe or exposing them to harm. The child may become withdrawn, introverted and depressed.

5. EFFECTS OF ABUSE

The effects of child abuse can be devastating, especially if children are left unprotected or do not have the support to cope with that abuse.

Indications that a child may be being abused include:

- Unexplained or suspicious injuries such as bruising, cuts or burns, particularly if situated on a part of the body not normally prone to such injuries.
- An injury for which the explanation seems inconsistent.
- The child describes what appears to be an abusive act involving him or her.

- Someone else (child or adult) expresses concern about the welfare of another child.
- Unexplained changes in behaviour such as becoming very quiet, withdrawn or displaying sudden outbursts of temper.
- Inappropriate sexual awareness.
- Engaging in sexual explicit behaviour.
- Distrusting adults, particularly those with whom a close relationship would normally be expected.
- Difficulty in making friends.

THE ROLE OF CUMBRIA SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN BOARD

The Cumbria Local Safeguarding Children Board (known as 'Cumbria LSCB') is the key statutory mechanism for agreeing how agencies will co-operate to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in its locality and for ensuring the effectiveness of its activity.

The work of the Cumbria LSCB is part of the wider context of the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership, with the aim of improving the overall wellbeing of all children and young people in Cumbria; that is, the five Every Child Matters outcomes:

- Be Healthy
- Stay Safe
- Enjoy and Achieve
- Make a positive contribution
- Achieve economic well-being

The Cumbria LSCB has a particular focus on the staying safe outcome and seeks to ensure all children and young people in Cumbria are protected from physical or mental injury or abuse, neglect, maltreatment, sexual abuse or exploitation or harm caused by witnessing violence or abuse of another.

The specific focus of the work of Cumbria LSCB is;

'Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children with complex needs and compromised parenting, including children in need whose carers cannot provide safe homes, in order to:

- *Protect them from maltreatment;*
- *Prevent impairment of their health or development;*
- *Ensure that they are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care; and*
- *Undertaking that role so as to enable those children to have optimum life chances and enter adulthood successfully.'*

6. PROCEDURE

WHAT SHOULD YOU DO IF YOU SUSPECT ABUSE IS TAKING PLACE?

If any member of Marsh Street Arches and Garden CIC is concerned that abuse may or has occurred they must refer the matter immediately to the co-ordinator who will decide whether or not to report the matter further. If we feel that further investigation is necessary in order to protect the child, the matter must be referred to Social Services.

In the event of referral to Social Services, be sure to take the name of the person who you speak to. Copies of all relevant correspondence, notes of dialogue, diagrams of any injury witnessed must be passed to the co-ordinator for filing. It is very important that any concerns on a child's safety are logged. Within this document is Marsh Street Arches and Garden CIC's Child Protection logging form, which should be used if any doubt over a child's welfare exists.

Marsh Street Arches and Garden Community Interest Company's Child Protections policy arises from the following principles:

- The child's welfare is the first consideration.
- All children, regardless of age, disability, gender or ethnic origin have a right to be protected from all forms of harm, abuse, neglect and exploitation.

Informing the Parent/Carer

When you have made a decision that you need to make a referral to Cumbria Social Services, a major concern will be whether or not you should be telling the parent/carers at this stage. You can discuss this matter with the duty Social Worker who will be able to advise. The welfare of the child must be uppermost in your mind and a decision must be made according to the individual circumstances. You must take into account such factors as the severity of the suspected abuse and your relationship with the parents.

Whatever you decide, the issue of talking to the parents about the action you have taken will not be easy. It cannot however be avoided and given that in many situations you will need to have an ongoing relationship with the parent, it is important for everyone especially the child involved, that it is dealt with as carefully as possible. Sometimes it helps if you tell the parent that the matter has had to be taken further because all injuries or concerns regarding young children are taken seriously as a matter of routine. You can also explain that you are working according to guidelines laid down for you by the Child Protection Committee.

7. GOOD PRACTICE IN THE CARE OF CHILDREN

Situations where abuse may occur and be minimised by:

- Always being publicly open when working with children.
- Where possible parents should take responsibility for their own children.

- Where possible avoid taking children alone on car journeys, however short, unless there is no other option and the child's parents have given permission. This may be acceptable as a one-off, but very unwise to do on a regular basis.

Those working with children should never:

- Engage in rough, physical or sexually provocative games, including horseplay.
- Allow or engage in inappropriate touching of any form.
- Allow children to use inappropriate language unchallenged.
- Let allegations a child makes go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon.

8. PROTECTING OUR LEADERS

Leaders are at increasing risk of accusations of unacceptable behaviour towards young people. We believe that the following 10 points of advice and guidance are aimed at minimising these risks.

1. Do not rely upon good nature to protect you.
2. Do not, for one moment, believe "it could never happen to me".
3. Whilst respecting the need for privacy and confidentiality, try never to be alone with a young person. When one to one situations are unavoidable, ensure unlimited access by others is available.
4. Never engage in inappropriate physical or verbal contact with others.
5. If you suspect that a young person is developing a 'crush' on you, discuss it with other leaders and explore constructive ways of dealing with it in a proper manner.
6. Similarly, if you notice one of your colleagues is at risk of false accusations, draw this to his/her attention and suggest they adhere to the guidelines.
7. Mixed groups (especially residential ones) should always have mixed leadership.
8. If you are feeling emotionally disturbed or you feel an abnormal affection for a young person, withdraw from the situation and discuss the matter with a trusted friend.
9. Never take a chance.
10. Be aware that young people can fabricate stories that can place you in a bad light. Do not allow circumstances to develop where a young person's false story can be given credence.

If a child or young person tells you that someone in Marsh Street Arches and Garden Community Interest Company has caused them harm, this should be treated in the same way as any other disclosure a child may make. The information should be passed on to the designated child protection worker and handled in the same way. This will ensure that the allegations are treated in a consistent and fair manner. If you are unsure of what action to take, it would be appropriate to seek guidance of either the police or social work department (or both).

The abuse of children is most easily concealed, and therefore perpetuated, where there is confusion amongst adults over roles, responsibilities and accountability. Therefore, risks are minimised if all members of Marsh Street Arches and Garden Community Interest Company

have clear roles, outlining their task and responsibilities, thus allowing each adult the opportunity to continually check on the actions of others.

LOGGING CONCERNS ABOUT A CHILD'S SAFETY AND WELFARE

Name of young person	Date of birth
Date form completed	Time form completed
Your name (please print)	Signature
Your Organisation	Your position
Reasons for recording incident	
Please record the following as factually as possible	Who?
	What?
	Where?
	When?
Offer an opinion where relevant (how and why this may have happened)	
Substantiate the opinion. Please note the action taken, including the names of anyone to whom information was passed.	