



EMBRACE SAFEGUARDING POLICIES

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1. SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN

1.1 PURPOSE

Embrace is committed to working with young people, parent/carers, staff, and the community to ensure the safety and protection of the young people in our care and to work towards giving them the best start in life. This policy is to provide staff and volunteers with the overarching principles that guide our approach to safeguarding children and young people. We recognise the added duty to protect vulnerable adults and address it in a dedicated section of this policy.

1.2. MONITORING AND RESPONSIBILITY

This policy applies to all staff, including senior managers and the board of trustees, paid staff, volunteers and sessional workers, agency staff, students or anyone working on behalf of Embrace. Anyone working with young people has a duty of care to ensure they are kept safe from harm, abuse, or injury. Embrace understands that children with disabilities are potentially more vulnerable because they may find it difficult to communicate with others, struggle with social interaction or have difficulties understanding people's motives, they may be less able to report abuse and thus be more vulnerable to it. This necessitates greater vigilance among practitioners in recognising, reporting, and investigating potential signs of abuse.

Safeguarding will be considered during all sessions with young people and vulnerable adults. It will also be considered during staff supervisions. The impact of any outcomes will be considered alongside this policy.

Embrace have a nominated person who coordinates safeguarding young people issues, ensuring training and support is in place for all staff, best practice is adhered to throughout the organisation's operations, advises on any changes to policy and/or practice and will coordinate reporting of any safeguarding concerns. This person is their Safeguarding Lead (*name: Rose McHugh, Contact: rose@embrace.org.uk or 07450197877*). In the absence of the lead officer, the deputy officer should be contacted. (*Our deputy safeguarding lead is Poppy Browning, activities@embrace.org.uk or 07748582519*)

The officers will nominate a trustee to take leadership responsibility for the organisation's safeguarding arrangements. This includes ensuring that staff have sufficient time, funding, supervision, and support to fulfil their safeguarding responsibilities effectively. (*name: Suzannah Lee*)

1.3. AIMS

Our aims are to:

- create an environment and culture in our settings which is safe and secure for all young people;
 - ❖ value, respect, and listen to all children and young people, regardless of age, disability, gender, racial heritage, religious belief, sexual orientation, giving them the right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse.
 - ❖ ensure young people are empowered through support to make their own decisions and choices and have the self-confidence and the vocabulary or alternative communication methods to resist inappropriate approaches.
 - ❖ encourage young people to establish and sustain satisfying relationships within their families, with peers, and with other adults.
 - ❖ encourage young people to develop a sense of autonomy and independence.
 - ❖ support young people to have positive self-image recognising that this has an impact on their wellbeing.
 - ❖ work with parent/carers to build their understanding of and commitment to the welfare of all our young people.

1.3.1 In order to fulfil these aims:

- Our staff will receive training in safeguarding young people with the senior staff receiving refresher training every 2 years. All staff will receive an annual update on any changes to legislation, policy, and procedure.
- Our processes will be devised to prevent unsuitable people from working with young people.
- We follow the guidelines and policy practice laid down by the Local Safeguarding Board.
- We follow the guidance of Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023.
- We will take proportionate steps and the least intrusive actions whilst we maintain our duty to act.
- We will work in partnership with other agencies to prevent and detect abuse.
- All members of staff will know the settings' procedures for recording and reporting safeguarding incidents or concerns.

To report a concern or to get advice:

- *NSPCC Helpline 0808 800 5000*
- *Bedford Borough Council: 01234 718700*
- *Central Bedfordshire Council: 0300 300 8585*
- *Out of office hours: 0300 300 8123 (For all local authority areas)*

If a child is in immediate danger or we cannot contact the local authority out of hours team, we will contact the police.

1.4. STAFFING AND VOLUNTEERING

- Embrace have a nominated person who coordinates safeguarding young people issues, ensuring training and support is in place for all staff, best practice is adhered to throughout the organisation's operations, advises on any changes to policy and/or practice and will coordinate reporting of any safeguarding concerns. This person is our Safeguarding Lead (*name: Rose McHugh*).
- The officers will nominate a trustee to take leadership responsibility for the organisation's safeguarding arrangements. This includes ensuring that staff have sufficient time, funding, supervision, and support to fulfil their safeguarding responsibilities effectively. (*name: Suzannah Lee*)
- We provide adequate and appropriate staffing resources to meet the needs of young people. This will be achieved through the assessment of the needs of each individual young person.
- All staff are informed of their duty to maintain the well-being of young people in their care. This is included in their role descriptions, induction and session briefings and supervisions.
- Applicants for posts within the setting are clearly informed that the positions are exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974. Candidates are informed of the need to carry out Enhanced DBS checks and take-up references before posts can be confirmed. Where applications are rejected because of information that has been disclosed, applicants have the right to know and to challenge incorrect information.

- A person who is barred from working with young people or vulnerable adults will be breaking the law if they work, volunteer or try to work or volunteer with those groups.
- Embrace will not employ anyone who has not received satisfactory checks i.e. references and DBS clearance as if we knowingly employ someone who is barred to work with those groups, we will also be breaking the law.
- No member of staff in contact with the young people works unsupervised.
- Physical contact should be consensual, appropriate to the situation and be age appropriate.
- All staff undertake mandatory basic awareness in safeguarding training.
- We have procedures for recording the details of visitors to the setting.
- We take security steps to ensure that we have control over who comes into the setting so that no unauthorised persons gain access to the young people.

1.5. TRAINING

As part of their induction all staff will receive Safeguarding awareness training. All our senior staff receive training on issues around safeguarding young people to enable them to act accordingly on any information and concerns brought to them. We seek out training opportunities for all adults involved in the setting to ensure that they can recognise the signs and symptoms of possible physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, and neglect and so that they are aware of the local authority guidelines for making referrals. We ensure that all staff are aware of the procedures for reporting and recording their concerns in the setting. They will receive a handbook detailing our code of conduct and an induction to the role. They will be given regular updates on policies and procedures during briefing sessions. They will also have the opportunity to attend other additional relevant training.

1.6. ALLEGATION MADE AGAINST MEMBER OF STAFF

- When signing up to our services all parent/carers are sent an information pack which details how to complain about staff or volunteer action within the setting, which may include an allegation of abuse.
- If an allegation is made against an employee, both the Safeguarding lead and the Chair of Trustees will be immediately informed.
- We notify the relevant Local Area Designated Officer LADO when we receive an allegation about a member of staff, within 1 working day, in line with our procedure.
- We follow all the disclosure and recording procedures when investigating an allegation that a member of staff or volunteer has abused a young person as if it were an allegation of abuse by any other person. When a young person makes an allegation of abuse by a member of staff, the person receiving the allegation must take it seriously and deal with it by informing either the Safeguarding lead (providing the allegation is not against that person) or the Nominated trustee. Failure to do so may result in disciplinary action.
- The Safeguarding Officer will make a referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) if a person in regulated activity has been dismissed or removed due to safeguarding concerns or would have been had they not resigned.

It is recognised that whilst sessional staff are uniquely placed to detect signs and indicators of young person abuse, they are themselves particularly vulnerable to malicious or misplaced allegations made deliberately or innocently, arising from normal association with them within the setting. With this in mind they will abide strictly by our policy of maintaining a presence of at least audible level of two whilst working with any young person. It is the responsibility of each member of staff to ensure that all reasonable steps are taken to avoid being alone with young people.

Our actions relate to members of staff who are currently working with young people regardless of whether our setting is where the alleged abuse took place. Allegations against a member of staff who is no longer working with us will be

referred to the police. Historical allegations of abuse will also be referred to the police.

1.6.1 Disciplinary Action

Whilst the allegation is being investigated Embrace will provide effective support for anyone facing an allegation and provide them with a named contact if they are suspended. It is essential that any allegation of abuse made against a member of staff is dealt with very quickly, in a fair and consistent way that provides effective protection for the child and, at the same time supports the person who is the subject of the allegation. Embrace will comply with any requirements of an investigation in a timely manner. If the member of staff resigns the investigation will continue.

The time taken to investigate and resolve individual cases depends on a variety of factors including the nature, seriousness, and complexity of the allegation however all allegations must be investigated as a priority to avoid any delay. If the nature of the allegation does not require formal disciplinary action, then Embrace will instigate appropriate action within three working days. If a disciplinary hearing is required and can be held without further investigation, the hearing should be held within 15 working days. Where it has been deemed appropriate to suspend the person, written confirmation will be given within one working day, providing as much detail as appropriate for the reasons for the suspension.

The following definitions will be used when determining the outcome of allegation investigations:

- Substantiated: there is sufficient evidence to prove the allegation
- False: there is sufficient evidence to disprove the allegation
- Unsubstantiated: there is insufficient evidence to either prove or disprove the allegation. The term, therefore, does not imply guilt or innocence.
- Unfounded: to reflect cases where there is no evidence or proper basis which supports the allegation being made

- Malicious: there is sufficient evidence to disprove the allegation and there has been a deliberate act to deceive

1.7. ACTIVITY PLANNING

- Embrace create within the setting a culture of value and respect for all individuals regardless of age, disability, gender, racial heritage, religious belief, sexual orientation, or identity.
- We ensure that this is carried out in a way that is appropriate for the ages and stages of our young people.
- We introduce key elements of safeguarding young people into our activity planning so that young people can develop an understanding of why and how to keep safe. (e.g. Stranger Danger, Road Safety)
- Children and young people can speak to an independent person outside of Embrace through contacting either of the following:
 - Childline on 0800 1111
 - NSPCC helpline: 0800 328 0904

1.8. COMPLAINTS

- Embrace ensures all parent/carers receive a copy of our complaints procedure so they know how to complain about staff or volunteer action within the setting, which may include an allegation of abuse.
- We have a procedure on allegations made against a member of staff.
- We will get advice from,
 - ***Bedford Borough Council: 01234 718700***
 - ***Central Bedfordshire Council: 0300 300 8585***
 - ***Out of office hours: 0300 300 8123 (For all local authority areas)***
(if a child is in immediate danger or we cannot contact the local authority out of hours team we will contact the police)

when we receive an allegation made about a member of staff, in line with our and their procedures.

- Embrace follow all the disclosure and recording procedures when investigating an allegation that a member of staff or volunteer has abused a child as if it were an allegation of abuse by any other person.

1.8.1 If we suspect abuse

- Embrace acknowledge that abuse of young people can take different forms - physical, emotional, sexual and neglect.
- When young people are suffering from physical, sexual, or emotional abuse or neglect, this may be demonstrated through changes in their behaviour, or in their play. If we observe such changes in behaviour occurring, or where young people's play gives cause for concern staff will record their observations and share these with the Safeguarding lead who will follow local safeguarding procedures, as necessary.
- Embrace will enable any investigation to be carried out with sensitivity. Staff in the setting take care not to influence the outcome either through the way they speak to young people or ask questions of young people.
- Where a young person shows signs and symptoms of 'failure to thrive' or neglect, the Safeguarding lead will make appropriate referrals. We seek parental permission before making a referral unless by seeking this permission we put a young person at risk.
- Embrace work co-operatively with the parent/carers unless this is inconsistent with the need to ensure the young person's safety.

1.9. DISCLOSURES MADE TO OUR STAFF

1. Staff members will treat the matter seriously and reassure the young person. Reacting to what a young person tells them with belief, making it clear they will have to tell others. They will listen and observe the young person, not probe.
2. They will tell the Safeguarding Officer what they observed/overheard/what the young person said. They will NOT discuss this in front of anybody else.
3. Every aspect of the concern will be recorded. It is essential that these records are kept confidential.

4. We will try to ensure that the information recorded is objective and factual and does not contain assumptions, interpretations, or personal comments.

1.9.1 Recording and Reporting Suspicions of Abuse and Disclosures

Staff make a record of:

- The young person's name, address, date of birth.
- The date and time of the observation or the disclosure.
- An objective record of the observation or disclosure.
- The exact words spoken by the young person.
- The name of the person to whom the concern was reported, with date and time.
- The names of any other person present at the time.

These records are signed and dated and kept in a separate confidential file.

The member of staff will discuss the incident with the Safeguarding lead who will decide who should be notified. If a young person's safety is at risk the appropriate safeguarding team will be contacted immediately.

➤ ***Bedford Borough Council: 01234 718700***

➤ ***Central Bedfordshire Council: 0300 300 8585***

➤ ***Out of office hours: 0300 300 8123 (For all local authority areas)***

If a child is in immediate danger or we cannot contact the local authority out of hours team, we will contact the police.

We will take advice from them regarding information then given to parent/carers.

In a case where a young person is not in immediate danger, we try to discuss the matter with parent/carers before making any referrals. However, it is the welfare of the young person that is paramount, and this is at the forefront of all our actions. We are aware that many young people have suffered because of lack of communication between agencies. We shall therefore use our professional judgement in sharing information and maintaining the principles of the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) with the agencies that 'need to know,' being open and honest with parent/carers and young people as to why we feel we need to share the information.

Full records of conversations will be maintained when any referrals or discussions are held with any other agencies or with parent/carers prior to a referral. These records will include dates and times of the conversation, whom we speak to, and the advice we were given.

1.10. INFORMING PARENT/CARERS

We will always aim to involve parent/carers in any referrals, where doing so does not put a child at any risk before they are made. However, if a suspicion of abuse is recorded, and the young person is considered at risk an immediate referral will be made to the relevant social care safeguarding team and we will take their advice on informing parent/carers.

1.11. PEER ON PEER ABUSE

All staff will recognise that children can abuse their peers. This will include within the staff team as many of our volunteers are under 18 years of age. Abuse is abuse and should never be tolerated or passed off as “banter,” “just having a laugh” or “part of growing up.”

- recognition of the gendered nature of peer-on-peer abuse (i.e. that it is more likely that girls will be victims and boys will be perpetrators), but that all peer-on-peer abuse is unacceptable and will be taken seriously; and
- the different forms peer on peer abuse can take, such as:
 - bullying (including cyberbullying).
 - physical abuse which can include hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm.
 - sexual violence and sexual harassment.
 - up-skirting, which typically involves taking a picture under a person’s clothing without them knowing, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks to obtain sexual gratification, or cause the victim humiliation, distress, or alarm.
 - sexting (also known as youth produced sexual imagery)
 - initiation/hazing type violence and rituals

1.12. SUPPORT TO FAMILIES

- The setting takes every step in its power to build up trusting and supportive relations among families, staff, and volunteers in the group.
- The setting continues to welcome the young person and the family whilst investigations are being made in relation to abuse in the home situation.
- Confidential records kept on a young person are shared, on request, with the young person's parent/carers or those who have parental responsibility for the young person and only if appropriate under the guidance of the Safeguarding team investigating the allegation. These will be kept in accordance with our GDPR policy.
- With the proviso that the care and safety of the young person is paramount, we do all in our power to support and work with the young person's family.

1.13. REVIEW

This policy was approved by the Board of Trustees during the meeting held **October 2024**

This policy should be reviewed annually. Therefore, its next review is due by **October 2025**

2. VULNERABLE ADULTS PROTECTION POLICY

Embrace is committed to ensuring that vulnerable people who use our services in accordance with the Care Act 2014 are not abused or neglected and can live in safety and that working practices prevent or minimise the risk of such abuse. Our staff &/or volunteers &/or trustees have a duty to identify abuse and report it.

2.1 Definition

Vulnerable adults are people who are over 18 years of age and are getting or may need help and services to live in the community. Vulnerable adults may be unable to take care of themselves and unable to protect themselves from harm or exploitation by other people.

2.1.1 Abuse can include:

- physical,
- financial or economic,
- sexual,
- discriminatory,
- emotional and psychological
- neglect,
- organisational
- self-neglect
- domestic
- modern slavery

The Care Act 2014 also links abuse to

- Domestic Abuse
- Modern Day Slavery
- Forced Marriage
- Honour-Based Violence
- Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

Abuse can take place in any setting, public or private, and can be perpetrated by anyone.

2.2 Rights & Responsibilities

Embrace will make the dignity, safety, and well-being of our service users a priority in our actions. Services provided should be appropriate to the individual including their communication needs, physical needs, mental abilities, and each of the protected characteristics of the Equality Act 2010 (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage & civil partnership, pregnancy & maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation.)

2.2.1. Responsibilities of Trustees:

- To designate a trustee to take leadership responsibility for the organisation's safeguarding arrangements.
- To designate a Safeguarding Officer for the organisation and approve appropriate training for that person to undertake their duties in relation to safeguarding vulnerable adults who come into contact with Embrace.
- To carry out Disclosure and Barring (DBS) checks, as appropriate according to DBS guidelines, on staff that have access to or work with Vulnerable Adults
- Ensure rigorous recruitment and selection practice and adhere to pre-appointment checking requirements e.g. references will always be taken up, DBS checks made.
- Have a clear, well publicised policy of zero tolerance of abuse in any format.

2.2.2 Responsibilities of Safeguarding Lead (nominated by trustees and with delegated responsibility, Rose McHugh)

- To ensure staff are aware of vulnerable adults need for protection.
- To raise awareness amongst adults at risk who may be potential abusers of what constitutes abuse and why.

- To ensure service users, visitors and relatives receive information about how to raise concerns if they suspect or experience abuse in all its forms including neglect.
- To enable staff and volunteers to recognise poor practice or abuse and respond appropriately.
- To notify the appropriate agencies if abuse is identified or suspected.
- To support and where possible secure the safety of individuals and ensure that all referrals to services have full information in relation to identified risk and vulnerability.
- Provide the support that may be necessary to ensure adequate levels of understanding, and adequate skills to ensure that rights and responsibilities are recognised and asserted.
- Raise awareness of how staff and volunteers can use their routine and processes to enable people to acknowledge that they are at risk of abuse, and signpost them to effective support.
- Raise the profile of adult protection in all relevant internal and interagency meetings.
- Be a source of information to signpost any adult who is being abused to appropriate sources of advice and support.
- Promote relevant advocacy and advisory services.

2.2.3 Responsibilities of Staff &/or Volunteers

- To be familiar with the vulnerable adult protection policy
- To take appropriate action in line with the policy
- To declare any existing or subsequent convictions.
- To empower individuals with knowledge and understanding so that they will be aware of what is appropriate or inappropriate behaviour towards them.
- To raise the profile of adult protection in all relevant internal and interagency meetings
- To promote relevant advocacy and advisory services

2.3 Safeguarding Incidents

2.3.1 Is it an emergency?

An emergency is a situation with immediate threat to life or of serious harm to a person. If this is the case;

- Staff will contact the emergency services.
- Staff will seek the support of the Safeguarding Lead
- Staff should do everything they can, without putting themselves at risk, to ensure everyone is safe.
- Our emergency procedures should be followed.
- If the incident involves a crime staff should make all efforts to preserve the scene

2.3.2 Non-emergency Disclosures and Referrals

- Staff will gather information using open questions.
- Staff will inform the Safeguarding Lead
- Staff will decide if immediate action is needed to safeguard individuals. Decision making should take into the account the desired outcomes of the adult at risk. If a child is involved action must be taken even without consent.
- The safeguarding lead will decide whether the local authority safeguarding team need to be informed and wherever possible with the consent of the vulnerable adult involved.
 - Bedford Borough
Tel: 01234 276222
Email: adult.protection@bedford.gov.uk
 - Central Bedfordshire
Tel: 0300 300 8122 (Monday to Friday, 8:45 am to 5:20 pm)
Email: adult.protection@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk
 - **For both local authorities outside of office hours 0300 300 8123**
- Staff will document the incident, record any decisions made, actions taken, and conversations held.

- The Safeguarding Lead and staff will come back together with the vulnerable adult and ensure agreed actions have taken place and they feel supported to stay safe.

2.4 Support for those who report abuse

All those making a complaint or allegation or expressing concern whether they are staff, volunteers, service users, carers or members of the public should be reassured that:

- They will be taken seriously.
- Their comments will usually be treated confidentially, but their concerns may be shared with the appropriate authorities if they or others are at risk.

2.5 The Vulnerable Adult

All adult protection work should aim to enable adults who experience abuse to retain as much control as possible over their own lives. The person who may be experiencing abuse should be given information, properly accessible to them, about the adult protection process.

2.5.1 The Vulnerable Adult has the right:

- To be made aware of this policy.
- To have alleged incidents recognised and taken seriously.
- To receive fair and respectful treatment throughout.
- To be involved in any process as appropriate.
- To receive information about the outcome.

2.5.2 Vulnerable Adults who experience abuse

Those who have experienced abuse will be offered the choice and support to participate or otherwise have their views included, in all forums that are making decisions about their lives. They will be offered contact with independent organisations and advocacy services. Where communication aids, interpretation or personal assistance are necessary for a person to participate, Embrace will assist

the vulnerable person to source these. This will be overseen by Embrace's designated Safeguarding Officer.

Where an individual does not have the mental capacity to decide how to protect him or herself from abuse, a Mental Capacity Advocate (or IMCA) will be sought to represent their interests during adult protection procedures. Where ongoing advocacy support is needed, an appropriately qualified professional should be nominated to act in the role of advocate.

Information will only be shared with the person's consent or where there is an overriding justification (for example, legal reasons to protect from harm a person without capacity) and on a need-to-know basis.

2.6 Confidentiality

Any exchange of information must be in accordance with UK General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) as tailored by the Data Protection Act 1998, the Human Rights Act 1998, and Caldicott Principles. Informed consent should be obtained, but if this is not possible and other adults are at risk, it may be necessary to override the requirement.

It is inappropriate for Embrace to give absolute confidentiality in cases where there are concerns about abuse, particularly when other people may be at risk or there is a legal duty to report criminal activity. Embrace will not risk allowing a person to be abused by failure to share information necessary for their protection. The protection and well-being of those in our care is our highest priority.

2.7 REVIEW

This policy was approved by the Board of Trustees during the meeting held.

October 2024

This policy should be reviewed annually. Therefore, its next review is due by

October 2025

3. ONLINE SAFEGUARDING

3.1 PURPOSE

We have extended our support services offer to include activities delivered virtually/online. Our online activities will follow the same principles as our face-to-face activities in relation to safeguarding.

3.2 RESPONSIBILITIES

As with our face-to-face services, responsibility of safeguarding online is the responsibility of the Safeguarding Lead (Rose McHugh)

3.3. REVIEW

This policy was approved by the Board of Trustees during the meeting held October 2024

This policy should be reviewed annually. Therefore, its next review is due by October 2025