

The MAIN Project

Safeguarding Children Policy

Forward

1. The MAIN Project is a charitable company established for the support of families who have children on the Autistic Spectrum. Governance of the charity is undertaken by a board of trustees with support from the management team, staff and volunteers.
2. The purpose of this policy is to make all trustees, staff and volunteers aware of child protection issues and where to find the guidance to respond to allegations and suspicions . To be used in conjunction with Vulnerable Adults Policy.
3. The policy is based on the principal that “It is not the responsibility of the MAIN Project’s designated safeguarding children person, nor of anyone in the MAIN Project to investigate allegations or suspicion of abuse. It is everyone’s responsibility to act on concerns and report them to the relevant safeguarding boards or in emergencies the police”.
4. The safeguarding policy and procedure materials were drawn up specifically for the MAIN Project following advice from the NSPCC, the charity commission, VDA’s and local safeguarding boards and conform to current safeguarding children legislation and guidance, with reference to South Tees Local Safeguarding Children Board Safeguarding Procedures,2007 and “What To Do If You’re Worried a Child Is Being Abused”(copies available in the staff handbook)

Policy Statement:

- The trustees are committed to practices that aim to protect children from harm. All children without exception have the right to protection from abuse regardless of gender, ethnicity, disability, sexuality or beliefs.
- MAIN Project trustees, staff and volunteers are often in positions of trust with children and have a duty and responsibility to set a good example, to avoid any actions that could be misunderstood or misinterpreted, to challenge any inappropriate behaviour by others and overall to promote the welfare and the safety of the child with whom they come into contact.
- Without exception this policy applies to all MAIN Project trustees, staff and volunteers.
- The policy has been approved and endorsed by the board of trustees and is reviewed at regular intervals, to conform to legislation and guidance, minimum annually updated.

- Children and parents are informed of the policy and procedures, and have access to the policy on our website, and paper copies included in the welcome packs.

Code of practice

Trustees expect that all those in a position of responsibility, which for these purposes include anybody in paid or unpaid work on behalf of the MAIN Project, will be aware of this policy and code of practice and adhere to it's principles in their approach to all children.

- All should work together to give children a feeling of self worth, by taking appropriate opportunities to enhance self esteem and to develop secure and trusting relationships with pupils where confidences can be shared if necessary.
- Activities involving children should be as open as possible, and where possible adults should not spend time alone with children.
- It is not good practice to take children alone in a car journey, unless with the knowledge and express agreement of a parent.
- Children with an ASC have difficulties with language and communication, therefore be aware of use of language, do not make suggestive or inappropriate remarks, even in fun, as this could be misinterpreted.
- Many of the children and young people connected with The MAIN Project have severe communication difficulties which could result in their failure to report abuse. Staff therefore need to be vigilant, without becoming over zealous, in observing the physical condition and emotional state a child. Any concerns should be discussed with the nominated contact .
- All concerns, and allegations of abuse will be taken seriously by trustees staff and volunteers and responded to appropriately.

The role of the nominated director

The nominated Director for child protection is Nigel Carden, a Director of the MAIN Project, and Head teacher of Beverley School and service for children with Autism..

Anna Taylor, Chief Executive of the MAIN Project, is also a child protection contact.

The nominated Director

- Monitors children who have been identified as a risk including those who have child protection plans.
- Is responsible for making Child Protection referrals
- Assembles the necessary documentation for case conferences, attends or appoints another member of staff to attend case conferences and disseminates information to staff.

In the absence of the nominated Director the Chief Executive or nominated person will assume this role.

Procedures for Reporting Concerns

Communication

Good lines of communication are essential for Safeguarding procedures to work. Trustees, staff or volunteers must share any concerns arising from observation of a Child's physical or behavioural/emotional condition or from a third party report with one of the nominated staff as soon as possible. Follow this up with a brief written report detailing the concerns and including any relevant information.

Disclosure

If a disclosure is made to you by a child allow them to communicate it in their own way, do not rephrase or reinterpret their answers.

Do not ask direct questions about the information given but use open ended ones such as 'Is there anything else you want to tell me?'

A written Record of Initial Contact with a child must be made as soon as possible after the disclosure and given to the nominated person. A 'body map' should be filled in if applicable. The member of staff who received the disclosure may remain with the child during subsequent meetings.

Staff and Volunteers must **NOT** notify parents of any concerns or referrals without permission from the Designated Officer in the appropriate authorities Local Safeguarding Board.

Recognising Abuse

The MAIN Project offers a detailed description for all trustees, staff and volunteers to be aware of what child abuse is.

Child abuse may be identified through a complex mixture of:

- Physical symptoms
- Behavioural characteristics
- Background factors

The following descriptions of types of abuse may assist staff in recognising them.

Neglect

This is persistent of severe neglect of a child, or the failure to protect a child from exposure (cold, starvation, etc.), or extreme failure to carry out important aspects of care (children left unsupervised, given and inadequate diet etc.). There may also be concerns over children who fail to ‘thrive’.

Physical abuse

Signs of physical abuse may include:

- Bruising (especially on less mobile or unprotected areas)
- Finger marks or outline marks (as from a belt)
- Black eyes (accidental black eyes are usually accompanied by other bruising)
- Burns and scalds (usually of regular shape or with clear outline especially circular cigarette burns)
- Lesions and cuts (especially skin between upper gum and lip)

Sexual abuse

If a child shows signs of emotional or behavioural stress, which have not been present, previously they could be signs that the child is being sexually abused. Physical signs may include bruising, lacerations, bites or scratches on the inner thighs, breasts, genital or anal areas.

- **All genital injuries should be considered as a cause for concern until explanations are verified for them.**

Emotional abuse

Children who are depressed or withdrawn or who have difficulty making friendships, or who are passive and apathetic may have to deal with hostility or rejection. This is a complicated area for us as children who attend the MAIN Project could show some of these signs as a consequence of their Autistic Spectrum Condition. We need to proceed with caution and not jump to hasty conclusions.

Practice Guidance

The MAIN Project has a staff/ volunteer handbook, this contains copies of all policy documents and their associated guidance.

Following a disclosure the Practice Guidance documents give trustees, staff and volunteers a step by step approach.

The guidance covers:

- Contact details for reporting.
- How to respond and report.
- Safe recruitment and selection (please also refer to policy documents)
- Dealing with allegations against trustees, staff and volunteers.
- Induction, learning and training needs, monitoring and supervision
- Complaints procedures
- Sharing information guidelines.

