

## SAFEGUARDING POLICY MINDSPARK C

### **The purpose and scope of this policy statement**

#### **Notes:**

- Principles set down in this document that apply to 'children' or a 'child' do so in a broad sense which includes vulnerable young people above the age of 18 such as disabled adults.
- Principles set down in this document apply to all children and young people, irrespective of gender, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation or religion.
- The term parent is a generic term that refers to parents, and legal guardians and carers.

### **Safeguarding procedure as a visiting professional**

The strategy of the MindSpark is to work with partner organisations including schools and youth centres to train staff to empathetically support young people to develop strong executive functions. As a part of this partnership, site visits for staff training or inset days, resource development, or data collection are sometimes required. All MindSpark staff will be subject to the appropriate checks including a DBS check as a part of the recruitment process before they can attend an on-site visit and are suitable to work with children. Confirmation that all necessary checks are completed will be shared with partner organisations in writing. MindSpark staff will be aware that they will be subject to an identity check upon arrival.

Staff at MindSpark will comply with the organisation's safeguarding policy and procedures as visiting professionals, will identify who the Safeguarding Lead is, and will understand the process for reporting and responding to safeguarding and child protection concerns as visiting professionals. If a report of concern is raised by a MindSpark staff member during a visit to a partner organisation then, in addition to complying with the organisation's safeguarding procedure, this will also be reported to the Line Manager and the MindSpark Safeguarding Lead. The MindSpark Safeguarding Lead will then liaise with the Safeguarding Lead at the partner organisation. For internal records, a confidential incident

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report form will be completed and stored in a restricted access folder on GoogleDrive. MindSpark will inform the partner organisation that any safeguarding concern will be reported internally at MindSpark to comply with company policy.

## **1. POLICY STATEMENT**

MindSpark is committed to a practice that protects children and vulnerable adults from harm, in accordance with Children Acts of 1989 and 2004. Staff in this organisation accept and recognise our responsibilities to develop awareness of the issues that cause children and vulnerable adults harm.

MindSpark will endeavour to safeguard children and vulnerable adults by:

- Adopting child protection guidelines through procedures and a code of conduct for staff
- Sharing information about child protection and good practice with children, parents and carers, staff and volunteers
- Sharing information about concerns with agencies who need to know, and involving parents and children appropriately
- Following careful procedures for recruitment and selection of staff
- Providing effective management for staff through supervision support and training
- We are committed to reviewing our policy and good practice at regular intervals

## **2. HOW DOES A CAUSE FOR CONCERN ARISE & HOW DO WE DEAL WITH IT?**

A cause for concern may arise from a direct disclosure from the child or an observation of the child.

*Observation* – e.g. physical symptoms such as bruising, wincing, or you may have noted in a child/ young person's physical appearance, behaviour, language or general manner something which is out of the ordinary.

*Disclosure* – e.g. a child may approach you and tell you that they are being 'hurt', or may disclose past abuse. In this situation no matter how shocking the revelation you must remain calm for the benefit of the child/young person. You must never pass judgement, although you may reassure the child/young person that whatever has happened was not

their fault. If you have any concerns at all no matter how insignificant they may seem, you must record them on an Incident Report form as they help to build the bigger picture. Please see the below procedure for dealing with a disclosure.

*Reporting* – another child or young person, a parent, a carer or other individual may inform you that they think a child or young person is being harmed or at risk. In all of the above cases you need to fill out an Incident Report form.

## **Disclosures**

If a disclosure is made by a young person, try and remember exactly what was said by the young person, and how the subject came up. After you have ended the session or are away from the young person, make a note (on paper or on your phone) of what you remember, as this is when you will have the most accurate recollection of what was said. Then contact your Line Manager and Safeguarding Lead. The Safeguarding Lead will then write an Incident Report form with you.

***MindSpark staff responsibilities DO NOT include investigating suspected abuse. This is the role of Social Services or the NSPCC who have statutory powers and obligations under the Children Act 1989.***

Your response to the child/young person during a disclosure is crucial. If a child discloses specific abuse, neglect or harm you should listen carefully without asking any questions. You thank the child for sharing this with you and acknowledge how difficult it can be to talk about such issues. You explain to them that because they have shared something with you that shows they are at risk or being hurt, you have a responsibility to share it with a Line Manager. You then write down what the child/young person has said verbatim without inferring your opinion or judgement. For example if a child tells you they were hit by a parent you might document it this way: ‘Sarah said... “My mother picked up her slipper and hit me on the back with it”

If abuse is suspected it is rare for children and in particular young children to make false accusations of abuse. If a child alleges that they are being abused, this should be taken seriously. If the allegation is subsequently found to be inaccurate it may nevertheless be an indication of the child’s need for help.

## **GUIDELINES FOR TALKING TO CHILDREN / YOUNG PEOPLE WHO TELL YOU THEY HAVE BEEN ABUSED**

- Stay calm
- Try to record facts and get times/dates as soon as possible
- Record names and contact details of everyone who is involved or been informed
- Do not “judge” or assume
- Do not give your opinion
- Do not ask questions except to clarify the information required on the Incident Report Form
- Do not try to stop the child telling you about the incident(s)
- Do not allow anyone else outside the police or social services to interview or ask questions of the child
- Offer the child the NSPCC helpline number 0808 800 5000
- Ensure you make a full record of what has been said, heard and/or seen as soon as possible. This record will be referred to during further investigations. The record should be stored in accordance with the Data Protection Policy.
- Do tell them you believe them. The abuser may have told them that nobody will believe them.
- If you feel shock or disbelief try not to show it. Do not let the child/young person think that you are unwilling to hear what they are telling you. Do not say things like ‘are you sure?’, ‘why didn’t you tell me before?’, ‘I don’t believe it’.
- Do say ‘you were right to tell me’. The abuser may have tried to frighten them into keeping silent, and will often have told them the abuse is a secret that they must keep.
- Do tell the child that the abuse was not the child’s/young persons’ fault. It is likely that the abuser will have made them feel responsible.
- Do tell the child that the abuser was ‘wrong’ rather than ‘bad’: the child/young person may love the abuser whilst hating the abuse.
- Do not promise things you cannot do: for example, never agree to keep what the child has told you a secret.
- Do tell them who you will be telling and why.
- If the child/young person tells you and you are surprised, do not rush away to inform other people. Control your reaction and spend time with the child until you have reassured him/her.

It is MindSpark’s policy that staff are NOT to keep “secrets” for children or young people and are NOT to tell the children or young people that this is possible. MindSpark staff have a responsibility to pass on information to their Line Manager and the Safeguarding Lead (details can be found at the end of this policy) regarding any concerns about a child or young person.

It is the responsibility of the Safeguarding Lead to deal with allegations or suspicions of abuse. Everyone at MindSpark must be aware that a Line Manager and Safeguarding Lead should always be informed of any concerns about a child being abused. The Safeguarding Lead should note the following guidance on dealing with allegations or suspicions of abuse:

- Have pen and paper readily available to take notes and also an Incident Report Form. Contact details for the local Social Services Department and Police should also be readily available. If contacted by telephone ask the caller for their contact details so that you may call them back if their call is disconnected – but do not persist to the point that they hang up

Staff guidelines for disclosure and report writing:

1. If the Line Manager and Safeguarding Lead are contactable, always refer to them in the first instance.
2. If a child is in immediate danger, call the police.
3. If a Line Manager and Safeguarding Lead are not contactable, remember that you are not qualified to determine whether or not abuse has taken place – that is the responsibility of the Social Services and/or local police. Your responsibility is to inform them.
4. It is the responsibility of the Safeguarding Lead to contact the local social services department or go directly to the police if out of hours. Take the name and designation of the social services member of staff or police officer and follow this up with confidential written confirmation within 24 hours of receiving the allegation.

The parents should be contacted as soon as possible (unless they are the alleged perpetrators). The social services department will advise accordingly.

The legal principle that the ‘welfare of the child is paramount’ means that considerations of confidentiality which might apply to other situations in the organisation, should not be allowed to override the right of children to be protected from harm.

Confidentiality should be maintained on a strictly “need to know” basis and any relevant documentation stored in a secure place with access available to designated people only. **For further information see Data Protection Policy.**

### **What Are The Different Types Of Abuse?**

**Physical abuse** – e.g. you may recognise unusual bruising on a child/young person. If you do, do not challenge the child/young person directly about where the bruising came from as they may be embarrassed or frightened. You may tactfully approach the subject but only if the child/young person seems willing or able to talk. Never pressure a child/young person to make a disclosure of abuse. If you have any concerns at all no matter how insignificant they may seem you must record them on an Incident Report form as they help to build the bigger picture.

**Emotional abuse** – e.g. the child/young person may express that they are worthless or ‘no good’. Reassure the child/young person that you believe them to be very e.g. talented at art/singing/sport and allow the child/young person to speak if they wish. Never pressure the child/young person into exploring feeling negative however do not hide from listening to them either. It is a matter of balance. If the child/young person does not seem willing to talk and is becoming despondent, then try and divert their attention from the issue by involving them in an activity. It is important to note that exposure to domestic violence/abuse either directly or indirectly is considered to be highly emotionally harmful and needs to be reported if you discover it is an issue in the child’s life. Emotional abuse is difficult to recognise, but if you have any concerns at all no matter how insignificant they may seem you must record them on a ‘Incident Report form’ as they help to build the bigger picture.

**Sexual abuse** – e.g. the child/young person may display overtly sexual behaviour through dancing in an overly provocative manner to talking about sex. Anything that you do not feel comfortable with or that you think may exhibit signs of abuse should be recorded even when a prior history of abuse is known. It is extremely important that this is not assumed by you as ‘not being a problem’. If you have any concerns at all no matter how insignificant they may seem you must record them on a ‘Incident Report form’ form as they help to build the bigger picture.

**Neglect** – e.g. the child/young person may present with poor personal hygiene including nits; lice or unwashed hair; unwashed teeth; unwashed clothes; dishevelled appearance; inappropriate clothing for either too hot or too cold weather or inappropriate clothing for sports or activities; smell; the child/young person may display scavenging tendencies for food and appear very hungry. Regardless of whether the child/young person presents with

these symptoms of neglect all the time/occasionally and regardless of the severity of the symptoms, Incident Report form forms need to be filled out. It should be noted that the long term outcomes of continued neglect may be extremely damaging for individuals. Neglect is very corrosive. No matter how insignificant the concerns may seem you must record them on an Incident Report form as they help to build the bigger picture.

Other causes for concern must also be recorded. For example unusual changes in a child/young person's behaviour e.g. appearing very withdrawn, or being overly clingy or overly affectionate. This list is not exhaustive and the above are only a few examples.

### **Mental Health symptoms**

Children and young people present with symptoms of mental health difficulties from time to time, but if these symptoms are considered severe or are causing significant distress or functional impairment, they should have a thorough mental health assessment by a trained professional. Staff should make themselves familiar with the key symptoms of anxiety, depression, self-harm and other disorders by watching the videos on [www.minded.org](http://www.minded.org). If they suspect a more severe mental health condition or see a significant change in the young person's presentation or demeanour, they should contact their Line Manager in the first instance to discuss ways to offer support. Below is a list of possible cause for concern (though this is not exhaustive):

- significant change in how the child seems
- tearful throughout session
- continuing to miss sessions
- evidence of cuts on arms or legs
- young person expressing severe concerns about their day or lives

If the staff member is concerned about the child's safety they should seek advice immediately and not leave the child alone without adult intervention.

### **3. ON THE GROUND STRATEGY OVERVIEW**

- If MindSpark has knowledge of or a suspicion that a child or vulnerable adult is suffering significant harm or is at risk of significant harm, it has a duty to refer their concern to one of the statutory agencies -- Social Services, NSPCC or Police
- In cases where a staff member suspects a child is being abused they should inform the Line Manager and Safeguarding Lead who will contact statutory agencies directly

- Every staff member is to be aware of the signs of abuse and what to do if concerns arise
- Any concerns are logged in a confidential 'Incident Report Form' on the day it is first observed and as soon as possible on that day. If in doubt, staff members must seek advice from management
- Confidentiality is of the utmost importance and incidents should only be discussed with the relevant persons e.g. The MindSpark Line Manager and Safeguarding Lead or Social Services.
- Every staff member is to undergo an enhanced DBS check every 3 years
- One of the main philosophies of the Children Act 1989 is that local authorities should work in 'partnership' with parents wherever possible. Social Services guidelines stress:

All referrals are taken seriously and are considered with an open mind. Once the local authority has been informed it has a duty to investigate.

Any enquiry should be conducted in such a way that the parents are not unnecessarily antagonised. Parents are entitled to know what is going on and to be helped to understand the steps that are being taken

#### **4. ON THE GROUND STRATEGY GUIDELINES**

- Ensure that all staff members are briefed about child protection during training and a copy of this policy is made available. Monitor staff training needs and ensure staff are kept up to date with child protection training.
- When recruiting new staff, ensure correct procedures are adopted in the advertising and selection process
- Ensure all staff undergo enhanced DBS checking
- Failure to follow the guidelines in this policy is considered a serious offence and will be investigated thoroughly and dealt with through the MindSpark disciplinary procedure. Serious breaches may lead to dismissal and termination of any agreement

#### **5. CODE OF CONDUCT**

MindSpark has a responsibility to the young people and vulnerable adults that we have a strong code of conduct for workers. Below are the key points necessary for operating safely and effectively.

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Staff commit to:

- Report any concerns or issues relating to children or vulnerable adults to a Line Manager or Safeguarding Lead as soon as possible.
- Be aware that any physical contact with a child or vulnerable adult may be misinterpreted
- Adopt extra caution when discussing sensitive issues with children or vulnerable adults
- Report allegations and suspicions of abuse

Staff commit not to:

- Strike a child
- Use profane, insulting, harassing or otherwise offensive language
- Spend an excessive amount of time alone with a child or vulnerable adult, away from others. (Meetings with individual children or young people should take place as openly as possible. If privacy is needed, the door should be left ajar and the Line Manager and Safeguarding Lead informed of the meeting)
- Take children alone on car journeys, no matter how short, without first consulting the parents. (In cases where such a journey is absolutely necessary, two adults should travel in the car)
- Take children to your home where they will be alone with you
- Share a bedroom with a child or vulnerable adult
- Meet children outside organised activities. If this is unavoidable, inform a senior member of the team and always be contactable by phone
- Make sexually suggestive comments in front of, about, or to, a child, even in fun
- Reduce a child to tears as a form of control
- Allow allegations of abuse or poor practice to go unreported or unrecorded
- Jump to conclusions about others without checking facts
- Allow a sexual relationship to develop between yourself and a young person or an adult whilst there is a professional relationship of trust between you
- Engage in illicit or illegal activities with any children or vulnerable adult
- Lend or give money to young people or vulnerable adults
- On no account should anyone from MindSpark give a child/vulnerable adult a gift or buy refreshments etc which could be in any way considered as a bribe or inducement to enter into a relationship with a MindSpark staff member or give rise to any false allegations of improper conduct against the individual

## **6.RECRUITMENT AND VETTING OF STAFF**

Recruitment and vetting of staff and volunteers checklist:

1. Written application form
2. Shortlisting of applicants against a written job description identifying the roles and responsibilities of the particular post
3. Approach 2 referees – with specific questions regarding the applicant's suitability to work with children. References should be in writing and on headed paper; a follow up phone call should be made to ensure they are bona fide.
4. Interview
5. Identification check – long birth certificate, photo card driving licence or passport
6. Passing a DBS Check

## **7.KEY CONTACTS**

Safeguarding Lead/ Director: Sue Snell

Email: [sue@mindspark.org.uk](mailto:sue@mindspark.org.uk)

Tel: +44 7710 285143

Managing Director: Belinda Edington

Email: [belinda@mindspark.org.uk](mailto:belinda@mindspark.org.uk)

Tel: +44 7734 410264

Other contacts

NSPCC Helpline Number 0808 800 5000

Police 0300 123 1212 (999 in emergency)

### **Review**

This policy will be reviewed every year to ensure it remains up to date and compliant with the law. *Next review date: April 2024*