



*A voice for families of children and young people with
special education needs and/or disabilities*

DEALING WITH CONCERNS ABOUT ABUSE

Context

This policy sets out what to do if:

1. A child or young adult tells you something that has upset or harmed them;
2. Someone else reports that a child or young adult has told them, or they believe that, a child or young adult has been or is being harmed;
3. A child or young adult shows signs of physical injury, for which there appears to be no explanation;
4. A child or young adult's behaviour suggests that he or she is being abused;
5. The behaviour or attitude of a Trustee, steering group member, paid employee or contractor towards a child or young adult worries you;
6. You witness worrying behaviour from one child or young adult to another.

This policy applies to all those who come into contact with children or vulnerable young adults within Reading Families' Forum and is written with reference to the Children Act 2004.

Recognising Abuse

Please see the NSPCC website for information about the signs and symptoms of different kinds of child or young adult abuse:

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/child-or-young-adult-abuse-and-neglect/>

The Social Care Institute for Excellence website details signs and symptoms of different kinds of abuse of adults:

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<http://www.scie.org.uk/publications/atagance/69-adults-safeguarding-types-and-indicators-of-abuse.asp>

Remember, if in any doubt, discuss your concerns with one of the Forum designated safeguarding officers without delay.

Confidentiality

It is fine to share information, if someone is worried about the safety of a child or vulnerable young adult. The legal principle that the welfare of the child or young adult is paramount means that the considerations of confidentiality which might apply to other situations, should not be allowed to override the right of child or vulnerable young adult to be protected from harm.

However, not everyone needs to know when a concern or worry is raised. Only people who need to know should be told. It is fine to say that a concern has been raised and is being dealt with under the Forum's procedures.

How to respond to a child or young adult telling you about abuse

Listen to what the child or young adult has to say. Do not ask any leading questions (questions which suggest particular answers) or promise confidentiality. As soon as possible, write down what the child or young adult has said, using their exact words, gestures or the symbols they have used. Sign and date your record and give it to the Designated Safeguarding Officer below.

Raising Concerns

The Forum want members, paid staff, contractors and volunteers to be confident to raise concerns about what seems to be unacceptable or unsafe conduct towards child or vulnerable young adults, families or

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Email: info@readingfamiliesforum.co.uk



mobile: 07516 185380



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colleagues. All concerns will be listened to fairly and equally with all allegations taken very seriously.

It is not the role of anyone in the Forum to decide whether a child or vulnerable young adult has been abused or not. This is the task of the local Social Care Department who have the legal responsibility, or of the NSPCC which also has powers to investigate child protection concerns. It is however everybody's responsibility to ensure that concerns are shared and appropriate action taken.

Who to contact

If you have any concerns about a child or vulnerable young adult, or are unsure if what you have seen or heard is grounds for concern, you should immediately alert the Chair or a Trustee. The Chair or the Treasurer who are the Designated Safeguarding Officers should then be contacted as soon as possible:

Ramona Bridgman
0788 141 5928
rgebridgman@aol.com

Alice Carter, deputy
0778 6868 188
alice.e.carter@ntlworld.com

Please note that, if you are worried about a child or young adult under 18 who is at risk of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) or has had FGM, RFF has a legal obligation to share this information with social care or the police. It is then the responsibility of social care and the police to investigate, safeguard and protect any girls involved. Other professionals should not attempt to investigate cases themselves.

If a child or vulnerable young adult is in imminent danger, a referral should be made to the Police or Social Care straightaway.

Otherwise, the DSO will contact the Social Care Department in Reading within one working day of the concerns being raised to discuss whether any further action is needed.

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All referrals will be followed up in writing as soon as possible.

If your concern is regarding a trustee, steering group member, paid employee or contractor

Talk your concerns through as soon as possible with one of the Designated Safeguarding Officers above. The DSOs will liaise together unless the concern is about the behaviour of the other DSO.

The DSO will then contact their Local Authority Designated Officer for advice within one working day and will agree a plan of action with the Trustees, a discussion which will not include anyone about whom the concerns may be raised.

Role of the Designated Safeguarding Officer

It is the DSG's responsibility to:

1. Act as the first point of contact for all to go to for advice if they are concerned about a child or young adult;
2. Have completed up to date Designated Safeguarding Officer training.
3. Assess information regarding concerns about child or young adult and what action to take;
4. Make formal referrals to the Social Care Department or Police as necessary;
5. Ensure that concerns are logged and stored securely
6. Have responsibility to ensure that the Forum' safeguarding policy and related policies and procedures are followed and regularly updated;
7. Be responsible for promoting a safe environment for child or young adult and young people.

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How to respond if a concern is not about abuse

Sometimes concerns about a child or young adult may not be about abuse. You may be concerned that a child, young adult or family needs some helping in making sure all the child or young adult's needs are met to address a particular problem. Examples of this are where a child or young adult has a disability and needs extra help. In these situations, the Forum will help by advising the family of appropriate sources of support.

How information will be recorded

Clear accurate records will be kept of what was heard or seen, how the concern was managed and actions (including no action) taken by whom, where and why. We will use clear, straightforward language and distinguish between fact and opinion.

The Designated Safeguarding Officer will keep the information stored confidentially.

Parent Carer Trustees

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