

West End Refugee Service Policy Statement

Safeguarding Children

Introduction

WERS believes that children and young people should never experience abuse of any kind and that we have a responsibility to promote the welfare of all children and young people, to keep them safe, and to behave in a way that protects them. WERS is committed to:

- valuing, listening to and respecting children as well as safeguarding and promoting their welfare and protection;
- listening to and valuing the views of parents and carers, regarding their children, and empowering people we work with to take steps to safeguard children in their communities;
- having an effective procedure for dealing with concerns about possible child abuse, working in co-operation with other agencies, including statutory bodies;
- ensuring that safeguarding is integral to the recruitment of paid staff and volunteers, and that those known to have been convicted of offences against children will not be allowed to work at WERS, and
- training, supervising and supporting employees and volunteers so that they are equipped to identify and deal with safeguarding issues.

WERS will give equal priority to keeping all children and young people safe regardless of their age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation. WERS recognises that many of the people it works with and their children face extra barriers caused by racial discrimination, communication difficulties, their situation as asylum seekers or refugees and present or past traumas. WERS is committed to combatting racism, including in the area of child safeguarding.

General Information

The Department for Education (DfE) is responsible for child protection in England. It sets out policy, legislation and statutory guidance on how the child protection system should work.

Local safeguarding partners are responsible for child protection policy, procedure and guidance at a local level. They are led by three statutory safeguarding partners:

- the local authority
- the clinical commissioning group
- the police.

Working together with other relevant agencies, they must co-ordinate and ensure the effectiveness of work to protect and promote the welfare of children, including making arrangements to identify and support children at risk of harm.

WERS works with the statutory safeguarding partners to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

A 'child' is anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday.

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children' encapsulates:

- protecting children from maltreatment
- preventing impairment of children's health or development
- ensuring that children are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care
- taking action to enable all children to have the best life chances

Abuse and neglect are forms of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child either directly by inflicting harm, or indirectly, by failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting; by those known to them; or, more rarely, by a stranger. They may be abused by an adult or adults, or another child or children.

Child abuse may take different forms such as physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, neglect and bullying.

Responsibilities

WERS trustees are responsible overall for setting the safeguarding children policy and ensuring its implementation. However, all employees and volunteers working with children have a duty to do everything they can to ensure that the policy works in practice.

Chief Executive is responsible for ensuring that staff know of and adhere to the policy. The volunteer co-ordinators are responsible for ensuring that existing and potential volunteers

are aware of and adhere to the policy. After their induction at WERS, staff and volunteers sign to say that they have read, understood and agree to abide by this policy.

Chief Executive is responsible for ensuring that everybody who uses WERS services has access to information that they can understand about WERS' commitment to safeguarding children and how to talk to someone about any concerns they have.

The safeguarding policy, the name and details of the child safeguarding lead contacts and a poster detailing the key areas covered by the policy will be displayed in the building.

With regard to other agencies providing regular surgeries/drop-ins on WERS' premises:

- At the outset, WERS should ask to see the agency's policy to ensure that visiting agencies adhere to the same standards as WERS in regard to safeguarding. In the event that an agency does not have a policy, WERS will give them a copy of its own safeguarding policies to which they must adhere.
- If a safeguarding issue is disclosed to a worker from a visiting organisation, that organisation should initiate the safeguarding process.

Supporting guidelines

Training

In order to ensure the best protection for WERS' clients and their families, staff and trustees will receive appropriate training in relation to safeguarding, to enable them to recognise and respond appropriately to abuse.

Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks

All WERS staff are subject to Enhanced DBS Checks.

As trustees and volunteer roles at WERS do not meet the official eligibility criteria for standard or enhanced DBS checks and they are not engaged in 'regulated activity', checks are not undertaken for these voluntary roles.

Having a criminal record will not necessarily bar an individual from working with the organisation. This will depend on the nature of the position and the circumstances and background of the offences.

Looking after children

During the course of its normal activities and services, WERS staff and volunteers should not be left in sole charge of children.

When children attend the WERS project they should always be accompanied by a parent or responsible adult, who will look after them whilst on the premises. Volunteer befrienders are strongly advised not to look after clients' children in their absence, although it is recognised that there may, very occasionally, be circumstances in which this is unavoidable. In this case a member of WERS staff must be informed giving date, times and the circumstances that led to the situation.

Identifying and responding to safeguarding concerns

WERS staff (employees and volunteers) may have concerns about the safeguarding of a child – including that the child is being abused, either physically, emotionally, sexually or through neglect – as a result of:

- observation while working with the child and family members
- a disclosure by the child
- another person reporting a concern
- observation of or reports about the behaviour of a staff member towards a child

If a child discloses a safeguarding issue to a WERS staff member, or if a WERS client discloses a safeguarding issue relating to a child, the staff member should:

- listen carefully, without interrupting
- remain calm and receptive, without displaying emotion
- give reassurance that it is right to speak out
- try to clarify information without probing or over-questioning
- explain the need to share information
- not make promises or agree to keep information confidential

Reporting and investigation

The staff member must report their concerns, or what has been disclosed to them, immediately to the Nominated child protection lead or, if unavailable, the Board' child protection lead. If either of the child protection leads is thought to be involved in the abuse, concerns should be reported to the trustee lead for safeguarding and child protection, or, in their absence, to another Trustee of WERS. The staff member reporting the concern should, as soon as possible, make a factual, verbatim written record of the disclosure or other event. If a child appears to be in immediate danger or in need of urgent medical attention, the emergency services must be contacted immediately.

The reported concerns will be investigated to establish the facts, assess the needs of the child and determine a course of action, taking into account the cultural background of the child and their situation. The investigation will be documented, including as many specific details (date, location, form of suspected abuse, reasons why abuse is suspected) as can be supplied. Confidentiality will be maintained throughout by all involved, with the aim of protecting the interests of the child.

If, as a result of the investigation, it is felt that there is not sufficiently strong evidence to involve other agencies, the documentation will be filed and the client's and child's situations monitored as far as is feasible within the normal services operated by WERS.

If it is felt that the concerns may be well-founded, WERS will contact the appropriate statutory or voluntary agency. WERS has close links with a wide range of health professionals in primary and secondary care, Northumbria Police, Social Services, Victim Support, Hate Crime UK, and others. Ideally, before a referral is made to Children's Services the concern should be discussed with the child and parent/carer. However, this may not be appropriate if it could increase the risk to the child. Advice should be sought from Children's Services.

If a WERS employee or volunteer is found to have harmed or posed a risk to a child while working for the organisation, WERS will refer the matter to the Newcastle Safeguarding Children Partnership within 1 working day (see below for contact details).

Use of information relating to children

Information about children (eg names, addresses, images) must be treated confidentially in line with the WERS Data Protection Policy.

Report to the board of trustees

Chief Executive will report on safeguarding issues at each meeting of the board of trustees; either that there are none to report or the outline of the concern if any have arisen.

Important local contacts

Within WERS:

Designated child protection leads:

- 1) Carolyn Hepplewhite – 0191 273 7482 – carolyn@wers.org.uk
- 2) Peter Noble – 0191 273 7482 – peter@wers.org.uk

Safeguarding Lead for the Board of Trustees *for safeguarding and child protection*

Revd John Howard-Norman john.howard-norman@methodist.org.uk

Local statutory agencies

If you are concerned that a child is in immediate danger call the police on 999.

Contact Newcastle Safeguarding Children Partnership's *Initial Response Service of Children's Social Care* on 0191 277 2500 for advice and referrals during office hours (weekdays 8:45am to 5pm).

Contact Newcastle Emergency Duty Team on **0191 278 78 78** outside of office hours if the matter cannot wait until the next day.

Newcastle Safeguarding Children Partnership's *Initial Response Service on 0191 277 2500* should be contacted within one working day if there are allegations that a member of staff or a volunteer has harmed a child or poses a risk to a child.

NSPCC 24 hour helpline (National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children) offers help, advice and support. Call **0808 800 5000**.

If you think a crime against a child, young person, or adult at risk has been committed but they are not in immediate danger, or you want advice if you are worried about sexual exploitation, call 101 and ask for the Northumbria Police Safeguarding Department.

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