



## **WEST BLETCHLEY COUNCIL**

### **Child Protection Policy**

**Designated Safeguarding Lead: The Clerk**

**Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead: The Community Services Manager & The Deputy Clerk**

We have an ethos at West Bletchley Council, in which children and adults can feel safe, are valued, respected and listened to.

Safeguarding is defined as protecting children from maltreatment, preventing impairment of health and/or development, ensuring that children grow up in the provision of safe and effective care and taking action to enable all children to have the best life chances.

Child abuse is a term which describes all the ways in which a child's development and health are damaged by the actions or inactions of others. Abuse can occur within the family or in an institutional or community setting: by those known to them or, by a stranger. Abuse can occur within all social groups regardless of religion, culture, social class or financial position. For children there are four types of abuse identified. The following definitions are based on those from Working Together to Safeguard Children (HM Government, 2018).

West Bletchley Council will strive to work in accordance with the local key priorities set by MK together. The priorities set for 2021-23 are mental health, child poverty, domestic abuse, violent crime and hate crime.

#### **Physical Abuse**

Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces illness in a child whom they are looking after. Physical abuse, as well as being the result of an act of commission can also be caused through omission or the failure to act to protect from harm. Signs of physical abuse may include: Unexplained or hidden injuries, lack of medical attention

#### **Emotional Abuse**

Emotional Abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child. It may involve making a child feel or believe that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate or valued only in so far as they meet the needs of another person. It may involve serious bullying, causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill treatment to a child, though it may occur alone.

Signs of emotional abuse may include: Reverting to younger behaviour, nervousness, sudden underachievement, attention-seeking behaviour, running away from home, stealing, lying.

## **Sexual Abuse**

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (e.g. rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. Children under 16 years of age cannot lawfully consent to sexual activity.

Sexual abuse may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children looking at or in the production of, pornographic material or watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse.

Signs of sexual abuse may include: Pre-occupation with sexual matters evident in words, play, drawings, being sexually provocative with adults, disturbed sleep, nightmares, bed wetting, secretive relationships with adults and children, stomach pains with no apparent cause.

## **Neglect**

Neglect involves the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. It may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food, shelter or clothing, failing to protect the child from physical and emotional harm or danger, or the failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include failure to meet or respond to a child's basic emotional needs.

Signs of neglect may include: Looking ill-cared for and unhappy, being withdrawn or aggressive, lingering injuries or health problems.

Child Protection is about identifying and acting on behalf of children who may be at significant risk of harm.

We safeguarded all children that access our services and have trained all our staff to identify those who may be at risk of significant harm. We have a duty of care to children and will refer to the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) if a child is at risk of significant harm.

Concerns will be discussed with parents unless this would put the child at additional risk.

All staff have been trained to be aware of how to identify the signs of a child at risk. They are clear about what to do if they suspect a child or young person may be experiencing, or be at risk of, harm and know how to flag this with the Designated Safeguarding Lead, or in their absence how to report this through to the MASH.

**If a child or other person is at immediate risk of harm, the first response should always be to call the police on 999.**

In line with legislation and guidance, we will ensure that arrangements are in place to safeguard and promote the welfare of children by:

- Ensuring a safe environment, where children feel secure and are encouraged to talk and are listened to
- Providing children and carers with opportunities to discuss issues and report problems affecting their safety and welfare.
- Equipping staff to identify the signs of Physical, Emotional, Neglect and Sexual Abuse
- Identifying children who are particularly vulnerable
- Support children to recognise risks to and alert a safe adult.
- Ensure all staff understand their responsibilities in identifying and reporting abuse.

- Ensuring safe recruitment practices and safe working practice are in place and followed.
- Ensuring procedures for recognition and referral where there are welfare or child protection concerns
- Promoting partnership working with parents and other professionals
- Making sure we listen to children's wishes whilst ensuring we always act in the best interests of the child.
- Keeping secure & robust records to enable patterns of concern to be identified.
- Identifying children and families where early help support may be of benefit and discussing this with parent/carers.

Staff are fully briefed & trained to be alert to the potential need for early help for children who are more vulnerable. For example:

- Children with a disability and/or specific additional needs.
- Children with special educational needs.
- Children who are acting as a young carer.
- Children who are showing signs of engaging in anti-social or criminal behaviour.
- Children whose family circumstances present challenges, such as substance abuse, adult mental health or learning disability, domestic violence.
- Children who are showing early signs of abuse and/or neglect.

Children may be vulnerable to specific issues such as:-

**Female Genital Mutilation** - Female genital mutilation (FGM) comprises all procedures that involve partial or total removal of the external female genitalia, or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons. It is illegal in the United Kingdom to allow girls to undergo female genital mutilation either in this country or abroad. People guilty of allowing FGM to take place are punished by fines and up to fourteen years in prison.

FGM Helpline - 0800 028 3550 · [fgmhelp@nspcc.org.uk](mailto:fgmhelp@nspcc.org.uk)

**Honour Based Violence including Forced Marriage** - Honour based violence is a violent crime or incident which may have been committed to protect or defend the honour of the family or community.

It is often linked to family members or acquaintances who mistakenly believe someone has brought shame to their family or community by doing something that is not in keeping with the traditional beliefs of their culture.

**Breast Ironing** - Breast ironing, also known as breast flattening, is the pounding and massaging of a pubescent girl's breasts, using hard or heated objects, to try to make them stop developing or disappear. Mainly practiced in those who originated from Africa, the intention is to make the girl unattractive to males to prevent rape and sexual interest.

**Radicalisation** - Radicalisation is defined as the act or process of making a person more radical or favouring of extreme or fundamental changes in political, economic or social conditions, institutions or habits of the mind. Extremism is defined as the holding of extreme political or religious views.

**Child Sexual Exploitation** - Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited

even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.

**County Lines** - County lines is a term used to describe gangs and organised criminal networks involved in exporting illegal drugs out of bigger cities into one or more smaller towns in the UK, using dedicated mobile phone lines or other form of 'deal line'.

**Gang Involvement** - A gang is a group of associates, friends or members of a family with a defined leadership and internal organisation that identifies with or claims control over territory in a community and engages, either individually or collectively, in illegal, and possibly violent, behaviour.

**Anti-Social Behaviour** – Anti Social Behaviour may be a result of problems at home. WBC work closely with the police to deal with ASB, but also to support the young person who is involved in ASB.

**Parental; Substance Misuse** –Children are not necessarily at risk just because a parent uses substances. Many children of substance misusing parents receive good parenting, stability and have all their needs fully met. However, we are alert to the possibility that substance misuse by a parent may lead to a child being considered as a child in need and may prevent a child from receiving the level and quality of care that they need.

**Domestic Abuse** - Domestic abuse is any type of controlling, bullying, threatening or violent behaviour between people in a relationship. But it isn't just physical violence – domestic abuse includes emotional, physical, sexual, financial or psychological abuse. Domestic abuse can seriously harm children and young people. Witnessing domestic abuse is child abuse, and teenagers can suffer domestic abuse in their relationships.

**Parental Mental Health** - We recognise that the adults with mental health issues may have long periods where they are coping well, but there may be periods when they are unwell and unable to manage adequate parenting for their child.

**Peer on Peer Abuse** - Peer on peer abuse occurs when a young person is exploited, bullied and / or harmed by their peers who are the same or similar age; everyone directly involved in peer on peer abuse is under the age of 18.

The different forms peer on peer abuse can take, such as sexual violence and sexual harassment, physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm; sexting (also known as youth produced sexual imagery); up skirting & initiation/hazing type violence and rituals

**All staff are confident in completing internal records to record initial concerns. In the event of a child at risk of significant harm, the DSL will make a referral or consult Children's Services regarding concerns about that child.**

**Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH):**

Tel: 01908 253169 or 253170 during office hours or

Emergency Social Work Team 01908 265545 out of office hours

email: [children@milton-keynes.gov.uk](mailto:children@milton-keynes.gov.uk)

**For allegations about people who work with children:**

Local Authority Designated Office (LADO) Debbie Young & Kay Newman

Tel: 01908 254307

email: [lado@milton-keynes.gov.uk](mailto:lado@milton-keynes.gov.uk)

## **Useful Numbers**

NSPCC Helpline: 0808 800 5000

FGM helpline: 0800 028 3550

Whistleblowing Helpline: 0800 028 0285

Childline: 0800 1111

Channel Panel Chair: 01908 254533

This policy should be read in conjunction with

- Safeguarding Policies
- Health and safety Policy
- Peer on Peer Policy
- Photography/ Use of Mobile phones/camera Policy
- Risk Assessments
- Safer recruitment policies and practice
- Staff induction policy
- Code of conduct for staff
- Allegations against staff
- Complaints policy

**Updated November 2023**