

Child Protection Policy and Procedures

1. Policy statement

Lightyear Foundation is committed to safeguarding the wholeness and wellbeing of every person of whatever age that engages with its services and activities. Lightyear Foundation acknowledges the duty of care to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people and is committed to ensuring safeguarding practice which reflects statutory responsibilities, government guidance and complies with best practice and regulatory requirements.

This policy and these procedures recognise that the welfare and interests of children and young people are paramount in all circumstances. For the purpose of this document a child – and the age range covered by this policy – is defined as a person under the age of 18.

Lightyear Foundation aims to ensure that regardless of age, gender, religion or beliefs, ethnicity, disability, nationality, race, sexual orientation or socio-economic background, all children and young people using its services or activities:

- have a positive and enjoyable experience in a safe and child centred environment.
- are protected from abuse whilst participating in the activity or outside of the activity.

As part of its policy Lightyear Foundation will:

- promote and prioritise the safety and wellbeing of children and young people.
- ensure everyone understands their roles and responsibilities in respect of safeguarding and is provided with appropriate learning opportunities to recognise, identify and respond to signs of abuse, neglect and other safeguarding concerns relating to children and young people.
- ensure appropriate action is taken in the event of incidents/concerns of abuse and support provided to the individual/s who raise or disclose the concern.
- ensure that confidential, detailed and accurate records of all safeguarding concerns are maintained and securely stored.
- ensure all roles have a valid DBS certificate at the appropriate level and are renewed every three years, in line with best practice.
- ensure robust safeguarding arrangements and procedures are in operation.

This policy and these procedures will be widely promoted and are mandatory for everyone involved in the organisation. Failure to comply with the policy and procedures will be addressed without delay and may ultimately result in dismissal/exclusion from the organisation.

2. What is child abuse?

Child abuse is when a child (a person under the age of 18) is intentionally harmed by an adult or another child. It is a difficult issue and presents challenges to all involved in providing services for children and young people. It is not always easily recognisable but is generally divided into four categories:

1. Physical: Where adults physically hurt or injure children; hitting, shaking, squeezing, burning and biting are all forms of physical abuse. Giving children alcohol, inappropriate drugs or poison and attempted suffocation or drowning are also physical abuse.

2. Neglect: An adult may fail to meet a child's basic needs, like food, warm clothing or medical attention. Children might be left alone unsupervised. Abuse in any form can affect a child of any age.
3. Emotional: Persistent lack of love and affection damages children emotionally. Being constantly shouted at, threatened or taunted can make a child very nervous and withdrawn.
4. Sexual: This is where children are encouraged or forced to observe or participate in any form of sexual activity. This could occur through unnecessary or inappropriate physical contact or through suggestive comments or innuendo or include showing children pornographic materials.

3. Taking steps

Lightyear Foundation will seek to safeguard children and young people by:

- Valuing them, listening to and respecting them.
- Recruiting staff and volunteers safely, ensuring all necessary checks (including Disclosure and Barring Service) are made.
- Sharing information about child protection and good practice with children, parents, staff and volunteers.
- Sharing information about concerns with agencies who need to know and involving parents and children appropriately.
- Having clear signposting for children to know who to tell if something has happened.
- Creating a safe environment for children to feel able to share incidents with us or another trusted person/organisation.
- Providing effective management for staff and volunteers through supervision, support and training.

Recognising abuse

Recognising abuse is one of the first steps in protecting children and young people. There could be signs or behaviour that make you feel concerned. All staff should be alert to the following types of behaviour in children:

- Becoming excessively aggressive, withdrawn or clingy.
- Seeming to be keeping a secret.
- Significant changes in children's behaviour.
- Deterioration in children's well-being.
- Unexplained bruising, marks or signs of possible abuse or neglect.
- Unreasonable fear of certain people or places.
- Acting out in an inappropriate way perhaps with adults, other children, toys or objects.
- Children's comments which give cause for concern, e.g., inconsistent explanations of bruising, injuries or burns.
- Sexually explicit language or actions.

Not all concerns about children or young people relate to abuse, there may well be other explanations. It is important to keep an open mind and consider what you know about the child and their circumstances.

4. What to do if abuse is suspected or disclosed

If abuse is disclosed to a staff member or volunteer, they need to stay calm, listen to and reassure the child that they have done the right thing telling you and do not ask leading questions. Never promise a child that you can keep it secret, be honest about who you will need to tell to help keep them safe.

It is not the role of leaders, staff or volunteers to investigate an allegation of abuse. Any member of staff or volunteer who receives a disclosure of abuse or suspects that abuse may have occurred must report it immediately to the designated person for child protection in Lightyear Foundation; Dr Josie Rawes josierawes@gmail.com (Chair of Trustees).

In all situations, parents will be informed unless to do so would present a risk to the child.

If abuse is disclosed, the designated person will contact **the local area Child Protection Team (see Appendix for contact details)** and discuss the situation with them. Calls may result in direct referral to a Social Work Team or to Early Help and/or advice and guidance being given about services to help families.

If abuse is suspected, the designated person will monitor the situation and make a decision about how to proceed. The designated person can discuss any concerns they have and seek guidance from First Response before actually reporting any child protection issues.

Confidentiality must be maintained and information relating to individual children and young people/families shared with staff on a strictly need to know basis.

5. Alleged abuse by staff or volunteers

Lightyear Foundation is committed to maintaining the highest standards of honesty, openness and accountability and recognises that employees and volunteers have an important role to play in achieving this goal.

They may be the first to know when someone inside or connected with an organisation is doing something illegal or improper, but may feel apprehensive about voicing their concerns. This may be because they feel that speaking up would be disloyal to their colleagues or the organisation itself. Or it may be because they do not think that their concerns will be taken seriously or they are afraid that they will be bullied or dismissed.

Lightyear Foundation does not believe that it is in anyone's interests for staff or volunteers with knowledge of wrongdoing to remain silent. It will take all malpractice very seriously, whether it is committed by staff, volunteers, consultants or contractors. It will also aim to support staff or volunteers who make an allegation, and also those about whom an allegation has been made as appropriate.

An allegation or concern against a member of staff or volunteer, must be passed to Lightyear Foundation's designated person for child protection, or their deputy or, if the allegation concerns them both, direct to the Local Authority Designated Officer.

It may be clear in some cases, where a child has been injured and/or there is clear evidence or risk of significant harm, that an immediate referral must be made to the police, First Response or emergency services. In addition, either the designated person for child protection, or the person responsible must then contact the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) WITHIN 1 WORKING DAY of receiving the report of an allegation. The LADO's advice will then be followed.

Important note: wherever children are taking part in a Lightyear activity, a parent, carer or teacher will always remain present and take responsibility for the children in their care.

6. Record keeping

Any member of staff or volunteer receiving a disclosure of abuse, or noticing possible abuse, must make an accurate record as soon as possible noting what was said or seen, putting the event into context, and giving the date, time and location. All records must be dated and signed.

All hand-written records will be retained, even if they are subsequently typed up in a more formal report. Written records of concerns about children or young people should be kept, even where there is no need to make a referral immediately.

All records relating to child protection concerns will be kept in a secure place and will remain confidential.

7. Parental involvement

This organisation is committed to helping parents/carers understand its responsibility for the welfare of all children and young people. Parents/carers will be given information about the organisation's child protection

procedures. In most situations it may be appropriate, after consultation with the designated officer, for a staff member to talk to parents/guardians/carers to help clarify any initial concerns (as opposed to investigating possible abuse). For example, if a child seems withdrawn, he/she may have experienced an upset in the family, such as a parental separation, divorce or bereavement.

However, there are circumstances in which a child might be placed at even greater risk if concerns are shared – and advice and guidance must be sought from First Response if there is any uncertainty about contacting parents or carers about initial concerns.

8. Training

All staff and volunteers will be made aware of this policy and asked if they have read and understood it. All staff and volunteers will be signposted towards other training and training materials related to child protection. For example, an NSPCC child protection course (an online introductory safeguarding course for anyone who works with children).

The designated child protection person within Lightyear Foundation is Dr Josie Rawes.

9. Awareness of online activities

Lightyear Foundation also considers the potential risks associated with providing online classes and activities for children and young people and will always ensure that these are appropriately risk assessed. Safety guidance is provided for all sessions and appropriate online platforms used at all times.

Online classes are shorter than face-to-face sessions and require the attendance of at least one parent/carer or member of support staff to be present with the child/ren at all times. Chat functions, and other ways of communicating with children online, are not required and never used.

Key members of staff have completed the NSPCC's 'Keeping Children Safe Online' course.

9. Review

The policy will be reviewed every year.

Appendix A: Useful contacts

1. Designated person responsible for child protection at Lightyear Foundation:
Dr Josie Rawes, josierawes@gmail.com, tel 07735 593977
Katherine Sparkes, katie@lightyearfoundation.org, tel 0796 808 1152
2. **London Safeguarding Children Board** – contact details by borough
http://www.londonscb.gov.uk/contacts/london_local_safeguarding_children_boards.html
3. **London child protection procedures:** <http://www.londoncp.co.uk/index.html>
4. **Police:** Non emergency 101, emergency 999
5. **Staff allegations** - Local Area Designated Officer – contact details via local council website.

Support and advice

6. **Childline:** 0800 1111 (open 24 hours)
7. **National Association for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC):** 0800 800 500
8. **NSPCC FGM helpline:** 0800 028 3550 or email fgmhelp@nspcc.org.uk

Last reviewed: 30/09/2023