

Safeguarding and child protection policy

1. Introduction

Ensuring the safety of children and young people is the responsibility of every organisation that works with them. Visyon takes this responsibility very seriously, recognising that many of the children and young people we work with are particularly vulnerable. We have a duty to keep them safe whilst they are accessing the services of Visyon but also to act when it appears that a child or young person has been harmed in some way outside of their contact with this organisation. Visyon believes that it is always unacceptable for a child or young person to experience abuse or harm of any kind and recognises its responsibility to safeguard the welfare of all children and young people and to keep them safe by a commitment to practice which protects them. These practices are also important to safeguarding our staff, volunteers and workers.

Visyon is a charity which is committed to improving the emotional health and wellbeing of children, young people and their families.

This policy applies to all staff, trustees, volunteers, sessional workers, subcontractors or anyone working on behalf of Visyon.

2. The purpose of this policy

This policy lays out clearly Visyon's commitment to:

- To protect the children and young people who receive Visyon services.
- To ensure that children and young people who disclose abuse are supported by appropriate agencies
- To ensure that all staff and volunteers are deemed suitable to work with children and young people
- To provide staff and volunteers with the overarching principles which guide our approach to child protection and safeguarding.

3. Legal framework

In Visyon, the Chief Executive Officer is the lead officer for Safeguarding, and acts as a single point of contact for all safeguarding issues including: Child Sexual Exploitation, Female Genital Mutilation, Prevent, Domestic Abuse, Honour Based Violence, Forced Marriage, Trafficking/Modern Slavery, and now including: Mental Capacity Act, Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards.

This policy has been drawn up on the basis of law and guidance that seeks to protect children and young people, namely:

- Working Together to Safeguard Children March 2015.
- Children Act 1989

- United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child 1991
- Data Protection Act 1998
- Sexual Offences Act 2003
- Children Act 2004
- Children and Young Persons Act 2008
- Protection of Freedoms Act 2012
- Care Act 2014
- Mental Capacity Act 2005
- Other relevant government guidance on safeguarding children

4. We recognise that:

- Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility
- The welfare of the child or young person is paramount
- All children and young people, regardless of age, disability, gender, racial heritage, religious belief, sexual orientation or identity, have the right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse.
- Safeguarding covers a wide range of issues including for example physical safety, as well as child protection issues
- Some children and young people are additionally vulnerable because of the impact of previous experiences, their level of dependency, communication needs or other issues.
- Working in partnership with children, young people, their parents, carers and other agencies is essential in promoting children and young people's welfare.

5. We will seek to keep children and young people safe by:

- Valuing them, listening to them and respecting them.
- Adopting safeguarding and child protection practices through procedures and a code of conduct for staff and volunteers.
- Ensuring that the buildings we use to meet with children and young people are safe, warm and friendly
- Providing effective management for staff and volunteers through supervision, support and training.
- Recruiting staff and volunteers safely, ensuring all necessary checks are made and reviewing regularly.
- Sharing information about child protection and good practices with children, parents, staff and volunteers.
- Sharing concerns with agencies who need to know, and involving parents and children or young people appropriately.
- Gaining permission before taking photos of or videoing children and young people.
- Creating an open culture of communication within Visyon.
- Training every staff member, volunteer and external contractor to the level appropriate to their role.

6. Visyon Services

All services delivered by Visyon will be offered in an environment which enables children and young people to feel safe, to feel supported, and confident that they will be treated with respect and their views will be heard and acted upon appropriately.

7. Disclosures by Children and Young People

Children, young people and their families will be made aware on initial contact that some things cannot be kept confidential.

When children and young people make disclosures they will be treated with respect, openness and honesty. They will be informed of all actions undertaken on their behalf and be kept up to date of all developments.

Where possible children, young people and their families will be supported and empowered to escalate their disclosure to the relevant statutory authorities themselves, but where this is not possible Visyon will take timely action to ensure information is shared with other agencies.

8. Recruitment and Training of Staff

Staff will be recruited using an open and thorough recruitment process that tests out knowledge of safeguarding as is appropriate to the role. All staff will supply two references that will be checked out and staff working directly with children and young people will be Disclosure and Barring Service checked.

All staff will undertake basic safeguarding and annual update training, those staff working directly with children and young people will undertake intermediate level training every 3 years.

9. Gillick Competency and Fraser Guidelines

Staff working with young people over the age of 12 need to be aware of the Gillick competency and Fraser Guidelines and use them to inform their practice when working with young people.

Gillick competency and Fraser guidelines refer to a legal case which looked specifically at whether doctors should be able to give contraceptive advice or treatment to under 16-year-olds without parental consent. But since then, they have been more widely used to help assess whether a child has the maturity to make their own decisions and to understand the implications of those decisions.

"...it is not enough that she should understand the nature of the advice which is being given: she must also have a sufficient maturity to understand what is involved."

"Parental right yields to the child's right to make his own decisions when he reaches a sufficient understanding and intelligence to be capable of making up his own mind on the matter requiring decision." (Lord Scarman 1985)

Professionals working with children need to consider how to balance children's rights and wishes with their responsibility to keep children safe from harm.

10. Recording and Information Sharing

Concerns about the safety of a child or young person should always be recorded and stored electronically to ensure maximum confidentiality. Information sharing with other professionals signed up to the same level of professional practice should take place when it is in the best interest of the child or young person.

11. Policy on informing parents

Supporting parents is an important part of the role of Visyon and the organisation recognises that the majority of parents put the safety of their child first. However, there are a number of situations where parents should not be routinely informed of issues before further discussion takes place:

- Where a parent is implicated in a disclosure of abuse
- Where there is a possibility that the parent will warn the alleged perpetrator of the allegations
- Where the child is acutely distressed due to parents being informed
- Where a young person is deemed to be Gillick competent, information should not, as a rule, be passed to parents without the young person's permission. The preferred approach is to support the young person to talk to the parents themselves.

12. Allegations of abuse

Any allegation that an employee or volunteer has behaved in a way that has harmed, or may have harmed, a child is taken seriously and dealt with sensitively and promptly. The child's interests are paramount and their views and wishes are given careful consideration at all times.

This includes where a member of staff or volunteer is alleged to have:

- behaved in a way that has harmed, or may have harmed a child;
- possibly committed a criminal offence against, or related to, a child;
- behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates s/he is unsuitable to work with children

The designated Visyon officer for dealing with allegations or suspicions of such behaviour is the CEO. When managers are made aware of a concern or have one themselves they must consult with the CEO.

The CEO will then consult with the local authority's designated officer (LADO) which may result in an investigation being undertaken.

A record will be made of all allegations made detailing:

- any allegations made

- details of how allegations were followed up and resolved
- any action taken
- decisions reached.

For additional information regarding forms of abuse and possible signs of abuse, see – **P2c Safeguarding essential information.**

We are committed to reviewing our policy and good practice annually.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the **P2b Safeguarding and Child Protection Procedures** document, and the following Visyon policies

O4 Health and Safety policy

P1 Policy Statement on Confidentiality

Safeguarding flowchart – Appendix 1 Safeguarding and Child Protection Procedures

Cause for concern flowchart – Appendix 2 Safeguarding and Child Protection Procedures

P24 Lone working policy

O12 Whistle blowing policy

P31 Maintaining Professional Boundaries Policy and Guidelines