



## **Talking Forward Safeguarding Policy**

Safeguarding children is the responsibility of everyone

Safeguarding lead for talking forward:

Deputy safeguarding lead: | \_\_\_\_\_

### **Policy Statement**

The Children Act, 1989 defines a child as being up to the age of 18 years old. Extensions of this exist for children who have special needs and for those in local authority care settings. The Children's Act makes it clear that the welfare of the child is paramount, and it gives everyone involved in the care of children a responsibility for the protection of those children.

Talking Forward is committed to provide a safe environment for children, staff and visitors and promotes a climate where children and adults will feel confident about sharing any concerns that they may have about their own safety or the well-being of others.

Talking Forward believe that through supporting the non-offending parent through the period where another parent is under investigation for online sexual offences against children, we can protect that child's right to a safe home environment. Talking Forward will ensure that this is the case by rigorously implementing this policy.

**Commented [RA1]:** I have not had a safeguarding role in any role professionally BUT I am happy to deputise if it is a matter of being guided/rigorous and following policy. Check ins and paperwork etc.



## **Types of abuse: Child abuse is generally divided into four categories**

### **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 feigns the symptoms of, or deliberately causes ill health to, a child whom they are looking after. A person might do this because they enjoy or need the attention, they get through having a sick child (Fabricated or Induced Illness).

Physical abuse, as well as being a result of an act of commission can also be caused through omission or the failure to act to protect.

### **Emotional Abuse**

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional ill treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve making a child feel or believe that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person.

### **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, or consents to, what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative acts such as rape, or oral sex or non-penetrative acts such as fondling.

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

Boys and girls can be sexually abused by males and/or females, by adults and by other young people. This includes people from all different walks of life.

### **Neglect**

Neglect is 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 and clothing, failing to protect a child from physical harm or danger, or the failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.



## Recruitment

All reasonable steps will be taken to ensure unsuitable individuals are prevented from having any involvement with Talking Forward. Employee/volunteer recruitment procedures will include an enhanced DBS (Disclosure Barring Service) check, for all personnel. This will include all Trustees. All prospective employees/volunteers should be interviewed.

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Should any concerns arise following a DBS check, then this will be assessed to establish the level of risk the subject poses to children, other service users, colleagues, the general public and/or Talking Forward. A number of questions will be asked:

- Does the offence relate directly to work with children?
- What is the seriousness of the offence/s and the circumstances surrounding it?
- How long is it since the offence was committed?
- Does the subject have a pattern of offending?
- Has the subject's situation changed since the offence occurred?
- What is the subject's explanation of the offence?
- Did the subject declare the offence prior to the Disclosure?

Following a positive disclosure, a full risk assessment will be undertaken by either the safeguarding lead or deputy. If all the above questions are not answered satisfactorily, then the prospective employee/volunteer will not be permitted to join Talking Forward.

## Training and supervision of staff and volunteers

All new staff and volunteers will read and understand this policy as part of their induction process. Staff and volunteers will be able to identify the signs of abuse and will be confident about the steps to take and to whom they should report any concerns. All staff will be expected to re-read and sign this policy annually. Staff and volunteers will have the generalist safeguarding training provided to them by the lead or deputy lead for safeguarding.



### **Creating a Safe and Caring Environment**

- Risk Assessment should be undertaken prior to any offsite visits or new types of activities.
- Employees/volunteers working with children will be appropriately trained and qualified to ensure the safe provision of services, Generalist Safeguarding is mandatory.
- Employees/volunteers must not make racist, sexist; homophobic or any other remarks which upset or humiliate.
- It is the responsibility of employees/volunteers to listen to and discuss the difficult position a family find themselves in.
- The parent may be discussing their child in a peer support forum, as such they will be reminded not to use identifying factors to protect the child's right to privacy.
- Facilitators in a peer group will be trained in group discussion techniques to support discussion in such a way as to protect and deflect if they think a person is disclosing things in too much detail.

### **Behaviour guidelines for employees/volunteers**

- Safety of participants and employees/volunteers is of prime consideration at all times.
- All accidents involving anyone should be recorded in the Talking Forward digital accident book immediately or as soon as practicably possible.
- Employees/volunteers are responsible for familiarising themselves with building/facility safety issues, such as, fire procedures, location of emergency exits, location of emergency telephones and first aid equipment.
- Employees/volunteers are responsible for reporting suspected cases of child abuse to the appropriate individuals and/or agencies including out of hours emergency services without delay. Where there is reason to suspect significant harm, an immediate referral is required.
- Employees/volunteers will be expected to keep an attendance register for all organised sessions.
- Employees/volunteers should ensure that their activities start and end on time.
- Employees/volunteers should ensure that they are adequately insured, to protect against claims of negligence, through Talking Forward or their own personal insurance if acting as a self-employed agent.



### **Signs of Abuse:**

The signs summarised below are not exhaustive and do not necessarily mean that a child is being abused. Similarly, there may not be any signs; you may just feel that something is wrong. If you are worried report it to the designated person. It is not your responsibility to decide if it is abuse, but it is your responsibility to act on your concerns and do something about it by reporting. As Talking Forward does not have direct contact with children they are expected to listen to parents when discussing their child and report anything discussed that is concerning. This includes all different signs of abuse.

### **Responding to disclosures of abuse**

It is not the responsibility of employees/volunteers to deal with suspected abuse, but it is their responsibility to report concerns to the designated safeguarding lead or deputy. It is essential that all employees/volunteers are aware of their responsibilities if child safeguarding concerns are suspected.

If, during a peer support group, a parent mentions anything which is considered a sign of abuse, it is not safe to assume that someone else will take action. Each parent is going through a period of considerable stress and trauma; therefore, care must be taken in discussing a child's wellbeing. If during a referral call or peer group a parent discloses that behaviour has taken place which constitutes any of the signs of abuse, that person must report this to the safeguarding lead. This is recorded in an information sensitive way removing identifying names for audit trail.

As an adult, you have a duty to take appropriate action. Recognising and coping with potential child safeguarding issues can be very stressful and the person reporting the concern will not have to cope alone. All staff and volunteers will be supported by the safeguarding leads within Talking Forward.

### **If a parent spontaneously talks of experiences which give cause for concern staff and volunteers at Talking Forward must:**

1. Explain to the parent that if he/she discloses information which leads you to believe they may not be safe, you will be unable to keep it confidential.
2. Listen to the parent without questioning him/her. Be aware of your own reactions as showing disapproval may stop the parent from continuing with their disclosure.
3. Do not try to stop them from recalling events. Make a note of what is said and a detailed note of any disclosure of concern, in what context, the setting, the timing and which people were present.
4. Accept what you have been told.
5. Tell the parent that you will offer support, but you will have to pass the information on.
6. Do not approach or contact the alleged abuser[s].



### **Reporting Procedures**

- Record the concern or incident in the Talking Forward register, including, date and time of what has occurred and the time the disclosure was made. Record the names of the people involved and what was said and done by whom and any action taken.
- Inform the safeguarding lead and person in charge or deputy immediately. If this is not possible, contact the chair or an appropriate member of the management committee
- If the matter is urgent and none of the above can be contacted, then contact Statutory Children's Services and/ or the Police.

If in any doubt, contact must be made with the designated/deputy safeguarding lead; or safeguarding lead person in charge or chair of trustees. If none are available contact should be made with the relevant MASH or Emergency Duty Team if out of hours.

### **Review:**

Talking Forward will ensure that issues of child protection receive continuous attention and will annually review the way that we operate to support this principle.

**Last reviewed 4<sup>th</sup> March 2023**