

Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy Statement

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.

Safeguarding children and young people is a multiagency responsibility and is dependent upon partnership working with other statutory and non-statutory agencies. It is essential therefore that this policy is read in conjunction with the Safeguarding Children's Partnership/ Board, multi-agency safeguarding procedures relevant to the individual child and their family. All staff are required to have electronic access to these Partnership/ Boards procedures via their local website. The links to the various websites can be found at:

- Cheshire East - <https://www.cescp.org.uk/professionals/procedures-and-guidance.aspx>
- Staffordshire - <https://www.ssscbb.org.uk/procedures/>

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 designated 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, Online Safety, Bullying, The Mental Capacity Act, and 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 (HM Government July 2018).
- Children Act 1989 (2004)
- United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child 1991
- Data Protection Act 1998
- Sexual Offences Act 2003
- Children and Young Persons Act 2008
- Protection of Freedoms Act 2012
- Care Act 2014
- Mental Capacity Act 2005: Code of Practice (Department for Constitutional Affairs 2007) *Department of Health Guidance: Response to the Supreme Court Judgment/ Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (October 2015)*
- The policies and procedures of the Local Safeguarding Partners
- 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 gender identity, have the right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse.
- Safeguarding covers a wide range of issues including 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:

- Working in a Child Centred way, valuing them, listening to them and respecting them.
- Being curious when appropriate as per Voice of the Child – Working Together
 - Act in a timely way to report safeguarding concerns
- 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.
- Ensuring 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.

Visyon has a number of safeguarding officers of whom all team members are made aware. An on call safeguarding rota ensures that there is always a safeguarding officer contactable if team members have any safeguarding concerns.

All practitioners working in the 3rd Sector and agencies who are working with children and their families are subject to the same safeguarding responsibilities, whether paid or a volunteer. Working Together p73

7. Definition of abuse

- Visyon defines abuse by definitions detailed in Appendix A of Working Together to Safeguard Children (HM Government July 2018).

Practitioners should, in particular, be alert to the potential need for early help for any child who has additional vulnerabilities including:

- are disabled and/or has specific additional needs
- have special educational needs (whether or not they have a statutory Education, Health and Care Plan)
- young carers
- showing signs of being drawn into anti-social or criminal behaviour, including gang involvement and association with organised crime groups
- is frequently missing/goes missing from care or from home
- is at risk of modern slavery, trafficking or exploitation
- is at risk of being radicalised or exploited
- is in a family circumstance presenting challenges for the child, such as drug and alcohol misuse, adult mental health issues and domestic abuse
- is misusing drugs or alcohol themselves
- has returned home to their family from care
- is a privately fostered child.
- Has serious difficulties with their mental/physical health.
- Any child who fulfil the definition of a Child in Need.

8. 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 appropriate curiosity, 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.

All staff will be proactive in carrying out the necessary actions to ensure the continuing safety of a child or young person.

9. Recruitment and Training of Staff

Staff will be recruited using an open and thorough recruitment process that tests out knowledge of safeguarding 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 (part of the induction programme for all new staff members) and annual update training, those staff working directly with children and young people will undertake intermediate level training every 3 years.

10. Gillick Competency

Staff working with young people need to be aware of Gillick competency and use it to inform their practice when working with young people.

Gillick competency: It was determined that children under 16 can consent if they have sufficient understanding and intelligence to fully understand what is involved in a proposed treatment, including its purpose, nature, likely effects and risks, chances of success and the availability of other options. (Care Quality Commission: <https://www.cqc.org.uk/guidanceproviders/gps/nigels-surgery-8-gillick-competency-fraser-guidelines>)

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

11. 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 agencies and professionals when necessary with the assumption that they follow standard safeguarding practice. This will happen when it is in the best interests of the child or young person and or when required to do so legally.

12. Policy on informing parents

Supporting parents is an important part of the role of Visyon and the organisation recognises that the vast majority of parents put the safety of their child first. However, there are a number of situations where a safeguarding officer should consider whether parents should or should not be-informed of issues before further discussion and local safeguarding referral 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 for this decision, 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.

13. Allegations of abuse by staff and volunteers

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 they may pose a risk of harm to children
- behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable 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.

If a concern is raised regarding the CEO, the Chair of the Service Effectiveness Group (SEG) should be contacted, and the LADO may need to be involved.

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.

14. Addendum of policy and procedure during COVID 19

During COVID-19 the key principles of Visyon Safeguarding remain the same, children and vulnerable adults' welfare come first. To ensure the continued highest standard of child protection and safeguarding a number of additional considerations, policy and procedures have been put in place. These acknowledge the impacts and manage the current necessary changes in practice. Details are included in the Visyon Safeguarding and Child Protection Procedures document. These policies and procedures will be reviewed and updated to reflect any changes as they evolve throughout the coronavirus pandemic.

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, which is saved with this Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy Statement on the Visyon Drives, as well as 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 Safeguarding Remotely - Appendix 3 Safeguarding
Procedure Addendum for Supporting Clients Online and on the Telephone**

**P24 Lone working policy O12 Whistle blowing policy P31 Maintaining
Professional Boundaries Policy and Guidelines**