



## **Safeguarding Young People and Vulnerable Young Adults Policy**

### **Reviewed: February 2019**

#### **Responsible Persons**

Chair - Prism LGBTQ: Duncan Brightside  
Treasurer - Prism LGBTQ: Joey Atwill

#### **Statement**

All individuals (whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, gender identity, language, racial origin, religious beliefs and/or sexual orientation) have the right to protection from abuse.

It is particularly important to protect young people and vulnerable young adults as they are at a higher risk of abuse.

All volunteers for Prism LGBTQ have a responsibility to act by reporting concerns to the responsible persons named above. These persons are responsible for reporting concerns, as outlined in this Policy.

All suspicions and allegations of abuse will be taken seriously, and responded to quickly and appropriately.

Protection from abuse is more important than Data Protection or Confidentiality.

#### **Aims**

The aim of this Safeguarding Policy is to protect children and vulnerable adults from abuse.

It aims to promote good practice and to ensure all volunteers make an informed and confident response to specific child protection issues and/or vulnerable adult protection issues.

The following information aims to help all staff/volunteers to recognise abuse and know what to do should they be concerned that a child or vulnerable adult is being or has been abused.

## Definitions

### *Child*

Any person under 18

### *A vulnerable young adult*

Any person aged 18 or over who is or may be in need of community care services because of disability, age or illness, and who:

- is or may be unable to take care of themselves, or
- is unable to protect themselves from significant harm or exploitation.

Vulnerable young adults could include people with a visual or hearing impairment, physical disability, learning disabilities or mental health problems

### *Abuse*

Abuse is a violation of an individual's human and civil rights by another person or persons. This maltreatment can cause significant harm. Abuse may take the form of:

- A single act or multiple acts
- Planned or unplanned acts
- Deliberate intent, negligence or ignorance.
- Persuasion of a young person or vulnerable young adult to enter into a transaction to which they have not consented or cannot consent.

### *Potential forms of abuse*

There are different categories of abuse.

Here are some examples of each type (this list is not exhaustive):

- *Physical Abuse* – this can include assault, hitting, slapping, pushing, giving the wrong (or no) medication, restraining someone, or only letting them do certain things at certain times
- *Sexual Abuse* – this include rape, indecent exposure, sexual harassment, inappropriate looking or touching, sexual teasing or innuendo, taking sexual photographs, making someone look at pornography or watch sexual acts, sexual assault or sexual acts to which the young person or vulnerable young adult did not consent or was pressured into consenting
- *Psychological or Emotional Abuse* - this includes threats of harm or abandonment, depriving someone of contact with someone else, humiliation, blaming, controlling, intimidation, putting pressure on someone to do something, harassment, verbal abuse, cyber bullying, isolation or unreasonable and unjustified withdrawal of services or support networks
- *Financial or Material Abuse* – this includes theft, fraud, internet scamming, putting pressure on someone about their financial arrangements or transactions, or the misuse or stealing of property, possessions or benefits.
- *Neglect* - this includes ignoring medical, emotional or physical care needs, failure to provide access to appropriate health, care and support or educational services, or not giving someone what they need to help them live, such as medication, enough nutrition and heating.

- *Discriminatory Abuse* - this includes types of harassment or insults because of someone's race, gender or gender identity, age, disability, sexual orientation or religion
- *Organisational/Institutional Abuse* - this includes neglect and poor care in an institution or care setting. The abuse can be a one-off incident or repeated, on-going ill treatment. The abuse can be through neglect or poor professional practice, which might be because of structure, policies, processes and practises within an organisation

Further types can include:

- *Modern Slavery* - this covers slavery including domestic slavery, human trafficking and forced labour. Traffickers and slave masters use whatever they can to pressurise, deceive and force individuals into a life of abuse and inhumane treatment
- *Self-Neglect* - this covers a wide range of behaviour which shows that someone is not caring for their own personal hygiene, health or surroundings. It includes behaviour such as hoarding

*Where can abuse happen?*

Abuse can take place in **any setting**:

- In their own home
- In someone else's home
- In a residential home
- In a day centre, adult education centre or other establishment
- In a hospital or GP surgery
- At work
- In a public place
- During the youth group sessions or activities
- Anywhere!

*Who abuses?*

The person responsible for the abuse is **often but not always** well known to the young person or vulnerable young adult being abused. They may be:

- A relative, friend or neighbour
- A paid or volunteer carer
- A professional worker, mentor, volunteer
- Another resident or service user
- An occasional visitor or service provider
- Anyone!

## Procedure

*If you suspect abuse, what should you do?*

Remember: it is **not** the responsibility of any volunteer for Prism LGBTQ to decide whether or not a young person or vulnerable young adult is being abused, or that abuse has taken place.

**There is a responsibility to act on any concerns. Therefore anyone who suspects that abuse has or is taking place must discuss their concerns as soon as possible with the responsible persons.**

*What should the Responsible person do?*

The responsible person should report the concern to Social Care. They should make a judgement about whether, in their opinion, the young person may be at risk of immediate harm. If so, they should contact the Coventry Emergency Duty Social Worker Team for advice. If not, they should complete a MARF (Multi Agency Safeguarding Referral Form) asap within 48 hours.

*What should the mentors do?*

Two mentors should then have a conversation with the alleged victim. They should:

- Believe them
- Listen sensitively
- Be careful of the language used during the conversation. (If possible, they should encourage the young person to speak freely with no interruptions. They should also remember to ask open-ended questions such as, "What happened next?" rather than leading questions such as, "When did the abuse start?". They should also be mindful of body their own body language throughout the conversation).
- Try not to show that they are shocked
- Try to find out what the young person wants
- Try to find out who else they may have told (for example, are parents/carers aware?)
- If there are physical signs of abuse, encourage the young person to take photographs on their own mobile phone (ie, not on the mentor's phone).
- Clearly and sensitively explain to the young person that Prism has an obligation to report the concern to Social Care. They should remind the young person when confidentiality must be broken, and spell out why this constitutes one of those times
- Reassure the young person that it will not be shared with other young people

*Throughout the conversation, one mentor should be taking detailed notes of exactly what is said. This should also include the following information, at the time if possible or as soon afterwards as possible in order to create the most accurate account:*

- The young person or vulnerable adult's full name, date of birth, address and contact details.
- Whether or not the person making the report is expressing their own concerns or those of someone else
- The nature of the allegation. Include dates, times, circumstances, witnesses and other relevant information
- Make a clear distinction between what is fact, opinion or hearsay, i.e. only record **exactly** what is said, not any interpretations
- A description of any visible bruising or other injuries, also any indirect signs, such as behavioural changes

- The young person's or vulnerable adult's account, if it can be given, of what has happened and how any bruising or other injuries occurred.
- Have these concerns been raised previously? If so, when and with whom?
- The full details of the alleged abuser as possible

The account should be as detailed as possible in order for Social Care or the Police to take appropriate action if necessary.

*What should the mentors not do?*

- Do not confront the person they think is responsible for the abuse
- Do not destroy any evidence, e.g. rough notes made in emergency situations
- Do not start to investigate the situation, unless the allegations relate to the youth group
- Do not be judgemental
- Do not make any promises that cannot be kept, e.g. do not say, "It will never happen again. I can't keep it a secret."
- Do not take the allegations lightly or dismiss them

## **Confidentiality**

Every effort should be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned.

Information should be handled and disseminated on a need to know basis only, i.e. mentors, Social Care, Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) or the Police as appropriate.

All information should be stored in a secure place with limited access to designated people, in line with data protection laws, e.g. that information is accurate, regularly updated, relevant and secure.

## **What Happens Next**

Remember, it is **NOT** the responsibility of an individual mentor, the mentoring group, or the PMC to investigate or judge alleged abuse. Any disclosures **MUST** be discussed with LADO, and advice should be sought with regard to what procedures should follow.

This may include a referral to Coventry's Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and the Referral Assessment Service (RAS).

[http://coventrychildcare.proceduresonline.com/files/mash\\_procedure.pdf](http://coventrychildcare.proceduresonline.com/files/mash_procedure.pdf)

Where an allegation of abuse is made against a volunteer, the advice of LADO should be sought, and their advice should be followed accurately. This may include a private, mentor only meeting with the volunteer to inform them their support of Prism LGBTQ is no longer appropriate.

## **Handling Disclosure**

As outlined above, if you suspect abuse may be taking place then discuss your concerns with the responsible persons as soon as possible. However, a young person may choose to voluntarily disclose to you that they are being, or have been, a victim of abuse.

*How to respond to Disclosure*

- Do listen carefully to what the child is saying

- Do take the child's statement seriously
- Do write down exactly what the child said as soon as possible afterwards
- Do discuss with the responsible persons as soon as possible afterwards
- Do tell the child they are good to tell
- Do act sensitively
- Do remind the child that as they have told you something relating to them being at risk of harm then you will have to tell someone else
- Be careful of the language used during the conversation. Where possible, encourage the child to speak freely with no interruptions. If needed remember to ask open-ended questions such as, "What happened next?" rather than leading questions such as, "When did the abuse start?"
- Do take care of yourself and work out how you are feeling

#### *How not to respond to Disclosure*

- Do not panic
- Do not rush off to find someone else to listen
- Do not promise to keep things secret
- Do not lie to the child, or say that everything will be fine now they have told
- Do not make judgements of any kind about the abuser, especially if a parent
- Do not press for answers a child is unwilling to give
- Do not ask lots of details questions
- Do not make assumptions about how the child feels about their experience

#### *Summary of Handling Disclosure*

You are not expected to sort out all the child's problems yourself, or to be a therapist. However, it is important to remember that disclosing abuse is very difficult and children need to select very carefully whom they chose to tell. You will help a child by listening and taking their disclosure seriously. If the first telling is responded to in a supportive way it can be very therapeutic to a child.

## Prism Mentors & Volunteers

Certain skills and responsibilities are required for all mentors and volunteers at Prism LGBTQ. These will include the following:

### Skills

They will need to show:

- a strong commitment to young people and an understanding of the factors affecting their lives.
- the ability to provide reliable support to young people in times of stress and act with integrity.
- you are a good listener.
- excellent interpersonal and teamwork skills, with the ability to establish good relationships with young people and mentors.
- patience, flexibility and resilience.
- a sense of adventure and a willingness to try new things.
- the ability to treat young people's concerns with respect, tact and sensitivity
- awareness of the importance of, and the limits that are required by, confidentiality.
- awareness of the boundaries that govern the young person/mentor relationship.

### Responsibilities

They will need to:

- run youth group sessions alongside other mentors, ensuring all young people feel included.
- mentor, coach and support individuals and encourage greater social inclusion.
- work in partnership with professionals from other organisations that support young people such as social care, health, police, education, youth offending teams and local authorities.
- assess the needs of young people. Arrange for the delivery of workshops related to these needs. For example: coming out, gender identity awareness, discrimination, bullying, relationships & sexual health, fitness, smoking, drugs, gangs, or violence.
- attend regular training and development opportunities. Maintain an up-to-date knowledge of safeguarding and reporting responsibilities, health & safety, and Prism policies.
- manage non-mentor volunteers.
- undertake administrative tasks such as maintaining session monitoring forms.
- undertake appropriate planning and paperwork for events, including risk assessments and consent forms.
- contribute to evaluations of the session, which may include observations, conversations, positive areas, and areas for development.

### Disclosure & Barring Service Checks

**ALL** Prism Mentors are subject to an enhanced DBS check and should always be in possession of a current valid DBS certificate.

- Should any Mentor fail an enhanced DBS check then they will be immediately removed from the organisation and will be banned from attending any further Prism sessions or activities.
- Should any Mentor be in possession of a DBS certificate which is no longer current/valid then they will be asked not to attend any further Prism sessions or activities until the certificate is renewed.

## **Appropriate Boundaries**

Mentors at Prism LGBTQ are acting in a Position of Trust. Therefore certain boundaries should be observed.

Mentors should not engage in any of the following activities with youth group members:

- Borrow or lend money/property
- Act as a named Executor
- Act as a Godparent
- Be personal “friends” or have any link/connection on social media to a young person's profile/account through their own social media accounts/profiles.
  - Social media contact should only be via the Official Prism LGBTQ accounts on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and email.
  - Prism LGBTQ shall not keep a Snapchat account, nor any Social Media for which a record of posts cannot be easily kept
- Share their personal home address
- Share their personal phone number.
  - Prism LGBTQ has a phone that can be used for events. (This shall only be switched on during these events, and is not a point of contact for use at other times. It shall only be held by a designated officer - Chair, Secretary or Treasurer)
- Solicit goods or services from members or their families
- Purposefully arrange to meet Members outside of Prism sessions

Where possible, any discussions between Mentors and Members should be held in the public communal areas of the relevant venue where there is full visibility. In the event the discussion requires more privacy then at least one other Mentor should be present. If due to Mentor availability then the discussion should be deferred to another session and the reasons why explained to the member. If required the details for confidential helplines can be passed on for the Member to use in their own time.

## **Gifts**

Mentors should declare to the rest of the team any small personal gift they receive from a member.

- If the gift is deemed to be inappropriate the mentor might need be asked to return it, or donate it to charity.
- Small gifts (eg chocolates) received should be shared by the youth group where possible.

## **Training**

All mentors should receive Safeguarding Training every two years. This is to be arranged by the Responsible Persons, and it can be e-learning if appropriate.

## **Additional Information**

### **Policy Review**

This Policy and its implementation will be reviewed as required to keep in line with changing legislation and at least every three years as per The Constitution.

### **Obligations for all volunteers**

All volunteers for Prism LGBTQ must agree to abide by this policy, and must sign below to confirm they have read and understand its contents.

Any breach of this policy will be discussed by the mentors or the PMC (whichever is more appropriate) and, in line with The Constitution, disciplinary action is likely to be taken.

*I hereby understand and agree to the above Policy*

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Role \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_