

a. Safeguarding

Introduction

Spark! makes a positive contribution to a strong and safe community and recognises the right of every individual to stay safe. We work with partners such as schools and employers to facilitate high quality, meaningful and safe work experience placements, in-school and workplace-based activities and take our responsibilities for safeguarding seriously.

This policy seeks to ensure that Spark! undertakes its responsibilities with regard to the protection of children and young people and will respond to concerns appropriately. The policy establishes a framework to support paid and unpaid staff in their practices and clarifies the organisation's expectations for staff and partners with whom we work.

As a charity we also comply with the Charity Commission's requirements in respect of safeguarding.

Commitment of Staff

All staff are fully aware of and understand the contents of this policy and will act in accordance with it. They receive a copy on taking up their role with us as part of their induction. Training to ensure a full understanding of safeguarding matters and their importance will be provided to staff as required, and regular and in-depth training provided by NSPCC to the Designated Safeguarding Officer a minimum of every two years.

What is safeguarding?

Safeguarding refers to the measures and actions taken to protect individuals, particularly vulnerable individuals. This is particularly relevant at Spark! with daily interactions with children and young people who must be protected from abuse, harm, or neglect. It is an important aspect of ensuring the well-being and safety of all vulnerable people.

Safeguarding can involve a range of activities, including assessing and managing risk, providing education and training to individuals and organisations, establishing policies and procedures, and responding to concerns and allegations of abuse or neglect.

Examples of safeguarding measures at Spark! include DBS checks for people who work with vulnerable individuals and groups, setting up safe and secure environments for vulnerable people, providing education and support to families, and promoting awareness of abuse and neglect.

Overall, safeguarding is a critical aspect of working at Spark! ensuring the safety, welfare, and protection of vulnerable individuals. It is a responsibility shared by all individuals at Spark!, organisations that we interact with, and society as a whole.

Abuse can take a number of forms, including:

- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Neglect

Appendix One explains more about the types of abuse and how to recognise indicators that abuse might be taking place.

Definition of a child

A child is anyone under the age of 18 years.

Legislation and Guidance

The key legislative framework for safeguarding matters relevant to those with who's work is contained in: the Children Act 2004, the Safeguarding of Vulnerable Groups Act 2006, the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012, the Children and Social Work Act 2017, the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) Order 1975 as amended, the Education Acts and the Education (Independent School) Regulations 2014.

As a charity derives its own safeguarding duty from its common law duty of care to its beneficiaries.

For anyone working with children in an educational setting the key guidance is 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' which is statutory guidance. Statutory Guidance means that schools and others covered by the legislation under which it is issued must have regard to it when dealing with the various safeguarding issues it covers. The most recently updated version of the guidance¹ is here:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/550511/Keeping_children_safe_in_education.pdf.

There is additional guidance specific to safeguarding for work experience which can be found here: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/534922/post_16_work_experience_guidance.pdf.

will comply with this guidance as part of their overall safeguarding arrangements and our partnership arrangements with the schools, colleges, employers and partners with whom we work.

Safer Recruitment

It is important to note that safer recruitment is not confined to conducting DBS checks but includes a responsible and considered approach to recruitment generally, including conducting interviews, checks on qualifications and taking up appropriate references. HR policies cover these issues in detail.

Disclosure and barring service (DBS) checks

In accordance with the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 and Protection of Freedoms Act 2012, where we are engaging in activities which require our staff to have a DBS check we will ensure that these are carried out as part of our commitment to safer recruitment and safeguarding.

Not all roles are eligible for all types of DBS check, and the Safeguarding Officer's advice should be sought on all DBS related issues in the first instance. Persons who are on the DBS Barred Lists cannot work in regulated activity in relation to children. All staff will receive the relevant check for the role which they will be performing. If a staff member changes their role, they may require a new check to be undertaken.

Where we become aware that any current staff member may pose a risk to children we will comply with the legislation in respect of referring that staff member to the DBS. Where a staff member has a criminal conviction that precludes them from working with children and young people, this will lead to dismissal procedures being enacted.

We will carry out DBS checks on our trustees as appropriate and in accordance with the Charity Commission's guidance on safeguarding.

Where we contract with others as part of our work we ensure that the contractual provisions require them to comply with their own safeguarding duties and conduct all relevant DBS checks.

Safeguarding concerns and reporting procedures

Where any safeguarding concern arises, whether as a result of an occurrence during an activity or arising from a complaint or otherwise, the concern will be treated seriously and dealt with in accordance with this policy and procedures.

When dealing with a complaint, accusation or whistle-blowing, whether it is from a child or a concerned adult, the approach is the same:

- Stay calm and listen carefully to what is said.
- Reassure the person that to tell is the right thing to do.
- Find an appropriate and early opportunity to explain that it is very likely that the information will be shared with others. Do not promise to keep secrets even if the person threatens "only to tell" if it is a secret.
- Allow the person to dictate the pace.
- Ask questions only to seek clarification and make sure they are not leading questions.
- Explain what will happen next, who will be told.
- As soon as possible record in writing what was said using the person's own words whenever possible. Include any dates, times, names, name of person making record and make sure it is dated and signed.
- Record the name of the person or persons with whom the information will be shared.
- Report to the Safeguarding Officer as soon as possible.

It is not the responsibility of anyone to decide whether or not a child has been abused. It is, however, everyone's responsibility to report concerns and comply with this policy.

The concern must be reported to the Safeguarding Officer who will consider the circumstances and, in conjunction with the CEO, decide whether further investigation is needed or what other action needs to be taken. The Safeguarding Officer will ensure that all concerns are properly recorded and records kept securely and confidentially.

Information about child protection concerns and referrals should be kept in a separate child protection file for each child, rather than in one 'concern log'. The child protection file should be started as soon as you become aware of any concerns.

If the concern is of a nature which warrants a referral to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) for safeguarding then the referral will be made without delay. will then cooperate with any investigation in accordance with the London Borough of Hounslow's Safeguarding Policies and Procedures.

If there is a serious or immediate safeguarding concern which places a child at risk anyone can make a referral to social services or to the police to prevent harm. The Board of Trustees will consider whether it is necessary to make a serious incident report to the Charity Commission in accordance with their guidance on this issue.

Role of the Safeguarding Officer

The Safeguarding Officer shall:

- Be the point of contact for all concerns, incidents and disclosures within
- Receive information from professionals, children, parents and carers about child protection concerns
- Monitor the overall trend of safeguarding concerns and report annually to the Board of Trustees on the implementation of 's policies and procedures
- Maintain records of any child protection or other safeguarding concerns raised, action taken and follow up required
- Ensure that all professionals working for Spark! are aware of their safeguarding duties, have read the policies and will adhere to them at all times
- Offer advice and support to professionals working for Spark! to enable them to understand and fulfil their responsibilities
- Be familiar with legislation and statutory guidance and have undertaken appropriate safeguarding training

The Safeguarding Officer is Faye Rounding
fayerounding@sparkcharity.org.uk (07772 030525)

In Faye Rounding's absence the Safeguarding Officer is Georgia Ford
georgiaford@sparkcharity.org.uk (07903 499617)

If the Safeguarding Officers are unavailable for any reason, or if your concern relates to the Safeguarding Officer, then it must be reported directly to CEO - Matt Lent
mattlent@sparkcharity.org.uk (07779 160941)

Confidentiality

Children have the right to have their information dealt with sensitively and confidentially. However, confidentiality will never be a barrier to good safeguarding practice.

If a child tells a professional that they or another person is being hurt physically, sexually or emotionally, is likely to be hurt in the future, or is in danger of hurting someone else, then the professional will have to tell other people. Professionals will not promise to 'keep secrets' and will always make it clear that if they are told something that means someone is at risk of harm or is being harmed, this will have to be passed to the Safeguarding Officer.

Wherever possible, confidential information will not be passed to statutory agencies without the consent of the owner. There may be times, however, when disclosing confidential information without consent is necessary to safeguard a child or because the information suggests that there is a risk to others. If this is the case, information will be passed to the appropriate statutory agency by the Safeguarding Officer, making it clear that consent has not been sought and why, or that consent has been refused. The reasons for the disclosure without consent must be recorded and stored securely by the Safeguarding Officer.

More information on how we deal with the data we collect and use can be found in our Data Protection Policy.

Other relevant policies are the [Data Protection Policy](#) and [Whistleblowing Policy](#).

Appendix One – Types and indicators of abuse Physical Abuse

This is when a child is hurt or injured by a child or an adult. Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child.

It also includes giving a child harmful drugs or alcohol. Female genital mutilation is a form of physical abuse which is illegal in the UK. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer feigns the symptoms of, or deliberately causes, ill health to a child they are looking after.

Physical signs of abuse:

- Any injuries not consistent with the explanation given for them
- Injuries which occur to the body in places which are not normally exposed to falls or games
- Unexplained bruising, marks or injuries on any part of the body
- Bruises which reflect hand marks or fingertips (from slapping or pinching)
- Cigarette burns
- Bite marks
- Broken bones
- Scalds
- Injuries which have not received medical attention
- Neglect-under nourishment, failure to grow, constant hunger, stealing or gorging food, untreated illnesses, inadequate care
- Repeated urinary infections or unexplained stomach pains

Changes in behaviour which can also indicate physical abuse:

- Fear of parents being approached for an explanation
- Aggressive behaviour or severe temper outbursts
- Flinching when approached or touched
- Reluctance to get changed, for example, wearing long sleeves in hot weather
- Depression
- Withdrawn behaviour
- Running away from home

Emotional Abuse

This is when adults deny children love or affection, or constantly threaten or humiliate them. Sarcasm, degrading punishments and ignoring a child are also forms of emotional abuse and undermine a child's confidence and sense of self-worth.

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve serious bullying, causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children.

Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

The physical signs of emotional abuse may include:

- A failure to thrive or grow, particularly if a child puts on weight in other circumstances: e.g. in hospital or away from their parents' care
- Sudden speech disorders
- Persistent tiredness
- Development delay, either in terms of physical or emotional progress

Changes in behaviour which can also indicate emotional abuse include:

- Obsessions or phobias
- Sudden under-achievement or lack of concentration
- Inappropriate relationships with peers and/or adults
- Being unable to play
- Attention-seeking behaviour
- Fear of making mistakes
- Self-harm
- Fear of parent being approached regarding their behaviour

Sexual Abuse

This is when a child is used sexually by an adult or young person. Sexual abuse can include kissing, touching the child's genitals or breasts, vaginal or anal intercourse and oral sex. Encouraging a child to look at pornographic magazines or videos is also sexual abuse. Sexual abuse includes sexual exploitation, such as forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, including prostitution. Boys and girls can be sexually abused by males and/or females, by adults and by other young people. 'Sexting', online grooming and sexual activity over the phone or on video is also sexual abuse.

The physical signs of sexual abuse may include:

- Pain or itching in the genital/anal area
- Bruising or bleeding near genital/anal areas
- Sexually transmitted disease
- Vaginal discharge or infection
- Stomach pains
- Discomfort when walking or sitting down
- Pregnancy

Changes in behaviour which can also indicate sexual abuse include:

- Sudden or unexplained changes in behaviour, e.g. becoming withdrawn or aggressive
- Fear of being left with a specific person or group of people
- Having nightmares
- Running away from home
- Sexual knowledge which is beyond their age or developmental level
- Sexual drawings or language
- Bedwetting
- Eating problems such as over-eating or anorexia
- Self-harm or mutilation, sometimes leading to suicide attempts
- Saying they have secrets they cannot tell anyone about
- Substance or drug abuse
- Suddenly having unexplained sources of money or expensive gifts

- Not allowed to have friends (particularly in adolescence)
- Acting in an inappropriate sexually explicit way with adults

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. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born 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, failure to ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care givers) 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.

The physical signs of neglect may include:

- Constant hunger, sometimes stealing food from other children
- Being constantly dirty or smelly
- Loss of weight or being constantly underweight
- Inappropriate dress for the conditions

Changes in behaviour which can also indicate neglect include:

- Complaining of being tired all the time
- Not requesting medical assistance and/or failing to attend appointments
- Having few friends
- Mentioning being left alone or unsupervised

NSPCC Helpline

If you're worried about a child, you can contact the NSPCC helpline for advice and support.
Call: 0800 800 5000
Email: help@nspcc.org.uk