



# **Safeguarding Children Policy and Procedures**

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## **Introduction**

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is defined for the purposes of this policy as:

- providing help and support to meet the needs of children as soon as problems emerge
- protecting children from maltreatment, whether that is within or outside the home, including online
- preventing the impairment of children's mental and physical health or development
- ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care
- taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes ('Keeping Children Safe in Education' 2024)

Epic Partners places the highest priority on safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people. This document follows guidance on what organisations providing services to children or working with children and young people need to have in place.

This policy and procedures have been reviewed and revised in the light of learning from serious case reviews and the subsequent policy developments that have taken place. The policy considers the statutory guidance contained in 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' July 2022 DfE, Nottingham City Safeguarding Children Board (updated September 2023), 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' September 2024 DfE and 'Keeping children Safe in Out-of-School Settings' September 2023.

This policy is reviewed and agreed by the Board of Trustees on an annual basis.

## **Section 1: The Policy**

This policy applies to all staff and volunteers.

### **Epic Partners Commitment to Safeguarding**

Epic Partners will safeguard and promote safety and health when working with children and young people by:

- Ensuring safe recruitment: checking the suitability of staff and volunteers who will work with children and young people
- Raising staff awareness of issues concerning the safeguarding of children and young people
- Developing and implementing rigorous systems for identifying and reporting cases, or suspected cases, of abuse
- Establishing a safe environment in which children and young people can learn and develop
- Working with appropriate support agencies to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children and young people

Epic Partners will:

- Establish and maintain an ethos where children feel secure, are encouraged to talk and are listened to
- Ensure that children know that there are adults whom they can approach if they are worried or are in difficulty
- Equip children with the skills and resilience to stay safe from abuse
- Establish effective working relationships with parents and colleagues from other agencies

## Section 2: Roles and Responsibilities

Epic Partners Designated Safeguarding Leads are Kevin Brown, Tom Priestley, Michaela Castillo-Williams and Michael Clements. Peter Bewley, as CEO, will work with this team to retain a strategic overview of safeguarding.

The Board of Trustees member responsible for monitoring safeguarding is Jane Swingler.

### The Designated Safeguarding Leads will:

- Ensure that the policies and procedures are fully implemented and followed.
- Ensure that information is immediately passed to the appropriate agency, co-ordinate action and liaise with other agencies on suspected abuse cases.
- Ensure sufficient resources and time are allocated to enable staff to discharge their responsibilities
- Ensure that all staff are alert to signs of possible abuse and know what to do if they have any concerns or suspicions.
- Ensure that all those who have significant contact with children are subject to pre-recruitment safeguarding checks (DBS and other checks, as per Safer Recruitment policy) as required by legislation and guidance and these are properly recorded
- Ensure all staff and volunteers are aware of their responsibility to raise concerns about poor or unsafe practice and ensure that such concerns are addressed sensitively, effectively and in accordance with the agreed Whistleblowing policy.
- Monitor training and induction and ensure all staff receive regular safeguarding training updates.
- Be responsible for investigating allegations against staff.
- Work with Lead Trustee to monitor safeguarding.
- Monitor safeguarding work to evaluate outcomes for children.
- Keep up to date with current legislation, policy, guidance and practice.
- Undertake safer recruitment procedures, to ensure that all those who have significant contact with children are subject to pre-recruitment safeguarding checks (DBS and other checks, as per Safer Recruitment policy) as required by legislation and guidance and these are properly recorded

### Lead Trustee will:

- Work with the CEO and DSLs to monitor safeguarding and ensure the organisation is following good practice.
- Provide Trustees with regular safeguarding updates.

### Staff will:

- Be familiar with Epic Partners' safeguarding policies and procedures.
- Report any safeguarding concerns immediately, as outlined in **Appendix III: Staff guidance on responding to disclosures.**
- Discuss any safeguarding concerns with their DSL.

## Section 3: Guidance and procedures for Epic Partners staff

### Safeguarding Procedure:

#### Reporting a disclosure

Epic's agreed procedure must be followed whenever an allegation of abuse is made or when there is a suspicion that a child has been abused. Staff guidance is included in Appendices II and III.

A full record must be made as soon as possible of the nature of the allegation and any other relevant information, using the Epic form. This should be passed to a DSL and shared with the appropriate agency within 24 hours or as near as possible.

### **Responding to allegations made against a staff member**

Epic Partners understands that a vulnerable child may make an allegation against a member of staff. If such an allegation is made, the member of staff receiving the allegation will immediately inform their line manager, who will conduct a full investigation.

To avoid putting themselves in a difficult situation, or even the possibility of claims of abuse, staff should follow the general guidelines for good practice (Appendix III).

### **Whistleblowing**

All staff should be aware of their duty to raise concerns about the attitude or actions of colleagues. If necessary, staff should speak to their Epic Partners line manager. See the Whistleblowing Policy for more details.

### **Maintaining records and monitoring**

DSLs are responsible for maintaining records. Sensitive information about a child will only be shared with other staff on a need-to-know basis only. All records will be kept securely, either in a locked filing cabinet or in password protected documents online.

## **Section 4: Staff Training**

Epic Partners will ensure that all staff and volunteers who will be working with children and adults are confident and competent to carry out their safeguarding responsibilities. Training will include:

- Basic Awareness Training for all staff and Refresher Training for DSLs
- Induction safeguarding training for all new staff
- In-house training in recording of referrals/concerns
- Safer recruitment training for senior staff and Trustees
- NCC MARF (Multi Agency Referral Form) training for DSLs

Staff undertake safeguarding training in accordance with the legal guidelines. Epic Partners retains a record of all relevant staff training.

### **Support for staff**

Epic Partners recognises that staff working with a child who has suffered harm, or may be likely to suffer harm, may find the situation stressful and upsetting. We will support staff by providing an opportunity to talk through their anxieties with a senior colleague or our HR provider's confidential counselling service.

### **Confidentiality**

The important statutory duties in relation to children cannot be met without effective and appropriate sharing of relevant information, some of which may be regarded as confidential. This should not be confused with secrecy. Information is shared on a need-to-know basis. Anyone with concerns that a child is subject to abuse has a duty to maintain confidentiality and disclose such information only with the appropriate members of staff or authority. The purpose of confidentiality is to protect the child.

### **Further Guidance**

The Local Authority Safeguarding contacts are:

Children and Families – 0115 876 4800 - [candfdirect@nottinghamcity.gov.uk](mailto:candfdirect@nottinghamcity.gov.uk)

Adults: Nottingham City Council Health and Care Point – 0300 131 03 00 (Opening times; Monday - Friday 8.00am – 7.00pm)

## **Section 5: Information sharing**

Epic Partners always aims to work in partnership with children and families and to avoid breaches of trust. However, staff must be open and honest with service-users about the limits of confidentiality that we can offer at the outset of their working relationship. Staff should highlight that, at a minimum, we must share information on a need-to-know basis with school or Local Authority, where children may be at risk of harm.

As part of its Service Level Agreement with individual schools, Epic will provide any information required on its safeguarding policy and procedures, to comply with the new guidance ('Keeping Children Safe in Education' 2023, paragraph 167) concerning out of school activities.

Staff should exercise their professional judgement in deciding whether to share information without consent and should seek guidance from their DSL if in doubt. Staff and managers should keep a clear record of the decision to share information, including managerial guidance, the reasons for this decision, and details of what information has been shared and with who.

To support good judgement in these matters, practitioners and managers should refer to the government guidance 'Information Sharing' (May 2024) and 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' (December 2023).

## Appendix I: Definitions of Child Abuse and Triggers for Concern

- **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. This is often described as "fabricated or induced illness".
- **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 conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued in so far as they meet the needs of another person. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. It may involve 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 ill treatment of a child, though it may occur alone.
- **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 what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative or non-penetrative acts. They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at pornographic material or watching sexual activities or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.
- **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/treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

### Signs and Symptoms of Abuse

There are many varied indicators that a child is suffering from abuse whilst, at the same time, these may not be the result of abuse. It is therefore important that any unexplained injuries or significant changes in a child's physical appearance, behaviour or emotional state are responded to by discussing concerns with the appropriate person.

### Triggers for concern

- Patterns of attendance
- Changes in classroom/workshop functioning
- Statements, comments, stories, drawings, play
- Parental interest and comments
- Medicals
- Response to PE/Sport
- Injuries/marks, past and present
- Changes in mood or behaviour (eg, aggressive) and attitude to peers and adults
- Abnormal reaction to a situation or a person
- Pseudo-mature or promiscuous behaviour or language
- General demeanour and appearance

## Appendix II: Staff guidance on responding to disclosures

### Children:

If a child says or indicates that he or she is being abused, or information is obtained from another child which gives concern of abuse, the person receiving this information should follow the guidance below:

- Ensure the child is reassured that they have done the right thing by telling you, however, do not make promises of confidentiality.
- It is essential that the child is listened to and treated sensitively.
- Avoid asking leading questions. It is best to listen to the child without direct questioning, if possible; allow them to speak freely.
- Do not examine the child.
- Make notes of the information you have received — the date and time, where it took place, the child's demeanour and information about any bruises or marks. Where possible use the child's own words
- Sign all notes before passing them on to the DSL
- Share this information with your DSL and, if appropriate, the DSL based at the school or organisation.
- Complete the school's child protection referral form and Epic safeguarding alert form as soon as possible.
- Ensure copies of both forms are kept for Epic records.
- The school or Epic will refer this to Social Care. A verbal referral must be followed with a written referral within 24 hours.

### **Appendix III: Good Practice Guidance**

To avoid putting yourself in a difficult situation, including the possibility of claims of abuse against you, the following notes are provided to give general guidance.

- Avoid doing anything that is not totally open and make sure you treat all children in the same way
- If you need to assist a child to put on specialist clothing, get them to agree that you will fit it, explain what you are doing while you are assisting them and make sure you do so openly and in sight of others
- If you are required to lift, carry or support children, avoid touching sensitive parts of the body and explain what you are doing while you are doing it and, where possible, gain their consent
- Do not put yourself in a position where you might find yourself out of public view or alone with a child
- Do not make any sexually suggestive comments to any child
- Do not engage in rough physical or provocative games with any child
- Never make any unnecessary physical contact with children
- Never take, or arrange to meet, children outside of the premises without the express permission of parents and the knowledge of a senior member of staff
- If a child makes approaches to you, or is overly familiar you should remove yourself from the situation and report the matter to the DSL (in school or at Epic)
- Never agree to keep a secret and, if asked, explain that it is not possible to keep secrets

### **Appendix IV: policy statement on photography and filming**

The purpose of this statement is to:

- Protect children and young people who take part in Epic Partner's services, events and activities, specifically those where photographs and videos may be taken
- Ensure that we operate in line with our values and within the law when creating, using and sharing images of children and young people.

This statement applies to all staff, volunteers and other adults associated with Epic Partners.

We recognise that:

- Sharing photographs and films of our activities can help us celebrate the successes and achievements of our children and young people, provide a record of our activities and raise awareness of our organisation
- The welfare of the children and young people taking part in our activities is paramount and children, their parents and carers have a right to decide whether their images are taken and how these may be used, regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation
- Consent to take images of children is only meaningful when children, their parents and carers understand how the images will be used and stored and are fully aware of the potential risks associated with the use and distribution of these images
- There are potential risks associated with sharing images of children online.

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

- Asking for written consent from a child and their parents or carers before taking and using a child's image
- Explaining what images will be used for, how they will be stored and what potential risks are associated with sharing images of children
- Making it clear that if a child or their family withdraw consent for an image to be shared, it may not be possible to delete images that have already been shared or published
- Not using names of children whose images are being used in our published material whenever possible (or only using first names if we need to identify them)
- Never publishing personal information about individual children and disguising any identifying information (for example, the name of their school or a school uniform with a logo)
- Making sure children, their parents and carers understand how images of children will be securely stored and for how long (including how we will control access to the images and their associated information)
- Reducing the risk of images being copied and used inappropriately by only using images of children in appropriate clothing and avoiding full face and body shots of children taking part in activities such as swimming, where there may be a heightened risk of images being misused
- Using images that positively reflect young people's involvement in the activity

Epic staff are allowed to take photographs and videos on their personal phones, on condition that all photos and footage are deleted immediately after they are downloaded onto the central secure database. This is monitored by the CEO and Operations Manager.

Photos and videos in the public domain will be deleted from the central database as soon as they are no longer being used online.