

Safeguarding Children

In

PLACES OF WORSHIP

Good Practice Guidance
Endorsed by LBBD Local Safeguarding Children Board

Safeguarding Children is Everyone's Business!!

[NAME OF PLACE OF WORSHIP]

Safeguarding children is the responsibility of us all.

[Name of organisation] recognises its responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of children within the legal framework of the Children Acts 1989 and 2004. Under the terms of the Children Act 2004 anyone under the age of 19 is considered to be a child/young person.

It is difficult to acknowledge sometimes that abuse can happen within a place of worship but any group or organisation working with children is vulnerable. It is the responsibility of us all, irrespective of our particular faith or cultural background, to put the welfare of children and young people first and to recognize behaviours that can put children at risk.

Places of worship and faith based organisations need to have appropriate arrangements in place for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. In particular these arrangements should include:

- procedures for staff and others to report concerns that they may have about the children they meet that are in line with Local Safeguarding Children Boards procedures
- appropriate codes of practice for staff, particularly those working directly with children such as those issued by their denomination or faith group
- recruitment procedures in accordance with *Safe from Harm* (Home Office 1993) principles and Local Safeguarding Children Board procedures, alongside training and supervision of staff (paid or voluntary) Working Together to Safeguard Children no 2.153

We are aware that many children and young people are the victims of different kinds of abuse and that they can be subjected to social factors that have an adverse impact upon their lives, such as domestic violence or substance misuse. There are also customs practiced by some believers that are unlawful in England and which place children and young people at risk. These include forced and under-age marriages; honour killings; female circumcision; and ritualistic abuse.

We aim to create a safe and respectful environment for worship within which children and young people can thrive and places of worship can practice in the security of clear guidance.

These guidelines are for the use of all paid staff, volunteers, and visitors. We will make them available to the parents and carers of the children and young people to whom we offer a service. Through them, we will endeavour to ensure that:

- Children and young people are listened to, valued and respected
- All members of our place of worship are aware of the need to be alert to the signs of abuse and know what to do with their concerns
- All paid staff and volunteers are subject to rigorous recruitment procedures and Criminal Record Bureau clearance
- All paid staff and volunteers are given appropriate support and child protection training

The guidelines are divided into the following sections:

1. Recognising signs of abuse
2. What to do with your concerns
3. Allegations made against staff
4. Safe recruitment
5. Good practice
6. Safeguarding children in Barking and Dagenham
7. Contacts

All child protection concerns should be acted upon immediately. If you are concerned that a child might be at risk or is actually suffering abuse, you should tell the designated child protection officer within your place of worship.

**Your designated officer is:
Telephone number:**

If the designated officer is not available, speak to a senior member of staff.

In an emergency situation, contact a social worker directly:

In office hours, either: **Children's Services, Safeguarding and Rights Assessment Team**
Tel: 020 8227 3852 / 3882 / 3860
Fax: 020 8227 3951
Textphone: 020 8227 3882
E-mail: childrenss@lbbd.gov.uk

Or:

Out of office hours: **The Emergency Duty Team, 020 8594 8356**

1. RECOGNISING SIGNS OF ABUSE

It can often be difficult to recognise abuse. The signs listed in these guidelines are only indicators and many can have reasonable explanations. Children may behave strangely or seem unhappy for many reasons, as they move through the stages of childhood or their families experience changes. It is nevertheless important to know what could indicate that abuse is taking place and to be alert to the need to consult further.

Someone can abuse a child by actively inflicting harm or by failing to act to prevent harm. Abuse can take place within a family, in an institutional or community setting, by telephone or on the Internet. Abuse can be carried out by someone known to a child or by a complete stranger.

If you are worried about a child it is important that you keep a written record of any physical or behavioural signs and symptoms. It is important that this record is signed and dated. In this way you can monitor whether or not a pattern emerges and provide evidence to any investigation if required.

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse can involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, scalding, drowning, and suffocating. It is against the law to discipline a child by deliberately doing any of these things. Physical abuse can also result when a parent or carer deliberately causes the ill health of a child in order to seek attention; this is called fabricated illness. Symptoms that indicate physical abuse include:

- Bruising in unusual places, such as the face or the back
- Finger mark bruising or grasp marks on the limbs or chest of a small child
- Bites
- Burn and scald marks; small round burns that could be caused by a cigarette
- Fractures to arms, legs or ribs in a small child
- Large numbers of scars of different sizes or ages

Children who have been physically hurt can be fearful of others. They may also wear inappropriate clothes in order to cover their injuries and be resistant to explaining how the injury happened.

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse happens when a child's need for love, security, praise and recognition is not met. Some level of emotional abuse is involvement in all types of ill treatment of a child. Emotionally abusive behaviour occurs if a parent, carer or authority figure is consistently hostile, rejecting, threatening or undermining. It can also result when children are prevented from social contact with others, or if developmentally inappropriate expectations are imposed upon them. Children who are living with domestic violence are also impacted by the violent and fearful atmosphere that is present in the home. Symptoms that indicate emotional abuse include:

- Excessively clingy or attention-seeking behaviour
- Very low self esteem or excessive self-criticism
- Excessively withdrawn behaviour or fearfulness
- Anxious behaviour, such as rocking, hair twisting or self harm
- Lack of appropriate boundaries with strangers; too eager to please
- Eating disorders

Neglect

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, causing damage to their health and development. It may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food, shelter or clothing, failing to protect a child from harm or danger, or failing to access appropriate medical care and treatment when necessary. It can exist in isolation or in combination with other forms of abuse. Symptoms of physical and emotional neglect can include:

- Inadequate supervision; being left alone for long periods of time
- Lack of stimulation, social contact or education. Inadequate responses to emotional needs
- Inadequate nutrition, leading to ill-health – a child may look too thin, too fat and/or undernourished
- Constant hunger; stealing or gorging food
- Failure to seek or to follow medical advice such that a child's life or development is endangered
- Repeated wearing of inappropriate clothing for the weather

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 what is happening. This may include physical contact, both penetrative and non-penetrative, or involve no contact, such as watching sexual activities, harassment or looking at pornographic material. Encouraging children to act in sexually inappropriate ways is also abusive. Under the Sexual Offences Act 2003, any sexual activity – contact or non-contact – with a child under the age of 13 is a crime. Symptoms of sexual abuse include:

- Allegations or disclosure
- Genital soreness, injuries or discomfort
- Sexually transmitted diseases; urinary infections
- Excessive preoccupation with sex; inappropriately sexualised play, words or drawings
- A child who is sexually provocative or seductive with adults

Older children and young people may additionally exhibit:

- Depression
- Drug and/or alcohol abuse
- Eating disorders; obsessive behaviours
- Self mutilation; suicide attempts
- School/peer/relationship problems

Some members of our communities hold beliefs that may be common within particular cultures but which are against the law in England. No place of worship will condone practices that are illegal or harmful to children, but these are sensitive issues and we need to be able to offer guidance. Examples of particular practices are:

- **Forced Marriages**
No faith supports the idea of forcing someone to marry without their consent. This should not be confused with arranged marriages between consenting adults.
- **Under-age Marriages**
In England, a young person cannot legally marry or have a sexual relationship until they are 16 years old or more
- **Female circumcision**
This is against the law yet we know that for some in our communities it is considered a religious act and a cultural requirement. **It is also illegal** for someone to arrange for a child to go abroad with the intention of having her circumcised.
- **Ritualistic abuse**
Some faiths believe that spirits and demons can possess people (including children). Prayer can be used very constructively in these circumstances. What should never be condoned is the use of any physical violence to get rid of the possessing spirit. This is physical abuse and people can be prosecuted even if it was their intention to help the child.

2. WHAT TO DO WITH YOUR CONCERNS?

In the event that a child makes an allegation or disclosure of abuse about an adult or another child or young person, it is important that you:

- Listen to them and/or closely observe their presentation and behaviour;

- Let them know that you take what they are saying seriously;
- Do **not** attempt to question or interview them yourself;
- Let them know that you will need to tell someone else in order to help them. **Do not promise to keep what they tell you secret;**
- Inform your designated child protection officer as soon as possible;
- Make a written record of the incident or events, sign and date;
- **Where possible, it is good practice to inform the parent/carer of the referral, however, do not inform the person who is named as the abuser if you feel this might place the child at further risk of harm.**

Sometimes you may just feel concerned about a child but do not know whether to share your concerns or not. In this situation you should always raise your concerns with your designated child protection officer, who will help you to decide what to do.

The responsibility for investigating allegations of abuse, whether they result from the disclosure of a child or the concerns of an adult, lies with social workers in the local Children's Services Department and the Police Child Abuse Investigation Team (CAIT). It is normally the responsibility of your designated child protection officer to make a referral to these agencies, but if you judge the situation to be an emergency and/or you require urgent advice in the absence of the designated officer, you must report your concerns directly, using the contacts listed at the back of these guidelines. The Children's Service also employs Child Protection Advisors (CPAs), who you can contact in office hours for further specialist guidance. Contact numbers for the CPAs are included in section 7.

The Duty social worker or CPA will advise you when or whether to inform the child's parents or carers about any concerns. If they decide to pursue a child protection investigation, you should:

- Work closely and collaboratively with all professionals involved in the investigation, in order to keep the child safe;
- Attend a child protection conference if you are invited. You will be asked to provide information about your involvement with the child, which is why it is important to keep records of your concerns;
- Attend any subsequent child protection review conferences.

! PRACTICE TIPS!

You can find more detail about the identification of abuse and what to do about it in the booklet, "What to do if you're worried a child is being abused". This is available from your Local Safeguarding Children Board or via the DfEs website, www.everychildmatters.gov.uk Information about the procedure for investigating allegations of abuse is contained in the London Child Protection Procedures, available from the London Councils website, www.londoncouncils.gov.uk. The Multi Agency Referral Form and its Guidance are available from Local Safeguarding Children Board, www.bardag.lscb.gov.uk or the South end, Essex and Thurrock Child Protection Procedures. Make sure your organization has a copy.

3. ALLEGATIONS MADE AGAINST LEADERS, STAFF & VOLUNTEERS

Organisations that work or come into contact with children and young people need to be aware of the possibility that allegations of abuse will be made against members of their staff or volunteers. Allegations will usually be that some kind of abuse has taken place. They can be made by children and young people and they can be made by other concerned adults. Allegations can be made for a variety of reasons. Some of the most common are:

- Abuse has actually taken place;
- Something happens to a child that reminds them of an event that happened in the past – the child is unable to recognize that the situation and the people are different;
- Children can misinterpret your language or your actions because they are reminded of something else;
- Some children know how powerful an allegation can be; if they are angry with you about something they can make an allegation as a way of hitting out;
- An allegation can be a way of seeking attention.

All allegations should be brought to the notice of the designated child protection officer immediately. In cases where the allegation is made against this person, the complainant should approach a more senior official or take the following action him or herself:

- Make sure that the child in question is safe and away from the person alleged to have abused a child;
- Contact the Duty social worker in the team relevant to where the child lives (see section 7);
- Contact the parents or carers of the child if advised to do so by the social worker/officer in charge of allegations;
- Irrespective of any investigation by the Children's Services or the police, you should follow the appropriate disciplinary procedure; common practice is for the alleged abuser to be suspended from attending the church, faith group or workplace until the outcome of any investigation is clear;
- Consider whether the person has access to children anywhere else and whether those organizations or groups need to be informed;
- Act upon the decisions made in any strategy meeting.

All incidents should be investigated internally after any external investigation has finished, to review practice and put in place any additional measures to prevent a similar thing happening again.

Support

It is important that you also develop support systems for the person who faces an allegation. If your church or faith group has a management committee, it could be that a member is nominated to fulfil this role. As well as providing support through listening and through prayer, this person could advise on appropriate outside help, such as counselling or legal services.

! PRACTICE TIPS!

Well functioning organizations encourage an environment where people feel safe to express their concerns about the practice of others. The term 'whistle blowing' is often used pejoratively; if a staff member, volunteer or visitor has concerns, they should not be victimized in any way for expressing them.

4. SAFE RECRUITMENT

The application of rigorous procedures for the recruitment of any staff or volunteers who come into contact with children, both directly and indirectly, can reduce the likelihood of allegations of abuse being made that are founded. As an absolute minimum, the following standards should be followed:

- All prospective workers (paid and unpaid) should complete an application form which asks for details of their previous employment and for the names of two referees;
- All prospective workers (paid and unpaid) should have a new Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) disclosure before they start employment with you – anyone who refuses to do so should not be employed;
- All prospective workers (paid and unpaid) should be interviewed to establish previous experience of working in an environment where there is contact with children and perceptions of acceptable behaviour;
- Nobody should start work before references have been received and the CRB process completed with a disclosure certificate received. Referees should be reminded that references should not misrepresent the candidate or omit to say things that might be relevant to their employment;
- All appointments to work with children should be subject to an agreed probationary period;
- New members of staff should be clear about their responsibilities and wherever possible, work to an agreed job description;
- These guidelines should be available to everyone and fully discussed as part of an induction process.

! PRACTICE TIPS!

Even the most careful selection process cannot identify everyone who may pose a risk to children and young people. The Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) has produced Practice Guidance for the Recruitment and Vetting of Staff to help organizations to be as thorough as possible. Copies are available from the LSCB www.bardag.lscb.gov.uk

5. GOOD PRACTICE

- Every place of worship or Madrasa should have a designated child protection officer who must undergo child protection training. It is the responsibility of this person to make themselves available for consultation by staff, volunteers, visitors, children and their families;
- The name of the designated officer and their duties should be displayed in the place of worship so that everyone (including parents and carers) is aware of who to talk to if they have concerns;
- All staff are responsible for children while on these premises and must make sure that health and safety guidelines are adhered to;
- All staff working with children should receive regular supervision from a more experienced staff member and be encouraged to attend basic child protection training;
- All records and staff or volunteer personal information must be kept in a confidential file in a safe and secure place

- Any allegation or concern about a child or adult must be dealt with in a confidential manner. It is important this information is not shared with anyone other than those who need to know;
- No member of staff should be left alone with a child where they cannot be observed by others;
- Under no circumstances should visitors be allowed to wander around the premises unaccompanied when children and young people are present;
- Where possible there should always be at least two adults present with a group of children – it is vital that the ratio of adult to child is adequate to ensure safety. For children under 8 the ratio should be no more than 1:8; for children under 5 it should be no more than 1:6.
- Staff should be alert to strangers frequently waiting outside a venue with no apparent purpose. Children should not be collected by people other than their parents unless notification has been received;
- If a child is not collected after a session it is reasonable to wait approximately half an hour for a parent or carer to arrive. If the parent or carer cannot be contacted, staff should contact the relevant children's services. Duty Team or the police and request assistance.

Outings & Trips

- All vehicles hired for outings must be insured, roadworthy and fitted with seatbelts;
- All drivers should travel with at least one escort. Drivers and escorts should have up to date CRB checks and been subject to appropriate recruitment procedures. All drivers and escorts should agree to abide by these guidelines;
- Roll call will be taken at the start of a journey and again before commencing the return journey; if travelling in more than one vehicle, children will be encouraged to travel in the same vehicle there and back;
- Staff accompanying trips will carry the contact numbers for the home organization and emergency services in the event of an alert being necessary;
- If a child goes missing while on a trip, staff should instigate an immediate search. If the child cannot be found within half an hour, the appropriate security staff and the police should be notified;
- If, having notified security staff and the police, the child cannot be found, the parents/carers of the child will be notified immediately;
- The care of the remaining children is paramount. It is imperative that they return to the home site as quickly as possible, while a senior staff member remains at the visit site to co-ordinate contact between security staff and the child's parents/carers.

Use of premises by other organisations

- In the event that a room or rooms on the premises are used by other organisations, the letting agreement should ensure that the hiring organization works to approved child protection procedures and/or that they read and agree to abide by these guidelines.

6. SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN

The Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) is responsible for coordinating the arrangements made by different local organisations to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. The Association of Voluntary and Community Organisations (HAVCO) represent the interests of voluntary sector and community groups on the LSCB. The LSCB will also approach

individual organizations as and when their advice and experience in particular areas could be valuable to the production of guidance or information to the public.

The LSCB coordinates multi-agency training programmes on child protection related topics; it is recommended that all designated child protection officers and senior officials attend one or more of these courses to gain the knowledge necessary to be able to offer advice and consultancy within your place of worship.

7. CONTACTS

In an emergency situation, contact a social worker directly:

In office hours, either: Children's Services, Safeguarding & Rights Assessment

Team Tel: 020 8227 3852 / 3882 / 3860

Fax: 020 8227 3951

Textphone: 020 8227 3882

E-mail: childrenss@lbbd.gov.uk

Or:

Out of office hours: The Emergency Duty Team, 020 8594 8356

Children's Service (Child Protection Advisor) 020 8227 2839

Local Safeguarding Children Board 020 8227 2901

Child Abuse Investigation Team (Metropolitan Police) 020 8345 2927

NSPCC Helpline 0808 800 5000

This policy has been adapted with thanks from a template from Haringey LSCB

8. IMPLEMENTATION CHECKLIST

These child protection procedures will only be effective if all staff and volunteers in your place of worship own and understand them. This checklist is designed to help you to go through that process:

- Identify designated child protection officer (CPO) for place of worship
- Add CPO name and contact details to procedure
- Ensure CPO attends training on child protection and updates that training regularly
- Ensure all staff and volunteers have a copy of child protection procedures
- Ensure that all staff and volunteers know what to do if they have concerns about a child
- Ensure all existing staff and volunteers who have contact with children have Enhanced CRB Disclosures
- Ensure that new staff/volunteers who have contact with children have Enhanced CRB Disclosures before they start work
- Ensure that the premises used for worship conforms to health and safety Guidelines
- Ensure that any letting arrangements are bound by contracts that include an agreement to adhere to the host organization's child protection procedures