



Safeguarding Young People & Vulnerable Adults Policy

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Introduction & Aims

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.

Prism LGBTQ recognises it has a responsibility to safeguard the welfare of the young people and vulnerable adults who are its Members and commit to a practice that protects them.

The purpose of this policy and its subsequent procedures are to outline a clear framework for protecting children, young people and vulnerable adults so that all Mentors (and other adults volunteering with the organisation) are aware of their roles and responsibilities in identifying concerns, sharing information and taking action. Its aim is 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.

All individuals volunteering for Prism LGBTQ must read, understand and adhere to this policy

This policy and its related procedures will be reviewed every three years.

Section 1 - Contact Details For Responsible Persons

The contact details for those designated within Prism LGBTQ as being responsible for safeguarding, can be found here:

Section 2 - Contact Details For Safeguarding Authority

The contact details for the Coventry City Council Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) can be found here:

https://www.coventry.gov.uk/info/206/coventry_safeguarding_children_partnership/2628/local_authority_designated_officer_lado

Section 3 - Definitions

"Child" - Any person under 18

"Safeguarding Children" - Protecting children from maltreatment, preventing impairment of children's health or development, ensuring that children are growing up in circumstances



consistent with the provision of safe & effective care; taking action to enable all children have their best outcomes.

"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.

a) 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

b) 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!

c) 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!

Section 4 - Minimising Risks & Appropriate Boundaries

Mentors at Prism LGBTQ are acting in a position of trust and it is vital that they conduct themselves in a way as to minimise the risks of finding themselves subject to any allegations of abuse.

a) Safe Working Practice for Mentors

- Ensure that the procedures and principles laid down in this and other Prism policies are adhered to
- Behave and operate in a transparent manner



- Notify the Responsible Person(s) if you believe your actions may lead to concerns being raised about your conduct
- Notify the Responsible Person(s) if you believe a Prism Member may be taking an 'above normal' level of interest in you.
- Avoid unnecessary physical contact with Prism Members and always ensure that consent has been given before initiating contact
- Where possible ensure any discussions between Mentors and Members are 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.
- Ensure that at all times during a Prism session or activity, there are no more than ten young people in attendance for every Mentor present.
- Respect the dignity and privacy of Prism Members
- Fully cooperate in any investigation which is being carried out with regards to concerns or allegations of a child protection nature

b) Prohibited Activities

Mentors should not engage in any of the following activities:

- Misuse in any way your position of responsibility within Prism LGBTQ+
- Use confidential information relating to Prism or Prism Members for personal benefit or for criminal activities
- Access images of child sexual abuse or other inappropriate material
- Accept regular gifts from Prism Members
- Provide personal gifts to Prism Members
- Solicit goods or services from a Prism Member or their family
- Borrow or lend money (or property) to a Prism Member
- Act as a Godparent or Named Executor for a Prism Member
- Divulge personal contact information (including home address) to a Prism Member
- Communicate with a Prism Member in an inappropriate manner.
- Initiate physical contact in a secretive manner
- Use physical punishment
- Arrange to meet Prism Members outside of Prism sessions or activities
- Use a personal motor vehicle to transport Prism Members unless approval has been given by the Chair
- Purposefully arrange to meet Members outside of Prism sessions
- Act in a manner which endangers the safety of a Prism member
- Abuse your position of trust within the organisation
- Engage in activities that might compromise your position with young people (including activities outside of Prism sessions or Prism activities)

Section 5 - Recognising Abuse

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. That



responsibility lies with the local authority safeguarding team. There is however, 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

Section 6 - Procedures: Concerns & Disclosures of Abuse

a) Guidance For Mentors

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 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
- 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



Make a clear distinction between what is fact, opinion or hearsay, i.e. only record exactly what is said, not any interpretations. 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

b) Guidance For Responsible Person(s)

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 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

c) Handling Disclosure

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 young person is saying
- Do take the young person's statement seriously
- Do write down exactly what the young person said as soon as possible afterwards
- Do discuss with the responsible persons as soon as possible afterwards
- Do reassure the young person that there is nothing wrong with disclosing what has been said
- Do act sensitively
- Do remind the young person 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 young person 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 young person, 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 young person is unwilling to give
- Do not ask lots of details questions
- Do not make assumptions about how the young person feels about their experience

Summary of Handling Disclosure

You are not expected to sort out all the young person's problems yourself, or to be a therapist. However, it is important to remember that disclosing abuse is very difficult and young people need to select very carefully whom they chose to tell. You will help a young person 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 young person.

d) 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.

For more information see the Prism "Confidentiality Policy".

Section 7 - Procedures: Allegations Involving Prism Mentors

In the event that either an allegation is made against a Prism Mentor or there is suspicion/concern about a Prism Mentor's interactions with Prism Members then it is essential to act quickly and effectively. This is particularly important if there is a belief that a Prism Mentor has acted in such a way that has harmed or may harm a Prism Member, committed a criminal offence against or in relation to Prism Member or in general has behaved in a way that indicates they are unsuitable to work with young people or vulnerable adults.



a) Guidance For Mentors

Any allegation involving a Prism Mentor should immediately be escalated to the Responsible Person(s).

b) Guidance For Responsible Person(s)

Where an allegation is made against a Prism Mentor, the LADO must be contacted within 24 hours of the allegation being made and their advice should be followed accurately.

A preliminary investigation to determine the veracity of the allegation may be carried out before contacting LADO.

If the nature of the allegation indicates there is an imminent risk to the Prism Member then the on-call social worker should be contacted and/or the Police.

In the event the advice from the LADO is to suspend the Prism Mentor whilst the allegation is investigated, then the Mentor concerned should be treated fairly and honestly, made fully aware of the process being followed and the potential outcomes.

c) Handling Disclosure

See section 6c

d) Confidentiality

See section 6d

Section 8 - Recruitment & Training of Volunteers

a) Disclosure & Barring Checks

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

Whilst an individual's application is pending with the DBS they may not be left unsupervised with any young person.

b) Additional Vetting Checks

All prospective Mentor candidates should provide photographic identification (ie. passport, driver's licence) and proof of address (ie. a current utility bill)

They should also submit the names of two referees which may be contacted (where possible this should include a current employer).

Interviews will be carried out with all prospective Mentors to assess whether they are appropriate for the role.



c) Training

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

Appendix - Additional Related Policies

- "Confidentiality Policy"
- "General Data Protection Policy"
- "Health & Safety Policy"
- "Technology & Social Media Policy"
- "Volunteer Policy"