

**Empowering Families**

**Safeguarding Policy**

**Version 1 - June 2024**

**Policy Statement**

Empowering Families supports children by providing them with an allocated mentor to provide a mentoring or respite-based service. The service aims to support the children to increase their confidence, build their resilience and to empower them to make positive decisions about their lives.

Empowering Families is committed to promoting the welfare of all children to keep them safe from abuse, harm, neglect, radicalisation and exploitation. A child is anyone under the age of 18, and all children have an equal right to protection regardless of any personal characteristics. We believe that no child should be subject, or vulnerable to, abuse of any kind.

We recognise at Empowering Families that we have additional responsibilities to ensure we have measures, practices, policies and the right culture in place to protect children from harm perpetrated by those who have a duty to keep them safe. We have a zero-tolerance approach to all forms of abuse, neglect and exploitation.

This policy outlines Empowering Families commitment to keeping children safe from any possible harm caused by staff or our services. It sets out the individual expectation and responsibility for all representatives of Empowering Families to comply with legislation, codes of conduct and behaviours required as a representative of Empowering Families.

**Scope of this Policy**

All individuals providing a service for Empowering Families must act in accordance with this policy in both their professional and personal lives. This policy applies during or outside of working hours, every day of the year.

**Policy Principles**

* The welfare of a child is of paramount importance and will be at the heart of all decisions when planning, organising, advising on and delivering the Empowering Families ethos.
* Empowering Families believes all children, regardless of age, gender expression, ability, ethnicity, sexual orientation, socio-economic situation and identity have a right to equal protection from all types of harm.
* Empowering Families will actively engage with children and their carers to ensure they are valued, listened to and respected.
* Empowering Families will ensure that everyone who is providing a service for Empowering Families will have access to this policy as well as appropriate safeguarding materials, training and support to recognise, identify and respond to signs of abuse, neglect, exploitation and other safeguarding concerns relating to children and young people.
* Empowering Families will proactively assess, monitor, respond and learn from safeguarding risks.
* The contact details of the Designated Safeguarding Officer will be given to mentees, their families/ caregivers and other representatives so they may report any worries or concerns. The contact details are listed in this policy.
* Empowering Families will review this policy annually but sooner if additional safeguarding risks are identified or if there is a change in government legislation and/or advice.
* Empowering Families will record, store and use information professionally and securely, in line with data protection legislation and internal policies and procedures.

**1.4** **Roles and Responsibilities**

Safeguarding is a shared responsibility of all representatives of Empowering Families.

***Mentors***

Mentors providing a service for Empowering Families have additional responsibilities for ensuring safeguarding processes, including monitoring attendance for mentoring sessions, gaining consent and medical information in advance of supporting a mentee, and keeping a log of safeguarding concerns.

***Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO)***

The DSO is the person appointed to take lead responsibility for safeguarding and protection at Empowering Families. The DSO is provided with appropriate safeguarding training to ensure that they can fulfil their role.

**Paul Davies – Proprietor at Empowering Families**

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Their role is to oversee and ensure that our safeguarding policy is embedded and adhered to.

Their responsibilities include:

* Ensuring concerns are monitored and recorded in line with best practice and safeguarding guidelines.
* Making referrals to social care, NSPCC, the police or any other government or regulatory body as necessary, without delay
* Liaising with other agencies (such as the NSPCC) as needed to keep children safe.
* Ensuring all mentors are trained at an appropriate level for their role and safeguarding responsibilities.

**Confidentiality Statement**

Empowering Families recognises that all matters relating to child protection are confidential.

Empowering Families is subject to a legal duty (Data Protection Act 1998) to process personal information about children and caregivers and this information should not normally be disclosed without the consent of the caregiver. The law does however permit the disclosure of confidential information without permission if it is necessary to safeguard a child or children; this includes cases of Safeguarding.

All concerns and investigations are kept confidential and shared only with those who need to know. Mentors at Empowering Families should follow the [Government’s seven golden rules](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/721581/Information_sharing_advice_practitioners_safeguarding_services.pdf) for information sharing:

1. Remember that the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), Data Protection Act 2018 and human rights law are not barriers to justified information sharing, but provide a framework to ensure that personal information about living individuals is shared appropriately.
2. Be open and honest with the individual (and/or their caregiver where appropriate) from the outset about why, what, how and with whom information will, or could be shared, and seek their agreement, unless it is unsafe or inappropriate to do so.
3. Seek advice from your line manager, or your information governance lead, if you are in any doubt about sharing the information concerned, without disclosing the identity of the individual where possible.
4. Where possible, share information with consent, and where possible, respect the wishes of those who do not consent to having their information shared. Under the GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018 you may share information without consent if, in your judgement, there is a lawful basis to do so, such as where safety may be at risk. You will need to base your judgement on the facts of the case. When you are sharing or requesting personal information from someone, be clear of the basis upon which you are doing so. Where you do not have consent, be mindful that an individual might not expect information to be shared.
5. Consider safety and well-being: base your information sharing decisions on considerations of the safety and well-being of the individual and others who may be affected by their actions.
6. Necessary, proportionate, relevant, adequate, accurate, timely and secure: ensure that the information you share is necessary for the purpose for which you are sharing it, is shared only with those individuals who need to have it, is accurate and up to-date, is shared in a timely fashion, and is shared securely (see principles).
7. Keep a record of your decision and the reasons for it – whether it is to share information or not. If you decide to share, then record what you have shared, with whom and for what purpose.

Mentors should also reference the Empowering Families Data Retention and Data Protection Policies for more information on how to process and store data.

**Safeguarding Code of Behaviour**
All Empowering Families mentors must follow the below code of behaviour to keep children safe.

**DO:**

* Treat all children and their caregivers with dignity and respect.
* Allow children to talk about their concerns in their own words, without judgement.
* Provide children with accessible, child-friendly information to understand what safeguarding is, and inform children as to how they can report concerns to a variety of stakeholders.
* Ensure children are made aware of their right to confidentiality, circumstances where confidentiality may be broken, and procedures for doing this.
* Recognise and celebrate strengths, social connections and identities to develop children’s wellbeing.
* Take all allegations, concerns and suspicions of abuse, harm, neglect, radicalisation and exploitation seriously and log/report them straight away.
* If a child discloses something to you, listen carefully. Use the 5 Rs of safeguarding, ‘Recognise’, ‘Respond’, ‘Report’, ‘Record’, ‘Refer’. Ensure you tell them you need to pass this information on to keep them safe.
* Challenge attitudes and behaviours that contravene this code of behaviour or our Safeguarding policy, procedures and/or guidelines.
* Share information with other agencies, when necessary, to safeguard children

**DO NOT**:

* Spend any time with Empowering Families mentees alone, isolated from others. Mentors should always meet Empowering Families mentees in public, populated places and restrict sessions to no more than three hours.
* Have any contact with the caregiver or child following the end of the mentoring/respite programme.
* Engage in rough physical activities with Empowering Families mentees – apart from structured activities that have been approved by the Empowering Families Proprietor in advance.
* Engage in sexual activities or make sexually suggestive comments of any kind about or to a child under any circumstances.
* Take part in inappropriate physical, verbal or sexual behaviour with or in the presence of children (including online or via mobile phone) or knowingly put a child in danger or harm’s way.
* Let an allegation a child makes go unrecorded and unreported or allow personal relationships, own experience or bias prevent you from reporting an incident.
* Do things of a personal nature for children that they can do themselves e.g., assisting a child to go to the toilet. Any personal care must always be agreed in advance by the Empowering Families Proprietor and caregivers.
* Take Empowering Families mentees to your own home or meet with them in private.
* You should not befriend a mentee or caregiver on any form of social media.
* Leave a child unattended whilst in your care or place a child in unsafe situations or situations that are inappropriate for their age (unless in situations of bathroom breaks where privacy is needed).
* Engage in relationships that could be an abuse of trust, for example, a romantic or sexual relationship, or friendship with a mentee’s caregiver.
* Disclose personal or sensitive information about a mentee or their caregiver to anyone other than a member of the Empowering Families team, in certain situations.

**Safer Recruitment**

* Empowering Families will seek the services of mentors in line with safer recruitment best practice; ensuring all necessary checks are carried out prior to commencement of the service delivery agreement.
* This process includes (but is not limited to): evidence of an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check alongside suitable references that ensure potential mentors understand and accept their responsibility to safeguard children and vulnerable adults.

 **Training**

* Empowering Families commits to ensuring that mentors have quality training and continuing professional development in child safeguarding, child protection and reporting mechanisms, so they are competent and confident to undertake their roles and responsibilities.

**Recognising abuse in children and young people.**

Our mentors understand that it is important to be observant, to listen to what is being said and record, for example, whether what they are observing and being told about an injury is consistent with the injury.

Empowering Families acknowledges that it is important to not only observe, listen to and record potential concerns relating to a child’s caregiver, but to also report any concerns that are linked to the child’s environment. This may mean concerns in schools, youth clubs, the local community, in their friendship group, online or when they are out with their mentor. We recognise that children can be at risk in any environment, and our responsibility is to monitor and report any indicators that may suggest abuse is taking place.

**Types of abuse**

The types of abuse Empowering Families recognises, which builds on the NSPCC’s own list, are:

* Bullying and cyberbullying
* Child sexual exploitation
* Child trafficking
* Criminal exploitation and gangs
* Domestic abuse
* Physical abuse.
* Female genital mutilation
* Grooming
* Sexual abuse.
* Emotional abuse.
* Online abuse
* Non-recent abuse
* Racism.
* Homophobia
* Disablism
* Antisemitism
* Islamophobia
* Sexism
* Cissexism
* Classism
* Colonialism
* Ageism
* Xenophobia

**Indicators of abuse**

The indicators that a child is being abused may depend on the type. For example, the signs that a child is being neglected may be different from the signs that a child is being abused sexually. Common signs that there may be something concerning happening in a child’s life include:

* unexplained changes in behaviour or personality
* becoming withdrawn
* seeming anxious
* becoming uncharacteristically aggressive
* lacks social skills and has few friends, if any
* poor bond or relationship with a parent
* knowledge of adult issues inappropriate for their age
* running away or going missing
* always choosing to wear clothes which cover their body.

This list is not exhaustive, and these signs don’t necessarily mean that a child is being abused, there could be other things happening in their life which are affecting a child’s behaviour.

**Handling disclosures**

If you suspect, see, hear or witness a concern or incident that suggests a child might be at risk of harm or abuse, you MUST:

* Ensure that the child is not in immediate danger. If you believe that they are at immediate risk, call the Emergency Services on 999 or 101.
* If the child is not at immediate risk, or once they are safe, you should inform the DSO immediately. The DSO will decide on what level of escalation may be required.
* Use the session report to record your actions, including anything the child said, anything you asked the child, and your observations. This may be used as evidence later so record only the facts as you know them, do not offer any personal interpretations, or make any assumptions.

**Reporting Concerns**

Empowering Families has a clear reporting framework in place, this means that representatives of Empowering Families and any child or caregiver who come into contact with Empowering Families knows how to report any safeguarding concerns and are confident that any concern will be dealt with correctly.

**Responding to concerns**

Responding is ensuring action is taken to support and protect children where concerns arise regarding their welfare or where possible abuse and exploitation is suspected.

This means:

* The DSO has appropriate knowledge and understanding to respond to safeguarding concerns and provide suitable advice and guidance.
* Promptly referring safeguarding concerns to relevant statutory agencies.
* Taking follow up actions, where required, to share information with other agencies to protect children.
* Ensuring that children affected are protected and given appropriate support within the limits of Empowering Families remit.

Empowering Families is committed to implementing robust, accessible and child-friendly communication, reporting and escalation process’s that complement those within the Local Safeguarding Children Partnerships for Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire.

**Policy Breaches**

* Empowering Families will respond swiftly and appropriately to all suspicions or allegations of abuse and breaches of this policy.
* Where it has been found that a representative of Empowering Families has breached this policy, or any associated procedures and guidelines, immediate action will be taken. In serious cases this may include terminating the contract for services. Empowering Families will also notify the DBS/LADO for serious cases.
* Acts of a criminal nature will be referred to the police and/or Children’s Social Care and may result in a criminal investigation and conviction. Where this occurs, the Police will notify the DBS and the individual may be barred from working with children.
* Empowering Families will act in accordance with the Empowering Families Data Protection Policy and ensure confidential information is restricted to the appropriate external agencies.

**Allegations against the DSO/other mentors**

If a representative of Empowering Families feels unable to raise a concern through any of the reporting routes outlined in this policy or if the concern is about the DSO or other Empowering Families mentor, they can raise a concern in the following ways:

* Contact NSPCC directly if a concern is linked to the DSO.
* Contact the relevant Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) for advice.

**Changes to this policy**

 This policy will be updated at least once per year.