



# Safeguarding Children Policy

## Foreword

1. Education Otherwise (EO) is a charitable company established for the support of families who choose to educate their children at home. Governance of the charity is undertaken by a Board of Trustees with support from the developing management team and a number of volunteers.
2. Child abuse is a sensitive issue and presents challenges to all who provide services for children. Many people feel uncomfortable with the subject, it is not easily recognisable and individuals often fear reading too much into a situation. This document contains information on some of the signs that may give cause for concern.
3. The policy is based on the principle that:  
**"It is not the responsibility of EO's designated safeguarding children person, nor of anyone in EO to investigate allegations or suspicions of child abuse. It is everyone's responsibility to act on concerns and report them to the relevant authorities or the police."**
4. The safeguarding children policy and procedural materials were drawn up specifically for Education Otherwise following advice from the NSPCC, and conform to current safeguarding children legislation and guidance.
5. The Policy and associated procedures comprise the following sections:
  - a. Policy statement
  - b. Code of practice
  - c. Dealing with concerns and allegations
  - d. Recruitment, selection and personal conduct
  - e. Role and responsibilities of the Designated Safeguarding Children Person (DSCP)
  - f. Definitions of abuse

## Policy Statement

6. The Trustees of EO are committed to practices that aim to protect children from harm. Responsibility for the care of children rests at all times with their parents or guardians. Similarly, responsibility for reporting concerns about child safety rests with whoever has first-hand concerns.
7. However, Trustees acknowledge that they have a responsibility for ensuring that EO has safeguarding children policies and procedures in place. These need to be followed by all those involved in activities convened by members or in which members and their families participate. The trustees also recognise that good safeguarding children policies and procedures are of benefit to everyone involved with EO's work, including staff, volunteers and members generally, as they help protect children and they can help protect adults from mistaken or malicious allegations.
8. EO members are often in positions of trust with children and have a duty and responsibility to set a good example, to avoid any actions that could be misunderstood or misinterpreted, to challenge any inappropriate behaviour by others and overall to

promote the welfare and safety of the children with whom they come into contact.

9. The Safeguarding Children Policy and associated procedures will be reviewed at regular intervals.

## **Code of Practice**

10. Trustees expect that all those in a position of responsibility, which for these purposes includes anybody in paid or unpaid work on behalf of EO, will be aware of this Code of Practice and adhere to its principles in their approach to all children.
  - a. Activities involving children should be as open as possible, and it is important that adults should spend no more time alone with children than is unavoidable.
  - b. Physical contact should normally be avoided with other people's children except when absolutely necessary. In such circumstances be sure that your actions cannot be misinterpreted and that other adults are either with you or are fully aware of what you are doing and why.
  - c. It is not good practice to take children alone in a car on journeys, however short, unless with the knowledge and express agreement of a parent.
  - d. Do not make suggestive or inappropriate remarks to or about a child, even in fun, as this could be misinterpreted.
  - e. It is important not to deter children from making a 'disclosure' of abuse through fear of not being believed, and to listen to what they have to say. Guidance on handling a disclosure is set out in the Procedure for Reporting Concerns. If this gives rise to a safeguarding children concern it is important to follow the EO Procedure, and not to attempt to investigate the concern yourself, or discuss it with those who do not have a need to know.
  - f. Remember that those who abuse children can be of any age (even other children), gender, ethnic background or class, and it is important not to allow personal preconceptions about people to prevent appropriate action taking place.
  - g. Good practice includes valuing and respecting children as individuals - which will always exclude bullying, shouting, racism, sectarianism or sexism.
  - h. Be clear with anyone disclosing any matter that could concern the safety and well being of a child that you cannot guarantee to keep this information to yourself.
  - i. Be aware of EO's Privacy Policy and Data Disclosure Policy.
  - j. Develop awareness of the issues that can cause children harm.
11. The Trustees policy on safeguarding children will be referred to or included in recruitment, training, and policy materials where appropriate. It will be openly and widely available to members in the Educating Otherwise booklet, on the website and the forums, and will be actively promoted within EO.

## **Dealing with concerns and allegations**

### **What to do if you have a concern about a child?**

12. It is the responsibility of all EO members, volunteers and staff to act on any safeguarding concerns about a child. You can:
  - a. Speak to the child's parents or carers about your concerns.
  - b. If that is not possible, refer your concerns to the appropriate agency directly and if

- you prefer anonymously. The NSPCC Helpline number is 0808 800 5000.
- c. If you have doubts about your concerns, and aren't sure if they're serious enough to report to the authorities, you may discuss them confidentially with the DSCP who will help you decide on what course of action to take in line with best practice.
  - d. NB. The DSCP is not available 24/7 and urgent concerns should be referred immediately to the statutory authorities.
13. Members should be careful about drawing conclusions about the child's treatment at home based solely on the child's behaviour. Unusual behaviours such as withdrawal from other children or adults, putting their hands over their ears because of noise, over-reacting to dogs barking, or children or adults shouting, can often be the result of a disability such as an Autistic Spectrum Disorder, or can occur during recovery from bullying at school.
  14. Education Otherwise has many of these children amongst their members and it is important to try to discuss your concerns with the parent/s or carer/s of the child concerned. You may find that the child's behaviour has a different and less sinister origin. If you feel you cannot discuss the matter or have tried and do not feel reassured, you should discuss with the DSCP and, if appropriate, make a referral to the authorities.

## **Procedure for Reporting Concerns**

15. Members of EO, whether adults or children, could have their suspicion or concern raised in a number of ways, the most likely of which are:
  - a. the conduct of another adult or child;
  - b. a child disclosing or alleging abuse;
  - c. unusual behaviour by a child;
  - d. mention or allegation by a third party.
  - e. physical signs or symptoms of possible abuse.
16. Concerns about a specific child or adult should be reported immediately either directly or by telephone to the NSPCC, Social Services or relevant authorities. The NSPCC have a 24 hour a day, 7 days a week Helpline 0808 800 5000. Non urgent advice may be obtained from the Helpline at [help@nspcc.org.uk](mailto:help@nspcc.org.uk) and answers usually given within 24 hours or write to: NSPCC Child Protection Helpline, 42 Curtain, London EC2A 3NH
17. The NSPCC Helpline offers advice and support to anyone concerned about the welfare of a child. Calls are confidential and callers can remain anonymous. Calls are answered by trained safeguarding children officers and they can be contacted for information and advice or to report concerns about a child at risk of abuse. Contact the local social services department, area safeguarding children team, through the local council for local advice.
18. The NSPCC Helpline can just talk through concerns, the Helpline Advisor will listen and give information and advice, but if told about a child who is being abused or who may be in danger they have a duty to act and will guide accordingly. If a Helpline caller reports child abuse, the NSPCC would pass the details on to the social services safeguarding children team, who would make further enquiries and investigate if necessary. In an emergency, if a child is in immediate danger, phone the police on 999 who respond immediately to serious concerns.
19. The NSPCC will not be able to report on the outcomes of any subsequent enquiries by social services or the police as this is confidential and subject to the Data Protection Act.

20. The NSPCC Helpline takes calls from children and young people and runs a special advice website for teenagers called [www.there4me.com](http://www.there4me.com). In addition to screen advice on a wide range of problems, one-to-one counselling is available online. Through this service, young people can talk online in real-time with specially trained NSPCC advisors.
21. Delay in reporting could prejudice the welfare of a child.
22. If any member of EO remains unsure about a safeguarding issue, or would like to discuss a concern then they may contact EO's DSCP. The DSCP will consider the matter and whether there is sufficient evidence to warrant immediate action. If that is so, the DSCP will either advise referral by the respondent to the authorities (as set out above), or themselves refer this immediately to the authorities or, after taking appropriate advice (which may include discussing the circumstances on a confidential basis with the NSPCC), decide not to refer the concerns to the authorities but keep a full record of the concerns. Irrespective of the action taken, the DSCP will keep a full and secure record of the report.

## **Responding Appropriately to a Child Making an Allegation of Abuse**

23. Anyone approached by a child regarding abuse should note the following checklist:
  - a. Stay calm.
  - b. Listen carefully to what is said.
  - c. Find an appropriate early opportunity to explain that it is likely that the information will need to be shared with others – do not promise to keep secrets.
  - d. Tell the child the matter will only be disclosed to those who need to know about it.
  - e. Allow the child to continue at her/his own pace.
  - f. Ask questions for clarification only, and at all times avoid asking questions that suggest a particular answer.
  - g. Reassure the child that they have done the right thing in telling you.
  - h. Tell them what you will do next, and with whom the information will be shared.
  - i. Record in writing what was said, using the child's own words as soon as possible – note the date, time, any names mentioned, to whom the information was given and ensure that the record is signed and dated.
  - j. Refer the matter to the appropriate authority after first discussing your concerns with the DSCP, if you wish.
24. It is important to remember that the person who first encounters a case of alleged abuse is not responsible for deciding whether abuse has occurred. That is a task for the professional safeguarding children agencies, following a referral either from that person or from the DSCP.

## **Reporting guidelines**

- a. In the case of an allegation of abuse, record in writing accurately and as quickly as possible what the child has told you. See the back of this policy, for advice on what to include in your written record.
- b. Concerns should be discussed with the parent or carer, if appropriate, and, where possible, their permission should be sought before making a referral to social

services or discussing it with the Designated Safeguarding Children Person **unless this places a child at increased risk of significant harm**. For example, cases of allegations of sexual abuse must be referred directly to social services.

- c. When making the referral to Social Services or other official body, confirm the referral in writing. At the end of any discussion you should be clear about who is taking what action or that no further action is required. It is a good idea to find out their phone numbers immediately and fill them in the box at the end of this document.
- d. Record details of any decision and/or action. You should notify the Designated Safeguarding Children Person as soon as possible.

You should not discuss your suspicions or allegations with anyone other than the responsible authorities or the Designated Safeguarding Children Person.

## **Confidentiality**

25. The Children's Act 1987 states that the "welfare of the child is paramount". This means that considerations of confidentiality, which might apply to other situations, should not be allowed to over-ride the right of children to be protected from harm. However, every effort should be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned when an allegation has been made and is being investigated.
26. Subject to the requirements above, information relating to child protection matters may only be shared with NSPCC, SS, police or the DSCP, except where it is considered necessary for the welfare and protection of a child. Children and young people will be particularly sensitive to other children, parents and professionals knowing about difficult and personal events in their lives. They will need reassurance about procedures and what is likely to happen next.
27. No member of staff or group member should ever promise to maintain confidentiality to a child where there are safety concerns. This can result in colluding with the secrecy that often surrounds abuse.

## **Recruitment, selection and personal conduct**

28. Appropriate recruitment and selection procedures for staff in the context of safeguarding children have been adopted by the Trustees and include the following:
  - a. A clear definition of any role so that the most suitable appointee can be identified.
  - b. Identification and application of key selection criteria.
  - c. Regard to equal opportunities when advertising vacancies.
  - d. Confirmation of the identity of the applicant, including personal details obtained either through using written application or through other means.
  - e. Written references.
  - f. Requirement of a declaration of previous convictions and submission to CRB check, together with the issue of the Safeguarding Children Policy for those candidates whose work will bring them into contact with children or who will have a responsibility in relation to those whose work does bring them into such contact.
  - g. A clear guarantee that disclosed information will be treated in confidence and not

used against applicants unfairly, including adherence to the Criminal Records Bureau code of practice.

29. The suitability of all those in positions of responsibility within EO will be checked appropriately, following carefully procedures for recruitment and selection of staff and volunteers. Trustees aim to provide effective management for staff and volunteers, including support and training where appropriate.
30. EO's safeguarding children procedures and Code of Practice must be followed by staff and volunteers.
31. Anybody who encounters safeguarding children concerns in the context of their work on behalf of EO will be expected to report their concerns to the appropriate authorities and will be supported when they report their concerns in good faith.

## **Role and Responsibilities of the Designated Safeguarding Children Person (DSCP)**

32. Trustees have appointed a designated safeguarding children person who is responsible for advising what would be best practice regarding any concerns reported to them about the protection of children. Their contact details are at the back of the newsletter.
33. The role of the designated person is:
  - a. To act as an external and confidential sounding board for people to discuss concerns about a child that they're unsure are serious enough to refer to the authorities. The DSCP will help callers decide on what course of action they should take in line with best practise. When a caller decides to make a referral, to record the action.
  - b. Where a referral by the DSCP is necessary, to ensure that an accurate written record of the referral is sent to the investigating authority and liaise with local social services and other agencies, as appropriate;
  - c. To keep a record of the number of calls received, the type of calls received (ensuring at all times absolute anonymity with special regard to the fact that individuals may be known to Trustees) and any other relevant information.
  - d. To ensure that secure records of safeguarding concerns are stored and shared appropriately and that the information is accurate and up-to-date, necessary for the purpose for which it is stored, and shared only with those people who need to be informed.
  - e. To provide a monthly report to be sent to the Company Secretary detailing the number of calls and an entirely anonymised overview of the nature of calls received, in order that Trustees can fulfil their duty of responsibility to the organisation. Advise on any further action required.
  - f. To advise the Trustees on safeguarding children matters.

## **Definitions of Abuse**

34. The generic term 'child abuse' is used to describe various ways in which children are harmed or mistreated. There are many different ways in which children can be harmed, all with a common factor that the child feels undervalued and worthless. Abuse can happen anywhere, but research indicates that the perpetrators of such abuse are likely

to be known and trusted by the child.

### **Physical Abuse**

Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. It may be the result of a deliberate act, but could also be caused through the omission or failure to act to protect.

### **Emotional Abuse**

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 making a child feel or believe that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. Bullying comes in this category. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill-treatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

### **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, or consents to, what is happening. It may involve physical contact, including rape or oral sex, or non-penetrative acts such as fondling. Boys and girls can be sexually abused by males and/or females, and by other young people. It also includes non-contact activities such as involving children in watching or taking part in the making of pornographic material, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

### **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. It may involve failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, or failing to ensure that a child gets appropriate medical care or treatment.