

SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN POLICY

Sustainable Cottenham

Introduction

Sustainable Cottenham is committed to creating an environment that enables children and young people to learn, develop, and express themselves in a safe, understanding and encouraging environment. We aim to safeguard the welfare of all children and young people participating in our activities.

The Children's Act makes it clear that the welfare of the child is paramount and it gives everyone involved in the care of children a responsibility for the protection of those children. It is also essential that we honour the trust of those who allow us to care for their children.

Therefore it is necessary that all concerned have an understanding of the issues involved and that procedure is in place and is understandable to anyone providing a service to young people and easy to implement.

What is child abuse?

Child abuse is a difficult issue and presents challenges to all involved in providing services for young people. It is not always easily recognisable but is generally divided into four categories which are defined within Working Together 2015 as:

1. Physical Abuse – a form of abuse which 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 fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child.
2. Neglect – 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. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to:
 - Provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment);
 - Protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger
 - Ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-givers); or
 - Ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.

It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

3. Emotional Abuse – The persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to a child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond a child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and

limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyber bullying), 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 maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

4. Sexual Abuse – involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. This may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

How to recognise abuse

- Unexplained or suspicious injuries such as bruising, cuts or burns, particularly if situated on a part of the body not normally prone to such injuries;
- The child describes what appears to be an abusive act involving him or her;
- Someone else (child or adult) expresses concern about the welfare of another child;
- Unexplained changes in behaviour such as becoming very quiet; withdrawn or displaying sudden outbursts of temper.
- Inappropriate sexual awareness;
- Engaging in sexually explicit behaviour;
- Distrust of adults, particularly those with whom a close relationship would normally be expected;
- Difficulty in making friends.

If you notice any social changes in the behaviour of a child, worrying marks or bruises or hear a child/children talking about things which give cause for concern then your first responsibility is to the child.

It is not safe to assume that someone else will take action. As an adult you have a duty to take appropriate action. Recognising and coping with child abuse is very stressful and the person reporting the concern will not have to cope alone.

What to do if you suspect abuse

If a child spontaneously talks of experiences which give cause for concern, you should:

1. Explain to the child that if he/she discloses information which leads you to believe they are being abused, you will be unable to keep it confidential.
2. Listen to the child without questioning him/her. Be aware of your own reactions as showing disapproval may stop the child from continuing with their disclosure.

3. Do not try to stop the child from recalling events. Make a note of what is said, in what context, the setting, the timing and which people were present. (complete a log if you have one)
4. Inform the designated child protection worker immediately or if they are unavailable an appropriate senior member of staff immediately. If you are unsure of what action to take it would be appropriate to seek advice from either the police or social services department.
5. The child protection worker will contact the appropriate authorities including the Duty Social Worker in the area where the child lives as soon as possible.

Allegations of abuse will be treated similarly whether the disclosure is relating to an individual from within or externally from Sustainable Cottenham. The information should be passed onto the designated child protection worker and handled in the same way. Social Care will also follow the same procedure as they do to investigate allegations of abuse for a family.

The Designated Child Protection worker for Sustainable Cottenham is Andrea Cowley, who can be contacted on 0789 990 4959. Any concerns or reports of abuse must be reported to this individual as soon as possible.

Further Measures

All workers and volunteers will be given a copy of the safeguarding policy and receive guidance before taking part in events involving young people.

All workers and volunteers with responsibility for supervising young people will hold a current Enhanced Certificate issued by the Disclosure and Barring Service.

Protecting Leaders

- Never believe that “it could never happen to you’
- If you suspect that a young person is developing an inappropriate affection for you, discuss it with other leaders and explore constructive ways of dealing with it
- If you develop an abnormal affection for a young person withdraw from the situation and discuss the matter with a trusted friend
- Be aware that young people can fabricate stories that can place you in a bad light. Do not take any chances nor allow yourself to be in a situation where stories can be given credence
- Always report and record any allegations made by children. Do not let them go unchallenged

Behaviour guidelines for those working with young people

The aim of these guidelines is to ensure the safety and well being of all young people and to support in providing a safe, caring environment.

DO's

- Always be publicly open when working with children

- Avoid being alone with children unnecessarily. Where possible avoid taking children alone on car journeys unless there is no other option and the child's parents have given permission
- Where possible parents should take responsibility for their own children
- Set an example of appropriate behaviour. Young people learn by example
- Offer respect to the young person at all times and strive to be sensitive to their feelings
- Good behaviour should be positively encouraged

DON'TS

- Never engage in rough, physical or sexually provocative games, including horseplay. Nor engage in inappropriate touching of any form
- Avoid using sarcasm or discrimination, direct criticism, labelling and unnecessary competition or comparison
- Never physically punish any young person
- Do not deprive any young person of, or force any child to consume food or drink
- Do not humiliate or frighten any young person

Allegations against a member of staff or volunteer

Sustainable Cottenham will assure all staff/volunteers that it will fully support and protect anyone, who in good faith reports his or her concern that a colleague is, or may be, abusing a child. Where there is a complaint against a member of staff or volunteer there may be three types of investigation:

- A criminal investigation,
- A child protection investigation,
- A disciplinary or misconduct investigation.

The results of the police and child protection investigation may well influence the disciplinary investigation, but not necessarily.

Action if there are concerns

1. Concerns about poor practice:

- If, following consideration, the allegation is clearly about poor practice; this will be dealt with as a misconduct issue
- If the allegation is about poor practice by the Designated Child Protection worker or if the matter has been handled inadequately and concerns remain, it should be reported to the Chair of Sustainable Cottenham who will decide how to deal with the allegation and whether or not the organisation should initiate disciplinary proceedings

2. Concerns about suspected abuse

- Any suspicion that a child has been abused by either a member of staff or a volunteer should be reported to the Designated Child Protection worker, who will take such steps as considered necessary to ensure the safety of the child in question and any other child who may be at risk

- The Designated Child Protection worker will refer the allegation to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) who may involve the police, or go directly to the police if out-of-hours
- The parents or carers of the child will be contacted as soon as possible following advice from the social services department
- If the Designated Child Protection worker is the subject of the suspicion/allegation, the report must be made to the appropriate Manager or Chair who will refer the allegation to the LADO.

3. Internal Enquiries and Suspension

- The Designated Child Protection worker will make an immediate decision about whether any individual accused of abuse should be temporarily suspended pending further police and social services inquiries

Irrespective of the findings of the social services or police inquiries the organisation will assess all individual cases to decide whether a member of staff or volunteer can be reinstated and how this can be sensitively handled. This may be a difficult decision; particularly where there is insufficient evidence to uphold any action by the police. In such cases, the organisation must reach a decision based upon the available information which could suggest that on a balance of probability; it is more likely than not that the allegation is true. The welfare of the child should remain of paramount importance throughout.

This policy has been formally agreed and adopted by the management committee of Sustainable Cottenham at a meeting on the 2nd September 2019. This will be reviewed annually by the management committee who are also responsible for the implementation of this policy.

Signed: Christine Ward

Position: Chairperson

Date: 16th March 2022

Review Date: 31st March 2023

Logging your concerns about a child's safety and welfare

Name of Young Person:	Date of birth:
Date of completing form:	Time of completing form:
Your name:	Your Position:
Your signature:	Your organisation:
Reasons for recording incident:	
Please record the following as factually as possible.	Who:
	What:
	Where:
	When:
Offer an opinion where relevant (how and why this may have happened)	
Substantiate the opinion. Please note the action taken, including the names of anyone to whom information was passed.	