
Policy reference PO-A-230-C

SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN POLICY

Approved 2 January 2024

Published 3 January 2024

Effective 5 April 2024

Review Annual

Summary

This Longhurst Group Policy on Safeguarding Children applies to all activities within the Group. Our approach to Safeguarding is underpinned by the fundamental human right for all adults and children ‘to live a life that is free from abuse and neglect’. Child safeguarding by definition applies to anyone under the age of 18.

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Introduction

Longhurst Group (the Group) are committed to safeguarding people of all ages and raising customer awareness of the issues around abuse to ensure the wellbeing of those we come into contact within the running of our services. The Group will operate under a duty of candour, recognising the need for transparency and good information sharing to protect children.

PART TWO

Policy

Intent

This policy sets out the duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children across the Group and how this will be implemented in the discharge of daily duties.

The Group recognises that, during the course of duties colleagues undertake, they may come into contact with children in a variety of contexts.

This policy ensures that all colleagues are aware of their responsibility to identify situations where they believe there is a potential risk, and to refer the concern to their manager and the Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSL).

The policy aims to identify causes for concern and risks to wellbeing at the earliest possible stage and provide avenues of intervention to minimise the potential for harm to occur.

This policy is designed to raise awareness of the importance of Safeguarding Children and ensure that all parties affiliated with the Group act in a manner befitting the core values of the organisation when dealing with any concerns that may arise around the welfare of a child.

Principles

The Group has a zero-tolerance approach to abuse and will not knowingly allow such incidents to continue unchallenged. All colleagues are required to report all cases where it is suspected abuse is occurring, no matter who the perpetrator is.

We believe that children should never experience abuse of any kind and they have a right to feel safe; as such, all colleagues will adhere to the policy and procedure for Safeguarding Children.

The Group will undertake signposting to relevant support agencies, for those with the care of child or children of concern, where identified risks or concerns are out with the remit of the Group.

All allegations of abuse will be taken seriously. The Group recognises, and will act in accordance with, its responsibilities under Working Together To Safeguard Children 2018.

Longhurst Group employees and contractors will not enter a property when only a child is at home (under 18 years old). We will only enter your home if there is an adult present. If the adult leaves, then the Longhurst Group employee / contractor must leave the premises. There may be some exceptions to this, and further guidance must be sought from the Safeguarding Team as needed.

This policy must be read in conjunction with the relevant local authority multi-agency guidelines for Safeguarding Children.

Scope

The terms “Longhurst Group” and “the Group” includes any subsidiaries.

This policy applies to all colleagues of Longhurst Group, all Trustees and Board Members and all those individuals and organisations who have a working relationship with the Group, including volunteers, students, trainees, contractors, and temporary workers, including those working on a bank or agency contract.

For ease of reference, all employees and workers who fall under these groups will be uniformly referred to as “colleagues” in this policy.

The policy does not form part of any employee’s contract of employment and the policy may be amended at any time.

Policy Details

Designated Safeguarding Leads

The Group Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Manager and their team will act as the Designated Safeguarding Leads for Longhurst Group.

The responsibilities of the Designated Safeguarding Leads are to:

- Attend training for designated leads and other relevant training.
- Act as a source of advice for colleagues on all Safeguarding matters.
- Be familiar with the Safeguarding procedures of relevant local authorities.
- Receive colleague concerns about Safeguarding and respond to all reports seriously, swiftly, and appropriately as per procedures.
- To ensure accurate and comprehensive recording of all safeguarding concerns that are identified
- Ensure appropriate, timely and comprehensive enquiries are made, with HR Business Partner support. Monitor all Safeguarding concerns on the register to ensure they are investigated appropriately in accordance with this policy and procedure.
- Take the lead in supporting colleagues with complex cases and support colleagues as they carry out the fact-finding process when requested.
- Take the lead role in coordinating any formal investigations into allegations of abuse that have occurred within the Group’s remit, where requested by the local authority safeguarding team..
- Ensure HR Business Partners are immediately notified of any implications for any colleague and liaise throughout any Safeguarding enquiries.
- Review cases and ensure our processes are effective and continuously improved with dissemination of ‘lessons learnt’.
- Ensure all necessary documentation is provided to relevant parties during investigation.
- Provide regular reports to the Group Board of all Safeguarding incidents, where they have come from, how many, the nature of them and outcomes achieved.
- Keep up to date with local arrangements as required for Safeguarding.
- Jointly with HR Business Partners and relevant Line Management, make sure that any allegations of colleague conduct around Safeguarding is investigated and reported immediately to the Local Authority Safeguarding Team.
- Jointly with the Head of Service/ Director, ensure that CQC notifications are undertaken as appropriate and in a timely manner.
- Jointly with the relevant Line Manager and HR Business Partners, ensure appropriate referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) where a

colleague has been dismissed on the grounds of abuse or leaves before the disciplinary process has concluded.

- Develop and maintain effective links with relevant agencies such as local Safeguarding Children Boards.
- Lead on the review of the policy and procedure to make sure it is up to date and effective.

Referrals to the Local Authority

Where it is believed that a child is experiencing abuse, the Group will ensure the appropriate referral is made to the local authority. This should be done with parental consent where possible, however this can be overridden in cases where it would cause greater risk to the child.

Referrals will usually be undertaken by the colleague who has identified the concern. The DSL team will advise and support regards making the referral as required.

Information Sharing

All colleagues must be aware that they have a professional duty to share information with other agencies in order to safeguard children. The public interest in Safeguarding children may override confidentiality interests. However, information will be shared on a need to know basis only, as judged by the DSL. If an allegation is made towards another colleague, full support will be given in line with the Group's Whistleblowing Policy.

Vetting and Barring and Referral to 'Disclosure and Barring Service' (DBS)

The Group will ensure that colleagues who work with children have a DBS check in line with current legislative requirements, before working alone with customers and that these DBS checks are repeated at three yearly intervals. The Group will exercise its duty under the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act (SVGA 2006), to refer employees to DBS as required. The Group requires incumbent colleagues to declare immediately if they are cautioned or convicted of any offence.

The Group's approach to allegations made against colleague/s or service/s is detailed in the Safeguarding Children Procedure Appendix A

Prevent

The Group will work with partner organisations to contribute to prevention of terrorism by, safeguarding and protecting vulnerable individuals, making safety a shared endeavour, and providing appropriate training as necessary. Any concerns that an individual may be at risk of radicalisation, will be dealt with in the same way as any other Safeguarding issue.

Children and Domestic Abuse

Children can be victims of domestic abuse and may be directly at risk, however witnessing domestic abuse can also cause distress and serious harm to a child. Children living in a home where domestic abuse is happening are also at risk of other types of abuse. Children can experience domestic abuse or violence in lots of different ways. They might:

- See the abuse
- Hear the abuse from another room
- See a parent's injuries or distress afterwards
- Be hurt by being nearby or trying to stop the abuse
- Be exposed to viewing abuse online or through other social media platforms
- Be at risk of grooming both within the home (not limited to immediate family) and online.

If there are concerns around a child being directly abused or affected by witnessing domestic abuse, this should be reported to the Children's Safeguarding Team in line with the organisation's procedure.

Children and Mental Capacity

It is important to understand that considerations about mental capacity do not apply with regards to children and possible signs of abuse. By definition they do not have the capacity to decide to tolerate the abusive situation, therefore all cases of abuse that staff become aware of must immediately be reported to the local authority Children's Safeguarding Team.

Parental consent to the referral being made should be sought and an explanation of the purpose provided. However, if it is assessed that seeking consent would place a child at further risk of harm or cause unnecessary delay, or if consent is withheld, a referral can be made without parental consent, along with an explanation as to the lack of consent being sought or obtained.

Safeguarding the Unborn Baby

All professionals have a role in identifying and assessing families in need of additional support and identifying safeguarding concerns. In cases where there are concerns around the safety and wellbeing of an unborn baby, once the baby is born a referral should be made to the Children's Safeguarding Team. Where possible, concerns should be shared with the prospective parent(s) to gain their agreement for referral to the Children's Safeguarding Team; this does not apply where taking such action is likely to place the unborn baby at further risk.

Referrals regarding unborn babies should be submitted as soon as reasonably practical, to ensure as much time as possible to implement plans to safeguard the baby.

Managing Safeguarding Children Policy

It is essential that managers ensure that all colleagues are made aware of their role and responsibilities under this policy. The policy will be communicated to colleagues through induction, team meetings, 1:1s, job specifications and the Group intranet. Managers will ensure all colleagues have access to associated procedures and reporting forms.

Roles and Responsibilities

There are clear roles and responsibilities for all colleagues detailed in this document to ensure, as far as possible, that customers and people within our services are effectively safeguarded against all forms of abuse, neglect, discrimination, embarrassment, or poor treatment. All colleagues need to act competently, confidently, and with courage to concerns about safety and wellbeing of customers and others within our services.

Every colleague within the Group, regardless of their role and level of authority, has the following responsibilities to:

- Promote the welfare of children within our services.
- Fulfil their legal and moral 'duty of care' to customers along with others within our services and as a person in a position of trust.
- Acknowledge and understand the potential of risk presented by colleagues to customers and others within the services and to understand the importance of maintaining professional boundaries and relationships and the potential for allegations of abuse.
- Follow risk management and lone working procedures in place to reduce the potential of risk to customers from colleagues and to pass on any welfare concerns using the required reporting procedures.

- Be aware of and adhere to internal Safeguarding Children policies and procedures informed by the Local Authority policy and procedure and Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements.
- Implement learning and promote good practice by being an excellent role model, contribute to discussions about Safeguarding and to positively involve people in developing safe practices.
- Be vigilant in their day to day work and immediately report any concerns.
- Listen to customers, work in partnership with customers and stakeholders (this could include family members, advocates, and external agencies).

As an organisation we will also:

- Ensure that children understand that they have a right to be safe.
- Understand that children should not feel they are to blame for being abused.
- Ensure that victims are not deterred from reporting abuse.
- Ensure that colleagues, customers, and other members of the public are not deterred from reporting suspected abuse.
- Not make any promises to victims of child abuse.
- Support victims of child abuse to rebuild their lives by working in partnership with other specialist children's services.
- Work in partnership with specialist children's services to stop the abuse reoccurring.
- Never delay reporting cases of possible child abuse to relevant specialist children's services and taking emergency action where appropriate.
- Ensure that when reporting concerns regarding a child's safety and wellbeing, parental consent is gained where possible but where this is not possible, referrals should still be made in the absence of consent.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

The Group is committed to providing high quality services and has a number of monitoring arrangements in place to validate this.

Specifically, in relation to Safeguarding, this includes:

- A register of all concerns raised internally and alerts raised externally under multi-agency guidelines. This is overseen by the Designated Safeguarding Leads who recommend changes are made to systems and procedures as a consequence of lessons learned.
- Regular reporting to the Group Board on Safeguarding activities, incidents, actions and outcomes. Analysis of patterns or trends that will lead to practice, policy, and procedure reviews.
- Confidential reporting of allegations regarding colleagues or contractors to the Group Board, including the outcomes of any investigations.
- Disseminating case studies, recommendations for amendments to policy and procedures and updating colleague training requirements.
- Ensuring risk assessment and management procedures are in place to ensure predictable risk is mitigated within an ethos of positive risk taking.
- Ensuring that colleague supervision and Performance Management processes are in place so that colleagues receive the necessary support and guidance from managers to fulfil their Safeguarding role and responsibilities.

Group People Services ensure that colleague files are maintained in line with current employment practice, these are audited and evidence that:

- Safe recruitment practices have been applied to all appointments.
- DBS checks are undertaken where appropriate (see recruitment procedure).

- Two suitable references are sought prior to appointment where appropriate (see recruitment procedure).
- Records are made and kept of supervision sessions.
- Training records are maintained of colleagues training on Safeguarding.

Equality and Diversity

All children will have the same protection, regardless of age, disability, race, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, religion or belief, marriage and civil partnership and pregnancy and maternity. The Group is committed to anti-discriminatory practice and recognise that some of our customers from minority ethnic groups or with particular disabilities may have additional needs and communication barriers.

Summary of Local Variations

None.

PART THREE

Appendices

- A. Policy Approval Control
- B. Definitions

Appendix B

Definitions

Safeguarding Children - defined in Working Together to Safeguard Children 2013 as:

- protecting children from maltreatment
- preventing impairment of children's health and development
- ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care and
- taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes

A child is defined

'...as anyone who has not reached their 18th birthday'

Even when a child aged 16 years is living independently or a member of the armed forces their status, entitlement to services and protection is not altered by these circumstances and they are still defined as a child.

Abuse - a violation of an individual's human and civil rights by any other person or persons. A single or repeated act, or lack of appropriate actions, occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust, which causes harm or distress. Abuse may be perpetrated because of deliberate intent, ignorance, or negligence.

Abuse is defined as:

'...a violation of an individual's human or civil rights by another' [which may result in significant harm].

Abuse can also be defined as 'a lack of action occurring within a relationship where there is an expectation of trust, which causes harm or distress to a person.'

Harm is defined as:

"Ill-treatment or the impairment of health or development including impairment suffered from seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another.

Development means physical, intellectual, emotional, social or behavioural development. Health refers to physical or mental health. Ill-treatment includes sexual abuse and forms of ill-treatment which are not physical.

This definition is as per Section 31(9) of the Children Act 1989, as amended by the Adoption and Children Act 2002 which broadened the definition of harm to include emotional harm as a result of awareness or witnessing of domestic violence in their home environment.

Forms of child abuse

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse 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.

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is 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 children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar

as they meet the needs of another person. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond the child's development 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, 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.

Emotional abuse includes **Radicalisation** - To support the Government, PREVENT strategy, The Longhurst Group are aware of the role frontline staff could have, in identifying signs that someone may be being drawn into terrorism.

To this end The Longhurst Group will ensure staff are briefed on:

- recognising vulnerability (to radicalisation)
- raising concerns (through existing Safeguarding procedures)
- supporting the service user through effective multi-agency working

The Designated Safeguarding Lead will advise and oversee referrals to the local Channel Police Practitioner for consideration and response. Channel is a national Home Office

Safeguarding project which aims to prevent adults from being drawn into [violent] radicalisation or becoming involved in terrorist related activity.

Managers will ensure that basic awareness is cascaded to frontline staff through discussion, literature, and access to training.

On Line Abuse is a form of emotional abuse that occurs via the internet. It can happen across any device that's connected to the web, e.g.computers, tablets and mobile phones and it can happen anywhere online, including:

- social media
- text messages and messaging apps
- emails
- online chats
- online gaming
- live-streaming sites.

Children can be at risk of online abuse from people they know or from strangers. It might be part of other abuse which is taking place offline, like bullying or grooming, or the abuse might only happen online.

Neglect

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in 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.

Staff also need to be aware of vulnerable groups such as those with disabilities, children living away from home, asylum seekers and children in hospital, children in contact with the youth justice system, victims of domestic abuse and those vulnerable due to religion, ethnicity etc. and those who may be exposed to violent extremism.

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, including prostitution, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative (e.g. rape, buggery or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts. They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual online images, watching sexual activities or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator.

The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.

Female genital mutilation (FGM) is a form of sexual abuse that involves the partial or total removal of external female genitalia for non-medical reasons. It's also known as female circumcision or cutting.

Religious, social or cultural reasons are sometimes given for FGM. However, FGM is child abuse. It's dangerous and a criminal offence.

There are no medical reasons to carry out FGM. It doesn't enhance fertility and it doesn't make childbirth safer. It is used to control female sexuality and can cause severe and long-lasting damage to physical and emotional health. (NSPCC).