

COMMUNITY LINKS BROMLEY

Safeguarding Children policy and procedure

Last Reviewed March 2026

Next review date March 2027



1. Introduction and scope

This Safeguarding Children policy and procedure sets out the approach of Community Links Bromley (CLB) to ensuring that the risk of harm to children is minimised.

All staff, volunteers and trustees working on behalf of CLB have a duty to promote the welfare and safety of children.

Staff, volunteers and trustees may receive disclosures of child abuse and observe children who are at risk. This policy and procedure (in Appendix 1) will enable staff/volunteers to make informed and confident responses to specific child protection issues.

2. Statement

CLB is committed to protecting and promoting the welfare of the children with whom it works and comes into contact with, and to working with agencies charged with statutory child protection duties.

All children, regardless of age, disability, racial heritage, religious belief, sexual orientation or identity have a right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse. Some children are additionally vulnerable because of the impact of previous experiences, their level of dependency, impairments, communication needs or other issues

CLB will put appropriate safeguards and measures in place to:

- treat all children and young people with respect
- protect and promote the welfare of children
- respect a child or young person's right to personal privacy, while being clear that absolute confidentiality cannot be promised if a disclosure is made and we will need to act on concerns and allegations made in accordance with procedures
- take all allegations seriously, challenging unacceptable behaviour and reporting swiftly all allegations or suspicions of abuse
- ensure that recruitment and working practices reflect these ambitions
- ensure that trustees, staff and volunteers are appropriately trained, skilled and supervised to be proactive about safeguarding and comply with safeguarding children responsibilities within the scope of their roles
- have a clear, open, and well publicised complaints procedure, which enables adults and children to voice concerns about unacceptable and/or abusive behaviour towards children.

CLB will deliver its duties for safeguarding children in line with the Children Act 1989, the Children Act 2004, the Children and Social Work Act 2017, the London Safeguarding Children Procedures and local safeguarding procedures.

CLB will cooperate with any Local Authority in relation to requests made of it in respect of children's safeguarding.

CLB will support all VCS organisation across the Borough to do the same and expects members and organisations funded through CLB to adopt and demonstrate their commitment to the principles and practice as set out in this safeguarding children policy and procedure.

3. Definitions

For the purpose of this policy a child is defined as someone up to the age of 18.

Abuse is defined as the harming of another individual usually by someone who is in a position of power, trust or authority over that individual. The harm may be physical, psychological, or emotional or it may be directed at exploiting the vulnerability of the individual in more subtle ways, such as withholding or denying access to basic needs.

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people means protecting children from maltreatment, preventing impairment of their health or development, ensuring that they grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care, and taking action to enable all children to have the best possible life chances and enter adulthood successfully.

Child protection is a core element of safeguarding and refers to the specific actions taken to protect children who are suffering, or are likely to suffer, significant harm.

All agencies and individuals should aim pro-actively to safeguard and promote the welfare of children so that the need for action to protect children from harm is reduced.

4. Types of Abuse

The ['Working Together to Safeguard Children' guidance](#) published by the Government in 2023 defines four categories of abuse as follows:

Physical Abuse

This 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

This 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 a child that they are worthless, unloved or inadequate. It may involve bullying, causing children to feel frightened or in danger.

Sexual Abuse

This type of 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. Examples of physical contact include penetrative acts (rape, buggery or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts kissing, fondling, masturbation. It may include non-contact activities involving children in looking at or be involved in sexual online images and or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

Neglect

This is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment to the child's health and development. It can include failing to provide adequate food, clothing and shelter, adequate supervision or failing to provide medical help when needed.

5. Signs of Abuse

The following signs and symptoms may indicate that abuse has taken place:

- History of unexplained falls or minor injuries, bruising, finger marks, burns, injuries at different stages of healing, injury shape similar to an object, history of GP or agency hopping, reluctance to seek help, weight loss, weight gain, ulcers, bed sores, drowsiness, recurring crises/hospital admissions.
- Disclosure or partial disclosure of sexual abuse, genital infections, pregnancy, difficulty walking or sitting, disturbed behaviour, depression, withdrawal from activities, lack of sleep, nightmares, self-injury, showing fear or aggression, inappropriate sexual behaviour, loss of appetite.
- Isolation, unwashed, over meticulous, inappropriately dressed, withdrawn, change in appetite, insomnia or excessive sleep, tearfulness, unexplained paranoia, excessive fear, low self esteem, confusion, clothing in poor condition, weight loss or weight gain, untreated injuries, poor personal hygiene.

6. Governance

The Safeguarding Lead takes strategic responsibility for all of CLB's safeguarding functions, including policy and training. They are accountable for providing assurance that CLB's safeguarding children statutory duties are discharged and all responsibilities met.

The role of Safeguarding Lead at CLB is held by the Chief Executive Officer and included in their job description. A detailed description of the role of the Safeguarding Lead appears at Appendix 2.

The Safeguarding Lead will ensure that CLB has an appropriate internal governance framework and operating arrangements that ensure the implementation and maintenance, and oversight of robust systems and processes to monitor all safeguarding requirements.

The Trustee Board will hold the Safeguarding Lead to account for the discharge of safeguarding children statutory duties in CLB. The Board will consider, at least annually, a report detailing how risks to children's safeguarding are being addressed and how any reports of concerns, where identified, have been addressed.

This policy and procedures are reviewed no less than on an annual basis and whenever there are changes in relevant legislation and/or government guidance or as a result of any other significant change or event.

7. Safeguarding children training standards

CLB will ensure that all staff, trustees and volunteers are made aware of this policy and procedures within two weeks of starting in role.

Training to ensure appropriate knowledge and competencies in the relevant staff and volunteers will be identified by the Safeguarding Lead in an organisational training needs analysis and training plan. This will include training at induction and refresher training at least every three years, including information about the procedure for reporting safeguarding concerns. The Safeguarding Lead will identify the training needs of any new projects delivered by CLB at the point of their establishment.

CLB will ensure that its safeguarding training includes elements on the Prevent programme.

The Trustee Board will nominate a Board member to attend children's safeguarding training.

8. Prevent (radicalisation)

The Prevent Duty was placed on all public sector institutions by the Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015. This means that all institutions have a duty to prevent vulnerable adults and children from being drawn into terrorism or being radicalised.

'Prevent' is essentially just safeguarding. It is about identifying vulnerability and doing something about it. 'Prevent' requires us to -

- Notice concerns. No different to noticing any other 'Safeguarding' issue.
- Check concerns. Speak with a colleague or your manager. Do they agree that your concerns are justified?
- Share concerns. CLB Safeguarding lead will assist with this.

CLB employees and volunteers may have contact with children and young people who could become victims of radicalisation. There is no obvious profile of a person likely to become involved in terrorist-related activity, or single indicator of when a person might move to support extremism. Vulnerable individuals who may be susceptible to radicalisation can be volunteers or service users. Prevent aims to ensure that those who are at risk will receive help and support from partners best placed to meet these needs.

The CLB Safeguarding Lead will also be the operational lead for Prevent. All concerns (unless urgent in which case call the police) within CLB regarding either employees or volunteers in relation to Counterterrorism will be reported to the appropriate manager who will escalate accordingly.

9. Safe recruitment

All organisations that employ adults or volunteers to work with children should adopt a consistent thorough process of safer recruitment to ensure those recruited are the best candidates for the role and are suitable to work with vulnerable groups.

CLB will ensure that all staff members and volunteers who may have contact with children, or their records, have been subject to appropriate due diligence employment checks, including through the Disclosure & Barring Service, commensurate with their role, and in advance of commencing their role.

CLB's arrangements for safer recruitment are set out in the Recruitment Policy.

10. Preventative measures

Trustee Board members and CLB volunteers will not have unsupervised access to children and young people.

When planning activities and events, CLB will include an assessment of, and risk to the safety of all children and young people who may attend and designate a person who will be in attendance as a safeguarding lead for that event.

CLB staff and volunteers will only take photographs and/or video footage of children at CLB events where written permission has been received from their parent or guardian.

11. Reporting a safeguarding concern

It is important that children are protected from abuse. All complaints, allegations or suspicions must be taken seriously.

If any CLB trustee, staff member or volunteer believes that a person:

- has care and support needs
- is experiencing, or is at risk of abuse and neglect
- and is unable to protect themselves from that abuse and neglect because of those care and support needs

then they will follow the procedure set out in Appendix 1.

Action will be taken no matter if the information received about a concern is non-recent or from an anonymous source.

12. Reporting/ managing allegations against staff

Where allegations of abuse are made against a staff member or volunteer, whether contemporary in nature, historical or both, the safeguarding allegation will be referred in the same way as any other incident or allegation of abuse.

The Safeguarding Lead must be informed immediately. Moving the staff member from a public or volunteer facing role or suspension of the individual may need to be considered. Suspension itself is a neutral act and allows a full investigation of the facts to take place, in accordance with the Disciplinary and Capability policy.

It is important that when allegations are made, early consideration is given to the distinction between an allegation and a complaint. Where doubt exists as to the nature of what is being referred, appropriate consultation with the Safeguarding Lead (or in cases where the allegation relates to the Safeguarding Lead, to the Chair of the Trustee Board) will take

place, so that accuracy, transparency and integrity of the process are secured and any doubt clarified.

It is acknowledged that all staff may be vulnerable to malicious or mischievous allegations or complaints or simply be subject to a misunderstanding of a situation, therefore objectivity and a balanced approach to information received are essential. Staff subject to allegations will be supported whilst allegations are investigated.

13. Confidentiality

Child protection raises issues of confidentiality which should be clearly understood by all.

Staff, volunteers and trustees have a professional responsibility to share relevant information about the protection of children with other professionals, particularly investigative agencies.

Clear boundaries of confidentiality will be communicated to all. All personal information regarding a child will be kept confidential except when it is suspected that a child under 18 years is the victim of abuse.

Where possible, consent should be obtained from the child before sharing personal information with third parties. In some circumstances obtaining consent may be neither possible nor desirable as the safety and welfare of the child is the priority.

The child's involvement in the process of sharing information should be fully considered and their wishes and feeling taken into account.

Child Protection issues are highly sensitive and staff who receive information about children or their families in the course of their work should share that information only within appropriate professional contexts. All child protection records should be kept secure.

14. Information sharing

Learning from Reviews reinforces the fact that both children and adults can suffer significant harm or death when professionals fail to share information. Good communication and appropriate information sharing between professionals is therefore a critical element of effective safeguarding practice.

The Bromley Safeguarding Children Partnership positively encourages professionals to seek agreement to share information when it is right to do so and where doing so does not place a child or adult at risk.

Where there are good reasons to be worried about a child or adult's safety or wellbeing, the fact that there is no existing information sharing agreement between organisations or that the information is seen as "third- party", should not be used as an excuse to fail to share.

15. Following a report of a safeguarding concern

Following an incident of a safeguarding concern, the Safeguarding Lead will:

- Ensure the victim(s) of the allegation has/ve been offered appropriate help and support
- Follow up with the police and/or council if any new relevant information is discovered.

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 child protection agencies,

following a referral from the designated child protection officer. CLB will cooperate with any local authority in relation to requests made of it in relation to children's safeguarding.

The Chief Executive will decide, in consultation with the Chair of the Board of Trustees, whether this is a 'serious incident' which needs to be reported to the Charity Commission. A serious incident is an adverse event, whether actual or alleged, which results in or risks significant harm to CLB's beneficiaries, staff, volunteers or others who come into CLB through its work.

Where CLB takes unusual steps to address concerns, information is shared without client consent or where there is a significant difference of opinion between senior staff members regarding action to be taken, trustees will be informed and/or consulted as appropriate.

16. Policy review

This policy and procedures will be reviewed at least once a year and always following a serious incident.

Appendix 1: Procedure for reporting a safeguarding concern

The following guidelines set out how staff and volunteers should respond if abuse is disclosed or suspected:

- React calmly, do not panic or show panic and reassure the child that they were right to tell.
- Listen carefully, allowing the child to continue at their own pace.
- 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. Tell the child that the matter will only be disclosed to those who need to know about it. Where possible, obtain consent from the child before sharing personal information with third parties (but in some circumstances obtaining consent may be neither possible nor desirable as the safety and welfare of the child is the priority).
- Keep questions to a minimum to understand what is being alleged and only ask in order to clarify what is being said, rather than to enquire. (It is up to social services and the police to investigate the matter fully, not CLB.) The use of leading questions can cause problems for the subsequent investigation and any court proceedings.
- Take what is said seriously.
- Tell them what you will do next, and with whom the information will be shared.
- Make a full record in writing of what is being said, heard or seen, using the child's own words, as soon as possible, sign and date the record.
- If you are worried about an immediate risk of harm to a child, it is essential that you share your concerns by telephone (see below). The referral, if appropriate, will be accepted over the telephone and you will need to follow this up by completing the online referral form within 24 hours. If you are unsure about whether or not to make a referral, or which service will best help the family and safeguard the child, you can telephone the Children & Families Hub consultation line (see below) where you will receive advice and guidance on the most appropriate steps to take.
- If a member of staff or volunteer is not satisfied that the matter has been dealt with appropriately within the organisation, they have the option of referring the matter direct to the local authority. It is not the responsibility of CLB to decide whether or not abuse has taken place but it is the responsibility of CLB to act if there is cause for concern, in order that the appropriate agencies can investigate and take the necessary action to protect a child or young person.

Procedure for Reporting Abuse

If any CLB trustee, staff member or volunteer believes that a child or young person under the age of 18 years old is being abused or neglected, then they will take the following actions as set out below:

1. If they are seriously concerned about a child's immediate safety, call 999 and ask for the police.

Do not disturb or move articles that could be used in evidence, and secure the scene, for example by locking the door to a room

As far as possible, make sure that others are not at risk

Do not question the alleged victim any more than needed to clarify that possible abuse has taken place

2. If they are worried that a child is at risk of significant harm, i.e. through abuse or neglect, make a 'Request for Protection':
- Make a note of any discussion with the child/ young person, taking care to record when and where it happened and who was present, as well as what the child said (in their words) and what you said, observations of their behaviour and any actions taken. This must be dated and kept confidentially in a safe place by the line manager.
 - Key information to include in the referral:
 - Name, age and date of birth of child
 - Location of child
 - Is the child aware of the contact?
 - Is the parent/ carer aware of the contact?
 - Parent/ carer's name, address, phone number
 - What are you worried about? Does the family share your worries?
 - What needs to happen next to ensure the child is safer?
 - Any other relevant information
 - Name of person reporting
 - Are you reporting your own concerns or someone else's?
 - Contact Children's services at the Children & Families Hub to make a 'Request for Protection', informing the parents that you are doing so unless this will endanger the child's safety:

Monday to Friday, 8:30am to 5pm - 020 8461 7373 / 7379 or

Out of hours/weekends/public holidays - 0300 303 8671 or

Email candfhub@bromley.gov.uk (Bromley Children and Families Hub)

Keep a written note of the time and date the report is submitted and the route through which it was done.

In either case, the worker's line manager or CLB safeguarding lead must be advised **immediately** of any action taken.

Responding to allegations relating to a staff member or volunteer

Any allegation about a staff member or volunteer, whether relating to historical or recent activity should be referred in the same way as any other allegation. Do not inform the alleged perpetrator(s) until you have taken advice from the Safeguarding Lead (or in their absence, the Chair of the Trustee Board), who you should inform immediately: depending on the concern this may not be appropriate at all.

Appendix 2 - Role description – Safeguarding Lead

The designated person within CLB has primary responsibility for putting into place procedures to safeguard children at risk, supporting welfare/safeguarding leads in other organisations where relevant and for managing concerns about children at risk.

Duties and responsibilities include:

- Working with others within the organisation to create a positive inclusive environment within CLB's activities.

- Play a lead role in developing and establishing CLB's approach to safeguarding children and in maintaining and reviewing the organisation's implementation plan for safeguarding children in line with current legislation and best practice.
- Coordinate the dissemination of the safeguarding children policy, procedures and resources throughout the organisation.
- Contribute to ensuring other policies and procedures are consistent with the organisation's commitment to safeguarding children.
- Advise on the organisation's training needs and the development of its training strategy.
- Receive reports of and manage cases of poor practice and abuse reported to the organisation – including an appropriate recording system.
- Support the chair to co-ordinate the case management process.
- Manage liaison with, and referrals to, external agencies for example children's social care services and the police.
- Create a central point of contact for internal and external individuals and agencies concerned about the safety of children in relation to the organisation.
- Play a lead role in their recruitment, selection and training.
- Represent the organisation at external meetings related to safeguarding.