



# HACKNEY SEND PARENT CARER FORUM

## SAFEGUARDING & CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

This policy governs the internal operations of Hackney SEND Parent Carer Forum while hosted by City & Hackney Carers Centre. Legal and financial responsibilities held by the Host remain subject to the Hosting Agreement

### 1. Aim of the Policy

The aim of this policy is to provide members of the Hackney SEND Parent Carer Forum (HSPCF) Steering Group members with clear guidance about their role and responsibilities in safeguarding children and to provide information for parents and carers about the safeguarding measures that HSPCF employs to ensure that it meets its responsibilities to promote the welfare of and safeguard children and young people. HSPCF does not provide regulated activities or direct services to children and young people.

This policy reflects our direct contact through engagement with parent carers.

### 2. Legislation and guidance that underpins this policy

*This Policy and Procedures have been developed in line with:*

- The Children Act 1989
- The Children Act 2004
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (latest statutory guidance)
- What to Do If You are Worried a Child Is Being Abused (2006)
- The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

### 3. The principles behind the Safeguarding Children Policy

All agencies and individuals share the responsibility to protect children from harm or the risk of harm. We live and work in a climate where we, as adults, “have a duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.”

*The application of HSPCF’s Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and Procedures is based on the following key principles:*

- The welfare of the child is paramount.

*All children have the right to:*

- Be healthy
- Stay Safe
- Enjoy and Achieve
- Make a positive contribution
- Achieve economic wellbeing
- All children, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious belief, and/or sexual identity have the right to protection from abuse.

Whilst it is not the responsibility of this organisation to decide whether or not abuse has taken place (this is undertaken in liaison with external child protection professionals), it is everyone’s responsibility to report any concerns in relation to children or vulnerable adults to the relevant authority.

The HSPCF Steering Group does not have direct contact with children and young people, however, by the nature of the organisation, we work directly with parent carers of disabled children and young people. Therefore, it is essential that we have robust policies and procedures. All Steering Group members are expected to be familiar with, and follow, this policy and its procedures.

### 4. Policy

Parent carers of children who attend or are members of HSPCF need to be aware that any concerns that a child or vulnerable adult has or may be experiencing harm, which comes to the attention of the Steering Group members, may be referred to the local statutory agency.

The Steering Group members and any staff employed by HSPCF, will be recruited using safe recruitment practices (including the taking of references and a DBS check) to ensure they are suitable individuals to take on a role which puts them into contact with large numbers of parent carers.

Steering Group members and staff will be provided with training and induction to aid them in fulfilling their duties.

## 5. Procedures

Whilst recognising that the HSPCF Steering Group will have little direct contact with children and young people, its work with parent carers means that they may indirectly have contact with children and young people and certainly have contact with parent carers who often live in particularly challenging situations.

Therefore, these procedures are designed to support the recognition of abuse of children and offer clear guidance about what processes and actions should be taken if this is identified, to ensure that children are safeguarded and protected.

## 6. Definitions and signs of abuse

There are four recognised types of abuse, and it is important that all staff and volunteers know what they are and how to recognise them.

### **Physical Abuse**

May involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child.

### **Emotional Abuse**

Persistent emotional maltreatment such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development.

### **Sexual Abuse**

Involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, including prostitution, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening.

### **Neglect**

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.

## 7. Safeguarding disabled children and young people

There is clear evidence that disabled children and young people have an increased vulnerability to being abused and that the presence of multiple impairments further increases their vulnerability. It is important that all those who work with disabled children and young people have some understanding of these reasons and ensure that they offer appropriate support to any child or young person who discloses abuse.

## **8. Guidance on how to respond to a child /young person /vulnerable adult disclosing abuse**

### *DO:*

- Always treat any allegations extremely seriously and act towards the child as if you believe what they are saying.
- Tell the child they are right to tell you.
- Reassure them that they are not to blame.
- Be honest about your own position, who you must tell and why.
- Tell the child what you are doing and when and keep them up to date with what is happening.
- Take further action – tell the nominated Safeguarding Advisor at once (shown in Section 15 of this policy).
- Write down everything said and what was done.

### *DON'T:*

- Do not make promises you cannot keep.
- Do not interrogate the child.
- Do not cast doubt on what the child has told you.
- Do not say anything that makes the child feel responsible for the abuse.
- Do not do anything – always report to the nominated Safeguarding Advisor at once (shown in Section 15 of the policy).

## 9. Should we tell parents/carers if we are going to make a referral?

It is good practice to be open and honest with parent carers about any concerns and if a referral to social care is needed, it should normally be discussed with the parent carer first.

*However, you should NOT discuss your concerns with the parent carer in the following circumstances:*

- Where sexual abuse or exploitation is suspected
- Where organised or multiple abuse is suspected
- Where fabricated or induced illness is suspected
- Where Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is the concern
- In cases of suspected Forced Marriage

Where contact would place a child, yourself, or others at immediate risk.

## 10. Guidance on how to respond to a parent carer disclosing abuse

*DO:*

- Make sure they know you cannot keep the information to yourself.
- Treat any allegations seriously and act as if you believe what they are saying.
- Tell the parent carer they are right to tell you.
- Be honest about who you must tell and why.
- Encourage them to make the referral themselves if possible or support them to do so.
- Be clear about where the child is and their immediate safety.
- If you make the referral, tell the parent carer what you are doing and when.
- Write down everything said and what was done.

*DON'T:*

- Do not make promises you cannot keep.
- Do not interrogate the parent carer.
- Do not do anything – always report to your nominated Safeguarding Advisor at once (shown in Section 15 of this policy).

## **11. Reporting Procedures – DO NOT DELAY**

### *Emergency Situations:*

- If emergency medical attention is needed, call 999 or take the child to A&E.
- If a child is in immediate danger, contact the police (999).

### *Other Situations:*

- Record factually as soon as possible:
- Date/time of occurrence and disclosure
- Names of those involved
- What was said or done
- Actions taken
- Any immediate safeguarding measures taken
- Reasons if no referral made
- Names of those reporting and to whom it was reported

The nominated Safeguarding Advisor (shown in Section 15 of this policy) will then use the appropriate reporting systems.

## **12. Recruitment, Selection, and Vetting Process**

Any employees will be subject to a rigorous recruitment process, including a DBS check, references, and a formal interview.

Steering Group members will also be vetted to ensure they are suitable to take on a role placing them in contact with a large number of parent carers.

All Steering Group members and staff will receive training and induction to help them fulfil their safeguarding duties.

## **13. Allegations Against Adults Who Work with Children**

*If you have information suggesting that an adult who works with children or young people (in a paid or unpaid capacity) has:*

- Behaved in a way that has harmed or may have harmed a child
- Possibly committed a criminal offense against, or related to, a child
- Behaved towards a child/ren in a way indicating they are unsuitable to work with children.

You must at once inform the nominated safeguarding advisor, who will consult with or refer to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO).

## 14. Code of Conduct

HSPCF has a Code of Conduct which all Steering Group members are expected to follow.

*Members must inform the Chair or Vice-Chair about any personal difficulties that might affect their ability to exercise responsibilities appropriately or risk bringing HSPCF into disrepute, including:*

- Allegations or investigations of a crime.
- Any child protection or safeguarding concern.
- Significant disputes that raise safeguarding or reputational concerns.
- Other similar circumstances.

In these situations, it will be standard practice to ask the Steering Group member to temporarily stand down until the issues are resolved. This neutral position is designed to protect both HSPCF and the individual.

Any action arising from concerns involving Steering Group members will be managed following the HSPCF Complaints, Grievance, Internal Disciplinary and Procedures Policy.

## 15. Nominated Safeguarding Advisor

The nominated Safeguarding Advisor for Hackney Parent Carer Forum (HSPCF) is Joanna Brunt – Chief Executive Officer for City & Hackney Carers.

### ***Role and Oversight:***

HSPCF will maintain a formal agreement with the nominated Safeguarding Advisor and review this arrangement annually.

## 16. Monitoring and Review Strategy

This policy and procedure document will be reviewed annually.