

Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

The safety and welfare of all children is central to Snakes & Ladders therapeutic services.

We are all responsible for the protection of children and all concerns about a child's safety or well-being will be followed up and dealt with as quickly and as sensitively as possible.

We will seek to ensure a safe environment for all children using Snakes & Ladders services. All our therapists accept and recognise our responsibilities to develop awareness of the issues which cause children harm.

Before a child enters therapy we will ensure that we have necessary information about the child, including contact number for emergencies and parents/carers will also be given information about the service. When children are collected, we will only hand them over to the named adult, unless alternative arrangements have been arranged beforehand or they will be escorted (in younger and/or vulnerable children and adolescents) to their classroom or next venue within the educational facility. Children often need and enjoy close contact with those caring for them, staff will be aware of boundaries and will ensure when giving hugs or cuddles children are comfortable with this and that it is carried out in the open, in the presence of other adults. Staff may need (only if agreed in advance) to provide personal and intimate care, such as toileting for a child. This will be done in an open, safe and sensitive way. All workers will undertake first aid training and there will always be a trained first aider on the premises, all accidents will be recorded in line with Health & Safety regulations.

When therapeutic services involving both children and their parents/carers are provided, parents/carers will be made aware of their own responsibilities and those of S&L workers. An awareness of safety will be promoted at all times.

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Snakes & Ladders Principles

1. Snakes & Ladders is committed to provide high quality therapeutic services to children and families.
2. The needs of a child are our first concern and we will always act to ensure their safety and protection. Our code of practice is outlined in Appendix 1.
3. The best results for children are achieved in partnership with their parents/carers and we will work in this way as far as possible at all times, unless we feel that this would cause a child further harm.
4. All Snakes & Ladders staff work within the school /area / borough's Child Protection procedure and guidance; if we are concerned that a child is being abused or harmed in any way we will report this to the safeguarding officer in the school or if working outside of school we report to the local Social Services department.
5. Any help offered should be the best for that child or family and we will work openly and flexibly with parents/carers, children and other agencies to ensure that this happens.
6. We recognise some groups of children may be most vulnerable to abuse, for example disabled children, and the policy and procedure applies to all children irrespective of gender, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation or religion.
7. Safeguards will be put in place to maximise a child's right to protection and children will know that they have the right to:

Be safe: Teach children that everyone has rights. Tell children that no one should take away their right to be safe.

Protect their own bodies: Children need to know that their body belongs to them, particularly their private parts covered by their swimsuits

Say NO: Tell children that it is all right to say no to anyone if that person tries to do something to them they feel is wrong. Most children are taught to listen to and obey adults and older people without question. Disabled children in particular are taught to be compliant.

Get help against bullies: Bullies often pick on younger children. Tell children to enlist the help of friends or say no without fighting– and to tell an adult. Bullies are cowards and a

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firm, loud 'no' from a gang of children with the threat of adult intervention often puts them off.

To tell: You must assure children that no matter what happens you will not be angry with them and that you want them to tell you of any incident that frightens or confuses them or makes them unhappy.

To be believed: When children are told to go to an adult for help they need to know they will be believed and supported. This is especially true in the case of sexual abuse which children very rarely lie about. If the child is not believed when he or she tells, the abuse may continue for years and result in suffering and guilt for the child.

Not to keep secrets: Teach children that some secrets should never be kept, no matter if they promised not to tell. Child abusers known to the child often say that a kiss or touch is 'our secret'. This confuses the child who has been taught to keep secrets.

The purpose of this child protection policy is:

1. To ensure that all children using Snakes & Ladders therapeutic services are kept safe and that concerns about a child are followed up in the right way and to ensure that everyone including parents/carers, Snakes & Ladders staff and children know what should happen and what is expected of them.

2. To keep children safe:

Recruitment of Snakes & Ladders staff will follow the policy and procedures of Snakes & Ladders. This includes undertaking checks with the Criminal Records Bureau, health checks and taking up two references. All appointments are subject to this vetting procedure and a probationary period (see Snakes & Ladders practice policy).

Staff will be made aware of child protection procedures, health & safety and safe practice issues of part of their induction. All staff will be required to undertake basic child protection training. All staff will receive regular supervision from a qualified clinical supervisor.

All staff will be made aware of these procedures and their responsibilities. Please see Appendix 2, which outlines appropriate behaviour when in contact and supervision of children.

If anyone has a concern about a member of staff and their behaviour towards a child or children, Karen Bland, owner Snakes & Ladders should be informed immediately. Appropriate action will then be taken to ensure the safety of children.

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To provide a safe environment

All premises and equipment used will be assessed to ensure safety and suitability. Where appropriate, provision will be registered through OFSTED and their guideline follows.

When children are attending Snakes & Ladders therapeutic services the level and quality of staffing will confirm to the BACP Ethical Framework for Good Practice in Counselling and Psychotherapy and to the Code of Ethics and Practice for Counsellors. Play therapy takes in account the age, ability and needs of the children attending and Snakes & Ladders ensures safety and supervision at all times.

3. Dealing with concerns:

Identifying concerns

Many concerns about children arise on a day to day basis, a child may have accident at home or at

S&L they may be tired, ill or behaving differently. In most cases these can be dealt with quickly and easily by discussions between staff and parents/carers, further advice or help may be offered, in needed.

Where appropriate these may be recorded in the accidents and incidents log book and accidents forms completed.

Sometimes concerns can be more worrying because it is clear that the child may be affected by what is happening to them. The child may be being harmed or hurt in some way.

There are many ways in which children can be harmed;

Physical abuse

Physical abuse can include, 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 feigns symptoms or deliberately causes ill health to a child.

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 a parent/carer failing to provide adequate food, clothing and shelter, failing to protect a child from physical harm or danger, or the failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to a child's basic emotional needs.

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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 what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetration for example, rape or buggery, or none penetrative acts. They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of pornographic material or watching sexual activities or encouraging children to act in sexually inappropriate ways.

Emotional abuse

Emotional abuse is the persistent ill treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on a child's emotional behaviour. It may involve conveying to the child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only in so far as they meet the needs of another person. It may feature age or development inappropriate expectations being imposed on the child. It may involve causing the child to frequently feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of the child. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill treatment of a child, though it may occur alone. Please see Appendix 3 for full definitions of abuse.

Concerns about a child may come to the attention of Snakes & Ladders staff in a number of ways;

- Through observation of the child. A child's behaviour may indicate that it is likely that he/she is being abused
- The child may disclose abuse
- Information may be given by parents, other people or agencies
- A child may show some signs of physical injury of which there seems to be no satisfactory explanation
- Something in the behaviour of one of the workers or young person, or in the way the worker or young person relates to a child, alerts them or makes them feel uncomfortable in some way
- Observing one child abuse another

There may be barriers to children telling, the power of relationships between adults and children should not be underestimated nor should the deliberate and skilled way that abusers target their victims.

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Continued....

Children may not tell because;

- Are scared because they have been threatened
- Believe they will be taken away from home
- Believe they are to blame
- Think it what happens to all children
- Feel embarrassed
- Feel guilty
- Don't want to get the abuser into trouble.
- Have communication or learning difficulties.
- May not have the vocabulary for what happened.
- Are afraid they won't be believed.
- Believe they have told maybe by dropping hints but haven't been believed so don't bother to try again.

Child abuse thrives on secrecy and needs to be handled in a sensitive, accepting way. In order to achieve this adults may have to overcome certain barriers also as;

- Sometimes it may be hard to believe what the child is saying.
- It may be difficult that the suspicion may be about someone that is known.
- 'The fear of getting it wrong'
- The fear of what consequences there may be for 'getting it wrong' for the child, for the family and for themselves.
- Worry that it may make it worse for the child.
- Believe that the services are stigmatising.
- Simply do not want to become involved.
- Do not have the necessary information on what to do or who to contact.

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Responding to a concern

It is not the responsibility of Snakes & ladders staff to investigate allegations or concerns but to identify concerns and pass them onto the school safeguarding officer, Social Services or the police. Snakes & Ladders staff do have a duty to follow S&L CP procedures.

If a therapist has a concern about a child, they should;

- Take appropriate action if the child is in need of urgent attention.
- It is not Snakes & Ladders responsibility to interrogate or interview the child. They must inform the safeguarding officer in the educational facility, Social Services or the police as soon as possible, especially if the client may be at risk if allowed to return to an unsafe environment
- Be open with the child, adolescent or adult about the concern and make it clear they will have to tell others.
- Keep a record of the date and time of the incident being reported, any notes relevant to the case should be kept in a safe, secure place.

Snakes & Ladders therapists may decide to monitor a situation (if no further safeguarding action is required at that time), it should be made clear to all relevant staff and to parents what is being done and what is expected of them. This should be regularly reviewed with the relevant parties.

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Appendix 1

Code of Practice

Snakes & Ladders staff will:

- Treat all children and young people with respect
- Provide an example of good conduct you wish others to follow
- Respect a young person's right to personal privacy / encourage young people and adults to feel comfortable and caring enough to point out attitudes or behaviour they do not like
- Remember that someone else might misinterpret your actions, no matter how well intentioned
- Be aware that even physical contact with a child or young person may be misinterpreted
- Recognise that special caution is required when you are discussing sensitive issues with children or young people
- Operate within the Church's (organisation's) principles and guidance and any particular procedure of the diocese, parish, order or club
- Challenge unacceptable behaviour and report all allegations/suspicions of abuse

You must not

- Have inappropriate physical or verbal contact with children or young people
- Allow yourself to be drawn into inappropriate attention seeking behaviour/make suggestive or derogatory remarks or gestures in front of children and young people
- Jump to conclusions about others without checking facts
- Either exaggerate or trivialise child abuse issues
- Show favouritism to any individual
- Rely on your good name or that of the Church's (organisation or charity) to protect you
- Believe 'it could never happen to me'
- Take a chance when common sense, policy or practice suggests another more prudent approach you should give guidance and support to inexperienced helpers.

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Appendix 2

Protecting Children and Workers

A. Contact with children

You can reduce likely situations for abuse of children and help protect your staff and volunteers from false accusations by making sure that everyone is aware that, as a general rule, it doesn't make sense to:

- Spend excessive amounts of time alone with children, away from others
- Take children alone in a car on journeys, however short
- Take children to your home

When it is unavoidable that these things happen, they should only occur with the full knowledge and consent of someone in charge of the organisation and/or the child's parents.

B. Relationships with children

You should make it clear to all your staff in your organisation that they should never:

- Engage in rough physical games including horse-play
- Engage in sexually provocative games
- Allow or engage in inappropriate touching of any form
- Allow children to use inappropriate language unchallenged
- Make sexually suggestive comments about or to a child, even in fun
- Let allegations a child makes be ignored or go unrecorded
- Do things of a personal nature for children that they can do themselves

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C. Restraint

Restraint is where a child is being held, moved or prevented from moving, against their will, because not to do so would result in injury to themselves or others or would cause significant damage to property. Restraint must always be used as a last resort, when all other methods of controlling a situation have been tried and failed. Restraint should never be used as a punishment or to bring out compliance (except where there is a risk injury) only staff who are properly trained in restraint techniques should carry it out.

A young person should be restrained for the shortest period necessary to bring the situation under control. Where possible help should be sought from a school staff member ASAP.

All such incidents should be recorded and details shared with Snakes & Ladders office and if appropriate, the educational facility 'Restraint Log' detailing the facts of the behaviour, witnesses, who restrained the young person and how, what other methods had been tried and what follow up action took place, a copy to be retained by the therapist, and copies given to manager and school contact.

A restraint policy applies to all young people equally, regardless of age or sex. It is acceptable for a member of the opposite sex to restrain a child because it is being used to prevent a serious injury. There should be a programme of training in place on restraint procedures.

D. Intimate care

It may sometimes be necessary for your staff to do things of a personal nature for children, particularly if they are very young or disabled. These tasks should only be carried out with the full understanding and consent of parents. In an emergency situation that requires this type of help, parents should be fully informed, as soon as reasonably possible.

If the parent is waiting outside the room or nearby they will be required to take care of their child's needs as and when required.

In such situations, it is important that you ensure that all staff are sensitive to the child and undertake personal care tasks with the utmost discretion.

E. Relationships of trust

'The inequality at the heart of a relationship of trust should be ended before any sexual relationship begins.' Caring for Young People and the Vulnerable? Guidance for preventing abuse of trust (Home Office 1999).

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This statement recognises that genuine relationships do occur between the different levels of participants in a group but that no intimate relationship should begin whilst the member of staff is in a 'position of trust' over them. The power and influence that an older member of staff has over someone attending a group or activity cannot be under-estimated, if there is an additional competitive aspect to the activity and the older person is responsible for the young person's success or failure to some extent, then the dependency of the younger member upon the older will be increased. It is therefore vital for staff to recognise the responsibility they must exercise in ensuring that they do not abuse their position of trust. Young people aged 16-18 can legally consent to some types of sexual activity; however, in some provisions of legislation they are classified as children.

In certain circumstances the 'abuse of trust' is a criminal offence (Sexual Offences (Amendment) Act) 2000 (UK wide).

Supervision of Children

Constant supervision of children is one of the most effective ways of minimising opportunities for children to suffer harm of any kind whilst in your care.

Therapists are responsible for the welfare and safety of the children for the whole time they are in session, a child should never be left in the therapy room alone, even for a moment

All children should be adequately supervised at all times and activities and materials should be suitable for the age group they belong to

In circumstances when the child needs to leave the room to go to the toilet for example, they should be accompanied and the staff member should wait outside to escort them back to the therapy room

If the parent is waiting outside the room they will be responsible for accompanying their child to the toilet.

Dangerous behaviour by children should not be allowed

Older children may be able to leave the session and return to class alone, younger or more vulnerable children will require escorting to their next venue / classroom.