



Middlesbrough Environment City

Policy on the Welfare and Safety of Children and Other Vulnerable Groups

Date of Issue: 27th October 2020

Reference: Po14/10

1. Introduction

The purpose of this policy is to outline the duties and responsibilities of staff, volunteers and trustees in relation to the protection of children, young people and vulnerable adults.

2. Purpose of the Document

The purpose of this Safeguarding Policy and any referenced accompanying guidance or policies, is to:

- Ensure that everyone, including MEC personnel, do not experience harassment, abuse or any other infringement of their rights whilst acting in their role.
- Ensure that any adult or child we come into contact with through our work as a beneficiary, or connected to a beneficiary of our work, does not experience any abuse or harm as a result of their engagement with MEC personnel.
- Ensure specifically that the welfare of children and vulnerable adults remains the paramount consideration in all aspects of our work.
- Ensure all personnel understand how to implement good safeguarding practice in their role.
- Ensure all personnel know how to respond appropriately where concerns arise about specific children, vulnerable adults or other personnel.
- Provide clarity about the process that will be followed when this policy is breached.

The Policy should be read in conjunction with the associated document, Pr11, Guidance on the Welfare of Children and Other Vulnerable Groups.

3. Policy Statement

Middlesbrough Environment City (MEC) is fully committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults, engaged in all of the organisation's activities. All children, young people and adults have the right to be safe from harm and should be able to live free from fear of abuse, neglect and exploitation.

MEC is committed to providing a safe environment for all children and other vulnerable people with whom it comes into contact. It agrees that the welfare of the individual is paramount, and all have the right to feel protected and valued regardless of gender, ethnicity, disability, sexuality or beliefs.

MEC will ensure that the policy is implemented by using its relevant procedures and by nominating a Protection Officer.

Specifically:

- This policy applies to anyone acting on behalf of MEC in any capacity.
- MEC is committed to safeguarding all vulnerable people we engage with through our work and takes a zero-tolerance approach to any form of bullying, harassment and sexual exploitation and abuse.
- Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility in MEC but we recognise that senior leaders have a particular responsibility to set the tone and culture of an organisation to ensure best safeguarding practice is expected and normalised.
- All children have an equal right to protection from harm regardless of their gender, culture, ethnicity, age, religion, sexual orientation, or ability.
- Children have a right to have their voices heard and their views should genuinely shape and influence how we work.
- All adults have a responsibility to respond when they are concerned that a child may be at risk of harm.
- Anyone that reports a concern regarding a colleague in good faith will be protected under the MEC Whistleblowing Policy.
- Safeguarding concerns will be managed through a robust and transparent process.
- Information will be managed confidentially and only shared without consent where the duty to protect children from harm supersedes an individual's right to privacy
- Safeguarding decisions will be made in a timely manner and should not be subject to unnecessary delay.
- Anyone working on behalf of MEC will be subject to the most robust safeguarding recruitment checks for which they are eligible.
- Anyone working on behalf of MEC will receive safeguarding training appropriate to their role and responsibilities.
- Serious breaches in this policy and other further guidance may result in formal disciplinary action being taken.

4. Background and Definitions

- Safeguarding – is a broad term that refers to all the policies, procedures and actions that an organisation takes and puts in place to ensure that anyone working on their behalf, and anyone benefitting from the work they are doing, does not come to any harm, either intended or unintended, as a result of this work taking place. It includes both policies and procedures and the culture within the organisation that either promotes or hinders best safeguarding practice.
- Child - anyone under the age of 18 years old.
- Child Safeguarding - refers to all the actions we take to keep all children we come into contact with safe. It includes the proactive measures we put in place to ensure children do not come to harm as a result of our contact with them
- Child Protection - refers to the actions we take when we have specific concerns that a particular child is at risk of significant harm.
- Adult safeguarding – refers to all the actions we take to ensure that any adults we come into contact with through our work, or who work on our behalf are safe. It includes adults connected to the children we are seeking to benefit and adults that work for MEC.
- Whistleblowing – describes the act of speaking out about certain types of wrongdoing at work which you believe to be in the public interest.
- Vulnerable adults – any person aged 18 years and over who is or may be in need of community care services by reason of mental health issues, learning or physical disability, sensory impairment, age or illness and who is or may be unable to take care of him/herself or unable to protect him/herself against significant harm or serious exploitation.
- Vulnerable circumstances – vulnerability is a changeable and contextual state but may include people with a diagnosed condition such as dementia or blindness, individuals

with learning difficulties or literacy issues, or those who have a mental health condition such as severe anxiety or depression.

5. Legal and Regulatory Framework

5.1 Legal Framework

This policy and guidance reflect the principles contained within the Human Rights Act 1998, the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998, the Mental Capacity Act 2005 and the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006.

The following also underpin the policy:

The Children's Act 1989 (amended 2004) – states that the welfare and developmental needs of children are of paramount concern and over-ride other considerations.

The Protection of Children Act 1999 – requires employers to check on the suitability of employees.

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child - sets out how all children should have access to basic human rights.

The Police Act 1997 – establishes the code of practice for registered persons and other recipients of disclosure information through the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checking service.

5.2 Safeguarding Adults Board

All local authorities have a Safeguarding Adults Board to oversee multi-agency work aimed at protecting and safeguarding vulnerable adults. In this area, The Tees wide Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Board is working in partnership to ensure that adults living and residing in the Boroughs of Hartlepool, Stockton, Middlesbrough and Redcar & Cleveland are safeguarded and protected.

5.3 Agencies Engaged in the Protection of Children

The Children's Act 1989 gives Local Authority Social Services the primary responsibility for the care and protection of abused children and children at risk of abuse. It is their statutory duty to ensure that there is an investigation in cases of suspected abuse or significant harm.

The overriding concern of the Police in child protection is the welfare of the child. Their general duties are to investigate crimes as well as a duty to prevent offences being committed and to protect those at risk of harm. The Children's Act 1989 permits the Police to take a child into police protection where there is reasonable cause to believe that he/she would otherwise be at risk of significant harm. Police and Social Services will work jointly where it is likely that criminal proceedings will be brought against the perpetrator of the abuse.

The NSPCC pursues its objective of identifying and preventing child abuse through consultation and cooperation with Social Services. They are identified as an 'authorised person' under the Children Act 1989. NSPCC runs national Child Protection Help lines. Child Protection Officers of the NSPCC are required to initiate procedures that ensure their own appropriate response to any complaint or request for help on all matters concerning children.

6. Definitions of Abuse

Children or other vulnerable people may be in need of protection where their basic needs are not being met, in a manner appropriate to their age and stage of development, and they will be at risk through avoidable acts of commission or omission on the part of their parent(s), sibling(s) or other relative(s), or carer(s) or others responsible for their well-being.

The broad categories of abuse for the purpose of the Policy and Procedure are as follows: neglect; physical abuse; sexual abuse; and emotional abuse.

These are described as follows:

Neglect, where adults

- Fail to meet the child or vulnerable person's basic physical needs for food, warm clothing, etc.
- Fail or refuse to give the child or vulnerable person love, affection or attention
- Frequently leave the child or vulnerable person alone and unsupervised

Physical abuse, where the child or other vulnerable person is

- Physically hurt or injured, e.g. by hitting, shaking, squeezing, biting or burning etc.
- Given alcohol, inappropriate drugs or poison
- Subjected to attempts at suffocation or drowning

Sexual abuse

- When adults of either sex use boys or girls or other vulnerable people to meet their own sexual needs
- This includes all kinds of direct sexual display or activity, also the showing to a child of any form of pornographic material or taking pictures for such purposes

Emotional abuse, occurs where

- There is a persistent lack of love or affection
- There is a constant over protection preventing the child from socialising
- There is frequent taunting or being shouted at
- There is, or has been, experience of one of the other categories of abuse

7. Duty of Care

Anyone working with children or adults at risk has a legal and moral duty of care to do all they can to protect them from harm. Specifically this means:

- A duty to behave in a way that does not place children or adults at risk of harm.
- A duty to report all safeguarding concerns about specific children or adults at risk to MEC and ensure these concerns are addressed.

MEC has a duty to ensure concerns are reported onto the appropriate authorities who can act to protect them, as per the reporting process below. MEC also has a duty follow up such referrals to ensure action has been taken.

8. Good Practice

Everyone should operate within the following good practice guidelines:

- **Risk Mitigation:** Consider the potential risks or negative impact on children or adults at risk of any activity we engage in prior to any piece of work starting and putting in place appropriate safeguards
- **Special Considerations:** Work in a way that makes provision for children or adults at risk who need additional support due to their needs or circumstances
- **Best Practice:** Plan and deliver any activities that involve direct contact with children or adults at risk following the Procedure Pr11 Guidance on the Welfare and Safety of Children and Other Vulnerable Groups.

- **Putting Children First:** Ensure anyone working on behalf of MEC follows all of this guidance and adheres to the appropriate policies and procedures.

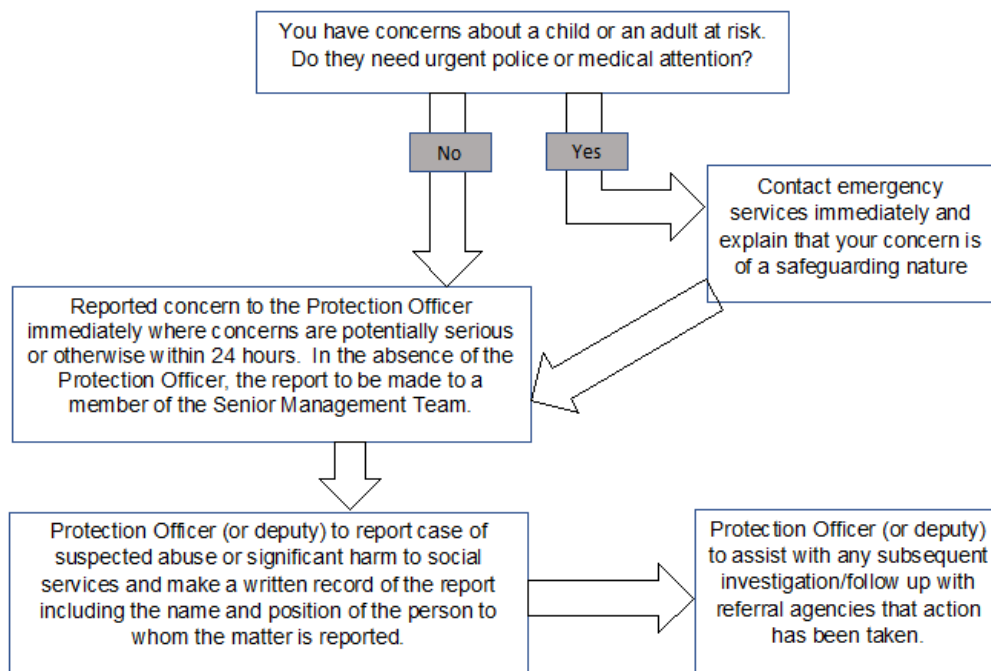
9. Recognising and Reporting Concerns

Whenever anyone working or representing MEC is concerned about a child or vulnerable adult, they have a duty to report their concern so that steps can be taken to protect that person from harm. It is not the responsibility of staff of MEC or others representing the organisation to decide if abuse is occurring, but it is our responsibility to act on any concerns by reporting them. Concerns should always be reported following the process outlined below, even if the person making the report is not certain that abuse has taken place.

Concerns about risk of harm to children may come to our attention in a number of different ways, including:

- **Observation:** Something that an adult or child observes about another adult or child's behaviour that causes them concern.
- **Disclosure:** A child or adult disclosing that they have been abused, either currently or in the past, or that they are worried another child may be being abused. This is the least likely way we will hear about abuse and we must be vigilant to identify other signs of potential harm to children and act upon them.
- **Risk Assessment:** MEC risk assessment processes identifying potential safeguarding risks that could occur due to our actions.
- **Recruitment:** Information that is disclosed through safe recruitment processes.

MEC could receive safeguarding concerns through direct contact with adults and children or indirect such as email and social media. However concerns arise, they must be reported and responded to by the organisation. Concerns should be reported as follows:



10. Designated Protection Officer

MEC has designated an officer to deal with all instances involving adult and child protection that arise at MEC. They will respond to all protection concerns and enquiries. They will advise trustees, staff and volunteers on protection issues, safe recruiting and DBS checks. The officer will also provide updates to trustees, staff and volunteers with regards to any relevant changes in legislation linked to child protection and arrange training as necessary.

The designated Protection Officer is the Director.

11. Related Policies and Procedures

This Policy has specific links with the following:

- Pr 11 - Guidance on the Welfare of Children and Other Vulnerable Groups
- Po 01 – Health and Safety Policy
- Po 09 – Disclosure Policy
- Po 10 – Policy on the Employment of Ex-Offenders
- Pr 06 – Recruitment Procedure
- Pr 22 – Protected Disclosure Policy

12. Review

This policy will be reviewed annually or when required by changes in legislation or good practice, whichever is the sooner.

Policy Written:	27th October 2020
Approved By:	
Date:	
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