



Safeguarding Policy

1. Introduction:

- 1.1** This policy is for ensuring the welfare, protection and safeguarding of any child or young person with SEND, aged 0 – 25, that becomes known to Essex Family Forum. Safeguarding concerns that become known about any other family member may also be escalated through this policy.

2. Policy Scope:

- 2.1** This policy covers all children and young people with SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) aged 0 – 25. This also includes vulnerable adults who become known to the Forum through its activities. All Essex Family Forum Committee Members, employees, volunteers and representatives are bound to the terms of this policy and must make a disclosure where there is a suspected safeguarding issue.

3. Policy Purpose:

- 3.1** The aim of this policy is to provide members of the Essex Family Forum, the Committee, Representatives, staff and volunteers with clear guidance about their role and responsibilities in safeguarding children and vulnerable persons, and to provide information for parents and carers about the safeguarding measures that Essex Family Forum employs to ensure that it meets its responsibilities to promote the welfare of, and safeguard children and young people.

4. Policy Background:

4.1 Legislation:

This Policy and Procedures have been developed in line with the principles of The Children Act 1989 and The Children Act 2004, and Working Together to Safeguard Children 2010 and with reference to the following:

- What to Do If You're Worried a Child Is Being Abused (2006)
- Every Child Matters 2004
- Non Statutory Guidance on Safeguarding Disabled Children (2009)
- UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

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4.2 Principles behind safeguarding children and young people:

In today's world all agencies and individuals now 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 the Essex Family Forum's Safeguarding Policy and Procedures is based on the following key principles:

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

4.3 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. There are many reasons for this, and 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.

5 Policy Guidance:

5.1 Definitions and signs of abuse

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

The following definitions are based on those from Working Together to Safeguard Children (DCSF 2010)

(i) 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 feigns the

symptoms of, or deliberately causes ill health to, a child whom they are looking after. A person might do this because they enjoy or need the attention they get through having a sick child. Physical abuse, as well as being a result of an act of commission can also be caused through omission or the failure to act to protect.

(ii) 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 making 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 developmental 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.

(iii) Sexual Abuse

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. 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 on-line images, watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways. Boys and girls can be sexually abused by males and/or females, by adults and by other young people. This includes people from all different walks of life.

(iv) 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. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born it may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, failing to protect a child from physical harm or danger, failure to ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care givers) 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.

(v) Child Sexual Exploitation

This is a form of child sexual abuse and occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person 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.

Self-harm must also be taken seriously and may include self-mutilation, eating disorders, suicide threats and other gestures by a child or young person. The possibility this may be caused by any form of abuse or neglect should not be overlooked. Individuals must always be seen as children in need and offered help via available services.

6 Policy Wording:

6.1 Principles

- Essex Family Forum 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.
- Whilst it is not the responsibility of Essex Family Forum to determine 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.
- Parent carers of children who attend or are members of Essex Family Forum, the Management Committee, representatives, staff and volunteers need to be aware that any concerns that a child or vulnerable adult has, or may be, experiencing harm, may be referred to the local statutory agency.
- All Essex Family Forum employees and Management Committee members are expected to be familiar with, and comply with this policy, and its procedures.
- The Management Committee and staff will all be expected to refresh their knowledge of this policy and safeguarding procedures on an annual basis.

- If any member of the Management Committee or any member of staff have any doubt as to their duties under this policy, it is their responsibility to raise this with the named Safeguarding Leads so that they can be provided with further training to assist them to fulfil their duties.

6.2 Recruitment selection and Vetting Process

- The Management Committee, and any staff employed by the Essex Family Forum 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.
- All staff and Management Committee members are DBS checked. In addition, staff also undergo a selection process. Staff and committee members are asked to provide a reference. All applicants will be given the opportunity to disclose any previous offences/convictions prior to any checks being carried out.
- Everyone will be provided with training and induction to assist them to fulfil their duties.
- In the event of a DBS check disclosing an offence this will be raised with the Management Committee, who will decide whether it is appropriate for the candidate to work for Essex Family Forum. Applicants will be given the opportunity to make a representation before a decision is made.

7 Policy Procedure:

7.1 Principles

Whilst recognising that Essex Family Forum 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 provide clear guidance about what processes and actions should be taken if this is identified to ensure that children are safeguarded and protected.

7.2 Guidance on how to respond to a child / young person / vulnerable adult disclosing abuse

DO:

- Do treat any allegations extremely seriously and act at all times towards the child as if you believe what they are saying.
- Do tell the child they are right to tell you.
- Do reassure them that they are not to blame.

- Do be honest about your own position, who you have to tell and why.
- Do tell the child what you are doing and when and keep them up to date with what is happening.
- Do take further action – you may be the only person in a position to prevent future abuse – tell the nominated Essex Family Forum Safeguarding Officer immediately.
- Do write down everything said and what was done.

DON'T:

- Don't make promises you can't keep.
- Don't interrogate the child – it is not your job to carry out an investigation – this will be up to the police and Children's social care, who have experience in this. ☒ Don't cast doubt on what the child has told you, don't interrupt or change the subject.
- Don't say anything that makes the child feel responsible for the abuse.
- Don't do nothing – make sure you tell the nominated Essex Family Forum Safeguarding Officer immediately – they will know how to follow this up and where to go for further advice.

7.3 Guidance on how to respond to a parent carer disclosing abuse

DO:

- If you enter into a discussion with a parent carer who you believe may begin to disclose information which leads you to believe that a child has suffered, or may suffer harm, make sure they know as soon as possible that you will not be able to keep this information to yourself.
- Do treat any allegations extremely seriously and act at all times towards the parent carer as if you believe what they are saying.
- Do tell the parent carer they are right to tell you.
- Do be honest about who you have to tell and why.
- Do make sure you are clear (if possible) where the child / young person / vulnerable adult is at the current time and consider their immediate safety.
- Do write down everything said and what was done.

DON'T:

- Don't make promises you can't keep – e.g. tell people they can tell you things in confidence.
- Don't interrogate the parent carer – it is not your job to carry out an investigation – this will be up to the police and Children's social care, who have experience in this.
- Don't do nothing – make sure you tell the Essex Family Forum Safeguarding Officer immediately – they will know how to follow this up and where to go for further advice.

7.4 Reporting Procedures – DO NOT DELAY

(i) Emergency Situations

- If emergency medical attention is required, this can be secured by calling an ambulance (dial 999) or taking a child to the nearest Accident and Emergency Department.
- If a child is in immediate danger the police should be contacted (dial 999) as they alone have the power to remove a child immediately if protection is necessary, via their powers to use Police Protection.

(ii) Other situations

It is vitally important that any disclosure made in confidence is recorded factually as soon as possible; this is whether or not the matter is taken to another authority.

- (a) An accurate account should be made of:
 - Date and time of what has occurred and the time the disclosure was made
 - Names of people who were involved
 - What was said or done by whom
 - Any action taken by the group to gather information and refer on
 - Any further action, e.g. suspension of a worker or volunteer
 - Where relevant, reasons why there is no referral to a statutory agency
 - Names of person reporting and to whom reported
- (b) The designated member of Essex Family Forum responsible for Safeguarding should then use the appropriate reporting systems for the situation. This may be reporting the matter to Essex County Council's Children and Families Hub on 0345 603 7627 or the police. This is why recording all information impartially and accurately is vital as this could be used for evidence for later use.
- (c) In addition to calling the Hub or police - Ralph Holloway, Head of SEND Strategy and Innovation is a direct and key contact at Essex County

Council to report any safeguarding concerns to. Mr Holloway is able to liaise most quickly and effectively with all the teams across Essex County Council to make sure information gets to the right person.

- (d) Completed forms and any written information regarding Safeguarding Children issues concerning individual's needs to be kept in a safe locked place to ensure confidentiality.

(iii) Allegations against Adults who work with Children

If you have information which suggests 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 offence against, or related to a child;
- Behaved towards a child/ren in a way that indicated s/he is unsuitable to work with children

You should speak immediately with the Essex Family Forum Safeguarding Officer. The safeguarding officer will consult with / make a referral to the LADO for the relevant area. (Local Authority Delegated Officer)

7.5 Should we tell parent / carers if we are going to make a referral?

Any concerns should not be discussed with any parent/carer and always referred directly to the Essex Family Forum Safeguarding Officer or their deputy. If neither of these is possible, the concerns should be raised with any one member of the Management Committee to progress appropriate.

7.6 Code of Conduct

- Essex Family Forum has a Code of Conduct which all members/staff are expected to comply with.
- The Code of Conduct has a clear section in relation to action taken should a safeguarding issue be raised in relation to a member/staff member.
- Members must inform the Chair/committee about any personal difficulties that might affect your ability to exercise your responsibilities appropriately. As members Essex Family Forum are expected to work in partnership at the highest level with various Local authorities and Health departments, any personal circumstance which may pose a conflict for individuals, and therefore for the organisation must be declared immediately.

The following are examples of types of circumstances :

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- Any allegation that an individual may have committed, or is being investigated in relation to having committed a crime
 - Any child protection or safeguarding concern relating to children and / or vulnerable adults.
 - Any significant challenge between individuals and Government agencies (e.g. where individuals may end up in a litigious relationship with a central or local Government Department)
 - Other similar circumstances
- In these situations, it will be standard practice to ask the individual to temporarily stand down until the issues are resolved. This is a neutral and non-judgemental position, designed to protect the organisation and the individual, and to ensure the individual involved is able to focus all of their attention on the issue at hand. It is felt necessary however to insist on this protocol to safeguard both Essex Family Forum and the individual involved.

7.7 Nominated Safeguarding Officer

The nominated Safeguarding officer for the Essex Family Forum is:

Kevin Gay – Management Committee

The secondary named person to report concerns to is:

Julia Brunning - Strategic Lead

The role of the nominated officer(s) is to:

- To provide a single point of contact between the Essex Family Forum and the statutory child protection agencies - children's social care and the police.
- To offer consultation and advice about safeguarding and child protection concerns pertaining to the activity of the Essex Family Forum.

7. Approval and Review Dates:

Approved on: November 2024

Approved by: Management Committee

Date for Review: November 2025