

PEMBROKE HOUSE POLICY FOR SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN

Our commitment

Pembroke House is committed to providing a welcoming and safe environment for everyone – children, young people, volunteers, staff and visitors.

We believe that safeguarding children is the responsibility of everyone. We recognise that all children have a right to equal protection regardless of background. All young people up to the age of 18 are protected by the Children Act, 1989.

We are committed to creating a caring environment in which children and adults feel confident about sharing any concerns they might have about their own safety or the well-being of others.

All staff and volunteers should familiarise themselves with our policy on safeguarding children set out in this document, which explains:

- How to identify abuse
- What to do if you suspect abuse
- How to run activities with children safely
- Recruitment, training and supervision of staff and volunteers

How to identify abuse

You should be alert for the following signs of possible abuse. Don't forget, however, that there can also be perfectly normal explanations for many of these behaviours. You might be concerned, for example, if there was a marked change in behaviour or a number of unexplained signs.

- **Physical abuse**, for example: hitting, shaking, poisoning, burning or suffocating.
Look out for: unexplained injuries, reluctance to discuss injuries, arms and legs covered in hot weather, fear of returning home, aggression towards others, persistent stomach ache.
- **Emotional and psychological abuse**, for example: making a child feel worthless, unloved or inadequate.
Look out for: over-reaction to mistakes, sudden speech disorders, neurotic behaviours (thumb sucking, hair twisting etc.), self-mutilation, persistent stomach ache.
- **Neglect**, for example: failure to provide adequate food, shelter, clothing or medical care.
Look out for: constant hunger, poor personal hygiene, poor state of clothing, untreated medical problems.
- **Sexual abuse or exploitation**, for example: forcing a child to take part in sexual activities (with or without consent), looking at or producing pornographic material or encouraging sexually inappropriate behaviour.
Look out for: over familiarity with adults or provocative behaviour, introversion, sleeplessness, nightmares, sudden behaviour changes.
- **Financial or material abuse**, for example: forcing a child to work, or take part in illegal activities for the financial benefit of others, taking a child's pocket money.

Look out for: unusual or unexpected cash or valuables being carried by children, unusual interest in money, fear or anxiety about money.

- **Discriminatory abuse**, for example: insulting, threatening or excluding a child because of their race, religion or background.

Look out for: being withdrawn and isolated, expressions of anger, frustration, fear or anxiety, lack of respect shown to others of different backgrounds, signs of substandard service being offered to a child from minority backgrounds, repeated exclusion from rights afforded to others such as health or education.

What to do if you suspect abuse

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. Our priority must be the welfare of the child and it is not safe to assume that someone else will take action. If you have concerns, you must report them immediately. However, staff and volunteers are **not** responsible for investigating or attempting to resolve suspected abuse.

In some cases, incidents may arise in your presence or you may have concerns based on your own observations. In others, a child or a third party may disclose information to you about events or concerns outside of circumstances to which you have access. The process to follow is the same, whether it is your concern, based on your observations, or a concern or disclosure reported to you by the child or a third party.

How to report concerns

- If the child is in immediate danger, **call emergency services on 999**.
- Most situations are not an emergency, so you should seek advice before action.
- Volunteers or parents can report to a member of staff such as their Project Lead or the Volunteer Coordinator, the Warden or directly to the Safeguarding Officer.
- Members of staff must report all safeguarding concerns to the Safeguarding Officer who will take appropriate action.
- If the Safeguarding Officer is not available, contact the Warden.
- If neither the Safeguarding Officer nor the Warden are available, you must contact the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser (DSA) for advice.
- In cases where none of the above can be contacted, and you require urgent advice, you should contact Social Services.
- Remember that confidentiality is very important. Do not speak to the alleged abusers or the child's parents, carers or relatives if they are the alleged abuser. This could put the child and others more at risk or cloud a statutory investigation; seek advice from the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser or, if they are not available, from Social Services on what can be shared.
- Make a record of your concerns and observations, including anything the child has said, the date, time and who was involved, as soon as possible, while ensuring that any necessary action has priority. You should make all effort to produce a written record on the same day. Making the record must not be delayed by more than 24 hours after the incident/concern. Be objective: record facts and observations, do not record your own views or conclusions.
- Send your record to the Safeguarding Officer within 24 hours of the incident/concern and ensure that the Safeguarding Officer has received it, for example by checking with a telephone call. If you send your report on email and receive an out of office auto-reply, contact that Warden or the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser.

How to react if a child spontaneously talks about experiences which give cause for concern

- Don't panic – respond calmly
- Have a conversation with the child in a setting that respects their privacy, for example, not in front of others in the group/project concerned, while safeguarding you and them: never be alone with a child in a space where there are no other adults present who have been safely recruited.
- Explain that you may not be able to keep a secret and may share with others what the child has said.
- Listen carefully and with your full attention.
- Don't ask leading questions, put words in the child's mouth, rephrase what has been said or probe for more information than is offered.
- Don't stop the child recalling events.
- Take the child's worries seriously without judging.
- Accept what you have been told without expressing disbelief or shock or challenging it.
- Reassure the child and tell them they were right to tell you.
- Explain what you will do next without making promises you can't keep.
- Take notes as soon as possible after the conversation (not during) and use the child's own words where possible.

What happens next?

When a safeguarding concern is reported, the Safeguarding Officer will involve the appropriate authorities, make sure that all the details of the incident and action needed are recorded securely in the Safeguarding Incident Form and that staff and volunteers involved are given appropriate support and guidance.

A member of the Senior Management Team will review the incident to ensure that it was handled appropriately and to consider whether risks could be reduced to prevent a similar incident arising.

Three months after the incident, the Safeguarding Officer will check that any action points have been carried out.

How to run activities with children safely

Planning activities

- A minimum of two members of staff who have been safely recruited and who have undergone Disclosure and Barring Service checks of a level appropriate to the activity concerned must be present in all activities that include children taking part without an adult carer.
- Carry out a risk assessment before any new activities and discuss any safeguarding risks with the Safeguarding Officer. Any off-site visits will also need a separate risk assessment.
- Make sure you keep a register of names, addresses and emergency contacts.

Delivering activities: high standards of staff and volunteer behaviour

- You should never be left alone with children. They must be at least in sight and hearing of other adults. If a child needs to be shown the way to the toilet, the accompanying adult should remain within sight of another adult.

- Be an excellent role model. This includes not smoking, drinking alcohol or swearing in the company of children.
- Wear clothes that are appropriate to the activity involved: for example, if you are dancing or playing games or sports, ensure that your clothes do not reveal sensitive body parts or undergarments when performing movements.
- Give enthusiastic and constructive feedback instead of negative criticism.
- Avoid sarcasm, discrimination, labelling and unnecessary competition or comparison.
- Keep physical interactions relevant to the activity in question. If an activity involves touch, explain that everyone should check it is okay before they touch another participant. Avoid physical contact if not part of the activity.
- Keep verbal interactions relevant to the activity in question. It is fine to engage in normal greetings and social conversation, for example before the activity when participants are arriving, but do not engage in conversations of a personal nature, for example about intimate relationships.
- Respond warmly if a child needs comforting, but make sure that physical contact in this case is kept to an appropriate level, is in response to their need, with their permission, and happens only when other adults are around.
- Never force a child to consume food or drink.
- Never do things of a personal nature for a child that they can do for themselves. If you have to do things of a personal nature for a child, make sure you obtain and record the full consent of the parents and permission from the Project Lead. If an emergency requires this type of help, parents and the Project Lead should be fully informed as soon as possible.
- Never engage in rough physical games or sexually provocative games.
- Never make sexually suggestive comments about or to a child, even in fun. If a child makes an inappropriate comment, do not ignore it or pretend you have not heard it. Be firm, label it inappropriate, and make it clear that you will not engage in the conversation.
- Never undertake any tasks involving children you feel you are inadequately trained to work with or have concerns about.

Discipline

- Never inflict physical punishment of any kind, nor shouting, verbal abuse or emotional blackmail or insults. Never ridicule or humiliate a child.
- A child may be temporarily excluded from an activity if they are using unacceptable behaviour. This must always be explained in language the child understands and followed up with a discussion with parents/guardians.
- Restraint must be a last resort and only used to prevent a child harming themselves or others or doing significant damage to property.
- It is never acceptable for a volunteer or a member of staff to suffer physical, verbal or emotional abuse. If this happens, first clearly and assertively explain that it must stop immediately. If this proves ineffective, and the exclusion of a child or group of children does not solve the problem either, then the activity must be brought to an end and the children returned to their parents/guardians where appropriate.
- If faced by aggressive behaviour that gets out of control, avoid physical engagement. Call the child's parents/carers immediately and ask them to come and pick up the child. As a last resort, if the child is above the age of 10 and you believe there is a serious risk of harm to anyone involved, call the Police. Deploy de-escalation techniques while you wait. Some techniques are listed below, but the list is not exhaustive:

- Stay calm: relax your body, keep hands visible in front of body, open, and relaxed, minimise gesturing, pacing, fidgeting
- Allow space (2 arms' length) between you and the child and stand at an angle to them not directly facing them
- Do not block exits
- Manage your own response: adopt a calm facial expression, modulate your tone of voice to reflect empathy or no emotional response
- Clearly set limits verbally and repeat them if necessary
- Do not argue, validate feelings (this is not the same as agreeing)
- Ask if the child needs water, a moment alone, to sit down, etc.
- Ask questions, provide choices, encourage cooperation

Recruitment, training and supervision

Appropriate safeguarding will be put in place around individuals to protect all members of the community.

A recruitment process is outlined for all staff, contractors and volunteers in our recruitment policy where clear guidelines are given on safeguarding considerations, such as on the appropriate number and content of references to be obtained.

Where there is a need for further safeguarding considerations in a specific project where staff, contractors or volunteers work with children, the Project Lead concerned will make necessary provisions with the Safeguarding Officer.

Staff, contractors and volunteers who work with children must have a DBS check at an appropriate level unless they are supervised at all times by another member of staff who has undergone such a check. The DBS check process involves a Confidential Declaration which they have to read, complete, and sign. They may also be asked to provide additional references, relevant to the work.

Any concerns resulting from a DBS check will be referred to the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser in the first instance, and a risk assessment will be carried out under their guidance.

All new staff and volunteers will read and understand this policy as part of their induction process and before they are in a position to deliver services to members of the community, so that they are able to identify the signs of abuse and confident about the steps to take and to whom to report any concerns.

All new staff and volunteers who work with children will also attend safeguarding training and regular refresher courses.

We have two designated Safeguarding Officers in Pembroke House who are responsible for making sure that staff and volunteers are trained and supported on safeguarding issues. Contact details for the Safeguarding Officers are displayed in the foyer and website.

Additional safeguarding cover is provided by the Warden of Pembroke House, who is the Priest-in-Charge of St. Christopher's Church and leads on safeguarding in the church.

In addition, we have a designated member of the Board of Directors (Trustees) with oversight of safeguarding, who holds the senior management team and the Warden to account on all matters relating to safeguarding: for example ensuring timely reviews, checking the quality of staff training and the relevance of policies and procedures, and who gives advice on occasional safeguarding cases or represents the organisation in case reviews at a senior level where needed.

Possible abuse by a member of staff or volunteer

Where a member of staff, volunteer, or a trustee is suspected of abuse, the Safeguarding Officer should seek advice from the Diocesan Safeguarding Team immediately (on the out of hours number if necessary). Depending on the advice given, the Safeguarding Officer may then interview the alleged victim. Another member of Pembroke House Senior Management Team, the Warden, a Diocesan Safeguarding Officer, or a Trustee must be present at the interview and the alleged victim should have the opportunity to bring someone for support.

The purpose of the meeting is not to investigate but to establish if there are grounds for the allegation.

In cases where such grounds are established, the Safeguarding Officer will work with the Diocesan Safeguarding Team to report the concerns to statutory authorities and to ensure that the same authorities are given all assistance to pursue any investigation.

Pembroke House will also seek to support the member of staff or volunteer, or where appropriate to ensure that alternative support is in place throughout the process.

When allegations are proven, suspension and/or disciplinary procedures may be implemented according to our disciplinary procedures and in line with legislation: Working Together to Safeguard Children 2019.

Review

Pembroke House will ensure that safeguarding issues receive continuous attention and will regularly review the way we operate to support this principle. The child safeguarding policy will be reviewed annually and when there are any changes in legislation.