

# Reaching Families

*Empowering families of children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities*

## Safeguarding Policy and Procedures

### Safeguarding Policy Statement

Reaching Families is committed to ensuring that all members and users are safeguarded while using its services and facilities. We do not directly work with children but have contact with parents/carers at our training events, support groups, our befriending service, and via online events, social media and email. Therefore, we recognise the need to be vigilant in ensuring the safety and well-being of children and parent carers that may be vulnerable, and act in their best interests if we have reason to believe that either has been victim of abuse or exploitation. Should we have concerns that either an adult or a child is at risk of significant harm, it is our responsibility to contact the Integrated Front Door (previously known as MASH) to pass on these concerns.

Reaching Families has a Safeguarding Code of Conduct that outlines its expectations of staff and volunteers and what they should expect from us. This is provided to all staff and volunteers and is attached to this policy.

### Scope of the Policy

The aim of this policy is to ensure both:

- The safety of children and vulnerable adults by outlining clear procedures for handling safeguarding issues.
- That all employees, volunteers, and trustees within Reaching Families are clear about their safeguarding responsibilities.

### Definitions

A child is defined as a person under the age of 18. Exceptions to this are: Children who are placed in local authority care are usually classed as children until aged 21, and those with special educational needs and disabilities are regarded as children while aged under 25.

A vulnerable adult is a person aged 18 or over who: -

- has needs for care and support
- is experiencing or at risk of abuse or neglect
- as a result of those care and support needs is unable to protect themselves from either the risk of or the experience of abuse or neglect.

### What is abuse?

Abuse is a violation of an individual's human and civil rights by any other person or persons. It can take a variety of forms and the following lists are not exhaustive.

- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Psychological/ emotional abuse
- Neglect and self-neglect
- Exposure to domestic abuse involving others in the home
- Child criminal exploitation (for example County lines)

- Extremism and radicalisation
- Female Genital Mutilation
- Sexual exploitation
- Child trafficking
- Commercial exploitations and modern slavery
- Forced marriage
- Financial or material abuse
- Bullying, harassment and discriminatory abuse
- Organisational abuse

There is an important difference between safeguarding adults and children - adults may choose not to act to protect themselves. Unless the adult lacks capacity in that area or there is a risk to children or vulnerable adults then the law will allow adults to make choices that appear to cause them harm.

### **Implementing this policy**

Reaching Families will:

- Ensure that all relevant staff, trustees, and volunteers have an appropriate Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check where required.
- Ensure that all staff, trustees, and volunteers are aware of these safeguarding procedures and complete training appropriate to their role.
- Conduct safeguarding risk assessments for all activities and projects to ensure safe, inclusive environment for the parents we support.
- Have a named safeguarding lead who understands his/her responsibility to refer any safeguarding concerns to the appropriate statutory agency (i.e. Police, Social Services).
- Have a named trustee who will oversee the implementing of the Safeguarding policy and procedures, ensuring it is reviewed and updated as necessary and who will support the named safeguarding lead in their duties.
- Ensure that any suspicions and allegations of abuse will be taken seriously and responded to quickly and appropriately.
- Ensure families are given the opportunity to tell us what we are doing well and what the risks are to them and how we can help keep them and others safe.

### **What happens if someone discloses something or makes an allegation**

- Remain calm, do not show any strong reactions such as shock and/or disgust.
- Reassure the person that they are doing the right thing by telling you, and it is not their fault.
- Take the allegation seriously. Do not promise confidentiality, explain that you will have to share this information, but only to people who need to know such as the safeguarding lead.
- Accept what is said without comment or judgement.
- Take time to listen carefully to what is being said. Do not ask leading questions – use words such as what, why, who, when and how. This will allow them to share their story freely.
- Do not ask too many questions or press for more details. Do not interrupt them – allow them to share whatever is important to them.
- It is crucial that you record what was said/what you saw, where it was said/where you saw it and who was there, including their relationship to you.
- Record any questions you have asked and their views and wishes. In the case of a vulnerable adult also record what they want to be done. Do this as soon as you can so that none of the detail is lost – make sure you use the individual's own words as much as possible – do not add any interpretations, reactions, evaluations or conclusions.
- This information should be kept confidential and passed onto your safeguarding lead as soon as possible. Do not keep a copy for yourself.

## **Social Media and Online Activity**

If an employee, volunteer, or trustee notices a concerning post on social media or receives an email or message that worries them, they should bring it to the attention of the safeguarding lead as soon as possible for the above actions to be followed and any serious concerns to be passed on via the integrated front door as outlined below. Posts within the Facebook group may be removed if they contain particularly sensitive information.

A safeguarding statement is posted on the Facebook page along with the guidelines for use (see Social Media policy).

Members can attend online events such as training workshops and support groups, these are delivered via Zoom by invitation/booking system. The same process applies if there is a disclosure made during an online event, either verbally or via the chat message function.

## **What to do if you are concerned**

If an employee, volunteer or trustee is concerned that a child or vulnerable adult is at risk of significant harm: -

- Record your concern accurately with time and date
- Contact the safeguarding lead to discuss
- The safeguarding lead may wish to discuss the matter with the designated safeguarding trustee
- If appropriate, either the safeguarding lead or trustee will contact the Integrated Front Door to report the concern.
- Where an employee or volunteer has concerns that a child may be at risk of significant harm, the general principle is that information will be shared with the consent of the subject of the information, however it may be possible to justify sharing information without consent from the parent carer/individual. Wherever possible, Reaching Families will seek consent and be open and honest with the individual from the outset as to why, what, how and with whom, their information will be shared. Reaching Families will endeavour to seek consent where an individual may not expect their information to be passed on. There may be some circumstances where it is not appropriate to seek consent, either because the individual cannot give consent, it is not reasonable to obtain consent, or because to gain consent would put a child or young person's safety or well-being at risk. Where a decision to share information without consent is made, a record of what has been shared should be kept.
- Any recording relating to the concern should be collated by the safeguarding lead and stored securely.

## **An allegation against an employee, volunteer, or Trustee of Reaching Families**

In the event of an employee or volunteer being implicated, one of the named safeguarding leads will investigate except in the instance of the safeguarding lead being implicated, in this case, the investigation should be conducted by the designated trustee for safeguarding and if the allegation is against the designated trustee then the chair will investigate. Should an allegation involving the Chair occur this would be investigated independently by an external source.

Internal investigations are only appropriate when an allegation is not investigated by social services or the police. If there's evidence of a policy breach, action would be taken in line with the organisation's relevant processes, see Reaching Families Disciplinary Policy for details.

## **Whistleblowing**

Reaching Families supports and encourages staff and volunteers to safely raise concerns about how we go about our work. It is important that any fraud, misconduct or wrongdoing by staff or others working on behalf of the charity is reported and properly dealt with. We therefore require all individuals to raise any concerns that they may have about the conduct of others in the charity or the way in which the organisation is run. This can be done in a protected and safe manner in line with the procedures set out in our Whistleblowing policy.

## Associated Policies

Reaching Families Safeguarding Policy is one of several policies and procedures that contribute to overall safeguarding of service users, staff and volunteers including –

- Recruitment Policy
- Recruitment of Ex-Offenders Policy
- Volunteer Policy
- Social Media Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Confidentiality Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Lone Working Policy

## Contacts

**Integrated Front Door – 01403 229900 or via email [WSChildrenservices@westsussex.gov.uk](mailto:WSChildrenservices@westsussex.gov.uk) (or emergency out of hours 0330 222 6664, in extreme emergency call 999)**

West Sussex Local Adult Safeguarding Board – [www.westsussexsab.org.uk](http://www.westsussexsab.org.uk)  
Phone **01243 642121** (or call **999** in extreme emergency)

Adult referral form can be found here - [www.westsussex.gov.uk/social-care-and-health/social-care-support/adults/raise-a-concern-about-an-adult/](http://www.westsussex.gov.uk/social-care-and-health/social-care-support/adults/raise-a-concern-about-an-adult/)

### Named Safeguarding Lead Persons

The named safeguarding contact for Reaching Families is:

**Donna Manwill**  
[donna@reachingfamilies.org.uk](mailto:donna@reachingfamilies.org.uk)

The named trustee to oversee Safeguarding is:

**Charlotte Linington**  
[charlotte@reachingfamilies.org.uk](mailto:charlotte@reachingfamilies.org.uk)

**This policy has been approved by the Trustees and will be reviewed annually or sooner if there is a change in legislation.**