

West End Refugee Service (WERS) Policy Statement

Safeguarding Children & Young People

Policy Statement

WERS believes that children and young people should never experience abuse of any kind and that we have a responsibility to promote the welfare of all children and young people, to keep them safe, and to behave in a way that protects them. WERS is committed to:

- valuing, listening to and respecting children as well as safeguarding and promoting their welfare and protection;
- listening to and valuing the views of parents and carers, regarding their children, and empowering people we work with to take steps to safeguard children in their communities;
- having an effective procedure for dealing with concerns about possible child abuse, working in co-operation with other agencies, including statutory bodies;
- ensuring that safeguarding is integral to the recruitment of paid staff, trustees and volunteers, and that those known to have been convicted of offences against children will not be allowed to work at WERS, and
- training, supervising and supporting employees and volunteers so that they are equipped to identify and deal with safeguarding issues.

WERS will give equal priority to keeping all children and young people safe regardless of their age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation. WERS recognises that many of the people it works with and their children face extra barriers caused by racial discrimination, communication difficulties, their situation as asylum seekers or refugees and present or past traumas. WERS is committed to combatting racism, including in child safeguarding.

Aims of the policy

The policy is relevant to all staff, volunteers, and Trustees at WERS and sets out the collective responsibility for all of us to act if we have concerns about the safety of any child. WERS works to discourage abuse, support children who may or previously experienced abuse and take appropriate action to any allegations or suspicions of abuse.

The policy has been written to provide accessible advice and procedures to follow when a WERS staff or volunteer is concerned about children they come across in their work within a family context.

WERS is not a statutory childcare agency and it is not appropriate for staff to investigate suspicions of child abuse themselves. However, WERS will take 'duty of care' appropriate action to any safeguarding concerns made about children and make referrals to the police or the local authority safeguarding services in accordance with organisational responsibility under the Children Act 2004.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Adult safeguarding policy, Whistleblowing policy (undergoing review), recruitment and selection policy and code of conduct (undergoing review).

General Information

The Department for Education (DfE) is responsible for child protection in England. It sets out policy, legislation and statutory guidance on how the child protection system should work. Local safeguarding partners are responsible for child protection policy, procedure, and guidance at a local level. They are led by three statutory safeguarding partners:

- the local authority
- the clinical commissioning group
- the police.

Working together with other relevant agencies, they must co-ordinate and ensure the effectiveness of work to protect and promote the welfare of children, including planning to identify and support children at risk of harm.

WERS works with the statutory safeguarding partners to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in accordance with the Children Act 1989.

A 'child' is anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday.

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children' encapsulates:

- protecting children from maltreatment
- preventing impairment of children's health or development
- ensuring that children are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care
- taking action to enable all children to have the best life chances

Abuse and neglect are forms of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child either directly by inflicting harm, or indirectly, by failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting; by those known to them; or, more rarely, by a stranger. They may be abused by an adult or adults, or another child or children.

Child abuse may take different forms such as physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, domestic abuse, female genital mutilation (FGM), grooming with intent

to radicalise, neglect, online abuse, criminal exploitation, bullying, child trafficking and cyber abuse.

Responsibilities

WERS Trustees are responsible overall for setting the safeguarding children policy and ensuring its implementation. However, all employees and volunteers working with children have a duty to do everything they can to ensure that the policy works in practice. Oversight is provided by the Trustee Safeguarding Lead.

The Chief Executive is responsible for ensuring that staff know of and adhere to the policy. The volunteer co-ordinators are responsible for ensuring that existing and potential volunteers are aware of and adhere to the policy. After their induction at WERS, staff and volunteers sign to say that they have read, understood, and agree to abide by this policy.

The Chief Executive is responsible for ensuring that everybody who uses WERS services has access to information that they can understand about WERS' commitment to safeguarding children and how to talk to someone about any concerns they have.

The safeguarding policy, the name and details of the child safeguarding lead contacts and a poster detailing the key areas covered by the policy will be displayed in the building.

With regard to other agencies providing regular surgeries/drop-ins on WERS' premises:

- At the outset, WERS should ask to see the agency's policy to ensure that visiting agencies adhere to the same standards as WERS regarding safeguarding. In the event that an agency does not have a policy, WERS will give them a copy of its own safeguarding policies to which they must adhere.
- If a safeguarding issue is disclosed to a worker from a visiting organisation, that organisation should initiate the safeguarding process.

Supporting guidelines

Staff recruitment, training and development

All WERS staff and Trustees are subject to Enhanced DBS Checks upon appointment. Volunteers working in a 1-1 context with clients, including but not limited to befriending and support work are to complete DBS checks. It is the responsibility of the Head of Corporate Services to ensure these are received. Volunteers that work in group settings are not required to undertake specific DBS checks, however, will undergo a self-declaring risk assessment prior to appointment.

Having a criminal record will not necessarily bar an individual from working with the organisation. This will depend on the nature of the position and the circumstances and background of the offences.

All staff and volunteers will be trained to recognise and respond appropriately to abuse to ensure the best protection for WERS' clients and their families. Staff and volunteers are not

expected to be experts, however, they should have the appropriate training and awareness to raise a concern.

Looking after children

During its normal activities and services, WERS staff and volunteers should not be left in sole charge of children.

When children attend the WERS project they should always be accompanied by a parent or responsible adult, who will look after them whilst on the premises. Volunteer befrienders are strongly advised not to look after clients' children in their absence, although it is recognised that there may, very occasionally, be circumstances in which this is unavoidable. In this case a member of WERS staff must be informed giving date, times and the circumstances that led to the situation.

Identifying and responding to safeguarding concerns

WERS staff (employees and volunteers) may have concerns about the safeguarding of a child – including that the child is being abused, either physically, emotionally, sexually or through neglect – as a result of:

- observation while working with the child and family members
- a disclosure by the child
- another person reporting a concern
- observation of or reports about the behaviour of a staff member towards a child

It is important to recognise that in the nature of the work at WERS primarily working with adults, it is rare or infrequent that WERS has a child client. However, as it is possible, it is important to highlight how to respond if a child discloses a safeguarding issue to a WERS staff member, or if a WERS client discloses a safeguarding issue relating to a child, the staff member should:

- Identify if an interpreter is needed and seek approval for involvement of an interpreter.
- listen carefully, without interrupting
- remain calm and receptive, without displaying emotion
- do not make physical contact at any time
- give reassurance that it is right to speak out
- try to clarify information without probing or over-questioning
- explain the need to share information
- not make promises or agree to keep information confidential

Dealing with allegations or suspicions of abuse

Raising a Safeguarding Alert

WERS staff and volunteers are not expected to be experts in identifying abuse or investigating allegations. Any concerns or disclosures of abuse should be accurately logged and forwarded to the relevant local authority, either directly or through the Designated Safeguarding Lead. Regardless of role the following actions should be taken:

- Make a written record of the disclosure, allegation or reasons for suspicion. Where possible specific details should be included (date, location, form of suspected abuse, reasons why abuse is suspected).
- Discuss with the WERS Designated Safeguarding Lead or Chief Executive Officer on the same day with a view to make a same day referral to the relevant Local Authority.
 - Designated Safeguarding Lead – Heather Andrews – heather@wers.org.uk
 - Interim Chief Executive Officer – Andy Durma – andy@wers.org.uk
- In their absences or if an allegation is made against them, this discussion should be made Board Trustee Safeguarding Lead.
 - Board Trustee Safeguarding Lead – Reverend John Howard-Norman – john.howard-norman@methodist.org.uk
- If the child appears to be in immediate danger or in need of urgent medical attention, the emergency services must be contacted immediately.
- If after discussion it is felt appropriate to make a referral to the Local Authority Safeguarding, efforts should be made to gain consent from the parent/carer for the referral if it is safe to do so without putting the Child at increased risk.

Managing a concern about a WERS representative

When a WERS representative is suspected to be a perpetrator of significant harm or abuse, the safety of the child or children concerned is of the utmost importance. The child should be made safe and kept away from the alleged perpetrator. A referral to Local Authority Children's Safeguarding should be made in the same way as with any other alleged perpetrator as outlined above. The referrer must highlight the fact that the alleged or suspected perpetrator is a WERS representative in the referral made or in the report to the Police, should a crime also be suspected.

Suspending

When an allegation or concern has been made regarding significant harm or a criminal act the WERS representative should be suspended without prejudice, pending an investigation.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead has both the authority and responsibility to suspend the alleged perpetrator to protect; the alleged victim, the alert raiser and the alleged perpetrator. Should the Designated Safeguarding Lead not be available then Chief Executive Officer or Board of Trustee Safeguarding Lead should be informed of the need to suspend the person suspected / against whom an allegation has been made and suspend the person.

The following email should be sent to the suspending a person for alleged or suspected safeguarding breaches:

“You are placed on administrative leave with full pay effective immediately, pending an investigation into suspected/alleged (choose the appropriate term) safeguarding breaches. This suspension is done without prejudice. It is essential to maintain confidentiality regarding this matter, and you are prohibited from discussing it with WERS colleagues. However, you have the right to seek guidance from your trade union or a legal representative. Please leave the premises promptly after collecting essential personal items and returning premises keys and WERS ID.”

The suspending Manager must accompany the alleged / suspected person whilst clearing the desk / taking keys id etc. and then escort them off the premises. The suspending Manager must inform the Local Authority Designated Office and / or Police about the suspension as soon as possible following the suspension.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead must liaise with Local Authority Designated Officer and / or the Police as required. This is to discuss the best course of action and to ensure any WERS investigation procedures are coordinated with any other enquiries taking place by statutory colleagues

Use of information relating to children

Information about children (eg names, addresses, images) must be treated confidentially in line with the WERS Data Protection Policy.

Report to the Board of Trustees

Chief Executive will report on safeguarding issues at each meeting of the Board of Trustees; either that there are none to report or the outline of the concern if any have arisen.

Important local contacts

Within WERS:

Designated child protection leads:

- 1) Heather Andrews – 0191 273 7482 – heather@wers.org.uk
- 2) Andy Durma – 0191 273 7482 – andy@wers.org.uk

Safeguarding Lead for the Board of Trustees for adult safeguarding and child protection

Revd John Howard-Norman - john.howard-norman@methodist.org.uk

Local statutory agencies

If you are concerned that a child is in immediate danger call the police on 999.

Contact Newcastle Safeguarding Children Partnership's *Initial Response Service of Children's Social Care* on 0191 277 2500 for advice and referrals during office hours (weekdays 8:45am to 5pm). Due to the nature of WERS being open restricted hours, seek guidance from the Initial Response team as to whether they require you to complete the professional online referral form on the [Newcastle City Council Website](#).

Contact Newcastle Emergency Duty Team on **0191 278 78 78** outside of office hours if the matter cannot wait until the next day.

Newcastle Safeguarding Children Partnership's *Initial Response Service on 0191 277 2500* should be contacted within **one working day** if there are allegations that a member of staff or a volunteer has harmed a child or poses a risk to a child.

NSPCC 24 hour helpline (National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children) offers help, advice and support. Call **0808 800 5000**.

If you think a crime against a child, young person, or adult at risk has been committed but they are not in immediate danger, or you want advice if you are worried about sexual exploitation, call 101 and ask for the Northumbria Police Safeguarding Department.

Date reviewed and updated: May 2024

Next review: May 2025