

TAMESIDE LOCAL HISTORY FORUM

SAFEGUARDING POLICY

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TAMESIDE LOCAL HISTORY FORUM (TLHF) SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AND VULNERABLE ADULTS

Opening Statement

As a voluntary organisation whose members sometimes work with children and vulnerable adults the Tameside Local History Forum (TLHF) has a responsibility to:

- pass information onto its members with regard to safeguarding children and vulnerable adults.
- provide regular opportunities to learn about safeguarding
- encourage those in frequent contact with children and vulnerable adults to undergo training

Definition of a ‘child’

Anyone under 18 years of age.

Definition of a ‘vulnerable adult’

A vulnerable adult is any individual who needs to be able to trust the people caring for them, supporting them or providing them with an essential service, which could leave them vulnerable to abuse. Examples would be adults with special needs or who have mental health issues, or who live in a care home or in sheltered accommodation, or receive NHS treatment

Introduction

It is important that TLHF raises the awareness of all members to the issues involved and that TLHF has a clear policy and guidelines which members can adopt in their own groups to enable them to create structures and procedures to protect children and vulnerable adults and to support those who work with them.

Duty of Care

TLHF is determined to ensure that all necessary steps are taken to protect from harm, those children and vulnerable adults who participate in any local history projects organised by them. Good safeguarding practice not only protects and promotes the welfare of children and vulnerable adults but also enhances the confidence of volunteers, parents/carers and the general public.

Guiding principles

Children and vulnerable adults have the right to be safe and happy in the activities that they or their parents/carers choose.

Parents/carers have a right to believe that the organisations to which they entrust their children/clients are safe.

Organisations like TLHF have a responsibility for safeguarding the children and vulnerable adults with whom they work.

All children and vulnerable adults who participate in the activities of TLHF should be able to participate in an enjoyable and safe environment and be protected from abuse. This is the responsibility of every adult involved in the organisation. TLHF recognises however, that child abuse is a very emotive subject. It is important to understand the feelings involved but not allow them to interfere with any judgement about the action to be taken.

Good practice

- Treat all children and vulnerable adults with respect and dignity
- Provide the example of good conduct that you wish others to follow – be a good role model
- Always work in an open environment; ensure that whenever possible there is more than one adult leader present during activities, or at least that you are within sight or hearing of others
- Respect a child’s, or vulnerable adult’s right to personal privacy

- Be aware that physical contact with a child, or vulnerable adult may be misinterpreted
- Recognise that special caution is required when discussing sensitive issues with a child, or vulnerable adult
- Operate within your organisation's principles and guidelines
- Give enthusiastic and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism
- Challenge unacceptable behaviour in others and report all allegations or suspicions of abuse. Remember that there are some people who seek to become volunteers in order to harm children or vulnerable adults
- Secure parental or carer's consent to act, if the need arises, to administer emergency first aid or other medical treatment
- Keep a written record of any injury that occurs, along with details of any treatment given
- Request written parental or carer's consent if required to transport children or vulnerable adults in a private car
- Keep up to date with training and insurance
- Involve children's/vulnerable adults' parents/carers as much as possible

(Further information with regard to recognising and reporting abuse is given on pages 4-6)

A 'healthcheck' from the NSPCC says:

Children and young people should be

- Listened to and heard
- Valued and treated as individuals
- Respected for their identity and uniqueness
- Encouraged and praised
- Involved in making decisions and with their decisions being taken into account and acted upon.

These points should apply to vulnerable adults too.

Filming and taking photographs:

Permission must be obtained of both children, through their parents or vulnerable adults before a photograph is taken or footage recorded. Asking who does NOT want this is acceptable.

It must be made clear why images or film is being used, what they will be used for, who might want to look at the images and film.

Never identify anyone by name or give personal details including , name, postal address, email address etc.

Obtain specific consent before putting images on a website.

The law has changed

In 2012 the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) and the Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA) were merged to form the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS). 'The DBS disclosure service helps employers make safer recruitment decisions and prevent unsuitable people from working with children and vulnerable adults.' (DBS website)

It is advisable for all people regularly working with children and vulnerable adults to be checked by the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS). Schools, youth groups and groups catering for adults with special needs may contact the DBS to see if volunteers working with them have been DBS checked. Obtaining a check means that any volunteer will then be permanently registered and any group with whom they work can seek information about their status from the DBS. Volunteers who work occasionally with such groups may not need to be checked. The recommendations are that volunteers need to be checked if they work with children or vulnerable adults:

- once a week or more regularly,

- on four days or more in a 30 day period
- on residential activities.

Therefore, there should be no need to be checked if you are working with children or vulnerable adults for less than once a week or less intensively than 4 days in any one month, unless you are involved in residential activities. This means that it is unlikely that TLHF members will have to be checked unless they work with children or vulnerable adults on a regular and intensive basis. 'Just in case' checking should be avoided. A DBS check is 'flexible' in that the information stays on record and is automatically updated by the DBS, if necessary. It is up to the body with whom the volunteer is working to contact the DBS for information.

DBS checking is free for volunteers but getting a DBS check cannot be done directly by an individual. It must always be done through an 'umbrella organisation' which is registered with the DBS. Such an organisation may charge an administration fee.

Responding to signs of abuse

Most members of TLHF will be working with children and vulnerable adults alongside teachers, leaders or carers. It is very unlikely that any child or vulnerable adult will make a disclosure of abuse under these circumstances. However, all volunteers have a responsibility to be alert to and aware of signs of abuse and to act appropriately. Any concerns or allegations should initially be passed to the Safeguarding Officer within the organisation in which a volunteer is working eg. school, youth club, centre. This should be done without delay if there is clear evidence of abuse. Where there is suspicion of abuse the volunteer should consult the Safeguarding Officer in the organisation in which the volunteer is working.

If in doubt, advice as to how to proceed may be sought from TLHF's Safeguarding Officer, Tameside Council's Children's or Social Services or the NSPCC. (*See page 7 for contact details*). The person contacted will then be responsible for deciding whether further action is necessary or not. The volunteer should be informed of the decision. The volunteer should be prepared to provide relevant information to the Safeguarding Officer, social services or the police if the allegation or evidence leads to further action being taken. It is advisable to keep a brief written record including the time, date and place when the abuse was discovered or disclosed.

Under no circumstances should a volunteer attempt to carry out any investigation into an allegation or suspicion of abuse, however compelling the evidence may appear.

General points

- Keep calm – do not appear shocked or disgusted
- Accept what the child or vulnerable adult says without passing judgement (however unlikely the disclosure may sound)
- Look directly at the child or vulnerable adult
- Be honest
- Don't promise confidentiality, let them know that you will need to tell someone else
- Be aware that the child or vulnerable adult may have been threatened and fear reprisals for having spoken to you
- Never push for information or question the child or vulnerable adult as this can undermine any subsequent criminal investigation. If at any point the child or vulnerable adult decides not to continue, accept that and let them know that you are ready to listen should they wish to continue at another time.

Helpful things to say or show

- Show acceptance of what is being said
- 'I take what you are saying seriously'
- 'I am pleased that you have told me.' Or 'Thank you for telling me.'

- If appropriate, 'It isn't your fault and you are not to blame at all.'
- 'I am sorry that happened to you.'
- 'I will help you.'

Things not to say

- 'Why didn't you say something before?'
- 'I really can't believe it.'
- 'Are you sure this happened?'
- 'Why?' 'Where?' 'When?' 'Who?' 'What?' 'How?'
- Don't make false promises, like confidentiality, be honest, any lies will be further abuse and betrayal
- Never make statements such as 'I'm shocked!' or 'Don't tell anyone else.'

Concluding the conversation

- Reassure the child or vulnerable adult that they were right to tell you
- Let the child or vulnerable adult know what you are going to do next and tell them that you will let them know what is happening at each stage

What is abuse?

Abuse or neglect is defined as inflicting harm, or failing to act to prevent harm. Children and vulnerable adults may be abused in a family or in an institution or community setting by those known to them, or, more rarely, by a stranger.

Physical abuse

Physical abuse includes hitting, shaking, kicking, punching, scalding, suffocating and other ways of inflicting pain or injury to a child or vulnerable adult. It also includes giving harmful substances, such as drugs, alcohol or poison. If a parent or carer reports non-existent symptoms of illness, or deliberately causes illness, this is also a form of physical abuse.

Emotional abuse

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional ill treatment of a child or vulnerable adult. It can range from constant rejection and denial of affection, through to continual severe criticism, deliberate humiliation and other ways of verbally "terrorising" a child or vulnerable adult. It may involve age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed or causing the child or vulnerable adult to feel frightened or in danger or exploiting or corrupting them. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill treatment, though it may occur alone.

Sexual abuse

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or vulnerable adult to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child or vulnerable adult is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, such as, kissing, touching of genitals or breasts, oral sex or penetrative acts such as rape or buggery. Encouraging a child or vulnerable adult to look at pornographic magazines, videos or sexual acts by others, is also sexual abuse.

Abusers may act alone or as part of an organised group. They sometimes prefer children and sometimes vulnerable adults of a particular age, sex, physical type or ethnic background. After the abuse, they will put the child or vulnerable adult under great pressure not to tell anyone about it. They will go to great lengths to get close to their victims and win their trust. For example, by choosing employment or becoming a volunteer that brings them into contact with children or vulnerable adults, or by pretending to be children in internet chat rooms run for children and young people.

Child sex abusers are sometimes referred to as "paedophiles" and abusers of children and

vulnerable adults are usually referred to as "sex offenders", especially when they are not family members.

Neglect

Neglect is the persistent lack of appropriate care of children and vulnerable adults, including love, stimulation, safety, nourishment, warmth, education and medical attention. It may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food, shelter or clothing, failure to protect a child or vulnerable adult from physical harm or danger, or failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care and treatment. It can have a serious effect on a child's physical, mental and emotional development. For babies and very young children and very frail vulnerable adults it can be life-threatening.

Signs of Abuse

Physical signs

- Any injuries, bruises, bites, burns, fractures etc. which are not consistent with the explanations given for them
- Injuries which occur to the body in places which are not normally exposed to falls, rough games etc.
- Injuries which appear to have been caused by a weapon eg. cuts, welts etc.
- Injuries that have not received the medical attention required
- Self-harm or self-mutilation eg. cutting, slashing, drug abuse
- Instances where children or vulnerable adults are kept away from the group inappropriately or without explanation

Emotional signs

- Changes or regression in mood and behaviour eg. when a child becomes withdrawn or clinging
- Depression or aggression
- Unusual nervousness
- Inappropriate fear of adults or leaders eg. frozen watchfulness
- Sudden and uncharacteristic changes in behaviour eg lack of concentration or under-achievement
- Inappropriate relationship with peers and/or adults eg excessive dependence
- Attention-seeking behaviour
- Persistent tiredness
- Wetting or soiling bed or clothes when this is not usual

Sexual signs

- Any direct disclosure about sexual abuse
- Sexual behaviour or engaging in age inappropriate sexual play
- Excessive preoccupation with sexual matters eg in words, play or drawing
- Inappropriately sexually provocative or seductive to adults or peers
- Severe sleep disturbances with fears, phobias, vivid dreams, nightmares, sometimes with overt or veiled sexual connotations
- Other emotional signs (see above) may be indicative of sexual or other abuse

Neglect signs

- Habitual poor hygiene
- Persistent tiredness
- Inadequate clothing
- Excessive appetite
- Failure to thrive eg poor weight gain or obvious weight loss

- Consistently being left alone or unsupervised

Learning more about safeguarding

Several groups provide on-line training eg the NSPCC check their website www.nspcc.org.uk
Tameside MBC runs courses for volunteers from time to time check their website
www.tameside.gov.uk

Useful contacts :

Disclosure and Barring Service: DBS Customer Service, PO Box 110, Liverpool, L69 3JD.
Email: customerservices@dbb.gsi.gov.uk. Disclosure helpline 0870 90 90 811

NSPCC Website: www.nspcc.org.uk; Helpline: 0808 800 5000; Email: help@nspcc.org.uk

Tameside Safeguarding Children's Board: Union Street Building, Union Street, Hyde, SK14 4ND;
Tel: 0161 342 4348

Tameside Metropolitan Borough Website: www.tameside.gov.uk

Tameside Children's Social Care: Tel: 0161 342 4150

Tameside Public Service Hub: Tel: 0161 342 4101

Tameside Local History Forum Safeguarding Officer:
Dawn Buckle: Tel: 01457 763 721: Email: dawnbuckle@yahoo.com.

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