



Mustard Seed Autism Trust

Safeguarding Children Policy

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Document Control

Version Control

Version	Date Released	Name	Remarks
1.0	November 2011	Francis Bland	
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12.1	November 2023	Sarah Clements	Changed Frimhurst to Odiham Cottage Hospital
12.2	Feb 2024	Sarah Clements	Changed DSL to Jen Hill

Distribution List

Name	Title
All staff	
All contracted therapists	
All Trustees	
All volunteers	

Acronyms used

SL	Safeguarding Lead
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Mustard Seed Autism Trust

Safeguarding Children

Policy and Procedures

- **1.1 Our commitment to safeguarding and the rights of children and young people to be protected from abuse**

Mustard Seed is committed to the nurturing, protection and safekeeping of all children.

We recognise the responsibility of each individual to prevent the physical, sexual and emotional abuse of children.

We are committed to supporting, resourcing and training those who work with children.

1.2 Policy and Training

Our policy is based on legislation and guidance -Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018, NSPCC and additional links in Appendix C.

We ensure that everyone in the organisation (trustees, staff and volunteers) receive annual Safeguarding training and review the guidelines contained in this policy. Everyone confirms (via email) each year to show they have read the policy and attended training. Our Safeguarding Leads also attend external advanced and specialist training.

This policy has been agreed by the team leaders (our Safeguarding Leads) and trustees of Mustard Seed Autism Trust. The trustees are accountable and responsible for the safeguarding policy and procedures and ensure our safeguarding practices are robust.

We take seriously and understand that [child protection](#) is about protecting those who are being harmed or are at risk of harm (reactive) and that [safeguarding](#) is preventing harm and promoting well-being for all children (prevention).

Within this policy the term “child” also refers to any young person under the age of 18. The term “parent” also refers to carers.

2.1 Definitions of abuse

Child abuse can take several forms and may be either physical, sexual, emotional, neglect or it may be a combination of these.

There may be occasions when information is received by Mustard Seed or observations made which suggest the need for action to be taken to protect the child from actual or potential harm.

This information may come in a variety of ways and will need to be handled appropriately depending on the circumstances.

The information could come anonymously, from a relative or parent, from the child or by direct observation.

It is important to be aware that insensitive action may place the child more at risk so the situation has to be handled delicately and carefully.

If a member of the team has any concern it must be shared with the team leaders, Francis Bland or Jen Hill who are the nominated Safeguarding Leads. The SLs are directly accountable to the trustees of Mustard Seed.

It is important to record and clarify details for any possible referral procedure. Social Services have a duty under Section 47 of the 1989 Children Act to investigate referrals. See Child Protection Record in Appendix B.

Notifying parents about a referral to Social Services will depend on the nature of the allegation and the relationship between Mustard Seed and parent.

2.2 Signs and symptoms of abuse

There is a difference between accidental injury and non-accidental injury; between emotional abuse and occasional disapproval; between verbal abuse and considered rebuke and between sexual abuse and parental affection. Children who always appear to have bruises or injuries that never appear to get better may be subject to abuse. Child abuse seldom occurs in isolation. It is the exception rather than the rule for abuse of any nature to be "one off".

2.3 Specific issues related to autism

It is important to be aware that autistic people can regularly engage in self-harming behaviour due to the nature of their needs.

- If a child is showing signs of self-harming behaviour, families should be encouraged to keep diaries to record the frequency and nature of injury.
- Some autistic children have sensory difficulties which mean they find some areas of hygiene difficult and painful, for example: teeth brushing, showering, hair-cuts, nail trimming, etc. Some struggle to accept new clothes and prefer old familiar items that are more comfortable. We recognise these could also be signs of neglect. We work with families to try and support these sensory difficulties and note any issues during the initial assessment and throughout the intervention.

- Some autistic children have difficulties with food – often identified as ARFID (Avoidant Restrictive Food Intake Disorder) – and in severe cases this can affect weight gain and growth.

- Our team also makes use of the National Autistic Society’s booklet “Safeguarding Children with Autism”.

2.4 Listed below are some types of injury which could be pointers to a non-accidental incident

Hand shaped bruises on cheeks or bottom.

Twin bruises on either side of the mouth or cheeks.

Bruising on both sides of the ear.

Finger bruises on the upper arm or body, particularly in babies.

Black eyes.

Bruising or tenderness to breasts, buttocks, lower stomach region, thighs, genital areas or anal area.

Cigarette burns.

Adult bite marks – these are easily distinguished from children’s bites.

Repeated fractures.

Tearing of the skin.

Any injuries or unaccountable bleeding to the genital or anal area.

A child who is dirty, smelly, underweight or always hungry is also to be noted.

3.1 Allegations or disclosures of abuse

- **Communication**

If a child discloses to you:

Always -

- Take the child seriously
- Be sensitive and listen carefully to what you are told
- Reassure the child that they are doing the right thing
- Explain clearly what will happen next, in a way that is suitable for the child and taking into account their age and their ability to understand, particularly if they have learning difficulties.

Never -

- Make promises you can't keep, such as telling the child that what they say will be kept secret
- Act surprised or angry
- Ask leading questions or put words into their mouth
- Force the child to explain the whole situation or pressure them for details
- Draw conclusions or make accusations

The person being disclosed to must not talk to anybody else about the incident other than Mustard Seed's Safeguarding Leads, or the Chair of Trustees.

As soon as possible, make a detailed written account stating time, place and circumstances.

At some point in the conversation with the child, tell him/her that the next step is for you to see Francis Bland or Jen Hill (SLs) who will explain what happens next.

3.2 Procedure for reporting

If a child is deemed to be in imminent danger (especially if threat of sexual or physical abuse) then call 999 and contact social services and our Safeguarding Leads. Numbers for local Social Services are in Appendix A and saved on Mustard Seed mobile phones.

If you suspect or a child makes an allegation of abuse:

1. Immediately contact one of our Safeguarding Leads (Francis Bland or Jen Hill).
2. The Safeguarding Lead will advise/consult with our Chair of Trustees and seek external advice if needed (contacts in Appendix A).
3. They will decide whether to....
 - Contact Social Services (contact details in Appendix A) and any other relevant services.
 - Or not report but make detailed notes which will be kept confidential and secure. The Safeguarding Leads will continue to observe and may signpost/refer the family to additional sources of support (eg. Health Visitor, Barnardos, Home Start, domestic abuse charities, Women's Aid, CAP, Care for the Family, Young Minds, CAMHS etc.).

3.3 Reporting and Referral Procedure

Where allegations are made by a third party, it is important to gain as much information as possible.

Include details of the person making the allegation and the child and family concerned, i.e. name, address, telephone number, email address as well as the nature of any injuries and observations about the child. Child Protection Record – Appendix B.

Any form of allegation made is to be submitted in writing to one of the Safeguarding Leads within 48 hours.

The person making the allegation is aware that the information may result in a referral to Social Services and further investigation.

The person making the allegation may be required to attend the Initial Child Protection Conference (ICPC) with one of the SLs.

4 Working together with statutory agencies and others

4.1 Action after Initial Child Protection Conference

Minutes will be taken at the ICPC and copies sent to those attending the conference. The people concerned are to check that these minutes are accurate.

Any errors should be discussed with the SL and Chair of the conference. The record is otherwise assumed to be agreed. These minutes must be kept securely and held in confidence, in accordance with our GDPR policy. If there is any dissatisfaction about the conference, then this must be discussed with the SL and the Chair of the conference as appropriate.

5. Good practice within our organisation

5.1 Safer Recruitment

We will ensure that:

- All staff, volunteers and trustees are DBS checked, have completed an initial interview, application form, provided references and induction training programme.
- All staff, volunteers and trustees complete annual safeguarding training.
- All staff, volunteers and trustees are DBS checked every three years.

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- Each team member is of good character, good standing within Mustard Seed and of good reputation.
- As far as possible no adults will be alone with a child where their activity cannot be seen. In the child's home, at Odiham Cottage Hospital or in community premises, this may mean leaving doors open or two groups working in the same room.
- Access to the building is safe and well lit.
- No adults will use personal phones during a session with a child. Personal numbers will not be shared with families, only Mustard Seed mobile numbers are shared with parents.
- Photos and video (with signed parental consent and child's permission) will only be taken using Mustard Seed cameras. Further information can be found in our GDPR policy and On-line Safety Policy.

5.2 All staff and volunteers should:

Treat all children and young people with respect and dignity befitting their age and be mindful of language, tone of voice and body language

Not engage in any of the following:

- Invade the privacy of children when they are toileting.
- Excessive rough or any sexually provocative games.
- Make sexually suggestive comments about or to a young person, even in fun.
- Inappropriate and intrusive touching of any form.
- Scapegoat, ridicule or reject a child or young person.

Manage children's behaviour without the use of anger or physical punishment.

Not allow children or young people engage in excessive attention seeking that is overtly sexual or physical in nature.

Not give lifts to children or young people on their own. In exceptional circumstances this may be required, in which case the parents should be notified as well as the SL.

When transporting children for a specific purpose (eg. Siblings Group outings) an additional member of the team will be in the car.

Disclose any previous criminal convictions (all convictions must be disclosed as the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 does not apply).

5.3 Safety on-line

Our procedures for keeping children and young people safe on-line is detailed in our On-line Safety Policy. The key points for on-line (video-conferencing) interaction are:

- ensuring only staff and designated volunteers are present in the session with the parents and child
- specific links are used for the meeting
- passwords are always used and only shared with those invited by the team leader
- the host (team leader) controls who is joining, through use of the waiting room
- use of Mustard Seed's account (not personal accounts)

5.4 Good practice with colleagues

If you see another member of the team acting in ways which might be misconstrued or cause any concern, be prepared to speak to them or the Team Leader about your concerns. Leaders should encourage an atmosphere of mutual support and care.

Concerns about another colleague should be reported immediately to one of the Safeguarding Leads, or in the case of a complaint about an SL, to the Chair of Trustees.

There are procedures for allegations against Mustard Seed trustees, staff and volunteers, which will involve the SL, Chair of Trustees, Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), Independent Safeguarding Authority. We will also seek advice from Thirtyone:eight.

The Trustees must inform the Charity Commission of any serious safeguarding incidents, complaints or allegations where it relates to staff or volunteers within Mustard Seed.

Reviewed February 2024

Next Review Date: February 2025

- **Appendix A Contact details**

If you suspect anyone is in immediate danger, call the Police on 999.

Mustard Seed Safeguarding Leads:

Francis Bland

Work: 07794254985

Jen Hill

Work: 07707881323

Chair of Trustees:

Caoimh McManus

Mustard Seed phone: 07980636413

Hampshire LADO:

01962 876364

Surrey LADO:

03001231650

If a child is at risk of significant harm, including from neglect, refer immediately to:

Surrey

- **Children's Single Point of Access (C-SPA)**

Phone: 0300 470 9100

Email: cspa@surreycc.gov.uk

Out of hours phone: 01483 517898 to speak to the emergency duty team

Hampshire

Hants direct!

Phone: 0300 555 1384

Email: csprofessional@hants.gov.uk

Out of hours phone: 0300 555 1373

Thirtyone: eight (formerly known as CCPAS)

Thirtyone: eight are the Child Protection Advisory Service and provide us with monthly bulletin updates, training workshops and DBS checks. They also provide an advice helpline.

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Helpline: 0303 003 1111

Appendix B Child Protection Record - to be completed in Power Diary and saved confidentially



CHILD PROTECTION ISSUE RECORD

Name of Child

Date and Time of disclosure

Start date of work with family

Name of other people involved – give relationship to child

Details of the disclosure – use the language the child used and include when and where the incident happened if known - continue on the back of this sheet if necessary.

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Action to be taken as discussed with child

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Child's wishes – did they consent to this information being passed on? Yes / No
If not and the information must be, was this clearly explained? Yes / No

Action agreed with Mustard Seed Safeguarding Lead

Referral made to

Date and time

If no referral made state reasons

Name of person completing form

Date

Signature

Appendix C Legislation and Guidance

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/942454/Working_together_to_safeguard_children_inter_agency_guidance.pdf

NSPCC

<https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/safeguarding-child-protection>

Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006

<https://www.scie.org.uk/key-social-care-legislation/safeguarding-adults>

Children Act 1989 and 2004

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/31/contents>

Care Act 2014

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/care-act-2014-part-1-factsheets/care-act-factsheets>

The Sexual Offences Act 2003

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2003/42/contents>

Mental Capacity Act 2005

<https://www.scie.org.uk/mca/introduction/mental-capacity-act-2005-at-a-glance>