CENTREPIECES
Mental Health Arts Project
Registered Charity 1160300

The King's Award for Voluntary Service
The MBE for volunteer groups

# SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN POLICY

Date of policy: January 2025
To be reviewed: January 2028

## 1. The purpose of this policy statement is:

- To safeguard children and young people who use Centrepieces services from harm. This includes the children of adults who use our services.
- to provide staff and volunteers, as well as children and young people and their families with the overarching principles that guide our approach to child protection. This policy applies to anyone working on behalf of Centrepieces, including senior managers and the board of trustees, paid staff, volunteers, sessional workers, agency staff and students
- to safeguard children and young people from experiencing abuse of any kind.
- We have a responsibility to promote the welfare of all children and young people to keep them safe through practices that enhance their protection.

## 2. Introduction

Centrepieces is a small charity that provides opportunities for local people with mental health issues to participate in art activities, for their therapeutic value and in order to sell art works through the charity to generate income for the individual and the charity. There are classes and workshops, and open sessions where artists can drop in to work using the charity's facilities.

Centrepieces is committed to ensuring that vulnerable children are not abused and that its working practices minimise the risk of abuse. We will ensure that all staff, volunteers and trustees work together in line with this policy and act promptly when dealing with allegations and suspicions of abuse.

Safeguarding is the responsibility of everyone. Living a life that is free from harm and abuse is a fundamental right of every person. We must all act as good

neighbours and citizens in looking out for one another and seeking to prevent the isolation which can easily lead to abusive situations and put children at risk of harm.

Centrepieces is committed to working with statutory agencies – the London Borough of Bexley and other local authorities, children's services and charities, the police, NHS organisations and local voluntary organisations – to promote safer communities, to prevent harm and abuse and to deal with suspected or actual cases of abuse.

## 3. What is safeguarding?

A child is defined as anyone who is below the age of 18. Safeguarding is protecting them from abuse, maltreatment or exploitation, as well as preventing any harm to their health or ability to develop. Individuals caring for children should also make sure they have safe and effective care and effective outcomes in life.

Safeguarding a child means you are identifying them as vulnerable and protecting them from harm.

## 4. Who is a vulnerable child?

Some children are additionally vulnerable because of the impact of previous experiences, their level of dependency, communication needs or other issues. Working in partnership with children, young people, their parents, carers and other agencies is essential in promoting young people's welfare.

## 5. What is abuse?

Abuse is a violation of an individual's human and civil rights by any other person or group of people. Abuse may be single or repeated acts. There are many types of abuse, including:

**Physical** – the use of force that results in pain or injury or a change in a person's natural physical state, or the non-accidental infliction of physical force that results in bodily injury, pain or impairment. Examples include hitting, slapping, burning, pushing, restraining or giving the wrong medication.

**Sexual** – the direct or indirect involvement of the child at risk in sexual activity or relationships. If Centrepieces receives information that a child under 16 has engaged in sexual activity even willingly, we will still have the incident reported unless there are strong reasons for why this does not have to be reported.

**Emotional and psychological** – behaviour that has a harmful effect on the child's emotional health and development, or any form of mental cruelty that results in mental distress, the denial of basic human and civil rights such as self-expression, privacy and dignity. Examples include shouting, swearing,

frightening, blaming, ignoring or humiliating a child, threats of harm or abandonment, intimidation, verbal abuse.

**Organisational/institutional** – the mistreatment or neglect of a child at risk by a regime or individuals within settings and services, that children at risk live in or use. Such abuse violates the child's dignity, resulting in lack of respect for their human rights. Also, it can be the collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to vulnerable children. This includes a failure to ensure the necessary safeguards are in place to protect vulnerable children and maintain good standards of care in accordance with their individual needs, including training of staff, supervision and management, record keeping and liaising with other providers of care.

**Discrimination** – discriminatory abuse exists when values, beliefs or culture result in a misuse of power that denies opportunities to some groups or individuals. It may include racist or sexist remarks or comments based on a child's disability, age or illness, and other forms of harassment, slurs or similar treatment. It also includes stopping someone from being involved in religious or cultural activity, services or support networks.

**Neglect and omission** – the withholding of the necessities of life such as medication, adequate nutrition and heating. The ignoring of medical, emotional and physical care needs. These can be deliberate or unintentional, amounting to abuse by a carer or self-neglect by the vulnerable child, e.g. where a child is deprived of food, heat, clothing, comfort or essential medication, or failing to provide access to appropriate health or social care services. The inability to maintain a socially and culturally accepted standard of self-care with the potential for serious consequences to health and well-being.

## 6. How might Centrepieces become aware of abuse?

Concerns about or evidence of abuse can come to the notice of volunteers and trustees of Centrepieces through:

- A direct disclosure by the vulnerable child
- A complaint or expression of concern by a volunteer, another service user, a carer a member of the public or a relative
- An observation of the behaviour of the vulnerable child by a volunteer, member of staff, trustee or carer

## 7. Our commitment

To support vulnerable children who are experiencing, or are at risk from, abuse, Centrepieces is committed to:

- Identifying the abuse of vulnerable children and where it is occurring
- Responding effectively to any circumstances giving grounds for concern, or where formal complaints or expressions of anxiety are expressed
- Raising awareness of the extent of abuse on vulnerable children and its impact on them
- Promoting and supporting work designed to reduce abuse and the fear of abuse as experienced by vulnerable children

We will regularly monitor and evaluate how our policies, procedures and practices for protecting vulnerable children are working. We will make sure that our policies, procedures and practices stay up to date with good practice and the law in relation to safeguarding vulnerable children, and ensure that our procedures are in line with multi-agency safeguarding procedures. We have established a confidentiality policy to help safeguard personal details and sensitive information. Where relevant, we will carry out criminal record checks in line with Disclosure and Barring Service guidelines. We have a code of conduct that all members and volunteers are expected to abide by. Our Equality and Diversity policy sets out our commitment to equality, diversity, and respect for all being embedded into everything that we do.

All staff, volunteers and trustees will be asked to read the Safeguarding Policy and Procedures as part of their induction to Centrepieces and will be informed that they have a duty to report any concerns or incidents. Where appropriate staff will need to participate in DBS disclosure procedures.

## 8. What to do if abuse is suspected, or disclosed by a vulnerable child

If a child experiencing abuse or neglect approaches a Centrepieces member of staff, volunteer or trustee, you should listen carefully and get a clear and factual picture of the concern. However the child must be made aware that confidentiality will have to be broken for the purpose of safeguarding, and that only required personnels will be made aware of the information. The vulnerable child should be made aware that Centrepieces cannot ignore issues around abuse and that steps will be taken to deal with them in as sensitive manner as possible.

The following steps should be taken:

- Make sure that the child at risk is safe
- Deal with their immediate needs and ensure the child is, as far as possible, central to the decision making process
- Report the incident and nature of abuse to the Project Co-ordinator or other appropriate person within Centrepieces

- If a crime may have been committed, contact the duty social worker in the local authority to discuss or report it.
- Record the events.

A concern may be a direct disclosure by the child at risk, or a concern raised by volunteers or members, others using the service, a carer or member of the public, or an observation of the behaviour of the child at risk or the behaviour of another

All suspicions or allegations of abuse must be taken seriously and reported to the Project Co-ordinator/Designated Person.

If you hear about an incident of abuse from someone else, encourage them to report it themselves or help them report the facts of what they know.

The Project Co-ordinator/Designated Person or the person deputising in their absence will decide whether to make a referral to another agency. All concerns of abuse or neglect of a vulnerable child at risk should be reported to Bexley Children's Services department or the Duty Social worker on 020 8303 7777, by the Project Manager/Designated Person. The Council Team will then investigate the matter and act if they conclude that it is a safeguarding issue. However, if a serious crime has taken place or there is a need for immediate police response to protect the child at risk, consider dialling 999.

## 9. Contact list for reporting concerns or seeking advice

**London Borough of Bexley**, 2 Watling Street, Bexleyheath, Kent DA6 7AT.
During office hours (Care Central) on 020 8303 7777.
Out of office hours (Emergency Duty Team) on 020 8303 7171.

**Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust (Mental Health)**
During office hours (Intake and Liaison Team) on 01322 356100.
Out of office hours 24- hour **Mental Health Crisis Line on 0800 330 8590.**

**Metropolitan Police Service** - Where the concern may also be a crime you can report this to the MPS. In an emergency, always dial 999, or for non-emergencies call 101. You can also report crimes online, in police stations, or call Crime stoppers on 0800 555 111.

**Care Quality Commission -** 03000 616161 or enquiries.london@cqc.org.uk.