



PROUT BRIDGE PROJECT CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Updated 9th January 2024

review due 31/01/2025

Definition of Abuse

A child is considered to be abused, or at risk of abuse, when basic needs are not met by avoidable acts of either commission or omission: in other words, there is a recognition that abuse is not necessarily a physical act but can occur through omitting to act. Abuse can also involve exposing children to activities that are, in themselves, abusive (this can include pornography, grooming etc). There are four main types of abuse; Physical, Emotional, Sexual and Neglect.

Introduction

All organisations that make provision for children and young people must ensure that:

- The welfare of the child is paramount.
- All children, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious beliefs and/or sexual identity have the right to protection from abuse.
- All suspicions and allegations of abuse and poor practice will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately.
- All staff (paid/unpaid) working with children have a responsibility to report concerns to the appropriate officer.

The Prout Bridge Project is committed to practice that protects children from harm. Staff and volunteers who work for the Prout Bridge Project will recognise and accept our responsibilities to develop the awareness of the issues that may cause young people harm.

We, as an organisation, should equip staff with the necessary information and knowledge to give young people the support, guidance and help needed.

Policy Statement

Prout Bridge Project has a duty of care to safeguard all children involved from harm. All children have a right to protection, and the needs of disabled children and others who may be particularly vulnerable must be taken into account. Prout Bridge Project will ensure the safety and protection of all children involved through adherence to the Child Protection guidelines adopted by the Prout Bridge Project.

A child is defined as a person under the age of 18 (The Children Act 1989).

Policy aims

The aim of the Prout Bridge Project Child Protection and Safe Guarding Policies are to promote good practice in:

- Providing children and young people with appropriate safety and protection whilst in the care of the Prout Bridge Project.
- Allow all staff/volunteers to make informed and confident responses to specific child protection issues.

As an organisation, the Prout Bridge Project will endeavour to safeguard young people by: –

- o Adopting Child Protection Policies and Guidelines through a code of behaviour for all staff paid or volunteers.
- o Providing adequate up to date training around child protection issues.
- o Ensuring that Enhanced Criminal Records Bureau checks are in place for all staff and volunteers.
- o Ensuring all staff are aware of the Child Protection Procedures and Policies,
- o Appointing designated people to enable any concerns to be reported in accordance with Policies and Procedures.
- o Reviewing Policies and Good Practice Guidelines on a regular basis.

Child Protection Officer

The Prout Bridge Project has appointed a Child Protection Officer who is responsible for overseeing the implementation of this Policy. Prout Bridge Project Child Protection Officer is Paula Tuff - Manager. As first point of contact any Child Protection issue should be reported to your immediate Line Manager.

Recruitment and Training of Staff and Volunteers

The Prout Bridge Project recognises that anyone may have the potential to abuse children in some way and that all reasonable steps are taken to ensure unsuitable people are prevented from working with children. Pre-selection checks must include the following:

- All volunteers/staff should complete an application form. The application form will elicit information about an applicant's past and a self disclosure about any criminal record
- Two confidential references, including one regarding previous work with children. These references must be taken up and confirmed.
- Evidence of identity (passport or driving license with photo).

All new Prout Bridge Project staff and volunteers are subject to enhanced police check clearance carried out by Dorset Youth Association. All staff will be subject to renewal of police checks at least once every three years or immediately if their work is altered to include face to face work with children.

All staff, whether paid or voluntary, will undergo an interview conducted by at least two panel members

DBS police checks are only as good as the day they are received, therefore Prout Bridge Project staff will endeavour to work in pairs and to good practice guidelines.

All staff will be subject to a satisfactory probationary period.

Interview panels may request verification of qualifications and work placements.

Rehabilitation of offenders

All applicants are subject to enhanced disclosures, whilst there are a number of situations preventing applicants from working with children Prout Bridge Project CPO will review individuals circumstances and may, on occasion, and without precedent employ former offenders providing they are not on the sex offenders register, have a schedule one conviction or subject to license or court orders preventing them from working with children.

Induction

All employees and volunteers should receive an induction, during which:

- The job requirements and responsibilities should be clarified.
- Child Protection Procedures should be explained and training needs identified.

Training

In addition to pre-selection checks, the safeguarding process includes training after recruitment to help staff and volunteers to:

- Analyse their own practice against established good practice, and to ensure their practice is not likely to result in allegations being made.
- Recognise their responsibilities and report any concerns about suspected poor practice or possible abuse.
- Respond to concerns expressed by a child or young person.
- Work safely and effectively with children.
- Reporting an incident

All staff will adhere to the following guidelines:

All incidents of direct disclosure must immediately be reported to your immediate Line Manager.

All incidents of concern where there is a significant suspicion abuse must be reported directly to your immediate Line Manager.

All incidents of concern where there is reasonable doubt as to a child's well being must be reported to your immediate Line Manager.

Incidents must be recorded, signed and dated using the Prout Bridge Project Safeguarding Incident Form by the person reporting the incident. Information must be counter signed by the Line Manager to indicate that the concern has been expressed and received by the Line Manager.

The line manager is to report all concerns to Prout Bridge Project CPO.

The CPO will take all reasonable steps to report the concern/incident directly to Social Services and ask to be updated on any developments.

ALL information will be dealt with in the strictest confidence and will remain the sole knowledge of the CPO and those reporting any incidents/concerns.

Institutionalised reporting – External Organisations

In the event of Institutionalised Disclosure/Suspicion within an external environment, Prout Bridge Project staff must report any incidence or suspicions directly to the CPO. Under no circumstances

must they alert the person to the fact that a complaint/disclosure/allegation or suspicion has been made against them or their colleagues.

Institutionalised reporting – within Prout Bridge Project

In cases of Institutionalised Disclosure/Suspicion within Prout Bridge Project any person reporting the incident must report directly to the Prout Bridge Project Manager or if not available or involved the Prout Bridge Project Board of Trustees. Under no circumstances must any staff be alerted to the fact that a complaint/ allegation/suspicion has been made against them or their colleagues.

Internal Enquiries and Suspension

Prout Bridge Project Child Protection Officer will make a decision about whether any individual accused of abuse should be temporarily suspended pending further police and social services inquiries.

Irrespective of the findings of the social services or police inquiries the Prout Bridge Project will assess all individual cases to decide whether a member of staff or volunteer can be reinstated and how this can be sensitively handled. This may be a difficult decision; particularly where there is insufficient evidence to uphold any action by the police. In such cases Prout Bridge Project must reach a decision based upon the available information which could suggest that on a balance of probability, it is more likely than not that the allegation is true.

The welfare of the child should remain of paramount importance throughout.

Support to deal with the aftermath of abuse

Consideration should be given to the kind of support that children, parents and members of staff may need. Use of help lines, support groups and open meetings will maintain an open culture and help the healing process.

Consideration should be given to what kind of support may be appropriate for the alleged perpetrator.

Allegations of previous abuse

Allegations of abuse may be made some time after the event (e.g. by an adult who was abused as a child or by a member of staff who is currently working with children).

Where such an allegation is made, Prout Bridge Project should follow the procedures as detailed above and report the matter to the social services or the police. This is because other children may be at risk from this person. Anyone who has a previous criminal conviction for offences related to child abuse is automatically excluded from working with children.

Good Practice Guidelines

The definition of child abuse can be broken down in the following: –

Neglect

Parents are responsible for giving love, care and protection and for providing adequate food, shelter, clothing, medical care, supervision and protection, education and social and moral guidance.

If aspects of these are missing it is likely that a child is being neglected.

Neglect is often difficult to detect, as it is usually a slow, ongoing process.

Indicators of neglect might be:

- A child who is underweight for their age
- Cold mottled skin or poor skin condition
- Swollen limbs or sores which are slow to heal
- Diarrhoea (due to poor/inappropriate diet, irregular meals and tension)
- Abnormal voracious appetite
- Patchy hair or bald spots

NB: This is not exhaustive or exclusive.

Physical Abuse

Most children suffer accidents from time to time, which result in physical injury. When faced with an injured child the worker must decide whether the accident is of accidental origin or not.

Some injuries may seem insignificant in themselves but repeated injuries, even of a minor nature, may be symptomatic of child abuse and if no action is taken the child may be injured more seriously.

Physical injuries of children can take many forms, including;

- Bruises
- Fractures
- Scalds/burns
- Weal's, scars
- Brain injuries
- Eye injuries
- Internal injuries
- Poisoning
- Bites
- Grip marks

Common sites for accidental injuries are:

- Forehead
- Crown
- Bony spine
- Elbow
- Hip
- Knee and shin

Sexual abuse

The nature of sexual abuse covers a broad spectrum from caressing to intercourse.

Sometimes there are physical signs and symptoms which may indicate sexual abuse, including:

- Injury to the genitals or anal area, e.g. tearing or bruising

- Infection or abnormal discharge in the genital, anal or oral area
- Pregnancy (real or imagined)

Sometimes there are behavioural signs or symptoms which may indicate sexual abuse, including:

- Sexualised behaviour
- Sexualised drawing or play
- Sudden decline in school performance
- Regression i.e. soiling or wetting
- Low self esteem
- Psychosomatic disorders
- Suicidal acts or threats
- Sexual victimisation of others
- Promiscuity or promiscuous behaviour
- Eating disorders
- Sleep disturbance or nightmares
- Depression
- Running away

Emotional abuse

Emotional abuse can exist on its own. Emotionally abused children find their needs met with indifference, hostility or an inconsistent manner.

Abuse may include:

- Verbal hostility
- Ridicule
- Sarcasm
- Shaming
- Belittling
- Threatening
- Tantalising

It may go on to cruel treatment, e.g.:

- Locking children in their bedrooms or cupboards;
- Making unrealistic domestic demands of them;
- Withholding basic needs such as food, warmth, clothing, as punishment.

These conditions may lead to physical, emotional and intellectual delay or stunting.

Young people may require protection as a result of their own action. These may include:

- Inappropriate use of computers
- Ill judged relationships
- Inappropriate social behaviour such as bullying
- Misuse of drugs or alcohol
- Sexually explicit language or behaviour
- Eating disorders
- Self-harming
- Running away

Safeguarding Children & Risk Assessment

The following guidelines are used to attempt to minimise abuse within the workplace. They are not in specific order and are neither exclusive nor exhaustive.

Ensure children have a safe place to talk or report an incident

Ensure all children's concerns are taken seriously and reported in the correct manner.

Ensure staff work in pairs whenever possible, but certainly do not encourage one-to-one work as the 'norm'.

Place your child protection policy in a place where it can be seen by children and offer children an opportunity to sit with you if they have any questions.

Wherever possible do not work in an enclosed or unobserved area.

Ensure all staff are familiar with Child Protection procedures and offer appropriate training whenever possible.

Ensure there is a named person who will deal with any Child Protection enquiries.

Find the contact name of your local Child Protection Officer in Social Services and make contact with them.

Follow usual and appropriate Health & Safety and Risk Assessment Guidelines (personal care, first aid etc).

NEVER attempt to physically harm a child nor use any demeaning putative measures to deal with specific behaviours.

Ensure all staff are vetted, police checked, reference taken up etc and probationary periods are set in place.

Ensure supervision can be used as a means to address any concerns and to involve 'whistle-blowing'.

Ensure staff and children are not placed in any vulnerable positions and follow guidance on staff/child ratios:

- 1:6 under eights (increasing if under 5's)
- 1:10/15 eight to eleven years
- 1:15/20 over elevens

HOWEVER due care must be given to specific children who may require a higher ratio of support.

Do not transport children alone; always ensure there is an escort.

Do not physically push or harm children.

Trips out/Holidays

Ensure:

- You have parental consent forms from ALL children, which are clearly signed and dated by the parent/carer.
- You have undertaken a risk assessment at the place you are visiting.
- Parent/carer know which staff are responsible for children.

- First-aider present.
- All specific requirements of the child are detailed and held by a responsible adult (medication, allergies etc).
- Parental consent forms are received to enable staff to administer medication.
- Adequate transport provision – are seat belts fitted.
- You are correctly insured.
- You have an emergency contact number at ALL times.
- All equipment has been checked.
- You have an agreed 'lost' procedure (for children and staff).
- All staff have the phone number of the organisation.
- All know who the nominated person in charge is.
- Staff are clear about their responsibilities.
- Children are aware of their responsibilities and understand the boundaries.
- Always retain a list of children's details at all times.
- Don't take children home early unless you are sure their parent/carer will be there to take care of them.

Use of the Internet

Place the computer where everyone can use it and where others can see it.

Supervise its usage.

Talk to children about the types of sites they can and can't use.

Ensure that children are aware that chat sites can be extremely dangerous.

Ensure children do not give out their personal details over the net.

Ensure children NEVER arrange face-to-face meetings either alone or with a friend.

Encourage children to report to you if they come across anything, which they feel is abusive or offensive.

Introduce allocated time limits for children to spend on the net.

Block out access to certain sites.

The Child Protection/ Safe Guarding Policy and guidelines will operate with the framework of all Prout Bridge Project's policies and procedures.

Guidelines on how to deal with direct disclosure

Stay calm

Do not react to the disclosure, it is human nature to want to 'criticise' the abuser, but remember this could be the child's father, mother or other family member, who in all likelihood, the child still either loves or has a close relationship with. By responding in a negative manner you could actually add additional discomfort or uncomfortable feelings to the child.

Do not tell the child you can keep this information secret, you cannot attempt to solve this situation alone, but you can find someone who can help.

Never tell a child you don't believe them (that is precisely what the abuser will have told them).

Do not make the child tell anybody else at this stage.

Do not question the child but DO clarify what they have said.

Listen but not ask leading questions or probe for information.

Do not assume the role of counsellor.

Use simple language when explaining what will happen next.

Document, sign and date ALL information EXACTLY as the child has reported it to you.

Only use the words the child has used (if the child uses the word 'willy' for example, write that down and do not make any assumptions as to what it means).

Inform your Line Manager or CPO of the incident, who will then inform social services.

UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES must you approach the alleged abuser nor attempt to take matters into your own hands.

Do not prevent the child from going home unless told to do so by.

REMEMBER

You HAVE to report the incident.

Don't assume the child will be taken into care.

Don't make any personal judgements about the abuser.

Always maintain confidentiality and personal boundaries.

Institutionalised Disclosure

Report immediately to the Centre Manager. Do not hesitate to report an incident just because you know the person and you think 'they would not do that'. The status of the person or your relationship with them must NOT make any bearing on you reporting the allegation.

Under no circumstances must you tell the accused that an allegation has been made against them. There is evidence to suggest that once an abuser is uncovered, they can encourage children to withdraw their allegations and cover their tracks.

Do NOT assume the child is lying.

Ensure the CPO informs you of proceedings: this will enable you to know that action HAS been taken and that the CPO and trustees are not also involved.

Ensure confidentiality at all times.

Guidelines on how to deal with suspicion of abuse

If a suspicion is reported to you by any adult, team member or child: either about an adult or child:

- Discuss with your line manager and the immediate members of staff team, following Confidentiality Policy at all times.
- If there is an acceptable explanation and no further cause for concern then record the information and keep in a locked file.

If concern continues:

- Observe what you see and hear.
- Record, date and sign your observations.
- Contact the Centre Manager who will contact a designated person in Children's Services and record these details.

DO NOT contact the child or family, Children's Services will carry out any further investigation.

Guidelines on how to deal with known abuse from a third party

If it is a child disclosing be aware they may have been exposed to the abuse themselves and may need monitoring or additional support.

If an adult discloses you can explain that you have to inform Social Services and then explain to them what will happen.

Inform your Line Manager / Child Protection Officer.

Document, sign and date information.

Guidelines on what to do if an adult discloses they are abusing a child

Explain that you cannot keep this confidential and try to stay calm.

Explain the process below.

Do not probe or ask any leading questions.

Contact your line manager immediately.

Do not tell anybody else (there could be others involved).

Sign, date and record all information.

Your line manager will then deal with the incident via the appropriate bodies.

To prevent institutionalised abuse ensure you have information regarding the process and that it is being dealt with.

Confidentiality

Staff must maintain the organisations policy on confidentiality at all time.

Incident Report

All organisations should supply staff with an incident report. This enables you to know that an allegation, suspicion or disclosure has been dealt with and that action has been taken.

It should outline proceedings with them signed and dated.

When an incident occurs make a record of the incident



Complete Incident Report Form



Ensure that the young person is safe and receives any necessary medical attention



Report your concerns to your immediate Line Manager



If your Line Manager is not available, refer the matter straight to Prout Bridge Project CPO.



Prout Bridge Project CPO will proceed from here

If you are concerned about poor working practice



Complete an incident Report Form and submit it to your Line Manager



If the report relates to the Centre Manager/CPO or your Line Manager, refer directly to the Board of Trustees (Contact details can be obtained from our Finance, Funding & Admin Officer)



If you are the Line Manager report to Prout Bridge Project CPO or head of trustees

If no-one is available call Child Protection Services CHAD on:

01305 228558