



Charity No: 1169903

Date of Policy: 24th January 2023

Updated: 9th January 2024

Date to be renewed: 31st January 2025

Background

The child protection standards in this procedure are consistent with the Government publications: 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' (2023) A guide to multi-agency working to help protect and promote the welfare of children and 'What To Do If You're Worried a Child is Being Abused (2015)'. Please note that this document is designed to complement and provide a context for the more detailed Child Protection Procedures and does not replace them. For more detailed information see: www.pdscp.co.uk

The Prout Bridge Project's Safeguarding Policy

The Prout Bridge Project aims to provide for people of all ages to use its facilities to carry out a range of activities where they will feel welcome and safe, and where children using The Prout Bridge Project's facilities can benefit from being with each other and developing their potential. The Prout Bridge Project is committed to providing systems for recognition and referral for all staff in child protection and safeguarding issues

The Prout Bridge Project believes that it is always unacceptable for a child or young person to experience abuse of any kind and recognises its responsibility to safeguard the welfare of all children and young people, by a commitment to practice which protects them.

We recognise that:

- the welfare of the child/young person is paramount
- all children, regardless of age, disability, gender, racial heritage, religious belief, sexual orientation, or identity, have the right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse
- working in partnership with children, young people, their parents, carers and other agencies is essential in promoting young people's welfare.

The purpose of the policy is:

- to provide protection for the children and young people who receive The Prout Bridge Project's services, including the children of adult members or users
- to provide staff and volunteers with guidance on procedures they should adopt in the event that they suspect a child or young person may be experiencing, or be at risk of, harm.

This policy applies to all staff, including the Trustees, paid staff, volunteers and sessional workers, agency staff, students or anyone working on behalf of The Prout Bridge Project or any of its user groups.

We will seek to safeguard children and young people by:

- valuing them, listening to and respecting them
- adopting child protection guidelines through procedures and this code of conduct for staff and volunteers
- recruiting staff and volunteers safely, ensuring all necessary checks are made
- sharing information about child protection and good practice with children, parents, staff and volunteers
- sharing information about concerns with agencies who need to know, and involving parents and children appropriately
- providing effective management for staff and volunteers through supervision, support and training.

We are also committed to reviewing our policy and good practice annually.

What is abuse and neglect?

Abuse and neglect are forms of maltreatment – a person may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children and young people may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting; by those known to them or, more rarely, by a stranger.

- Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child.
- Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or only valued insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond the child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying, causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.
- Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, including prostitution, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative (e.g. rape, buggery or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts. They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual on-line images, watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.
- Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born it may involve a parent failing to: – provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment) – protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger – ensure adequate supervision (including the use of

inadequate care-givers) – ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

Procedures

- The role for all staff, volunteers and user groups in safeguarding children who may be in need of child protection services is in identifying children or young people who may be at risk and alerting the appropriate service.
- Staff and volunteers should be alert to the potential need for early help for any child who:
 - o is disabled and has specific additional needs;
 - o has special educational needs;
 - o is a young carer
 - o is showing signs of engaging in anti-social or criminal behaviour
 - o is in a family circumstance presenting challenges for the child, such as substance abuse, adult mental health, domestic violence; and/or
 - o is showing early signs of abuse and/or neglect.
- All staff at The Prout Bridge Project and its user groups must ensure that they know the child protection procedures that are in force at The Prout Bridge Project and which staff member is responsible for child protection issues.
- In some cases advice can be first sought from the Prout Bridge Project Safeguarding leads responsible for child protection support at the Prout Bridge Project . However, this should not preclude a direct referral to ChAD particularly if there is any element of immediate risk and the Safeguarding leads/responsible director cannot be contacted.
- Referrals must always be made to the Children's Advice and Duty Service for Professionals ("ChAD") on at **01305 228558** if there are signs that a child under the age of 18 years, or an unborn baby (in the case of a teenage parent):
 - Is suffering or has suffered abuse and/or neglect
 - Is likely to suffer abuse and/or neglect
 - (With agreement of a person with parental responsibility) would be likely to benefit from family support services.

The timing of referrals must reflect the perceived risk, and should normally be within one working day of recognition by telephone followed by a written referral within 48 hours. If, for any reason, you cannot contact the Safeguarding leads at the Prout Bridge Project you should go ahead and contact the ChAD directly.

- When a referral is made to the ChAD you must agree with them what the young person and parents will be told, by whom and when. Do not just leave messages. Always speak to someone.

Under no circumstances should you speak to or confront the abuser. Do not share suspicions or information with any other person other than your line manager, ChAD and the Police. Information given to ChAD or the Police will be taken seriously, handled sensitively and shared only on a 'need to know' basis, wholly to protect the child. However, in order to ensure that children are safeguarded on the basis of proper evidence, the source of the referral cannot be kept anonymous.

Acting on Concerns Regarding an Adult's Behaviour

If you have any concerns about an adult's behaviour towards children or young people (not an employee or volunteer working for The Prout Bridge Project):

- Do not ignore it – the service will take any concerns very seriously.
- You must discuss your concerns with the Safeguarding leads at the Prout Bridge Project, who will support you in liaising with the statutory agencies should any child protection matter arise.
- Do not confront the adult but seek the advice of Safeguarding leads at The Prout Bridge Project. If they are not available seek advice from the director responsible for Safeguarding Issues or from ChAD.

Dealing with Allegations or concerns against any Employee or Volunteer Working for The Prout Bridge Project

Concerns for the safety and well-being of children could arise in a number of different ways and in a range of settings. It is essential to act quickly and effectively if an allegation is made, or if there is suspicion or concern about a professional or volunteer's relationship with a child, young person or group of children/young people, particularly if they have:

- Behaved in a way that has harmed, or may have harmed, a child;
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to, a child; or
- Behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates she/he is unsuitable to work with children.

If an allegation is made, or a concern arises, about a member of staff or volunteer, ensure that the Safeguarding leads at The Prout Bridge Project is informed immediately or if they cannot be contacted, a Trustee. The Safeguarding leads will contact the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) (**01305 221122**) at the ChAD within 24 hours. The LADO is available to provide advice or support in any allegations process, including advising whether or not immediate suspension of the person concerned should be initiated. The Prout Bridge Project's Trustees must ensure that advice is sought at the earliest opportunity.

If the concern is raised out of hours you should contact the ChAD on the out of hours service number or, in an emergency, the police.

Records should be stored in a secured place and access to them will be strictly limited to relevant staff and external professionals on a need to know basis.

The member of staff or volunteer should be treated fairly and honestly, helped to understand the concerns expressed, the process being followed and any outcomes of the process. **Trustees should seek advice from the ChAD before informing the person who is subject to an allegation.**

Guidance

Responding to a Disclosure

If someone tells you that they, or someone they know, is being abused:

- Believe what the person is saying and take it seriously.
- Reassure the person who has made the disclosure to you that they have done the right thing.
- Give the child time to talk and do not probe or ask leading questions. Investigation is not your responsibility.
- **Do not** promise to keep secrets. All allegations of harm or potential harm must be acted upon. It is likely that in reporting on safeguarding allegations we will need to pass confidential information on to third party agencies.
- Explain to the child that you will share this information with a senior member of staff who will ensure the appropriate procedures will be followed.
- E-mails or text messages received detailing suspected abuse should be immediately responded to within 24 hours by contacting the young person by phone or face-to-face to obtain further information.
- Record the event in accordance with the reporting form at the end of this document.
- All allegations, even those that appear less serious, need to be followed up and examined objectively by someone independent of the organisation concerned. All allegations will be considered by the LADO, who acts for the Dorset Safeguarding Children Board to monitor allegations and ensure that the actions in response to the allegation are in accordance with the Dorset Safeguarding Children Board Procedures.
- Advice on the storage of all documentation must be sought from The Thanet Safeguarding leads or one of the Directors (as appropriate) who must ensure that access is strictly limited to relevant staff and external professionals on a need to know basis.

Staff Conduct: SAFE WORKING PRACTICE

It is essential that all staff are conscious of how they should conduct themselves to minimise the risk of finding themselves the subject of any child protection processes.

All staff should be aware of the following summary of things to do and not to do when working with children.

“DO’s”

- Read and follow these procedures
- Report to the Prout Bridge Project’s Safeguarding leads any concerns about child welfare/safety
- Report to the Prout Bridge Project’s Safeguarding leads any concerns about the conduct of other staff/volunteers/contractors
- Record in writing all relevant incidents
- Work in an open and transparent way
- Discuss and report any incidents of concern or that might lead to concerns being raised about your conduct towards a child.
- Report to the Prout Bridge Project’s Safeguarding leads any incidents that suggest a child may be infatuated with you or taking an above normal interest in you.
- Dress appropriately for your role
- Only use e-mail contact with children via any authorised system
- Avoid unnecessary physical contact with children
- Ensure you only use physical restraint as a last resort based on an assessment of immediate risk, use the minimum amount of force necessary, and NEVER use it as a form of punishment
- Where physical contact is essential for educational or safety reasons, gain pupil’s permission for that contact wherever possible
- Allow children to change clothes with levels of respect and privacy appropriate to their age, gender, culture and circumstances
- Avoid working in one-to-one situations with children

- Avoid volunteering to house children overnight
- Be careful about recording images of children and do this only when it is an approved activity.
- Contact your professional association or trade union (if applicable) if you are the subject of concerns or allegations of a child protection nature
- Fully co-operate with any investigation into child protection issues at The Prout Bridge Project. Listen to children when they express concern (rumours) about staff or volunteers which might appear to be just that, and check facts v fiction

“DON’T’S”

- Take any action that would lead a reasonable person to question your motivation and/or intentions
- Misuse in any way your position of power and influence over children
- Use any confidential information about a child to intimidate, humiliate or embarrass a child
- Engage in activities out of the workplace/setting that might compromise your position with children or young people.
- Establish or seek to establish social contact with pupils outside of the workplace or setting
- Accept regular gifts from children
- Give personal gifts to children
- Communicate with children in inappropriate ways, including through the media of personal e-mails, social networking and mobile telephones
- Pass your home address, phone number, e-mail address or other personal details to children or young people
- Make physical contact secretive
- Arrange to meet with children in closed rooms without other staff being made aware of this in advance
- Use physical punishment of any kind
- Confer special attention on one child unless this is part of an agreed plan or policy
- Transport pupils in your own vehicle without prior management approval
- Take, publish or share images of children without their parents' permission
- Access abuse images (sometimes referred to as child pornography) or other inappropriate material
- Abuse your position of trust with children or young people
- Allow boundaries to be unsafe in more informal settings such as trips out

Unaccompanied Children in Public Settings

There will be situations when young children visit public settings unaccompanied by their parent or carer. Whilst not wishing to discourage children from visiting places such as The Prout Bridge Project, staff and volunteers need to take reasonable steps to ensure the safety of the child and to inform parents / carers of their responsibilities. The way in which staff deal with unaccompanied children must be based on awareness of the responsibility of the parent or the loco parentis carer (i.e., the one taking the responsibility of parent), and the duty of care of the service to all children on the premises. In no instance would staff be expected to take on parental responsibilities for children at The Prout Bridge Project.

A good practice response on discovering an unaccompanied child on the premises is to:

- Try to avoid being left alone with a child. Try to ensure colleagues are present when you are dealing with unaccompanied children.
- Try to establish whether the child is allowed by the parent / carer to come and go alone.

If you are satisfied that the child is allowed to come and go alone, then allow the child to leave. If you gather this information only from the child then you will need to use your judgment to ascertain whether the child is competent to leave alone.

Relevant factors may be:

- Whether the child exhibits signs of nervousness
- Whether the child appears to clearly understand your questions
- Whether the child seems physically capable
- Whether the child appears to know clearly and readily where he or she lives
- How far the journey is
- Whether you know of any particular hazards on the journey
- The child's age and vulnerability

If you are in doubt, encourage the child to remain on the premises until you have been able to contact a parent or carer. Children under 10 years of age should not normally be allowed to leave alone unless you know that in the particular case the parent / carer allows it.

Ask the child if s/he is expecting to be collected by an adult. Even if the child is expecting to be collected soon, do not wait until closing time before taking the next step.

Try to contact the parent or carer. Ask the child for an address or telephone number.

Safeguarding Training

The Prout Bridge Project Staff & Volunteers

All Prout Bridge Project staff and volunteers working with children or vulnerable adults must ensure that they have attended child protection training provided through Dorset Safeguarding Children Board. Staff and volunteers who are likely to be in infrequent contact with children, young people and/or parents/carers who as a result of their role may become aware of possible abuse or neglect are required to have received **Group 1** level safeguarding training^[1].

Training will be organised and delivered in accordance with the requirements of Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023).

Any staff or volunteers who are likely to be in more regular contact with young people and/or parents/carers must liaise with The Prout Bridge Project's Safeguarding leads to ensure that they have received the appropriate Group level of training for their role, but should as a minimum have completed **Group 2** level training.

All staff and volunteers are requested to provide The Prout Bridge Project with evidence of training received, and to refresh their training every three years.

User group Staff & Volunteers

Staff with responsibility for child protection training within individual user groups will monitor attendance at relevant training to ensure all relevant staff are aware of the procedures and have received relevant training. User groups are required to provide The Thanet with documentary evidence that such training has been obtained and is current as described above.

If they are in doubt about whether staff have received adequate training they should consult with the Safeguarding leads at The Prout Bridge Project who will assist them with ensuring that the correct level of training is in place for staff.

Safer Workforce

Disclosure and Barring

All staff and volunteers working at The Prout Bridge Project who will or could be working with children or vulnerable adults must provide The Prout Bridge Project with a copy of a recent (not more than six months old) DBS Disclosure Certificate (previously known as CRB Disclosure Certificate). Any individual who does not hold one can obtain forms from Prout Bridge Project, who holds the necessary application forms. That individual will not be permitted to work unaccompanied with children or vulnerable adults until a copy of their DBS certificate has been provided to The Prout Bridge Project for its records.

Staff and volunteers working with children or vulnerable adults will be requested to renew their CRB/DBS Certificates every three years.

Recruitment and Selection

Advertisement of posts and application packs for roles which involve any safeguarding element should make explicit reference to the commitment of the organisation to Safeguarding, including:

1. Compliance with Disclosure & Barring regulations
2. Clear statements in the Job Description and Person Specification that explicitly reference the individual's safeguarding responsibilities
3. Providing information about Safeguarding Policy and Practices to applicants.

The selection process should:

1.
 - o Comply with Disclosure & Barring regulations
 - o always use application forms (CVs should not be accepted)
 - o a minimum of two people should check for any gaps in employment history and explore these gaps during interview
 - o ensure at least one reference is from a previous employer and specifically asks if there have been any concerns or allegations about the applicant's behaviour towards children; any disciplinary action; and confirmation of the applicant's responsibilities. Compare this information with that provided by the applicant. Any inconsistencies or concerns regarding the information provided in a personal reference must be followed up directly with the referee
 - o ensure that any concerns arising from the applicant's medical reference are followed up directly with the applicant and with the employing agency's medical adviser. Seek to explore the applicant's attitudes towards children and young people, their motivation for pursuing the role, and managing boundaries, at interview.
 - o Always ensure that any other uncertainty or inconsistency about the information provided about the applicant is followed up and resolved.

Reporting of inappropriate behaviour

The Prout Bridge Project is required by law to notify the Disclosure & Barring Service if it has dismissed or removed any volunteer or employee (or would have if they had not already resigned) because they have:

- been cautioned or convicted for a relevant offence; or
- engaged in action or inaction (neglect) that has harmed a child or vulnerable adult or put them at risk of harm; or
- satisfied the Harm Test in relation to children and/or vulnerable adults. (i.e. there has been no relevant conduct (i.e. no action or inaction) but a risk of harm to a child or vulnerable adult still exists).

Monitoring Arrangements

This policy and procedure will be reviewed annually.

Useful Telephone Numbers

The Prout Bridge Project Safeguarding leads (Paula Tuff & Henrietta Collins)

Office Number 07503091932

Mobile Numbers (for out of hours emergencies)

Paula Tuff 07503091932

Tony Street 07802514172

Trustee Chair responsible for Safeguarding Matters

Rev. Jo Neary 01308867816

ChAD Children's Advice and Duty Service 01305 228866

ChAD Children's Advice and Duty Service for Professionals 01305 228558

NSPCC Child Protection Helpline: 0808 800 5000

Child-Line: 0800 1111

Model Recording Form

Child's Name:

D.o.b:

Date:

Name/title of person raising concern:

Details of concern	Action taken – To whom and organisation (Has a referral to MASH been considered?)	Outcome of action	Further actions required By whom and when	Review Date	Name and signature of person completing entry
--------------------	-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-------------------	----------------------------------------------	-------------	-----------------------------------------------

Name

Designation:

copied to