

BOSP CHILD PROTECTION POLICY



Introduction

BOSP understands that children with special educational needs and disabilities face additional safeguarding challenges. Barriers can exist when recognising abuse and neglect in this group of children.

Children with disabilities may be especially vulnerable to abuse for a number of reasons:

- Many children with disabilities are at an increased likelihood of being socially isolated with fewer outside contacts than non-disabled children
- Their dependency on parents and carers for practical assistance in daily living, including intimate personal care, increases their risk of exposure to abusive behaviour
- They have an impaired capacity to resist or avoid abuse
- They may have speech, language and communication needs which may make it difficult to tell others what is happening
- They often do not have access to someone they can trust to disclose that they have been abused, and/or
- They are especially vulnerable to bullying and intimidation

BOSP staff/workers form part of the wider safeguarding system for children.

Policy Statement

BOSP believes that children have the right to be completely secure from both the fear and reality of abuse and is committed to protecting all the children and young people in its care from harm.

Responsibilities

Everyone who comes into contact with children, young people and their families and carers has a role to play in safeguarding children. To fulfil our responsibility, we consider at all times what is in the best interests of the child.

BOSP has two designated Safeguarding Leads, Families & Activities Manager Emily Bell and CEO Jodie Connelly, who co-ordinate and oversee safeguarding, and a Safeguarding Deputy, Skills 4 Life Supervisor Emily Burbridge, all trained to Safeguarding Level 3. These members of staff have suitable experience, training and expertise, and are responsible for liaising with the Local Safeguarding Children's Board, social services and Ofsted in any child protection matter. Dee Horton is our Safeguarding Trustee.

Statutory Framework

BOSP works with key local partners to promote the welfare of children and protect them from harm. This includes providing a co-ordinated offer of early help when additional needs of concern are identified and contributing to an inter-agency plan which provides additional support.

The development of appropriate procedures and the monitoring of good practice in Essex are the responsibilities of the Essex Safeguarding Children Board (ESCB).

BOSP's Child Protection procedures comply with all relevant legislation, and all action is taken in accordance with the following guidance:

- Essex Safeguarding Children Board Guidelines – SET (Southend, Essex and Thurrock) Safeguarding and Child Protection Procedures (June 2025 and amendments/updates)
- Effective Support for Children and Families in Essex (ESCB 2024)
- Essex LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer) from the Children’s Safeguarding Service 03330-139797

Recognising Child Abuse & Identifying Different Types of Abuse

Child abuse manifests itself in a variety of different ways, some overt and others much less so. All staff/workers and volunteers have child protection training and will be vigilant to behaviours, signs and evidence of physical, sexual and emotional abuse or neglect. The main types of abuse are:

- **Physical Abuse:** This can involve hitting, shaking, throwing, burning, suffocating or any other physical harm. Deliberately causing a child’s ill health also constitutes physical abuse
- **Sexual Abuse:** This involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve inappropriate looking or touching, including penetrative or non-penetrative acts and child sexual exploitation. Showing children pornographic materials, sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways also constitutes sexual abuse
- **Emotional Abuse:** Varying degrees of emotional abuse are present in virtually all child protection incidents but can also constitute abuse in its own right. Emotional abuse involves persistent or severe emotional ill-treatment or torture, coercion, intimidation, cyber bullying or isolation, causing, or likely to cause, severe adverse effects on the emotional stability of a child. Such behaviour may involve conveying to a child that they are worthless, unloved, or inadequate, or making them feel unnecessarily frightened or vulnerable
- **Neglect:** Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child’s basic physical, emotional or psychological needs, such as is likely to have a severe impact on their health, development or emotional stability. Neglect may involve failing to provide adequate food, shelter or clothing for a child, or failing to protect them adequately from physical harm or ill health. Neglect can also manifest itself in a failure to meet the basic emotional needs of a child
- **Domestic Abuse:** Children can experience and be affected by domestic abuse at home, where it occurs between family members, including where the abuser does not live with the child. Young people can also experience child-on-child domestic abuse within their own personal relationships (teenage relationship abuse)

Risks Outside of the Home

Staff, workers and volunteers are also aware of environmental factors which may impact on a child/young person’s welfare and safety and understand safeguarding ‘risks outside of the home’ (formerly known as contextual safeguarding), responding to young people’s experiences of significant harm beyond their families. It recognises that the different relationships that young people form in their neighbourhoods, schools and online can feature violence and abuse. This can include:

Child Criminal and Sexual Exploitation an example being county lines criminal activity when drug networks or gangs groom and exploit children to carry drugs and money from urban to suburban areas, or utilising rape and sexual assault as a method of control.

Peer on Peer Abuse which can include cyber bullying, physical abuse, hazing (coercion) type violence and gender-based harassment.

Trafficking and Modern Slavery examples include sexual exploitation or work with little or no pay.

Cultural Competency

Staff, workers and volunteers are aware of children/young people becoming victims of abuse linked to faith or belief. Whilst BOSP is sensitive to differing family patterns and lifestyles to child rearing that vary across different racial and cultural groups, we are clear that child abuse cannot be condoned for religious or cultural reasons. Examples include:

Forced Marriage is when entered into without the full consent of one or both parties.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) comprises of all procedures involving partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or injury to the female genital organs. It is illegal in the UK and a duty on professionals has been introduced to notify the police of known cases if it appears to have been carried out on a girl under the age of 18 years of age or may about to be committed.

Breast Ironing as a means of preventing development.

Child Abuse linked to Beliefs in Spirit Possession, Witchcraft, Demons or the Devil can lead to children being blamed for bad luck and subsequently abused.

Prevention of Radicalisation or Extremism Radicalisation is the process through which a person comes to support, or be involved in, extremist ideologies. Youngsters can be targeted and groomed on-line with video games or exposure to violent material, via Tiktok, texts etc.

Hidden Harm

Staff/workers are aware of the 'hidden harm' agenda concerning parents with drug and alcohol problems. It also considers other factors affecting parental capacity and risk, such as domestic abuse, mental or physical illness or a parent's learning disability that can put children at risk of harm, and understands behaviours linked to issues such as deliberately missing education and sexting, putting children in danger. Other examples include:

Fabricated Induced Illness/Perplexing Presentations (formerly known as Munchausen Syndrome by Proxy) is when parents are saying their child has an illness or disorder when there is little evidence of this.

Disguised Compliance BOSP are aware that an individual or parent/carer may engage numerous times following a concern but with no changes having been made, and that an escalation is required.

Other Safeguarding Considerations

Safeguarding in a Public Place this is included in BOSP's activity risk assessments and as part of the children and young people's learning, where appropriate, are taught about 'stranger danger' and other associated risks.

Private Fostering BOSP are obliged to inform ECC of arrangements by family members, that have evolved perhaps as a result of hidden harm within the child's home. Status needs to be

determined, as Special Guardianship needs to be awarded to ensure the private fostering is safe.

Online Safety We recognise that during and following the pandemic many children/young people will have increased unsupervised access to digital platforms. Staff/workers are made aware that children/young people are vulnerable to being bullied or groomed for abuse or radicalisation online. Staff/workers will be vigilant to any signs that that this may be occurring and report any concerns in the usual way. Information on how to keep children/young people safe online and resources to support families to do this, including a Zoom participant guide and Parental Tool Kit – on-line safety, can be found on BOSP’s website.

Harmful Sexual Behaviour (HSB) is a term used to describe sexual actions that are outside what is safe for a child’s stage of development. It includes actions that can harm either the child themselves, or another person.

It can include:

- frequently and intentionally accessing age-inappropriate sexual material online
- using inappropriate language
- undertaking mutual sexual activity they are not ready for with peers
- sending and receiving illegal images
- sexual interactions where there are significant power differences, lack of consent, or through force or threats
- engaging in abusive or sexually violent sexual behaviour online or offline

Pandemics In the event of a local or national lockdown, staff/workers are aware that during lockdown the children we support will be very isolated and possibly exposed to increased harm including; physical or sexual abuse, neglect or poverty, perhaps as a result of increased domestic or alcohol abuse, or due to the mental health of the parent/carer. Whilst there will be others who avoid abuse during lockdown, they may then face harm once again as they become back in contact with their wider family/community, post pandemic.

PROCEDURES

Support Worker Support and Training

BOSP is committed to ensuring that it meets its responsibilities in respect of Child Protection through the provision of support and training to staff/volunteers. Therefore, BOSP will ensure that:

- All staff, workers and volunteers are carefully recruited in accordance with our ‘Safer Recruitment Policy’ (see separate BOSP policy); have verified references and have full and up to date Disclosure and Barring Service checks
- All staff, workers and volunteers are made aware of the main signs of child abuse and are aware of their statutory requirements in respect of the disclosure or discovery of child abuse
- All staff, workers and volunteers are given a copy of BOSP’s Child Protection Policy during their induction, and have its implications explained to them
- All staff, workers and volunteers complete a health questionnaire to assess their mental and physical suitability to work at BOSP, and attend a trial day where they are paired with a ‘buddy mentor’ to risk assess their performance and suitability

- All staff, workers and volunteers are provided with regular safeguarding training, supervision, and management support commensurate with their responsibilities in relation to Child Protection, and their requirement to maintain caring and safe relationships with children. This includes handbook learning, on-line, face-to-face safeguarding training (Group Leaders and Supervisors trained to Level 2), and guidance during pre and post session briefings, that if they have any safeguarding concerns to speak to the Supervisor on duty/Child Protection Lead (not to be disclosed to the whole group)
- Staff, workers and volunteers are aware of procedures in place to record details of visitors to the setting and to ensure that BOSP has control over who comes into the setting so that no unauthorised person has unsupervised access to the children
- Staff, workers and volunteers are encouraged to be courageous and exercise their 'professional curiosity' if they have any concerns, especially as many of BOSP's children are non-verbal and have complex learning needs
- Personal mobile phones are locked away during the session. Contact instead is made by walkie talkies between workers in different rooms, with the BOSP mobile retained by the Supervisor should parents wish to make contact or for emergency use. Photographs are only allowed to be taken using the BOSP camera/BOSP mobile in-line with parent/carers signed consent forms. The phone/camera is regularly downloaded, with images saved to a restricted file
- BOSP will audit incidents, looking for possible consistencies and risk assess procedures. It will exercise Duty of Candour, learning and changing, if processes are not quite succinct. Quarterly safeguarding summaries will be forwarded to BOSP's Safeguarding Trustee
- BOSP understands how diversity, beliefs and values of people who use our services may influence the identification, prevention and response to safeguarding concerns

Safe Caring

The staff, workers and volunteers at BOSP understand the organisation's Child Protection procedures and have had appropriate training and guidance in the principles of safe caring. To this end:

- Every effort will be made to avoid or minimise time when members of staff/workers, students or volunteers are left alone with a child. If staff/workers are alone with a child, the door of the room should be kept open and another member of staff/worker should be informed
- Staff/workers/volunteers will never carry out a personal task for children that they can do for themselves
- Where this is essential, staff, workers and volunteers will help a child whilst being accompanied by a colleague. Unless a child has a particular need, staff/volunteers should not accompany children into the toilet
- If a child makes inappropriate physical contact with a member of staff/worker, student or volunteer, this will be recorded fully on an Incident Record
- Staff, workers and volunteers are aware of the boundaries of appropriate behaviour and conduct. They will be mindful of how and where they touch children, given their age and

emotional understanding. Unnecessary or potentially inappropriate physical contact will be avoided at all times (as outlined in the Staff Handbook - Physical Touch Guidelines)

- We may on occasion request confirmation from a staff, workers or volunteer's GP that they are mentally and physically fit for work, to identify whether there are any causes for concern about an individual's health that might affect their ability/suitability to look after vulnerable children on a 1:1 basis or be in contact with children. To safeguard the children in our care, sessional work will not be offered to staff until this has been confirmed
- Resources for use at BOSP Sessions: 'Don't Hug Doug' and 'It's my Body' books', PANTS Resources including 'Talk PANTS with Makaton' book; 'People who make us Safe' pairing game

TAKING ACTION

When a Child/Young Person Makes an Allegation or Disclosure

In circumstances where a child makes an allegation or a disclosure to a member of staff/worker or volunteer, the member of staff/worker/volunteer concerned will:

1. Show care, use open body language and listen fully to all the child has to say, allowing silences
2. Make no observable judgement
3. Ask open questions that encourage the child to speak in their own words e.g. How, What, Who, Tell me about,..Explain to me about...
4. Reflect back and show you understand, using their own language if possible, as specific words are important
5. Ensure the child is safe, comfortable and not left alone
6. Not guarantee confidentiality, or promise not to tell anybody what they are being told. Make them aware if you have to share the information and record it

All staff/workers and volunteers will follow BOSP's Child Safeguarding procedures in-line with the Local Safeguarding Children Board Guidelines.

Reporting a Safeguarding Concern

Staff, workers and volunteers are encouraged and supported to trust their professional judgment and to always report their concerns. Where actual or suspected abuse comes to the attention of staff, workers or volunteers, they will report this to the Supervisor or the Child Protection Lead at the earliest possible opportunity, or the deputy in their absence.

- A BOSP Safeguarding Incident Form will be completed by the staff involved. Information recorded will include:
 - Full details of the alleged incident
 - Details of all the parties involved (Witnesses should also complete an Incident Record Form), using BOSP ID numbers or initials if ID unknown at the time, in place of names.
 - Relevant dates, time line (times of conversations, when shared with safeguarding lead etc.)
 - Use of speech marks to record spoken words of an individual and of questions asked

- Consent received, or reasons why not obtained and any action to safeguard the child
- Any evidence or explanations offered by interested parties
- Location
- Body map if required.

If a concern arises at a BOSP session, a BOSP Safeguarding Incident Form will be completed by the staff, worker or volunteer(s) involved. Information recorded will include full details of the alleged incident, details of all the parties involved, consent received, or reasons why not obtained, any evidence or explanations offered by interested parties, including the use of speech marks to record spoken words of an individual, if applicable, along with relevant dates, times, locations, and body maps if required. In the event of there being a witness to an incident, they should also complete an Incident Record Form.

The Safeguarding Lead will then complete BOSP's Safeguarding Incident Log and Lamplight Database Safeguarding report.

If the child is at risk of **immediate danger**, call **999**, or if at risk of **immediate harm** call the **Essex Child & Family Hub helpline** on **0345 603 7627** and ask for **Priority Line**.

All other referrals are to be made via the helpline on **0345 606 1212** and will be directed depending on the level of need (early help is also available at ECC's 'Early Help Drop-In's' that take place virtually every Wednesday at 12.30pm).

Level 1: universal services The child's needs are being met through open-access services.

Level 2: additional support and early help The child or family is struggling and needs additional support.

Level 3: multi-disciplinary support and Family Solutions The child or family needs more complex and intensive support.

Level 4: specialist intervention The child or young person is likely to suffer significant harm, lasting impairment or be removed from home without specialist intervention.

The Hub may require you to complete an online portal referral form. A copy of this can be saved to the safeguarding case opened on Lamplight.

Go to www.essex.gov.uk/report-a-concern-about-a-child

Once Case Closure is complete all relevant parties will be informed by the Hub. Details are to be updated within the Lamplight safeguarding case and the status changed to 'signed-off'. If you are not happy with the outcome and wish to challenge the decision, you can escalate the referral.

Exercising Professional Curiosity: BOSP's Safe-Guarding Lead can discuss allegations with **LADO** (Local Authority Designation Officer) if they have doubts of any situation arising before making a referral. Telephone 03330 139 797. Email: lado@essex.gov.uk

Dealing with Allegations of BOSP's Workforce

Further to this, the following principles will govern any suspected or reported case of abuse:

- All allegations made by a child against a member of staff, worker or volunteer will be fully recorded, including any actions taken, on an Incident Record form and BOSP's Safeguarding Incident Log and Lamplight safeguarding module

- The Supervisor and the Child Protection Lead will be responsible for ensuring that written records are dated, signed and kept confidentially
- If an allegation of abuse is made against the Supervisor, the incident should be reported to the Child Protection Lead or Deputy. If the allegation is against one of the Child Protection Leads, the second Child Protection Lead will then assume responsibility for the situation and BOSP's Safeguarding Trustee will also be informed
- BOSP will take appropriate action in relation to the findings of any investigation into allegations of abuse, consistent with its duties to protect the safety of children and uphold fair processes for staff/workers, students and volunteers
- Any member of staff/worker, a student or volunteer under investigation for the alleged abuse of a child, will be subject to the provisions of the Staff Disciplinary Policy
- Ofsted will be informed of any allegations of abuse against a member of staff, worker, student or volunteer, or any abuse that is alleged to have taken place on the premises or during a visit or outing within 14 days on; 0300 1234 666 or online at: https://ofstedonline.ofsted.gov.uk/ofsted/Ofsted_Early_Years_Notification.ofml

(If in doubt as to whether the incident is an Ofsted 'Reportable Incident' or not, BOSP will report anyway, for Ofsted to decide)

Under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998, we will notify the Disclosure and Barring Service of any person who is dismissed from our employment, or resigns in circumstances that would otherwise have led to dismissal for reasons of a child protection concern

Dealing with Allegations of a Person who also has Care and Support Needs

- A review of what support and action may help them not to abuse others
- Where possible there should be a co-ordinated approach and partnership working
- Consideration will be given to the balance of power as part of the reporting process
- Where both parties are receiving service from BOSP, the Safeguarding Leads and Senior Team will discuss cases and consider joint assessment and support plans where appropriate

Referring Allegations to Child Protection Agencies

BOSP is committed to ensuring that it meets its responsibilities in respect of child protection by treating any allegation seriously and sensitively. BOSP will NOT carry out any investigation itself into a suspected child abuse incident. If the Supervisor or the Child Protection Lead has reasonable grounds for believing that a child has been, or is in danger of being subject to abuse, our reporting procedure will be activated.

- At all times, the safety, protection and interests of children concerned will take precedence. BOSP will work with and support parents/carers as far as they are legally able
- BOSP will assist the social services and the police, as far as it is able, during any investigation of abuse or neglect. This will include disclosing written and verbal information and evidence

Confidentiality

Staff, workers and volunteers will ensure that all concerns, allegations and investigations are treated with sensitivity and confidentiality. Information sharing should only be that which is necessary, proportionate, relevant, accurate, timely and secure.

Any information shared is shared under the guidance of the Local Safeguarding Children Board and in-line with GDPR/Data Protection Act 2018. Paperwork to be kept in locked cupboard, ID numbers used in place of names in documentation, where possible. Emails sent by via BOSP's secure email system or password protected.

Whistleblowing

Please see BOSP's separate Whistleblowing Policy. We want everyone at BOSP to feel able to report any child protection/safeguarding concerns. However, members of staff/workers/volunteers who feel unable to raise these concerns internally can call the NSPCC whistle blowing helpline 0800 028 0285, 8:00am to 8:00pm or email help@nspcc.org.uk

Audit and Review

BOSP is committed to reviewing its Child Protection policy and procedures annually with safeguarding and incident logs audited on a quarterly basis by BOSP's CEO and BOSP's Safeguarding Trustee. The policy and its procedures are available via our website www.bosp.co.uk and from The BOSP Office.

If risk of significant immediate harm, call below and ask for the Priority Line, or call the police on 999 if in immediate danger

Outside of this, contact will be made, at the earliest possible opportunity with:

Essex - Child & Family Hub helpline:

0345 603 7627

Monday to Thursday: 8:45am to 5:00pm

Friday: 8:45am to 4:15pm

Out of Hours & Bank Holidays contact: 0345 606 1212

A request for service can also be made via the online portal:

www.essex.gov.uk/report-a-concern-about-a-child

Essex Police contact number 101 or 01245 491491

Southend: 01702 534 706 / SSCP@souhend.gov.uk

Thurrock: 01375 652 802

Out of Hours: 01375 372 468

For Havering Children: 01708 433 222 (9.00am to 5.00pm)

Out of Hours/weekends: 01708 433 999

Appendices:

Child Safeguarding Procedure Flowchart (a summary of the procedure for dealing with a Child Safeguarding concern)

Safeguarding – Signs of Abuse