



LINK

East Fife Mental Health Befriending Projects

Safeguarding Policy

LINK acknowledges the duty of care to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults and is committed to ensuring safeguarding practice reflects statutory responsibilities and government guidance.

The policy recognises that the welfare and interests of children, young people and vulnerable adults are paramount in all circumstances. It aims to ensure that regardless of age, gender, religion or beliefs, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation or socio-economic background, all children, young people and vulnerable adults:

- have a positive and enjoyable experience of befriending at LINK in a safe environment
- are protected from abuse whilst participating in the befriending relationship or outside of the activity.

LINK acknowledges that some children, young people and vulnerable adults, including disabled children, young people and adults or those from ethnic minority and LGBTQ+ communities, can be particularly vulnerable to abuse and we accept the responsibility to take reasonable and appropriate steps to ensure their welfare.

As part of our safeguarding policy LINK will:

- promote and prioritise the safety and wellbeing of children, young people and vulnerable adults.
- ensure everyone understands their roles and responsibilities in respect of safeguarding and is provided with appropriate learning opportunities to

SC027493

recognise, identify and respond to signs of abuse, neglect and other safeguarding concerns relating to children, young people and vulnerable adults.

- ensure appropriate action is taken in the event of incidents/concerns of abuse and support provided to the individual/s who raise or disclose the concern.
- ensure that confidential, detailed and accurate records of all safeguarding concerns are maintained and securely stored
- prevent the employment/deployment of unsuitable individuals
- ensure robust safeguarding arrangements and procedures are in operation.

The policy and procedures will be widely promoted and are mandatory for everyone involved in LINK.

Safeguarding is about embedding practices throughout the organisation to ensure the protection of children and vulnerable adults wherever possible. In contrast, child and adult protection is about responding to circumstances that arise.

Abuse is a selfish act of oppression and injustice, exploitation and manipulation of power by those in a position of authority. This can be caused by those inflicting harm or those who fail to act to prevent harm. Abuse is not restricted to any socio-economic group, gender or culture.

It can take a number of forms, including the following:

- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Bullying
- Neglect
- Financial (or material) abuse

Definition of a child

A child is under the age of 18 (as defined in the United Nations convention on the Rights of a Child).

Definition of Vulnerable Adults

A vulnerable adult is a person aged 18 years or over who may be unable to take care of themselves or protect themselves from harm or from being exploited.

This may include a person who:

- Is elderly and frail
- Has a mental illness including dementia
- Has a physical or sensory disability
- Has a learning disability
- Has a severe physical illness
- Is a substance misuser
- Is homeless

All staff (paid or unpaid) and volunteers have a responsibility to follow the guidance laid out in this policy and related policies, and to pass on any welfare concerns using the required procedures.

We expect all staff (paid or unpaid) and volunteers to promote good practice by being an excellent role model, contribute to discussions about safeguarding and to positively involve people in developing safe practices.

LINK ensures safe recruitment through the following processes:

SCREENING AND SELECTION OF STAFF

- Application form
- Membership of the PVG Scheme
- Two references
- Interview
- Initial three-month probation
- Annual review by line manager and management committee

SCREENING AND SELECTION OF VOLUNTEERS

- Initial interview by Project Co-ordinator
- Membership of the PVG Scheme
- Two references
- 12-hour preparation training course
- Post training interview by Project Co-ordinator
- Initial six-month probation

LINK commits resources for induction, training of staff (paid and unpaid) and volunteers, effective communications and support mechanisms in relation to Safeguarding.

Induction will include:

- Discussion of the Safeguarding Policy (and confirmation of understanding)
- Discussion of other relevant policies
- Ensure familiarity with reporting processes, the roles of the Manager (and who acts in their absence)

- Initial training on safeguarding including: safe working practices, safe recruitment, understanding child protection and protection of vulnerable adults

All staff and volunteers who, through their role, are in contact with children and /or vulnerable adults will have access to safeguarding training at an appropriate level.

Sources and types of training will include:

- Adult Protection:
<https://fifecouncil.learningnexus.co.uk/course/view.php?id=396>
- Child Protection:
<https://fifecouncil.learningnexus.co.uk/course/view.php?id=426>

As well as regular relevant training.

Commitment to the following communication methods will ensure effective communication of safeguarding issues and practice:

- team meetings
- Committee meetings
- One to one meetings (formal or informal)
- Monthly support and supervision sessions for staff and volunteers

We recognise that involvement in situations where there is risk or actual harm can be stressful for staff concerned. The mechanisms in place to support staff include:

- Debriefing support for paid/unpaid staff and volunteers so that they can reflect on the issues they have dealt with.
- Seeking further support as appropriate.

Professional boundaries are what define the limits of a relationship between staff, volunteers and service users/befriendees. They are a set of standards we agree to uphold that allows this necessary and often close relationship to exist while ensuring the correct detachment is kept in place.

LINK expects staff and volunteers to protect the professional integrity of themselves and the organisation.

SC027493

The following professional boundaries must be adhered to:

- **Giving and receiving gifts from clients:** LINK does not encourage paid staff or volunteers to give gifts to or receive gifts from befrienders. However, a £10 gift allowance is issued at Christmas for volunteers to buy their befriendees a small Christmas gift.
- **Staff contact with user groups.** Personal relationships between a member of staff (paid or unpaid) or volunteer and a service user is prohibited. This includes relationships through social networking sites such as Facebook.

The process outlined below details the stages involved in raising and reporting safeguarding concerns at LINK:

- Report concerns to your manager/coordinator or key worker.
- Seek medical attention for the vulnerable person if required.
- Discuss with parents of child or vulnerable person. Obtain consent to share concerns if appropriate.
- In the event of an emergency and if you cannot contact manager/coordinator or care worker please use the emergency numbers issued to you.

LINK recognises its duty to report concerns or allegations against its staff (paid or unpaid) or volunteers within the organisation or by a professional from another organisation.

The Project hopes that most concerns raised will be resolved through informal discussion with and between those involved, but would stress that on all occasions, there is a right to have complaints investigated formally.

The process for raising and dealing with allegations is as follows:

- A service user or their representative, volunteer or member of staff should be encouraged to raise any matter of concern as soon as possible and should be provided with assistance should they wish to make a formal complaint.

- The complainant will be given the opportunity to contact other persons regarding the complaint – e.g. a friend, relative, social worker etc. – and, where necessary, will be given assistance to make these contacts and seek advice.
- The complainant and/or their representative will be made aware of the complaints process, including: timescales, recording and confidentiality, notification of decisions and actions etc.
- The Project Coordinator will write to the complainant within the first five working days, acknowledging the complaint.

Information will be gathered, recorded and stored in accordance with the following policies, Data Protection Policy, Confidentiality Policy.

All staff must be aware that they have a professional duty to share information with other agencies in order to safeguard children and vulnerable adults. The public interest in safeguarding children and vulnerable adults may override confidentiality interests. However, information will be shared on a need to know basis only, as judged by the Designated Senior Manager.

This policy will be reviewed annually and when there are changes in legislation.