



SAFEGUARDING POLICY

INTRODUCTION

This policy provides details of how Bridge Counselling aims to demonstrate its commitment in keeping safe vulnerable adults and children with whom the Counsellors have contact in all aspects of their work.

Bridge Counselling is committed to promoting the welfare of all children and vulnerable adults and operating the counselling service in a way to ensure that they are safe and protected.

This policy applies to all staff, Trustees, Counsellors and Volunteers who are part of Bridge Counselling.

The purpose of the policy is to ensure:

- a) All those connected with the counselling service, (children and adults), are protected
- b) All Counsellors, (and those connected with the service), are aware of what abuse is, how to identify it and the procedures to follow if abuse is suspected
- c) All Bridge Clients (children and adults) are protected
- d) Everyone involved in the work of Bridge counselling is aware of this Policy and Procedures

SAFEGUARDING POLICY

As Bridge Counsellors and Trustees

- a) We commit ourselves to the nurturing, protection and safety of all, especially children and vulnerable adults with whom we have contact in connection with counselling activities
- b) We recognise it is the responsibility of each one of us, where possible, to prevent the physical, emotional and sexual abuse and neglect of children and vulnerable adults and to report any abuse discovered or suspected
- c) We undertake to exercise proper care in the selection and appointment of those working with vulnerable adults, whether paid or volunteer - this includes appropriate DBS checks
- d) We promote good practice in counselling when working alongside children and vulnerable adults, so that everyone concerned knows what to expect in terms of good conduct and accountability, and that any boundaries set are respected at all times
- e) Bridge Counselling will appoint a designated named person as a Safeguarding Adults Coordinator.
- f) Those working with children and vulnerable adults should be aware of the limits of their own activities and competencies and to whom they are accountable.
- g) Appropriate training and support will be made available as needed and updated regularly.

PROCEDURES

Bridge Counselling is committed to working within the current legal framework and with other appropriate agencies for reporting abuse. Any concerns about abuse should be passed on to the Bridge Safeguarding Coordinator. These may be a general concern about someone's well-being, something you have heard or seen that could be abusive or something you are told that has happened or is happening to someone that could be abusive.

If you receive an allegation of abuse:

- a) Reassure the person concerned
- b) Listen to what they are saying
- c) Record what you have been told/witnessed as soon as possible (see form at Appendix 1)
- d) Remain calm and do not show shock or disbelief
- e) Tell the person that the information will be treated seriously
- f) Do not start to investigate or ask detailed or probing questions
- g) Do not promise to keep it a secret
- h) Inform the Bridge Safeguarding Coordinator

If you witness abuse or abuse has just taken place the priorities will be:

- a) To call an ambulance if required
- b) To call the police if a crime has been committed
- c) To preserve evidence
- d) To keep yourself and others safe
- e) To inform the Safeguarding Coordinator
- f) To record what happened (see form at Appendix 1)

The Coordinator will advise on the appropriate action and, if abuse is identified, will make sure immediate protection needs are put in place and a referral made to the appropriate agency.

DEFINITIONS

Children – all children aged 18 and under

Vulnerable adults are people aged 18 years or over, who may be at increased risk of abuse. The following factors could increase this risk:

- a) Learning, sensory or physical disability
- b) Old age and frailty, especially if it creates dependency on, or needing help from, others
- c) Mental health problems
- d) Dementia or confusion
- e) Severe illness
- f) In addition, adults may be made vulnerable by means of a permanent or temporary reduction in physical, mental or emotional capacity brought about by life events e.g. an illness, bereavement, past abuse or trauma

Abuse:

Abuse is a violation of an individual's human and civil rights by any other person or persons' (No Secrets: Department of Health, 2000).

Such abuse can take many forms, from treating someone with disrespect - so as to significantly affect his or her quality of life - to causing actual physical suffering. Abuse may be carried out deliberately or unknowingly, it may be a single act or repeated acts.

People who behave abusively come from all backgrounds and walks of life – including professional staff, volunteers, relatives, friends, neighbours and people in positions of trust.

Abuse can happen anywhere, including in the home, at work, in a hospital or nursing/residential home and in places of worship such as churches.

Types of abuse:

- a) Physical abuse – including hitting, shaking, slapping, punching, burning, misuse of medication, inappropriate restraint or otherwise that causes physical harm to a child or vulnerable adult
- b) Psychological or emotional abuse – including belittling, name calling, threats of harm, intimidation,
- c) isolation and severe bullying, including cyber bullying
- d) Sexual abuse – including rape, indecent assault, inappropriate touching, exposure to pornographic material and (for children), grooming
- e) Neglect or acts of omission – including withholding the necessities of life such as medication or food or warmth, and ignoring medical or physical care needs
- f) Financial or material abuse – including stealing, selling assets, fraud and misuse or misappropriation of property or possessions or benefits
- g) Discriminatory abuse – including racist, sexist, that based on a person's disability and other forms of harassment and slurs or similar treatment
- h) Institutional or organisational – including regimented routines and cultures, unsafe practices and lack of person-centred care or treatment

Possible Signs of Abuse:

Physical Abuse:

Any injury not consistent with the explanation given for them or in places that are not normally exposed

Injuries which have not received medical attention or regular instances of bruising or injury which form a pattern

Instances where children/young people are kept away from the group inappropriately. Attendance patterns may be of concern

Psychological or Emotional Abuse

Changes or regression in mood or behaviour

Depression/aggression, extreme anxiety

Persistent tiredness

Sexual Abuse:

Any allegation made by a child/young person concerning sexual abuse

A child/young person with excessive preoccupation with sexual matters and detailed knowledge of adult sexual behaviour, or who regularly engages in age-inappropriate sexual play

Sexual activity through words, playing and drawing

A child/young person who is sexually provocative or seductive with adults

Neglect:

Physical signs such as under nourishment, failure to thrive as well as emotional symptoms such as being withdrawn

Overview of Safeguarding Procedures

All referrals or alert of suspected abuse will be made to the Bridge Counselling Safeguarding Coordinator:

Name: Mrs Jenny Hadley

Email: safeguarding@bridgecounselling.org

Decisions:

If a decision is made that it is not appropriate to refer further, there will be local discussion with Counsellors/Trustees as appropriate and changes made to procedures and appropriate support found for the victim, as needed

If a decision is made by Coordinator to refer, this will mean contact either to:-

Bedford's Children's Safeguarding Services i.e. Integrated Front Door

Telephone number 01234 718700

Out of hour's number: 03003008123

OR

Bedford's Local Multi Agency Safeguarding Vulnerable Adult's Board

Telephone number 01234 718700

Out of hour's number 03003008123

If the agency's decision is that there will be no further action, local discussions will take place as in first paragraph under 'Decisions' (above).

Otherwise, Bedford's procedures should be followed and will need the cooperation of those concerned.

Clear written records and ensuring the advice as to what to do following an incident has been followed, will be essential for a successful outcome of these procedures – (use of the form at Appendix 1 should help with this).

Relevant Legislation:

Working Together to safeguard Children 2018

Children's Act 2004

Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006

Safeguarding Adults NHS England Guide

Data Protection Act 2018

Discrimination Equality Act 2010

Bridge Counselling, Bromham Baptist Church, Village Road, Bromham, MK43 8LJ

Registered Charity 1191105

Telephone 01234 822681 Ext 3: Email coordinator@bridgecounselling.org www.bridgecounselling.org

APPENDIX 1

Form for recording an incident. Please use the following as a guide for recording an incident of suspected abuse for the Safeguarding Coordinator

Safeguarding Adults Alert Form

Person completing the form:

Contact details:

Date incident notified and to whom:

Details of incident:

Date and time of alleged incident/harm:

Area where incident/harm took place:

Who reported the alert:

Who was involved?

Details of alleged victim:

Name:

Address and telephone number:

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Date of birth/age:

Nature of victim's vulnerability:

Details of alleged perpetrator

Address and phone number:.....

Relationship to victim:

Are they a vulnerable adult YES/NO

Description of alleged incident/alleged harm, detailing all people involved

Please give a detailed description of the incident, what action was taken at the time and any other comments you feel are relevant

(Have you made the victim aware that details of the incident are being recorded and will be investigated?)

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