

Policy: Phase Safeguarding Policy

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Signed: On behalf of Trustees Date:

Signed: Phase Director Date:

Phase Hitchin (Phase) is a registered charity working with young people and children aged 5 to 19. Phase offers a wide range of support and activities for young people, both in local schools and through residential activities and events. Phase staff include paid employees and trainees working full time, and other volunteers.

PHASE SAFEGUARDING POLICY FOR CHILDREN and YOUNG PEOPLE

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1. Introduction

Phase is a registered charity founded in 2002. We work face-to-face with young people in Hitchin. This safeguarding policy applies to all our work wherever it happens.

2. Why do we have a safeguarding policy?

The purpose of this policy is to clearly lay the principles that underpin our approach to safeguarding, our responsibility as an organisation, and how we will meet our legal obligations and the highest standards of practice.

We believe that:

- children should never experience abuse of any kind.
- we have a responsibility to promote the welfare of all children, to keep them safe and to practise in a way that protects them.

We recognise that:

- the welfare of the child is paramount.
- all children, regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation have a right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse.
- some children are additionally vulnerable because of the impact of previous experiences, their level of dependency, communication needs or other issues.
- working in partnership with children, young people, their parents, carers, schools, and other agencies is essential in promoting children's welfare.

Our responsibilities are to:

- establish clear safeguarding policies and procedures that all trustees, staff and volunteers understand and follow.
- make sure all trustees, staff and volunteers receive regular training relevant to the role in the organisation.
- appoint a Safeguarding Lead to oversee our safeguarding.
- carry out safer recruitment in accordance with our policy.
- manage concerns, complaints, whistle blowing and allegations relating to child protection or adults with care and support needs effectively.
- comply with all relevant legislation and guidance.

In order to manage and fulfil these responsibilities, we have appointed a Safeguarding Team made up of our Safeguarding Lead and a Deputy Safeguarding Officer. The Deputy Officers may act for the Safeguarding Lead in their absence. Together, the Safeguarding Team respond to any safeguarding concerns or referrals as they are identified. They meet

regularly to carry out this task. In addition, they, alongside the Trustee responsible for safeguarding review this policy annually to ensure it is up-to-date and to scrutinise how it is being implemented, and to identify any issues or training needs.

Safeguarding Lead: Kieran Murphy
Deputy Safeguarding Leads: Amanda Maylin
Trustee Safeguarding Lead: Martin Watson

The Board of Trustees have overall responsibility for safeguarding at Phase. The Safeguarding Team updates them at every Trustee meeting. The Board of Trustees also review this policy annually and make any recommendations to improve our safeguarding practice.

This policy has been drawn up on the basis of legislation, policy and guidance that seeks to protect children in England.

3. What is safeguarding?

Safeguarding children is defined in Working together to Safeguard Children (2018) and Keeping Children Safe in Education (2023) as:

- protecting children from maltreatment.
- preventing impairment of children's health or development.
- ensuring that children are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care.
- taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes.

4. Who is this policy is intended to safeguard?

Whilst Phase works primarily with children and young people, we recognise we may, from time to time, work with adults with care and support needs. This policy applies to everyone we engage with as a charity, and also includes our trustees, staff and volunteers.

All young people under the age of eighteen are regarded as children for the purposes of this policy. The fact that a child has reached sixteen years of age, is living independently, is in further education, is a member of the Armed Forces or is in hospital, prison or a young offender's institution does not change their status.

5. Recruitment and selection of trustees, staff and volunteers

Everyone who works with Phase, in whatever capacity, will undergo a fair and transparent recruitment process designed not only to select those with the right skills, and experience, but also to ensure that everyone we work with is protected from harm. In order to achieve this, Phase adheres to the 'Safer Recruitment guidance produced by Hertfordshire County Council. There is a Safer Recruitment policy in place to support this.

The key points from this Guidance require that:

- Our job descriptions will clearly state the individual's responsibility for promoting and safeguarding the welfare of the children, young people, and adults with care and support needs that they are responsible for, or come into contact with.
- We will require a minimum of two references in writing. One referee will be the applicant's current or most recent employer or line manager, not a colleague. Where an applicant is not currently working with children, but has done so in the past, it is important that a reference is also obtained from the employer by whom the person was most recently employed in work with children in addition to the current or most recent employer.
- We will carry out a clear process of scrutinising, short listing and interviewing candidates which will include the candidate's attitude towards children, young people and adults with care and support needs; and their ability to support Phase's agenda for safeguarding and promoting welfare.
- We will allow sufficient time before appointment to carry out all necessary pre-appointment checks and references.

Further detail about these requirements are laid out in our Safer Recruitment policy.

We will use the same principles and process to recruit and appoint trustees and volunteers. If a person is found not to be appropriate to work with young people (or adults with care and support needs), they will not be employed by Phase or appointed as a trustee or volunteer.

6. Induction and ongoing training for trustees, staff and volunteers

Everyone who works with Phase, in whatever capacity, will receive safeguarding training as part of their induction. This will include a foundation level safeguarding course and an explanation of Phase's safeguarding policy, including the procedures to report any safeguarding concern and our whistle-blowing procedure. They will also receive their own copy of this policy.

Training will continue to be provided to trustees, staff and volunteers throughout their work with Phase.

In the case of staff and trustees who do not work directly with young people, and volunteers, this will take the form of a refresher course, including Phase's policy and procedures, at least every two years. Trustees will additionally receive training to understand their role and duties as trustees of the organisation in regard to safeguarding.

Staff working directly with young people, will be expected to complete higher level safeguarding training as soon as possible after the commencement of their employment. They will also be given the opportunity to attend additional training on subjects related to safeguarding.

They will be required to attend a refresher course, including Phase's policy and procedures, every two years.

Checks with the Disclosure and Barring Service will be renewed every three years for all trustees, staff and volunteers.

In addition all staff will be required to read Keeping Children Safe in Education at the start of each academic year.

7. The responsibility of Phase trustees, staff and volunteers

For their part, all trustees, staff and volunteers have a responsibility to:

- Read this policy and make sure they understand what it is asking of them.
- Follow the procedures laid out in this policy.
- Co-operate with supervisors and programme leaders in relation to safeguarding.
- Take reasonable care to avoid placing themselves or those in their care at risk of mistreatment.
- Report all safeguarding concerns without delay.

8. Complaints/allegations made against Phase trustees, staff and volunteers

Any complaint made against a Phase trustee, staff or volunteer will be taken seriously.

Phase will provide clear information about how to make a complaint on our website and in the Phase office

Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018) sets out procedures for managing allegations against people who work with children (including adults working in the private,

voluntary and independent sector). The procedures also manage concerns about adults where there is an indication they may pose a risk of harm to children.

The procedures are used in all cases in which it is alleged that an adult who works with children has:

- behaved in a way that has harmed, or may have harmed, a child.
- possibly committed a criminal offence against, or related to, a child.
- behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm.

Any allegation against a Phase trustee, staff or volunteer will be dealt with by the Safeguarding Lead. In the absence of this person, the allegation should be reported to another member of the safeguarding team. If the allegation is about the Director contact should be made in the first instance with the Chair of Trustees: chair@phase-hitchin.org

The Safeguarding Lead will check with the person making the allegation the basic facts, specifically who the allegation is being made against, when it occurred and where. They will not investigate the matter at this stage or inform the person concerned. The Safeguarding Lead will contact the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) within one working day, or immediately in urgent cases, and follow the guidance of the LADO.

If the child may have suffered significant harm, the Safeguarding Lead will also contact Children's Social Care (MASH) or Police (Public Protection Team) without delay. They will also inform the parents or carers unless doing so may put the child at risk.

9. Whistle blowing

Whistle blowing is a vital tool in safeguarding children. It is in the interest of all concerned that disclosure of potential abuse, poor practice or breaches of the safeguarding policy are dealt with appropriately.

Phase is committed to being an organisation where:

- Individuals feel confident and supported in raising concerns about the welfare of young people in relation to the actions of a trustee, staff member or volunteer.
- There is a clear method of raising concerns directly to the organisation and to receive feedback on any action taken.
- Individuals receive a response to their concerns and that they are aware of how to pursue them if they are not satisfied.
- Individuals are reassured that they will be protected from reprisals or victimisation for whistle blowing in good faith.

This policy encourages the whistle blower to put their name to their allegation, even if they do not wish this to be disclosed to other parties. It may not be possible to seek further information or provide updates if the allegations are anonymous.

Phase will do its best to protect the identity of the whistle blower when they raise a concern and do not want their name to be disclosed. It must be appreciated that depending the identity of the whistle blower may be apparent or a statement by the whistle blower may be essential as part of the evidence.

Any concerns about this should be discussed when the concerns are raised.

- Where staff have any concerns in relation to the actions of a trustee, staff member or volunteer, they should be raised in the first instance with their line manager.
- Where volunteers have any concerns, they should be raised with the Volunteer Coordinator.
- Where trustees have any concerns, they should be raised with the Director.

If anyone feels unable to raise the issue with the relevant person, their concern relates to that person, or if that person does not take appropriate action to resolve the issue, they should approach the Chair of Trustees. If the person is not satisfied with the outcome, and if they feel it is right to take the matter outside of the organisation they should contact the NSPCC's Whistle-blowing Advice Line by calling 0800 028 0285 or emailing help@nspcc.org.uk.

10. Identifying a safeguarding concerns

Information, observations or suspicions giving rise to a safeguarding concern may come from what a child says what has happened to them or through a third party (for example, another young person). It may also come through observation of a child's behaviour or an unexplained injury

Behaviour or other factors which might give rise to suspicion of abuse or harm include:

- Unexplained bruising, cuts or burns on the person, particularly if these are parts of the body not normally injured in accidents.
- An unwillingness to discuss injuries, improbable explanations or a deliberate attempt to hide injuries
- An injury, which a parent or carer tries to hide, or for which they might have given different explanations.
- Changes in behaviour such as the person suddenly becoming very quiet, tearful, withdrawn, aggressive, or displaying severe tantrums.
- Loss of weight without a medical explanation.
- An inappropriately dressed or ill kept child/vulnerable person who may also be dirty.

- Constant hunger or an unusually large appetite.
- Sexually explicit behaviour, for instance playing games and showing awareness which is inappropriate for a child's age/ inconsistent with the person's level of understanding, promiscuity in older teenagers.
- Continual masturbation, aggressive and inappropriate sex play.
- Running away from home, attempted suicides, self-inflicted injuries.
- A lack of trust in adults, particularly those who would normally be close to the person.
- Disturbed sleep, nightmares and enuresis.
- Eating problems, including over-eating or loss of appetite.
- Self-deprecating remarks, an inability to accept praise.

The above signs do not necessarily mean that a person has been abused. But all information, observations and suspicions relating to safeguarding must be reported. Even if it does not require action in itself, it may contribute to a wider picture that reveals important insights about a child that requires action.

11. Radicalisation

Children can be exposed to different views and receive information from various sources. Some of these views may be considered radical or extreme.

Radicalisation is the way a person comes to support or be involved in extremism and terrorism. It's a gradual process so young people who are affected may not realise what's happening. Challenging and tackling extremism is a shared effort and we have a responsibility to protect children from becoming radicalised and/or being exposed to extreme views. Radicalisation is a form of harm.

The process may involve:

- being groomed online or in person
- exploitation, including sexual exploitation
- psychological manipulation
- exposure to violent material and other inappropriate information
- the risk of physical harm or death through extremist acts.

If a trustee, staff member or volunteers has any information or suspicion about radicalisation, they should follow Phase's procedure for acting on a safeguarding concern. If there is an immediate risk of harm, the staff member leading the activity, or the Safeguarding Team, must call 999 straight away.

12. Acting on a safeguarding concern

Safeguarding Policy

All trustees, staff and volunteers have a responsibility to act on any information or suspicion about any abuse or harm to a child (or adult with care and support needs). There are no exceptions to this requirement.

Staff and volunteers, including trustees, should report their concerns immediately to the staff member who is leading the activity or programme in which they are participating (If there is no particular programme, to the Safeguarding Team). The staff member will make a risk assessment with them as to whether the child is suffering significant harm or is likely to do so. If there is a concern that the child is suffering significant harm or is likely to do so, the staff member must contact the Safeguarding Team, or one of the Deputies, immediately to explain the situation. This includes a disclosure made out of standard working hours.

The Safeguarding Team will decide whether to make a referral to MASH (Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub) or other authority, such as the Police. The Safeguarding Team will also inform the child's parents or carers before a referral is made, subject to the exceptions in later in this document.

Where a concern has been raised by a staff member, they will record the information, observation or suspicion using the Phase recording system within one working day.

Where a concern has been raised by a trustee or volunteer, they will meet with the staff member supervising the activity or the Safeguarding Team who will record the information, observation or suspicion using the Phase recording system within one working day.

The Safeguarding team will review the record and contact the staff member if any further information or action is required.

A record should state what the young person said, using their own words as much as possible. The context and the date and time should be included, as well as any names mentioned and to whom the information was given.

If there is not a concern that the child is suffering significant harm or is likely to do so, the staff member will decide if there are any actions required to support the child - for example, referral to a service or programme provided by Phase or a referral to an external organisation.

Alternatively, they may decide that the information is to be recorded in order to contribute to a better understanding of any needs the child may have. The decisions and actions of the staff member must be recorded using the Phase recording system within one working day. The Safeguarding Team will review the record and contact the staff member if any further information or action is required.

13. Raising a safeguarding concern in schools and other external contexts

Phase's work with young people may take place in a school, church or other context where Phase staff and volunteers are visiting or providing services. Where there is information, an observation or a suspicion giving rise to a safeguarding concern in this context, the relevant safeguarding contact of the organisation must be informed wherever possible before leaving site.

Where they are willing to do so, the child may be accompanied to meet the relevant safeguarding contact of the organisation. The organisation's safeguarding officers will then take responsibility for the situation.

Phase staff and volunteers must still complete a record of the information, an observation or a suspicion on Phase recording system. Phase's Safeguarding Team will contact the organisation's safeguarding officer to confirm that the information has been received and acted upon.

14. Informing parents and carers of a referral

Where appropriate, all reasonable efforts will be made to inform parents and carers before Phase makes a referral to the local authority's children's social care or other authority, such as the Police. However, an inability to inform them will not prevent a referral being made. There are cases where it will not be appropriate to discuss concerns with parents or carers before referral.

In such situations, the timing of contact with parents or carers will be agreed with MASH and/or the Police once the referral has been made. Situations where it would not be appropriate to inform family members prior to referral include where discussion would put a child at additional risk of Significant Harm or there is evidence to suggest that involving the parents or carers would impede the Police investigation. The Safeguarding Team must record the reasons for not informing the parents or carers of the referral using the Phase recording system.

15. Confidentiality

All reported safeguarding concerns and investigations are kept confidential and shared only with those who need to know. They are not shared within the wider Phase team except where another member of staff or volunteer is working with a young person and it is relevant to make them aware of it. Depending on the circumstances, this may be simply the fact that a safeguarding concern has been made rather than the specific details of the concern. The Safeguarding Team will make the decision as to what is shared and with whom. Any information shared with external agencies is done following the guidance of appropriate professionals/agencies.

16. Contacts

Phase Safeguarding Lead Name: Kieran Murphy

Phone: 01462 574969

Email: kieran.murphy@phase-hitchin.org

Phase Trustee Safeguarding Lead Name: Martin Watson

Email: martin.watson@phase-hitchin.org

Chair of Trustees: chair@phase-hitchin.org

Hertfordshire Multi Agency Support Hub (MASH)

Phone: 0300 123 4043

Email: protectedreferrals.cs@hertfordshire.gov.uk

Local Area Designated Officer (LADO) Name:

Phone: 01992 555420

Email: LADO.Referral@hertfordshire.gov.uk

Hertfordshire Police Phone: 101 or 999 in an emergency

To be reviewed by end of November 2024