Safeguarding Policy and Whistleblowing

Willow Tree Children's Support has a duty of care to keep all Children and Adults at Risk safe from harm by upholding the highest level of Safeguarding practice. As such, we have a duty to the children and families we support to act quickly and responsibly in any instance that may come to our attention.

Our overarching principles that guide our approach to Safeguarding Children and Adults at Risk will be made available to everyone that comes into contact with Willow Tree Children's Support.

This policy applies to anyone working with or supporting Willow Tree Children's Support including all Staff, Volunteers, Sessional Workers, Trainees and Directors.

A summary of the key legislation and guidance for Safeguarding children in England is available from Children and the law | NSPCC Learning

How does Willow Tree Children's Support define Safeguarding?
Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, for the sake of this policy is defined as:
Protecting children from maltreatment.
Preventing the 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.
(Definition taken from the HM Government document 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' 2018.)
Our definitions of abuse can include physical, sexual or emotional harm, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment, radicalisation or exploitation. We recognise that abuse can take place in person or online, by any person. (This could include by other Children and Adults at Risk or by other people in positions of trust.)

How will Willow Tree Children's Support keep children safe from harm?
Staff and volunteers and anyone coming into contact with all children and young people will always provide a safe and secure environment for them.

Children will always be valued, listened to and respected at all times.
All staff, volunteers and sessional workers will be safely recruited and trained in appropriate Safeguarding practices prior to working with children and their families and will complete a Safeguarding course prior to supporting any children or young people.
Safe Recruitment processes will include an enhanced DBS Certificate and 2 independent references who will provide any reasons that they are aware of why the member of staff, volunteer or sessional worker should not be working with Children and Adults at Risk.
All staff, volunteers and sessional workers will be required to undertake an enhanced DBS check prior to supporting any children or young people.
Safeguarding training courses will be updated at least annually or sooner if required.
Staff, volunteer and sessional worker meetings will be conducted on a regular basis to ensure that current Safeguarding Policies and Practices are discussed and prioritised at all times.
Staff and volunteers will be provided with regular Supervision sessions both with Willow Tree Children's Support and with an External Supervisor.
Staff and volunteers will abide by an appropriate Code of Conduct which will ensure that they meet Willow Tree Children's Support's high expectations of behaviour both in person and online.
All children and young people, families, Schools and other professionals will know where to go for help if they have a concern. This information will be accessible on the Willow Tree Children's Support Website. Within the School environment this will be strictly following the School's robust Safeguarding policy and information so that the children and young people can raise any concerns about Willow Tree Children's Support immediately with their Safeguarding Lead at School.

How will Willow Tree Children's Support raise concerns about children?
All staff, volunteers and sessional workers will be appropriately managed and trained to understand how and when to raise a concern about a Child or Adult at Risk.
All staff, volunteers and sessional workers will be provided with a "How to report a concern" form and know when and how to provide the relevant information.
Concerns for children's welfare during School support sessions will be reported by staff or volunteers to the school Designated Safeguarding Lead immediately following the support session. These concerns will be documented and recorded securely by the Willow Tree Children's Support Designated Safeguarding Lead Jennifer Eldridge.
Concerns for children's welfare during out of school sessions and events will be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead at Willow Tree Children's Services and documented and recorded securely. The Designated Safeguarding Lead will discuss the concern with the family and/ or refer to SPOA. (Single Point of Advice)

In the event of a child or young person being at risk of immediate harm, the concern will be reported to the Police with immediate effect.

Whistleblowing Guidance and how we can report concerns.

Whistleblowing is the act of reporting suspected wrongdoing or unsafe practices to help keep other people safe from harm.

All Willow Tree staff and volunteers should feel confident about sharing their concerns and must acknowledge their individual responsibilities to bring matters of concern, induding low-level concerns. to the attention of the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) at Willow Tree and the DSL within School environments. This is particularly important where the welfare of children may be at risk.

Concerns about staff, volunteers, sessional workers and other professionals will be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead. In accordance with Whistleblowing guidance, concerns about staff and volunteers can also be directly reported to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) if they do not wish to speak to the Designated Safeguarding Lead either at Willow Tree or within the school environment.

LADO: Allegations about adults who work with children | East Sussex County Council

Individuals can also obtain further help and advice from the NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line:

Whistleblowing Advice Line | NSPCC

At Willow Tree Children's Support we are committed to building a Safeguarding culture where staff, volunteers, sessional workers, children, young people, families, carers, Schools and other professionals treat each other with respect and are comfortable with sharing concerns.

We may also have to alert our grant providers that a serious concern has been raised within 10 days of the incident whilst maintaining all appropriate confidentiality requirements.

Upholding Safeguarding Policies and Practice:

All staff, volunteers and sessional workers will receive regular supervision meetings with the Designated Safeguarding Lead where issues and concerns raised will be reviewed, gaps in knowledge will be identified and training booked to ensure that the highest level of knowledge and awareness is maintained. They will also have access to an external Supervisor where they can discuss any concerns.

If a staff member, volunteer or sessional worker has a concern raised against them, immediate action will be taken to ensure that they are not working alongside any children or young people unsupervised while the concern is investigated. The concern will be investigated by the Designated Safeguarding Lead who may then refer the matter to the East Sussex Safeguarding Children Partnership. (ESSCP.) If the concern regards the Designated Safeguarding Lead then all staff, volunteers, sessional workers, and those using the service will be made aware of how to report to LADO:Children's LADO referral form | East Sussex County Council

Confidentiality:

All suspicions, enquiries and external investigations are kept confidential and shared only with those who need to know. Any information is shared under the guidance of the East Sussex Safeguarding Children Partnership.

Useful Contact Information:

East Sussex Safeguarding Children Partnership:
ESSCP.Contact@eastsussex.gov.uk
TEL: 01273 481544

Single Point of Advice (SPoA):
0-19.SPOA@eastsussex.gov.uk
TEL: 01323 464222

NSPCC:
help@nspcc.org.uk
TEL: 0808 8005000

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