

Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy

Owned by Bridges for Communities

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Introduction

Bridges for Communities exists to connect people from different cultures and faiths, giving them the opportunity to build friendships and understand one another better. It seeks to challenge the stereotypes and prejudice that exist between different groups of people, doing so by promoting interaction and friendship.

It seeks to give people who would not ordinarily meet the chance to do so, promoting friendship and understanding between diverse communities. By simply bringing people together and giving them opportunities to develop friendships, stereotypes are challenged and perceptions are changed.

As well as connecting people in this way, Bridges for Communities works to support some of the most marginalised in society, namely asylum seekers and refugees. It also provides training for people who want to build bridges in their local communities.

Specific programmes run by Bridges for Communities where there may be children present and therefore considered within the scope of this policy include:

- Peace Feast: sharing a meal together gives people from different cultures and faiths the opportunity to meet and build friendships.
- Sharing Festivals: bringing people together around religious festivals and feasts — like Ramadan and Christmas — to break down barriers and challenge stereotypes.
- b.friend: providing one-to-one support for refugees and asylum-seekers in Bristol, who may be isolated or struggling.
- Resettlement Befriend: helping to support refugees who have been resettled in Bristol, through volunteer support and cultural awareness training.
- Bristol Welcome Events: social events and trips that enable refugees and asylum seekers to meet with others and connect with their local community
- Schools linking project – connecting with schools to facilitate children across the city getting to know each other

Bridges for Communities is committed to Safeguarding children in line with national legislation and relevant national and local guidelines.

We will safeguard children by ensuring that our activities are delivered in a way which keeps all children safe.



Bridges for Communities is committed to creating a culture of zero-tolerance of harm to children which necessitates: the recognition of children who may be at risk and the circumstances which may increase risk; knowing how child abuse, exploitation or neglect manifests itself; and being willing to report safeguarding concerns.

This extends to recognising and reporting harm experienced anywhere, including within our activities, within other organised community or voluntary activities, in the community, in the person's own home and in any care setting.

Bridges for Communities is committed to best safeguarding practice and to uphold the rights of all children to live a life free from harm from abuse, exploitation and neglect.

Policy Statement:

The purpose of this policy is to:

- protect children and young people who receive Bridges for Communities' services from harm. This includes the children of adults who use our services.
- to provide trustees, staff and volunteers, as well as children and young people and their families, with the overarching principles that guide our approach to child protection.
- to ensure that everyone involved in Bridges for Communities is aware of:
 - The legislation, policy and procedures for safeguarding children
 - Their role and responsibility for safeguarding children
 - What to do or who to speak to if they have a concern relating to the welfare or wellbeing of a child

This safeguarding children policy and associated procedures apply to all individuals involved in Bridges for Communities including all staff – paid and unpaid, trustees and volunteers, and to all concerns about the safety of children whilst taking part in our organisation and its activities.

We recognise that:

- the welfare of children is paramount in all the work we do and in all the decisions we take all children, regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation have an equal right to 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

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- working in partnership with children, young people, their parents, carers and other agencies is essential in promoting young people's welfare.

Implementation

In order to implement this policy Bridges for Communities will ensure that:

- Everyone involved with Bridges for Communities is aware of the safeguarding children and young people procedures and knows what to do and who to contact if they have a concern relating to the welfare or wellbeing of a child
- Any concern that a child is not safe is taken seriously, responded to promptly, and followed up in line with Bridges for Communities safeguarding children and young people policy and procedures.
- The well-being of those at risk of harm will be put first
- Any actions taken will respect the rights and dignity of all those involved and be proportionate to the risk of harm.
- Confidential, detailed and accurate records of all safeguarding concerns are maintained and securely stored in line with our Data Protection Policy and Procedures.
- Bridges for Communities will cooperate with the Police and the relevant Local Authorities in taking action to safeguard a child.
- All staff, trustees and volunteers understand their role and responsibility for safeguarding children and have completed and are up to date with safeguarding children training (a minimum of every 3 years) and learning opportunities appropriate for their role. Review dates are recorded and implemented. We will provide effective management for staff and volunteers through supervision, support, training and quality assurance measures so that all staff and volunteers know about and follow our policies, procedures and behaviour codes confidently and competently
- All staff and volunteers sign and agree to our Behaviour Code which outlines clear consequences for any breaches (See Behaviour Code at the end of this document)
- Bridges for Communities uses safe recruitment practices and continually assesses the suitability of volunteers and staff.

- Bridges for Communities shares information about anyone found to be a risk to children with the appropriate bodies. For example: Disclosure and Barring Service, Services, Police, Local Authority/Social Services.
- This policy and related policies are reviewed by the Board of Trustees on an annual basis and whenever there are changes in relevant legislation and/or government guidance as required by the Local Safeguarding Board, or as a result of any other significant change or event.

Linked policies and procedures

This child safeguarding policy is to be considered alongside the following Bridges for Communities policies and procedures:

- Safeguarding adults policy and procedures
- Bullying and harassment
- Managing allegations against staff and volunteers
- Online safety
- Equality, diversity and inclusion
- Behaviour code and a process for breach of these – Trustees, Staff, Volunteers
- Discipline and grievance
- Managing complaints
- Photography and sharing images guidance
- Health and Safety
- Role description for the designated safeguarding lead
- Whistleblowing
- Safe recruitment and selection (staff and volunteers)
- Information policy, data protection and information sharing

We will seek to keep children and young people safe by:

- appointing a nominated child protection lead for children and young people, a deputy and a lead trustee/board member for safeguarding (see details below)
- developing and implementing an effective online safety policy and related procedures
- recording, storing and using information professionally and securely, in line with data protection legislation and guidance
- using our safeguarding and child protection procedures to share concerns and relevant information with agencies who need to know, and involving children, young people, parents, families and carers appropriately



- using our procedures to manage any allegations against staff and volunteers appropriately
- creating and maintaining an anti-bullying environment and ensuring that we have a policy and procedure to help us deal effectively with any bullying that does arise
- ensuring that we have effective complaints and whistleblowing measures in place, thus promoting the safety of the child over and above organizational concerns.

Regular management reports to the Board of Trustees detailing how any safeguarding reports have been addressed.

We will ensure children and young people feel valued by:

- valuing, listening to and respecting them
- sharing information about safeguarding and good practice with children and their families, informing them of policies and procedures where appropriate.
- making sure that children, young people and their families know where to go for help if they have a concern.
- ensuring that we provide a safe physical environment for children, young people, staff and volunteers, by applying health and safety measures in accordance with the law and regulatory guidance.
- building a safeguarding culture where staff and volunteers, children, young people and their families, treat each other with respect and are comfortable about sharing concerns.

Roles within Bridges for Communities

Director

The Managing Director of Bridges for Communities (Dan Green) is responsible for ensuring compliance with this policy. The Managing Director is also responsible for investigating allegations against staff or volunteers. The Managing Director will report to trustees any significant concerns, and any concerns that need to be reported to the Charities Commission. They will also keep a log of any incidents.

Safeguarding Lead

The Bridges for Communities **Safeguarding Lead is Karen Green** – 07547498520.



The Safeguarding Lead role description is to be considered alongside this policy. The safeguarding lead is responsible for providing safeguarding advice to the Director, staff and volunteers, and for ensuring staff and volunteers have adequate training in the identification and reporting of abuse, as well as maintaining a record of staff training and training plan. The Safeguarding Lead is also responsible for onward notification of reports of abuse.

The deputy safeguarding lead is Mark Walters – 07999554996

The trustee responsible for safeguarding is Danny Gregory – 07833587561

Because of the marriage relationship between the current Safeguarding Lead and Managing Director (Dan & Karen Green), if there is a conflict of interest or the concern is about either of them then it should be raised with Danny Gregory (Trustee).

Although Bridges for Communities, by the nature of its activities, has limited statutory obligations with respect to safeguarding it recognises that it may encounter situations or plan to undertake activities where unsupervised contact with children is a possibility. The Safeguarding Lead is therefore responsible for ensuring that Bridges for Communities retains the ability to make informed safeguarding decisions, and is responsible for reviewing the activities of Bridges for Communities on an ongoing basis with a view to ensuring that this policy remains relevant.

Training of Staff and Volunteers

All staff and volunteers interacting with children will be provided with safeguarding training prior to commencing their work, to allow them to identify potential types and signs of abuse and raise their concerns with the Bridges for Communities Safeguarding Lead through clear pathways of reporting. This includes volunteers on the following programmes:

- B.friend.
- Resettlement Befriend.
- Any other programmes the Director, in conjunction with the Safeguarding Lead, considers appropriate.

Disclosure and Barring

Where trustees, staff and volunteers have direct or indirect contact with children, they will be checked through the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS).

What is Safeguarding?

Definition: The Children Acts 1989, 2004 and 2010 define a 'child' as anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday. Therefore, safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children means 'children' and 'young people'.

'Working Together to Safeguard Children (2015)' legislation defines safeguarding 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 life chances

(This policy is based on UK and international law and guidance that seeks to protect children, namely the Children Act, 1989, 2004; United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989; Data Protection Act, 1998; Sexual Offences Act, 2003; Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act, 2006 as amended by the Protection of Freedoms Act, 2012; Equality Act 2010; Counter-terrorism and Security Act 2015; other relevant UK government guidance on safeguarding children including Working Together to Safeguard Children, 2015 and the Prevent Duty.)

What is child abuse?

Abuse and neglect are forms of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused within a family or in an institutional or community setting; by those known to them or by a stranger, for example via the internet. They may be abused by an adult or adults or another child or children.

Working Together 2015 highlights four areas of abuse: Physical abuse, Emotional abuse, Sexual abuse and Neglect.

Physical abuse

Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces illness in a child. This is known as Fabricated or Induced Illness.

Bumps and bruises don't always mean a child is being physically abused. All children have accidents, trips and falls, and there isn't just one sign or symptom to look out for, but it's

important to be aware of the signs. If a child regularly has injuries, there seems to be a pattern to the injuries or the explanation doesn't match the injuries, then this should be reported.

Physical abuse symptoms include:

- Bruises
- broken or fractured bones
- burns or scalds
- bite marks.

It can also include other injuries and health problems, such as:

- scarring
- the effects of poisoning, such as vomiting, drowsiness or seizures
- breathing problems from drowning, suffocation or poisoning.

Head injuries in babies and toddlers can be signs of abuse so it's important to be aware of these.

Visible signs include:

- swelling
- bruising
- fractures
- being extremely sleepy or unconscious
- breathing problems
- seizures
- vomiting
- unusual behaviour, such as being irritable or not feeding properly.

Emotional abuse

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development.

Emotional abuse may involve:

- conveying to a child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person
- not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate
- age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond the child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction
- seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another (including domestic abuse)

- serious bullying (including cyberbullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children

Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

There might not be any obvious physical signs of emotional abuse, and a child might not tell anyone what's happening until they reach a 'crisis point'. That's why it's important to look out for signs in how a child is acting. As children grow up, their emotions change. This means it can be difficult to tell if they're being emotionally abused. But children who are being emotionally abused might:

- seem unconfident or lack self-assurance
- struggle to control their emotions
- have difficulty making or maintaining relationships
- act in a way that's inappropriate for their age.

The signs of emotional abuse can be different for children at different ages

Sexual abuse

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening.

Sexual abuse may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. Sexual abuse may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

Emotional signs of sexual abuse:

- Avoiding being alone with, or frightened of a person they know
- Language or sexual behaviour you wouldn't expect them to know
- Bed wetting or nightmares
- Self harm
- Changes in eating habits

Physical signs of sexual abuse

- Bruises

- Bleeding, discharge, pains, soreness in genital or anal area
- Sexually transmitted infections
- Pregnancy

If a child is being or has been sexually abused online, they might:

- spend a lot more or a lot less time than usual online, texting, gaming or using social media
- seem distant, upset or angry after using the internet or texting
- be secretive about who they're talking to and what they're doing online or on their mobile phone
- have lots of new phone numbers, texts or email addresses on their mobile phone, laptop or tablet.

Children and young people might also drop hints and clues about the abuse

Neglect

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to:

- provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment)
- protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger
- ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-givers) or
- ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment

It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

Signs of neglect include:

Poor appearance and hygiene:

- being smelly or dirty
- being hungry or not given money for food
- having unwashed clothes
- having the wrong clothing, such as no warm clothes in winter
- having frequent and untreated nappy rash in infants.

Health and development:

- anaemia
- body issues, such as poor muscle tone or prominent joints

- medical or dental issues
- missed medical appointments, such as for vaccinations
- not given the correct medicines
- poor language or social skills
- regular illness or infections
- repeated accidental injuries, often caused by lack of supervision
- skin issues, such as sores, rashes, flea bites, scabies or ringworm
- thin or swollen tummy
- tiredness
- untreated injuries
- weight or growth issues.

Housing and family issues:

- living in an unsuitable home environment, such as having no heating
- being left alone for a long time
- taking on the role of carer for other family members

Changes in behaviour:

- becoming clingy
- becoming aggressive
- being withdrawn, depressed or anxious
- changes in eating habits
- displaying obsessive behaviour
- finding it hard to concentrate or take part in activities
- missing school
- showing signs of self-harm
- using drugs or alcohol.

In addition, you should be aware that there are many other ways in which children can be placed at risk of harm. These may include:

1. Domestic abuse between those age 16 and over – includes any incident or pattern of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse. Experiencing domestic abuse (directly or indirectly) constitutes harm to a child and young person.
2. Mental illness of parent or carer
3. Drug or alcohol misuse by parent or carer
4. Children becoming 'young carers'

5. Information Communication Technology (ICT) – computers and mobile devices such as mobile phones and games consoles may be used as a means of abusing and grooming children and young people
6. Specialist circumstances such as gang activity, abuse linked to spiritual and religious beliefs, Race and Hate crime, Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE), Human Trafficking, Modern Day Slavery, Honour Based Violence, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), Forced Marriage and Fabricated or Induced Illness.

Common signs for any abuse:

Some common signs that there may be something concerning happening in a child's life include:

- unexplained changes in behaviour or personality
- becoming withdrawn
- seeming anxious
- becoming uncharacteristically aggressive
- lacks social skills and has few friends, if any
- poor bond or relationship with a parent
- knowledge of adult issues inappropriate for their age
- running away or going missing
- always choosing to wear clothes which cover their body.

These signs don't necessarily mean that a child is being abused, there could be other things happening in their life which are affecting their behaviour, but if you have any concerns, please contact the safeguarding lead for Bridges for Communities to discuss your concerns.

Sources of information and support

- You should make a referral to the police on 999 if you are currently witnessing a child being harmed or in a situation of immediate risk (See safeguarding children and young people procedures)
- NSPCC 24 hour Helpline: 0808 800 5000 (free from a landline)
- NSPCC Text helpline: 88858 (service is free and anonymous). There is a lot of helpful information on their website www.nspcc.org.uk
- Police: 101 (non-emergency calls)
- Barnardos – supporting victims of child abuse
 - [Child sexual abuse | Barnardo's \(barnardos.org.uk\)](http://Child%20sexual%20abuse%20|%20Barnardo's%20(barnardos.org.uk))
- Childline – phone line for help and support – 0800 1111



See 'Safeguarding children and young people – procedures' for more information on how to make referrals.

Code of Behaviour when working with children

Reviewed Nov 2021

This behaviour code outlines the conduct Bridges for Communities expects from all our staff and volunteers. This includes trustees, staff, interns, volunteers and anyone who is undertaking duties for the organisation, whether paid or unpaid. The behaviour code aims to help us protect children and young people from abuse and reduce the possibility of unfounded allegations being made. Bridges for Communities is responsible for making sure everyone taking part in our services has seen, understood and agreed to follow the code of behaviour, and that they understand the consequences of inappropriate behaviour.

The role of staff and volunteers

In your role at Bridges for Communities you are acting in a position of authority and have a duty of care towards the children and young people we work with. You are likely to be seen as a role model and are expected to act appropriately.

Responsibility

You are responsible for:

- prioritising the welfare of children and young people
- providing a safe environment for children and young people, ensuring equipment is used safely and for its intended purpose, and having good awareness of issues to do with safeguarding and child protection and taking action when appropriate.
- following our principles, policies and procedures, including our policies and procedures for child protection/safeguarding, whistleblowing and online safety
- staying within the law at all times
- modelling good behaviour for children and young people to follow
- challenging all unacceptable behaviour and reporting any breaches of the behaviour code to the Safeguarding Lead

- reporting all concerns about abusive behaviour, following our safeguarding and child protection procedures – this includes behaviour being displayed by an adult or child and directed at anybody of any age.

Rights

You should:

- treat children and young people fairly and without prejudice or discrimination
- understand that children and young people are individuals with individual needs
- respect differences in gender, sexual orientation, culture, race, ethnicity, disability and religious belief systems, and appreciate that all participants bring something valuable and different to the group/organisation
- challenge discrimination and prejudice
- encourage young people and adults to speak out about attitudes or behaviour that makes them uncomfortable.

Relationships

You should:

- promote relationships that are based on openness, honesty, trust and respect
- avoid favouritism
- be patient with others
- exercise caution when you are discussing sensitive issues with children or young people
- ensure your contact with children and young people is appropriate and relevant to the work of the project you are involved in
- ensure that whenever possible, there is more than one adult present during activities with children and young people – if a situation arises where you are alone with a child or young person, ensure that you are within sight or hearing of other adults, and if a child specifically asks for or needs some individual time with you, ensure other staff or volunteers know where you and the child are.
- only provide personal care in an emergency and make sure there is more than one adult present if possible, unless it has been agreed that the provision of personal care is part of your role and you have been trained to do this safely.

Respect

You should:

- listen to and respect children at all times



- value and take children’s contributions seriously, actively involving them in planning activities wherever possible
- respect a young person’s right to personal privacy as far as possible – if you need to break confidentiality in order to follow child protection procedures, it is important to explain this to the child or young person at the earliest opportunity.

Unacceptable behaviour

When working with children and young people, you must not:

- allow concerns or allegations to go unreported
- take unnecessary risks
- smoke, consume alcohol or use illegal substances
- develop inappropriate relationships with children and young people
- make inappropriate promises to children and young people
- engage in behaviour that is in any way abusive, including having any form of sexual contact with a child or young person.
- let children and young people have your personal contact details (mobile number, email or postal address) or have contact with them via a personal social media account
- act in a way that can be perceived as threatening or intrusive
- patronise or belittle children and young people
- make sarcastic, insensitive, derogatory or sexually suggestive comments or gestures to or in front of children and young people.

Upholding this code of behaviour

You should always follow this code of behaviour and never rely on your reputation or that of Bridges for Communities to protect you. If you have behaved inappropriately you will be subject to our disciplinary and procedures. Depending on the seriousness of the situation, you may be asked to leave Bridges for Communities through our dismissal procedures. We may also make a report to statutory agencies such as the police and/or the local authority child protection services. If you become aware of any breaches of this code, you must report them to Bridges for Communities safeguarding lead or managing director. If necessary you should follow our whistleblowing procedure and safeguarding and child protection procedures.