

Safeguarding policy

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2. Introduction

This policy applies to all staff, volunteers (including the board of trustees), students or anyone working on behalf of PACT. The purpose of this policy is:

- **To protect children, young people and vulnerable adults who are in receipt of PACT's services**
- **To provide people working for, or on behalf of, PACT with the overarching principles that guide our approach to safeguarding.**

All work to safeguard and promote the welfare of children should:

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- Be child centred and consider the voice of the child
- Be rooted in child development
- Be focussed on outcomes for children
- Be holistic in approach
- Ensure equality of opportunity
- Involve children and families
- Build on strengths as well as identifying differences
- Be integrated in approach
- Be a continuing process, not an event
- Be reviewed regularly
- Be informed by evidence

3. Legislative and regulatory context

This policy and associated procedures are informed by and adhere to the following legislation and guidance:

- Working Together to Safeguard Children, HM Government, 2018, updated 2020
- Children and Social Work Act 2017
- The National Minimum Standards for Adoption 2014
- The Adoption Agencies (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2013
- The Adoption Agencies Regulations 2011
- The Equality Act 2010
- The Children Act 2004
- Local Authority Social Services Act 1970
- Safeguarding Children and young People from Sexual Exploitation 2009
- Data Protection Act 2018
- The Children Act 1989
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)
- Domestic Abuse Act 2021

4. Policy statement

PACT believes that all children, young people and adults have a right to protection from mistreatment, neglect, physical, emotional and sexual abuse and that people accessing our services should feel safe and able to trust the services PACT provides.

PACT workers and those who work with them in any capacity have a responsibility to protect the PACT service by safeguarding clients and the wider community.

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This policy and associated procedures therefore aims to ensure that safeguarding is at the forefront of everything PACT does.

All staff, both voluntary and paid, will adhere to the policy, procedures and guidelines. Failure to do so could have implications both for the safety of a vulnerable individual and/or the reputation of PACT as a provider of services.

All PACT's policies and procedures are made available to the workforce through induction, the corporate intranet, training and one-to-one consultation / supervision. It is the responsibility of the Line Manager to ensure that the workforce is aware of procedures and where to access them.

We are diligent, adhering to the law, our policies and procedures. We know that from time-to-time things may not go as well as expected. During these times we support each other and learn from what's gone wrong, taking steps to prevent re-occurrence. We are committed to our continued professional development and ensure that we are resourced and supported to operate safely.

Should any of PACT's procedures not be followed, investigations will take place and workers may be suspended whilst these are carried out. This decision lies with the Chief Executive Officer. It is recognised that workers may need support until investigations are completed. It will be the investigating officer's responsibility to identify who will provide support and to clarify their role with them.

5. Recognising abuse

Child abuse

Child abuse is any action by another person – adult or child – that causes significant harm to a child. It can be physical, sexual or emotional, but can just as often be about a lack of love, care and attention. We know that neglect, whatever form it takes, can be just as damaging to a child as physical abuse. Some children are more vulnerable to abuse, often having additional needs or disabilities.

An abused child will often experience more than one type of abuse, as well as other difficulties in their lives. It often happens over a period, rather than being a one-off event; it can increasingly happen online.

Children may be vulnerable to neglect and abuse or exploitation from within their family and from individuals they come across in their day-to-day lives. They may be abused by an adult or adults, or another child or children. Child abuse can have major long-term effects on all aspects of a child's health, development and well-

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being. Four main forms of maltreatment have been recognised in legislation and guidance over many years as follows:

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse is deliberately causing physical harm to a child. This might involve punching, kicking, biting, burning, scalding, shaking, throwing or beating with objects such as belts, whips, or sticks. It also includes poisoning, giving a child alcohol or illegal drugs, drowning or suffocation. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of illness in a child.

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is where repeated verbal threats, criticism, ridicule, shouting, lack of love and affection causes a severe adverse effect on a child's emotional development. It includes conveying to children that they are worthless, unloved, and inadequate or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. Emotional abuse may include not giving a child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. It may feature inappropriate expectations being imposed on a child, over protection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child from taking part in normal social interaction. It may involve serious bullying (including cyberbullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children.

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. This may involve physical contact including penetrative sex, oral sex, masturbation, kissing, rubbing, or touching outside of clothing, or it may involve non-contact activities such as involving children in watching sexual activities, producing or looking at sexual images, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet).

Neglect

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect is when a parent or carer fails to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment), medical care, or protection from physical and emotional harm or danger.

Risk outside the home:

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Extra familial threats can take a variety of different forms, including: 'exploitation by criminal gangs and organised crime groups; trafficking; online abuse; sexual exploitation and the influences of extremism leading to radicalisation. Whatever the form of abuse or neglect, practitioners should put the needs of children first when determining what action to take

A number of additional forms of abuse are outlined below, however there are additional elements to be recognised and considered, often around the organised nature of the abuse.

Domestic Abuse

Domestic abuse is any type of controlling, bullying, threatening or violent behaviour between people in a relationship. It can seriously harm children and young people and witnessing domestic abuse is child abuse. It's important to remember domestic abuse:

- can happen inside and outside the home
- can happen over the phone, on the internet and on social networking sites
- can happen in any relationship and can continue even after the relationship has ended
- both men and women can be abused or abusers.

Child sexual exploitation

Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact, it can also occur through the use of technology.

Child criminal exploitation: county lines

Criminal exploitation of children is a geographically widespread form of harm that is a typical feature of county lines criminal activity, drug networks or gangs to groom and exploit children and young people to carry drugs and money from urban areas to suburban and rural areas, market and seaside towns. Like other forms of abuse and exploitation, county lines exploitation is typified by some form of power imbalance in favour of those perpetrating the exploitation. Whilst age may be the most obvious, this power imbalance can also be due to a range of other factors including gender, cognitive ability, physical strength, status, and access to economic or other resources.

Online abuse

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Online abuse is any type of abuse that happens on the internet. It can happen across any device that's connected to the web, like computers, tablets and mobile phones. And it can happen anywhere online, including social media, text messages/apps, emails online chats, online gaming, live streaming sites. Children can be at risk of online abuse from people they know or from strangers. It might be part of other abuse which is taking place offline, like bullying or grooming. Or the abuse might only happen online.

Peer on peer abuse

Children can abuse other children (often referred to as peer-on-peer abuse). This is most likely to include, but may not be limited to: bullying, physical abuse, sexual violence and harassment, upskirting (see below), sexting, initiation rituals.

Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children

Sexual violence and sexual harassment can occur between two children of any age and sex. It can also occur through a group of children sexually assaulting or sexually harassing a single child or group of children. Sexual violence and sexual harassment exist on a continuum and may overlap; they can occur online and offline (both physically and verbally) and are never acceptable.

Upskirting

'Upskirting' typically involves taking a picture under a person's clothing without them knowing, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks to obtain sexual gratification, or cause the victim humiliation, distress or alarm. It is now a criminal offence.

Female Genital Mutilation

FGM comprises all procedures involving partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs. It is illegal in the UK and is a form of child abuse with long-lasting harmful consequences.

So-called 'honour-based' violence (including Female Genital Mutilation and Forced Marriage)

So-called 'honour-based' violence (HBV) encompasses incidents or crimes which have been committed to protect or defend the honour of the family and/or the community, including female genital mutilation (FGM), forced marriage, and practices such as breast ironing. Abuse committed in the context of preserving "honour" often involves a wider network of family or community pressure and can include multiple perpetrators.

Radicalisation and Extremism

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Radicalisation is a process by which an individual or group comes to adopt increasingly extreme political, social, or religious ideals and aspirations that reject or undermine the status quo or reject and/or undermine contemporary ideas and expressions of freedom of choice.

The signs of child abuse aren't always obvious, and a child might not tell anyone what's happening to them. Children might be scared that the abuser will find out, and worried that the abuse will get worse. Or they might think that there's no-one they can tell or that they won't be believed. Sometimes, children don't even realise that what's happening is abuse. The effects of abuse may be short term or may last a long time - sometimes into adulthood. Adults who were abused as children may need advice and support.

PACT's adoption service will ensure that the preparation and assessment for adoption includes information about safeguarding children and that prospective adoptive parents are helped to develop parenting skills and strategies which enable them to create safe families for children and develop each child's sense of worth and self-esteem. PACT recognises that children and young adults may be particularly susceptible to the more recently recognised forms of abuse as they are growing up, and it is therefore important to prepare adoptive parents for these as far as is reasonably possible. PACT further recognises that in some circumstances adopters do deliberately harm their children and therefore our child centred approach is to focus on the needs of the child at all times, and when required, necessary action will be taken.

PACT also recognises that many families may end up in a safeguarding situation due to the pressures and difficulties experienced by parenting children who have been highly traumatised in their early life and are finding life difficult to cope with. Parents managing complex behaviour over time can become exhausted, entrenched and unable to think clearly and may resort to behaviour management strategies that are unacceptable. We aim to provide ongoing support to families as a means of safeguarding children who may currently be difficult to parent.

Young Children and Children with disabilities

PACT recognises that young, pre-verbal children and those with disabilities have an increased risk of suffering abuse, due to their additional needs and that they may not be able to inform others of the abuse they are experiencing. PACT will ensure that staff and prospective adopters will be made aware of the need to be particularly vigilant when working or caring for such children.

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Adult abuse People with care and support needs, such as older people or people with disabilities, are more likely to be abused or neglected. They may be seen as an easy target and may be less likely to identify abuse themselves or to report it. People with communication difficulties can be particularly at risk because they may not be able to alert others. Sometimes people may not even be aware that they are being abused, and this is especially likely if they have a cognitive impairment.

The main types of abuse are:

- Physical abuse
- Domestic violence or abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Psychological or emotional abuse
- Financial or material abuse
- Modern slavery
- Discriminatory abuse
- Organisational or institutional abuse
- Neglect or acts of omission
- Self-neglect

Signs of abuse can often be difficult to detect. The above list is not exhaustive and people may be subject to a number of abuse types at the same time. Many types of abuse are also criminal offences and should be treated as such.

6. Responsibilities

This document, as with all policies and procedures, is reviewed regularly, approved by the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and endorsed by the Board of Trustees.

Everyone who works for PACT, or on its behalf, has a responsibility to safeguard clients and the wider community and is expected to adhere to the safeguarding policy, procedures and guidance. All concerns and allegations of abuse will be taken seriously and responded to appropriately. This may require a referral to the safeguarding adult's team or children's social care services, the independent Local Authority Designated Office (LADO), the regulatory body (Ofsted) or in emergencies, the police.

Additional specific responsibilities

- Trustees have responsibility to ensure there is an appropriate safeguarding policy and associated procedures in place.

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- The senior leadership team has responsibility for ensuring this policy and associated procedures are accessible and that there is effective communication of safeguarding procedures and issues across the teams.
- The Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO) and Assistant Designated Safeguarding Officer (ADSO) will promote the welfare of children and vulnerable adults within the organisation with the support of the senior management team. The DSO or ADSO will receive, review and advise on safeguarding concerns across the organisation.

Safeguarding Lead responsibilities

The Service Director is the Designated Safeguarding Officer with overall responsibility for safeguarding issues within PACT; she refers directly to the CEO. The Assistant Service Director is the Assistant Designated Safeguarding Officer.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSO) and the Head of HR will ensure that everyone who works directly with families is recruited using the principles of safer recruitment. S/he will support managers to take responsibility for ensuring that people are well trained and supported, and that they understand their safeguarding responsibilities.

The DSO and ADSO will keep up to date with safeguarding issues and communicate this as necessary; safeguarding will be a regular agenda item during supervisions and team meetings. A central log will be kept of all safeguarding incidences across the organisation; the DSO and ADSO will review this quarterly and report on this to the Board.

The DSO/ will keep up to date with local arrangements for safeguarding, liaising with relevant agencies (such as the Safeguarding Partners) as necessary.

7. Communicating and reviewing this policy

PACT will make clients aware of the safeguarding policy by providing a link to this policy on the website. Contact details for the Local Safeguarding Children's Board and local authority children's services as well as flow charts illustrating the actions to be taken in the event of a safeguarding issue are displayed in PACT's offices and noticeboards.

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There is a short leaflet explaining the key actions to take in the event of safeguarding concerns that is readily accessible on our website as well as in our offices.

The Compliments, Concerns and Complaints leaflet is also available in our offices and on PACT's website, so that clients are aware of how they can make a complaint about the service.

This policy and associated procedures will be reviewed annually and/or when there are changes in legislation.

This document is approved by the Board of Trustees, amendments to which are recommended by the Senior Leadership Team following any routine review and identification of new best practice.

8. Contact information – Children

READING OFFICE

www.berkshirerwestsafeguardingchildrenpartnership.org.uk

Child protection:

Berkshire West Safeguarding Children Partnership (BWSCP).

Tel: 0118 937 3641

See Reading's website for the **MASH referral form**:

<https://brighterfuturesforchildren.org>

LONDON OFFICE

Safeguarding Partners

The Pimlico area is covered by the Safeguarding Partner for Hammersmith & Fulham, Kensington and Chelsea and Westminster:

<https://www.rbkc.gov.uk/>

Child protection:

To make a referral **Tel: 020 7641 4000 or email:**

accesstochildrensservices@westminster.gov.uk

BRIGHTON OFFICE

Brighton and Hove Safeguarding Children's Partnership:

<https://www.bhscp.org.uk/>

Child Protection.

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To make a referral contact the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub, **Tel: 01273 290400**

See Brighton & Hove's website for the **MASH referral form** or email: MASH@brighton-hove.gcsx.gov.uk

9. Contact information – Adults

READING OFFICE

Child Protection.

To make a referral contact

<https://brighterfuturesforchildren.org/cspoa-notification-form1>

Tel: - 0118 9373641

West Berkshire Safeguarding Adults Team.

Email: safeguardingadults@westberks.gov.uk or **Tel: 01635 519056**

10. PACT officers

Designated Safeguarding Officer:

Lorna Hunt
Service Director
PACT
7 Southern Court
Reading
RG1 4QS

Email: Lorna.hunt@pactcharity.org

Tel: 07867 467489

Assistant Designated Safeguarding Officer:

Amanda Davies
Assistant Service Director
PACT
7 Southern Court
Reading
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Email: Amanda.davies@pactcharity.org

Tel: 07717 833446

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Chief Executive Officer: Natausha van Vliet
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7 Southern Court
Reading
RG1 4QS

Email: Natausha.vanvliet@pactcharity.org
Tel: 07729 932949

PACT Head Office contact details:

Main switchboard: 0300 456 4800

General email: info@pactcharity.org

11. Associated procedures

Safeguarding and Protecting Children
Historical Abuse
Allegations against staff, volunteers and adopters
Child Sexual Exploitation
Photography & Storage of Images
Safeguarding Adults
Safer Recruitment
Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS) Checks

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