Step and Learn Conductive Education

Registered Charity No: 1148686 / Company Limited by Guarantee: 07564050

Safeguarding Policy

Updated August 2023

Approved By	**Chair of Trustees**
Signed	
Dated	**27 Aug 2023**

Introduction

This policy should be read in conjunction with other related and relevant policies of Step and Learn.

It meets the need to set out how Step and Learn will protect and keep children safe within our organisation and respond to safeguarding concerns.

Step and Learn has a strong culture and awareness of safeguarding and this is a key consideration in all aspects within the organisation.

Step and Learn work exclusively with children and young people with disabilities, and recognise that in some circumstances, this makes them inherently vulnerable.

All staff and volunteers have a responsibility to report cases of actual or suspected abuse of any kind, to any child, by any person, at any time.

This also includes unintentional abuse, which may arise from inappropriate parenting skills.

All concerns in the first instance should be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL). The DSL will record, on a Cause for Concern Form, exactly what has been said or observed. Clear and accurate records are an absolute necessity, all Cause for Concern Forms must be correctly dated, signed and filed in a secure, locked cabinet for future reference, along with the original disclosure.

Step and Learn's DSL is Reka Keseru, the lead conductor.

Her email address is reka@stepandlearn.org

The Chair of the Trustees is Patrick Barden.

His email address is patrickbarden@stepandlearn.org

Step and Learn operate from premises in the Medway area, their services for safeguarding concerns can be found online at:

www.medway.gov.uk/info/200170/children_and_families/600/worried_about_a_child/1

If the concern is immediate and a child is in danger, 999 should be called.

The Chair of Trustees will have overall responsibility for monitoring performance in relation to this policy.

This policy will be continuously reviewed and updated as necessary.

What to do if you have a concern

All staff and volunteers have a responsibility to report cases of actual or suspected abuse of any kind, to any child, by any person, at any time. This also includes unintentional abuse, which may arise from inappropriate parenting skills, cultural beliefs and differences.

Concerns should be reported to the DSL, who will complete a Cause for Concern Form.

In the case of the DSL being suspected of any form of abuse, contact should be made directly with the Chair of the Trustees, Patrick Barden.

In the case of a child making a disclosure, staff should seek to reassure the child but must not ask any 'leading' questions. All children and young people who attend sessions at Step and Learn do so with a parent or carer in attendance with them, for the duration of the session. If appropriate, the staff member may discuss with the parent / carer in attendance with the child, unless they feel this will put the child at further risk.

In all instances of a concern being raised:

- If a child is in immediate danger, the DSL will call 999.

- If a child is not in immediate danger, the DSL will make a referral to the children's social services team at Medway Council (or other local authority if the child lives outside of Medway).

- If the concern is a more general concern around a child's safety and welfare, the DSL will make contact with the Medway Council Early Help support team, offered by 'Family Solutions'.

Clear and accurate records are an absolute necessity, should you need to report a case of actual or suspected abuse. A written record is the best way to make a disclosure.

You should identify the cause of your concern, record dates and times (if possible) and include factual information and evidence.

When a disclosure is received by the DSL (or Chair of the Trustees) it will be treated sensitively and dealt with appropriately. A Cause for Concern form will be completed by the DSL (or Chair of the Trustees) and the next steps of our procedure will be implemented.

Persons making disclosures are not at liberty to be notified of any further actions taken in respect of their disclosure.

Staff, Volunteer and Trustee Responsibilities

All people working with children have a responsibility to keep them safe.

At Step and Learn, staff, volunteers and trustees will receive regular training on safeguarding, relevant to their role.

Staff and volunteers working directly with the children will be expected to:

- Know this policy and follow it
- Complete training every 3 years
- Have their enhanced DBS check completed every 3 years
- Be vigilant at all times in watching out for the welfare of each child who attends a Step and Learn session, including the initial assessment, regardless of if a place is offered and taken up.

Trustees not working directly with the children will be expected to:

- Know this policy and follow it
- Have a general awareness of safeguarding procedures
- Be vigilant at any time they are in attendance of a session in their capacity as a trustee.

A general awareness of safeguarding constitutes the following:

- Knowing how to recognise the possible signs or indicators of abuse or neglect.
- Knowing how to respond and communicate with children or young people when they may be trying to tell you something. This could be verbally or non-verbally, through body language or facial expressions.
- Knowing what to do when a disclosure is made to you, for example how to record it and who it should be passed on to.
- Understanding factors which may make some children more vulnerable, ie cultural/religious differences, whilst being mindful of our equal opportunities policy.

There are occasions where staff and volunteers may witness behaviour from a child towards their family members which could be deemed as abusive.

There may also be occasions where staff and volunteers suspect domestic abuse is occurring between the child's parents / carers.

Whilst this policy deals with safeguarding children, staff should be aware of services they could signpost families to when this behaviour is apparent, and if they feel able to, offer support to the parent / carer.

Designated Safeguarding Lead

The responsibilities of the DSL include:

- Acting as a point of contact
- The provision of information regarding safeguarding procedures
- Liaising with the board of trustees, staff and third parties about issues concerning safeguarding
- Management and referral of cases of suspected abuse to the relevant authorities
- Referral of cases to the police where there is a radicalisation concern
- Acting as a source of support, advice and expertise within the organisation and liaising with staff on matters relating to safeguarding
- To attend and contribute to child protection meetings and multi-agency safeguarding meetings when required
- Being alert to the specific needs of vulnerable children, especially those known to social services
- Ensuring each member of staff has access to and understands the organisations safeguarding policy
- Ensuring all staff and volunteers have induction training and their training refreshed every 3 years
- Ensure they are aware of updates in legislation at least annually
- Keeping detailed records of all disclosures made and Cause for Concern Forms
- Report to trustees any concerns around safeguarding
- When children leave Step and Learn, ensuring their records are fully handed over to the next setting. If there is no next setting, ensure all disclosures have been appropriately followed up and necessary referrals are in progress
- Maintain and monitor safeguarding records, looking out for patterns of concern for any particular child

Staff Suspecting Staff Members of Abuse

If a member of staff has a suspicion regarding a fellow member of staff or a volunteer, they must report this to the DSL.

If the suspected staff member is the DSL, then they must report directly to the Chair of the Trustees.

Disclosures made in this instance will be treated the same as any other disclosure made with the following additional steps also implemented:

- The staff member to which the disclosure relates will be immediately placed on leave, with full pay
- The Board of Trustees will be informed at the earliest opportunity

Working with Parents and Carers

If a parent or carer (or any other family member who attends with your child) has a concern, they should raise this in the first instance with the DSL, Reka Keseru. This can be done in person at the end of a session, by telephone or by email.

The DSL will complete a Cause for Concern form and a record will be maintained.

In any instance where the person with the concern feels unable to talk to the DSL, they should contact the Chair of the Trustees, Patrick Barden.

Concerns raised by families will always be taken seriously and sensitively.

Supervision of Children

As per our Parent Partnership Policy, all children must be accompanied to sessions by their parent, carer or other family member. The accompanying adult is expected to be physically fit enough to offer hands on support throughout the session and at the very least, must stay with their child for the duration of each session.

We ask that in the event that an accompanying adult needs to leave the session, for example to take a phone call or toilet break, their child is left in the care of the lead conductor or other Step and Learn staff member only. Please ensure the staff member is aware that they are supervising your child in your absence.

Appropriate Use of Photographs

As per our Parent Partnership Policy, documenting your child's progress by taking photographs is common practice.

Photographs are only ever taken on devices owned and stored securely by Step and Learn. The primary purpose of the photographs is to add to your child's personal records, however sometimes they may be shared publicly.

Families will be asked to give their consent to these photographs being shared publicly at the start of each academic year, and are welcome to not give such consent.

Public sharing of the photographs means:

- Using them as evidence in grant applications
- Posting them on our public social media pages to showcase our charity's work

During sessions, some families choose to photograph or video their own child and Step and Learn has no problem with this, we are always pleased to see families showing off their child's achievements.

We would however ask that care is taken to only photograph / video your own child and to please ensure that no other child is visible in anything you share online, unless you have the express consent of that child's family.

Running Safe Activities

Arrangements are in place to ensure that physical risks associated with the activities provided for children (and their families) are identified and managed:

- Risk assessments are undertaken and reviewed as necessary.
- Venues are visited to ensure suitability for our families.
- Equipment and resources are routinely inspected and replaced.
- Staff and volunteers are aware of our policies and procedures.
- Staff and volunteers receive regular training, in particular, safeguarding and first aid.

Safe Recruitment

All recruitment for staff and volunteers follows principles for safe recruiting, which includes, enhanced DBS checks, character references, employment history and previous employer references, interviews and probationary periods.

Job descriptions for all roles include a reference to safeguarding duties.

All new staff and volunteers receive safeguarding training relevant to their role during their first few weeks. Following a new appointment, staff and volunteers are taken through our Safeguarding procedure by the DSL and a copy of this policy is made available to them. (Alongside complete copies of all Step and Learn policies and procedures.)

The DSL will determine if further formal training is required for any new appointment.

Definition of Child Abuse

"A form 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 in a family or in an institutional or community setting by those known to them or, more rarely, by others (eg. Via the internet). They may be abused by an adult or adults, or another child or children."

Recognising Abuse and Safeguarding Disabled Children

All staff and volunteers should be aware of the different forms of abuse and their implications. Every child who attends Step and Learn has a physical disability, sometimes they also have a delay in their cognition or speech and language skills which can make them inherently vulnerable to abuse or neglect.

Severely disabled children often rely on parents / carers to meet most if not all of their needs, in some cases, there may also be outside agencies involved in their care. In all cases, they place their trust in the care giver that their best interests are at the forefront of their caring responsibilities.

When this is not the case, they may find it difficult to express the problem in a way that is understandable. It is important that staff working with the child form their own judgements on a child's behaviour and communication, so that they are better placed to identify changes in mood and non verbal signs that something may be wrong.

Indicators of Abuse and Neglect

Abuse, neglect and safeguarding issues are rarely standalone events that can be covered by one definition or label. In most cases, multiple issues will overlap with one another.

Physical Abuse

A form of abuse which may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, scalding, drowning, starving, suffocating or otherwise cause physical harm to a child. Physical abuse may also be caused when a parent / carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child.

Emotional Abuse

The persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to a child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued in so far as they meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on the child. These may include interactions that are beyond a child's developmental capability as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child from participating in a normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyber-bullying), causing children to frequently 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, although it may occur alone.

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. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing or touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities such as involving the child to look at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging a child to behave in a sexually inappropriate way, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse. Sexual abuse can take place online, and technology can be used to facilitate offline abuse. Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Adult females can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other

children and young people. The abuse of children by other children is a specific safeguarding issue in education settings.

Neglect

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 may occur during pregnancy, for example, as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent / carer failing to: provide adequate food, clothing, 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.

Grave Concerns

Staff and volunteers should be aware of the following situations which place a child at increased risk of any type of abuse:

- There is a known child abuser in the family
- Another child in the family is known to have been abused
- There is an adult in the family with a history of violence

General Indicators

The following may occur to any children being abused but are particularly prevalent in cases of sexual or emotional abuse, where outward and physical signs may not be present:

- Onset on enuresis – day or night
- Sleeping and eating disturbances
- Recurrent abdominal pain
- Recurrent headaches
- Social withdrawal
- Restlessness and aimlessness
- Inexplicable school failure
- Poor trust and secretiveness
- Indiscriminate and careless sexual behaviour
- Self mutilation and other forms of self harm

Other Forms of Abuse

Bullying

This can take many forms, such as:

- Verbal teasing or making fun of someone
- Excluding children from games and conversations
- Pressuring other children not to be friends with the child being bullied
- Spreading hurtful rumours or circulating inappropriate images or drawings
- Shouting at or verbally abusing someone
- Stealing or damaging someone's property
- Making threats
- Physical or sexual assault
- Forcing someone to do something embarrassing, harmful, dangerous or illegal
- Harassment of someone based on their race, gender, sexuality, culture or disability

Domestic Abuse

When dealing with domestic violence or domestic abuse staff must be very mindful of the emotional impact and long term damage or effect this can have on children. Staff must be careful not to focus on the parent / carer's behaviour or needs. Some children may blame themselves for the abuse. All children living in a DV/DA situation are under stress. Some children may be exposed to radical or extreme views and there may also be cultural or religious issues too.

Child Trafficking

This is where children and young people are tricked, forced or persuaded to leave their homes and are moved and transported elsewhere. They are then exploited, forced to work or are sold.

Female Genital Mutilation FGM

FGM has been illegal in the UK since 1985. This means that it is now mandatory for all health professionals to notify the police when they become aware that a girl under the age of 18 has had an act of FGM carried out on her. They must also report if they observe physical signs which are suggestive of FGM.

Radicalisation

This is the way in which a child or young person comes to be involved in extremism and terrorism. It is a gradual process and quite often the child or young person is unaware of what is happening. It is increasingly a

problem when a child or young person consumes information on a daily basis from social media, where this information is not routinely or robustly fact checked.

Legislation

This policy has been drawn up on the basis of law and guidance which seeks to protect children, in particular:

- The United Convention of the Rights of the Child 1991
- Every Child Matters 2003
- The Children and Families Act 2014
- Care Act 2014
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018
- Data Protection Act 2018
- NSPCC Guidelines