

The Hitchin Churches Schools Worker Trust (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.

1.0 Statement of intent

1.1 Every child or young person deserves to be happy and secure in their activities, and their parents or carers need to feel sure that the people in charge of these activities are trustworthy, responsible and will do everything they can to keep the child or young person safe from harm.

1.2 Unfortunately, sometimes people may pose a risk to children or young people and may wish to harm them. It is therefore the duty of PHASE to put in place safeguards to protect the children and young people with whom we work.

1.3 All staff and volunteers have a duty to follow this policy and maintain the wellbeing of children and young people in their care.

1.4 We will review this policy annually to confirm it is up to date with legislation and the requirements of the Hertfordshire Safeguarding Children Board, and to ensure that it is being applied consistently and correctly throughout our organisation.

2.0 Safeguarding aims

2.1 To create an environment which is safe and secure for all children and young people.

2.2 To enable children and young people to have the self confidence and the vocabulary to resist inappropriate approaches.

2.3 To encourage children and young people to establish and sustain satisfying relationships within their families, with peers, and with other adults.

2.4 To encourage children and young people to develop a sense of autonomy and independence.

3.0 Fulfilling our aims

In order to fulfill these aims:

3.1 We have two named persons responsible for safeguarding in our organisation, with clear roles and responsibilities.

3.2 We follow the practice laid down by the Hertfordshire Safeguarding Children Board for recruiting all staff and volunteers.

3.3 All staff and volunteers receive training on safeguarding as part of their induction, and will receive ongoing training annually.

3.4 All staff and volunteers know our procedures for recording and reporting incidents.

3.5 We have clear criteria and procedures for contacting the Local Authority's intake and assessment team.

4.0 Recruitment

4.1 Our procedure for recruiting staff and volunteers aims to be effective, fair and safe.

4.2 In recruiting a new member of staff or volunteer we allow sufficient time before appointment to carry out all necessary checks and references. We will not allow any member of staff or volunteer to take up a role without these having been completed satisfactorily.

4.3 Applicants for roles within PHASE, whether paid or voluntary, will be clearly informed that the positions are exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974. Applicants will also be informed of the need to carry out Enhanced CRB checks and take up references before posts can be confirmed. Where applications are rejected because of information that has been disclosed, applicants have the right to know and to challenge incorrect information.

4.4 We abide by the Protection of Children Act requirements in respect of any person who is dismissed from our employment, or who resigns in circumstances that would otherwise have led to dismissal for reasons of a concern about safeguarding.

5.0 Disciplinary Action

5.1 If a member of staff or a volunteer is dismissed from PHASE or internally disciplined because of misconduct relating to a child or young person, we will notify the relevant authorities so that the name may be included on the List for the Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults.

6.0 Training

6.1 Safeguarding children and young people is a core element of our professional development and training programme for all staff and volunteers.

6.2 All new staff and volunteers complete safeguarding training as part of their induction and before they take up any

of their duties.

6.3 Staff and volunteers regularly receive ongoing training in safeguarding at least once a year.

6.4 All staff and volunteers are aware of the procedures for reporting and recording their concerns.

7.0 Programme content

7.1 We seek to create within PHASE a culture of value and respect for the individual.

7.2 We ensure that this is carried out in a way that is appropriate for the ages and developmental stages.

7.3 Where appropriate, we introduce key principles of safeguarding into our programmes and activities so that children and young people can develop an understanding of why and how to keep safe.

8.0 Complaints

8.1 We ensure that all parents know how to complain about staff and volunteers, which may include an allegation of abuse.

8.2 We have a procedure on allegations made against a member of staff and volunteers. We follow all the disclosure and recording procedures when investigating an allegation that a member of staff or volunteer has abused a child as if it were an allegation of abuse by any other person.

9.0 Premises

9.1 We have procedures for recording the details of visitors to our premises or activities.

9.2 We take security steps to ensure that we have control over who comes into our premises or activities so that no unauthorised person has unsupervised access to the children and young people.

10.0 Suspected abuse

10.1 We acknowledge that abuse of children and young people can take different forms: physical, emotional, sexual and neglect.

10.2 When children and young people are suffering from physical, sexual or emotional abuse, this may be demonstrated through changes in their behaviour, or in other ways. Where such changes in behaviour occur, or where there is cause for concern, we will investigate.

10.3 We recognise the importance that investigations are carried out with sensitivity. Staff and volunteers take care not to influence the outcome either through the way they speak to or ask questions of the child or young person.

10.4 Where a child or young person shows signs and symptoms of 'failure to thrive' or neglect, we make appropriate referrals. We seek parent's permissions before making a referral unless by seeking this permission we put a child at risk.

10.5 We work co-operatively with the parent or carer unless this is inconsistent with the need to ensure the child's safety.

11.0 Disclosures made to us

11.1 Where a child makes a disclosure to a member of staff and volunteers, they will offer reassurance to the child; listen to the child; and give an assurance that she or he will take action.

11.2 The member of staff and volunteers involved will not question the child themselves and will refer the disclosure to the Safeguarding Officer immediately. If both Safeguarding Officers are unavailable, they will refer it to the most senior manager available.

12.0 Recording and reporting suspicions of abuse and disclosures

12.1 Staff and volunteers to whom a disclosure is made will make a record of:

- The child's name; address, date of birth;
- The date and time of the observation or the disclosure;
- An objective record of the observation or disclosure;
- The exact words spoken by the child;
- The name of the person to whom the concern was reported, with date and time;
- The names of any other person present at the time.

12.2 These records are signed and dated and kept in a separate confidential file.

12.3 The member of staff or volunteer will discuss the incident with the Safeguarding Officer and a decision will be made by the Safeguarding Officer about who should be notified. If a child's safety is at risk the Local Authority intake and assessment team will be contacted immediately. We will take advice from them regarding information then given to parents.

12.4 In a case where a child is not in immediate danger we try to discuss the matter with parents before making any referrals. However it is the welfare of the child, which is paramount, and this is at the forefront of all our actions. We are aware that many children and young people have suffered because of lack of communication between agencies, and that government guidance now encourages the full sharing of information. We shall therefore use our professional judgment in sharing information with the agencies that 'need to know', being open and honest with parents and children and young people as to why we feel we need to share the information.

12.5 Full records of conversations will be maintained when any referrals or discussions are held with any other agencies or with parents prior to a referral. These records will include dates and times of the conversation, who we speak to, and the advice we were given.

13.0 Informing Parents

13.1 We will always aim to involve parents in any referrals before they are made. However if a suspicion of abuse is recorded, and the child is considered at risk an immediate referral will be made to the Local Authority intake and assessment team and we will take their advice on informing parents.

14.0 Confidentiality

14.1 All suspicions and investigations are kept confidential and shared only with those who need to know. If there are concerns, the member of staff or volunteer must immediately inform the Safeguarding Officer.

14.2 Where children and young people work with a number of different staff or volunteers, they should also be made aware that there are concerns about an aspect of well-being of the child in question.

14.3 Any information shared with external agencies is done under the guidance of the Hertfordshire Safeguarding Children Board.