

Canterbury Oast Trust (COT)

Safeguarding Children and Child Protection policy and procedure



Purpose

The purpose of this policy and procedure is to ensure that appropriate action is taken to protect children who are suspected of being abused or at risk of abuse. This aligns with Canterbury Oast Trust (COT)'s commitment to safeguarding.

Scope

This policy applies across all COT services, including residential care, supported living, day services, and the Rare Breeds Centre. It applies to all staff, volunteers, contractors, students, senior management, agency staff, and anyone working on behalf of COT.

Relation to COT Vision, Mission, and Values

Vision: This policy supports the safety and welfare of children, reflecting our commitment to providing safe and inclusive environments

Mission: By safeguarding children and protecting them from harm, this policy enables COT to uphold its mission to deliver quality care and services to vulnerable populations. This includes fostering an environment where every individual can thrive, free from harm.

Values:

Be Courageous: This policy reflects courage in addressing abuse and safeguarding issues, including when addressing concerns about internal stakeholders or trusted individuals.

Seek Opportunities: It ensures a proactive approach by empowering children, identifying risks early, and providing tailored support.

Work Together: This policy promotes partnership with agencies, families, and local authorities, demonstrating a collaborative ethos in achieving safeguarding goals.

Policy Statement

Canterbury Oast Trust is committed to ensuring the welfare and safety of all children and young people. We believe it is always unacceptable for a child to experience abuse of any kind, and we recognise our responsibility to safeguard children and protect them from harm.

Statement of Intent

COT recognises the vulnerability of children and believes that it is always unacceptable for a child or young person to experience abuse of any kind. It wholly supports the principle that the welfare of the child is paramount and accepts the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of the Child.

COT understands that children can be under threat, and/or abused by parents/family, other children and young people, carers, staff and others and that everyone who works with children has a responsibility for keeping them safe.

COT will ensure that it works in partnership with other agencies, children, and their families so that they receive the right help at the right time, with everyone who comes into contact with them understanding that they all have a role to play in identifying concerns, sharing information, and taking prompt action.

Additionally, COT believes that all children, regardless of ethnicity, gender, culture, sexual orientation, disability, faith or religious belief, have a right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse.

COT recognises that deaf and disabled children and those with complex health needs are at increased risk of abuse. Furthermore, it understands that some children have increased vulnerability because of the impact of previous experiences, their level of dependency, their communication needs, or other issues; and that threats can take a variety of different forms, including sexual, physical and emotional abuse, neglect, exploitation by criminal gangs and organised crime groups, trafficking, online abuse, sexual exploitation, and the influences of extremism leading to radicalisation.

All necessary steps will be taken to ensure that the rights of all children are respected and that opportunities for abuse to occur are minimised.

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1. Policy Implementation

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

- Empowering children, listening, respecting, and responding in a compassionate but effective way.
- Ensuring a child-centred approach to service planning and delivery and keeping the child in focus when making decisions about their lives.
- Ensuring that all staff read and understand this policy.
- Providing safeguarding children and child protection training to staff to enable them to recognise signs of abuse and follow appropriate procedures when dealing with child protection concerns.
- Adopting safe staff recruitment, selection, and vetting procedures.
- Sharing information about safeguarding children, child protection, and good practice with staff, volunteers, parents, support staff, and relevant agencies.
- Requiring all staff to follow the reporting and recording procedures in every case of suspected abuse or disclosed abuse.
- Ensuring that all staff with responsibility for or contact with children will be provided with appropriate policies, guidance, training, and support to enable them to implement this policy.
- Providing effective management and support systems for all staff so that staff know who to contact within COT in the event of safeguarding children and/or child protection concerns arising.
- Working within the relevant Local Safeguarding Partners' guidance and procedures.
- Ensuring that policy and practice remain current and up-to-date and dovetails with local procedures.

2. Information sharing and confidentiality

Good communication is essential for any organisation. In COT, every effort will be made to assure individuals that, should they have concerns, they will be listened to and taken seriously.

It is the responsibility of the Director of Social Care to ensure that information is available to and exchanged between all those involved in this organisation and its activities.

Children and young people have a right to information, especially any information that could make life better and safer for them. COT will act to ensure that they have information about how and with whom they can share their concerns, complaints, and anxieties.

When sharing information, staff will be sensitive to the level of understanding and maturity, as well as to the level of responsibility of the people with whom they are sharing.

We understand that some information is confidential and will only be shared on a strictly need-to-know basis. COT will ensure that staff follow the guidelines: *Information Sharing Advice for Practitioners Providing Safeguarding Services to Children, Young People, Parents, and Carers (July 2018)*.

COT will ensure that staff understand that the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR), Data Protection Act 2018, and human rights legislation are not barriers to justified information sharing but provide a framework to ensure that personal information about living individuals is shared appropriately.

3. Safe Recruitment

COT will adopt a consistent and thorough process of safe recruitment to ensure that those recruited are suitable. This includes ensuring that safe recruitment and selection procedures are adopted which deter, reject, or identify people who might abuse children or are otherwise unsuitable to work with them. COT will not sub-contract to any organisation that has not been part of a safe recruitment process.

COT will ensure that the level of DBS check required for the role will be confirmed. The recruiting manager will ensure that clearance is obtained before the applicant commences employment. As an employer of staff in a 'regulated activity', COT has a responsibility to refer concerns to the Disclosure and Barring Service in accordance with the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006. Managers must report concerns to the Kent County Council Child Protection Team.

4. Allegations against management

COT will act appropriately towards allegations against people in positions of trust and will follow procedure relating to the LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer).

5. Best Practice

COT will adhere to HM Government's 'Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023)' and will follow, within the scope of its role and responsibilities, NICE guidance NG76 and CG89 in addition to other best practice documents cited in this policy and procedure.

6. Accountabilities and responsibilities

Individual staff have a responsibility to report and record any concerns, not to make decisions as to whether abuse has or has not occurred. An investigation into child abuse can only be undertaken by the Local Safeguarding Partners. Doing nothing is not an option. If we know or suspect that a child is being abused, we will do something about it and ensure that our work is properly recorded.

The Senior Leadership Team at COT will:

- Be responsible for the effectiveness of this policy and related procedures and for ensuring that sufficient resources are available to support its implementation.
- Appoint a nominated individual to ensure that this policy is agreed, implemented, and reviewed.
- Delegate responsibility for ensuring that this policy is integrated into the governance structure of COT and reviewed.
- Appoint a designated Safeguarding Lead(s) to undertake a lead role for safeguarding, including being involved in Serious Case Reviews with Local Safeguarding Partners and agreeing action plans for shortfalls or improvements in process and working with the local operational team.
- The Safeguarding Lead will review concerns identified, standardise process and learning and report to the Quality and Risk committee who are responsible for reviewing safeguarding incidents, ensuring that the CQC is informed.

Service Managers will:

- Notify the designated Safeguarding Lead, if it is someone other than themselves, of any safeguarding concerns.
- Notify the designated Safeguarding Lead of the outcome of any safeguarding meetings not attended by the Lead.
- Ensure that they remain up to date on child protection processes in their own locality.
- Notify CQC in line with CQC notification reporting requirements. – Is this the Service Manager? Or the Director of Social Care?
- Contact DBS in line with statutory reporting requirements.

All managers are responsible for:

- Ensuring that all staff are aware of their responsibilities in accordance with this policy and associated documents.
- Monitoring compliance with this policy within their area of responsibility.
- Providing support to staff involved in any children welfare incidents.
- Ensuring that staff complete approved safeguarding training.
- Ensuring that the services provided are compliant with COT safeguarding and child protection processes as well as Local Authority processes.
- Notifying the Director of Social Care of any safeguarding concerns.

7. Procedure - Safeguarding Children and Child Protection in Settings that Provide Services to Adults

COT understands that whilst it may not deliver support services to children, during the course of providing services, particularly at the Rare Breeds Centre, staff come into contact with children. This could be in a variety of circumstances, including but not limited to:

- Visitors to the Rare Breeds Centre, including school trips.
- Visitors who are children to COT supported people, staff and volunteers, including grandchildren, own children, friends.
- A child who lives with a supported individual.
- Other children in the community.

As such, COT understands its responsibility to ensure that staff understand the Local Authority procedure and the contents of this policy.

8. Local Procedures

All staff, including contracted or agency staff working with children, will familiarise themselves with the local child safeguarding policies, procedures and guidelines and work within them. COT will ensure that all staff within COT are aware and understand their local child protection policies and their localised reporting procedures for Local Authorities. COT will identify a member of staff responsible for safeguarding.

The Kent and Medway Safeguarding Children procedures manual can be found here:

<https://kentandmedway.trixonline.co.uk/>

9. Recognising children who may need early help

COT will ensure that staff understand that they must be alert to the potential need for early help as stated in 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' (2023) for a child who:

- Is disabled.
- Has special educational needs (whether or not they have a statutory education, health, and care (EHC) Plan).
- Is a young carer.
- Is bereaved.
- Is showing signs of being drawn into anti-social or criminal behaviour, including gang involvement and association with organised crime groups.
- Is frequently missing/goes missing from care or from home.
- Is suffering from mental ill health.
- Has a parent or carer in custody.
- Is missing education, or persistently absent from school, or not in receipt of full-time education.
- Has experienced multiple suspensions and is at risk of, or has been permanently excluded.
- Is at risk of modern slavery, trafficking, or criminal exploitation.
- Is at risk of being radicalised or exploited.
- Is viewing problematic and/or inappropriate online content (for example, linked to violence), or developing inappropriate relationships online.
- Is in a family circumstance presenting challenges for the child, such as drug and alcohol misuse, adult mental health issues, and domestic abuse.
- Is misusing drugs or alcohol themselves.
- Has returned home to their family from care.
- Is a privately fostered child.

Additionally, staff must be aware of any new or emerging threats which include online abuse, grooming, sexual exploitation, and radicalisation as well as having the ability to identify symptoms and triggers of abuse or neglect.

10. Safeguarding children with physical and/or learning disabilities

Research suggests that children with disabilities are at increased risk of abuse, and that the presence of multiple disabilities appears to increase the risk of both abuse and neglect. A child could be considered to be disabled if they have significant problems with communication, comprehension, vision, hearing, or physical functioning. A failure to recognise disabled children's human rights can lead to abusive situations and practices. Organisational culture and 'custom and practice' can contribute to institutional abuse or harm.

COT will not underestimate how poor practice can become pervasive in influencing staff to behave inappropriately.

The Support Worker will be given the opportunity to reflect on their practice and promote a positive risk-taking culture to enhance the quality of life for young people.

We will ensure that its services will readily seek the views of young people, parents, and other professionals in reviewing their practice.

Particular attention will be paid to promoting a high level of awareness of the risks of harm, to high standards of practice, and to strengthening the ability of children and families to help themselves.

COT will make it common practice to enable disabled children to make their wishes and feelings known in respect of their care and treatment, and make sure that all disabled children know how to raise concerns and give them access to a range of adults with whom they can communicate. This could mean using interpreters and facilitators who are skilled in using the child's preferred method of communication.

We recognise and utilise key sources of support, including staff in schools such as support workers, friends, and family members where appropriate.

We ensure that there is an explicit commitment to, and an understanding of, disabled children's safety and welfare amongst all staff of services used by disabled children.

COT will develop the safe support services that families want, and a culture of openness and joint working with parents and carers on the part of services.

Where a child is unable to tell someone of the abuse, they may convey anxiety or distress in some other way, e.g. behaviour or symptoms, and the Support Worker must be alert to this.

Under new legislation, children are victims in their own right.

11. Responding when a child discloses abuse

Keep the following considerations in mind when talking to a child who is disclosing abuse:

- Help the child feel comfortable.
- Reassure the child that it is not their fault. Let them know that they have not done anything wrong.
- Do not react with shock, anger, or disgust. Be calm.
- Do not force a child to talk. Give the child time. Let them talk to you at their own pace.
- Do not force a child to show injuries.
- Use terms and language that the child can understand.
- Do not 'interview' the child.
- Ask appropriate questions.
- Do not ask 'why' questions.

- Do not teach the child new terms or words. This is important in relation to the court and law.
- Find out what the child wants from you.
- Be honest with the child.
- Confirm the child's feelings. Be supportive.
- Remember that the safety of the child is most important. Keep in mind that a child might be further abused if they report that they have spoken to someone about the abuse. If you feel that the child is in danger, you must act immediately.

12. Reporting Concerns

If the child requires immediate medical attention call an ambulance and inform the control room staff that there is a child protection concern.

Call 999 if in immediate danger.

Report incidents/concerns to the relevant line manager who will support you to complete a report form. Refer to the Accident and Incident Reporting Policy and Procedure for the report form.

Report to child social care team at the relevant local authority.

13. Management of allegations against people in positions of trust (PiPoT)

COT, when working with children and families, must have clear policies for dealing with allegations against people who work with children. COT will make a clear distinction between an allegation, a concern about the quality of care or practice, or a complaint. An allegation may relate to a person who works with children who has:

- Behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child.
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child.
- Behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children.

If an allegation arises it will:

- Be reported immediately to a Senior Manager within COT.
- Be addressed as quickly as possible with a consistent and fair and thorough investigation. Where it appears that a criminal offence may have been committed, the Police will be contacted immediately by the appropriate Senior Manager.
- The Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) at Kent County Council Children's Social Care Team must be informed within one working day of all allegations that come to the

attention of COT or that are made to the Police regarding an employee or someone in a position of trust working with, or on behalf of, or who is known to COT who may have caused harm to a child. It is the responsibility of the manager to ensure that the LADO at Kent County Council Children's Social Care Team is notified.

14. Enforcement and Compliance

Violations of this policy may result in disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal, or legal action if required. Vendors or contractors who breach this policy may have their contracts terminated and could face civil or criminal penalties.