

SAFEGUARDING POLICY

London Training and Employment Network (LTEN)

Last updated	November 2023
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(1) Introduction:

This policy is made in accordance with LTEN's vision and mission, which believes that children, young people, and vulnerable adults have the right to be protected from abuse and harm at all times and in all situations.

(2) Definitions:

A **child** is any person who is below the minimum school leaving age, i.e., just before or just after their 16th birthday.

A **young person** is defined in the Health and Safety (Young Persons) Regulations 1997 as any person under the age of 18. It also includes unborn children.

A **vulnerable adult** is a person over 18 who is or may be in need of community care services by reason of

- A learning or physical disability
- A physical or mental illness, chronic or otherwise, including an addiction to alcohol or drugs
- A reduction in physical or mental capacity
- Is in the receipt of any form of healthcare
- Is detained in custody
- Is receiving community services because of age, health or disability
- Is living in sheltered or residential care home
- Is unable, for any other reason, to protect him/herself against significant harm or exploitation.

(3) Purpose:

Children, young persons, and vulnerable adults have the right to protection from all forms of abuse, neglect or exploitation and should have the right to express their views on any issues or decisions affecting them. Protection is therefore the responsibility of every adult who has involvement with children, young persons and vulnerable adults. LTEN therefore:

- Safeguards and promotes the wellbeing of the children/young persons and vulnerable adults with whom we work
- Ensure that all employees and others covered by this policy understand the context within which checking with the Disclosure and Barring Service takes place

- Provide all employees with guidance on how they should behave if they suspect that a child/young person or vulnerable adult may be experiencing or be at risk from abuse or harm.
- Guide employees on how to respond to - and report - concerns
- Ensure compatibility with other LTEN policies

LTEN, as a community-based organisation, has a duty to ensure that volunteers and staff are equipped with the skills, necessary information, and knowledge to give children, young persons, and vulnerable adults the support, guidance and help they may need at any particular time. Above all, we should all remember that their welfare is of paramount consideration and we work together with partners/sub-contractors and community-based organisations to ensure the protection of children, young persons, and vulnerable adults.

As a community group, the organisation has a responsibility to co-operate and work closely with the relevant authorities (Social Services & the Police Service). In the event of any suspected abuse, we are strongly required to have clear procedures in place to deal with the matter.

The purpose of this policy statement is:

- To protect children, young persons, and vulnerable adults who receive LTEN's services
- To provide staff and volunteers with overarching principles that guide our approach to child protection and safeguarding

This policy statement applies to anyone working on behalf of LTEN including board of trustees, paid staff, volunteers, and sessional staff.

(4) Legal Framework:

Everyone has a right to be safeguarded from abuse or neglect. This policy has been drawn up on the basis of legislation, policy and guidance that seeks to protect children, young persons and vulnerable adults in England.

We believe that:

- Children, young persons and vulnerable adults should never experience abuse of any kind, this includes Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is illegal in England and Wales under the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003. It is a form of child abuse and violence against women
- The Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015 sets out the "need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism". The Prevent strategy is part of an overall counterterrorism strategy, CONTEST, and aims to reduce the threat to the UK from terrorism. Organisations such as LTEN do not have a duty to adhere to the Prevent duty but do still have a responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of the children/young people and vulnerable adults we work with

- We have the responsibility to promote the welfare of all children, young persons and vulnerable adults, to keep them safe and to practice in a way that protects them.

(5) General Principles:

Safeguarding relates to the action taken to promote the welfare of children/young people and vulnerable adults and to protect them from harm.

All staff should have a basic awareness of safeguarding issues, this includes:

- Being alert to the possibility of abuse and neglect
- Having enough knowledge to recognise an abusive or potentially abusive event or set of circumstances
- Knowing who in the organisation to raise concerns with
- Being competent to take the appropriate immediate or emergency action. If any member of staff has any concerns about a child or vulnerable adult, they must alert their nominated child protection/ safeguarding lead immediately. If the child protection/ safeguarding lead agrees there is grounds for concern, they must take appropriate action to safeguard the child/young person or vulnerable adult. This may include contacting the relevant local authority social care service or the local police child abuse investigation team.

The above may include concerns about a member of staff, a suspicion that a child/young person or vulnerable adult is being abused or neglected, or a suspicion that an activity is taking place that could place a person at risk. If the concern relates to a member of staff, then their manager should also be informed. This is a general guide. In any situation where there is a suspicion of abuse, the welfare needs of the child/young person or vulnerable adult must come first even where there may be a conflict of interest (e.g., where the suspected perpetrator may be a member of staff)

(6) What Constitutes Abuse?

Abuse is a deliberate act of ill-treatment that can harm or is likely to harm a person's safety, wellbeing and development. Abuse can be physical, sexual or emotional. Abuse may not, however, fall easily into these categories and staff/associates are not expected to be experts in the field. Neglect also constitutes abuse but can be defined as failing to provide or secure a child or vulnerable adult with the basic needs required for physical safety and wellbeing. LTEN will always seek to keep children, young persons and vulnerable adults safe regardless of age, disability, gender, racial heritage, religious belief and sexual orientation or identity.

Categories/forms include:

- Abuse of trust
- Sexual exploitation, Sexual Abuse and or Harmful sexual behaviour
- Child Trafficking
- Discriminatory abuse

- Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)
- Financial or material abuse
- Grooming
- Modern slavery
- Neglect including Self-neglect
- Online abuse
- Organisational or institutional abuse
- Physical Abuse including Domestic violence
- Psychological or Emotional abuse
- Radicalisation of children/young people or vulnerable adults

These categories can overlap, and an abused child or adult often suffers more than one type of abuse. Disabled children and young people are particularly vulnerable to abuse in any form. Safeguards for disabled children are essentially the same as for non-disabled children. Staff must maintain high standards of practice, remain vigilant to the possibility of a child being abused and minimise situations of risk. All staff must ensure that the children they work with know how to raise concerns and have access to interpreters/specialist workers and other aids to communication if required. Where there are concerns about the welfare of a disabled child, they should be acted upon in accordance with the procedures set out in this policy. The same thresholds for action apply. Where concerns are raised about a child who has communication difficulties, appropriate support, interpreting services and communication aids must be secured.

(7) Procedures for safeguarding children/young people and vulnerable adults

Organisation duties and responsibilities:

- Raise awareness of the need to protect children, young people and vulnerable adults to reduce risks to them
- Ensure that staff in contact with children and vulnerable adults have the requisite knowledge, skill and qualifications to carry out their jobs safely and effectively
- Ensure safe practice when working in partnership with other organisations, in particular that they have in place adequate safeguarding arrangements, including appropriate policies, training and mechanisms to provide assurance on compliance
- Maintain an organisation that is safe for all staff, children, young people and vulnerable adults and an environment where poor practice is challenged
- Ensure that all staff, associates, volunteers, young people and Board members who will be working/in contact with children and vulnerable adults consent to vetting through the Disclosure and Barring Scheme
- Ensure that when abuse is suspected or disclosed, it is clear what action must be taken
- Ensure that the Chief Executive Officer, members of staff/volunteers are accountable for the effective implementation of this policy
- Ensure that all staff receive copies of safeguarding policies, are trained in their meaning and application and understand their responsibilities

(8) Staff duties and responsibilities

What to do if you suspect a young person/vulnerable adult has been abused/neglected.

Any member of the community, member of the management committee, staff and/or volunteer who suspects that a young person/vulnerable adult has been abused in any way must immediately report this to their LTEN Manager. No one should keep such suspicions to her/himself;

All should be aware that working together with colleagues and sharing concerns could help. It is not the responsibility of LTEN to decide whether or not abuse has taken place. It is the responsibility of staff at LTEN to act if there is cause for concern, in order that the appropriate agencies can investigate and take any action necessary to protect the young and/or vulnerable adult. Whenever needed, staff should be prepared to ask for advice or further information from other professionals in the young person/vulnerable adult's life. It should be remembered that these are professionals who are useful sources with helpful and expert advice.

8.1 Staff and Volunteers must, at all times:

- Acknowledge the age group they work with;
- Never trivialise or exaggerate young persons'/vulnerable adults abuse issues;
- Allow the young person/vulnerable adult time to speak and not interrupt nor make suggestions to them which could impact/impede an investigation;
- Reassure the young person/vulnerable adult that you are glad she or he has told what has happened and that it was right to tell;
- No interrogation or questioning other than to clarify your understanding. If the matter is to be investigated further it will be so done by trained professionals. No matter how well you know the young person/vulnerable adult, spare them having to repeat themselves over and over. Apart from anything else, the young person/vulnerable adult may begin to think that you don't believe them;
- Be honest, tell the young person/vulnerable adult that you cannot keep it a secret, you have to talk to someone else that can help;
- Listen to the young person/vulnerable adult - REALLY LISTEN - take what they say seriously. Tell them that they've done the right thing by telling you;
- As soon as practical write down everything the young person/vulnerable adult told you but remember that this is a confidential matter between you and the young person/vulnerable adult. The only person a staff/volunteer should be discussing it with is the manager/director of LTEN who is responsible to act as a monitor for child protection issues.

All LTEN staff have a responsibility to ensure the safety of children and vulnerable adults with whom they work. It is the responsibility of staff to promote good practice and minimise and manage potential risks. All staff – including volunteers, freelance staff and associates - must be aware of the requirements within these procedures.

8.2 Responsibilities of trustees

To comply with their legal duties, trustees must react responsibly to reports of safeguarding risks and incidents of abuse and take steps to make sure all staff know how to deal with these. Trustees should report a serious incident to the Charity Commission if:

- beneficiaries have been, or are alleged to have been, abused or mistreated while under the care of LTEN, or by someone connected with LTEN, for example a trustee, staff member or volunteer
- there has been an incident where someone has been abused or mistreated (alleged or actual) and this is connected with LTEN's activities
- there has been a breach of procedures or policies at LTEN which has put beneficiaries at risk, including a failure to carry out checks which would have identified that a person is disqualified under safeguarding legislation, from working with children or adults

8.3 Responsibilities of all line managers

Individual line managers are responsible for ensuring staff comply with the expectations set out within this policy. Specific responsibilities include:

- Being the first point of contact for reports of concerns
- Ensuring that all employees and volunteers in regulated roles are subject to DBS checks where applicable
- Reporting all concerns to a line/senior manager, Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO) and or trustee
- Providing advice and support to employees reporting disclosures or concerns
- Working with the line/senior manager, DSO and or trustee to resolve issues

8.4 Reporting suspected abuse

In any case LTEN staff members or volunteers will ensure that the manager, director, the chair or any available member of management committee are advised promptly of any concerns.

They in turn:

- Will report the matter to the relevant local authority's Young Person/Vulnerable Adult Protection Unit including police immediately or as soon as is possible, by telephone
- Will speak to a member of the social work staff and record the name of this person and the time and date and contents of the conversation

8.5 Reporting a serious safeguarding incident:

If any member of staff is involved in an actual or suspected serious safeguarding incident, or if a serious safeguarding incident takes place within any of LTEN's workplaces or working context, in addition to following the protocols set out within this policy, it should also be reported to the Charity Commission. It is the responsibility of Trustees to ensure that this takes place. All suspected or actual safeguarding incidents should be reported to the Charity Commission by email at: RSI@charitycommission.gsi.gov.uk.

In addition, immediate action should be taken to:

- prevent or minimise any further harm
- report it to the police, if it is suspected that a crime has been committed, and to any other regulators the charity is accountable to Senior staff should plan what to say to staff, volunteers, members, the public and the media
- review what happened and prevent it from happening again - this may include strengthening internal controls and procedures, and/or seeking appropriate help from professional advisers

8.6 Confidentiality

Young persons' / vulnerable adults' personal data should always be kept confidential and should not be disclosed to a third party unless required by law and hence approved by the organisation.

However, in the case of any alleged abuse the young person/vulnerable adult's safety should be paramount. For example, some young persons'/vulnerable adults may seek to tell staff or volunteers in confidence, that they have been abused. Staff or volunteers must understand that it is not possible to give young persons'/vulnerable adults absolute guarantees of confidentiality because that could put staff/volunteers in the untenable position of being unable to protect the young person/vulnerable adult.

It is good general practice to resist being drawn into secretive and collusive relationships with young persons'/vulnerable adults. It is especially important for young persons'/vulnerable adults who may have been abused that the destructive element of secrecy is not reinforced, It is essential that a relationship is built up between young persons'/vulnerable adults and staff/volunteers such that young persons'/vulnerable adults feel that they can trust staff to do the best thing if they say they have suffered abuse.

No one should offer the young person/vulnerable adult a guarantee of 100% confidentiality, but reassure him/her that the information given will be used in their best interests and tell the young person/vulnerable adult what may happen next.

Information sharing must be done in a way that is compliant with the General Data Protection Regulation and Data Protection Act 2018, the Human Rights Act 1998 and the common law duty of confidentiality. However, a concern for confidentiality must never be used as a justification for withholding information when it would be in the child or vulnerable adult's best interests to share information.

8.7 Interviewing the Young person/Vulnerable Adult

If a young person or vulnerable adult tells staff/volunteer of abuse, they should listen sensitively but should not ask for a detailed account. Further investigation should be left to the appropriate bodies, otherwise further questions may contaminate any further investigation by the Social Workers and/or the Police.

If there is a prosecution you may be asked in cross-examination what you have asked the young person/vulnerable adult. Leading questions are not helpful to the young person/vulnerable adult or the process of the investigations. Careful questioning of the young person/vulnerable adult by a Police Officer and Social Worker will take place under the conditions set out in the Memorandum of Good Practice.

8.8 Recording

The member of staff or volunteer must write down what the young person/vulnerable adult has said, including any signs and symptoms of abuse, as soon as possible. In the form of an incident report, it must not be written as a statement (the word 'statement' should not be used.) The report must be signed and dated.

8.9 The Process of Investigation

LTEN's staff, clients and volunteers live all over London and which local authority carries out any investigation depends upon the young person/vulnerable adult's address. Factors such as the degree of urgency, age of the young person/vulnerable adult, possible source of the abuse etc will be dealt with by the process of investigation.

If the member of staff reporting the matter is not happy with the response they receive from their Line/Senior Manager/DSO, then they should in the first instance raise a complaint to the Board of Trustees and if still not satisfied refer to LTEN's Whistle Blowing Policy.

(9) Code of conduct for LTEN staff working with children and/or vulnerable adults may be required to undergo awareness training

9.1 Staff should not:

- meet with the child/young person or vulnerable adult on their own
- ask overly personal questions, including those about age or appearance (unless specifically related to a work project, in which case it must be documented)
- send/give out material that could be considered offensive, which includes material on social media sites
- suggest or imply a personal relationship could develop
- take an aggressive or bullying tone
- have physical contact
- offer or accept personal gifts
- travel alone with a young and/or vulnerable person

9.2. Website/online safety

Any project that provides service users with direct access to the Internet must have protocols in place to ensure safe use. The Internet is a significant tool in the distribution of indecent photographs and some adults use the Internet to try to establish contact with young and/or vulnerable people to “groom” them for inappropriate or abusive relationships. LTEN would consider staff involvement in such activities as gross misconduct, which could ultimately lead to dismissal and referral for police investigation.

9.3 Presence on websites and social media

Staff should take care when communicating with others online, particularly when identifying themselves as LTEN staff members and when in contact with children and vulnerable adults.

9.4 LTEN staff obtaining and accessing inappropriate text and images (see also LTEN’s internet policy)

Many websites contain offensive, obscene or indecent material such as:

- Sexually explicit images and related material
- Advocating of illegal activities
- Advocating intolerance for others

Staff members authorised to use the Internet must not download pornographic or other unsuitable material on to LTEN computers/machines or distribute such material to others. LTEN would consider this gross misconduct which could ultimately lead to dismissal and referral for police investigation. In addition, users must not place any material on to the Internet that would be considered inappropriate, offensive or disrespectful of others.

Disciplinary action will be taken against staff that breach this policy. Where this is done inadvertently, the user must escape from the website and/or delete the material immediately. They should also report the incident to their line manager. Breach of this will be treated as gross misconduct. Where exemption is required, because of the nature of the work of the member of staff, permission must be given in advance by the line manager and in consultation with the IT services provider. Children/young persons and vulnerable adults should not be given access to such websites.

9.5. Children or vulnerable adults obtaining indecent images or 'sexting'

If a child or vulnerable adult reports to a member of staff that they have sent, or have been sent, indecent images (sometimes referred to as 'sexting'), they should discuss the concern with their Line/Senior Manager or DSO. The police and children's social care should always be contacted if:

- somebody involved is over the age of 18 or under the age of 13
- there are concerns about the ability to give consent
- the images are extreme or show violence
- the incident is intended to cause physical or emotional harm
- there is reason to believe that the child/young person/vulnerable adult has been blackmailed, coerced or groomed.

Details of the incident and the actions taken must be recorded in writing. Staff should avoid looking at the image, video or message in question. If it is on a device belonging to LTEN, it may need to be isolated so that nobody else can see it. This may involve blocking the network to all users.

(10) Allegations that a member of staff/volunteer has abused a child.

Where the allegation is about a member of staff or volunteer, any person on behalf of the child/young person or vulnerable adult should report the incident to the manager, director or chair, as appropriate.

It needs to be quickly established if the allegation is genuine and based on an incident or incidents rather than on supposition or speculation. LTEN will inform the relevant authority immediately of every allegation of abuse by a member or members of staff or volunteers. If the allegation is about the Manager/Director, then the chair will inform the Management Committee members immediately. In any event Management Committee members must be informed within seven days of a child/young person or vulnerable adult's abuse allegation.

If the allegations are of a nature to suggest that any child/young person(s) or vulnerable adult(s) could possibly be in danger, then the member of staff will be suspended from duty on full pay, pending the outcome of the investigation. Suspension is not a disciplinary procedure it is intended to allow space for enquiries to be carried out and does not imply the staff member is guilty of an offence.

LTEN's Management Committee members, staff and volunteers must be aware of the organisation's disciplinary procedures and of the rights of the employee, as well as their duty to protect children/young persons or vulnerable adults.

LTEN's staff and volunteer are also directed to the Government's Child/Young Person/Vulnerable Adult Protection guidelines. Staff members and volunteers are reminded of their responsibility to raise concerns if they have 'a reasonable suspicion that a service user is being ill-treated'.

a. What happens after the initial investigation?

Each local authority has specific guidelines, but the general procedures are very similar. If concerns are substantiated a Child/Young Person or Vulnerable Adult Protection Case Conference will be arranged which is usually organised and chaired by a Manager from the investigating social services department. It is important that LTEN staff attend to contribute to the information required and to any recommendations made about future work for the child.

On occasions it may be that a child protection investigation results in court proceedings. LTEN staff/volunteers may be required to give evidence in civil or possibly criminal proceedings. Appropriate support and legal advice would be sought with this regard.

(11) General Policy Statement

London Training and Employment Network (LTEN) works with children, young persons, vulnerable adults and families as part of its activities who come to receive our services, LTEN will address recruitment and selection of volunteers and paid employees by doing the following:

- We accept that it is our responsibility as a group to check that all adults with substantial access to children/young persons and vulnerable adults have been appropriately vetted;
- We will make a request for previous addresses on staff/volunteer job application forms;
- We will ask for the names of two referees who will be prepared to provide a written reference;
- We will follow up each reference with a telephone call or personal contact during which we will discuss the applicant's suitability to work with young persons and vulnerable adults. A record of this discussion will be kept in the applicants file;
- We will interview prospective volunteers and staff;
- We will note at interview all previous experience of volunteers and staff in working with children/young persons and vulnerable adults;

- We will carry out a probationary period for all volunteers and staff of at least 3 months;
- We will hold a register of every child/young person and vulnerable adult involved with the group including relevant medical details and have a contact name and number close at hand in case of emergencies;
- Young persons and vulnerable adults will not be left on their own when receiving the organisation's services. This means, we will be ensured that they are under supervision of staff/volunteers;

12. COMPLYING WITH THIS POLICY

12.1. Expectations of employees

It is important that staff work to a high standard of professional conduct and act with integrity at all times, in order to minimise any potential risk of abuse from within LTEN. It is important to create a work environment where the risk of abuse is minimised and children/young persons and vulnerable adults feel comfortable and safe. When incidents of abuse are raised or suspected it is important that staff have the necessary information and support and follow the procedures appropriately. Staff should make sure they have read LTEN's safeguarding procedures in full. They should highlight and discuss any issues requiring clarification and any training issues with their line manager. Staff should make sure that they have a working knowledge of the different forms of abuse and possible indicators.

Signed: 

Name: REBECCA BROWN

Position: DIRECTOR/CHAIR BOARD OF TRUSTEES