Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

**The purpose and scope of this policy statement**

Abacus is dedicated to ensuring the safety and well-being of all children and staff within its care, regardless of their age, gender, race, religion, disability and gender reassignment. We firmly believe that as people who work with children, we all have a shared and individual responsibility to identify, report and refer any concerns for the protection of children against sexual, emotional, physically and mental abuse. This also applies to the welfare for our colleagues.

Abacus’ policy is grounded on guidance and procedures stated in the Kingston Local Safeguarding Children’s Board and The Richmond Safeguarding Children’s board.

Staff will uphold high standards of safeguarding by:

* Attending all training and ensure that they have read and implement all policies
* Knowing signs of abuse and neglect (physical, emotional, sexual, mental, FGM, radicalization) and immediately reporting any concerns to the DSO. **Staff must NOT depend on anyone else to report concerns.**
* Whistle blowing if they suspect or learn anything that places a child or a member of staff at risk (see the Whistleblowing policy for further details)
* Disclosing any information that may affect their suitability to work with children e.g cautions, convictions, reprimands and warnings.
* Follow the signs of safety

As a setting Abacus will:

* Have a Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO), EJ, and deputy TG , who will take the ultimate responsibility for safeguarding arrangement within Abacus and liase with other agencies if necessary.
* Have a clear and vigorous ‘safer recruitment policy and procedure’ to ensure that candidates are suitable to work with children
* Use digital devises (cameras, mobile phones, camera enabled devises etc.) in strict accordance with our ‘Camera, Mobile phone & Recording Devices Policy’
* Supervise volunteers, students and staff with pending DBS at all times when working with children. Volunteers, students and staff with pending DBS will not have an apron as identification to other members of staff.
* Ensure that all enhanced criminal checks (DBS) are up to date and review them when necessary for staff and people living on the premises.
* Set up the rooms in a manner that enables children to be supervised at all times and any one to one situation between staff and a child are visible.
* Ensure that visitors sign in the visitor’s books and are supervised at all times on the premises

At Abacus we are aware that abuse can take different forms-sexual, mental, emotional and physical. Staff are alert to identify signs of possible abuse and neglect and understand that some children may be more vulnerable due to living conditions.

This includes homes where children live with:

* Domestic Violence
* One or more adults with adult mental health issues in the home
* One or more adults abusing drugs or alcohol

Other factors that may reduce parental capacity includes radicalisation

If we discover any child living in such circumstances, we will report it to SPA or MASH.

Abacus considers the following as possible signs of abuse or neglect for both children and members of staff:

* Unexplained injuries (scratches, cuts, burns, bruises, bites) especially in uncommon places
* Significant changes in a child’s behavior
* Deterioration of a child’s wellbeing and or appearance
* Inappropriate comment or behavior from the child which is a cause for concern (disclosure (see recording disclosure);inappropriate language or roleplay)
* Inappropriate behavior from staff (sexual comments; excessive one to one that exceeds their role and responsibilities; or inappropriate sharing of images)

If such evidences are apparent, key worker should fill out an incident form in a permanent ink dated and signed before promptly discussing concerns with Manger, who will then decide on the appropriate course of action. The action whether it is escalated to another agency or parents are spoken to is recorded. The record is stored in the child’s personal file and monitored closely to see whether there are further concerns. If believed that the child is in imminent danger the police will be contacted.

Recording suspicion of abuse and disclosure

In the case of a disclosure staff must:

* Remain calm
* Reassure the child but do not promise to keep this a secret
* Allow the child to talk at their own pace
* Do not ask leading questions
* Record incident on form with Child’s name, age, date, time, exact words of child, exact place of injury, name of any witness.
* Record should be given in hand to the Manager (DSO)
* DSO will then contact necessary agencies if required or take appropriate action.
* Record (dated and signed) of decision or any further action is kept confidential in secure location.

Informing and Supporting Parents:

* Initially parents are informed at the earliest convenient time
* If the DSO deems it ‘appropriate’ to inform the parents i.e. they don’t feel by doing so it would place the child in danger), DSO will speak to them face to face regarding concerns on form and ask parents to sign.
* Abacus may not inform parents should they feel it will potentially endanger the child further in accordance with guidance from Local Safeguarding Children Board. In these circumstances, it is the LSCB’s decision whether or not parents should be informed.
* If there suspicion about a child being potentially radicalized by parents or other members of the family, a referral will be made to Prevent and Abacus will follow guidance from MASH/LADO/SPA.

For allegations against members of staff or volunteers please see the ‘Allegations of Child Abuse Against a Member of Staff or Volunteer’.