

GREENWICH TOY LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN POLICY (Code of Practice for Protecting Children from Harm)

Greenwich Toy & Leisure Library Association (GTLLA) operates its code of practice for protecting children from harm in line with the national and local guidelines. This code of practice details the action to be taken by workers, volunteers, parents and carers if they are concerned about the welfare of a child.

The Code of Practice is based on the definition of safeguarding used in the Children Act 2004, and in the government guidance document Working Together to safeguard children. This can be summarised as:

- Protecting children and young people from maltreatment
- Preventing impairment of children and young people's health or development.
- Ensuring that children and young people are growing in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care
- Undertaking that role so as to enable those children and young people to have optimum life chances and to enter adulthood successfully.

Standards

We need to know about and be confident that:

- Our staff and the services we commission understand that safeguarding children is everybody's business;
- Our staff and services we commission externally can recognise possible child maltreatment and respond appropriately;
- Our service is safe: who we recruit, the people who deliver services on our behalf or have contact with our service users;
- We can give account of how our service is contributing to preventing impairment of children and young people's health and development (improving outcomes for children in need).

The Code of Practice is intended for use by the following:

- GTLLA employees
- Volunteers supporting the activities of GTLLA and Toy Library Network
- Families and other service users

GTLLA acknowledges that Network Toy Libraries will have their own safeguarding policy.

Members of GTLLA Toy Library Network will be issued a copy of the Code of Practice.

It is expected that the various policies will compliment one another.

1. When issues arise that cause concern for a member of staff, volunteer or member of the Toy Library:

Staff who have a concern regarding a child who they believe may be suffering significant harm, or whose health or development may be being impaired, should report their concern, in accordance with their child protection policy of their employing

organisation. Referrals should be made to their line manager, Services Manager and Children's Services as appropriate.

Volunteers should air their concerns with their line manager/key co-ordinator or Services Manager in the absence of a line manager.

Members; concern will be responded to by the Services Manager.

In all cases the 'key' worker should remain involved with the family as appropriate for the role.

2. GTLLA follow Greenwich Safeguarding Children's Board referral and Assessment procedure.

a) Those who work with children and families have a responsibility to be familiar with:

- Possible signs of abuse
- The organisations procedures
- Safeguarding Children's Board Procedures

b) Recognising Child Abuse

Research shows that a number of factors frequently occur in association with child abuse. It is important for individual workers to consider the child in the wider context of their family and environment.

Child abuse may be categorised as

- Physical abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Neglect

Definition of these categories may be found, along with guidance on determining whether a child is suffering, or has suffered significant harm in the Department of Health document Working Together to Safeguard Children 1999 and Greenwich Safeguarding Children Board's Referral & Assessment Procedure.

c) Sources of stress which may be interrelated, and which may contribute to an environment, or event which constitutes a risk to a child's safety include:

- Social exclusion
- Domestic violence
- Mental illness of a parent or carer
- Drug and alcohol misuse

Children may suffer both directly and indirectly if they live in households where there is domestic violence.

Those working with women and children should be alert to the frequent inter-relationship between domestic violence and the abuse and neglect of children. Where there is evidence of domestic violence, the implications for any children in the household should be considered, including the possibility that the children may themselves be subject to violence or other harm.

Conversely, where it is believed that a child is being abused, those involved with a child and family should be alert to the possibility of domestic violence within the family. (Working Together 1999). An appropriate response may be a referral concerning child protection and/or to other agencies concerning the domestic violence and on going work with the family as appropriate to the worker's role.

Making a Referral:

Referrals of concern should be made within 24 hours, to the Safeguarding Children's Board, or in the case of a Disabled Child, Children with Disabilities Team.

If a child has an injury or appears to need urgent medical treatment they should be taken to hospital (refer to 'immediate action and emergency protection) or contact IRAS Team or in emergency Local Police Station – Child Protection team or Safeguarding children Team.

Any referral should be confirmed in writing within 24 hours. The following information is required by Greenwich Children's Safeguarding Board & Social Care

- Why you are making the referral/why you think the child is at risk
- Whether the child is presently safe, and where s/he is currently
- Child's name, date of birth, address (current and previous), school, race, religion, language spoken, any known disabilities
- Details of any siblings and whether they are thought to be presently safe
- Parent/carers names, dates of birth, address (current and previous), race, religion, language spoken, any known disabilities and their present whereabouts
- Names of all those with parental responsibility for the child
- All available information about the incident or concerns, and whether the concern is about physical/sexual/emotional abuse or neglect, or any combination of these
- Information about the child's general circumstances, including any positive aspects of the child's care and development
- Any general information you have about the parent(s) child care, including positive aspects
- Any concerns about the parents which may be pertinent e.g. concerns about mental health issues, domestic violence, drug or alcohol abuse, learning disability
- Whether there are likely to be any communication issues between the family and those investigating the referral (e.g. is an interpreter required?)
- Details of the family's General Practitioner and any other professionals known to be working with the family
- Details of any members of the child's extended family or community who are significant to the child
- Details of any person known to be living in or regularly visiting the household
- Information about any previous incidents or cause for concern which are relevant to this referral
- Your own full name, address, reason for involvement and where and when you can be contacted
- Whether the child and/or parents know of this referral.

3. When dealing with children with disabilities

Safeguarding disabled children's welfare is everybody's responsibility, and given that we know that disabled children are more vulnerable to abuse than non-disabled children, awareness amongst staff about safeguarding disabled children and what constitutes best practice, is essential. Research shows the reasons why disabled children are more vulnerable to abuse and these are summarised below:

- Many disabled children are at an increased likelihood of being socially isolated with fewer outside contacts than non disabled children
- Their dependency on parents and carers for practical assistance in daily living, including intimate personal care, increases their risk of exposure to abusive behaviour
- They have an impaired capacity to resist or avoid abuse
- They may have speech, language and communication needs which may make it difficult to tell others what is happening
- They often do not have access to someone they can trust to disclose that they have been abused
- They are especially vulnerable to bullying and intimidation
- Looked after disabled children are not only vulnerable to the same factors that exist for all children living away from home, but are particularly susceptible to possible abuse because of their additional dependency on residential and hospital staff for day to day physical needs.

What does this mean for practice?

- Staff working in all GTLLA services must be aware that the belief that disabled children are not abused or beliefs that minimise the impact of abuse on disabled children can lead to the denial of, or failure to report abuse or neglect.
- Essentially disabled children at risk of or who have experienced abuse should be treated with the same degree of professional concern accorded to non-disabled children.
- Additional resources and time may need to be allocated, if an investigation of potential or alleged abuse is to be meaningful. This is a basic premise and should not be ignored at any stage of the safeguarding process.
- Basic training and awareness raising of the susceptibility of disabled children to abuse is essential for all those working with disabled children, including drivers, guides, play staff, short term breaks staff & volunteers.
- Reporting safeguarding concerns needs to be encouraged at all levels of professional involvement, and prompt and detailed information sharing is vital.
- The impairment with which a child presents should not detract from early multi-agency assessments of need that consider possible underlying causes for concern.
- Where a criminal offence is alleged, investigation by the police needs to be handled sensitively and in accordance with 'Achieving Best Evidence in Criminal Proceedings: Guidance on vulnerable or intimidated witnesses including children'
- Parents and carers need to be made aware (if they are not already) of the vulnerability of their children to abuse or neglect, but also of their potential role in the safeguarding process.

Why disabled children don't tell when they are being abused

- Adult power

- Adult collusion
- Justifiable accidents
- Close knit community
- Self Blame
- Lack of Self-worth
- Fear
- Not having opportunity to tell
- Communication difficulties
- Will I be believed
- Not sure if abuse or not

All staff need to be aware of the possible indicators of abuse and/or neglect for disabled children

Whilst at times, it is immediately apparent that a non-disabled child has suffered significant harm, it is not always so and lengthy enquiries are often necessary. Where there are safeguarding concerns about a disabled child, there is a need for greater awareness of the possible indicators of abuse and/or neglect, as the situation is often more complex. However, it is crucial when considering whether a disabled child has been abused and/or neglected that the disability does not mask or deter an appropriate investigation of child protection concerns. Any such concerns for the safety and welfare of a disabled child should be acted upon in the same way as that for a non-disabled child, as set down in Working Together to Safeguard Children (2006)

When undertaking an assessment (considering whether significant harm might be indicated) staff should always take into account the nature of the child's disability. The following are some indicators of possible abuse or neglect:

- A bruise in a site that might not be of concern on an ambulant child, such as the shin, might be a concern on a non-mobile child
- Not getting enough help with feeding leading to malnourishment
- Poor toileting arrangements
- Lack of stimulation
- Unjustified and/or excessive use of restraint
- Rough handling, extreme behaviour modification e.g. deprivation of liquid, medication, food or clothing
- Unwillingness to try to learn a child's means of communication
- Ill-fitting equipment e.g. callipers, sleep boards, inappropriate splinting; misappropriation of a child's finances
- Invasive procedures which are unnecessary or are carried out against the child's will.

4. Safe recruitment procedures need to make sure the following checks are completed, where appropriate:

- Criminal records check (local check to be carried out whilst waiting for CRB)
- Professional registers (if relevant)
- Confirm identity through documentation
- Verify authenticity of qualifications and references
- Seek full employment history and obtain explanations for any gaps
- Offers of employment should be made subject to references and a probation period.

Staff and volunteers working with GTLLA will be expected to attend 'Safeguarding Children and Team around the Child training.

Complaints made about staff delivering services on behalf of GTLLA (in conjunction with Greenwich Safeguarding Children Board)

GTLA is aware of the fact that some professional workers and carers do abuse children. For this reason, it is essential that any complaint or expression of concern regarding a member of staff providing a service on behalf of GTLLA must be acted upon.

All workers and volunteers must be aware of the need to maintain professional boundaries in their relationships with children.

All workers and volunteers must be aware of the possibility that an allegation, or suspicion, of abuse of a child by a colleague may occur, and that they have an obligation to act in the child's best interests, by following the child protection procedures.

It is the responsibility of all workers to take action if concerned about the welfare of a child. It is essential that GTLLA services operate in an environment in which staff and volunteers, concerned regarding the unsafe practice of a colleague may, in confidence, bring their concern to the attention of a manager, or higher officer if necessary.

Referrals can come from a variety of sources:

- Personal observation
- The child
- Siblings or other children
- Parent or other adult
- Colleague
- Visitor to the establishment
- Professional or other person involved with the child
- Anonymous informant
- Other member of the public
- Via the complaints procedure

Referrals of allegations against professionals should be made to IRAS Team, Riverside House East, Beresford Street, London, SE18 6BU, Tel: 0208 9213172

If the Child Protection Co-ordinator is not available, referrals should be made to the Duty Manager of the Referral & Assessment Team, Ofsted and the local Safeguarding Children Board.

It is the responsibility of the Child Protection Co-ordinator, in conjunction with the police, to decide whether the allegations necessitates action:

- A child protection enquiry to establish whether the child has suffered significant harm
- A police investigation into a possible offence
- Implementing the agency's disciplinary procedures

When an allegation or suspicion of abuse occurs the concerned professional should:

- Bring this to the attention of the Manager
- Make a written note as to the details of the allegation. Always listen to and record what a child actually says but without asking “investigative” questions. (ie Leave to child protection team).
- Do not promise confidentiality when talking with/listening to a child who is making a complaint.

The professional must not be informed of an allegation without prior discussion with social services and the police, particularly in cases of alleged sexual abuse.

5. Guidelines for dealing with allegations of inappropriate behaviour between children.

- All allegations must be dealt with as in this policy, with care to listen to the child and make notes of disclosures.
- Report to relevant safeguarding team
- Do not discuss disclosure to ‘other’ party

6. Access to the Code of Practice

Families using the services of GTLLA should have access to the Code of Practice on Protecting Children from Harm.

The Child Protection Statement should be displayed in a prominent location where service users have access to it.

Complaints about GTLLA services may be made on GTLLA Complaints form or Social Care complaints form.

Safe Services

GTLA have a responsibility to ensure that their services are run in a manner that promotes safety and protection for children.

Attention should be paid to:

- Staff ratios:
in situations when parents are not present, must be in line with national guidelines, according to the age of the children being cared for.
Current ratios for care of children are:-
Children under one year - 1 adult/2 children
1-2years - 1 adult/3 children
2-3years - 1 adult/4 children
3-4years - 1 adult/8 children

GTLA requires a minimum of 2 adults at all times and 1:1 ratio to children with special needs as and when required. GTLLA Contact Policy must be adhered to at all times.

- Premises:
Where appropriate, premises should be visited by Ofsted.

There is an expectation that the level of safety and hygiene be maintained, and that where there are concerns regarding this, staff should take the appropriate action to return the premises to an acceptable standard.

- **Safety of equipment and play areas:**
Attention must be paid to design and maintenance of play areas and equipment.
Any concerns regarding the safety of play equipment and areas must be reported immediately, and rectified as soon as possible.
Unsafe equipment must be withdrawn from use.

- **Safety of staff and families:**
Staff should be alert to the possibility of domestic violence. If domestic violence is suspected or observed when there are child protection concerns within the family a referral should be made to Children's Services. Staff making such a referral must take care to do so in a way that aims to work with non-abusing parents/carers and does not increase the risk to victims of domestic violence and their children.
Consideration should be given to staff safety when making a referral to Child Protection Co-ordinator.
Staff concerned regarding their own safety must also give consideration to the safety of the child in that situation.
It may be appropriate to the staff member to:-
 - 1) alert the police to their concerns
 - 2) make an emergency referral to Children's Services or
 - 3) contact a named social worker to advise their department of the situation.

GTLLA Safeguarding Children's Policy will be reviewed annually or at any such time that new legislation is put in place. This policy along with all other policies are included in all new staff, volunteers and trustees induction procedure and information packs.

Appendix 'A' Quick referral flowchart

Appendix 'B' Referral sheet – completed at initial concern

Appendix 'C' Record sheet for non-accidental injury/accidental injury

Appendix 'D' Useful Telephone Numbers

Appendix 'E' GTLLA Line Management to be used in Child Protection issues.