

Long Covid Kids
Safeguarding POLICY and Procedure
Children and Young People

1. POLICY STATEMENT

Long Covid Kids (LCK) is committed to fulfilling its duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and to ensuring that staff and volunteers are trained and supported in meeting their safeguarding responsibilities in the course of their work, and have easily-accessed procedures and guidance to assist them.

1. DEFINITIONS

a. Safeguarding

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is defined for the purpose of this policy as:

- Protecting children from maltreatment
- Prevent impairment of children's health or development
- Ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care; and
- Taking action to enable all children to have the best outcome.

b. Child protection

- This refers to the activity that is undertaken to protect specific children who are suffering or are likely to suffer significant harm.

c. Significant Harm

- Significant harm refers to the threshold that justifies compulsory intervention in family life in the best interests of children and gives Local Authorities a duty to make enquiries to decide whether they should take action to safeguard and promote the welfare of a child who is suffering, or likely to suffer significant harm.
- A person may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to prevent harm. Children and young people may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting, by those known to them or, more rarely, by a stranger. The concept of significant harm as the threshold justifying compulsory intervention in family life is likely to apply to the following indications of abuse, and the Local Authority as lead agency for child protection, the Police or the NSPCC, have powers to take action in such instances of abuse by removing children from situations of harm or danger.

d. Safeguarding Lead

- The Safeguarding Lead for Long Covid Kids is Kirsty Stanley, DSL (safeguarding@longcovidkids.org). In her absence, matters should be referred to Sammie McFarland, CEO LCK.

e. LCK Policy Framework

- All children have equal rights to protection from abuse and exploitation or radicalisation.
- All children should be encouraged to fulfill their potential and inequalities should be challenged.
- Safeguarding children - the action we take to promote the welfare of children and protect them from harm - is everyone's responsibility. Everyone who comes into contact with children and families has a role to play.
- Children are best protected when professionals are clear about what is required of them individually, and how they need to work together.
- Whilst services may be delivered to a parent or carer, the focus is on the needs of the child and the impact any services are having on the child.
- The child's interests are paramount, and his or her safety and welfare will always be given first priority.
- A child's concern will be listened to carefully and will always be taken seriously.
- The limits of confidentiality, if child protection concerns arise in the course of our work, with families will be explained to them at the time of their initial involvement with the Charity.
- Care will be taken not to infringe privacy and confidentiality any more than is necessary to safeguard the welfare of the child.
- In assessing the need for action when faced with child protection concerns, staff and volunteers will remain sensitive to issues of family relationships, religion and culture, but will always place a child's safety and welfare first

- LCK will ensure that all staff and volunteers understand the charity's safeguarding procedures and are given appropriate levels of training in child protection matters.
- No single professional can have a full picture of a child's needs and circumstances and, if children and families are to receive the right help at the right time, everyone who comes into contact with them will have a role to play in identifying concerns, sharing information and taking prompt action.

2. CATEGORIES OF ABUSE AND NEGLECT

a) **Physical abuse** involves hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of or deliberately induces, illness in a child.

b) **Emotional abuse** is the persistent emotional ill-treatment of a child such as causes severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun of what they say or how they communicate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond a child's developmental capability, as well as over-protection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child from participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyber bullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone. It also includes age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children, causing children frequently to feel frightened, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Emotional abuse may include witnessing domestic violence.

c) **Sexual abuse** involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for e.g. rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

d) **Neglect** is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to:

- Provide adequate food, clothing and shelter
- Protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger
- Ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate caregivers)
- Ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

3. SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN FROM BULLYING

Bullying is behaviour by an individual or group, repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group either physically or emotionally. Bullying can take many forms (e.g. cyberbullying via social media) and is often motivated by prejudice against a particular group e.g. race, religion, disability, sexual orientation. Bullying is often based on actual or perceived differences between individuals or groups and is usually characterised by an imbalance of power between the perpetrator and the victim. Bullying can have a serious psychological impact on children and young people and result in them feeling defenceless and socially isolated.

Cyberbullying can happen at any time of the day or night and due to its nature can leave the victim feeling publicly

humiliated. All forms of bullying against children and young people should be taken seriously. If any members of staff or volunteers have any concerns that a child or young person is being bullied they must speak to their line manager.

4. CHILDREN AND E-SAFETY

E-safety is a term that covers not only the internet but other ways in which young people communicate using electronic media. It means that children and young people are protected from harm and supported to achieve the maximum benefit from new and developing technologies without risk to themselves or others.

The aim of promoting e-safety is to protect young people from the adverse consequences of access to or use of electronic media, including cyberbullying, inappropriate sexualised behaviour or exploitation. There is also the potential for excessive use, which can have a detrimental impact on a child's learning and social development.

If any member of staff or volunteers have any concerns that a child or young person is at risk through social media they must speak to their line manager.

5. OTHER CATEGORIES OF ABUSE

These include criminal exploitation of children and young people, female genital mutilation, extremism, forced marriage and honour-based violence. Further information is available from the NSPCC website.

Radicalisation/prevent strategy - vocalising extreme views (far right, extreme Islamic views, violent protests - animal rights etc)

County Lines- recruitment to be part of a county lines drug-running team or "cuckooing" taking over someone's house as a meeting location.

2. DISCLOSURE BY A CHILD OR YOUNG PERSON

Guidance about how to respond to a disclosure of abuse by a child can be found in **Appendix 1**.

1. STEPS YOU MUST FOLLOW IF YOU HAVE CONCERNS ABOUT A CHILD

2. If you have concerns about a child you must discuss these with your line manager immediately. This discussion must be recorded, signed and dated, using the specific form for recording a concern (**Appendix 2**) and kept on the child's records, by both the worker and manager. You must agree on who will notify the Safeguarding Lead. This should also be recorded, dated and signed on the record. If your line manager is not available, the Safeguarding Lead must be contacted directly or, in her absence, Sammie McFarland, CEO. **Store any notes securely, you must not share your notes with anyone other than safeguarding Lead**
3. As a general principle, it should be possible for you to share your concerns with service users and inform them of any action you intend to take. However, there will be circumstances where this is not possible, for example, if to do so would place a child or any other person at risk, or if it is suspected that a crime has been committed, i.e. physical/sexual abuse. If in any doubt, seek guidance from your line manager.
4. All concerns about child abuse or neglect **must** be referred to the Local Authority Children & Young People's Services. It is usually better if the person who has the concerns makes the referral, but if unable to do so, this can be done by the Safeguarding Lead or a member of the Leadership Team. This decision must be recorded on the child's record and be signed and dated by the worker and manager.
5. Referrals should be made as soon as a problem, suspicion or concern about a child becomes apparent and certainly within 1 working day.

6. If you make a Safeguarding referral to Local Authority Children & Young People's Services by telephone, you must confirm this in writing to them within 48 hours using the official referral form for that Local Authority. These can usually be found on the website for each Local Area. Local Authority Children & Young People's Services are required to acknowledge the written referral within one working day of receiving it.
7. Referrals should be made to the Local Authority in which the child is currently residing. 8. When you make your referral you must provide as much information to Local Authority Children & Young People's Services as possible. This will include the name of the child, date of birth, address, contact numbers, name of person(s) who hold parental consent. You should clearly state your concerns, providing context to your professional contact with the person or family.
9. You must ensure you record your concerns clearly on the record, dating and signing this. 10. All referrals and reports that are sent to Social Services must be copied to the LCK Safeguarding Lead. 11. If an acknowledgement from Local Authority Children & Young People's Services has not been received within 3 working days (10 working days for Wales), you must contact them again about your referral. All communication should be clearly recorded on the case file.
12. In exceptional circumstances, it may be necessary to make a referral directly to the Police e.g. if you are working out of hours and a child or vulnerable adult is in immediate danger. In this instance, you must inform the Emergency Local Authority Children & Young People's Services Duty team and your line manager as soon as possible of the action you have taken, and you must agree with your line manager who will follow through with the Local Authority. The Lead Manager for safeguarding must be notified the next working day. This also must be recorded on the child's record.
13. Individual employees and volunteers must never attempt to investigate an allegation of abuse themselves. If you are worried about taking action or making a mistake you should discuss this with your line manager. It is better to be cautious than to overlook potential harm to a child.

Remember - **WHEN IN DOUBT CONSULT.**

3. INFORMATION SHARING

Early sharing of information is the key to providing effective early help where there are emerging problems. At the other end of the continuum, sharing information can be essential to put in place an effective child protection service.

Sharing information amongst practitioners working with children and their families is essential. In many cases, it is only when information from a range of sources is put together that a child can be seen to be in need, or at risk of harm.

You may be anxious about the legal or ethical restrictions on sharing information, particularly with other agencies. You should be prepared to exercise your judgement in discussion with your line manager. A failure to pass on information that might prevent a tragedy could expose you to criticism in the same way as an unjustified disclosure.

No professional should assume that someone else will pass on information that they think may be critical to keeping a child safe. If a professional has concerns about a child's welfare and believes they are suffering or likely to suffer harm, then they must share the information with the Local Authority Children's Social Care.

A decision on whether to disclose information may be particularly difficult if you think it may damage the trust between you and the family you are working with. Wherever possible, you should explain the problem, seek agreement and explain the reasons if you decide to act against a parent or child's wishes. It is therefore essential to discuss such concerns with your line manager.

4. ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE MADE AGAINST A MEMBER OF STAFF OR VOLUNTEER

1. INTRODUCTION

All adults who come into contact with young people in their work have a duty of care to safeguard and promote their welfare.

The Children Act 2004, places a duty on services to safeguard and promote the well-being of young people. This includes the need to ensure that all adults who work with, or on behalf of young people are competent, confident and safe to do so.

The vast majority of adults who work with children act professionally and aim to provide a safe and supportive environment, which secures the well-being and very best outcomes for young people in their care. However, it is

recognised that in this area of work, tensions and misunderstandings can occur. It is here that the behaviour of adults can give rise to allegations of abuse being made against them. Allegations may be malicious or misplaced. They may arise from differing perceptions of the same event, but when they occur, they are inevitably distressing and difficult for all concerned. Equally, it must be recognised that some allegations will be genuine and there are adults who will deliberately seek out, create or exploit opportunities to abuse children. It is therefore essential that all possible steps are taken to safeguard young people and ensure that the adults working with them are safe to do so.

Experience has shown that those who work with children in any and every setting can subject them to abuse. Allegations against staff and volunteers must be taken seriously and treated in accordance with the relevant Procedures.

The Charity recognises the possibility of abuse and will strive to prevent the creation of circumstances that could facilitate abuse. The agency will be alert to the possibility of abuse by employees or volunteers.

It is essential that any allegation of abuse made against a professional who works with children and young people, or another member of staff or volunteer in any setting, is dealt with fairly, quickly, and consistently, in a way that provides effective protection for the child, or children and at the same time is fair to the person who is the subject of the allegation.

Practical guidance and a Code of Conduct on how employees can work safely with children, young people and families and observe professional boundaries can be found in **Appendix 3**.

2. UNDERLYING PRINCIPLES

When managing allegations of abuse in this context, the following principles will apply:

- The welfare of the child is paramount
- Adults about whom there are concerns should be treated fairly and honestly and should be provided with support
- It is the responsibility of all adults to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people. This responsibility extends to a duty of care for those adults employed, commissioned or contracted to work with children and young people.

3. THE PROCESS

Any serious concerns that staff or volunteers have about any aspect of the conduct of colleagues, or others acting on behalf of LCK in relation to the welfare of children must report their concerns to the Safeguarding Lead immediately. If the concerns are about the Safeguarding Lead then they should be reported to the Chair of the Trustee Board.

The process of managing allegations starts where there is information, which suggests that an adult working with children may have:

- 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; or
- Behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates he/she may pose a risk of harm to children.

Concerns or allegations about the behaviour of an adult may be brought to the attention of LCK in different ways. For example:

- An allegation made directly by a child or parent
- An allegation made by a colleague or member of staff
- There may be Information from the Police or Local Authority Social Care Team
- Information from a third party or the general public
- Information disclosed anonymously or online, or
- Concerns generated through an employment relationship.

All concerns that meet the above criteria must be reported to the Lead Safeguarding Manager, or the second nominated Safeguarding Officer within 1 working day, who will then consider a referral to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO). The role of the LADO is set out in HM Government guidance, Working Together 2018 and is involved in the management and oversight of individual outcomes. The LADO role applies to paid workers, volunteers, casual workers, agency staff or anyone who is self-employed. Child protection referrals must be made to the Social Services area office covering the child's home address, this will be the responsibility of the Safeguarding Lead.

It is the responsibility of the Safeguarding Lead to:

- Liaise with the statutory agencies on the subject;
 - Ensure procedures are properly applied and implemented; and
 - Provide advice, information and guidance for staff and volunteers within the organisation •
- Ensure that all records in the management of the allegation are thorough and up-to-date.

There may be up to three strands in the consideration of an allegation:

- A Police investigation
- Enquiries and assessment by Children's Social Care about whether a child is in need of protection or in need of services; and
- Consideration by an employer of disciplinary action in respect of the individual.

4. INITIAL DISCUSSION

The purpose of an initial discussion is for the LADO and the Safeguarding Lead to consider the nature, content and context of the allegation and agree on a course of action.

The LADO may ask the Safeguarding Lead to provide or obtain any additional information which may be relevant, such as the previous history, whether the child/family have made similar allegations and current contact with children.

This initial sharing of information and evaluation may lead to a decision that no further action is to be taken by the statutory authorities in regard to the individual facing the allegation or concern, and the Safeguarding Lead will then decide how best to proceed within their organisation.

For all other cases, the discussion will then focus on agreeing on a course of action, including deciding whether the information meets agreed thresholds to hold a Strategy Meeting under child protection procedures and whether suspension of the adult is appropriate. The LADO should ascertain the views of Police and/or Children's Social Care as to whether the member of staff or volunteer should be suspended from contact with children. The decision to suspend rests with LCK alone and it cannot be requested by another agency, although LCK should have regard to the views of investigative agencies if involved. Suspension should be seen in this context as a neutral act.

5. EMPLOYER'S ACTION

Further action by LCK will always be required in circumstances where:

- A LADO meeting has concluded that disciplinary action should be considered by LCK
- The matter has been referred to LCK after the Police or Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) has determined that a charge or prosecution may not be appropriate; or
- Following the conclusion of legal proceedings.

6. THE DECISION TO UNDERTAKE A DISCIPLINARY INVESTIGATION

The decision to instigate disciplinary procedures will be based upon the nature and seriousness of the behaviour, which has been brought to the multi-agency discussion for consideration. Once it is known that the agencies are taking no further action, the disciplinary investigation is the responsibility of LCK, or governing body and the agency has a duty to keep the LADO informed of progress and agreed timescales.

7. SUPPORT FOR CHILD/FAMILY

Children and families involved in the allegation should be made aware of services that exist locally and nationally that can offer support and guidance.

8. SUPPORT FOR THE INDIVIDUAL

LCK has a duty of care to its workers and should act to manage and minimise the stress inherent in the allegations and disciplinary process. Support to the individual is key to fulfilling this duty.

Individuals should be informed of concerns or allegations as soon as possible and given an explanation of the likely course of action unless there is an objection by Social Care or Police.

They should be advised to contact their Trade Union Representative, if they have one, and be given access to welfare counselling or medical advice.

Particular care needs to be taken when employees are suspended to ensure that they are kept informed of both the progress of their case and current work-related issues. Social contact with colleagues and friends should not be discouraged except where it is likely to be prejudicial to the gathering and presentation of evidence.

Throughout the process, the individual should be aware of the concerns and why his or her suitability to work with children is being questioned and given the opportunity to state his or her case.

When an employee returns to work following a suspension, or on the conclusion of a case, arrangements should be made to facilitate his or her reintegration. This may involve informal counselling, guidance, support, reassurance and help to rebuild confidence in working with children and young people.

Employees will be notified in writing at the end of the process of outcomes. All allegations of misconduct will be dealt with in accordance with the organisation's Disciplinary Policy and Procedures.

9. RECORD KEEPING

Record keeping is an integral part of the management of allegations. Complete and accurate records will need to contain information that provides comprehensive details of:

- Events leading to the allegation or concern about an adult's behaviour
- The circumstances and context of the allegation
- Professional opinions
- Decisions made and the reasons for them
- Action that is taken
- Final outcome.

All need to be kept securely and only viewed by those involved in the case.

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5. SAFEGUARDING VULNERABLE ADULTS

1. INTRODUCTION

The families who come into contact with the Charity are facing great challenges and will experience a great deal of stress. In working alongside them, it may be that we become aware of vulnerabilities amongst parents and carers that could have an impact on them as well as their children. That does not necessarily mean that they require a safeguarding response, but LCK staff and volunteers need to be aware of the possibility that an adult's needs may, on rare occasions, reach the threshold for a Safeguarding referral.

2. DEFINITIONS

Safeguarding as defined by the Care Act 2014 means protecting an adult's right to live in safety, free from harm and abuse.

The criteria for using these procedures are met when an adult:

- Has needs for care and support (whether or not the Local Authority is meeting these needs) ●
Is experiencing or at risk, of abuse or neglect, and
- As a result of this care and support, needs is unable to protect themselves from either the risk of or experience of abuse or neglect.

Just because an individual is older, or has a disability does not mean that they are at risk. The level of risk is related to how able they are to protect themselves from abuse, neglect or exploitation and make their choices free from duress, pressure or undue influence.

3. FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO ADULTS BEING AT RISK OF HARM

A person's vulnerability and ability to protect themselves is determined by personal factors and environmental factors. These include:

- Social isolation
- Poor self-esteem
- Minority status
- Mental incapacity
- Physical or mental frailty
- Disability, physical or learning
- History of abuse as a child
- Drug/alcohol misuse
- Early loss of a parent
- Communication difficulties
- Institutionalisation
- Financial issues

4. WHAT TO DO IF YOU HAVE A CONCERN

If you are working with a family, you may see or hear about situations that give rise to concern either to you or the service user. Examples include current or historical information which may give cause for concern about the safety or welfare of a child or other adults; criminal activity. It could be that there is an accumulation of small incidents or events that lead you to believe that something is wrong. In all circumstances, even if you are unsure about what you have been told or witnessed, you must consult with the Safeguarding Lead immediately. This will usually be done by phone. If she is not available, you must contact the second nominated officer.

Remember **WHEN IN DOUBT CONSULT.**

You should try to let the service user know that you are seeking advice or reporting your concern but it is not always possible to do this.

5.5. ROLE OF LCK

The Charity has a very prescribed role and is not able to offer support services to a family beyond what is laid out in the constitution. LCK does not have the expertise, resources or capacity to provide services to adults who may be at risk. If you become aware of an issue in a parent/carer e.g. a growing dependence on alcohol, or a serious mental health problem, you should discuss this with the Safeguarding Lead and an agreed approach can be made with the individual/family concerned. It is important to remember parental mental ill health or addiction can have a serious impact on children and partners as well. The Safeguarding Lead will take the decision about whether the situation has reached the threshold for a referral to be made to Adult Social Care or whether a referral to Children's Social Care is necessary.