



# WHITTLESEY MUSEUM



Charity Commission Registration Nos. Whittlesea Society: 295474 Whittlesea Museum Trust: 274486 Registered with the Civic Trust

## WHITTLESEY MUSEUM

### CHILD & VULNERABLE ADULT PROTECTION POLICY & PROCEDURES

#### **1. Policy Statement**

- 1.1** Whittlesey Museum is committed to providing a safe environment for children and vulnerable adults. This includes any events or venues which they may be present at, volunteering schemes or any other situations where children and vulnerable adults may be involved.

Whittlesey Museum is also committed to ensure that all its committee members are able to make informed and confident responses to specific child protection issues.

#### **1.2 This policy acknowledges that:**

- The welfare of the child or vulnerable adult is paramount.
- All children and vulnerable adults, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious belief and/or sexual identity, have the right to protection from abuse.
- All suspicions and allegations of inappropriate behaviour will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately with the procedures outlined in this policy.
- As defined in the Children Act 1989, anyone under the age of 18 years should be considered as a child for the purposes of this document.
- The term 'vulnerable adult' is defined as someone over 18 who is or may be in need of community care services by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness and who is or may be unable to take care of him/herself or unable to protect him/herself against significant harm or exploitation.

#### **1.3 Whittlesey Museum recognises that abuse can take**

many forms (see Appendix 1 for definitions of abuse) and take place in a number of different settings.

As an organisation which may work with children and vulnerable adults in the future Whittlesey Museum will have a responsibility to act if abuse comes to light and, as far as possible, to protect children and vulnerable adults from the possibility of being abused within situations where they are present.

- 1.4 Whittlesey Museum is committed to providing a protective culture that puts the child's interests first. Whilst respecting a child's and their family's right to privacy and confidentiality, we will endeavour to share information for the purposes of *legitimate interests* in order to safeguard a child's welfare (in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and Human Rights Act 1998).

## 2 Procedures for Responding to Allegations/Concerns Regarding Child Abuse

- 2.1 Whittlesey Museum is committed to providing an open and well-publicised way in which adults and young people can voice concerns about abusive or unethical conduct.
- 2.2 Whilst it is recognised that staff will not necessarily have the expertise to diagnose child abuse, all Whittlesey Museum trustees have a responsibility to be aware of the signs of child abuse (see Appendix 2 for possible signs of child abuse).
- 2.3 All concerns about the welfare of a child or concerns that a child may be suffering, or at risk of suffering abuse or neglect, should be referred to the Social Services District Offices (*see information at end of policy document*) who will seek to clarify the nature of the concern and whether immediate action is needed to make them safe from harm.

Where there is a clear allegation or strong suspicion or evidence of abuse, there must be no delay in making a referral to the statutory agencies.

- 2.4 At the end of any discussion about a child, the referrer and Social Services should be clear about who will be taking what action or that no further action will be taken. The decision will be recorded by Social Services and the professional referrer.
- 2.5 Concerns should be discussed with the parent or carer and, where possible, their agreement should be sought before making referrals to Social Services **unless this places a child at increased risk of significant harm.**
- 2.6 Under no circumstances attempt to carry out any investigation into allegations or suspicions of abuse. It is the task of Social Services to investigate the matter under Section 47 of the Children Act 1989.
- 2.7 For guidelines on responding to an allegation of abuse from a child, please refer to Appendix 3.

### **3 Actions to take after hearing an allegation of abuse from a child**

3.1 Make notes about the conversation as soon as possible after the discussion. Record exactly what the child said, when he or she said it, and what was happening immediately beforehand e.g. (description of the activity). Note the time, date and place of the conversation and the name of any other person present. If the initial note is handwritten, keep it if it is subsequently typed up (a Child Protection booklet will be kept by the Chairman of Whittlesey Museum and held at the Museum.

3.2 Either the designated Child Protection employee or the Chairman of Whittlesey Museum. should contact the Social Services Area Office.

In exceptional circumstances, should there be any disagreement between the person in receipt of the allegation or suspicion and the designated Child Protection employees as to the appropriateness of a referral to the Social Services District Office, the person with concerns retains a responsibility as a member of the public to report serious matters to the Social Services District Office, and should do so without hesitation.

3.3 Do not be tempted to try to investigate further the claims – this could lead to contamination of the evidence and could jeopardise any Police investigation and criminal prosecution activity.

### **4 Appointment of Workers**

4.1 Whittlesey Museum follows a rigorous recruitment and selection process for staff and for volunteers who work with children. All trustees, volunteers or representatives from Whittlesey Museum who will have unsupervised access to children or vulnerable adult visitors should undertake a background check. Checks will also be recommended for any staff member or volunteer who will have direct supervised access to children or vulnerable adults.

### **5 One-to-one Appointments and Boundaries**

5.3 For Health and Safety reasons, and to protect both clients and employees from abuse and from false allegations of abuse, one-to-one appointments can only take place when there is another staff member or Whittlesey Museum volunteer on the premises.

### **6 Events**

6.1. Before all events organised by Whittlesey Museum. a member of the Museum will carry out a risk assessment on the premises and event. This assessment should include consideration of any possible child/vulnerable adult protection issues.

### **Appendix. 1: What is child abuse?**

The definitions of abuse outlined below are taken from ‘Working Together to Safeguard Children’, Department of Health, 1999, where it states that abuse is where “somebody abuses or neglects a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused in a family or in institutional or community setting; by those known to them or, more rarely, by a stranger”.

Child abuse can take many forms:

**Physical Abuse:**

May involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer feigns the symptoms of, or deliberately causes ill health to a child who they are looking after. This situation is commonly described using terms such as factitious illness by proxy or Munchausen’s syndrome by proxy.

**Emotional Abuse:**

This is the persistent emotional ill treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent effects on the child’s emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless and unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may involve age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. It may involve 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 ill treatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

**Sexual Abuse:**

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening.

**Neglect:**

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child’s basic physical and or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child’s health or development. It may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, failure to protect a child from physical harm or danger, or the failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child’s basic emotional needs.

**Organised Abuse:**

Organised or multiple abuse may be defined as abuse involving one or more abuser and a number of related or non-related abused children and young people. The abusers concerned may be acting in concert to abuse children, sometimes acting in isolation, or may be using an institutional framework or position of authority to recruit children for abuse.

Organised and multiple abuse occur both as part of a network of abuse across a family or community, and within institutions such as residential homes or schools.

Note: Children whose situations do not currently fit the above categories may also be at significant risk of harm. This could include situations where another child in the household has been harmed or the household contains a known child abuser.

## **Appendix. 2: Signs of Abuse**

### ***Physical Signs***

- Any injuries, bruises, bites, burns, fractures, etc, which are not consistent with the explanation given for them
- Injuries which occur to the body in places which are not normally exposed to falls, rough games, etc
- Injuries which appear to have been caused by a weapon e.g. cuts, welts, etc
- Injuries which have not received medical attention
- Instances where children are kept away from the group
- Self-mutilation or self-harm e.g. cutting, slashing, drug abuse

### ***Emotional Signs***

- Changes or regression in mood and behaviour particularly where a child withdraws or becomes clinging. Also depression/aggression
- Nervousness/inappropriate fear of particular adults e.g. frozen watchfulness
- Sudden changes in behaviour e.g. under-achievement or lack of concentration
- Inappropriate relationships with peers and/or adults e.g. excessive dependence
- Attention-seeking behaviour
- Persistent tiredness
- Wetting or soiling of bed or clothes by an older child

### ***Neglect Signs***

- Regular poor hygiene
- Persistent tiredness
- Inadequate clothing
- Excessive appetite
- Failure to thrive e.g. poor weight gain
- Consistently being left alone and unsupervised

### ***Sexual Signs***

- Any direct disclosure made by a child concerning sexual abuse
- Child with excessive preoccupation with sexual matters and detailed knowledge of adult sexual behaviour, or who regularly engages in age inappropriate sexual play
- Preoccupation with sexual activity through words, play or drawing

- Child who is sexually provocative or seductive with adults
- Inappropriate bed-sharing arrangements at home
- Severe sleep disturbances with fears, phobias, vivid dreams or nightmares, sometimes with overt or veiled sexual connotations
- Other emotional signs (see above) may be indicative of sexual or some other form of abuse

*NB: Just because a child exhibits one of the signs this does not mean that they have been abused. Nevertheless, the presence of one or more of the signs, or their repeated presence, might raise concerns and should be used as a prompt for discussion with the Chairman of Whittlesey Museum.*

### **Appendix. 3: Responding to an Allegation of Abuse from a Child**

#### ***General Points***

- Keep calm – do not appear shocked or disgusted
- Accept what the child says without passing judgement (however unlikely the disclosure may sound)
- Look directly at the child
- Be honest
- Let them know you will need to tell someone else, don't promise confidentiality
- Be aware the child may have been threatened and fear reprisals for having spoken to you
- Never push for information or question the child as this can undermine any subsequent criminal investigation. If at any point a child decides not to continue, accept that and let them know that you are ready to listen should they wish to continue at any time.

#### ***Helpful things to say or show***

- Show acceptance of what the child says
- "I take what you are saying very seriously"
- "I am pleased that you have told me. Thank you for telling me"
- If appropriate, "it isn't your fault and you are not to blame at all"
- "I am sorry that happened to you"
- "I will help you"

#### ***Things not to say***

- "Why didn't you say something before?"
- "I really can't believe it"
- "Are you sure this has happened?"
- "Why?" "Where?" "When?" "Who?" "What?" "How?"
- Don't make false promises to the child – like confidentiality – be honest now, any lies will be further abuse and betrayal

- Never make statements such as ‘I am shocked!’ or ‘don’t tell anyone else’.

### **Concluding the conversation**

- Reassure the child that they were right to tell you
- Let the child know what you are going to do next and tell them that you will let them know what is happening at each stage.