



1. Policy Statement

The majority of our work is office-based and on-site working with schools and partner organisations. On occasion, School Food Matters may work directly, under supervision, with schools and other youth organisations.

For the protection of children, and to justify public trust and confidence, School Food Matters is required to ensure that only suitable staff, volunteers and freelancers are allowed to undertake work that brings them into regular contact with children. School Food Matters uses the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) to assess the suitability of staff, volunteers and freelancers.

Duty of care:

School Food Matters believes that anyone working with children or young people has a legal and moral duty of care to do all they can to protect them from harm. We believe it is always unacceptable for a child or young person to experience abuse of any kind and we recognise our responsibility to safeguard the welfare of all children and young people, by operating within practice that protects them as outlined in the reporting process below.

We recognise that:

- In everything we do, the welfare of the child/young person is paramount
- All children, regardless of age, disability, gender, racial heritage, religious belief, sexual orientation or identity, have the right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse
- All staff, trustees, volunteers and freelancers at School Food Matters have a responsibility for child protection and safeguarding in the delivery of our services
- Working in partnership with children, young people, their parents, carers and other agencies is essential in promoting young people's welfare
- Safeguarding decisions should be made in a timely manner and should not be subject to unnecessary delay
- Information should be managed confidentially and only shared without consent where the duty to protect children from harm supersedes an individual's right to privacy

The purpose of this policy is:

- To provide protection for the children and young people who use School Food Matters' services including the children of adult members or users
- To provide staff and volunteers with guidance on procedures they should adopt in the event that they suspect a child or young person may be experiencing, or be at risk of, harm

We will seek to safeguard children and young people by:

- Valuing, listening to, and respecting children and young people
- Adopting child protection guidelines through procedures and a code of conduct for staff and volunteers
- Recruiting staff and volunteers safely ensuring all necessary checks are made

- Sharing information about child protection and good practice with staff and volunteers
- Sharing information about concerns with agencies who need to know, and involving parents and children appropriately
- Providing appropriate support to staff and volunteers through supervision and training

We will always assess risk in relation to all our activities, focussing on prevention and minimising risk. We will put in place plans that safeguard the people using our services through processes which include:

- Always working in an open environment, where possible avoiding private or unobserved situations
- Treating all young people fairly with respect and dignity
- Being an excellent role model for example, not smoking, drinking alcohol or eating unhealthy food in the company of young people
- Keeping a written record of any injury or incident that caused harm (including verbal attacks) along with any steps taken

2. Procedures for Referral

All action is taken in line with:

- Children's Act 2004
- Working Together to Safeguard Children: July 2018 (updated February 2019)
- What to do if you're worried a child is being abused: Advice for practitioners: March 2015
- Local Safeguarding Children's Partnership Procedures
- Keeping Children Safe in Education September 2020

Any member of a staff, volunteer or freelancer who receives a disclosure of abuse or suspects that abuse may have occurred must report it immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Officer, in the case of School Food Matters, the Chief Executive or if unavailable the Finance Manager.

The member of staff, volunteer or freelancer must then complete a Reporting Form which must be signed and dated and sent to the Designated Safeguarding Officer.

The Designated Safeguarding Officer will immediately inform the relevant local authority children's social care Initial Response Team (IRT) and will follow up in writing, detailing what was discussed and any actions arising.

In an emergency phone 999.

Confidentiality must be maintained and information relating to individual children and young people/families shared with staff on a strictly need to know basis.

If the member of staff, volunteer or freelancer is concerned about how child protection issues are being handled by the Designated Safeguarding Officer, they can contact the [NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line](https://www.nspcc.org.uk/what-we-do/our-services/whistleblowing-advice-line/) on 0800 028 0285 or email help@nspcc.org.uk

3. Alleged Abuse by Staff or Volunteers

When an allegation is made against a member of School Food Matters staff, volunteer or freelancer, then the allegation must be passed to the Designated Safeguarding Officer.

The Designated Safeguarding Officer must then make a referral to the relevant local authority's Designated Officer (LADO). The local authority officer will record a note of the consultation and will advise on the appropriate action that needs to be taken.

If an allegation is made against the Designated Safeguarding Officer, then the allegation must be passed to the Chair of Trustees.

Please see Appendix 1 for possible signs of abuse.

4. School Involvement

Our Safeguarding Policy, which includes contact details for the Designated Safeguarding Officer, is displayed on the School Food Matters website and will be made available to schools for review on request.

Even though concerns will always be reported to the child's school, the Designated Safeguarding Officer must also make a referral to the relevant local authority children's social care team (see point 2).

5. Training

The Designated Safeguarding Officer and at least one other staff member from School Food Matters will receive training every year in child protection.

All staff, volunteers and freelancers must receive appropriate training on a regular basis, at least every three years.

All staff, volunteers and freelancers must read "Keeping Children Safe in Education 2020 - Part One" in the Staff Handbook.

6. Review

The policy will be reviewed on an annual basis and updated where appropriate.

7. Definitions

"Designated Safeguarding Officer" refers to the member of staff responsible for child protection issues. In the case of School Food Matters this is the Chief Executive or, if they are unavailable, the Finance Manager.

At the date of policy review (October 2020) the contact details for the "Designated Safeguarding Officer" are as follows:

Stephanie Slater Chief Executive School Food Matters stephanie@schoolfoodmatters.org 020 8878 8333	Sarah Mountcastle Finance Manager School Food Matters sarah@schoolfoodmatters.org 020 8878 8333
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“Physical Abuse” refers to when a child is hurt or injured by a child or an adult. Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. It also includes giving a child harmful drugs or alcohol. Female genital mutilation is a form of physical abuse which is illegal in the UK. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer feigns the symptoms of, or deliberately causes ill health to a child they are looking after. A person might do this because they enjoy or need the attention they receive by having a sick child.

“Emotional Abuse” is when adults deny children love or affection, or constantly threaten or humiliate them. Sarcasm, degrading punishments and ignoring a child are also forms of emotional abuse and undermine a child's confidence and sense of self-worth. Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve serious 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.

“Sexual Abuse” is when a child is used sexually by an adult or young person. Sexual abuse can include kissing, touching the child's genitals or breasts, vaginal or anal intercourse and oral sex. Encouraging a child to look at pornographic magazines or videos is also sexual abuse. Bullying, racism and other types of discrimination are forms of child abuse. Like other kinds of abuse, they can harm a child physically and emotionally. Sexual abuse includes sexual exploitation, such as forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, including prostitution. Boys and girls can be sexually abused by males and/or females, by adults and by other young people.

“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. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born it may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, failing to protect a child from physical harm or danger, failure to ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care givers) 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.

“Child” is a person under the age of 18 years old.

“Safeguarding” is a broad term that refers to all the policies, procedures and actions that an organisation takes and puts in place to ensure that anyone working on their behalf, and anyone benefitting from the work they are doing, does not come to any harm, either intended or unintended, as a result of this work taking place. It includes both policies and procedures and the culture within the organisation that either promotes or hinders best safeguarding practice.

“Child Safeguarding” refers to all the actions we take to keep all children we come into contact with safe. It includes the proactive measures we put in place to ensure children do not come to harm as a result of our contact with them.

“Child Protection” refers to the actions we take when we have specific concerns that a particular child is at risk of significant harm.

Appendix 1

Signs of physical abuse

- Any injuries not consistent with the explanation given for them
- Injuries which occur to the body in places which are not normally exposed to falls or games
- Unexplained bruising, marks or injuries on any part of the body
- Bruises which reflect hand marks or fingertips (from slapping or pinching)
- Cigarette burns
- Bite marks
- Broken bones
- Scalds
- Injuries which have not received medical attention
- Neglect-under nourishment, failure to grow, constant hunger, stealing or gorging food, untreated illnesses, inadequate care
- Repeated urinary infections or unexplained stomach pains

Changes in behaviour which can also indicate physical abuse:

- Fear of parents being approached for an explanation
- Aggressive behaviour or severe temper outbursts
- Flinching when approached or touched
- Reluctance to get changed, for example, wearing long sleeves in hot weather
- Depression
- Withdrawn behaviour
- Running away from home

Signs of emotional abuse

The physical signs of emotional abuse may include:

- A failure to thrive or grow particularly if a child puts on weight in other circumstances, for example, in hospital or away from their parents' care
- Sudden speech disorders
- Persistent tiredness
- Development delay, either in terms of physical or emotional progress

Changes in behaviour which can also indicate emotional abuse include:

- Obsessions or phobias
- Sudden under-achievement or lack of concentration
- Inappropriate relationships with peers and/or adults
- Being unable to play
- Attention seeking behaviour
- Fear of making mistakes
- Self-harm
- Fear of parent being approached regarding their behaviour

Signs of sexual abuse

The physical signs of sexual abuse may include:

- Pain or itching in the genital/anal area
- Bruising or bleeding near genital/anal areas
- Sexually transmitted disease
- Vaginal discharge or infection
- Stomach pains
- Discomfort when walking or sitting down
- Pregnancy

Changes in behaviour which can also indicate sexual abuse include:

- Sudden or unexplained changes in behaviour, for example becoming withdrawn or aggressive
- Fear of being left with a specific person or group of people
- Having nightmares
- Running away from home
- Sexual knowledge which is beyond their age or developmental level
- Sexual drawings or language
- Bedwetting
- Eating problems such as over-eating or anorexia
- Self-harm or mutilation, sometimes leading to suicide attempts
- Saying they have secrets they cannot tell anyone about
- Substance or drug abuse
- Suddenly having unexplained sources of money or expensive gifts
- Not allowed to have friends (particularly in adolescence)
- Acting in an inappropriate sexually explicit way with adults

Signs of neglect

The physical signs of neglect may include:

- Constant hunger, sometimes stealing food from other children
- Constantly dirty or smelly
- Loss of weight or being constantly underweight
- Inappropriate dress for the conditions

Changes in behaviour which can also indicate neglect include:

- Complaining of being tired all the time
 - Not requesting medical assistance and/or failing to attend appointments
 - Having few friends
 - Mentioning being left alone or unsupervised
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Appendix 2

Behaviours

Everyone acting on behalf of School Food Matters is required to sign up to the behaviours below. This acts as confirmation that you have read this Safeguarding Policy; you agree to fulfil your duty of care to safeguard children to the best of your ability; and you agree to abide by the principles and behaviours as outlined in this Safeguarding Policy.

As a representative of School Food Matters I will:

Always

- Work in a way that respects the rights of children and places children's best interests above all other considerations
- Act on safeguarding concerns swiftly and pass information to the Designated Safeguarding Officer so that action can be taken to reduce the risk of harm to children
- Treat all children with equal respect, without discrimination or harassment, regardless of their gender, culture, ethnicity, age, religion, sexual orientation, or ability
- Work in a way that makes provision for children who require additional support due to their own needs or circumstances in order for them to access the same level of protection or opportunities that others may have
- Respect cultural and religious differences when engaging with children and their families, and be sensitive to these in my interactions with them
- Maintain appropriate boundaries at all times whenever I have direct or indirect contact with children. I recognise that when I engage with children through my activity with School Food Matters, I am in a position of trust and will not engage in any conduct that compromises that position and breaches appropriate boundaries. This includes online and digital contact
- Ensure that all data regarding children I obtain through my role is handled with the highest regard for safety and privacy, including collection, storage and sharing of information where appropriate. All personal data and sensitive/special categories of data will be stored in line with data protection legislation
- Ensure I have completed all safe recruitment checks that School Food Matters requires of me with integrity and honesty

Never

- Share personal details with children including online or digital information
- Spend time alone with children where my actions cannot be accounted for
- Initiate physical contact with a child at risk (including hugging, picking them up)
- Engage in any physical abuse of a child at risk (including hitting, slapping, shaking, throwing, pushing or otherwise causing physical harm)
- Engage in any sexual activity (contact or non-contact) with a child at risk (including indecent exposure, exposure to pornographic material, sexual teasing or innuendo, inappropriate touching including penetrative or non-penetrative acts, or use of adult sex workers)
- Engage in any form of financial or material exploitation (including stealing, fraud, misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits) behaviour through or during my work with School Food Matters
- Perform tasks of a personal nature for a child at risk
- Endorse the participation of a child at risk in abusive activities (for example, bullying, neglect, withholding medication, food or shelter, or ignoring medical, physical or emotional needs)

- Emotionally or psychologically abuse a child at risk by acting in a way that shames or degrades them (including threatening to hurt or abandon, humiliating, blaming, controlling, overprotecting, isolating or intimidating)

Name:

Your role:

Date:

Please tick to indicate you have read and will adhere to this Policy

Safeguarding Policy for School Food Matters: Updated December 2020