



The Gatehouse Child Protection Procedures October 2023

Introduction

The purpose of this procedure is to ensure the safety and protection of children and young people.

The Gatehouse is a community drop-in centre offering free support services for adults who are; homeless, vulnerably housed, on low income and/or looking for company & community. The Gatehouse offers a free community centre with a cafe (six evenings a week), therapeutic and practical workshops, a shower and clothing service, a counselling service, one-to-one casework support and facilitates the Lived Experience Advisory Forum in partnership with Aspire and Oxfordshire Homeless Movement. For more information please see <https://oxfordgatehouse.org/>

The Gatehouse services works with adults. However, as staff and volunteers we may be given indirect information about children and young people under the age of 18. That is, we may work with adults who are parents; or Guests, staff and volunteers may disclose child protection concerns.

The Children Act 1989 provides the legislative framework for child protection in England. Key principles established by the Act include:

- The paramount nature of the child's welfare.
- The expectations and requirements around duties of care to children.

legislation has been strengthened by the Children Act 2004, which encourages partnerships between agencies and creates more accountability, by:

- Placing a duty on local authorities to appoint children's services members who are ultimately accountable for the delivery of services.
- Placing a duty on local authorities and their partners to co-operate in safeguarding and promoting the wellbeing of children and young people.

How to report concerns about a child's welfare

The Gatehouse Designated Safeguarding Leads are the Gatehouse CEO, Operations Manager and Casework Manager.

If you think a child is in immediate danger, contact the police on **999**. If you're worried about a child but they are not in immediate danger, you should share your concerns verbally and in writing:

- **With the Gatehouse CEO. In the Gatehouse CEO's absence please contact the Gatehouse Safeguarding Trustee.**
- **Contact the NSPCC Helpline** on [0808 800 5000](tel:08088005000) or by emailing help@nspcc.org.uk where trained professionals will talk through the concerns with Gatehouse staff and give expert advice.

- **Contact your local child protection services.** Their contact details can be found on the website for the local authority the child lives in. If the child lives in Oxfordshire **contact the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) on 0345 050 7666.**
- **Contact the police.**

Services will risk-assess the situation and take action to protect the child as appropriate either through statutory involvement or other support. This may include making a referral to the local authority.

“Working Together to Safeguard Children” states that local authority children’s services should give feedback to anyone who has made a child protection referral to them on the decisions they have taken (Department for Education, 2018).

Documenting disclosures

It’s important to keep fact-based, accurate and detailed notes on any concerns you have or that have been disclosed about a child. These notes may need to be shared with professionals in the future and should include.

- Unbiased and full details of the disclosure/concern.
- The child’s details (name, age, address).
- Any information given on the alleged abuser.
- If a person is disclosing a concern indirectly take the details (name, age, address).

Do not dispose of any written notes as well as electronic notes.

Only the Gatehouse Operations Manager/CEO will hold child protection data and it will not be held on Lamplight. **Once the safeguarding concern is closed/complete, electronic data related to the safeguarding concern will be printed and held securely for 50 years in line with the Gatehouse insurance policy.**

Information sharing

Timely information sharing is key to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. You must always have a clear and legitimate purpose for sharing a child’s personal information. **Keep a record of the reasons why you are sharing or requesting information about a child or their family.**

You should also make sure you are not putting a child’s safety and welfare at immediate risk by sharing information about them. Always try and seek consent to share information about a child and their family. However, if it would put the child at more risk or consent isn’t given, you can still share information with relevant professionals under certain circumstances, for example if you are protecting a child from significant harm. The Data Protection Act 2018 and General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) do not affect this principle.

If a staff or volunteer discloses to you that they have witnessed a child protection incident, **read and follow the Gatehouse Whistleblowing Policy.**

What information to share

The Gatehouse CEO or Safeguarding Trustee will help in deciding what specific information is appropriate to share and who to share it with after gaining specialist advice from the NSPCC.

- Prioritise the safety and welfare of the child and anyone else who may be affected by the situation.
- Make sure you share the information quickly and securely. The sooner you report your concerns the better. This means the details will be fresh in your mind and action can be taken quickly.
- Identify how much information should be shared. This will depend on the reasons for sharing it.

- Use language that is clear and precise. Different agencies may use and understand terminology differently.
- Make sure the information you are sharing is accurate. Make it clear what information is factual and what is based on opinion (yours or other people's).

Procedure for concerns or allegations against professionals, staff or volunteers

If child protection concerns are disclosed or alleged in relation to professionals, staff or volunteers the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) will need to be informed within **24 hours** of the concerns/allegations being raised. The Oxfordshire LADO contact details are found on <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/contactus/contact-local-authority-designated-officer>

The Gatehouse will then follow the instructions from the Oxfordshire LADO and Croners which is the Gatehouse HR consultancy service.

Follow the above documenting and information sharing procedures. However, if the concern/allegation is against the Gatehouse CEO, directly contact the Gatehouse Safeguarding Trustee.

Katrina Horne – CEO
September 2023