

Safeguarding Children/Child Protection Policy

Organisation

Precious Counselling and Mentoring Community Interest Company (CIC) is a private limited company providing Mentoring, Counselling and Training services to adults, adolescence and children. It also offers Cognitive Behaviour Therapy and Play Therapy to individuals as well as groups.

Introduction to the safeguarding children/child protection policy

Precious Counselling and Mentoring CIC encompasses multi agency working and will work with other counselling, mentoring, and training organisations. Its child protection policy therefore takes account of its external as well as its in-housework. Its policy is outlined below. This is in the process of ongoing development, and changes will be notified on the website

www.preciouscounsellingandmentoring.co.uk

A review of the policy will be made every 3 years.

NOTE: The terms 'safeguarding children' and 'child protection' are used interchangeably throughout this document to reflect the growing trend towards the phasing out of 'child protection' and the 'phasing in of safeguarding children.'

Standard 1: Policy

This policy is based on the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of children, under the protection of children (up to gage 18) from abuse and exploitation is paramount.

Precious Counselling and Mentoring CIC is deeply committed to protecting children it works with, from all forms of abuse, including sexual, physical and emotional abuse. It will also seek wherever possible to protect children from neglect, abandonment and exploitation. Children need safeguarding where they live (family or care home) as well as any dangers posed in school, in the playground or elsewhere outside.

Precious Counselling and Mentoring CIC recognises that when child abuse is suspected, children often experience unintentional abuse by being interviewed by social services or the police, or even separated from family members or placed in care. It will seek wherever possible to put the child's needs first in such situations by being involved as much as possible, working with the relevant statutory organisations.

Precious Counselling and Mentoring CIC will seek to establish a good working relationship with social services children's teams and police child protection departments.

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Standard 2: Procedures and systems

If you believe that someone you know is being, or has been, abused or neglected then you can report this to Enfield Council via the following:

- To report abuse Monday to Friday during working hours you can ring Enfield Council and speak to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub: Tel: 020 8379 3196 or e-mail TheMASHteam@enfield.gov.uk
- There is also a dedicated phone line which is available day or night: Tel: 020 8379 5212
- To report abuse in Enfield from a textphone Tel: 18001
- Referrals around Children can also be sent to the Early Help Family Hub at earlyhelp@enfield.gov.uk, and the MASH at childrensmash@enfield.gov.uk. Professionals will need to submit all referrals through the Children's Portal.
- If you have a safeguarding concern that cannot wait for a referral form, you should call the Children's MASH on 020 8379 5555.

Please note that these are not emergency services – always dial 999 if an ambulance or Police are required.”

Where abuse is suspected of or reported by a child involved with Precious Counselling and Mentoring CIC services, the person with the concern will in the first instance, discuss the matter with the Safeguarding Children/Child Protection Officer Mauva Johnson-Jones within three days. If the child is at immediate risk the officer will make a direct call to the relevant children's team mentioned above. In cases where there is no immediate risk of harm to the child, the officer may call a case conference or seek further specialist advice. The case conference would consist of all those involved in the welfare of the child. This may include parents, teachers, social workers, counsellors and the relevant mentor. Further specialist advice may be sought from a specialist social work agency such as CCPAS (telephone 0845 120 4550).

Where the matter must be reported, the officer will contact the children's team as mentioned above and seek to work with them on a professional-to-professional basis. If it is likely that a crime has been committed the police will be informed so that they can investigate. This will uphold the law and hopefully prevent further abuse. All discussion of a child considered at risk will be written down with time and date and notes in a secure, locked cabinet. Confidentiality to protect a child's rights will be respected unless the child's safety is at risk. Everyone involved in discussion about a suspected incident of child abuse will agree to these levels of confidentiality.

Precious Counselling and Mentoring CIC will aim to provide appropriate mentoring/counselling for the child and for others concerned. If the child is expected later to be called a witness, the mentoring/counselling will be conducted within the guidelines of the Crown Prosecution Service on provision of therapy for child witnesses

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(www.cps.gov.uk/publications/prosecution/therapychild.html), where therapy avoids direct discussion of details of the abuse until after the case has been heard in court.

Complaints about people working for or associated with Precious Counselling and Mentoring CIC should be addressed to the designated child protection officer Mauva Johnson-Jones (mobile telephone 07956 874491). Any complaints regarding counselling should follow the BACP (British Association of Counselling & Psychotherapy) complaints procedure on their website <http://www.bacp.co.uk/crs/complaints.php>.

Standard 3: Prevention

Precious Counselling and Mentoring CIC requires anyone wanting to work for them in any capacity to undertake a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check. (See <https://www.gov.uk/disclosure-barring-service-check/overview>). This was formerly known as Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) enhanced disclosure. If the check shows convictions that are likely to put children at risk, Precious Counselling and Mentoring CIC reserves the right to refuse the services of the person, whether the services are voluntary or not. In addition, each person will need to provide at least two written character references about them from trustworthy people.

If abuse is later suspected by an associate, the person concerned will be suspended while a full investigation is conducted by Precious Moments and Health Ltd, the local social services and/or the police. If the abuse is confirmed, the person will be removed from Precious Counselling and Mentoring CIC and recommended to undergo intensive therapy. He/she will be deemed a danger to children and steps may be taken to warn other groups of the person's danger to children.

Any photographs of children used by Precious Counselling and Mentoring CIC on websites or in emails will seek not to give the name, identity or location of the child or provide other information that could be used abusively in any way. Where possible, permission from the parent/carer of the child concerned will be obtained in advance of the use of the photograph. Part of this permission is to inform the parent/carer exactly how the picture will be used, including any captions or digital change proposed.

Standard 4: Codes of practice and behaviour

Precious Counselling and Mentoring CIC services are undertaken in a way that ensures safe, ethical practice. In many cases when undertaking therapy with a child, the person (such as a parent or translator) is present in the room or outside the room. This could be a parent/carer waiting for the child or within a school environment, there would be an allocated person responsible for ensuring the child is brought and returned to their classroom. If that person is aware that therapy is going on, he or she can attend to any difficulties and be available in case of problems.

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Almost all therapy takes place in a room with the door shut. This is standard practice for most therapists due to it being a safe and confidential space for the client. There are instances however, when leaving the door slightly ajar can be therapeutically justified, even if it means compromising confidentiality by risking someone overhearing what is happening. The child with extreme anxiety or claustrophobia is a case in point. So too is the child who has been subjected to sexual abuse behind a closed door, such as a bedroom or a bathroom. In these instances, not only does the client feel safe but the therapist can feel less vulnerable.

Child clients are generally expected to stay in the room throughout the session. There are a few exceptions to this rule. These include children who have experienced being locked in a bedroom as punishment and those who have not been allowed out of a room until they have engaged in sexual activity with an abuser. In these rare instances the therapist gives the child permission to leave the room as often as she/he needs to.

On exceedingly rare occasions, Precious Counselling and Mentoring CIC therapists may sometimes video or tape record the session, with the agreement of the parent/carer and the child concerned. The video tape is for note-taking and training and is kept in a locked cabinet. It is available for loan to the parent/carer only with the clear agreement of the child and the therapist.

In relation to mentoring, the parent/carer would give authority for the child or young person to go out with their mentor and return by a certain time. All involved would have contact numbers in case of emergencies or any other concerns. Prior to a mentor taking a child or young person out, a risk assessment would be provided by the Parent/Carer, Social Services or other relevant organisation stating the type of risk i.e. low, medium or high. If the risk is too high the mentoring request can be refused to avoid any safeguarding issues.

Since most issues with children impact on and are affected by the system (family, school etc.), it is sometimes appropriate to involve the parent/carer or brother and sister in some or all these sessions. Having another person present, providing it is therapeutically justified, is a major contribution towards safe and ethical practice. It is especially important with the child who is either flirtatious or is known to be acting out sexually.

In its training and supervision work, Precious Counselling and Mentoring CIC will help mentors, counsellors and trainees to identify any potential Safeguarding /Child Protection issues in their work and follow the company's safeguarding and child protection policy and procedures. All contractors and employees are provided with regular supervision, to ensure that they are working safely with their clients.

Children often need physical contact. Precious Counselling and Mentoring CIC has developed a Safe Touch policy when counselling & mentoring children and young people:

1 Always have other people in sight

Avoid being on your own with a child of any age.

2 Ensure that the child wants the physical contact you are offering

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Where possible make eye contact with the child and indicate with gestures or verbally what you propose, waiting for the child's clear agreement. This is whether you are offering a hug, touching a shoulder, holding a hand, tickling or play fighting. If you believe a child may have been abused, it is important to avoid hugging, tickling and play fighting until they have learned the difference between 'good' and 'bad' touching.

3 Touch in appropriate areas only

Consciously avoid touching the child in areas of the body that would be covered by a swimming costume. The only exceptions are when changing or washing a baby or a very small child or helping a disabled child in the toilet or washing themselves. Touching the leg above the knee is generally not acceptable.

4 Be cautious about having a child on your lap

Men are strongly advised to avoid children sitting on their laps. In exceptional circumstances they may let a small child sit on the knee end of their lap.

5 Avoid face-to-face hugging of a girl who has begun to develop

This is especially important with men. Instead of a face-to-face hug, try an on the shoulder 'sideways hug.' This satisfies the older girl's need for closeness and avoids inappropriate physical contact.

Special precautions are required when working with children who have a disability because of the increased risk of physical abuse or sexual exploitation. Only in very exceptional circumstances will an associate of Precious Counselling and Mentoring CIC be alone with a disabled child. Helping the child change clothes or to go to the toilet must always be done with the door open and, if possible, in the presence of another adult.

Precious Counselling and Mentoring CIC child-child policy includes addressing any public or age – inappropriate sexualised behaviour with another child, whether the two children are of the same age. While such behaviour may provide useful therapeutic clues to the child's possible problematic background, it is essential that such behaviour is addressed to avoid any abuse arising as a result.

Children will always be encouraged strongly to respect each other. This includes avoiding any physical or verbal aggression towards another child because of the child's own anger problems.

Standard 5: Implementation in different cultural contexts

Precious Counselling and Mentoring CIC works mainly in the UK. Its child protection policy applies in all its work, taking account of the different cultures it works with. Aspects of the child protection policy may need to be adjusted when taking account of different cultures.

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Standard 6: Equality

Precious Counselling and Mentoring CIC is deeply committed to equality for children, adolescence and adults regardless of culture, language, religious adherence, age, gender, level of disability, socio-economic group or sexual preference. At all times, it promotes equality and protection for children, adolescence and adults.

Standard 7: Communication systems

Precious Counselling and Mentoring CIC safeguarding children/Child Protection policy is available upon request.

Working Online with Children and Young people

Working Online includes all methods of communication using digital and information technology regardless of whether equipment is used in the form of a desktop computer, laptop, tablet, smartphone or any other device. The BACP sometimes refers to this method of working as **'working at a distance'** to establish a distinction between working in the physical presence of the other person and working at a distance via an online forum such as Zoom or Skype for example.

Although digital and online resources are widely used to arrange meetings, appointments, reminders via email or text messages, we also use digital and online forums to record and store session information, process invoices and payments, audio and video communications.

Considering any issues which impact face to face counselling or mentoring services, online working will be implemented to ensure we can still provide the safest and most reliable services to clients.

Although absolute security in the digital world does not exist, we will always try our best to avoid any security beaches, whilst also working with the client's needs and preferences. Careful decisions will therefore be made by:

- Ensuring that services are accessible and acceptable to clients
- Taking reasonable steps to ensure adequate levels of security for the type of service being provided
- Consideration for the client's ability to engage in therapy appropriate to their needs
- Consideration for client's age and parental/carers informed consent to use online tools

Informed consent from the children and young person and their parent/guardian must be sought to do online therapy and include:

- Technical requirements to allow the session to take place without interruption
- Consideration for the safety and confidentiality issues around this method of therapy

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- Children and young people must be at least:
 - 16 to use WhatsApp
 - 13 to use Facebook
 - 13 to use Skype
 - 13 to use Outlook email
 - 13 to use Gmail
 - Zoom Conference – must be old enough to consent to the legal terms of service

(British Association of Art Therapists, March 2020)

Good practice guidelines from the BACP include:

- Adequate password protection and encryption of services being provided
- Regularly updating firewalls, virus protection or other applicable security systems
- Providing suitable information to service users to enable them to protect their end of the communications

(BACP, Good Practice in Action 047 March 2019)

Standard 8: Education and training

Precious Counselling and Mentoring CIC provides safeguarding and child protection training for all its contractors including counsellors and mentors.

Standard 9: Access to advice and support

Precious Counselling and Mentoring CIC is aware of the importance for children who have been or are being abused to have a way of getting help. It favours the model exemplified by ChildLine, where the child can speak on the telephone in confidence with a trained counsellor about what is concerning her or him (telephone 0800 1111). It also favours local initiatives where children who have been abused can seek advice and support in person, online or by telephone.

Standard 10: Implementation and monitoring

Precious Counselling and Mentoring CIC as a small organisation can monitor any incidents of noncompliance with its child protection policy and to take appropriate action quickly. Any such incidents will start with a strategy meeting to propose a way forward.

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In the case of a complaint being made about a staff member, contractor or associate, our own supervision network will be involved as quickly as possible. This will also include its UK clinical supervisor for counselling and mentoring work, the police and /or social services if appropriate.

Standard 11: Working with partners

Precious Counselling and Mentoring CIC seeks to work cooperatively with other organisations. Such partnerships will include Precious Counselling and Mentoring CIC providing counselling and mentoring services to Social Services, NHS and other organisations.

When working with children or training with other organisations, Precious Counselling and Mentoring CIC expects such partnership organisations to have in place, or be in the process of developing, their own safeguarding children/child protection policy and procedures. Such policy and procedures need to be consistent with standards outlined in this document.

Child protection issues that arise as a result of working with partners will be referred to the partner organisation by Precious Counselling and Mentoring CIC for appropriate action.

Mauva Johnson-Jones

Safeguarding Children/Child Protection Officer

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