



Muswell Hill

**Child
Contact
Centre**

**at Muswell Hill
Methodist Church**

Safeguarding Policy – both children and vulnerable adults

1. Introduction

Muswell Hill Child Contact Centre is a registered charity run under the auspices of the Muswell Hill Methodist Church for the purpose of offering supported contact sessions for the children of separated parents.

The Muswell Hill Child Contact Centre is based at The Methodist Church 28 Pages Lane N10 1PP. Muswell Hill Child Contact Centre: Number 062/4

Muswell Hill Child Contact Centre Mission Statement states that the organisation aims to provide a place for the children of separated parents to enjoy contact with their non-resident parent and sometimes other family members, in a comfortable and safe environment.

Muswell Hill Child Contact Centre has adopted this Safeguarding Children policy and expects every adult working, volunteering, or representing Muswell Hill Child Contact Centre to support and comply with it. Consequently, this policy shall apply to all management committee, volunteers, students, or anyone working on behalf of Muswell Hill Child Contact Centre.

This policy has been drawn up based on legislation, policy and guidance that seeks to protect children in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales, and any other area which might bring us into contact with children and young people. A summary of the key legislation and guidance is available from <https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/child-protection-system>. It applies to both children and vulnerable adults.

We believe that:

- children and young people should never experience abuse of any kind.
- we have a responsibility to promote the welfare of all children and young people, to keep them safe and to practise in a way that protects them.

We recognise that:

- the welfare of children is paramount in all the work we do and in all the decisions we take.
- working in partnership with children, young people, their parents, carers and other agencies is essential in promoting young people's welfare.
- all children, regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation have an equal right to protection from all types of harm or abuse.

- some children are additionally vulnerable because of the impact of previous experiences, their level of dependency, communication needs, or other issues, extra safeguards may be needed to keep children who are additionally vulnerable safe from abuse.

2. Accountability

Two copies of this policy and its accompanying Statement of Commitment will be given to all existing and new volunteers, and the management committee.

They are required to retain the first copy, initial and return the second copy and sign and return the Statement of Commitment.

3. Purpose of the Policy

This policy is intended to protect children, this may include children that we come into contact with through our work. Under this policy, the term children shall mean any person who is under eighteen years of age but would also apply to vulnerable adults.

This policy is intended to provide guidance and overarching principles to those who represent us as volunteers to guide our approach to child protection and safeguarding.

4. The Risks to Children

Children can be vulnerable to different forms of abuse and harm. It is important to recognise that abuse and harm of children can cover a wide range of circumstances and behaviours. For example, children can be at risk of any type of abuse, including, but not limited to:

- Physical Abuse
- Emotional Abuse
- Neglect
- Sexual Abuse

The types of harm that children might be subjected to and should be protected from could also include, but is not limited to:

- Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)
- Grooming and exploitation
- Trafficking and modern slavery
- Exposure to or infliction of domestic abuse
- Bullying or cyber bullying
- Exposure to other inappropriate content or behaviour, such as violence, pornography or criminal behaviour
- Self-harm
- Physical harm when engaging in activities without adequate supervision.

The protection afforded to children by this policy is not influenced by where or when the abuse took place. All who come in to contact with children or information that may suggest children either have been or might be abused have a duty to take the appropriate action needed to protect those children.

5. Safeguarding Principles

5.1 Safeguarding children from harm and abuse is an essential responsibility. We are committed to ensuring that any child who comes into contact with our services is properly safeguarded.

5.2 Muswell Hill Child Contact Centre believes that children and young people need safe environments in which they can grow and develop in confidence.

5.3 Muswell Hill Child Contact Centre recognises that organisations working with and supporting children and young people have a duty to keep them safe.

5.4 Muswell Hill Child Contact Centre places safeguarding children and young people and child protection at the centre of its activities.

5.5 Muswell Hill Child Contact Centre works in accordance with the guidance set out in “Working together to safeguard children” (DfE - 2023). The Guidance makes clear that all those working to support children and their families should follow the guidance and states:

“It should be read and followed by Local Safeguarding Children’s Boards, (LSCB) Chairs and senior managers within organisations who commission and provide services for children and families, including social workers and professionals from health services, adult services, the police, Academy Trusts, education, and the voluntary and community sector who have contact with children and families. All relevant professionals should read and comply with this guidance unless exceptional circumstances arise”

5.6 Muswell Hill Child Contact Centre believes that children and young people should not be exposed to negligence or avoidable risks.

5.7 Muswell Hill Child Contact Centre recognises that safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children are emotive issues that need managing both sensitively and carefully.

5.8 Muswell Hill Child Contact Centre is committed to creating and implementing policies and procedures that will ensure where risks need to be taken regarding children and young people, they are both fully assessed and carefully managed.

5.9 Safeguarding is everyone’s responsibility: for services to be effective each professional and organisation should play their full part; and a child-centred approach: for services to be effective they should be based on a clear understanding of the needs and views of children. In our context, this means listening and acting, if children express a concern and reporting it to Social Services.

5.10 Everyone who works with children has a responsibility for keeping them safe. 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 meets them has a role to play in identifying concerns, sharing information, and taking prompt action.

5.11 Anyone working with children should see and speak to the child; listen to what they say, take their views seriously; and work with them collaboratively when deciding how to support their needs. In practice for us as a supported centre this will only occur should a concern be raised or if we observe something untoward.

5.12 A child centred approach is regulated by

- the Children Act 1989 (as amended by section 53 of the Children Act 2004). This Act requires local authorities to give due regard to a child’s wishes when determining what services to provide under section 17 of the Children

Act 1989, and before making decisions about action to be taken to protect individual children under section 47 of the Children Act 1989. These duties complement requirements relating to the wishes and feelings of children who are, or may be, looked after (section 22(4) Children Act 1989), including those who are provided with accommodation under section 20 of the Children Act 1989 and children taken into police protection (section 46(3)(d) of that Act).

- the Equality Act 2010 which puts a responsibility on public authorities to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination and promote equality of opportunity. This applies to the process of identification of need and risk faced by the individual child and the process of assessment. No child or group of children must be treated any less favourably than others in being able to access effective services which meet their needs; and,
- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). This is an international agreement that protects the rights of children and provides a child-centred framework for the development of services to children. The UK Government ratified the UNCRC in 1991 and, by doing so, recognises children's rights to expression and receiving information.
- Muswell Hill Child Contact Centre is committed to ensuring that all its volunteers, and management committee are aware of, kept up to date with, and operate in accordance with good practice in relation with Safeguarding and Child Protection. This will mean that they will have the ability to recognise, respond to, report, record and refer issues of Safeguarding and Child Protection.
- Every person under this policy must ensure that they play an active role in ensuring that children are properly safeguarded.
- Every person under this policy holds responsibility for:
 - a) Remaining alert and aware of possible safeguarding risks to children.
 - b) Guarding children against harmful environments with appropriate actions (for example, adequate supervision or ensuring safe environments).
 - c) Taking positive steps to maintain the safety and wellbeing of children engaging with us.
 - d) Reporting concerns expeditiously and appropriately, in line with child protection procedures.
 - e) Understanding the duty to report specific concerns.
 - f) Challenging any inappropriate or harmful behaviour of any other adult and reporting this accordingly.
 - g) Acting appropriately in the presence of children.
 - h) Not taking any inappropriate risks.
 - i) Not smoking, drinking, or taking any form of illicit substances (prior to or) during our work with children.

6. Safeguarding Officer at MHCCC is Pauline Preston, coordinator.

The primary task, role and responsibility of the Safeguarding Officer is to ensure high quality safeguarding children and adult practice throughout the service. The safeguarding agenda will be underpinned in by legislation and Government strategy along with national, regional, and local guidance.

7. We will seek to keep children and young people safe by:

- Valuing, listening to and respecting them.
- Appointing a nominated child protection lead for children and young people, and a lead management committee member for safeguarding.
- Adopting child protection and safeguarding best practice through our policies, procedures, and code of conduct for staff and volunteers.

- Developing and implementing an effective online safety policy and related procedures.
- Providing effective management for volunteers through supervision, support, training, and quality assurance measures so that all staff and volunteers know about and follow our policies, procedures, and behaviour codes confidently and competently.
- Recording, storing and using information professionally and securely, in line with data protection legislation and guidance. More information about this is available from the Information Commissioner's Office: ico.org.uk.
- Sharing information about safeguarding and good practice with children and their families via leaflets, posters, group work and one-to-one discussions.
- Making sure that children, young people, and their families know where to go for help if they have a concern.
- Using our safeguarding and child protection procedures to share concerns and relevant information with agencies who need to know, and involving children, young people, parents, families, and carers appropriately.
- Complying with our complaints procedure to manage any allegations against staff and volunteers appropriately.
- Creating and maintaining an anti-bullying environment and ensuring that we have a policy and procedure to help us deal effectively with any bullying that does arise.
- Ensuring that we have effective complaints and whistleblowing measures in place.
- Ensuring that we provide a safe physical environment for our children, young people, and volunteers, by applying health and safety measures in accordance with the law and regulatory guidance.
- Building a safeguarding culture where staff and volunteers, children, young people, and their families, treat each other with respect and are comfortable about sharing concerns.

8. Confidentiality and Data Protection

Confidentiality and Data Protection do not provide barriers to the sharing of information that keeps children and young people safe. Information should be shared with relevant agencies, on a need-to-know basis without delay.

All records relating to safeguarding must be:

- Truthful
- Accurate
- Concise (in terms of words), yet detailed (in terms of sharing known information)
- Signed
- Dated
- All personal information we process relating to children, shall be processed, and stored in accordance with our data protection privacy policy which can be located both within the policy handbook and on the website.

9. 1 Responding to a Safeguarding Concern

- Where a child is at immediate risk of serious harm, any adult present should call 999. Thereafter, the Team Leader or coordinator should be contacted as soon as is reasonably practicable.
- Where there is a safeguarding concern but no immediate risk of serious harm, the adult who has heard (about) or witnessed this concern should consult with the Team Leader, Safeguarding officer (coordinator) or her Deputy as soon as practicable and by no later than the end of that same day. Additionally, advice can be sought from NACCC – see the safeguarding flow chart
- Where there is a need to make a safeguarding referral, you will be supported to do this, by the Safeguarding officer (coordinator), or another senior person. However, it will be usual for the person who became aware of the concern to make the safeguarding referral, where this is needed.

- Where any child makes a disclosure relating to harm or abuse to an adult, it is important to:
 - a. Listen calmly and carefully, showing that their views are taken seriously.
 - b. Provide an appropriate and honest level of reassurance.
 - c. Avoid interrogating children and asking probing, intrusive and/or leading questions.
 - d. Avoid making false promises regarding secrets and confidentiality with the child (because any concern of abuse/harm must be shared with the Safeguarding Officer and any subsequent safeguarding referral.)
 - e. Make a confidential written record of the discussion either during the discussion or immediately afterwards. The record should include the key details of the disclosure together with any relevant times, dates, places, and people concerned. Audio and video recordings of children making disclosures should be avoided.
 - f. Refer all relevant information to the Team Leader and Safeguarding officer (coordinator) as soon as practicable afterwards, and by no later than the end of the day.
 - g. Upon receipt of any safeguarding concern, Safeguarding officer (coordinator) shall consult with (or support you to consult with) any other relevant persons and will support you to make any appropriate referrals to the relevant authorities, such as the applicable Local Authority Children's Services department. This will usually be the department local to where the child lives.
 - h. The Safeguarding officer (coordinator) will inform NACCC, the Church safeguarding officers, (who will in turn inform the Circuit Safeguarding officer) and the Minister.

9.2 Reporting concerns about other adults within the Muswell Hill Child Contact Centre

Where any person has a concern regarding the conduct of an adult connected to the organisation, which poses or may pose a safeguarding risk to children such as:

- Harming a child either physically or emotionally.
- Exposing a child to behaviour which may cause physical or emotional harm.
- Engaging in criminal activity concerning a child.
- This must be raised in the first instance with the Safeguarding Officer (or where this is not appropriate, a different senior member of the organisation) so that the next appropriate steps may be agreed and actioned. We recognise that there could be circumstances where a person may need to report a matter that has taken place in a setting outside of the person's engagement with the organisation.

Usually, any appropriate steps following a safeguarding referral in respect of an individual connected to the organisation will include either:

- Further initial enquiries.
- Escalation to the applicable Local Authority Children's Services department for assessment and/or the police for investigation.
- Instigation of any appropriate disciplinary, formal investigation processes and suspension of any person concerned within the Charity.
- A referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service, Disclosure Scotland or Access Northern Ireland, or any other relevant regulatory bodies.
- Any person within the organisation who has allegations made against them shall be informed properly in a formal meeting of the particulars of the allegations and the relevant next steps which shall be taken. Such a meeting should ordinarily be held by the Safeguarding Officer. On certain occasions, such a meeting may not be

convened until this has been approved by any authorities involved (such as the police or the relevant Local Authority).

- Any person from within the organisation who has allegations made against them shall be treated fairly. All enquires, investigations and decisions taken shall be just and fair, with the safety of any child concerned at the heart of the process.
- Any person from within the organisation who makes an allegation against another person from within Muswell Hill Child Contact Centre shall be listened to, taken seriously, and shall be treated fairly and justly throughout the process of enquiries, investigations and decision making.

10. Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)

Checks under the appropriate legislation are undertaken wherever required. The groups of people we will undertake checks with, including the DBS, are all volunteers, and Management committee. The appointment of volunteers and Management committee is subject to an Enhanced Disclosure and Barring check, to include barred lists. This check is to be repeated every 3 years.

11. Safeguarding Children at Muswell Hill Child Contact Centre

11.1 Responsibilities and planning

Although the Safeguarding officer will hold ultimate responsibility for overseeing the safety of children, all individuals under this policy must also play an active role in always ensuring the safety of children.

Appropriate background checking shall be undertaken wherever we are legally required to do so in respect of adults who are engaged by us (see the relevant section above).

11.2 Venues

Our location for contact shall always be risk assessed properly in reference to the suitability and safety for children. Fire and safety procedures and precautions shall be made clear to all involved.

12.1 Managing Behaviour of Children Generally

Whenever any adult engaged by us is faced with challenging or inappropriate behaviour from a child or with conflict between children, they must:

- Support the parents to respond to this (where appropriate).
- Approach the situation in a calm and neutral manner.
- Only ever use physical restraint/intervention to protect the immediate safety of a person, for example to prevent an injury or harm either to the child or others.
- Wherever it is justified to physically restrain a child or to physically intervene, the amount of force used should be kept to the absolute minimum considering the risk posed.
- Make a written record of the incident and ensure this is reported appropriately to the Safeguarding Officer.

12.2 Managing Risks Posed by Other Children

It is important for all adults engaged by us to recognise that children can face harm from their peers. This can commonly take the form of bullying. Bullying can be defined as any behaviour which is repeated and has the intention of hurting somebody either physically or emotionally.

Bullying can sometimes be motivated by prejudices based on certain groups, for example gender, race, religion or sexual orientation. Bullying can often include:

- physical harm perpetrated against another child
- name calling and threats
- cyberbullying (threats and abusive comments made via technology)

Any instance of bullying or concern relating to bullying between children the Contact Centre will usually be dealt with by us in the first instance as follows: discussion with the child and its parent.

Where any behaviour amounting to bullying continues following this, exclusion from the centre may be necessary.

All steps in relation to the prevention or management of bullying should be taken in consultation with the Coordinator.

13. Photography

No photographs will be taken of children except by parents taking photos of their own child with permission from the resident parent. We recognise that photography of children carries risks, such as:

- The potential for images to be re-used, shared, or adapted in a damaging or inappropriate manner.
- The general risk of sharing images and the impact this could have on child's public image as they grow older.

In view of these risks, we will:

- Always ask for written permission from a child and / or their parent/guardian before any photographs are taken
- Always ensure that a child and their parent/guardian are clear that no photos taken within the centre may be used on social media.
- We ask that any members of the public attending our premises, events or activities do not take photographs, without the consent of the centre.

14. Recruitment

- When recruiting volunteers or management committee members who have unsupervised access to children, Muswell Hill Child Contact Centre will adhere to a thorough and standardised procedure that will include making appropriate checks with the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) which helps employers make safer recruitment decisions and prevent unsuitable people from working with vulnerable groups, including children.
- When first joining the organisation and every three years thereafter – as stated above, this applies to all volunteers and members of the management committee.
- Completing and signing a standard application form and a full CV including a written statement of their suitability for the post applied for.
- Signing a personal declaration of eligibility stating any criminal convictions including those considered to be spent.
- Being asked to provide a minimum of two character references (excluding family members and those that have known the applicant personally for less than two years)
- Reading, understanding, accepting, and complying with Muswell Hill Child Contact Centre Policy for Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children as part of the terms and conditions of their appointment as a volunteer or member of the management committee.
- This procedure must be followed before any appointments are confirmed.
- Muswell Hill Child Contact Centre commitment to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children will also extend to the following:

- NACCC's accreditation and re-accreditation processes for its member centres requiring them to ensure that all their volunteers and members of the management committee are DBS checked to an enhanced level either when they first become involved with the centre or every three years.
- Muswell Hill Child Contact Centre ensuring that its volunteers and members of the management committee are all aware of and kept up to date with good practice and procedural changes in relation to DBS checks.

15.1 Education and Training

The Muswell Hill Child Contact Centre induction process will include "Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children" training for all volunteers and management committee. This is mandatory. Records of all training will be kept at NACCC Head Office.

15.2 Support and Supervision

All volunteers and employees with direct access to information about or relating to children will be given on-going supervision. All employees will have regular evaluations with their line manager.

15.3 Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children: Training for NACCC's member centres

- NACCC will design and regularly update training modules which will be made available via the website. Muswell Hill Child Contact Centre will dispense training for volunteers annually and coordinators will attend NACCC training at least every three years.
- NACCC will encourage its member centres to operate in accordance with their LSCB's policies and procedures.
- NACCC will help its member centres to be aware of legislation, guidelines and directives updates as and when they are issued.
- NACCC will have a nominated advice line (Monday-Friday 9.30am-4.30pm operating from the NACCC office) and a dedicated Saturday safeguarding helpline run by trained members of staff to provide its member centres with guidance and support when they are working with Safeguarding or Child Protection concerns.

16. Sharing Information

Muswell Hill Child Contact Centre management committee and volunteers will follow a procedure that ensures that every safeguarding issue is brought to the attention of relevant safeguarding authorities and NACCC. Furthermore, steps will be taken to ensure that this is logged correctly and followed up, to ensure that information is shared correctly with the relevant agencies.

17. Providing Advice and Support

- Muswell Hill Child Contact Centre will ensure that Safeguarding is a rolling agenda item in all volunteer supervision.
- Failing to follow or non-compliance with recognised procedures and good practice in relation to Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children by Muswell Hill Child Contact Centre volunteers will generate support, information, and training.
- In more serious cases involving Muswell Hill Child Contact Centre volunteers or staff, the organisations disciplinary proceedings will be activated by the Chair of the Management committee or their delegated/nominated appointee.
- In more serious cases involving Muswell Hill Child Contact Centre the people involved could be removed from the management committee or their role as a volunteer, by the Chair of the Management committee.

18. Distribution of Muswell Hill Child Contact Centre Policy for Safeguarding and Child Protection

A copy of this policy will be:

- Included in the Muswell Hill Child Contact Centre Staff Handbook and on the website.
- Made available to all Muswell Hill Child Contact Centre partner organisations.

19. Review of Muswell Hill Child Contact Centre Policy for Safeguarding and Child Protection

This will take place annually. Additional changes to take account of new legislation and practice directions will also be made as and when required.

Copies of the revised policy will be made available to all volunteers and members of the management committee.

We are committed to reviewing our policy and good practice annually		
Name: Evadne Cameron	Signature:	Date:
This policy was last reviewed on: 3 rd February 2025		

Appendix 1 – Safeguarding Procedure for Muswell Hill Child Contact Centre

Reporting Concerns.

- Through ongoing training, and information contained within the Safeguarding Children Policy, the volunteers, and management committee working at Muswell Hill Child Contact Centre have the competence to identify when children might be placed at a risk of harm and where protective action might need to be taken.
- Some of the safeguarding concerns that we might become aware of will come to our attention because of disclosures or our own observations. Whilst some concerns might be brought to our attention by others, including parents.
- Regardless of how the concern comes to our attention, we have a duty to make sure that this has been reported to the relevant organisations. Where we cannot be confident of this, such a disclosure will be made by Insert Name Here.
- When becoming aware of a risk of harm to children and young people, our first concern is to take steps to increase the safety of that child.
- If the child is at immediate risk, or where a criminal offence has been (or is at risk of being) committed the police should be informed by dialling 999.
- All non-emergencies will be reported to the Local Authority, in the area where the child(ren) reside.

Safeguarding Steps to be taken

For the sake of this section of the procedure, a professional is a person who is professionally involved with a family, whether paid or unpaid. Where a family member, is a professional and potential safeguarding risks might also pose risks to others through their place or work, there is additional information later in this procedure.

- Where we have concerns about the safety of a child, that do not require a 999 call, we should consult the Safeguarding officer (coordinator), with all the information that we have available at the time.
- The Safeguarding officer (coordinator) will collaborate with the volunteer raising the concern to consider what action should be taken next. This might include making a referral to Social Services or other agencies.
- All concerns must be recorded, in written form, as soon as is practicably possible, this will need to be completed during the same working day. Notes must always be factual, quoting people is often a good idea and we should avoid adding our own opinions. Whereby our opinions might be relevant to the safety of children, we should clearly identify this information as being an opinion and refer to the facts that helped in the formation of this opinion.
- Once the decision has been made to share concerns with social services, this should take place as soon as is practicably possible. This will need to happen on the same day as becoming aware of the concern and without excessive time delays. Sharing this information will take place by phone, to the social services closest to where the child lives (if this is unknown, then closest to where the concern was raised). Social Services will often ask whether the child's parents have been informed of the referral. If doing so does not add to any risk to the child, they will often expect this to have happened.
- When verbally sharing information with social services, they will usually expect this information to be complimented with a written record of the concerns you have shared. Sometimes they will ask you to complete an online form, on other occasions they may email you a document and sometimes sending them a report with the information available to you will be sufficient. It is important to make sure you are aware of the expectations for the local area, whilst on the phone with them.
- Once this information has been provided, care should be taken to confirm that the intended person / office has received this.