



BRIDGE THE GAP

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SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AND VULNERABLE ADULT POLICY

for Bridge the Gap Child Mental Health C.I.C.

1. Introduction

I. Bridge the Gap Child Mental Health is a registered Community Interest Company (CIC) run for the following purpose:

To support the mental health of children, young people, adults and schools.

II. The CIC is based at:

- 45 Friargate, Derby, DE1 1DA
- Registered CIC Number: 12191993

III. The CIC has adopted this safeguarding children and vulnerable adult policy and expects every adult working or helping at BRIDGE THE GAP CHILD MENTAL HEALTH to support it and comply with it. Consequently, this policy shall apply to all staff, managers, trustees, directors, volunteers, students or anyone working on behalf of Bridge the Gap.

IV. The legislation and guidance relevant to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and adults at risk includes the following: The Children and Social Work Act (2017), The Children Act 1989 and 2004, Working together to safeguard children (2018), No Secrets (2000), The Crime and Disorder Act (1998), The Health and Social Care Act (2008) and the Care Act (2014)

2. Purpose of the Policy

I. This policy is intended to protect children, young people and vulnerable adults who receive any service from us. This includes those who are the children of adults who may receive services from us or adults who are parents of the children we support.

II. Bridge the Gap believes that no child, young person, or vulnerable adult should experience abuse or harm and are committed to the protection of children, young people and vulnerable adults. This policy is intended to provide guidance and overarching principles to those who represent us as volunteers or staff, to guide our approach to child protection and safeguarding.



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III. This policy will be reviewed annually and updated if required at this time or in line with any legislation changes. There might be times where the policy must be updated in line with any recent changes at Bridge the Gap CIC.

IV. This policy and its associated practices and procedures will be regularly communicated to trustees, staff and volunteers through training. Training will be completed on an annual basis.

3. The Risks to Children

Nearly every child grows up in a safe and happy environment and it is important not to exaggerate or overestimate the dangers. Nevertheless, there are situations where children need protection including but not limited to:

- Sexual abuse;
- Grooming;
- Physical and emotional abuse and neglect;
- Domestic violence;
- Inappropriate supervision by staff or volunteers;
- Female genital mutilation (FGM);
- Bullying, cyber bullying, acts of violence and aggression;
- Radicalisation.
- Victimisation;
- Self-harm;
- Unsafe environments and activities;
- Crime;
- Exploitation.

3a. The Risks to Vulnerable Adults.

The definition of a vulnerable adult is wide, however may be regarded as anyone over the age of 18 years who may be unable to protect themselves from abuse, harm or exploitation, which may be by reason of illness, age, mental illness, disability or other types of physical or mental impairment. Those at risk may live alone, be dependent on others (care homes etc.), elderly, or socially isolated.

Risks to vulnerable adults include:

- Neglect – ignoring mental or physical needs, care, education, or basic life necessities or rights
- Bullying – family, carers, friends



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- Financial – theft or use of money or possessions
- Sexual – assault, rape, non-consensual acts (including acts where unable to give consent), touching, indecent exposure
- Physical – hitting, assault, manhandling, restraint, pain or forcing medication
- Psychological – threats, fear, being controlled, taunts, isolation
- Discrimination – abuse based on perceived differences and vulnerabilities
- Institutional abuse – in hospitals, care homes, support services or individuals within them, including inappropriate behaviours, discrimination, prejudice, and lack of essential safeguards

4. Universality of Protection

Bridge the Gap recognises that: - the welfare of the child and vulnerable adult is paramount; - all children and vulnerable adults regardless of race, gender, religious belief, disability, age, sexual orientation or identity have a right to equal protection from harm; - some children and adults are more vulnerable to harm as a result of their circumstances, prior experiences, communication needs or level of dependency; and - working with children, young people, their parents and/or guardians, carers or other agencies is essential to protecting their wellbeing.

5. Safeguarding Children at Events/Activities

I. There are three kinds of events/activities: (A). those open to adults and children of all ages; (B). those for children accompanied by a responsible adult (parent/carer/other care giver); and (C). those for unaccompanied children, which can be in a small group with other children or in a 1:1 capacity with a practitioner or therapist; and (D) sessions for parent/carers in small groups or within one-to-one capacity.

Sessions take place at Bridge the Gap premises and within the community such as family hubs, schools and community rooms or our Community Gardens at: Wilmorton Community Gardens, Dickinson Street, Derby, DE24 HWJ.

This policy will be applied to wherever Bridge the Gap sessions are taking place.

Volunteers do not deliver any sessions in a one to one capacity.



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II. At small group sessions where a parent/carer is not present the groups must be run by a minimum of two Bridge the Gap trained volunteers or practitioners. All ratios legally stated, laid out for schools and childcare provisions will be adhered to at Bridge the Gap.

Children shall not leave the main room unattended and if visiting the toilet facilities then a member of the team will ensure that they go to the toilet and return to the room safely, waiting outside of the toilet door. We have a shared building so this is essential to ensure the safeguarding of all children in our care.

III. At events and activities for children accompanied by a parent/carer, children under 16 must be supervised throughout the event by an adult over the age of 18 who not only brings the child to the event but also takes the child home again afterwards. If a lone adult brings more than one child, then the children will have to stay together, so that the one adult can supervise them.

IV. At events and activities for unaccompanied children, children under the age of 16 must be enrolled by a responsible adult before being left with the event leader. The enrolment must record three identifiers of the child: child's name, date of birth and address. This will also include the names and addresses of the child's parents/carers, plus the parents' mobile telephone numbers. Young people aged 16 or 17 may attend unaccompanied if they bring the written consent and mobile telephone number of one of their parents.

V. Both events and activities are to be defined broadly to include any occasions where the CIC will be providing a service.

VI. ALL staff and volunteers will be required to undergo safeguarding Training – staff and volunteers will be required to read and sign our Child Protection Policy and procedures.

VII. At Bridge the Gap we provide therapeutic services which requires a practitioner to deliver support in a room with a closed door. All practitioners are onboarded through 'Safer Recruitment' principles and are qualified to work with children and young people.

- There is always another team member in the building.
- All practitioners and volunteers hold a fully up to date and enhanced DBS check.
- All practitioners are appropriately qualified and Level 3 safeguarding trained.
- All volunteers are appropriately trained in the ethos of Bridge the Gap and appropriately safeguarding trained.

Bridge the Gap will achieve the objectives outlined in this policy by creating a safe environment that promotes the following:



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Safe Ethos:

- Work to support the organisational purpose to work proactively around child mental health by creating a safe space for children and families to explore emotional literacy and other coping strategies to support mental health.
- To create a safe environment for staff, volunteers, children and families, regardless of their cultural identity, gender or race.
- To cultivate an environment where reflective practice is encouraged, facilitated and supported.
- To ensure the Bridge the Gap values are embedded within our internal and external processes, practices and policies.
- To follow safe recruitment policies and procedures to include enhanced DBS checks, 2 x references, right to work checks and thorough training with Bridge the Gap to include safeguarding training.
- To work in collaboration with external organisations and partners to ensure that information is shared when required in order to keep children and young people safe.

Mental Health Risk:

- Practitioners at the CIC are trained in knowing how to spot signs of mental health risk in children. Practitioners are trained in how to complete a safety plan and share information with the child's carers. A joint, team decision will be made to ensure the safety of sharing this information on a case by case basis.
- Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSL): Nikki Webster and Lucy Brown.
- In the event of both Nikki Webster and Lucy Brown being absent, staff will contact Deputy DSL Jennifer Wyman.
- Mental Health risk is assessed at each session and updated risk assessment forms are completed if any changes are highlighted.
- Although we are not a crisis service, we recognise the importance of keeping children safe and will follow our mental health risk policies and procedures to reduce any risk of serious harm, injury or death for the children seen in our service.

6. Disclosure and Barring

I. Bridge the Gap offers the following activities for children:

- One to one mental health support
- Group mental health support



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II. Some of our activities may therefore require adult participants or adult leaders to undergo DBS enhanced checks under the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006.

III. The CIC will take very seriously any allegation of impropriety on the part of any member of the CIC. Bridge the Gap adhere to whistle blowing procedures; any member of the CIC who discovers anything amiss should get in touch immediately with Nikki Webster, Clinical Director. If the allegation involves Nikki Webster, then the concern should be raised to Jennifer Wyman, Creative Director.

IV. Allegations will be appropriately reviewed. Bridge the Gap will suspend any member of staff, pending a full investigation into the allegation in line with disciplinary and grievances policies and procedures.

V. ALL staff members and volunteers working within Bridge the Gap CIC will be required to have a DBS that states they are suitable to work with children and/or vulnerable adults. Where possible this DBS must be recorded under the update service, Bridge the Gap will pay for practitioners to be on the update service once new DBS checks are completed - from November 2023. If this is not possible a new DBS will be undertaken if the role in our service is changed (i.e. promotion/change of position etc).

7. Health and Safety Aspects of Safeguarding Children

I. Before starting any event for unaccompanied children, the Board will carry out a risk assessment and then take steps to minimise all risks to health and safety. Parents and children will be made aware of any particular risks and of the steps to be taken to minimise those risks. The Board will keep a record of all risk assessments.

II. Sufficient adults must be present at any event for unaccompanied children to enable one adult to deal with any emergency while another adult supervises the children not directly affected by the emergency.

8. Prevention of Bullying

We will not tolerate the bullying of children either by adults or by other children. If any incident of child-on-child bullying should arise at a CIC event, those involved will be separated immediately and the parents of the children involved will be asked to deal with the matter. The Board will review all incidents of child-on-child bullying and assess the likely future risk to children. If appropriate, the Board will consider banning a child from future events, but only in full accordance with the rules and procedures of the CIC. Allegations of adults bullying children will be dealt with in accordance with this Policy.



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9. Photographing Children

No photos will be taken or published of any child attending an event or activity unless prior written permission is sought from a person with parental responsibility. If any person has any concerns regarding any person taking photos at an event or activity, that person should contact the CIC immediately.

Phone use:

All staff working independently with children will have access to their phones in order to escalate concerns as required and in a case of an emergency. Practitioners are NOT permitted to take photographs of children or access personal use of social media/respond to personal phone calls during sessions with a child.

10. Managing Behaviour, Discipline and Acceptable Restrain

I. Adults supervising children at Bridge the Gap events must never use any form of corporal punishment. If physical restraint is absolutely necessary to prevent injury to any person or to prevent serious damage to property, then the minimum necessary restraint may be used — but for that purpose only.

II. Unacceptable behaviour at events for unaccompanied children will generally be stopped by separating the children from each other and from the group. Escalated children will be suitably supervised and any audience around them removed. They will be returned as soon as possible to the care of their parents.

III. Bridge the Gap may reserve the right to suggest alternative sessions if the child attending appears uncomfortable and struggles to regulate. Any such decision would be determined and applied by the following officer: NIKKI WEBSTER, DIRECTOR.

IV. A parent who is aggrieved by this decision may appeal to the CIC who will hear the views of all relevant persons. The decision of the CIC is then final. Any such appeals should be made to, and will be determined by the following officer: NIKKI WEBSTER or JENNIFER WYMAN

11. Other Policies

This safeguarding policy should be read together with the following policies and resources of Bridge the Gap:



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- Lone Working
- Health and Safety
- Safeguarding Procedures - Local and Out of Area
- Equal Opportunities
- Anti-Racism

12. Legal Framework

This policy has been drawn up in accordance with the following legislation and guidance: - Children Act 1989 - United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child - General Data Protection Regulation - Data Protection Act 2018 - Human Rights Act 1998 - Children Act 2004 - Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 - Protection of Freedoms Act 2012 - Children and Families Act 2014 - Children and Social Work 2017 - What to do if you're worried a child is being abused: advice for practitioners (Department of Education, 2015) - Working together to safeguard children (Department for Education, 2018)

This Policy is approved and robustly endorsed by Bridge the Gap Child Mental Health and is due for review annually.

Signed:

Nikki Webster, Clinical Director

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jyman'.

Jennifer Wyman, Creative Director.