

# **OTHONA COMMUNITY**

## **SAFEGUARDING POLICY and PROCEDURES**

### **For Staff And Volunteers**

**Abbreviated version  
for short term staff and volunteers**

# OTHONA COMMUNITY

## SAFEGUARDING POLICY

### 1.1 POLICY CONTEXT

Othona is an open and inclusive Community, founded in 1946 to foster peace and reconciliation between people of different nations, beliefs and outlooks in the aftermath of the Second World War.

Othona operates two residential Centres, one at Burton Bradstock in West Dorset, and one at Bradwell-on-Sea in Essex. Each Centre is run by a small resident Core Community of staff and volunteers, led by a resident Manager. The Manager and staff report to centre management committees and, ultimately, a board of trustees.

Both centres run a programme of events, retreats and activities throughout the year and are also open to casual visitors. They accommodate families, visiting schools and youth groups and individual vulnerable adults. Othona operates a policy that children and young people must be accompanied and supervised by their own appointed leaders/ responsible adults, who are also responsible for ensuring the wellbeing and welfare of the children and young people in their care whilst visiting Othona. Vulnerable adults who are unable to undertake their own personal care should also be accompanied by their own carers.

Othona staff will from time to time run activities for visiting groups, but will not undertake supervision of unaccompanied children. The only exception to this will be when, in the context of intentional community, parents specifically express consent for their children to be supervised by others within the group.

Visiting school and youth groups have exclusive access to the accommodation areas at both Othona Centres for the duration of their stay. Othona staff are not permitted to enter these areas during this time, except when children are elsewhere on or off site, to carry out essential cleaning duties or if it is necessary to deal with emergencies, when they will be accompanied by one of the visiting group's responsible adults or another member of staff.

**Parents or approved guardians/group leaders with parental consent are responsible for the children and young people in their care whilst at Othona.**

If a child with additional needs wants to stay at Othona and needs special attention and care, when the child's parent is not present, an appropriate adult carer with a valid DBS Check should accompany them and be responsible for ensuring their safety and wellbeing whilst at Othona.

It is the responsibility of Othona to provide a 'safe' environment for all our visitors and staff. 'Safe' means taking every possible precaution to prevent the physical, emotional and sexual abuse and neglect of any person who spends time at either Centre. Whilst Othona is committed to operating best practice in all areas of safeguarding that we can influence, the Trustees and staff at Othona cannot be held responsible for things that are beyond their control.

Othona resident Core Community staff have separate accommodation, in a separate building which is strictly out of bounds to school groups and to unaccompanied children without expressed parental consent.

When the Centre is specifically reserved for one group (e.g. a school) containing children and young people under 18 years of age, Othona will actively discourage any other visitors. Where this is unavoidable, Othona will house any persons not connected to the group within a separate building, joining us only for meals.

## 1.2

At Othona we want to work with children, parents and the community to ensure the safety of all those in the community: visitors, staff and volunteers. As such we believe that Safeguarding is Everyone's Business, in that we all have a duty of care towards one another and that we are committed to acting quickly and responsibly when any instances or suspicions that may come to our attention, indicate the physical, sexual, emotional abuse or neglect of a child, young person or vulnerable adult.

The staff at Othona have a duty to report any suspicions of abuse as per the procedures set out in the Othona Community Safeguarding Policy .

## 2.1 The Manager

The Manager at each Othona Centre will be the **Designated Person for Safeguarding (DPS)**. As the DPS, the Manager is the member of staff responsible for ensuring that all Safeguarding policies and procedures within each Centre are applied at all times. The Manager should role model best practice in respect of Safeguarding, and ensure that all other Othona staff implement all the required policies, procedures & guidelines and operate in accordance with them.

- To act as the key point of contact for all staff, parents/carers and visitors to discuss concerns and offer them advice, information and assistance on safeguarding matters.
- To ensure all Othona staff are recruited, inducted and trained in accordance with our child protection policies, procedures and guidelines.

- To ensure all Othona staff members are aware of the Safeguarding Policy and procedures, and know how to recognise and refer any concerns.
- To act as a key point of contact for Safeguarding for all staff, volunteers, group leaders and parents to discuss concerns and to offer them information, advice and assistance where appropriate.
- To ensure that day to day management of the Centre is in accordance with this Safeguarding Policy. For example that:
- During parents' or group leaders' meetings, s/he mentions that Othona has a Safeguarding Policy; communicates who is/isn't available to supervise children's activities; reiterates the safeguarding responsibilities of parents/guardians and group leaders whilst at Othona.
- Staff rotas are compiled with consideration to safeguarding children.
- To co-ordinate and manage all responses to disclosures and other Safeguarding and Child Protection issues.
- To make Safeguarding/Child Protection referrals to the appropriate authority.
- To highlight all Safeguarding problems/issues/incidents to the Trustee with Overall Responsibility for Safeguarding and to the Centre Committee Member Responsible for Safeguarding, as appropriate.
- To deal with allegations of abuse against staff members in liaison with both the Trustee and the Centre Committee Member Responsible for Safeguarding, unless those allegations are against the Warden her/himself.
- To liaise with other agencies and professionals and to attend relevant meetings on Safeguarding matters.
- To keep and maintain appropriate, confidential, accurate, up-to-date records and to ensure that effective information-sharing protocols are followed, subject to confidentiality and data-protection policy and legislation.
- To keep their own knowledge up-to-date, to enable them to effectively fulfil their role, including undertaking relevant training.
- To apply for DBS checks for Othona staff at their Centre, as appropriate, and validate the identity of these individuals as part of the process.
- To maintain an up-to-date Single Central Record for the Centre which details that the relevant DBS and other safeguarding checks have been carried out on all Othona Staff.

## 2.2 Training

All staff and volunteers should be made aware of the safeguarding policy as part of their induction and should undertake training to a level, appropriate and practical in respect of time spent as part of the community.

### **2.3 Othona Staff and Volunteers**

- All Othona Staff and volunteers should take personal responsibility for reading and understanding the relevant information within the Safeguarding Policy and ensure that they operate in line with the policy and procedures at all times.
- All Othona Staff should support the Manager to ensure that the day-to-day running of the centre is in accordance with our Safeguarding Policy and Procedures.
- All Othona staff are responsible for highlighting problems/issues regarding Safeguarding to the Manager (DPS) unless it is an allegation against the Warden, in which case they should refer these concerns to the Centre Committee Member Responsible for Safeguarding or the trustee responsible for safeguarding.

### **2.3 Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Checks**

Due to the potentially sensitive nature of our work and the fact that Othona Staff and visitors live in close community together, it is our policy that all paid Othona Staff and long-term volunteers must have a valid DBS check.

Only those undertaking a regulated activity need an enhanced check; others will need a basic check. Volunteers from abroad should provide appropriate checks from their countries.

Long term staff should renew their checks every three years.

## 3.0 HOW WE KEEP VISITORS AND OURSELVES SAFE

### Introduction

To protect both visitors and ourselves we must at all times:

- operate sensible precautions
- abide by legal/best practice guidelines
- take no unnecessary risks

### 3.1 Working with Parents and Guardians

**Parents or approved guardians with parental consent are responsible for the children in their care throughout the duration of their stay at Othona.**

If a vulnerable child or young person wants to stay at Othona and needs additional attention and care, an appropriate adult carer should accompany them.

At no time should any member of Othona staff be left in, or place themselves in a situation where they are left alone with a child or young person (except in the context of intentional community).

It is our responsibility to provide a safe environment. 'Safe' means the prevention of neglect, physical, emotional and sexual harm.

We cannot be held responsible for things we can't control, as long as we operate best practice in all areas we can influence.

#### 3.1.2 Adults' and Children's Meetings

Early in all events where children are present, Othona holds introductory welcome meetings which include awareness of our safeguarding practice.

#### 3.1.3 Parental Consent

Where a child/young person under the age of 18 years is staying at Othona without at least one parent, a Parental Consent form must be completed and signed by the parent, naming an adult Guardian who will be present with the child. This Guardian will be responsible for ensuring the safety and wellbeing of the child or young person for the duration of their stay at Othona.

In the case of schools and youth groups staying at Othona, the group leader is responsible for ensuring that he/she has parental consent for all the children in his/her group.

### **3.1.4 Guidelines for Children's/Young People's Activities**

From time to time, Othona staff may be involved in organising activities for children and young people. These may be either for visiting schools or youth groups, or for children staying at Othona with their families.

- (a) In the case of visiting youth groups, the group leaders should be present during all activities run by Othona staff. Responsibility for supervision of the children remains with their group leader.
  
- (b) In the case of activities organised by Othona for children staying with their parents or guardian, children take part with the permission of their parent or guardian. These activities include sessions of, for example, art & craft, music, or games, where the parents/guardians may be free to engage in other community activity while their children are catered for by Othona staff. Responsibility for supervision of children during these activities rests with the Othona staff or volunteers running the activity.

Othona does not take responsibility for children during ordinary day-to-day activities undertaken as part of their stay with families or carers.

### **3.2 Protecting ourselves**

It is important to stress at this point that protecting our employees/volunteers is as important as protecting the children and young people who visit Othona. We should never put our employees/volunteers in a position where they are potentially compromised.

Examples of compromising situations might be:

- If a staff member is a lone adult and there is no other adult witness to their interactions with a child or young person;
- When the size of the group is too large for Othona staff to manage it safely and comfortably;
- When the group members have needs which Othona staff are not equipped to deal with, either due to lack of training or lack of experience, or both.

### 3.2.1

It is important that some/all of those taking on responsibility for Children and Young People have undergone appropriate awareness training. If Othona cannot provide DBS-checked, appropriately trained individuals to responsibly supervise children and young people with their parents'/guardian's consent, they should not take on the task.

### 3.2. Some Dos and Don'ts for Working Safely with Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults

It is possible to reduce the risk and help protect employees, volunteers and visitors from false accusations by promoting good practice.

We should

- always be within the sight of others when working with children – avoid situations of being completely unobserved.
- avoid excessive personal body contact – comforting need only be an arm around a shoulder or gentle patting of arm/back.
- treat all visitors equally and with respect. Take notice of any reactions to tone of voice and manner. Take care with the use of ridicule and sarcasm, especially with children.
- be alert to the signs of danger and inappropriate behaviour by yourself and others.
- trust our instincts and don't ignore warning signs. Where appropriate, take advice from another member of staff if you have any doubts or suspicions.
- take personal responsibility to ensure that allegations or suspicions are recorded and acted upon immediately and follow Othona Safeguarding Policy and procedure at all times.

We should never:

- engage in overly rough or physical games or any sexually provocative games.
- use inappropriate or racist language or make sexually suggestive comments, even in jest.
- touch a child, young person or vulnerable adult in an intrusive or sexual manner.
- never accompany a child, young person or vulnerable adult to the toilet, or undertake any personal care – ask the parents/guardians/group leaders to take them, where possible, or ensure two adults are present.
- accompany a child, young person or vulnerable adult into a closed room where you cannot be observed.
- do things of a personal nature that a person can do for themselves.



### 3.2.3 Risk Assessment

A basic risk assessment should be part of any activity planning and health and safety must form part of this process.

Othona staff should be aware of the possibility of strong feelings being generated by the closeness and openness of community life, therefore, for their own protection, they must act sensitively and carefully when dealing with young or vulnerable people who may become attached to them.

## 4.0 PROCEDURES FOR MANAGING ALLEGATIONS OR CONCERNS OF POSSIBLE ABUSE

### 4.1 Initial actions to be taken by the staff member or volunteer following an allegation of abuse

All concerns and allegations raised with or by staff or volunteers should initially be reported immediately to the Manager. If he/she is not available the report should be made to the local committee member responsible for safeguarding or the trustee responsible for safeguarding. Contact details for these persons should be on display in the centre.

All incidents or allegations should be recorded on the Othona safeguarding report form which is available from the office.

It is the responsibility of the Manager or other responsible person to take any appropriate action following any report.

*\*Be mindful in all communications that an allegation of abuse or neglect may lead to criminal investigation. Do not attempt to investigate the allegations made. This is the role of the Manager, as Othona's Designated Person for Safeguarding or the Committee Member Responsible for Safeguarding as Deputy DPS if the Manager is unavailable. Reports can also be made to the Trustees. The Manager may seek advice from the Local Authority or the Police to ensure that neither the safety of the child/young person/vulnerable adult, nor any subsequent investigation is jeopardised.*

NB: Do not delay if medical treatment is required or immediate protection is needed. Call the emergency services, police or ambulance, or go to the nearest A&E department.

#### **4.2 Disagreement with the Manager's decision**

If the staff member who originally raised the concern disagrees with the Manager's decision, s/he must inform the Safeguarding Trustee that s/he still has concerns. The staff member always has the right to report the matter themselves to the Local Authority Safeguarding Officer if they are dissatisfied with the final decision.

**NB** The full version of the safeguarding policy is available to all staff, volunteers, visitors and other users of the Centres. The full policy includes appendices detailing signs and symptoms of possible abuse and a flow chart explaining Regulated Activity.

**This abbreviated policy together with the full policy were adopted by the Board of Trustees on**

**Date: 14/09/2020**

**The policies will next be reviewed on**

**Date: September 2021**