

Safeguarding Children Policy

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Introduction

Sha'arei Tsedek is a community of diverse individuals and families having rich and complex networks of relationships with others. We value, and seek to promote, this richness and diversity. At the same time, we are also aware that we have particular responsibilities to protect children and young people, some of which are statutory, in line with the law, government guidance and standards of best practice. All staff and volunteers have a full and active part to play in protecting (safeguarding) children and young people from harm. We explicitly affirm that safeguarding children and young people is everyone's responsibility.

This policy has been developed in line with current relevant government guidance, which reflects the requirements of numerous items of legislation enacted in recent decades:

"Working Together to Safeguard Children", 2015 (HM Government)

"London Child Protection Procedures and Practice Guidance", 2017

We recognise that:

- the welfare of the child/young person is paramount
- all children and young persons, regardless of age, disability, gender, racial heritage, religious belief, sexual orientation or identity, have the right to equal protection from abuse in its numerous forms (ill-treatment, cruelty, neglect, etc – as detailed below)
- working in partnership with children, young people, their parents, carers and other agencies is essential in promoting young people's welfare.

This policy applies to everyone playing a role in Sha'arei Tsedek synagogue community life - including teachers, volunteers, rabbis, paid staff, sessional workers, agency staff, and members of the congregation participating in services and events at the synagogue.

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There are obviously many ways of advancing the welfare of children and young people. In this policy we focus on one particular aspect of this overall commitment, namely our duties of protection and prevention in relation to **abuse**. Thus we detail ways of protecting ("safeguarding") children who have experienced, or are currently experiencing, or are at risk of, any type of **abuse**. In particular, this means promoting best practice in all areas of synagogue community life – and responding speedily and effectively to suspicions of abuse.

Accordingly, this document first offers a series of definitions describing different types of abuse. After that, it outlines standards of good practice aimed at promoting children's and young people's wellbeing – and preventing the possibility of abuse. Finally, it details our procedures in any situation where a suspicion of abuse is communicated (this can take many possible forms - it could be a complaint or allegation from a given child or young person – or a concern voiced by a member of staff or parent – etc).

Definitions of abuse

Abuse refers to a variety of forms of harm and maltreatment, including neglect, circulation of indecent images etc). Of course, there are clearly bad experiences in a child's or young person's life which are not abuse. In this section we offer some definitions which enable all of us to be alert to abuse, to identify it, to recognise when it is being reported, and to be conscious of things in everyday life which may point to the existence of abuse.

Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting, by those known to them or, more rarely, by others (e.g. over the internet). They may be abused by an adult or adults, or another child or children.

Physical Abuse - Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child.

Emotional Abuse – Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent diverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to a child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate

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expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond a child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyber bullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

Sexual Abuse - Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children. If a child initiates a sexual situation, it would still be abuse if any adult or older teenager took advantage of this.

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) involves young people receiving something in exchange for sexual acts. Sexual exploitation can take many forms ranging from seemingly consensual relationships to serious gang and group exploitation. A child affected by CSE may not exhibit external signs of abuse; therefore employees and volunteers must be vigilant for the less obvious signs, such as (a) lots of new electronic equipment, when before there was none; (b) seeming to have extra money to spend; (c) moving away from established friendship groups; (d) older boy/girlfriends, involvement with other vulnerable children and vulnerable adults/adults etc.

Indecent images and "sexting": it is illegal for sexual or indecent photographs of a child under 18 to be taken and/or distributed. "Sexting" refers to the circulation via SMS texting and social media of such images and messages containing sexual content relating to individuals. Such messages are often sent with the intention of bullying, embarrassing, intimidating or terrorising a child or young person.

Neglect - Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect

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may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to:

- provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment)
- protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger
- ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-givers)
- ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.

Best practice

All adults, including staff, rabbis, and volunteers, should be made aware that they are in a position of **adult responsibility**, and that it is their responsibility to ensure that all interactions, whether verbal or physical, are entirely appropriate. Madrichim/helpers are teenagers, and though they are not adults, they are in a position of responsibility and the same guidelines and requirements apply to them as well.

Physical contact In general, we do not anticipate that there is a need for adults to physically touch young people – but if there is, for instance, occasion to offer a physical gesture of reassurance or consolation, this must be done in a way that reflects our training and awareness. We do not express our relationships with our young people through physical means such as hugging.

Lone working should be avoided wherever possible; where it is a necessity it will be done by agreement with a senior manager in the synagogue and clearly recorded in the individual member of staff's calendar, and parents should be invited where appropriate. Under no circumstances will we work with young people with the door closed. Staff members, madrichim or volunteers, should avoid **working alone** with individual pupils except for short periods where this is essential for the activity – additionally, the door of the room shall be kept open and other adults made aware of the circumstances.

Toilets Certain staff do have specific responsibilities accompanying very young children, or children with disabilities, to the toilet; however, **other** adults shall **not** take individual children to the **toilet**. Staff who have such responsibilities – for instance, accompanying a child to the toilet, or helping the child to dress or get cleaned up – should ensure that another staff member is present, or the door is open and a colleague on the premises is aware of what is happening.

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Mobile phones. Staff must not bring out their **mobile phones** while working with children and young people unless for official purposes. **Photographs** only to be taken on a 'work mobile phone,' a Sha'arei Tsedek camera or a members' camera with a Sha'arei Tsedek memory card, which must then be removed. Any photos on staff or volunteer mobile phones that are necessary for official purposes must be deleted immediately after they have been transmitted for use in our own records or for publicity purposes or communicating with families.

Contact with young people away from the synagogue. Staff, including madrichim, should not **correspond** (make phone calls, send texts, messages or emails) with pupils/learners except via official Sha'arei Tsedek channels, nor should they share their mobile telephone numbers.

Social media Staff need at all times to model appropriate behaviour in their use of social media, in a way that reflects the reality that we are a community, recognising that teachers, volunteers and other adults are likely to have multiple and overlapping relationships with children and young people attending educational and other activities at the synagogue. They should not meet or 'friend' these young people through social media or arrange to meet privately, unless (a) this has been arranged and agreed with their Sha'arei Tsedek line manager for an official synagogue purpose and (b) parents have agreed to the meeting and venue. We commit ourselves to vigilance in this area while at the same time valuing the importance of being available to our young people. We will remain aware of the age limits set by the various apps, and will abide by them. We note for example that WhatsApp now has a minimum age limit of 16. We will guard the online privacy of our young members and use first names only in our publications.

Shared use of the building People of all ages and generations share our Sha'arei Tsedek premises at 120 Oakleigh Road North. We welcome this reality of broad community involvement and presence in our building. However, children's activities (such as Religion School, youth clubs, Alonim classes etc) are organised specifically for children, not for adults. Clearly, many staff and volunteers have key responsibilities requiring them to work and otherwise interact with children and young people every day, but **other adults** – including parents, visitors, Council members, etc – **should not attend or frequent children's activities** without the express approval of relevant staff, who are in charge of those activities.

There are **many steps** we can take to implement best practice. Specifically we must ensure that:

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- All staff and parents are **made aware** of our safeguarding policies and procedures. This Safeguarding Policy will be made available on the website.
- We provide adequate and appropriate **staffing resources** to meet the needs of children.
- Applicants for posts within the setting are clearly informed that the **positions are exempt** from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974.
- Candidates are informed of the need to carry out '**enhanced disclosure**' checks with the Disclosure & Barring Service before posts can be confirmed.
- Where applications are rejected because of information that has been disclosed, applicants have the **right to know** and to challenge incorrect information.
- We abide by **safer recruitment guidance** in respect of our interviewing process, two signed references and DBS checks for staff and volunteers, in order to ensure that no disqualified person or unsuitable person works at the setting or has access to the children.
- **Volunteers** do not work unsupervised.
- We abide by the Protection of Vulnerable Groups Act requirements in respect of any person who is **dismissed** from our employment, or resigns in circumstances that would otherwise have led to dismissal for reasons of child protection concern.
- We have procedures for recording the details of **visitors** who enter the synagogue and its grounds.
- We take security steps to ensure that we have control over **who comes into the synagogue** setting so that no unauthorised person has unsupervised access to children.
- Where a member of staff or volunteer has been **dismissed** due to engaging in activities that caused concern for the safeguarding of children or vulnerable adults, we notify the **Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA)** of relevant information so that individuals who pose a threat to children (and vulnerable groups), can be identified and barred from working with these groups.
- Sha'arei Tsedek consistently seeks out **training** opportunities for adults (staff and volunteers) and madirichim who have teaching and childcare-related responsibilities to ensure that they are able to recognise the signs and signals of possible physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse and neglect and that they are aware of our procedures for expressing, recording and responding to suspicions (see below).
- The **layout of rooms** occupied by children (attending any activity at the synagogue) should allow for constant supervision.
- We aim to introduce **positive elements** of keeping children safe into our programme in order that we promote their personal, social and emotional development, enabling them to grow to be *strong, resilient, listened-to, and conscious of the importance of safety in everyday life.*

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- We create within the synagogue setting a **culture of value and respect** for the individual, having positive regard for children's heritage arising from their colour, ethnicity, languages spoken at home, cultural and social background.
- We make sure that this is carried out in a way that is **developmentally appropriate** for the children.
- All suspicions and investigations are kept **confidential** and shared only with those who need to know. In most cases this is the Safeguarding Officer and Safeguarding Lead and no one else.
- We build trusting and supportive **relationships with parents** and families. Accordingly, we shall make clear to parents our role and responsibilities in relation to child protection, such as for the reporting of concerns, providing information, monitoring of the child, and liaising at all times with other relevant agencies.
- We continue to welcome the child and the family if and when any **investigation** is underway.
- We do our best always to play our part in implementing the terms of any **Child Protection Plan** as drawn up, for instance, by a known qualified social worker.
- We take steps to ensure children are **not photographed** or filmed on video for any other purpose than to record their development or their participation in events organised by us. Parents sign a consent form and have access to records holding visual images of their child.

Responding to suspicions of Abuse

If abuse has taken place, or is taking place in the present – or if a child is at significant risk of harm – it may be that other persons become aware of indicators which alert their **suspicions**; alternatively, a child or young person may himself or herself **disclose** abuse. It is vital to:

- **Recognise** the signs and behaviours which may be cause for concern
- **Respond** to the child or young person sensitively
- **Refer** the situation to the Safeguarding Officer; she will decide what further action to take and inform the relevant safeguarding agencies as necessary

More specifically:

- We acknowledge that abuse of children can take **different forms** - physical, emotional, and sexual, as well as neglect.

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- When children are suffering from physical, sexual or emotional abuse, or may be experiencing neglect, this may be demonstrated through the things **they say** (direct or indirect disclosure) or through **changes** in their appearance, their behaviour, or their play.
- We need to take into account factors affecting **parental capacity**, such as social exclusion, domestic violence, parent's drug or alcohol abuse, mental or physical illness or parent's learning disability.
- We likewise have to be aware of **other factors** that affect children's vulnerability, such as abuse of disabled children, fabricated or induced illness, abuse linked to beliefs in spirit possession, sexual exploitation of children (such as through internet abuse), and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM): we must bear in mind that such issues may affect or may have affected children and young people using our provision.
- We need also to make ourselves aware that some children and young people in the **local communities** whom we serve are affected by gang activity; by complex, multiple or organised abuse; by forced marriage or honour based violence or child trafficking. While this may be less likely to affect young children in our care we may become aware of any of these factors affecting older children and young people who we may come into contact with.
- We must always remember that **other local agencies** bear major legal responsibilities in the area of child protection: thus it is important that our designated Safeguarding Officer should report cases as necessary to the local authority (London Borough of Barnet) Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and the Metropolitan Police, and should ensure that the synagogue co-operates fully in any subsequent investigation. (Referring cases on to the local authority and the Police is subject to the judgment of the Safeguarding Officer, who has special training and a deeper practical knowledge base enabling her/him to reach such a judgment.) We need to remember to take care not to influence the outcome either through the way we speak to children or by asking questions of children.
- We take account of the need to protect **young people aged 16-19** as defined by the Children Act 1989. This may include students or school children on work placement, young employees or young parents. Where abuse is suspected we follow the procedure for reporting any other child protection concerns. The views of the young person will always be taken into account, but the setting may override the young person's refusal to consent to share information if it is felt that such an intervention is speedily required in order to prevent a crime from being committed or to prevent some other form harm to a child or young person. Sharing confidential information without consent is done only where not sharing it could be worse than the outcome of having shared it.
- Where a child says things to a member of staff that give cause for concern (**'disclosure'**, as detailed below) it is important to observe signs or signals that gives cause for

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concern, such as significant changes in behaviour, deterioration in general wellbeing, unexplained bruising, marks or signs of possible abuse or neglect.

Disclosure of Abuse

This relates to a range of possible comments a child or young person may make – including outright statements, allegations and complaints, expressions of alarm or fear, incongruous questions of allusions (e.g. to sexual activity), 'imaginative' narratives, persistent worries, etc.

If a child or young person has chosen to disclose abuse to you, you are a very special person for that child or young person.

Staff and volunteers should follow this procedure in the event of a disclosure:

Never promise that you can keep anything secret that a child or young person tells you. You have a duty to pass information on in order to protect children and young people.

If the young person then chooses not to disclose the information you should inform the Safeguarding Officer.

When a child or young person discloses abuse, it is important to:

Receive

- **Listen** to what is being said, trying not to display shock or disbelief be careful of physical messages
- **Accept** what is being said but do not comment upon it.
- **Do not** ask 'leading' questions, for example, "What did s/he do next?" (This assumes s/he did!), or, "Did s/he touch your private parts?" Such questions may invalidate the evidence in any later court action.

Reassure

- **Reassure** the young person but only so far as is honest and reliable, for example, don't make promises you may not be able to keep, such as, "I'll stay with you", or, "Everything will be all right now".
- **Don't promise to keep what they tell you a secret; you have to pass it on.**

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- Do reassure and alleviate guilt, if the young person refers to it. For example, you could say: "You are not to blame." "You are not alone, you're not the only one this sort of thing has happened to."
- Do **not** criticise the perpetrator; the young person may love that person and reconciliation may be possible.

Record

- As soon as possible all information should **be recorded**. Record as much detail as possible, including names, address, and contact information.
- **Write down** the nature of the allegation, do not include your own judgement or assumptions. Stick to what was actually said by the young person. You should use their own words, and this of course includes slang words for body parts if the child uses these words. You may add detail so of any physical marks to our standard body outline drawing, but never under any circumstances take any photographs
- **Note** any observations on behaviour/emotional state or injuries and bruising.
- **Note** time, location and date of disclosure and sign the notes.
- **Do not investigate** the matter yourself, merely receive information and be ready to refer.

Refer

- **Pass this information on** - a verbal account must be conveyed immediately to the designated Safeguarding Officer. In the absence of the Safeguarding Officer, refer information to another senior staff member – for example, a teacher or rabbi – ensuring that he/she will relay the report to the Safeguarding Officer as a matter of high urgency.
- It is your duty to refer this information – you **cannot keep it a secret**.
- Information should only be **shared** with the Safeguarding Officer or a rabbi (who must share it with the Safeguarding Officer).

Review

A year after approval by Council, this policy shall be reviewed by the Education Forum and the Forum's comments and recommendations should be referred to Council (for ratification or otherwise, as the case may be) - and any amended/updated future version of the Safeguarding Policy shall replace the present document.

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