**Safeguarding Policy for Children**

Essere Therapies will provide effective support to children at risk of harm, supporting children in mitigating that risk, and communicating clearly and openly in an age-appropriate way the steps we will take to protect them from harm, if deemed in their best interest.

The terms **“children”** and **“child”** refer to anyone under the age of 18.

Essere Therapies recognise that our engagement with children frequently offers us only a snapshot of their situation at any given time, and that our therapists must be alert to identifying children in need of support considering Lancashire’s Continuum of Need, being confident in knowing our legal duties as therapists.

All of our therapists are trained to know if someone is at risk of significant harm, which we will act upon, but always with informed consent where possible.

A written contract provides parents/carers with all the relevant information about how we manage what children tell us, and when and how we might need to break confidentiality.

A written contract is signed at the beginning of therapy, and it is important that the parent/carer and therapist take time together to ensure that all involved fully understands and is happy with the terms of the agreement, ensuring children are informed in a child friendly way.

We always want to involve children within the process and empower them to report the abuse themselves where possible. We acknowledge this is a difficult process and we will discuss it with the child unless it has anything to do with terrorism or acts of terror.

Statutory guidance published by the Government, Working Together to Safeguard Children, states “anyone who has concerns about a child’s welfare should consider whether a referral needs to be made to local authority children’s social care and should do so immediately if there is a concern that the child is suffering significant harm or is likely to do so.”

While this does not impose a legislative requirement to report abuse, it creates an expectation that those working with children will comply with the guidance unless there are exceptional circumstances, our therapists are trained and have continual supervised to act in the child's best interest.

In relation to child sexual abuse- In February 2024, the Government confirmed a mandatory reporting duty would be introduced through amendments to the Criminal Justice Bill at its Commons report stage, a date for which has not yet been set. **(Duties to report child abuse in England, research briefing 2024,** David Foster.)

Essere Therapies recognise the importance of ongoing training and development to keep up to date with emerging issues and keeping the ethos of safeguarding children high. Everybody has a role to play in safeguarding children and we strive to ensure all therapists are well informed. Our therapists undergo safeguarding and child protection training (level 3), which will be updated on a regular basis and/or whenever there is a change in legislation.

With regard to safer recruitment, all our associate therapist and founders of Essere have undergone rigorous checks to ensure they are safe to work with children. This includes an interview process, references, checks to ensure they have the necessary qualifications.

We also carry ensure enhanced checks through the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) with barred lists on anyone working with children, to make sure children are safe. This prevents people who are unsafe working with children.

Essere Therapies will follow the safeguarding procedures detailed within the safeguarding policy at the educational establishment they are working at, where appropriate they will also work within the safeguarding process below.

Essere Therapies safeguarding process are documented below:

Step 1 Identify risk of harm

Step 2 Assess level of risk of harm, complete safeguarding proforma

Step 3 Seek further advice and information and/or Internal, External, no immediate referral

Step 4 Determine and take appropriate action

Step 5 Document all decisions, rationale, and actions clearly in client record and disclosure record, including rationale for sharing information considering GDPR guidelines.

Step 6 Monitor and support

 **Step 1 – Identify risk of harm**

Associate therapists will be provided with training and guidance to effectively identify the risk factors for abuse or harm, they may also use Brook’s Traffic Light Tool to distinguish healthy and harmful behaviours when thinking about children, utilise warning signs and vulnerabilities checklists.

Essere Therapies will provide support and guidance to identify particular risks and risk groups, including:

Child sexual exploitation; Female genital mutilation; Domestic abuse, including forced marriage and honour-based violence; Online and other ICT based abuse; Adults at risk (see safeguarding vulnerable adult’s policy); Young people with disabilities; Young people at risk of radicalisation; child trafficking and modern slavery.

Where there is cause to suspect abuse or harm, Essere Therapies will sensitively highlight their concern with the child/young person in order to stimulate a conversation. It is important that the child's process is considered throughout the process.

In all such cases of disclosure of abuse or harm, or suspected abuse or harm of a child, our associate therapists are required to follow Essere therapies/educational establishments safeguarding procedure.

Associate therapists will make an accurate record of the disclosure, take care to record any timings, the setting and people present. Use the child’s own words but will not press for more information than offered.

**Step 2 – Assess level of risk of harm**

Where abuse or harm is disclosed or suspected, associate therapists will complete the safeguarding proforma to assess the level of risk and determine the action to be taken, involving a second person in their assessment if needed, this needs to be done as soon as the session has finished with their supervisor and/or Helen Lewin if deemed necessary.

**Step 3 – Seek further advice and information**

Internal advice - Essere therapies has a safeguarding lead (Helen Lewin) who is jointly accountable with the therapist for safeguarding decision.

External advice - The safeguarding lead is responsible for ensuring working relationships are in place with key external contacts including Children`s Social Care and the Local Safeguarding Children Board or equivalent, and Helen Lewin has a good understanding of the local safeguarding procedures in place within their Local Authority.

We will share information with external agencies only when appropriate, where this will best protect the child/ young person or others, with consent wherever possible.

Advice and information may be sought from Children’s Social Care if a child is sexually active under the age of 13.

 **Step 4 – Determine and take appropriate action**

Where risk of harm is identified, Essere Therapies will act in a way to best protect the child. We will involve the child in decision making and act with their consent where possible. We will act without consent when risk of immediate significant harm has been identified and/or action is in the best interest of the child, in line with the law.

Essere Therapies will support the child in understanding the risk of harm and encourage and empower them to take any appropriate action to mitigate that risk themselves, with support.

External referral- When the decision is taken that an external referral is in the best interests of the child, Essere Therapies will agree with the agency concerned how and when Essere Therapies will be informed about the outcome of any referral.

Essere Therapies will always follow up with the agency if this information is not received; this is the responsibility of the therapist, where Essere Therapies are not satisfied with the outcome of any referral this will be escalated to the Local Safeguarding Children Board or equivalent.

Email enquiries@lancashire.gov.uk

Children Social Care- Telephone 0300 123 6701

Out of hours emergency contact details- Social Care 0300 123 6722

Lancashire Police- Telephone 0845 1 25 35 45

If you are in immediate danger or think a criminal act is being committed, contact the police by calling 999.

No immediate referral- Where it is agreed that no immediate referral needs to be made, a programme of follow-up and support will be agreed with the child and monitored.

 **Step 5 – Document all decisions, rationale, and actions**

All safeguarding concerns will be fully documented, including those where it is agreed that no action needs to be taken.

The safeguarding proforma will record a summary of the concern and the level of risk of harm, the decisions taken and the rationale for those decisions, and the agreed actions and timescales for follow up.

**Step 6 – Monitor and support**

Helen Lewin will monitor alongside the therapist safeguarding concerns to ensure that all agreed actions are delivered. While providing follow-up support associate therapists will monitor any changes in the child’s situation that may affect the level of risk of harm and act as appropriate. Monitoring activity and outcomes will be documented.

 **Supporting children/young people at risk of harm**

Essere Therapies primary concern is the best interests of the child who may be at risk of harm. All decision-making processes will consider the impact of that decision on the child and whether there is a risk of them experiencing greater harm as a result of any decision.

Essere Therapies will involve the child in decisions wherever possible and respect the expectations of confidentiality and trust that have been built up. We will always seek to secure the child’s informed consent before sharing confidential information but will share such information without consent where it is necessary for their immediate protection, or that of a third party, in line with our confidentiality policy.

We will endeavour to communicate clearly and openly about any actions that will be taken and the likely outcomes of those actions and keep the child fully informed throughout.

If we receive a court order or coroner’s request, we have to comply. We do not release client's case notes without such an order, or consent.

**Support for associate therapists**

Associate therapists will attend mandatory safeguarding training commensurate with their role and will be provided with any further training necessary to ensure they are equipped and supported to handle safeguarding concerns.

The receipt of a disclosure of abuse or harm can be upsetting, associate therapists will be offered support, via: Individual case debrief with Helen Lewin if required; Regular 1-to-1 supervision with their supervisor; group supervision/training on a monthly basis.

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to:

* **Education Act 2002**: Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 requires local education authorities and the governors of maintained schools and further education (FE) colleges to make arrangements to ensure that their functions are carried out with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. Section 157 of the same act and the Education (Independent Schools Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 require proprietors of independent schools (including academies) to have arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.
* **Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018:** guides education establishments of their role within inter-agency working to safeguard and protect children.
* **Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023**: The Department for Education (DfE) has updated the statutory safeguarding and child protection guidance for schools and colleges in England, Keeping children safe in education. This guidance sets out what schools and colleges in England must do to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people under the age of 18.
* **Guidance for Safer Working Practice 2022**
* **The Children Act 1989 & 2004**
* **The Prevent Duty –** The Prevent duty is **the duty in the Counter-Terrorism and** **Security Act 2015** that sets out guidance for the LA and its partners to have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism.
* **Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003** as inserted by the Serious Crime Act 2015
* **Sexual Offences Act 2003**
* **Equality Act 2010**
* **Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015**
* **Domestic Abuse Act 2021**
* **Disqualification under the Childcare Act 2006**
* **Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 and the Protection of Freedoms Bill**
* **Duties to report child abuse in England, research briefing 2024** David Foster. commonslibrary.parliament.uk

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