



**reconstruct**

# **Safeguarding Policy & Procedure Policy**

## Safeguarding Policy & Procedures

### Policy Statement

The company work to improve the lives of vulnerable children and young people and keeping children safe lies at the heart of everything we do as individuals and as an organisation. We understand that Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.

The General Data Protection Regulations 2018 has guidance on information sharing for those working with children and young people and we understand that Safeguarding and Child Protection concerns overrule data protection considerations. We will work with all out local safeguarding partners to ensure best practice and guidance is adhered to.

Multi- agency working and information sharing are the most important tools in making sure children are kept safe from harm and abuse. There are four categories of abuse recognised by the 1989 Children Act: physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse and neglect. Section 47 of the Children Act 1989 states that a local authority has a duty to investigate when there is 'reasonable cause to suspect that a child who lives, or is found, in their area is suffering, or is likely to suffer significant harm'. It must make such enquiries, as it considers necessary in order to decide whether any action is needed to safeguard or promote the child's welfare. It is important that practitioners are also aware of additional vulnerabilities of children and young people who are:

- At risk of gang involvement or associated with organised crime and criminality sometimes across county lines.
- Frequently going missing from home or care
- Misusing drugs and alcohol
- At risk of sexual exploitation
- Experiencing bullying including cyber bullying
- At risk of so-called honour crimes
- At risk of FGM
- At risk of radicalisation
- At risk of human trafficking or modern slavery
- Child criminal and sexual abuse

Additional groups with vulnerabilities are those who are young carers, those who are privately fostered, those with disabilities, those living in secure youth provision, those living in families with one or more toxic trio concerns. Children seeking refuge and asylum are also particularly vulnerable.

Section 47 (9) says that 'Where a local authority are conducting enquiries under this section, it shall be the duty of any person... to assist them with these enquiries...if called upon by the local authority to do so'. We take this duty seriously and recognises it is the duty of all of us to work together cooperatively and openly to help keep children safe from risk and harm.

### Safeguarding Principles

We will:

- Honour the child's and vulnerable adult's fundamental right to protection from exploitation, neglect, physical, emotional and sexual abuse, including domestic abuse.
- Ensure that abuse in any of its forms will not be **tolerated**
- Take seriously and immediately report allegations or suspicions of abuse concerning children/vulnerable adults. Detailed procedures about how staff must respond to specific concerns are available and must be followed when applicable.
- Remain open-minded in respect of allegations made by children and vulnerable adults, avoiding making assumptions about children, carers, parents, professionals, or staff and ensure that matters are dealt with fairly and transparently.

- Positively promote the needs of adults, children and young people and will consider their ethnic origin, cultural background, religion, health, gender, sexual orientation/gender identity and special needs.
- Provide an effective complaints procedure.
- Ensure that confidential, detailed and accurate records of all safeguarding concerns are maintained and securely stored.
- Provide high quality support to staff to ensure that any safeguarding issues are identified and acted upon accordingly.

We will our robust recruitment process ensuring safer recruitment practice is followed and all team members who undertake recruitment are safer recruited trained.

The recruitment process includes:

- Provision of clear job descriptions and person spec
- Completion of a written application form which includes reference to the requirements to declare any convictions under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) Order 1975
- Receipt of two written references
- Completion of an interview with a minimum two persons forming the panel
- Receipt of a clear Enhanced DBS Check
- Receipt of digital checks
- LADO checks (if the LA has agreed to support this)

Provide mandatory Safeguarding training as part of their onboarding to all employees, advocates and volunteers. This is also compulsory for employees advocates, and volunteers to attend a refresher every 2 years.

## **Definitions of Abuse and Neglect (Children)**

Abuse and neglect are forms of maltreatment of a child. 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 a stranger for example, via the internet. They may be abused by an adult or adults, or another child or children. *(Definitions taken from Working Together to Safeguard Children, 2018 England)*

### **Physical abuse**

Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child or service user.

Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child or service user.

### **Emotional abuse**

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child/service user such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to a child/service user 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/service user 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 expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond the child's/service user's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child/service user 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/service user 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.

### **Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)**

Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or service user under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.

### **Neglect**

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

It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs

### **Radicalisation**

Children can be exposed to different views and receive information from various sources. Some of these views may be considered radical or extreme. Radicalisation is the process through which a person comes to support or be involved in extremist ideologies. It can result in a person becoming drawn into terrorism and is in itself a form of harm.

Extremism is vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs. It includes calls for the death of members of the British armed forces (HM Government, 2011).

We will adhere to the procedures set out in the national PREVENT strategy and any other internal procedures for report.

From July 2015 all schools and child care providers must have regard to the statutory guidance issued in July 2015 under the County Terrorism and Security Act 2015.

The duty is known as the PREVENT duty.

[Prevent duty guidance: for England and Wales \(accessible\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/442669/prevent-duty-guidance-for-england-and-wales-accessible.pdf)

### **Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)**

Female genital mutilation (FGM) is defined as the partial or total removal of the external female genitalia, or any practice that purposely changes or injures the female genital organs for non-medical reasons. The practice is internationally recognised as a human rights violation of women and girls.

FGM has been a criminal offence in the U.K. since the Prohibition of Female Circumcision Act 1985 was passed. The Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003 replaced the 1985 Act and made it an offence for the first time for UK nationals, permanent or habitual UK residents to carry out FGM abroad, or to aid, abet, counsel or procure the carrying out of FGM abroad, even in countries where the practice is legal.

### **Modern Day Slavery and trafficking**

Modern slavery is the recruitment, movement, harbouring or receiving of children, women or men through the use of force, coercion, abuse of vulnerability, deception or other means for the purpose of exploitation.

Types of Slavery include:

- Sex Trafficking, the manipulation, coercion, or control of an adult engaging in a commercial sex act
- Child Sex Trafficking
- Forced Labour
- Forced Child Labour
- Bonded Labour or Debt Bondage
- Domestic Servitude
- Unlawful Recruitment and Use of Child Soldiers

### **Definitions of Abuse and Neglect (Adults)**

An adult at risk of harm is a person aged 18 or over, whose exposure to harm through abuse, exploitation or neglect may be increased by their personal characteristics or life circumstances.

#### **Physical abuse**

Physical injuries which have no satisfactory explanation or where there is a definite knowledge, or a reasonable suspicion that the injury was inflicted with intent, or through lack of care, by the person having custody, charge or care of that person, including hitting, slapping, pushing, misuse of or lack of medication, restraint, or inappropriate sanctions.

#### **Domestic Abuse**

Domestic abuse is an incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening, degrading and violent behaviour, including sexual violence, in the majority of cases by a partner or ex-partner, but also by a family member or carer.

Domestic abuse can include, but is not limited to, the following:

- Coercive control (a pattern of intimidation, degradation, isolation and control with the use or threat of physical or sexual violence)
- Psychological and/or emotional abuse
- Physical or sexual abuse
- Financial or economic abuse
- Harassment and stalking
- Online or digital abuse

### **Emotional abuse**

Psychological, or emotional abuse, includes the use of threats, fears or bribes to negate a vulnerable adult's choices, independent wishes and self-esteem; cause isolation or over-dependence (as might be signalled by impairment of development or performance); or prevent a vulnerable adult from using services, which would provide help.

### **Sexual abuse**

Sexual acts, which might be abusive, include non-contact abuse such as looking, pornographic photography, indecent exposure, harassment, unwanted teasing or innuendo, or contact such as touching breasts, genitals, or anus, masturbation, penetration or attempted penetration of vagina, anus, and mouth with or by penis, fingers or other objects.

### **Neglect**

Neglect can be both physical and emotional. It is about the failure to keep a vulnerable adult clean, warm and promote optimum health, or to provide adequate nutrition, medication, being prevented from making choices.

Neglect of a duty of care or the breakdown of a care package may also give rise to safeguarding issues i.e. where a carer refuses access or if a care provider is unable, unwilling or neglects to meet assessed needs. If the circumstances mean that the vulnerable adult is at risk of significant harm, then Safeguarding Adults procedures should be invoked.

Additional information on some key safeguarding issues please see the supplementary guidance hyperlinks below

[Forced Marriage](#)

[Safeguarding children from Abuse to faith or belief](#)

[Safeguarding Disabled Children](#)

[Preventing and talking bullying](#)

[Information sharing](#)

[Modern Slavery and trafficking](#)

[Self Harm and Suicidal behaviour](#)

[Underage sexual activity](#)

[Mental Capacity Act: making decisions - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

### **Procedure**

We will ensure all Managers, staff, advocates and volunteers are trained in Safeguarding and Child Protection and are aware of risks to children and young people and the signs of abuse and neglect.

This training and all Policies and Procedures will be regularly refreshed and updated and Safeguarding and Child Protection will be agenda items in supervisions and appraisals of all workers.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead for the company is Leanne McGowan (leanne.mcgowan@reconstruct.co.uk), Head of Service. If the service Manager is unavailable her line manager is Siobhan Harper (Siobhan.harper@reconstruct.co.uk), Director or Ruksana Aslam Forrester Lead Advocate coordinator (Ruksana.aslam@reconstruct.co.uk)

If anyone acting for or employed by the company has reason to believe that a child or service user is at risk of or is being abused then the safety and welfare of that child has to be the paramount consideration in deciding what action needs to be taken.

All concerns about the safety and well-being of a child or service user must be recorded and reported to the Children's Services on the same working day as the concern has been identified.

This should be done by either phoning your supervising coordinator or the service manager. If you have been unable to speak to a person, please leave a message BUT then telephone the coordinator's mobile or the children's services manager's mobile telephone numbers (see below).

Only if you are still unable to speak with a relevant employee then explain to the child (taking into consideration the child's age, development and their level of understanding or any other communication difficulties) that you both need to share this information with the child's social worker, plan what you will verbally report with the child and then telephone their social worker during office hours or the emergency social work team out of office hours. It is important to keep the child or service user involved with what is likely to happen, from any conversations with coordinators, the children's services manager, the director of practice or the local authority.

In the unlikely event that you were required to contact a social worker prior to being able to speak with a relevant member of staff, you are required to make contact with a coordinator or children's services manager as soon as possible thereafter.

We can then work with appropriate local safeguarding partnership agencies to ensure plans are put in place and acted upon to protect children and young people experiencing or at risk of harm.

**Contact Telephone Numbers:**

**If a child is in immediate danger call the police on 999 straight away**

**Main office number: 0800 0209 858  
Office hours 9am – 5pm.**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Job title</b>	<b>Mobile number</b>
Leanne McGowan	Head of Service (Designated Safeguarding Lead)	07549021086
Carol Floris –	Bristol Advocacy Coordinator	07857625129
Debbie Mayes	Surrey Advocacy Coordinator	07857618559
Eileen Smith	Gloucestershire Advocacy Team Manager	07955 313719
Jennifer Tabley	South West Independent Visitor Coordinator	07857 621953
Louise Dean	Milton Keynes Advocacy and IV Coordinator	07719 088870
Maria Mayes	Reading IV Coordinator	07495 542096
Olivia Hauxwell	South West Independent Visitor Coordinator	07956 588 807
Paige Elvins	South West Independent Visitor Coordinator/ BeHeard Advocacy Team	07745533900
Ruksana Aslam-Forrester,	South Gloucestershire coordinator	07802 868276



In case of an out of hours emergency contact the Local Authority Emergency Duty Team. This will be evening or weekends. See relevant website for details of operating hours.

Bristol City Council	01454 615 165 <a href="https://www.bristol.gov.uk/residents/social-care-and-health/emergency-duty-team">https://www.bristol.gov.uk/residents/social-care-and-health/emergency-duty-team</a>
Gloucestershire County Council	01452 614194 <a href="https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/emergency-contacts/emergency-duty-team/">https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/emergency-contacts/emergency-duty-team/</a>
Milton Keynes	<a href="https://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/children-young-people-and-families/emergency-social-work-team-eswt">https://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/children-young-people-and-families/emergency-social-work-team-eswt</a>
Reading (Brighter Futures for Children)	<b>01344 351999</b> <a href="#">Report or refer concerns about a child - Brighter Futures For Children</a>
South Gloucestershire	01454 615 165 <a href="https://beta.southglos.gov.uk/emergency-contacts">https://beta.southglos.gov.uk/emergency-contacts</a>
Surrey County Council	01483 517898 <a href="https://www.surreycc.gov.uk/children/contact-childrens-services">https://www.surreycc.gov.uk/children/contact-childrens-services</a>

**Keep these numbers in your own mobile phone.**

- Advocates and volunteers have the responsibility of talking through the “our promise document” to the child or service user explaining to young people during their initial sessions that they cannot give absolute guarantees about keeping what they say confidential from us as an agency but explain the differing levels of confidentiality to our agency and the local authority.

Workers also need to explore the ‘significant harm’ threshold of confidentiality with young people. If a disclosure is made and there is a risk of significant harm to the child or the child has suffered significant harm the worker must inform the child (in an age appropriate way) that they must report this to the local authority duty team.

## **Recruitment, Training and Support**

We recognise that the abuse can and does occur in any setting and we are vigilant in our safe recruitment which is thorough and includes identity and safeguarding checks. During your employment (including volunteers) you will receive, ongoing supervision, training and annual appraisals.

Training on these procedures will be provided for all Managers, Staff, advocates and volunteers. It is the responsibility of your coordinator to arrange extra support as and when necessary. This will include situations:

- Where a child or someone else on their behalf has made a disclosure to you
- Where you suspect abuse
- If there is an allegation of abuse made against you or another staff member or volunteer.

## **Allegations against you as a practitioner (Also see allegations policy)**

If there is an allegation of abuse made against a Manager, coordinator, advocate or volunteer it should immediately be reported to their line manager and/or the designated safeguarding lead, Leanne McGowan. If neither are available to the Group Director, Siobhan Harper.

Following any such allegation the manager will follow the process in the allegations policy.

In all cases where an allegation has been made against a staff member the designated safeguarding lead within the organisation must inform the Local Authority Duty Officer (LADO) within 24 hours

In this scenario it will be the responsibility of the Designated Safeguarding lead to report these concerns to Local authority LADO and within one working day of the receipt of the concerns.

## **Information sharing**

### **See also: Confidentiality Policy**

If a service user discloses information to you that you believe falls within the definition of 'significant harm' under the categories of Physical abuse, Sexual abuse, Emotional Abuse and Neglect you should explain this to the service user (in simple language relevant to ability and understanding) and explain that you will need to share this information with the relevant people.

Should the service user try to refuse, you still need to explain to the service user this information will have to be shared. The safety and welfare of young people is paramount. In practice it is very rare that a service user will remain opposed to this course of action, if you properly share your reasons for doing so and involve them in the process, so that it 'feels' like this is a journey that you are both on.

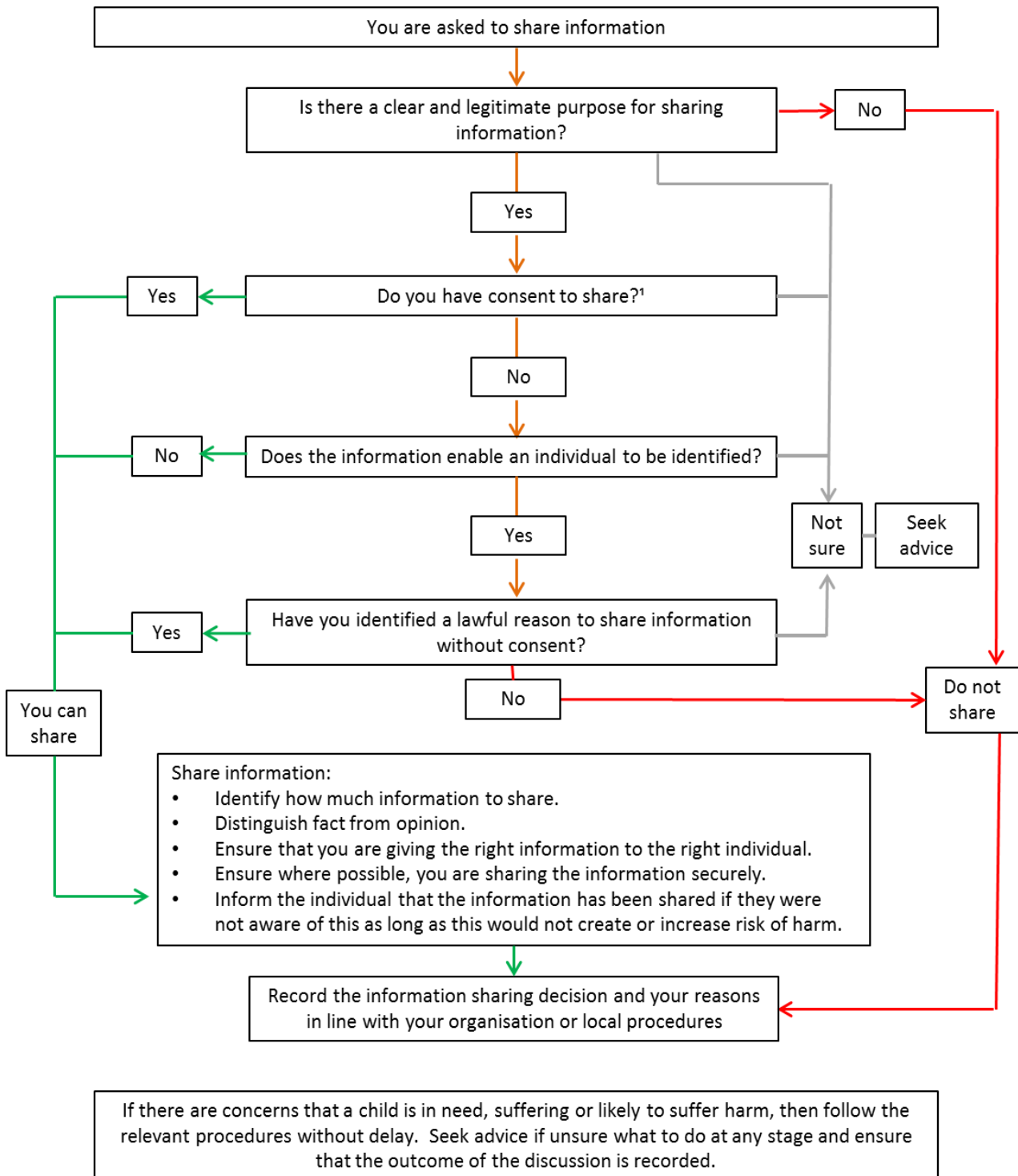
Opposed to the service user feeling that something has been given to you (information) which you are now going to take away from them and later on someone else will do something about it, but they do not know who, what or when that will be. If there is no immediate risk, you should explain to the service user why the information needs to be shared, and encourage them to decide whom it should be shared with, and if there is anyone they would prefer did not know. It is not always possible to contain information once it has been disclosed, and you should be honest with young people about this. However, you can advocate on behalf of the service user to keep information on a 'need to know basis'.

In the unlikely event that a service user continues to refuse to allow you to pass information on, you should explain that you will consult with your coordinator or children's services manager, who

will consider whether a breach of the service user’s confidentiality is warranted. If the disclosure constitutes abuse or neglect, the children’s services manager can authorise disclosure over the service user’s wishes and feelings. Children’s workers should not pass on information to any third parties without this consent unless there is immediate risk to a service user.

Flowchart of when and how to share information

Extracted from the HM Government Information sharing advice practitioners safeguarding services)



1. Consent must be unambiguous, freely given and may be withdrawn at any time

The government information sharing document July 2018 provides further information on information sharing click [here](#) to view

## Good Practice Guide

If a child or service user discloses information to you that falls under the categories of abuse, or you believe they are vulnerable to radicalisation you should:

- Listen carefully, giving the service user time and undivided attention. Try not to express your own views and feelings. If you appear shocked or as if you don't believe them it could make them stop talking and take back what they have said.
- Keep calm, try to maintain the conversation and be clear about what the child is saying in terms of when, whom and where they are talking about.
- Don't interrogate, prompt or persuade, but reflect back to them what they are saying to make sure you got it right.
- Reassure them that they have done the right thing by telling you.
- Tell them it not their fault, abuse is never a child's fault, it is important to hear this
- You should explain that you will be speaking to someone who can help them. They should be aware it cannot remain confidential to just you and the service user. The policy on confidentiality should have been made clear to the service user, nevertheless the service user maybe fearful about what may happen and who may find out what they have said.
- They may need considerable help and reassurance to feel safe. Find out if the service user has already told someone, find out whom. Depending on the nature of what you are told it may be appropriate to encourage the child to approach their foster carer or keyworker about this information.

Remember the responsibility for undertaking the investigation lies with the area social services department and not with us.

You should record any information concerning the disclosure as soon as possible. This should include; date and time of the conversation, what service user said, any injuries noted and action taken by you the worker, e.g. telephone calls to a coordinator and decisions made. This should be signed and dated. In some circumstances the service user could be encouraged to write or dictate their own account and be given a copy. A copy should be sent to the coordinator in addition to a telephone call.

**If you or a service user is in a dangerous situation requiring immediate action please call the police.**

When a referral to Children' Social Care is made, then any future decisions regarding the safety of the service user and the conduct of the investigation will be made by the team in consultation with others involved. You have a responsibility to ensure that the service user understands the process and is given the opportunity to give his/her views about participation in any investigation.

Your coordinator will be able to help you understand and explain this process to a service user.

A strategy meeting may be called by the local authority during or after an investigation. This is a meeting of professionals to decide the way forward, taking into account all the circumstances and the best interests of the service user concerned.

The strategy meeting may decide to call a child protection conference which will include a range of representatives some of who will know the child and the family. It would probably also include the parents.

It is important to recognise the importance of feedback to the service user both during and at the end of the process and their right to make a complaint if they are not satisfied with how it was handled. It is vital that they remain involved with the process, as it is their information, experience(s) and this will reduce the anxiety of the unknown.

### **Safety and Risk**

The welfare of the service users is of paramount concern to us. During the time you are with the service user you have a degree of responsibility for their well-being. This responsibility is dependent on the age of the service user and the setting in which you are meeting them.

It must be acknowledged that we are working with young people who are often more vulnerable than their peers who are not in care. Emotionally and behaviourally troubled young people can put themselves at risk physically, emotionally, and sexually. It is equally important to be aware that some adults who work with children seek to take advantage of this vulnerability.

It is therefore sensible for the protection of young people that you take reasonable precautions to ensure their safety. This will vary depending on the service user, but your coordinator will draw up a risk assessment if you are working as a lone worker. You would also be expected to take specific precautions e.g.: around roads, avoiding particular foods and being aware of the emotions of the child. Coordinators will discuss any such issues with you, to assist and support sensible decision making.

Children's workers (including volunteers) are required, on an ongoing basis, to assess any potential risks both to young people and self. Where you are uncertain of the risk, or particular activities are considered hazardous or risky for the service user concerned, you should always consult with your coordinator who may decide to discuss this with the children's services manager.

### **Children's Workers (including volunteers)**

Some service users can also pose a risk to those they work with. This could be physical, emotional or sexual in nature. It is expected that potential risks will be identified by the social worker and the foster carer at the referral stage, and these risks can then be discussed within supervision prior to the meeting the service user. Such difficulties must then be taken into account when assessing the risk in any given situation.

However, it is not always possible to identify all the risks in any situation. When taking service users out, it is important to agree return times with carers, to let people know where you will be, and if you deviate from plans to ensure the relevant people are aware of the change in plan.

Some risks are less obvious. Many young people have experienced significant amounts of pain and suffering, some of which may also resonate with our own life experiences. It is important that you are equipped to cope with these situations, and one essential tool in surviving in this line of work is supervision and the support and sensible advice that can be offered, often referred to as 'unloading', especially after a very difficult session.

We value our workers, and will ensure regular, reliable and effective support and supervision via a range of opportunities, tailored to meet individual and agency requirements. If you are not receiving the level of support that you require, please discuss this with your supervising coordinator or if it remains an unresolved issue with the children's services manager. We take your support and supervision very seriously and we usually receive positive feedback concerning this issue.



## **In an emergency**

If the service user is in immediate danger it could be necessary to call the police, but you are also required to contact your supervising coordinator or children's services manager, when safe to do so.

Please refer to the telephone contact numbers above. If an emergency involves a service user, you also need to make reasonable attempts to contact their carers.

Finally, it is important to ensure that you provide written clear records of these events (preferably typed) as soon after the emergency as is reasonably practicable. Written notes should include actions taken, decisions made and what happened, where possible these can be written with the service user, again helping them to feel included and to demonstrate your ability to work alongside the child: 'do with' not 'for'.

Please ensure you have all these relevant contact telephone numbers with you or stored in your mobile telephone during time spent with young people, so that you are able to quickly obtain support required from us.

## **Escalation**

If the matter has been referred to Children's Social Care and the worker or volunteer believes that the action taken does not safeguard the child, the worker must discuss their concerns with the Children's Services Manager or (in their absence) the Service Director. They will then consider whether the local Escalation procedure should be invoked so that Children's Social Care can also be sure that the child will be safe. There is often a reluctance to consider this action but the reasons for this should also be considered when the decision to invoke the procedure is being considered.

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **How should I respond to a service user if they are making an allegation or telling me something concerning?**

- Listen carefully, giving the service user time and undivided attention. Try not to express your own views and feelings. If you appear shocked or as if you don't believe them it could make them stop talking and take back what they have said.
- Keep calm, try to maintain the conversation and be clear about what the child is saying in terms of when, whom and where they are talking about.
- Don't interrogate, prompt or persuade, but reflect back to them what they are saying to make sure you got it right.
- Reassure them that they have done the right thing by telling you.
- Tell them it not their fault, abuse is never a child's fault, it is important to hear this
- You should explain that you will be speaking to someone who can help them. They should be aware it cannot remain confidential to just you and the service user. The policy on confidentiality should have been made clear to the service user, nevertheless the service user maybe fearful about what may happen and who may find out what they have said.
- They may need considerable help and reassurance to feel safe. Find out if the service user has already told someone, find out whom. Depending on the nature of what you are told it may be appropriate to encourage the child to approach their foster carer or keyworker about this information.

Remember the responsibility for undertaking the investigation lies with the area social services department and not with us.



You should record any information concerning the disclosure as soon as possible. This should include; date and time of the conversation, what service user said, any injuries noted and action taken by you the worker, e.g. telephone calls to a coordinator and decisions made. This should be signed and dated. In some circumstances the service user could be encouraged to write or dictate their own account and be given a copy. A copy should be sent to the coordinator in addition to a telephone call.

### **What about concerns or allegations where the alleged perpetrator is a child or service user?**

Occasionally, allegations or concerns involve children or vulnerable adults as the alleged perpetrator. In these circumstances, the same referral process should be followed with the addition that the alleged perpetrator should also be the subject of an assessment by the placing authority investigating the allegation. The alleged perpetrator should, at the very least, be viewed as a child/vulnerable adult in need, as they themselves may be a victim. A discussion of their needs should form a separate part of any strategy discussions. This should not however, take focus away from addressing the needs of the alleged victim, but rather should ensure that the needs of the alleged perpetrator are also addressed.

### **What happens after the referral has been made?**

There is a set process for dealing with all referrals made. You may be asked to contribute to the investigation process, strategy discussions or case conferences, so please ensure that you represent the facts that you are aware of, in a professional and accurate manner.

Once an investigation is completed, it is essential that the outcome is obtained in writing from the investigating authority and placed on the appropriate file.

### **What needs to be done after the investigation?**

If a member of staff is subject to an investigation, there has to be a written record of the outcome for the individual's file. If the investigating authority and the police take No Further Action, it is essential that we obtain a record of to what action has been taken, and which of the Critical Incident prescribed outcomes is relevant. We should also seek their view in writing if possible as to what action, if any, they recommend we should take.

Investigating authorities and the police cannot direct us to reach a particular disciplinary judgement, but they can advise that we implement disciplinary procedures. Whilst the focus of this policy is safeguarding children and young people, it is important to ensure that any staff, which are subject to this process, are treated honestly and fairly, and receive appropriate support.

Managers must ensure that any information relating to the allegation is fully documented on the staff file as appropriate, and that this includes an outcome.

### **Safeguarding practice reviews**

Occasionally, we may be asked to contribute to Safeguarding Practice reviews or other multi-agency reviews about specific cases identified by the statutory body responsible for child protection and welfare. In these circumstances, we will identify a Senior Manager to contribute information to the review, and support with this process can also be obtained from the Quality Assurance and Service Improvement Team.

### **Conclusion**

Keeping children and young people safe is the responsibility of us all. We take safeguarding responsibilities very seriously. We follow safer recruitment and employment practices and we train and support all our workers to understand and be aware of possible signs of abuse and how best to deal with this. We are committed to supporting workers and equipping them to manage challenging situations. Our job is to look after the adults who work for us so they can look after the



children they support. **Therefore, any concerns, doubts or worries, however small please call straight away.**

## VERSION CONTROL

			Document Owner	Reconstruct
			Status	Active
			Next Review	30/09/2024
Version	Revision Date	Section Revised	Person undertaking Revision	Reason for Revision
V_2 2023	11/10/23	All	AD	Review of policy, rebranding, and implemented version control mechanism opposed to having just date for next review