

Arts Council of Wales

Supporting Documents and Useful Information

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Cyngor Celfyddydau Cymru
Arts Council of Wales



Noddir gan
Lywodraeth Cymru
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Supporting Documents and Useful Information

1. Recognising Child Abuse

It is very important that any person who has contact with children and families should always be alert to the possible indicators of child abuse. Anyone who has knowledge, concerns or suspicions that a child is being harmed, or is at risk of significant harm, has a responsibility to pass such concerns to those agencies that have the statutory powers to investigate and intervene. These agencies are the Social Services Department or Police.

Child abuse may be the result of direct acts towards a child, or by the failure of those who have responsibility for a child to provide reasonable care, or it may be both. It could be viewed in terms of commissioning an act towards a child or young person or by omission.

Child abuse can be perpetrated by parents, other family members, carers, neighbours, professionals working with children, or any adult known or not known to the child and family. It is unusual for child abuse to be perpetrated by an adult not known to the child. A child may also be the victim of abuse where the abuser is another child. Those children/young people who in homes where substance misuse or domestic violence occurs may also experience abuse or neglect. Workers should be aware of what to look for so that they can, if necessary, make referrals to the relevant protection agencies.

It should be remembered that the first indication that a child is being abused is not necessarily the presence of a severe injury. Suspicions of any form of abuse may be aroused by overheard remarks made by a child, family members or friends, or by noticeable changes in a child's behaviour or reactions.

Child abuse is commonly categorised in four ways:

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 or induces illness in a child whom they are looking after.

Sexual abuse

Forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. It may include physical contact, including penetrative or non penetrative acts. It may include non contact activities, such as involving children in looking at or in the production of pornographic material or watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

Emotional abuse

The persistent emotional treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional and behavioural development.

Neglect

The persistent or severe neglect of a child or the failure to protect a child from exposure to any kind of danger including cold, starvation or extra failure to carry out important aspects of care, resulting in the significant impairment of a child's health or development, including non organic failure to thrive.

2. Child abuse indicators

The following are some general points that give indications of possible child abuse. It should not, however, be automatically assumed that because indicators exist that a child or young person is being abused:

- a history or other evidence of frequent, repeated injuries
- repeated attendance at clinic or hospital, or frequent hospital admissions
- a delay in seeking medical advice and treatment that is obviously necessary
- conflicting accounts and explanations of how an injury has occurred given by the child and carers
- an unawareness or denial of an injury or incident by the carer
- very low self-esteem
- fearful and withdrawn behaviour
- an adult who has very noticeable unrealistic expectations of a child
- failure to thrive and meet developmental milestones
- an awareness that domestic violence or animal abuse occurs within the family

3. Talking to children

When a child speaks about what appears to be an abusive situation, the following principles should apply, and should be followed in all cases:

- the child should be listened to but not interrogated nor asked leading questions or asked to repeat their account
- care should be taken not to make assumptions about what the child is saying or to make interpretations
- the child should not be interrupted when recalling significant events
- the discussion should be noted carefully and wherever possible the child's own words recorded and details such as timing, setting, who was present and what was said should be recorded
- all actions subsequently taken should be recorded
- the child should never be promised complete confidentiality

4. Reporting

What to do when concerns are raised about possible child abuse

Concerns of abuse may arise in a number of ways. The child or young person may make a disclosure; someone else such as a parent or volunteer may voice concerns or there may be suspicion of abuse.

It will be important in any work that you do, to ensure that a plan is agreed with your line manager and co-workers on how any allegations or suspicions will be dealt with.

The following principles should apply:

- if a child or young person discloses abuse it is important to discuss the issues in a calm, caring and supportive manner
- the child is never to blame in situations of abuse and should be reassured they have done nothing wrong, either in relation to the abuse itself or in reporting it
- the child needs to know that you are listening and taking seriously the information that is being divulged, and that you will respond positively to ensure their protection
- listen carefully and let the child tell you the information in his/her own way
- it is important to record what is said, using the child's own words wherever possible, at the time if appropriate, or as soon as possible following the disclosure
- it is not appropriate to inquire into the details of the abuse at this stage. It is important, however, to listen and respond positively to the child and be supportive without asking direct questions
- the child will need information and an explanation of what will or is likely to happen next

You may become concerned about the safety of a child or young person by observing their behaviour or physical injuries. In some cases the identification of child abuse can be straightforward as a result of the nature of the injuries, statements from witnesses and actions of perpetrators. In these circumstances you should contact your named child protection person immediately and discuss appropriate action. If they are not available, contact the Chief Executive or equivalent within your organisation.

In some cases the identification of child abuse can be the result of a lengthy and complex process involving the gathering and assessing of relevant information over time and from a variety of different sources. In this case, it is the culmination of a number of factors that leads to conclusions about abuse rather than a single incident. Despite our sometimes reluctance to get involved it is also clear that earlier involvement can lead to better outcomes for children and young people.

In many situations the child's explanation of the injuries and circumstances leading to the abuse is crucial. Talking to children especially those with particular communication skills because of age or disability may be a key role for staff. A record of those communications and of all other relevant information gathered about abuse is vital.

It is unacceptable for staff to rely on children and young people themselves making the child protection referral. Staff must avoid possible failure to protect children and take action where abuse is suspected. The welfare of the child is paramount.

Discussion is important to clarify the issues, and agree on the appropriate way forward. Furthermore, it is important to ensure that those at the right level of seniority are involved in the decision-making. However, no one should ever delay emergency action (if this is believed to be necessary) to protect a child because of the unavailability of a certain individual.

5. Abuse of a child / young person by another child / young person

Allegations or concerns regarding the abuse of a child by another child need to be responded to with particular sensitivity, although they must nevertheless be dealt with through the child protection process.

Many young abusers have been abused themselves, and so any subsequent process – including any police investigation where this applies - must consider the needs and circumstances of the 'abuser' and the 'abused', as well as protecting the needs of both.

Whilst bullying is different to child abuse it can be a precursor to abuse taking place. All agencies should therefore ensure that they deal effectively and appropriately with any bullying episode that they witness or become aware of. Do not assume it will go away. It is important to acknowledge that sensitive and appropriate handling of this issue can ensure that the bullying stops. A clear message from all individuals to ensure that bullying will not be tolerated and will if repeated lead to the removal of the bully. However, with sensitive effective intervention it is hoped that exclusion of the bully will not be necessary.

6. Confidential record keeping

All concerns and any discussions about a child's welfare should be recorded in writing whether or not further action is taken. It is important that anxieties are recorded accurately and in detail. It should be clear to somebody reading about the worries where and why they have arisen. All discussions should end with clear and explicit recorded agreement about who will be taking what action, or that no further action is needed. Records should be as detailed and precise as possible, giving an exact account of what was said, especially where it is a child who is disclosing abuse or making an allegation. They should report the details as disclosed or alleged, including who was present and what happened, the sequence of events, and so on. All subsequent action should also be documented. Records must be kept securely in a locked place to which access is restricted. Managers have a particular responsibility in maintaining the confidentiality of these records and must ensure that the records, or any information they contain, are made available only to relevant parties. The transfer of information - verbally, through the mail, electronically, etc - should be done in such a way that confidentiality is maintained.

7. Confidentiality

In all cases where a child has been abused, or is at risk of abuse, there is a duty to share all relevant information amongst appropriate professionals and agencies. In all such situations, the protection of the child must take precedence over all other considerations. The success of multi-disciplinary co-operation is rooted in the exchange and sharing of relevant information. Professional rules of confidentiality should be interpreted in relation to the need to protect the child. Total confidentiality should never be promised to a child or young person as once a child protection investigation is instigated, other professionals such as the Police or Social Services will need to be involved.

Both parents and children should be made aware that information that has relevance to child protection is shared. It is important not to promise a child complete confidentiality in the hope of encouraging that child to make a disclosure of abuse. Such a pledge cannot be kept, as there is a professional responsibility to decide what information must be passed on in order to protect children. Parents and children should also be made aware that sometimes information would need to be given as evidence to the Courts.

If a member of the public passes on reported suspicions that a child is being abused, they may ask for an assurance that their identity will not be revealed. They may be told that their names will not be divulged without their consent. However, the need to take action to protect a child may indirectly lead a parent or carer to suspect whom, in fact, has alerted the authorities. In addition, there may be exceptional occasions when a Court directs a referrer's name to be revealed. A referrer should be assured that alerting the professionals to a family in crisis is of prime importance when it is necessary to protect a child.

["In child protection work the degree of confidentiality will be governed by the need to protect the child..."](#) (Working Together under the Children Act 1989)

8. Partnership

The principle of a co-operative working relationship between agencies and families is a philosophy of the Children Act legislation. This relationship is much more likely to be achieved if parents, children and young people are encouraged to be involved in all stages of child protection investigations, wherever possible and appropriate. The object of a partnership with families during the child protection process will always be to ensure the welfare of the child and efforts to work in partnership should not put the child at risk. In order to protect children, it is important that all voluntary organisations are committed to working in partnership with Local Authorities and other agencies to ensure that such partner agencies are fully informed of their policies, practice and procedures guidance.

Partnership with other professionals and agencies is also crucial. Concerns often emerge in families known to one or more agency over a long period. It is well established that good child protection work requires a close working relationship between agencies and it is, therefore, very important that all individuals working with children are aware of child protection procedures.

9. Resources

This document is based upon a range of best practice including:

Current and updated draft of the All Wales Child Protection Procedures 2008

Safeguarding Children – working together under the Children Act 2004

Teaching Drama: guidance on safeguarding children and child protection for managers and drama practitioners, Welsh Assembly Government July 2006 – www.wales.gov.uk

Educare Child Protection Awareness programme, NSPCC – www.nspcc.org.uk

Someone to turn to Safeguarding children and young people, NSPCC – www.nspcc.org.uk

Keeping Learners Safe – Welsh Government January 2015

Keeping children safe, NSPCC – www.nspcc.org.uk

Creating a culture of safety, NSPCC – www.nspcc.org.uk

Appendix 1

Lead Creative Schools Clearance Form – Arts Council of Wales

Consent Form

I give consent for the Arts Council of Wales to take / use photographic images / video evidence of my group/performer/child and agree to allow the Council to reproduce the images in newspapers, print, websites and promotional materials when necessary.

I understand that these photographs or media might be used for promotional literature relating to the Lead Creative School Scheme* activities in perpetuity. This may include editorial, trade, advertising, web site, social media and displays.

In the case of a school the signatory is also confirming that they have the authority, on behalf of the school named and of the parents or guardians of the individual pupils listed to give permission on their behalf and that the school holds model release forms for each pupil.

Name of Individual/ School:

Signed: Date: