



CHILD PROTECTION PROCEDURE

Introduction:

ADAPT Scotland is committed to the protection of children and regards the safeguarding and promoting of the interests and wellbeing of children as of paramount importance. We are also committed to the protection of vulnerable children from exploitative relationships.

ADAPT Scotland considers it the duty of all those employed or involved with the organisation to prevent the physical, sexual or emotional abuse or neglect of all children with whom they come into contact, including reporting any abuse discovered or suspected.

Who needs protection?

Children and young people under the age of 16 and young people between the ages of 16 and 18 who are affected by disability or are vulnerable.

What is child abuse?

The definition of child abuse adopted in Scottish Government guidance states: "Abuse and neglect are forms of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting, or by failing to act to prevent, significant harm to the child. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional setting, by those known to them or, more rarely, by a stranger. Assessments will need to consider whether abuse has occurred or is likely to occur."

Definitions of child abuse:

The following definitions are taken from National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2010.

Physical Abuse:

Physical abuse is the causing of physical harm to a child or young person. Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning or suffocating. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer feigns the symptoms of, or deliberately causes, ill health to a child they are looking after.

Signs of possible physical abuse:-

- Unexplained injuries or burns, particularly if they are recurrent;
- Improbable excuses given to explain injuries;
- Refusal to discuss injuries;
- Untreated injuries or delay in reporting them;
- Excessive physical punishment;
- Arms and legs kept covered even in hot weather;
- Fear of returning home;
- Aggression towards others;
- Running away;
- Administration of toxic substances.

Neglect:

Neglect is persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs in a manner that is likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. It may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, failing to protect a child from physical harm or danger, or ensuring access to appropriate medical care or treatment.

Signs of possible physical neglect:

- Constant hunger or inappropriate/ erratic eating patterns;
- Poor personal hygiene;
- Constant tiredness;
- Lack of adequate clothing;
- Failure to seek appropriate/necessary medical attention;
- Unhygienic home conditions.

Emotional Abuse:

Emotional abuse is persistent emotional neglect or ill treatment that has severe and persistent adverse effects on a 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 involve the imposition of age or developmentally inappropriate expectations on a child. It may involve causing children to feel frightened, be in danger, or exploiting or corrupting children.

Signs of possible emotional abuse;

- Low self-esteem;
- Continual self-deprecation;
- Sudden speech disorder/refusal to speak;
- Fear of carers;
- Severe hostility/aggression towards other children;
- Significant decline in concentration span;
- Self-harm.

Sexual Abuse:

Sexual abuse is any act that involves the child in any activity for the sexual gratification of another person, whether or not it is claimed that the child either consented or assented. Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative or non-penetrative acts. They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, pornographic material or in watching sexual activities, using sexual language towards a child or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

Signs of possible sexual abuse

- Sleep disturbances or nightmares;
- Complaints of genital itching or pain;
- Self-harm;
- Eating disorders;
- Unexplained pregnancy;
- Acting in sexually explicit manner;
- Anxiety / depression / withdrawn;

- Fear of undressing e.g. for physical exercise;
- Low self-esteem;
- Inappropriate sexual awareness;
- Running away; Developmental regression;
- Lack of trust in adults or over familiarity with adults.

Significant Harm:

Significant harm can result from a specific incident, a series of incidents or an accumulation of concerns over a period of time. It is essential that, when considering the presence or likelihood of significant harm, the impact (or potential impact) on the child takes priority and not simply the alleged abusive behaviour.

To understand and identify significant harm, it is necessary to consider:

- the nature of harm, either through an act of commission or omission;
- the impact on the child's health and development, taking into account their age and stage of development;
- the child's development within the context of their family and wider environment;
- the context in which a harmful incident or behaviour occurred:
- any particular needs, such as a medical condition, communication impairment or disability, that may affect the child's development, make them more vulnerable to harm or influence the level and type of care provided by the family;
- the capacity of parents or carers to adequately meet the child's needs; and
- the wider and environmental family context

What to do if you think a child or young person is at risk of abuse:

- Be supportive to the child or young person. Listen with care, but do not ask any unnecessary questions. Take what the child or young person is saying seriously, and advise them you will have to pass the information on;
- Write down the nature of your concerns and anything the child or young person may have told you using, so far as possible, the words used by the child or young person. Remember to sign and date the notes taken;
- Immediately report the grounds of your concern to the named person who will take steps to pass the information on to the relevant person or organisation who will investigate the concerns.
- Do not delay reporting your concerns. Where possible advise the named person on the same day the concern arises;
- If you are unhappy with the response from the named person, you should contact the local Social Work Services Office and outline your concerns and the basis for them.

Confidentiality:

If a child or young person may be at risk of harm, this will always override a professional or organisational requirement to keep information confidential. Those employed or involved with the organisation have a responsibility to act to make sure that a child whose safety or welfare may be at risk is protected from harm. Children, young people and their parents will always be told this.

Action to be taken by the appropriate person:

All cases of suspected or alleged abuse must be treated seriously and the local Social Work Services Office should be contacted immediately. The concerns should be clearly stated including the basis for them.

When the local office is closed the Emergency Social Work Service should be alerted. All telephone calls should be followed up in writing within 48 hours using the CPC 'referral form'. If you are unhappy with the response from Social Work Services, you can contact the local Police Office or the Reporter to the Children's Panel and outline your concerns to them.

What happens next?

It is the duty of Social Work Services to investigate matters of concern in relation to the protection of the child or young person. Where it is alleged that a crime has been committed against a child, the matter is likely to be investigated jointly with the Police. The investigating Social Worker / Police Officer may require to speak to the person with whom the concerns originated. You should co-operate fully with any enquiries.

What to do in an emergency:

If you are concerned about the immediate safety of a child, for example a child at risk of immediate harm or injury, contact your local police office immediately. Do not delay, as this could result in serious injury to a child.

What if it is someone within the organisation that you are concerned about?

If you have observed a member of the organisation acting in a way that has caused you to be concerned, and feel the matter needs to be investigated you should contact the named person outlining your concerns and the basis for them. The named person should take your concerns seriously and decide on an appropriate course of action. This may involve the use of the organisations disciplinary procedures and / or a referral to Social Work Services / Police. If the concerns involve the named person, this should be reported to Social Work Services / Police.

Supporting the child or young person:

The child or young person is likely to continue to be involved with the organisation following the reporting of the concerns. In order to offer the appropriate support to the child / family, links should be maintained with the Social Work Services office involved in any investigation. It is important that employees and those involved with the child or young person act in a supportive manner.

You should

- Continue to listen with care;
- Reassure the child or young person that he/she was right to tell;
- Affirm the child or young person's feelings as expressed by them;
- Do not question/interrogate the child or young person;
- Do not show disbelief;
- Avoid being judgmental;
- Do not introduce personal or third party experiences of abuse; and
- Avoid displaying strong emotions.

Historical Abuse:

Where a child or adult discloses historical abuse, the organisation's child protection reporting procedure must be followed. A full discussion should take place with the named person within the organisation to agree what action is required to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the individual and others.

What to do if you have general welfare concerns about a child:

There are many circumstances that may cause harm to a child and require a response, but fall short of a concern that a child is being abused. Nevertheless, a build-up of concerns over time may in time become serious enough that the child is considered to be at risk of abuse.

Where you have general welfare concerns about a child you should:

- Address incidents as they arise with the parents / carers, within the practice guidance of your organisation;
- Discuss your concerns with your line manager;
- Liaise with other agencies that are working with the child;
- Record your actions, and note your concern in the session or telephone logs.

ADAPT Scotland will review general welfare concerns periodically, to see whether the build-up of concerns is significant enough to pass on to Social Work Services.

Training and awareness:

Employees / volunteers will be made aware of the existence of the Child Protection Policy, and their responsibilities in relation to the child protection process. For example:

- Through the provision of training
- By issuing a copy of the policy to all new staff members.
- Publicising its existence in strategic parts of the office

NAMED RESPONSIBLE PERSON

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Position within Organisation: Co-director

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In the absence of the responsible person, please contact: Karen Wallace 07927145361

I have read ADAPT Scotland's Child Protection Policy:

Signed:

----- for ADAPT Scotland

----- (date)