

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

1 Policy Statement

SCOREscotland recognises that in the organisation's work with children, the safety and protection of those children is paramount and has priority over all other interests. We are committed to ensuring that children are protected and kept safe from harm while they are with staff and volunteers within SCOREscotland.

2 Implementation

In order to implement the policy, SCOREscotland must ensure that:

- All staff (full-time, part-time and sessional) and volunteers who have access to/work with children are subject to criminal record checks;
- Any members of staff still awaiting disclosure clearance should be supervised at all times whilst working with children and/or young people
- All staff to limit one to one contact with young people unless necessary e.g. first aid or child disclosures
- All staff working with children and young people to be aware of and adhere to relevant risk assessment as per SCOREscotland Health and Safety Policy and procedures
- All staff and volunteers who have access to/work with children are required to supply a minimum of 2 references;
- All staff and volunteers who have access to/work with children receive training in child protection issues;
- All staff are instructed to report the suspected abuse, neglect or exploitation direct to management;
- All staff are informed of local statutory arrangements in respect of the disclosure or discovery of abuse;
- All staff and volunteers are given both supervision and support in their work with children;
- All premises that children may visit provide a safe environment.
- It is the duty of the Supervising Line Manager to communicate any reports of alleged abuse to relevant statutory agencies.

- It is the duty of SCOREscotland Manager to ensure protection for Whistle Blowers.

SCOREscotland is committed to reviewing this policy and good practice at regular intervals. Any questions or concerns should be addressed to the Children's and Youth Development Officer and SCOREscotland Manager with the responsibility for implementing this policy and; if necessary, to the Board of Directors of the organisation.

3 Individual roles within the child protection process

The Manager is responsible for implementing the Child Protection Policy. The Manager has a responsibility to meet regularly with the workers/volunteers dealing with issues of child abuse to provide support and guidance until such time as the incident is resolved or has been passed to the Children and Families Social Work Department.

The Manager and the Child Protection Co-ordinator from Children and Families Social Work Department, where appropriate, have a responsibility to ensure that appropriate referrals are made and to liaise with other agencies. They will seek to involve the worker/volunteer who is supporting a child/young person in all stages of the procedure, including interviews and case conferences, in accordance with the needs of the child/young person.

4 Guidelines for Staff and Volunteers

4.1 Purpose

The purpose of child protection is to ensure that appropriate action is taken when a child/young person up to the age of 18 years is suspected by workers of being abused, being at risk from parents, guardians, carers, adult visitors to the home and other responsible adults.

Similar action should also be taken in the case of a child/young person suspected of being abused by another child/young person, including within a child/young person's own relationships, abuse between siblings etc.

4.2 Talking with children and young people

The worker/volunteer may be the first person the child/young person has discussed the abuse with. The worker's or volunteer's response to the child/young person at this stage is crucial.

Children and young people rarely lie about abuse, particularly sexual abuse. They may try to conceal the truth in order to protect adults, particularly where they have been told that something awful may happen to those adults if they tell. They may be confused on details like when and where, but the main point of the story is usually accurate.

Upon being confronted with such information it is essential to do the following:

- Listen to the child

- Keep questions to a minimum
- Document what the child has said in their own words recording this on SCOREscotland Child Protection Incident Form
- Reassure the child they were right to tell
- Act promptly, reporting to your line manager and relevant social work department. The child should not be returned to the Parent until advised by the Children and Families Social Work Department.

Equally it is important to not do the following upon a disclosure of possible abuse:

- Ask too many questions, including why questions?
- Make any false promises
- Express shock, anger or upset at what is being said.
- Do not interpret what is being said, simply record as stated.
- Do not delay listening to the child or passing on these concerns to management.
- Do not be tempted to carry out an 'investigation' into the allegations.

Contact the Line Manager on 0131 442 2341 and either Children and Families Social Care Direct on 0131 200 2327 during office hours or out with these times contact the Emergency Social Work Services on 0800 7316969.

4.3 Confidentiality

Workers/volunteers should never indicate to a child/young person that they would keep secrets. A feature of sexual abuse in particular is the secrecy that exists between perpetrator and young person. Workers/volunteers can find themselves pulled into this relationship in a destructive way. Consequently, workers/volunteers should discuss such cases fully with the Manager and not work in isolation.

Approaches from children/young people along the lines of – “if I tell you something you won’t tell anyone else will you?” - should be met with a firm but gentle explanation: “I can’t promise that some things you might tell me I won’t decide to share with someone else. What I can promise is not to do that without you knowing”. Children/young people may then choose not to tell but usually they are looking for someone to help them to break out of their secret, not join them in it. For children/young people who do not tell, the worker/volunteer should make sure the child/young person knows of organisations that may operate in confidence (e.g. Childline, Incest Survivors Groups).

4.4 Recordings

The worker/volunteer should make notes of what a child/young person who has been abused has said. Care should be taken to do this in a way that does not block the child/young person from talking; they could for instance be agreed with the child/young person at the end of the session.

The notes, which a worker/volunteer may keep, can be used as a basis for supporting the worker/volunteer during a difficult process. These notes should be kept safely: for volunteers, this should be a safe place in their homes; workers should keep notes in a locked cabinet in their office. These notes are not admissible as evidence and should only be shared with other agencies or individuals with the full agreement of the child/young person. At the end of the work, there should be a joint decision about the destruction or further safe keeping of such notes.

Where a case is referred to the Children and Families Social Work Department the worker/volunteer and/or the Manager may submit a written report of what has happened, drawing on the workers/volunteers notes.

4.5 Categories of Abuse

The procedures outlined cover physical, sexual and emotional abuse and neglect.

(i) Physical Abuse

Identification

- The first task should be to check out the incident or injuries which have aroused the workers/volunteers' concern. This may be done by speaking with the child/young person.

Satisfactory Explanations

- If the worker/volunteer is satisfied with the explanations, a note should be made of the incident and the Manager contacted. This is to ensure that workers/volunteers/the Manager are alerted to a pattern of repeated incidents or injuries, each with an apparently satisfactory explanation.

Unsatisfactory Explanations

- If the worker/volunteer is still worried about the young person, s/he should contact the Manager to discuss their concerns.

Appropriate action may include:

- considering the need for emergency medical treatment
- the Manager checking the Child Protection Register
- involving the Children and Families Social Work Department in obtaining help for the child/young person
- monitoring the child/young person against future risk.

Serious Incidents

- It is obvious that serious injuries will need immediate medical treatment and workers/volunteers should ensure that this happens.
- A record should be made of the incident by the worker/volunteer and stored as above.

When a referral has been made to the Children and Families Social Work Department:

- Every co-operation should be given to Social Workers in any arrangements they may wish to make for the child/young person e.g. a medical examination.
- A full report should be sent to the Manager.

(ii) Child Sexual Abuse

Identification

- Child sexual abuse usually comes to light in a different way to physical abuse or neglect. Workers/volunteers may become concerned about the change in child/young person's behaviour or personality. The most usual route is that the child/young person confides in a worker/volunteer. This is usually described by other agencies as "disclosure".

Appropriate Action

- The workers/volunteers role is not to discuss the detail of the case with the child/young person, or with their parent/carer, but to listen, reassure and support the child/young person in taking action.
- The worker/volunteer must not ask leading questions or interrogate the child/young person, because it is important not to 'contaminate evidence'. Also if a referral is made to other agencies (e.g. Police, Social Work), the child/young person will be interviewed and it is important not to subject them to unnecessary questioning.
- Workers/volunteers who have any concerns about a child/young person who may be experiencing sexual abuse must share those concerns with the Manager.

Such appropriate action could include:-

- monitoring the child/young person's behaviour (where no disclosure has been made)
- taking advice from Children and Families Social Work Department
- contacting the SSD following disclosure
- checking the Child Protection register

It is important that the worker/volunteer states clearly what might happen when the child/young person talks to Social Work/the Police. The worker/volunteer should also make it clear that s/he cannot tell the Police what has happened, and that the child/young person will have to do that, but the worker/volunteer will be present to give support.

(iii) Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is present in all abuse, but can also stand-alone. It is defined as “the actual or likely severe adverse effect on the emotional and behavioural development of a child/young person caused by persistent or severe emotional ill-treatment”.

The role of the worker/volunteer is to recognise and record indicators of abuse, consult with the Manager about appropriate action and refer where appropriate.

(iv) Neglect

For neglect to be considered to apply, it needs to be persistent or severe resulting in a “significant impairment of the child/young person’s health or development”.

The role of the worker/volunteer is to recognise and record indicators of abuse, consult with the Manager about appropriate action, and refer where appropriate.

5 Procedures for the Manager

The Manager should assess all allegations promptly and carefully and consider the need for immediate action. All allegations should be pursued and recorded regardless of the availability of the alleged perpetrator to co-operate with the investigation.

If the Manager is unsure that concerns are valid, they should take advice from Social Work. Where the Manager decides there are grounds for concern about an individual, Children and Families Social Work Department and the police should be informed immediately.

The individual under suspicion must be notified of the cause for concern. However the timing of the notification and any action will be decided at the strategy discussion convened by Children and Families Social Work Department and/or the police. The timing of notifications of suspicions to other relevant agencies will be decided by the strategy discussion.

Full documentation should be kept. It should be treated as confidential and held securely.

All staff should be aware to contact Children and Families Social Care Direct on 0131 200 2327 during office hours. Out with these times contact the Emergency Social Work Services on 0800 7316969.

6 Ensuring the Effectiveness of the Policy

All Board members will receive a copy of the Child Protection Policy. Existing and new workers will be introduced to the Child Protection Policy via induction and training. The policy will be reviewed annually and amendments should be proposed and agreed by the Management Committee.

Child Protection Incident Form

All staff have a duty to report any allegations of suspected abuse, neglect or exploitation to management and cooperate fully with any subsequent investigations. The following form should be used to give details of the account.

Name of Child:.....

Name of Reporter/s:.....

When allegations were made?.....

Where allegations were disclosed? (E.g. Youth Group, Bus, Office etc)

.....

.....

Details of what was disclosed (report as closely to the child's own words as possible)

.....

.....

What action was taken immediately after the disclosure?

.....

.....

What steps have been taken to investigate allegations further (E.g what parties are now involved, please include their contact details in available)

.....

.....

Signed (by Reporter).....

Signed (by Manager).....

Date.....