

Autistic Social Hub - Aberdeen

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Policy/Procedure Name	Safeguarding - Adults and Children
Approved on	5/05/25
Approved by	Lee Baxtor
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Reviewed by	-

POLICY STATEMENT

The protection of adults at risk of harm and children is not an option but a responsibility.

ASH-A provides a community hub in which a wide range of social, leisure and wellbeing activities take place for the benefit of Autistic Individuals. All of these activities are organised by the charity itself, with the members being the leaders of what is organised. All groups require PVG checked volunteers (see Implementation below).

There is a possibility that Hub members will witness or be made aware of behaviour that might constitute abuse, exploitation or neglect (including self-neglect). It is therefore important that members are mindful and vigilant of what is defined as abuse, exploitation or neglect, who might be vulnerable, and what to do if they encounter such circumstances.

Autistic Social Hub - Aberdeen (ASH-A) will support and protect anyone who uses our premises or attends events or activities organised or facilitated by ASH-A and others whom we encounter. We are committed to the protection of children and adults at risk of harm. Safeguarding and promoting the interests and well-being of people is of paramount importance to the organisation.

This policy identifies some of the main ways that people, especially vulnerable people, can be harmed or exploited and explains the measures that we have in place to safeguard and protect them. The policy also details what actions are required of volunteers or staff when dealing with issues of child or adult protection and to ensure effective links are made with relevant agencies that are required in law to protect vulnerable people. This document should, therefore, be read in conjunction with the Grampian Interagency Procedures for Adult Support and Protection reporting protocols and further information is available from:

<https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/social-care-and-health/protection-and-support/adult-protection-and-support/>

<https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/children-and-families/report-child-abuse>

The protection of people at risk of harm is a major responsibility held between agencies. The expectation for all children and “at risk” adults in our communities is to be free from any preventable harm or exploitation.

SCOPE

ASH-A will encounter autistic adults through its various activities but due to the nature of families involved may have children visit. Our approach is to consider the issue of safeguarding in the whole, but the policy covers separately the specific procedures for adult and child protection.

This policy covers:

Adult Support and Protection, including modern slavery and human trafficking, Adult Sexual Exploitation and Child Protection, including Child Sexual Exploitation. It is, hopefully, unlikely that ASH-A will encounter modern slavery and human trafficking directly, however reference to these forms of abuse is included to make staff and volunteers staff aware of activities that might be ongoing.

DEFINITION

Safeguarding means protecting the health, wellbeing, and human rights of adults at risk and children, enabling them to live safely, free from abuse and neglect. It is about people and organisations working together to prevent and reduce both the risks and experience of abuse or neglect.

LEGISLATION

Adults with Incapacity (Scotland) Act 2000
Mental Health (Care and Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2003
Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) 2007
Protection of Children (Scotland) Act 2003
The Modern Slavery Act 2015 applies across the UK.
The Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Scotland) Act 2015 affects the law in Scotland.
Human Rights Act 1998
Protection of Vulnerable Groups (Scotland) Act 2007
The Sexual Offences (Scotland) Act 2009
Public Interest Disclosure Act 2018

Adults with Incapacity (Scotland) Act, 2000 - This Act imposes duties on, and assigns functions to, local authorities in relation to the making of enquiries in respect of adults who lack capacity, and the creation, application and supervision of proxy decision making powers in respect of such adults. Under the terms of Section 10 of the Adults with Incapacity (Scotland) Act 2000, the local authority must investigate 'any circumstances made known to them in which the personal welfare of an adult seems to be at risk'.

This means that the local authority must investigate allegations of abuse involving an adult who lacks the capacity to make or convey decisions for him or herself, whether the adult concerned agrees to the investigation or not.

It is the function of the Public Guardian to investigate situations of suspected financial abuse involving adults who lack capacity under Section 6 of the same Act.

Mental Health (Care & Treatment) Scotland Act, 2003 - This Act imposes duties on, and assigns functions to, local authorities and health boards in respect of social and mental health well-being, the making of enquiries in respect of persons who appear to have a mental disorder, and (where necessary) the application of compulsory measures in relation to the assessment and treatment of persons having a mental disorder.

Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Act 2007 - This Act imposes duties on and assigns functions to local authorities in respect of the making of enquiries, the conduct of investigations, the application for protective powers in respect of adults defined by the legislation to be at risk of actual or suspected harm. This Act also brought about the creation of Adult Protection Committees in every local authority area.

It is the responsibility of adult protection agencies such as Social Work Services and the Police to make enquiries (proactive and reactive) and to carry out appropriate investigations to establish:

- whether or not an adult is at risk from harm or suspected harm; and, if so,
- which, if any, of the protective measures available in terms of the legislation are most appropriate to an adult at risk's individual circumstances.

AIMS

This policy aims to make staff and volunteers aware of the forms of harm, abuse and exploitation that may be encountered and provide clear guidance on how to address the situation and protect vulnerable people.

PRINCIPLES

Although taken from the Care Act 2014, a piece of legislation applicable in England, the six principles of safeguarding that it outlines apply to any situation where you are trying to protect vulnerable people they are:

Empowerment

People are supported and encouraged to make their own decisions and informed consent.

Prevention

It is better to act before harm occurs.

Proportionality

The least intrusive response appropriate to the risk presented.

Protection

Support and representation for those in greatest need.

Partnership

Services offer local solutions through working closely with their communities.

Communities have a part to play in preventing, detecting and reporting neglect.

Accountability

Accountability and transparency in delivering safeguarding.

IMPLEMENTATION

ASH-A implements this policy in two ways:

Safer Recruitment - BCCH has a robust mechanism for recruiting people who have the values and competencies to identify and respond appropriately to issues or concerns about people who are subject to or at risk of harm or exploitation. ASH-A also takes every step to ensure that it does not recruit people who might present a risk to vulnerable people. It does this by ensuring a Protection of Vulnerable Groups (PVG) check and requires an application process, interview and two satisfactory references.

Training and Practice Development - All staff and volunteers are made aware of their responsibilities under our safeguarding policy at induction and we provide training on risk management, enablement, and safeguarding, as part of our suite of learning and development resources.

ADULT SUPPORT AND PROTECTION

Our organisation strives to ensure that the people we support will not encounter harm of any form while in its care, and that, if abuse is detected, the situation must be reported immediately to allow investigation by the appropriate statutory agency or agencies.

ASH-A undertakes to ensure it will protect adults who we encounter from exploitative relationships. In such circumstances, where it is found that an adult is at risk, we will liaise with the relevant local authority to ensure that appropriate investigation and action is taken.

Staff training, guidance at induction and thorough ongoing supervision will be provided to ensure that staff are always alert to the possibility that they may encounter adults requiring support and protection and that this extends beyond the people we support to include relatives, friends, visitors, etc.

ASH-A recognises that the protection of adults at risk of harm is placed above all other operating principles and supersedes the principle of confidentiality.

Who Needs Protecting? Adults should be enabled to make their own choices about their lives and to live as independently as their personal circumstances permit. However, ASH-A may encounter people who, for a wide variety of reasons, are at greater risk of harm and abuse.

Under the Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Act 2007 'adults at risk' are defined as adults aged 16 or over who:

- are unable to safeguard their own well-being, property, rights, or other interests,
- are at risk of harm, and
- because they are affected by disability, mental disorder, illness or physical or mental infirmity, are more vulnerable to being harmed than adults who are not so affected.

What is Harm?

The Adult Support and Protection Act (ASP) states that harm includes all harmful conduct including:

- Conduct which causes physical harm.
- Conduct which causes psychological harm (for example by causing fear, alarm, or distress).

- Unlawful conduct which appropriates or adversely affects property, rights, or interests (for example: theft, fraud, embezzlement, or extortion).
- Conduct which causes self-harm.

Self-neglect – This could include not eating or not cleaning the home adequately. Not taking care of personal hygiene or personal medical requirements.

What is Abuse?

“Abuse is a violation of an individual’s human or civil rights by any other person or persons” – Department of Health (2000)

Abuse may be perpetrated with or without deliberate intent. Abuse is a violation of an individual’s human and civil rights, through the misuse of power by a person or persons in a dominant position. In understanding this definition, consideration needs to be given to several factors. Abuse may:

- Consist of a single act or repeated acts.
- Be verbal, physical, psychological, or emotional.
- Be an act of neglect or an omission to act.
- Occur when an adult at risk is persuaded to enter a financial arrangement or sexual relationship to which they have not or could not have consented.

Abuse can be perpetrated in many ways:

Physical Abuse – involving actual or attempted injury to an adult defined as at risk. For example:

- Physical assault by punching, pushing, slapping, tying down, giving food or medication forcibly, or denial of medication.
- Use of medication other than as prescribed.
- Inappropriate restraint.

Emotional/Psychological Abuse – resulting in mental distress to the adult at risk. For example:

- Excessive shouting, bullying, humiliation.
- Manipulation of, or the prevention of access to services that would be of benefit to the adult.
- Isolation or sensory deprivation.
- Denigration of culture or religion.

Financial or Material Abuse – involving the exploitation of resources and property belonging to the adult at risk. For example:

- Theft or fraud.
- Misuse of money, property, or resources without the informed consent of the adult at risk.

Sexual Abuse – involving activity of a sexual nature where the adult at risk cannot or does not give informed consent. For example:

- Incest
- Rape
- Acts of gross indecency
- Inappropriate touching or verbal or physical sexual harassment

Neglect and acts of omission by others charged with the care of the adult - including ignoring medical or physical care needs. For example:

- Failure to provide access to appropriate health, social care, or educational services.
- Withholding of the necessities of life such as nutrition, appropriate heating, etc.

Discriminatory Abuse – for example, treating one supported person less favourably than another.

Information Abuse – deliberately giving erroneous information or withholding information

Human Rights Abuse – for example, deprivation of a right to family life or a fair hearing

Multiple Forms of Abuse – This may occur in an ongoing relationship or service setting or to more than one person at a time. It is important therefore to look not only at a single incident, but to also consider the underlying dynamics and patterns of harm

Acts of Violence – An attack by a stranger on an adult defined as at risk is an assault; this is a criminal matter and should be reported to the Police. However, where there is the possibility that the violence may be part of a pattern of victimisation in a community or neighbourhood, local authority Adult Protection procedures may also apply in respect of effective multi-agency intervention

Domestic Violence – The police define domestic violence as “any form of physical, non-physical or sexual abuse which takes place within the context of a close

relationship committed either in the home or elsewhere.” In most cases this relationship will be between partners (married, co-habituating or otherwise) or ex-partners.

Institutional Abuse – Institutional or organisational abuse is the mistreatment of people brought about by poor or inadequate care or support, or systematic poor practice that affects the whole care setting. It occurs when the individual's wishes and needs are sacrificed for the smooth running of a group, service, or organisation.

Grooming – Grooming is when an individual perpetrator tries to ‘set up’ and ‘prepare’ another person to be the victim of harm, often sexual abuse. It can be perpetrated by someone who is a family member, friend, or acquaintance of an individual as well as someone who is a stranger. A grooming process can last for months or even years. It can be very subtle – those who are being groomed often do not realise that they are being manipulated, nor do their relatives or carers.

It is important to note that abuse is not always intentional or deliberate. Particularly with neglect there may be no premeditation, but a persistent failure to meet someone’s basic physical and emotional needs is still harm.

The key factor in relation to activating the adult protection procedures in such situations is that the victim (or suspected victim) must be an adult at risk of harm as defined in the Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Act e.g., meets the “3 Point Test”, detailed under responsibilities of ASH-A staff and volunteers below.

Exploitation- This is the deliberate targeting of vulnerable adults for personal benefit. Areas to be vigilant for are:

“Cuckooing” - is the term used where an organised crime group takes over a person’s home by intimidation or other means, including the use of violence, so they can use the premises for criminal purposes, particularly for storing and dealing drugs. This is often achieved by threats and actual violence towards the occupants or their loved ones.

“County Lines” - is when criminals from major cities are expanding their drug networks to other areas, bringing with it serious criminal behaviour such as violence, exploitation, and abuse. The term “County Lines” refers to the use of a single telephone number to order drugs, operated from outside the local area.

Modern Slavery and Human - trafficking - Modern slavery is a crime and a violation of fundamental human rights. It takes various forms such as slavery, servitude, forced and

compulsory labour and human trafficking, all of which have in common the deprivation of a person's liberty by another to exploit them for personal or commercial gain.

Human Trafficking and exploitation have been identified as one of the biggest threats facing communities across the world, and it is happening across Scotland.

Sexual Exploitation - Sexual exploitation involves someone taking advantage of the child or adult sexually, for their own benefit through threats, bribes, violence, and humiliation. The perpetrator uses their power to get the child or adult to do sexual things for the perpetrator's own or other people's benefit or enjoyment.

Sexual exploitation can take many forms. Examples include:

- Rape (which can include rape by a partner, if the sex is unwanted – no means no, with no exception).
- Sexual assault.
- Being tricked or manipulated into having sex or performing a sexual act.
- Being trafficked into, out of, or around the UK for the purpose of sexual exploitation (i.e., prostitution).
- Being forced to take part in or watch pornography.
- Being victim to revenge porn (when a previously taken video or photograph, which was taken with or without consent, is shared online on platforms such as Snapchat, Facebook, the world wide web, etc.).

In addition, sexual exploitation has occurred if sex takes place and:

- It is in exchange for necessities, such as food, shelter, or protection;
- It is in exchange for something that is needed or wanted;
- An individual has felt frightened of the consequences if they refuse (coercion);
- The person who is exploiting stands to gain financially or socially.

It is important to remember that there are several scenarios that fall under this definition and sometimes sexual exploitation can be hard to identify. Anyone can be sexually exploited. It can take place in a domestic, commercial (workplace) or public setting. Crucially, the individual that is, or has been, subject to sexual exploitation may not realise it.

Who does sexual exploitation affect?

Whilst many victims identify as women, anybody could be a victim of sexual exploitation, rape, or sexual assault.

The following are especially vulnerable:

- Victims of domestic violence and abuse
- Drug and alcohol abusers
- Homeless people and those with limited or no immigration status
- Nightlife/weekend party goers
- Adults with physical or learning disabilities
- Adults with mental health difficulties
- Victims of forced marriage
- Other vulnerability factors include:
 - Bereavement
 - Missing from home/care/education/work
 - Social exclusion; poverty/deprivation/homeless
 - Communication difficulties
 - Family history of prostitution/sex work
 - Breakdown of family relationships
 - Low self-esteem
 - Bullying
- Has been a Looked after Child or had children who are Looked After

Anybody could be a perpetrator of sexual exploitation, rape, or sexual assault. Commonly, perpetrators include:

- Partners – boyfriends/girlfriends or husbands/wives
- Family members
- Gang members (organised traffickers or drug gangs)
- Drug and alcohol abusers

RESPONSIBILITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Any report that an adult may be at risk of harm, including whistleblowing and anonymous referrals, must be taken seriously. All cases should be considered with an open mind.

You do not need to have absolute proof or be completely sure before reporting a concern. It is better to report your concern, and it transpires that the person was not in fact at risk, than to hold back from reporting and find out that they were. However, it is worth thinking about whether the person will meet the Three Point Test criteria that is applied by statutory services to define a vulnerable adult. The test is as follows:

1. *An adult at risk of harm is an adult (aged 16 years or over) who:*
2. *Is unable to safeguard their own wellbeing, property, rights, or other interests*
Is at risk of harm; and

3. *Because he/she is affected by disability, mental disorder/capacity* illness or physical or mental infirmity.*

*See guidance on Mental Capacity below.

You should report your concerns to our Named Person at the earliest opportunity.

Our named person is:

Lee Baxter

Board Trustee

Tel: 07538 726067

Email: ash-aboard@outlook.com

If you become aware that an adult may be at risk of harm, or you are told directly by a person that we support that they are being/have been abused, you should be aware that the adult may be feeling vulnerable or upset when disclosing this information.

You should be supportive and reassure the adult by listening carefully, but do not ask unnecessary questions. It is not your role to investigate.

101 can be called for non-emergencies and general enquiries, in an emergency call 999. Crimestoppers can also be called on 0800 555 111.

Where concerns involve children, Child Protection procedures outlined below should be followed.

Mental Capacity

ASH-A staff and volunteers face the challenge of balancing the promotion of the rights and needs of the adult (which includes their right to a sexual life) with the need to support the adult to manage and reduce their risk of harm. Adults should be supported to make their own decisions wherever possible, however in cases where there are questions about decision-making and risk of harm, assessment of the adult's mental capacity to make decisions about their safety is key.

The Adults with Incapacity (Scotland) Act 2000 - Legally, if the person is formally assessed as lacking capacity to consent to a sexual relationship, there are difficulties in condoning or supporting such a relationship. In some cases where the adult's capacity to consent to a sexual relationship is doubtful, a local authority may look at preventing sexual exploitation by an application for welfare guardianship under the Adults with Incapacity Act on the basis of a generalised assessment of incapacity, and with wide powers given to the guardian (sometimes the parents) including to decide 'with whom the person should consort'.

Each case needs to be considered on an individual basis with the principles of the Act in mind, with advocacy involvement with the adult and the request for the court to appoint a legal representative or safe guarder.

Further information: Adults with Incapacity – Sexual Relationships and the Criminal Law, Mental Welfare Commission for Scotland, 2016

Fundamental Principles (These apply to sexual relationships and more widely)

- People have a right to sexual relationships, to marry and to form a family.
- Any interference with a person's rights must be necessary and lawful.
- Proper assessments of capacity and vulnerability are essential where the person may be at risk because of their own, or other people's, sexual behaviour.
- Any intervention must be proportionate, having carefully weighed up both the risks and benefits to the individual. The principles of the Adults with Incapacity (Scotland) Act 2000 and the Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Act 2007 provide a framework for decisions.
- Care professionals have a duty to protect people from abuse or exploitation. They also have a duty to assist people's sexual expression through education, counselling, and support.
- Resolving legal, ethical, and practical dilemmas requires discussion between professionals, carers, and the person themselves. Appropriate information sharing is essential.
- Staff must consider the person's individuality, background and culture and must take care not to impose their own values when considering sexual activity and expression.

Reporting - If possible, you should advise the adult that the information will have to be passed on to the ASH-A Named Person and that Social Work Services may be required to investigate further.

When you feel it is appropriate to leave the person who is disclosing the abuse, the information given by the person we support should be passed on ASH-A Named Person.

Where you are concerned for the immediate safety and well-being of an individual, contact emergency services i.e., ambulance and police immediately. Do not delay. You can contact the ASH-A Named Person once you are satisfied that the person is safe.

If you suspect that a criminal act has been committed, for example in cases of physical or sexual abuse, you should contact the Police immediately and steps should be taken to preserve evidence. You can then contact the BCCH Named Person.

If the exceptional case that you are unable to contact the ASH-A Named Person on the day when the abuse is detected, you must contact Social Work Services via [Social Care Direct](#) to report your concerns.

If you are unhappy with the response from the ASH-A Named Person, you should contact [Social Care Direct](#) and outline your concerns and the basis for them.

NOTE: You should follow the above procedure for all instances of suspected abuse or neglect (including self-neglect), for example where you become aware of:

- Abuse by another person using the Hub.
- Abuse by someone from within the community (family or friend)
- Abuse by a member of staff or volunteer.
- Concerns for the welfare of the individual where they appear not to have capacity to deal with their circumstances.

Recording - Write down the nature of your concern and anything the person may have told you using, as far as possible, the words used by the person. Remember to sign and date the note taken. This information will form the basis of the referral and will also be required if there is an investigation.

This information will be kept and securely stored within BCCH records service. The BCCH Named Person will determine who this information can be shared with, will maintain an overview of reports from staff or volunteers, monitor issues and detect trends as these occur.

Responsibilities of the ASH-A Named Person

It will be the responsibility of the ASH-A Named Person to ensure that all instances of alleged or suspected harm to an adult believed to be at risk and requiring protection are treated seriously and that appropriate liaison with Social Work Services and/or the Police takes place.

The ASH-A Named Person will be responsible may delegate responsibility for liaison with Social Work Services to other Trustees and/or the Police or can liaise directly.

The ASH-A Named Person will telephone the relevant Social Work Services location and give details of the alleged abuse. In accordance with the [Adult Support and Protection Multi Agency Guidelines](#), information should be followed up in writing within 24 hours.

The designated person contacting Social Work Services and/or the Police must make a note of the following:

- The date and time that contact was made. Where contact cannot immediately be made, the reason for this must be recorded. Details of any unsuccessful attempts to make contact must also be recorded.
- Name, address, and full details of those contacted.
- Details of who should be contacted for future follow-up/agreed further action.

In all cases of suspected adult abuse, it must be recognised that children involved in the situation might also be at risk. If this is the case refer also to the section on Child Protection below.

Principles of Reporting and Information Sharing

The protection of adults at risk of harm is placed above all other operating principles and supersedes the principle of confidentiality. Any concerns a member of ASH-A may have regarding the safety and well-being of an adult at risk of harm should be brought to the attention of the ASH-A Named Person.

Those employed or involved with ASH-A must take appropriate action to ensure the adult believed to be at risk is protected from harm.

Where an adult is seen to be at risk of harm, this will always override a professional or organisational requirement to keep information confidential, subject to the provisions of the Data Protection Act 2018. Although it is recognised that a person, we support's privacy must be always protected, in situations where abuse is suspected, there must be free communication between participating agencies throughout the investigation.

Under no circumstances will information on an adult be withheld from Social Work Services because the holder of the information thinks that it might compromise a third party. If a staff member is given information relating to adult abuse 'in confidence' they must make clear that any information relating to adult or child abuse must be passed on to social Work Services and/or Police for investigation.

What Happens Next?

Once they have received a referral, it is the duty of Social Work Services to make enquiries and to investigate matters of concern in relation to the protection of an adult deemed to be at risk of harm as defined by the legislation. Social Work Services will allocate the matter to a member of their staff who has sufficient knowledge and expertise to deal with any concerns raised. This may involve ASH-A being asked to complete an internal investigation. Where it is alleged that a crime has been committed against the adult, investigation is likely to be progressed jointly in consultation with the Police.

The investigating officers may need to speak to the staff member or volunteer from whom the concerns originated. ASH-A Staff and Volunteers will cooperate fully with any Police or Social Work Services enquiries.

What if it is a Staff Member you are Concerned About? - If you have observed a ASH-A staff member acting in a way that has caused you concern, you should contact the Named Person outlining your concerns and the basis for them. They will take your concerns seriously, make appropriate enquires into them and thereafter decide on the appropriate course of action.

In situations where the alleged abuser is a member of staff, ASH-A disciplinary procedures should be followed, but will not supersede an adult protection referral to, and investigation by, statutory agencies. In other words, care must be taken to ensure that implementation of any internal procedures (for example, fact finding) does not

undermine or impede any investigation by statutory agencies. Advice should be sought from Social Work Services before proceeding.

Supporting the Adult at Risk of Harm - It is important that staff and volunteers involved directly with the adult seen to be at risk of harm act throughout in a facilitative and supportive manner. They should avoid being judgemental and should not introduce personal or third-party experiences of harm. Every effort should be made to enable the adult to express their wishes and to make decisions to the best of their ability where appropriate, but, within a duty of care, the overriding concern is the protection of the adult from harm.

TRAINING

As an allegation of abuse can come to the notice of any member of staff at any time, all staff members and Trustees will receive training in Adult Protection Procedures at the outset of their induction period. Their understanding of the procedures will be assessed through the induction supervision session and refresher training will be provided as necessary.

Employees/volunteers will be made aware of the existence of the Safeguarding Policy, and their responsibilities in relation to the adult protection process:

- By making staff aware of the policy at Induction including provision of [Speak Up Speak Out](#) leaflet on Adult Protection for Care Workers
- Through the provision of training.
- By always providing access to the policy online.

CHILD PROTECTION

Whilst ASH-A does not provide services directly to children, staff and volunteers may encounter children in a couple ways:

- Children attending the Hub with family members.

ASH-A is committed to the protection of children and regards the safeguarding and promoting of the interests and wellbeing of children as of paramount concern. ASH-A considers it the duty of all those employed or involved with the organisation to prevent the physical, sexual, or emotional abuse of all children with whom they come into contact, including reporting any abuse discovered or suspected.

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

Child Abuse - The general definition of child abuse adopted in Scottish Office guidance refers to circumstances where “a child or young person’s basic needs are not being met in a manner which is appropriate to his or her individual needs and stages of development and the child is, or will be, at risk through avoidable acts of commission or omission on the part of their parent(s), sibling(s) or other relative(s) or a carer (i.e. the person(s) while not a parent who has actual custody of, charge of, or control over a child)”.

Who needs protecting?

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

Signs of child abuse

The lists below are by no means exhaustive but are designed to give employees and people involved with the organisation some guidance on how to recognise child abuse. Any information must be seen in the context of the child or young person’s whole situation and circumstances. Different types of abuse may overlap or co-exist.

Physical Abuse - Defined as “actual or attempted physical injury to a child, under the age of 16 where there is definite knowledge or reasonable suspicion that the injury was inflicted or knowingly not prevented.”

Possible signs of physical abuse include:

- 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

Physical Neglect - Defined as occurring “when a child’s essential needs are not met, and this is likely to cause impairment to physical health and development. Such needs

include food, clothing, cleanliness, shelter, and warmth. A lack of appropriate care results in persistent or severe exposure, through negligence, to circumstances which endanger the child.” Signs of possible physical neglect include:

- 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.

Non-Organic Failure to Thrive - Defined as “children who significantly fail to reach normal growth and developmental milestones (i.e., physical growth, weight, motor skills, organic reasons must have been medically eliminated and a diagnosis of non-organic failure to thrive has been established.” Signs of possible non-organic failure to thrive include:

- Significant lack of growth
- Weight loss
- Hair loss
- Poor skin or muscle tone
- Circulatory disorders
- Lethargy

Emotional Abuse - Defined as “failure to provide for the child’s basic emotional needs such as to have a severe effect on the behaviour and development of the child.” Possible signs of emotional abuse include:

- 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 - Defined as “any child below the age of 16 may be deemed to have been sexually abused when any person(s), by design or neglect exploits the child, directly or indirectly, with any activity intended to lead to the sexual arousal or other forms of gratification of that person or any other person(s) including organised networks.”

Possible signs of sexual abuse include:

- 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.

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

- Be supportive to the child or young person if appropriate. 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 concern and anything the child or young person may have told you using, as 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 our Named Person. Any report that a child or young person may be at risk of harm, including anonymous referrals, should be taken seriously. All cases should be considered with an open mind.

Our named person is:

Lee Baxter
Board Trustee
Tel: 07538 726067
Email: tripleasboard@gmail.com

Do not delay in reporting your concerns, inform the responsible person on the same day the concern arises.

If for any reason you are unable to contact the above and you believe a child is at immediate risk, you should contact the local Social Work Services Office and outline your concerns and the basis for them. Note:

- All telephone calls should be followed up in writing within 48 hours using the local authority 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, 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 speaking to the person with whom the concerns originated. BCCH staff and volunteers should cooperate fully with any future enquiries.

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

If you have observed a member of the organisation acting in a way towards a child or young person 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. Your concerns will be taken seriously, and an appropriate course of action decided upon. This may involve the use of the organisation's disciplinary procedures and/or a referral 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.

It is important that employees and those involved with the child or young person act in a supportive manner. They should:

- Continue to listen with care.
- Reassure the child or young person he/she was right to tell, if appropriate.
- 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.
- 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 believed to be at risk of abuse.

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

- Discuss your concerns with the Named Person.
- Where appropriate address concerns as they arise with the parents/carers.
- Liaise with other agencies that are working with the child.
- Record your actions and note your concerns within the people we supports' files.

TRAINING

All staff will always have access to the Safeguarding Policy, and it will be specifically addressed with new staff at induction.

Training on specific areas in relation to child protection and reporting will be given as a priority to new staff and volunteers. Ongoing training needs around child protection training will be identified and reviewed regularly.

Further information - For Further Information on child protection procedures for Aberdeenshire see:

<https://www.girfec-aberdeenshire.org/report-a-concern/>

MONITORING AND REVIEW

This policy will be regularly monitored to ensure that the objectives are being achieved. It will be reviewed and if necessary revised in the light of legislative change, and/or operational or organisational changes and activities. This policy will be reviewed at least every three years as a minimum.