

THE INTER FAITH NETWORK FOR THE UK

Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

Introduction

The purpose of this policy is to outline the duty and responsibility of staff, volunteers and trustees working on behalf of the Inter Faith Network for the UK (IFN) in relation to child protection procedures.

The key objectives of this policy are:

To explain the responsibilities IFN and its staff, volunteers and trustees have in respect of child protection.

To provide staff with an overview of child protection.

To provide a clear procedure that will be implemented where child protection issues arise.

Context of the IFN's work and possible involvement with children

Members of the IFN's staff and volunteers may occasionally come into contact with children, such as at inter faith events sponsored by the IFN or to which IFN staff and volunteers have been invited. This policy sets out what should happen if a disclosure occurs in that context or subsequent to it to a member of staff, volunteer or trustee.

If a member of staff, volunteer or trustee believes that abuse may have taken place, is taking place or may take place they have a duty to share that with the appropriate person, as set out in the policy.

In all cases the IFN's staff, volunteers and trustees have a duty of care.

Definition

For the purpose of this document a child is defined as a person under the age of 18 (The Children's Act 1989)¹

All children have the right to protection from all forms of abuse including exploitation, neglect, physical and mental abuse regardless of their age, gender, disability, culture, language, racial origin, religious beliefs or sexual orientation.

Legal Framework

¹ In some cases this is extended to vulnerable young adults in local authority care up to the age of 25.

This guidance reflects the principles contained within the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) ratified by the United Kingdom in 1991 and the Human Rights Act 1998.

The Children's Act 1989 sets out the legislative framework for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and the Children's Act 2004 underpins the Every Child Matters, Change for Children programme.

The role of staff, volunteers and trustees

All staff, volunteers and trustees working on behalf of IFN have a duty to promote the welfare and safety of children.

Staff, volunteers and trustees may receive disclosures of child abuse and observe children who are at risk. This policy will enable staff, volunteers and trustees to make informed and confident responses to specific child protection issues.

What is Child Abuse

Abuse and neglect are forms of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm, or by failing 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. They may be abused by an adult or adults, or another child or children (Working Together to Safeguard Children 2006)

The 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' guidance published by the Government defines four categories of abuse as follows.

Physical Abuse

This 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 the symptoms of, or deliberately induces illness in a child.

Emotional Abuse

This is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to a child that they are worthless, unloved or inadequate. It may involve bullying, causing children to feel frightened or in danger.

Psychological abuse

This may involve threats of harm or abandonment, deprivation of contact, humiliation, blaming, controlling, intimidation, coercion, harassment, verbal abuse, isolation or withdrawal from services or supportive networks. This would also include incitement to religious or racial hatred, violence or acts of terror.

Sexual Abuse

This type of abuse involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, including prostitution whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. Examples of physical contact include penetrative acts (rape, buggery or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts kissing, fondling,

masturbation. It may include non-contact activities involving children in looking at or be involved in sexual online images and or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

Neglect

This is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment to the child's health and development. It can include failing to provide adequate food, clothing and shelter, adequate supervision or failing to provide medical help when needed.

Where abuse may occur

Abuse may occur in person and it may also occur on-line. Because abuse occurs in the virtual world it is not to be deemed as less real for the abused person..

Procedure in the event of a disclosure

It is important that children are protected from abuse. All complaints, allegations or suspicions must be taken seriously.

This procedure must be followed whenever an allegation is made that a child has been abused or when there is a suspicion that a child has been abused.

Promises of confidentiality should not be given as this may conflict with the need to ensure the safety and welfare of the child.

If the complainant is the child, questions should be kept to the minimum necessary to understand what is being alleged and leading questions should be avoided. The use of leading questions can cause problems for the subsequent investigation and any court proceedings.

A full record shall be made as soon as possible of the nature of the allegation and any other relevant information including using the 'Initial Cause for Concern Form', Appendix 1. Members of staff, volunteers or trustees should not report their own thoughts or feelings in relation to the disclosure. Ensure the date, time and context of the disclosure is clearly recorded in the appropriate form.

The report should include information in relation to the date, the time and the place(s) where the alleged abuse happened. Your name and the names of others present, the name of the complainant and, where different, the name of the child who has allegedly been abused, the nature of the alleged abuse, a description of any injuries observed, the account which has been given of the allegation.

Where members of staff, volunteers or trustees have concerns about another member of staff, volunteer or trustee

There may be times when a member of staff, volunteer or trustee has a concern about the behaviour of another member of staff, volunteer or trustee with regard to a child. This might occur when contact is kept with the child longer than expected after an event or involve an exchange of personal details. In such cases the issue should be raised with the Designated Safeguarding Officer, or the Executive Director if it refers to that officer.

Responding to an allegation

Any suspicion, allegation or incident of abuse must be reported to the Designated Child Protection Officer on that working day where possible, if not the next working day.

The designated safeguarding officer, or Executive Director if the allegation is about the safeguarding officer, shall telephone and report the matter to the appropriate local social services department² duty social worker. A written record of the date and time of the report shall be made and the report must include the name and position of the person to whom the matter is reported. The telephone report must be confirmed in writing to the relevant local authority Social Services department within 24 hours.

Responding appropriately to a child making an allegation of abuse

DO

- Make sure the individual is safe
- Assess whether emergency services are required and if needed call them
- Listen
- Offer support and reassurance
- Ascertain and establish the basic facts
- Make careful notes and obtain agreement on them
- Ensure notation of dates, time and persons present are correct and agreed
- Take all necessary precautions to preserve forensic evidence
- Follow correct procedure
- Explain areas of confidentiality; immediately speak to the Designated Safeguarding Officer for support and guidance
- Explain the procedure to the individual making the allegation
- Remember the need for ongoing support.

DO NOT

- Confront the alleged abuser
- Be judgmental or voice your own opinion
- Be dismissive of the concern
- Investigate or interview beyond that which is necessary to establish the basic facts
- Disturb or destroy possible forensic evidence
- Consult with persons not directly involved with the situation
- Ask leading questions
- Assume Information
- Make promises
- Ignore the allegation
- Elaborate in your notes
- Panic

It is important to remember that the person who first encounters a case of alleged abuse is not responsible for deciding whether abuse has occurred. This is a task for the professional adult protection agencies, following a referral from the designated Vulnerable Adult Protection Officer.

² It will be important to establish in which local authority the child lives to ensure the right Children's Services is contacted. If this cannot be established the matter will be referred to the LSCB of the Authority in which the IFN's offices are situated.

Confidentiality

Child protection raises issues of confidentiality which should be clearly understood by all. Disclosures may only be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Officer or, if it about the officer, to the Executive Director.

Staff, volunteers and trustees have a professional responsibility to share relevant information about the protection of children with other professionals, particularly investigative agencies.

The IFN and its staff and volunteers are bound by data protection legislation. All personal information regarding a child will be kept confidential except when it is suspected that a child under 18 years is the victim of abuse and such information will only be shared with the appropriate statutory bodies.

If a child confides in a member of staff, volunteer or trustee and requests that the information is kept secret, it is important that person tells the child sensitively that he or she has a responsibility to refer cases of alleged abuse to the appropriate agencies for the child's own sake.

Within that context, the child should, however, be assured that the matter will be disclosed only to people who need to know about it.

Where possible, consent should be obtained from the child before sharing personal information with third parties. In some circumstances obtaining consent may be neither possible nor desirable as the safety and welfare of the child is the priority.

Where a disclosure has been made, staff should let the child know the position regarding their role and what action they will have to take as a result.

Staff should assure the child that they will keep them informed of any action to be taken and why. The child's involvement in the process of sharing information should be fully considered and their wishes and feeling taken into account.

Child Protection issues are highly sensitive and staff who receive information about children or their families in the course of their work should share that information only within appropriate professional contexts. All child protection records should be kept secure.

The Role of Key Individual Agencies

Social Services

The Children's Act 1989 gives Local Authority Social Services the primary responsibility for the care and protection of abused children and children at risk of abuse. It is their statutory duty to ensure that there is an investigation in cases of suspected abuse or significant harm.

To take action to protect the child and to promote the welfare of the child.

Social Services also convene Child Protection conferences and manage the Child Protection Register.

Police

The overriding concern of the Police in child protection is the welfare of the child. Their general duties are to investigate crimes as well as a duty to prevent offences being committed and to protect those at risk of harm. The Children's Act 1989 permits the Police to take a child into police protection; where there is reasonable cause to believe that he/she would otherwise be at risk of significant harm.

Police and Social Services will work jointly where it is likely that criminal proceedings will be brought against the perpetrator of the abuse.

In all Local Authority areas there are now Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCB) and Multi Agency Referral Units (MARU) that ensure statutory agencies work together to protect and safeguard children.

NSPCC

The NSPCC pursues its objective of identifying and preventing child abuse through consultation and cooperation with Social Services. They are identified as an 'authorised person' under the Children Act 1989. NSPCC runs national Child Protection Helplines.

Child Protection Officers of the NSPCC are required to initiate procedures that ensure their own appropriate response to any complaint or request for help on all matters concerning children.

Role of designated child protection officer

The role of the designated officer is to deal with all instances involving child protection that arises within IFN. They will respond to all child protection concerns and enquiries. The Designated Safeguarding Officer for IFN is Assistant Director. Should you have any suspicions or concerns relating to Child Protection you can contact him on 020 7730 0410 or at david.hampshire@interfaith.org.uk or write to him at 2 Grosvenor Gardens, London SW1W 0DH, marking the envelope or e-mail: Strictly Confidential. .

If the concern relates to the Assistant Director, the Executive Director should be contacted by writing to 2 Grosvenor Gardens, London SW1W 0DH, marking the item Strictly Confidential.

Role of line managers

The role of the line manager is to support the member of staff, trustee or volunteer involved with the incident and to ensure the correct procedures are followed.

The line manager could if agreed with the staff member dealing with the incident, make contact with the designated Child Protection Officer in the first instance.

The line manager should ensure that all staff within their team are familiar with IFNs current Child Protection procedures and ensure that all staff undertake Child Protection training, where appropriate.

The IFN also has a duty of care to its staff and volunteers. If members of staff or volunteers are traumatised by a disclosure they will be signposted to the appropriate support.

Use of photographic/video equipment

Written consent to take and use images of children should be obtained prior to the taking of photographs and or video footage. Parents/carers should be made aware of when, where and how the images may be used to give their informed consent.

Training

Training will be provided, as appropriate, to ensure that staff are aware of this policy. For employed members of staff this will involve an annual briefing and will form part of the induction of trustees and volunteers as appropriate. Specialist training will be provided for the member of staff with vulnerable adult protection responsibilities, who will be expected to have an Enhanced DBS certificate. A record of training will be kept centrally.

Complaints procedure

This policy needs to be read in conjunction with other policies of IFN.

Recruitment procedure

IFN operates procedures that take account of the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people, including arrangements for appropriate checks on new staff, volunteers and trustees where applicable.

References, internet links and further sources of information

Working together to Safeguard Children – (A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.)

Available to download at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2>

What to do if you are worried a child is being abused.

Available to download at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/what-to-do-if-youre-worried-a-child-is-being-abused--2>

Internet Links

www.ceop.gov.uk

www.childline.org.uk

www.thinkuknow.co.uk

<https://www.ceop.police.uk/Ceop-Report/>

<http://www.safenetwork.org.uk/>

For Children and Young People

www.childline.org.uk/pages/yourplace.aspx

Contacts

Child Line 0800 1111

NSPCC 0808 800 5000

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