

# **KNOCK CHILD CONTACT CENTRE**

## **Policies and Procedures to Safeguard Vulnerable Adults**

Knock Child Contact Centre recognises that any adult can be vulnerable to abuse and, within the context of the work of Child Contact Centres has established a policy and set of procedures to help identify and signpost such adults to the appropriate agencies and organisations that can assist them.

If a volunteer becomes aware of an abusive situation they shall report their concerns to the Coordinator. A decision will be made if this concern needs to be passed to the relevant authorities. This will, ordinarily, be Social Services who will assess the situation and may involve the PSNI and other agencies if required.

### **Guiding Principles**

A set of commonly agreed principles underpins this policy. Such principles flow from respect for the rights of vulnerable adults who are entitled to:

- Privacy
- Be treated with respect and dignity
- Lead an independent life and be enabled to do so
- Be able to choose how to lead their lives
- The protection of the law
- Have their rights upheld regardless of ethnic origin, gender, sexuality, impairment or disability, age and religious or cultural background
- Have the opportunity to fulfil personal aspirations and realise potential in all aspects of daily life.

This includes Human Rights considerations, particularly in relation to Article 2 “ the Right to Life”, Article 3 “Freedom from Torture” (including humiliating and degrading treatment), and Article 8 “Right to Family Life” (one that sustains the individual).

Any adult at risk of abuse, exploitation or neglect should be able to access support to enable them to live a life free from violence and abuse.

This policy is applicable to the protection from abuse of vulnerable people aged 18 or over and includes older people, people with a learning, physical or sensory disability and people with mental illness or dementia. It covers all types of abuse, including neglect and recognises that vulnerable people cannot always protect themselves.

## **Definition of Vulnerable Adult**

'A person aged 18 years or over who is, or may be, in need of community care services or is resident in a continuing care facility by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness or who is, or may be, unable to take care of him or herself or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation.

## **Definition of Abuse**

'The physical, psychological, emotional, financial or sexual maltreatment, or neglect of a vulnerable adult by another person. The abuse may be a single act or repeated over a period of time. It may take one form or a multiple of forms. The lack of appropriate action can also be a form of abuse. Abuse can occur in a relationship where there is an expectation of trust, and can be perpetrated by a person/persons, in breach of that trust, who have influence over the life of a dependant, whether they be formal or informal carers, staff or family members or others. It can also occur outside a relationship'.

Forms of abuse can be categorised as follows:

- Physical abuse (including inappropriate restraint or use of medication);
- Sexual abuse;
- Psychological abuse;
- Financial or material abuse
- Neglect and acts of omissions;
- Institutional abuse; and
- Discriminatory abuse.

Incidents of abuse may be multiple, either to one person in a continuing relationship or service context, or to more than one person at a time. Any or all types of abuse may be perpetrated as the result of deliberate intent and targeting of vulnerable people, negligence or ignorance.

## **Significant Harm**

Significant harm may include the degree, extent, duration and frequency of harm.

## **Individual Rights**

These principles assume that vulnerable adults have the right to:

- Be accorded the same respect and dignity as any other adult, by recognising their uniqueness and personal needs
- Be given access to knowledge and information which they can understand to help them make informed choices
- Information about, and practical help in, keeping themselves safe and protecting themselves from abuse
- Live safely, without fear of violence or abuse in any form

- Have their money, goods and possessions treated with respect, and to receive equal protection for themselves and their property through the law
- Guidance and assistance in seeking help as a consequence of abuse
- Be supported in making their own decisions about how they wish to proceed in the event of abuse and to know their wishes will only be over-ridden if it is considered necessary for their own safety or the safety of others
- Be supported in bringing a complaint under any existing complaints procedure
- Be supported in reporting the circumstances of any abuse to independent bodies
- Have alleged, suspected or confirmed cases of abuse investigated urgently
- Receive appropriate support, education, counselling, therapy and treatment following abuse
- Seek legal advice or representation on their own behalf
- Seek redress through appropriate agencies
- Have their rights respected and to have their family, informal carers or advocates act on their behalf as appropriate.

### **Confidentiality**

In normal circumstances observing the principle of confidentiality will mean that information is only passed on to others with the consent of the service users. However it should be recognised that in order to protect vulnerable adults, it may be necessary, in some circumstances, to share information that might normally be regarded as confidential.

All vulnerable adults and, where appropriate, their carers or representatives need to be made aware that the operation of multi-disciplinary and inter-agency procedures will, on occasion, require the sharing of information in order to protect a vulnerable adult or others, or to investigate an alleged or suspected criminal offence.

### **Alerting**

Alerting refers to the responsibility to recognise abusive situations and inform the local Social Services Gateway Team. It plays a major role in ensuring the protection of vulnerable adults and it is important that all concerns about possible abuse, however trivial, should be reported. An alert may come from any person who has knowledge or a reasonable suspicion that a vulnerable adult has been, or is at risk of being abused.

### **Referral**

All referrals should be made to the Social Services Gateway Team in line with reporting procedures outlined in the Child Protection Policy and Procedures.

When deciding the level of urgency of any referral, the degree of apparent risk should be the deciding factor. Some cases of abuse will require a rapid response and service provision must allow for this.

## **COMPLAINTS**

If a parent/adult using the Child Contact Centre has a complaint he/she should first speak to the Coordinator and, if the issue is not resolved, the complainant should formalise his/her complaint in a letter to the Chairperson

The complaint will be investigated.

A responding letter will be sent to the complainant.

If the complainant is still dissatisfied, the complainant will be referred to the Management Committee. (See Knock Child Contact Centre's Complaints procedure)

This policy will be reviewed annually and updated as required.