



CHILD PROTECTION POLICY AND PRACTICE GUIDANCE

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1. Policy Statement

The Directors of A+bility Limited believe:

- ✓ that the welfare of the child is paramount
- ✓ that all children and vulnerable adults without exception have the right to protection from abuse regardless of gender, ethnicity, disability, sexuality or beliefs
- ✓ that children and adults, including staff, should feel safe

2. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to make clear to staff the procedures which should be followed in relation to protecting children and young people, vulnerable adults, and also staff, volunteers and associates.

3. Scope

This policy applies to all A+bility Limited staff, associates and volunteers.

4. Context of the Policy

4.1 Legislation & other related policies

Children Act 1989

Sexual Offences Act 2003

The Children Act 2004

The Data Protection Act 1998

Lone Working Policy

Complaints, Concerns, Compliments and Comments Policy

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

Safe Recruitment Policy

5. Mandatory Procedures

There are seven elements to our procedures:

5.1 Ensuring we practice safe recruitment in checking the suitability of staff and volunteers to work with children.

- ✓ All staff and volunteers will have clear enhanced CRB checks no older than 3 years for both children and adults
- ✓ Staff and volunteers will be required to complete a suitability statement annually
- ✓ All staff and volunteers will be registered with ISA once this becomes a requirement.
- ✓ All staff and volunteers will have provided 2 verified references stating their suitability to work with children.
- ✓ All staff and volunteers will sign a suitability statement every year.

- ✓ There is a clear process for renewing CRB checks before the 3 year threshold is expired using a spreadsheet.

5.2 Raising awareness of child protection issues and equipping children with the skills needed to keep them safe.

- ✓ All staff and volunteers will be required to support children, young people and vulnerable adults to learn ways to keep themselves safe
- ✓ Parents will be informed of the activities the children will undertake AND informed of child protection and complaints procedures AND informed of the voluntary OFSTED registration system and OFSTED's address

5.3 Developing and then implementing procedures for identifying and reporting cases, or suspected cases, of abuse.

- ✓ All staff and volunteers will be given instructions about how to recognise signs and indicators of abuse, and how to report concerns.
- ✓ All concerns and allegations of abuse will be taken seriously by the Directors, staff and volunteers and responded to appropriately - this might require a referral to the Commissioning Agency and in emergencies, the Police.
- ✓ Concerns must be raised with the on call manager or Director by telephone on the day the staff become concerned.
- ✓ The Board has appointed a named person and deputy to take responsibility for Child Protection. These designated persons are: Sally Jackaman (lead) and Alayne O'Connor (deputy).
- ✓ One of these officers will pass on concerns to the appropriate authorities having made a dynamic risk assessment of the need to raise it as an emergency or wait until the next working day.
- ✓ Staff raising concerns will record them on the Company's contact record forms and pass to the DSM as soon as possible.
- ✓ Allegations against Directors, staff, associates and volunteers will be reported to the Local Area Designated Officer (LADO). This is currently Gloucestershire County Council officer Jane Bee.
- ✓ Concerns about safety will supercede agreements on information sharing.
- ✓ Procedures for managing disputes in professional decisions are informed by the GSCB's 'Escalation' policy which is attached as Appendix 2, and from Stage 3 onwards are recorded on the form supplied in Appendix

3. Staff will receive updates and outcome information from the Director managing the process.

5.4 Supporting children, young people and adults who have been abused, or are vulnerable to abuse, in accordance with his/her agreed child protection plan where appropriate.

- ✓ Commissioning Agencies are required to provide information necessary to ensure each service user's needs are met.
- ✓ This information is held on the individual risk assessment and behaviour management plan unless the agency provides its own documentation.
- ✓ Support staff, Managers or Directors will attend multi agency meetings as requested by commissioning agencies. This will feature in the service agreement.

5.5 Establishing a safe environment in which children can learn and develop

- ✓ All staff and volunteers will have received Child Protection training and receive update training every 2 years
- ✓ Staff should ensure they log on to <http://www.gscb.org.uk/> regularly
- ✓ Individual risk assessments will be kept on all current service users in order to ensure the correct level of support and supervision is in place for each service user
- ✓ A+bility does not offer open access child care
- ✓ Two people who have attained the age of 18 will be on the premises whilst care is being provided at The Christian Adventure Centre, Viney Hill
- ✓ The Directors of A+bility Limited will take all reasonable steps to ensure that no individual who is unsuitable will have unsupervised contact to the children in their care

5.6 Informing all staff, Commissioning Agencies, and service users of A+bility's Complaints, Concerns, Compliments and Comments policy.

- ✓ All staff and volunteers will have a copy of the Complaints, Concerns, Compliments and Comments Policy.
- ✓ Service users will be informed of the complaints policy, and will be given a copy on request.
- ✓ Service users will be supported to make complaints in ways that meet their needs in terms of age, understanding and preferred method of communication.

5.7 Establishing a safe environment for staff, associates and volunteers to carry out their duties.

- ✓ All staff, associates and volunteers will have a copy of the Complaints, Concerns, Compliments and Comments Policy.
- ✓ All staff, associates and volunteers will have a copy of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy which covers bullying and harassment.
- ✓ Staff, associates and volunteers will be supported to make complaints or raise concerns when their safety has been compromised, or is being compromised.
- ✓ If staff, associates or volunteers feel threatened, or have been threatened or hurt by service users, the Directors will take this up with the Commissioning Agency and ensure there is no repeat; this in no way affects the right of the aggrieved person to report offences to the Police or to take legal action.

6. Practice Guidance

Definitions:

6.1 Physical abuse

Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a person. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces illness in a child.

6.2 Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a person. With children it can cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond the child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone. Emotional abuse can also include threats and stalking.

6.3 Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse involves forcing an adult, or forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, including prostitution, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative (e.g. rape, buggery or oral sex) 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 watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways. Staff attending adults at home should accept the adults are entitled to have legal adult material.

6.4 Neglect

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's or vulnerable adult's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food and clothing, shelter including exclusion from home or abandonment, failing to protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger, failure to ensure adequate supervision including the use of inadequate care-takers, or the failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

6.5 Domestic Violence

The impact of domestic violence can go beyond actual physical violence, to involve emotional abuse, the destruction of property, isolation from friends, family or sources of support, control over decision making, money, transport or telephone and can include the impact of witnessing violence.

The government's core definition of domestic violence/abuse is:

"...any incident of threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional) between adults who are or have been intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender or sexuality."

(Home Office, Domestic Violence: A National Report, March 2004)

An adult is defined as any person aged 18 years or over. Family members are defined as mother, father, son, daughter, brother, sister, and grandparents, whether directly related, in laws or stepfamily. A family member may be an individual who regularly visits or has contact with the household. A child who lives in a household where domestic violence is a feature of family life, has been abused by these life experiences.

6.6 Signs and Indicators

Some of these signs and indicators could have other explanations.

- ✓ Aggression.
- ✓ Unexplained or suspicious injuries such as bruising, cuts or burns, particularly if situated on a part of the body not normally prone to such injuries.
- ✓ Sexually transmitted infections.
- ✓ Pregnancy.
- ✓ An injury for which the explanation seems suspicious or inconsistent.
- ✓ The individual describes what appears to be an abusive act involving themselves.
- ✓ Unexplained changes of behaviour (e.g. becoming quiet, withdrawn or displaying sudden outbursts of temper).

- ✓ Age inappropriate sexual awareness.
- ✓ Engaging in sexually explicit behaviour.
- ✓ Distrust of adults, particularly those with whom a close relationship would normally be expected.
- ✓ Difficulty in making friends.
- ✓ Prevented from socialising with other children.
- ✓ Displays variations in eating patterns including overeating or loss of appetite.
- ✓ Loses weight for no apparent reason.
- ✓ Becomes increasingly dirty or unkempt.
- ✓ Clothes not appropriate for season e.g. sandals in winter, Wellington boots in summer.
- ✓ Lots of layers of clothes.
- ✓ Cutting (self mutilation) and other forms of self harm.
- ✓ Drug and/or alcohol abuse.
- ✓ Running away.
- ✓ Hysterical fits or fainting.
- ✓ Restlessness and aimlessness.
- ✓ Recurrent headaches.
- ✓ Poor trust and secretiveness.
- ✓ Indiscriminate and careless sexual behaviour.
- ✓ Onset of enuresis (bedwetting) or daytime wetting.
- ✓ Recurrent abdominal pains.
- ✓ Running away.
- ✓ Sleeping disturbances.
- ✓ Smearing faeces.
- ✓ Social withdrawal.
- ✓ Unexplained bullying or aggressive behaviour to other children.
- ✓ Unexplained changes in attitude and/or behaviour.
- ✓ Speaking about, or acting out, domestic violence.

6.7 Guidance on listening to allegations:

- ✓ Do not promise confidentiality, you have a duty to share this information.
- ✓ Listen to what is being said, without displaying shock or disbelief.
- ✓ Accept what is said.
- ✓ Reassure the child or vulnerable adult, but only as far as is honest, don't make promises you may not be able to keep e.g. don't say *'Everything will be alright now'*, *'You'll never have to see that person again'*.
- ✓ Do reassure and alleviate guilt, if the child or vulnerable adult refers to it. For example, you could say, *'You're not to blame'*.
- ✓ Do not interrogate the child or vulnerable adult; it is not your responsibility to investigate.
- ✓ Do not ask leading questions (e.g. *Did he touch your private parts?*)
- ✓ Do not ask the child or vulnerable adult to repeat the information for another member of staff.
- ✓ Explain what you have to do next and who you have to talk to.
- ✓ Report to your on call person as soon as you can.
- ✓ Take notes if possible or write up your conversation as soon as possible afterwards.

- ✓ Record the date, time, place any non-verbal behaviour and the words used by the child (do not paraphrase).
- ✓ Record statements and observable things rather than interpretations or assumptions.

6.8 Allegations Management

If a Professional has a concern about another professional or volunteer where they have:

- ✓ Behaved inappropriately in a way that has harmed or may have harmed a child or
- ✓ Possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child or
- ✓ Behaved towards a child or children in away that indicates s/he is unsuitable to work with children

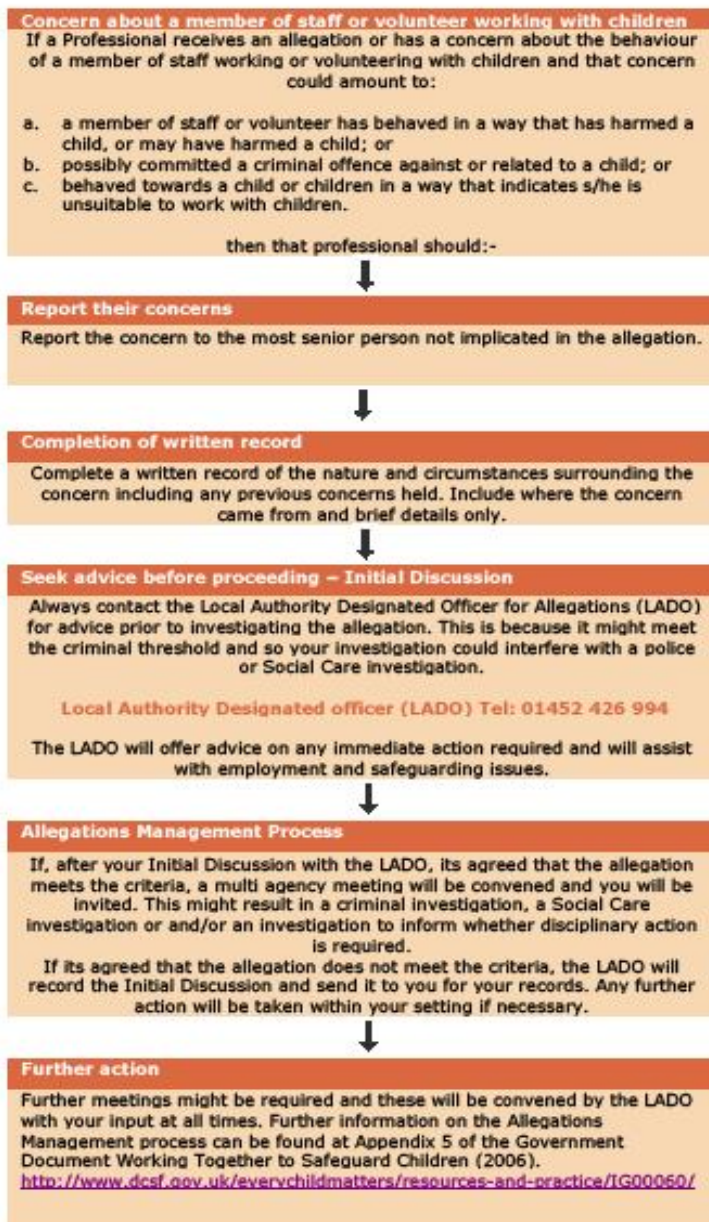
then these concerns should be dealt with following the Allegations Management Procedure which comprises Appendix 1 of this policy.

7. Monitoring

Child Protection issues will be monitored monthly at Board Meetings.

This policy will be reviewed every 2 years after staff consultation.

Summary of allegations management procedures



12th November 09



South West Safeguarding and Child Protection Group

Resolution of professional disagreements in work relating to the safety of children - Escalation Policy

Introduction

Occasionally situations arise when workers within one agency feel that the decision made by a worker from another agency on a child protection or child in need case is not a safe decision. Disagreements could arise in a number of areas, but are most likely to arise around:

- Levels of need
- Roles and responsibilities
- The need for action
- Communication

The safety of individual children is the paramount consideration in any professional disagreement and any unresolved issues should be addressed with due consideration to the risks that might exist for the child.

All workers should feel able to challenge decision-making and to see this as their right and responsibility in order to promote the best multi-agency safeguarding practice. This policy provides workers with the means to raise concerns they have about decisions made by other professionals or agencies by:

- a) avoiding professional disputes that put children at risk or obscure the focus on the child
- b) resolving the difficulties within and between agencies quickly and openly
- c) identifying problem areas in working together where there is a lack of clarity and to promote the resolution via amendment to protocols and procedures

Effective working together depends on an open approach and honest relationships between agencies. Problem resolution is an integral part of professional co-operation and joint working to safeguard children.

Resolution should be sought within the shortest timescale possible to ensure the child is protected. Disagreements should be resolved at the lowest possible stage however if a child is thought to be at risk of immediate harm discretion should be used as to which stage is initiated.

Stages of the policy

Stage One

Any worker who feels that a decision is not safe or is inappropriate should initially consult a supervisor/manager to clarify their thinking in order to identify the problem; to be specific as to what the disagreement is about; and what they aim to achieve.

Stage Two

Initial attempts should be taken to resolve the problem at the lowest possible level. This would normally be between the people who disagree. It should be recognised that differences in status and/or experience may affect the confidence of some workers to pursue this unsupported.

Stage Three

If the problem is not resolved at stage two the concerned worker should contact their supervisor/manager within their own agency who should raise the concerns with the equivalent supervisor/manager in the other agency.

Stage Four

If the problem is not resolved at stage three the supervisor/manager reports to their respective operations manager or named/designated safeguarding representative. These two managers must attempt to resolve the professional differences through discussion.

Stage Five

If it has not been possible to resolve the professional differences within the agencies concerned a Local Safeguarding Children Board Resolution Panel will be convened by the Chair of the LSCB:

The panel must consist of LSCB representatives from three agencies (including the agencies concerned in the professional differences, where possible).

The panel will receive representations from those concerned in the professional differences and make a decision as to the next course of action, resolving the professional differences concerned.

The decision of the panel is binding on all those agencies concerned.

The panel will ensure a brief report of the issues and decisions made is submitted to the LSCB on an annual basis.

Additional Notes

At all stages of the process actions and decisions must be recorded in writing and shared with relevant personnel, to include the worker who raised the initial concern. In particular this must include written confirmation between the parties about an agreed outcome of the disagreement and how any outstanding issues will be pursued.

It may be useful for individuals to debrief following some disputes in order to promote continuing good working relationships.

November 2009

Resolution of Professional Disagreements in work relating to the safety of children

A tool to record decisions and to monitor the effectiveness of the professional differences policy

Experience and outcomes of serious case reviews tells us how devastating professional disagreements can be to children. When concerns are raised but not addressed or when services are requested but not provided. Without an effective means to address concerns issues escalate, relationships between partner agencies deteriorate, problems drag on for weeks, months and years and, in the worse cases, children do not receive adequate services and are left exposed to harm.

This tool is a means to enable your service to record the agreed outcome of the use of the professional differences policy, and to aid Local Safeguarding Boards (LSCBs) to monitor its use.

This form to be used at stage three and at each subsequent stage of the professional's differences policy.

Child/Family name	

Summary of reason for dispute – include views of all agencies concerned.	
Agreed outcomes or actions if satisfactorily resolved – includes escalation to next stage if unresolved	

Action Note:
Copy of this form to be held on child/family file in all agencies involved in resolution of professional difference, if escalating to next stage use as basis of report to manager at next stage, send copy to your approved resolution audit manager or the LSCB for monitoring purposes.

Signature of challenger manager -----	Name	
	Designation	
	Agency	
	Date	
Signature of challenged manger -----	Name	
	Designation	
	Agency	
	Date	

Please complete for monitoring purposes

Stage at which resolution achieved- -----	Time taken to reach resolution- -----	Please note how effective this policy was in resolving the issue and please make suggestions as to how the policy can be improved:
Additional Notes:		