

Select Childcare

Child Safe Guarding

Childcare Providers

The purpose of this policy is to help Select Childcare staff, know what to do if they think a child in their care may be being abused or is likely to be abused. This policy is intended to complement the book "What to do if you are worried a child is being abused".

We commit to acting in the child's best interest, when dealing with any child Safe Guarding issues.

By producing this policy we aim to help all Select Childcare staff understand some of the warning signs that a child may be being abused and to know what to do if they have concerns about a child's welfare.

All those who come into contact with children and families, including people who do not have a specific role in relation to child protection, have duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

Before explaining the action a member of staff should take on receiving information that leads them to be worried about a child, it is helpful to understand the following:

- Definition of child abuse.
- Significant harm.
- Child in need.
- How children can be abused.
- Signs and indicators of possible abuse

Once this is understood we can explain the following:

- How abuse and neglect or possible abuse and neglect may come to the attention of staff.
- What action staff should take?
- What happens next?
- Confidentiality.

Definition of child abuse.

Child abuse consists of anything, which individuals, institutions or processes do or fail to do, which directly or indirectly harms children or damages their prospect of a safe and healthy development into childhood. The national commission of enquiry into the prevention of child abuse. 1996.

Significant Harm

Significant harm is based on the severity and extent of the harm, the duration and frequency of abuse and neglect and the extent of the premeditation. There is no specific definition for significant harm but these criteria will be used to determine the level of harm involved. This harm will also include 'the impairment suffered from seeing or hearing the ill treatment of another' - (the children's act 1989 - amendment in 2002).

On deciding the significant harm the local authority will make enquiries as to whether or not intervention is needed for the family.

Child In Need

Children who are "in need" under the children act 1989, are those whose 'vulnerability is such that they are unlikely to reach or maintain a satisfactory level of health or development, or their health and development will be significantly impaired, without the provision of services'.

How children can be abused.

Children maybe abused through:

- **Neglect.**
Is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development, such as failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, or neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.
- **Physical abuse.**
This may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child, including by fabricating the symptoms of, or deliberately causing, ill health to a child.
- **Sexual abuse.**
Involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative or non-penetrative acts. They may include involving children in looking at, or in the production of, pornographic material, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.
- **Emotional abuse.**
Is the persistent emotional ill treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development? It may involve conveying to the children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person, age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children, causing children frequently to feel frightened, or the exploitation or corruption of children.

Recognising or suspecting that a child is being abused may be stressful and upsetting. It is easy for people to believe that it couldn't happen to children for whom they care.

Children are harmed in all sorts of families and in most instances the person causing the harm is well known to them.

Signs and indicators of possible abuse.

Through observations of children staff maybe able to identify unusual marks or behavioral differences, which could be caused by a form of abuse?

Listening to children when they are playing or directly talking to you may give indicators that abuse is being carried out. Listening to parents or carer's is also a way of finding out information. This way you can find a possible explanation for any strange behaviour a child might be displaying. The important thing to remember when you think you may see signs or indicators of abuse are to record it, get as much information as possible without leading the conversations, and record the information as clearly and accurately as possible.

Remember it is not your responsibility to decide if a child is being abused; it is your responsibility to raise cause for concern and to refer on.

How abuse or possible abuse may come to the attention of staff

- Through direct observation of the children they care for.
- Seeing unusual marks on a child they care for.
- From an outside agency, such as social services.
- Through a telephone call.
- A letter.
- A fax.
- An e-mail

Any information about the possible abuse of a child received by staff, regardless of the source, must be acted upon without delay.

What action should staff take? What happens next?

- Be aware of the company's policies and procedures for promoting and safeguarding the welfare of children.
- Know whom to contact to express concerns about a child's welfare.
- Don't do anything to jeopardize an investigation, such as asking leading questions.
- Refer any concerns to your manager.
- The manager will refer any concerns to the police or social services.
- Have all information on the child and family up to date and accurate.
- Communicate with the child in an appropriate way; reassure them but never promise confidentiality.
- Record all concerns, discussions, decisions made and the reasons for those decisions.
- You may discuss your concerns with colleagues or other childcare professionals without identifying the child. This way you can have a wide range of experience and reassurance that you are taking the right action for the child.
- If concerns for the child are still there you must inform social services.
- When you make a referral, agree with the recipient what the child and parents will be told, by whom and when.
- If you make a referral by phone you must confirm it in writing within 48 hours.
- Social services should acknowledge your written referral within one working day. If you haven't heard anything back after 3 days get in contact with them again.

- Where you are asked to provide any information to social services or the police about the child or family, always make a copy of this information.
- You maybe asked to contribute an assessment.
- You must provide support or specific services to the child or member of the family as part of an agreed plan, and contribute to the reviewing of the child's developmental progress.
- The flow charts, which follow this policy, will explain all the different steps, which could be taken in the referral process and beyond.
- Social services may require you to contribute to assessments about the child and their "need".
- Staff are to be aware that accidents in the home do happen which cause injury. These should not be ignored, but discussed with the parents/carer's in a supportive way.
- Children do overhear things and repeat them; again these comments should be taken seriously, but not assumed to of happened, but not ignoring them.
- Remember there could be a stressful situation at home, which could trigger behaviour not usual of a child.

Confidentiality

Information about child protection concerns in relation to a child is confidential. Staff should make sure they keep any written information in a safe place, and never talk about the child's background except with those professionals involved.

Concerns raised about a childcare provider

Where concerns have been raised about a childcare provider possibly harming a child the following action should be taken:

- On the same day telephone Ofsted and report the concern.
- Record the action on the relevant form.
- Follow any actions requested by Ofsted.
- Talk to the person raising the concern and record all information.
- The social services department will be involved and will investigate the situation and the concern for the child's well fair.
- A decision will be made by the social services and the police may be involved depending on the severity of the case.
- The member of staff who is involved may be suspended from duties until the matter has concluded, depending on the severity of the accusation.
- Depending on the outcome the member of staff will be reinstated into their usual role or dismissed from the company.
- The company will liaise with and cooperate with all police and social services investigations.
- The company will make the well fair of the child the top priority in any suspicions of abuse.

Please see the allegation against staff member procedure for a full run down of the protocol

Childminder's signature: _____ Date: _____

Review date: _____

