

Countershade Child Protection Policy

Safeguarding children is the responsibility of everyone

Policy Statement

The Children's Act, 1989 defines a child as being up to the age of 18 years old. Extensions of this exist for children who have special needs and for those in local authority care settings. The Children's Act makes it clear that the welfare of the child is paramount and it gives everyone involved in the care of children a responsibility for the protection of those children.

Countershade is committed to provide a safe environment for children, staff and visitors and promote a climate where children and adults will feel confident about sharing any concerns that they may have about their own safety or the well-being of others.

Countershade believes that all children, regardless of age and background, have at all times and in all situations, the right to enjoy the activities of the group in a happy, safe and secure environment. Countershade will ensure that this is the case by rigorously implementing this policy. All staff and volunteers will be checked through the Criminal Records Bureau prior to employment with the organisation if they are to have any contact with children.

Types of abuse:

Child abuse is generally divided into four categories

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse 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 feigns the symptoms of, or deliberately causes ill health to, a child whom they are looking after. A person might do this because they enjoy or need the attention they get through having a sick child.

Physical abuse, as well as being a result of an act of commission can also be caused through omission or the failure to act to protect.

Emotional Abuse

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 making a child feel or believe that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person.

Sexual Abuse

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, or consents to, what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative acts such as rape, buggery or oral sex or non-penetrative acts such as fondling.

Sexual abuse may also 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.

Boys and girls can be sexually abused by males and/or females, by adults and by other young people. This includes people from all different walks of life.

Neglect

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.

It may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, failing to protect a child from physical harm or danger, 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.

Recruitment:

All reasonable steps will be taken to ensure unsuitable individuals are prevented from having any involvement with Countersshade.

Employee/volunteer recruitment procedures will include a Criminal Records Bureau Disclosure, at the appropriate level, for all personnel with access to children and should always include self-declaration and the use of references. Should any concerns arise following a Criminal Records Bureau Disclosure then this will be passed onto the Directors. Any Disclosure that causes concern will be assessed to establish the level of risk the subject poses to children, other service users, colleagues, the general public and/or our organisation. A number of questions will be asked:

- Does the offence relate directly to work with children?
- What is the seriousness of the offence/s and the circumstances surrounding it?
- How long is it since the offence was committed?
- Does the subject have a pattern of offending?
- Has the subject's situation changed since the offence occurred?
- What is the subject's explanation of the offence?
- Did the subject declare the offence prior to the Disclosure?

If all these questions are not answered satisfactorily then the prospective employee/volunteer will not be allowed to join the organisation. All new employees/volunteers will go through a probation and induction process, including relevant training. Ongoing training and supervision will ensure all employees/volunteers are adequately supported.

Training and supervision of staff and volunteers

New staff and volunteers will have a designated person (supervisor) that will ensure that a proper induction takes place. The supervisor will provide regular support and supervision to the new member of staff and volunteer in all areas of their work including child protection. All new staff and volunteers will read and understand this policy as part of their induction process.

Creating a Safe and Caring Environment:

- Risk Assessment should be undertaken prior to any offsite visits or new types of activities.(This may be done in collaboration or by proxy with collaborating institutions who already run risk assessments, e.g. schools, art galleries and N.G.Os .)
- Employees/volunteers working with children should be appropriately trained and qualified to ensure the safe provision of services, use of equipment, activities undertaken, etc.
- Employees/volunteers working with children should carefully plan activity sessions with the care and safety of children as their main concern including the use of activities at an appropriate age/ability level.
- Wherever possible we will encourage an 'open environment' e.g. avoiding private or unobserved situations and discouraging the keeping of secrets. This especially includes employees/volunteers should being alone with a child at any time. When this is unavoidable, it should be done with the full knowledge and consent of someone in charge of the organisation and/or the children's parents/carers.

- Employees/volunteers must treat all children/young people with respect.
- Employees/volunteers must not make racist, sexist or any other remarks which upset or humiliate
- Employees/volunteers must take care to avoid showing any favouritism.
- It is the responsibility of employees/volunteers to prevent the abuse of younger or weaker children by older or stronger children through bullying, cruelty or any other forms of humiliation.
- Arrangements for parents/carers dropping off and collecting children from activities/trips need to be clearly stated and agreed by parents/carers, children and employees/volunteers.

Behaviour guidelines for employees/volunteers:

Safety of participants and employees/volunteers is of prime consideration at all times. All accidents involving anyone should be recorded in the organisation's accident book immediately or as soon as practicably possible.

Employees/volunteers are responsible for familiarising themselves with building/facility safety issues, such as, fire procedures, location of emergency exits, location of emergency telephones and first aid equipment.

Employees/volunteers are responsible for reporting suspected cases of child abuse to the appropriate individuals and/or agencies.

When running activities independently of other responsible institutions:-

Appropriate employees/volunteers should have access to any parent consent/emergency consent forms for all children taking part in any activities [this information should be confidential].

Employees/volunteers should ensure that their activities start and end on time.

Employees/volunteers are expected to promote, demonstrate and incorporate the values of fair play, trust and ethics throughout their activities.

Employees/volunteer should ensure that they are adequately insured, to protect against claims of negligence, through their organisation or their own personal insurance if acting as a self employed agent.

Volunteer's code of behaviour: working with children and young people

The aim of these guidelines is to ensure the safety and well being of all young people and to support the volunteers in providing a safe, caring environment. Volunteers will work under the direct supervision of an established staff member

- Volunteers should set examples of appropriate behaviour. As young people learn by example, volunteers should avoid using sarcasm or discrimination, direct criticism, labelling and unnecessary competition or comparison.
- Good behaviour should be positively encouraged.
- Volunteers should not physically punish any young person.
- Volunteers should not deprive any young person of, or force any child to consume food or drink.
- Volunteers should not humiliate or frighten any young person.
- Volunteers should avoid situations in which they risk putting themselves or the young person at risk. This includes being alone with a young person unnecessarily.
- Volunteers should offer respect to the young person at all times and strive to be sensitive to their feelings.
- Adult to young person ratios should reflect best practice (1:10 max for 10 years and over, 1:8 max under 10).

Procedures for work independent of and outside of other institutions and managed space.

A register of names, addresses, next of kin and contact addresses and telephone numbers for emergencies will be kept. Parents/carers, and where appropriate older children, will be given a copy of a written statement which specifies the action which will be taken in the event of a child becoming ill or being injured and which indicates that any information which suggests that a child has been abused will be passed on to the Social Services Department and/or the police.

Designated Person

There will be a named designated person and a deputy-designated person for child protection. In the event of any concerns regarding a child then the designated person or deputy will be informed at the earliest available opportunity. If necessary the designated person will inform the relevant Social Services Department without delay and the management committee. The designated person will also ensure that the child protection procedures are kept up to date and reviewed.

Named Person:

Children and parents/carers will have a 'named person' to whom they may report any worries or concerns. This person will normally be the designated person or deputy.

Signs of Abuse:

The signs summarised below do not necessarily mean that a child is being abused. Similarly there may not be any signs; you may just feel something is wrong. If you are worried report it to the designated person. It is not your responsibility to decide if it is abuse but it is your responsibility to act on your concerns and do something about it by reporting.

Signs of Physical Abuse:

- Unexplained injuries or burns
- Improbable excuses given to explain injuries
- Refusal to discuss injuries
- Untreated injuries
- Admission of punishment which appears excessive
- Bald patches
- Withdrawal from physical contact
- Arms and legs covered in hot weather
- Fear of returning home
- Fear of medical help
- Self-destructive tendencies
- Aggression towards others
- Running away

Signs of Neglect:

- Constant hunger
- Poor personal hygiene
- Constant tiredness
- Poor state of clothing
- Emaciated
- Frequent lateness or non attendance at school
- Untreated medical problems

- Destructive tendencies
- Low self esteem
- Neurotic behaviour
- No social relationships
- Running away
- Compulsive stealing or scavenging

Signs of Emotional abuse:

- Physical, mental and/or emotional development slows down
- Admission of punishment which appears excessive
- Over-reaction to mistakes
- Continual self-deprecation
- Sudden speech disorders
- Fear of new situations
- Inappropriate emotional responses to painful situations
- Neurotic behaviour eg thumb sucking, hair twisting, etc.
- Self mutilation
- Fear of parents being contacted
- Extremes of passivity or aggression
- Substance misuse
- Running away
- Compulsive stealing, scavenging

Signs of Sexual Abuse:

- Lack of trust in adults and/or fear of a particular individual[s]
- Over familiarity with adults or provocative behaviour
- Withdrawal and introversion/problems with peer relationships
- Running away from home/sudden behaviour changes eg falling standards, truancy, Stealing etc.
- Low self esteem
- Substance misuse
- Displaying sexual knowledge beyond age group
- Involvement in prostitution
- Over-sexed behaviour
- Sleeplessness, nightmares, fear of the dark
- Bruises, scratches, bite marks
- Depression, suicide attempts
- Anorexia nervosa/eating disorder or a change in eating habits
- Pregnancy, particularly when reluctant to name the father
- Recurring urinary tract problems/vaginal infections

Employees/volunteers should never:

- Engage in rough physical activities, even when playing.
- Engage in sexually proactive activities.
- Allow or engage in inappropriate touching of any form.
- Allow children to use inappropriate language.
- Make sexually suggestive comments about or to a child.
- Let a child's allegation go either unchallenged and/or unrecorded.
- Do things of a personal nature for a child. If you do have to do things of a personal nature for a child eg take to the toilet, support, lift, etc particularly if they are very young or a child with additional needs, then you should obtain the full consent of their parents and permission from your line manager or person in

charge. In an emergency situation, which requires this type of help, parents and your line manager, should be fully informed as soon, as is practicable.

- Reduce a child to tears as a form of control.
- Undertake any tasks involving children for which they feel inadequately trained or have concerns about.

Photography, video, etc:

Formal permission from parent/carers should be obtained before taking photographs, videos, etc.

Responding to disclosures of abuse

It is not the responsibility of employees/volunteers to deal with suspected abuse but it is their responsibility to report concerns to the appropriate person. It is important that all employees/volunteers should be aware of their responsibilities if child abuse is suspected.

If you notice any social changes in the behaviour of a child, worrying marks or bruises or hear a child/children talking about things which give cause for concern, then your first responsibility is to the child. It is not safe to assume that someone else will take action. As an adult you have a duty to take appropriate action. Recognising and coping with child abuse is very stressful and the person reporting the concern will not have to cope alone.

If a child spontaneously talks of experiences which give cause for concern staff and volunteers at the Organisation should:

1. Explain to the child that if he/she discloses information which leads you to believe they are being abused, you will be unable to keep it confidential.
2. Listen to the child without questioning him/her. Be aware of your own reactions as showing disapproval may stop the child from continuing with their disclosure.
3. Do not try to stop the child from recalling events. Make a note of what is said, in what context, the setting, the timing and which people were present.
4. Reassure the child, tell them that they are right to tell you [do not promise to keep it a secret as it is your responsibility to inform others].
5. Stay calm – ensure the child is safe and feels safe.
6. Accept what you have been told. [This should not be seen as believing or disbelieving what you have been told]
7. Reassure the child and stress that they are not to blame.
8. Tell the child that you will offer support but you will have to pass the information on.
9. Do not question the child and/or rush into details that may be inappropriate.
10. Monitor the individuals concerned; encourage them to continue to take part in the Organisation's activities.
11. Do not make promises you cannot keep.

12. Do not approach or contact the alleged abuser[s].

Reporting Procedures (this will usually be undertaken within the procedures of the institution Countershade partners with and the following is a guide line checklist to ensure all countershade staff have undertaken all necessary action.)

- Record the concern or incident in the Child Protection register, including, date and time of what has occurred and the time the disclosure was made. Record the names of the people involved and what was said and done by whom and any action taken.
- Inform an appropriate senior member of staff or deputy immediately. Remember that confidentiality is of the utmost importance.
- A senior staff member should be contacted.
- If the matter is urgent and no senior member of staff can be contacted, then contact social services or the police.
- The senior staff member will contact the appropriate authorities including the Duty Social Worker in the area where the child lives as soon as possible.

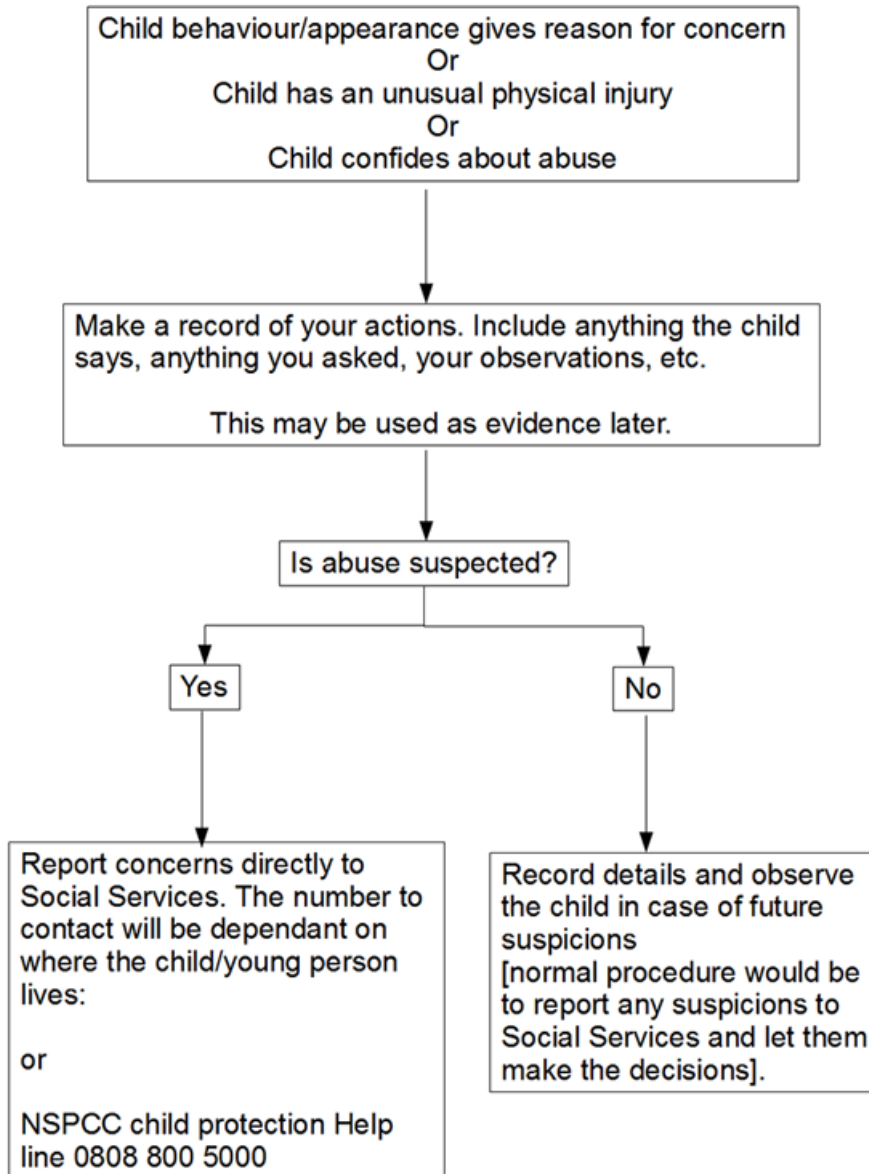
Concerns would normally be shared with parents/carers as soon as possible. However, there could be circumstances when this could put the child at greater risk or there may be concerns that parents/carers will not respond appropriately. Every effort will be made by Social Services to respect the anonymity, if requested, of the person reporting the abuse, however, if allegations result in Court proceedings this may not be possible.

If an allegation of abuse is made against a member of staff or volunteer, Social Services will follow the same procedure as they do to investigate allegations of abuse for a family.

Review:

The Organisation will ensure that issues of child protection receive continuous attention and will regularly review the way that we operate to support this principle. The child protection policy should be reviewed annually and when there are any changes in legislation.

Reporting procedure for suspected cases of child abuse



Incident Record Form

Your Name:
Your Position:
Child's Name:
Child's date of birth:
Child's Address:
Parents/carer names and address (if different from above)
Date and time of any incident or action prompting concerns:

Your observations:

What the child said and what you said:
(Remember do not lead the child – record actual details. Continue on separate sheet/s if necessary.)

Action taken so far:

Social Services
Contact details [name, etc]:

Information given:

Details of advice received:

Any other external agencies contacted (*contact details, date and time, information given and advice received*)

Have the parents been informed that contact is going to be made with social services.
Yes No
NB: *parents should always be informed unless to do so could place the child at risk of further harm, please seek advice of this point from the duty social worker if you are uncertain.*

Signature:

Print Name:

Date

Please remember to maintain confidentiality on a need to know basis – do not discuss this incident with anyone other than your manager or those who need to know. Please take advice on this point from your manager if you are uncertain.

Designated Person	Deputy
Position	Position
Name	Name
Contact details	Contact details
Contact numbers for reporting	NSPCC child protection Help line 0808 800 5000

Date policy written:.....

Date approved by directors.....

Signed by the designated person.....

Signed by the Chairperson.....

Date of review: A year after it was written/approved.....

Countershade Child Protection Policy

I confirm that I have read the policy, understand my responsibilities and confirm that I will adhere to the objectives and guidance.

Name _____

Position _____

Organisation _____

Signed _____

Date _____

