

Policy and Procedures for the Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults

Agreed by Belfast City Council on 1st September 2009.



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1.0 Terms of reference

- 1.1 This policy is applicable to staff and volunteers who work or come into contact with children or vulnerable adults.
- 1.2 A child is defined as aged 16 years and below.
- 1.3 The definition of a vulnerable adult, is a person aged 16 or over who receives services of a type listed in paragraph (i) below and in consequence of a condition of a type listed in paragraph (ii) below, has a disability of a type listed at (iii) below.
- (i) The services are:
- accommodation and nursing or personal care in a care home,
 - personal care or support to live independently in his or her own home,
 - any services provided by an independent hospital, independent clinic, independent medical agency or National Health Service body,
 - social care services; or
 - any services provided in an establishment catering for a person with learning difficulties.
- (ii) The conditions are:
- a learning or physical disability,
 - a physical or mental illness, chronic or otherwise, including an addiction to alcohol or drugs; or
 - a reduction in physical or mental capacity.
- (iii) The disabilities are:
- a dependency upon others in the performance of, or a requirement for assistance in the performance of, basic physical functions,
 - severe impairment in the ability to communicate with others, or
 - impairment in a person's ability to protect him or herself from assault, abuse or neglect.
- The above is taken from the Criminal Records Bureau website in respect of the definition of a vulnerable adult for the purposes of an enhanced check.
- 1.4 Coaches and hirers will be expected to comply with legislation when working with children or vulnerable adults.
- Coaches will be expected to undertake relevant training and to abide by our policy and procedures for the protection of children and vulnerable adults.
 - Hirers must abide by the Conditions of Hire.
(see Appendix 8 regarding Hire of Facilities)

2.0 Introduction

- 2.1 We are committed to delivering a service that promotes good practice and protects children and vulnerable adults from harm.
- 2.2 Members and staff within the council accept and recognise our responsibilities to develop awareness of the issues that may cause children or vulnerable adults harm.
- 2.3 We will seek to protect the safety of children and vulnerable adults and provide a safe environment by employing people who are suitable for working with or to have contact with, children and vulnerable adults. We will do this by vetting the background of persons who are recommended for appointment to posts (in either a paid or a voluntary capacity), which have substantial access to children or vulnerable adults. See Appendix 1 for recruitment and selection guidelines on the employment of staff who have substantial access to children and vulnerable adults.
- 2.4 We will ensure that suitable and appropriate training is provided to all staff, including volunteers, to raise awareness of their role in recognising abuse, including familiarity with our policy and procedures for the protection of children and vulnerable adults.

3.0 Background

- 3.1 The Children (NI) Order 1995, came into force in Northern Ireland on 4 November 1996 and it deals with the care, upbringing and protection of children. It reforms, consolidates and harmonises most of the public and private law relating to children, in a single coherent statutory framework.
- 3.2 One of the key principles in the child care law is protection. The principle is that children should be safe and should be protected by intervention if they are in danger.
- 3.3 Under this legislation there are requirements which set essential standards, which we will endeavour to follow by way of good practice.
- 3.4 Having regard to the above and in order to deal effectively with the issue of abuse, a clear statement of council policy and clear procedures are considered essential in order to communicate the council's position and to assist management in dealing with incidents of this nature.

4.0 Aims of the policy

- 4.1 To demonstrate our commitment to providing and maintaining a service that protects children and vulnerable adults from harm, as well as protecting the organisation and our workers from potential allegations.
- 4.2 To ensure that all our staff and volunteers are carefully selected, trained and supervised and are familiar with the council's policy and procedures for the protection of children and vulnerable adults.

5.0 Policy statement on the protection of children and vulnerable adults

- 5.1 We confirm our commitment to making sure that children and vulnerable adults are protected and kept safe from harm while they are being supervised by staff and volunteers from this organisation. To this end we will endeavour to safeguard children and vulnerable adults by:
- adopting guidelines through a code of behaviour for staff (see Appendix 3 for guidelines),
 - sharing information about protection and good practice,
 - sharing information about concerns with agencies who need to know and involving parents, carers, vulnerable adults and children appropriately,
 - providing effective management for staff through supervision, support and training,
 - taking appropriate action to respond to issues of protection which occur on our premises or involve its workforce, and
 - nominating designated officer(s) and key worker(s) to co-ordinate the council's policy and procedures for the protection of children and vulnerable adults. The key workers will be located in sections where staff are in contact with children or vulnerable adults on a daily basis.

6.0 Definitions of abuse

- 6.1 There are several different categories of abuse officially defined in government guidance and these are central to the statutory child protection system.
- 6.2 Child abuse occurs when a child is neglected, harmed or not provided with proper care.
- 6.3 Because children can be abused in a number of ways the harm caused cannot always be easily categorised. The Children (NI) Order 1995 defines 4 categories of abuse:
- Neglect**
the persistent failure to meet a child's physical, emotional or psychological needs, likely to result in significant harm
- Physical**
the deliberate physical injury to a child, or the wilful or neglectful failure to prevent physical injury or suffering
- Sexual**
involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities
- Emotional**
the persistent emotional ill-treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development
- Bullying**
Although bullying has not been defined as abuse within the Children (NI) Order 1995, a child who is bullied may be suffering any type of abuse as defined.
- Bullying is defined as deliberately hurtful behaviour, repeated over a period of time, where it is difficult for those bullied to defend themselves.
- It may take many forms but the main types are:
- physical (for example, hitting, kicking, theft),
 - verbal (for example, sectarian or racist remarks, name calling), and
 - indirect (for example, spreading rumours)
- 6.4 It is not always easy to recognise a situation where abuse may occur or where it has already taken place. It is unlikely that staff will be experts and it should be stressed that in accordance with the Children (N.I.) Order 1995, the Health and Social Services have a statutory duty to ensure the welfare of a child. (See Appendix 4 for indicators and effects of abuse.)
- 6.5 The definitions above relate to those outlined within the Children (NI) Order. These definitions would also apply to vulnerable adults where there has been a reduction in physical or mental capacity which has led to their reduced ability to protect themselves from assault, abuse, neglect or bullying.
- 6.6 It must be recognised that it is not only adults who will cause abuse to children or vulnerable adults. Peer abuse where the abuser is a child who is under 16 years of age does and will occur. This must be treated the same as where the alleged abuser is an adult.

7.0 Designated officer and key worker

- 7.1 We have nominated designated officer(s) and key worker(s) who have been specially trained and are acutely committed to the principle of confidentiality. (See Appendix 4 for Duties of Designated Officer and Key Worker).

8.0 Awareness training

- 8.1 All staff to which this policy relates will receive awareness training, including familiarity with our policy and procedures for the protection of children and vulnerable adults. This is to include all volunteers, paid staff, line managers and policy makers.
- 8.2 Training provided will be at four different levels: customer care, basic, advanced and full course. The content, duration and who should attend will vary for each level. Further details of which, are provided in Appendix 5.
- 8.3 Voluntary groups who work or have contact with children or vulnerable adults and obtain grant aid through all council departments are required to have appropriate policies and procedures within their organisation as a condition of their grant aid. The policies and procedures should comply with the guidelines set down in 'Getting It Right' which is produced by the Volunteer Development Agency. The guidelines can be downloaded from their website: www.volunteering-ni.org/what_we__do/publications/

9.0 Procedure for dealing with complaints of abuse

- 9.1 There are two elements under this section: those where allegations of abuse have been made against staff, and those where staff suspect a case of abuse against a child or vulnerable adult.
- 9.2 Where staff suspect a case of abuse against a child or vulnerable adult, they must recognise that they have a legal responsibility to report this through council procedures.
- 9.3 Confidentiality and sensitivity to the needs of the child or vulnerable adult must be paramount in all situations. Information must not be passed to another person other than those outlined within the council procedures.
- 9.4 Appendix 6 deals with procedures relating to allegations made against staff. (a flow chart illustrating the reporting processes is contained in Appendix 6.1.)
- 9.5 Appendix 7 deals with guidance on disclosure of abuse or where a member of staff is aware of or suspects abuse against a child or vulnerable adult (a flow chart illustrating the reporting processes is contained in Appendix 7.1).
- 9.6 Appendix 8 deals with guidance where a member of staff observes suspected abuse may be taking place within the workplace or where a member of staff observes a person acting suspiciously where there may be potential contact with children or vulnerable adults.

Appendices

Appendix 1

Recruitment and selection guidelines on the employment of staff who have substantial access to children and vulnerable adults

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The recruitment of all posts in the council is centralised in the Human Resources section which administers recruitment exercises on a department's behalf.
- 1.2 With effect from 12 October 2009, the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 will enhance the protection of children and vulnerable adults with the introduction of the following new safeguards.
- There will be a single list of those barred from working with children and a separate, but aligned, list of those barred from working with vulnerable adults. These lists will be administered by the ISA (Independent Safeguarding Authority) and will ensure that those who are known to present a risk of harm to children or vulnerable adults are prevented from entering the relevant workforce in the first place.
 - All individuals who want to work in child care posts which fall under the definition of 'regulated activity' will be required to register with ISA. This will include those who teach, instruct, train, care for, supervise, advise, treat or transport children or vulnerable adults and who do so once or more per month or two or more days in any 30 day period or overnight activity. Likewise, those who work in specified places, for example, in schools, care homes or child care premises will also be in regulated activity.
 - As an employer, there will be a legal requirement for Belfast City Council to check whether an individual working in 'regulated activity' is registered with the ISA prior to employing them. This will be done by way of an on-line check.
 - All individuals registered with the ISA will be subject to continuous monitoring. When new information becomes known about an ISA – registered individual, the ISA will be automatically informed. The ISA will then reconsider the suitability of the registered individual. If the individual is subsequently placed on one of the barred lists, the employer will immediately be informed. In order to receive such information, we must have registered their interest in this individual at the time of their appointment. When individuals leave employment with us, we must register that we are no longer interested in these individuals.
- 1.3 In addition, we may also conduct enhanced criminal record checks on those working in 'regulated activity' and also with those working with children and vulnerable adults in posts which fall under the Rehabilitation of Offenders (NI) Exceptions Order 1979. These checks will be carried out by Access NI which operates under the provision of Part V of the Police Act 1997 and provides criminal history information about anyone seeking paid or unpaid work in defined areas, such as working with children and vulnerable adults.
- 1.4 The actual request for an Access NI check will be the final stage in the selection process and will only be undertaken for the preferred applicant and only following a conditional offer of appointment. Applicants must satisfactorily pass these checks before an appointment can be made.

- 1.5 Checks can be requested from Access NI by lead and counter signatories from Human Resources who are authorised to request and receive such information, and any results are returned to both these signatories and the applicant. This information provided by Access NI is confidential.
- 1.6 It is for the host department to decide as to the candidate's suitability for working with children or vulnerable adults. However, any decision taken by the host department will be done so on the advice and through close consultation with the Human Resource representative. In any case, only convictions which are relevant to the post will be taken into consideration.
- 2.0 Agency staff**
- 2.1 We ensure that any employment agency supplying temporary staff to cover 'regulated activity' or 'excepted' posts which involve access to children and vulnerable adults is required to carry out all necessary checks under the Safeguarding of Vulnerable Groups (NI) Order 2007.
- 3.0 Volunteers**
- 3.1 Where individuals volunteer to work in an unpaid capacity in council premises, for example community centres, leisure centres, parks, play centres and where there is substantial access to children and vulnerable adults the host department is responsible for ensuring that the appropriate consent is obtained from the volunteers, and the necessary checks under the Safeguarding of Vulnerable Groups (NI) Order 2007 are undertaken.
- 3.2 Where there are serious concerns regarding a volunteer's previous behaviour or enquiries pending, the council reserves the right to consider the volunteer to be unsuitable to work with children or vulnerable adults. In all circumstances, the council will err on the side of safety to ensure that the child or vulnerable adult's welfare is paramount.
- 4.0 External contractors**
- 4.1 Where external contractors employ staff to work on our premises where there is potential access to children or vulnerable adults, the company may be required as part of their contract or franchise agreement to undertake the relevant necessary checks under the Safeguarding of Vulnerable Groups (NI) Order 2007.

Appendix 2

Code of behaviour for staff

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 We recognise that it is not practical to provide definitive instructions that would apply to all situations at all times whereby staff come into contact with children or vulnerable adults and to guarantee the protection of children, vulnerable adults and staff.
- 1.2 It is advisable for sections to develop more specific codes relating to their areas of work to provide guidance for staff and volunteers. Risk assessments may form part of this work.
- 1.3 However, below are the standards of behaviour required of staff in order to fulfil their roles within the council. This code should assist in the protection of both children, vulnerable adults and members of staff.
- 1.4 These guidelines apply to volunteers who work in an unpaid capacity in council premises.
- 1.5 **Staff must:**

- implement our policy and procedures for the protection of children and vulnerable adults at all times.

Staff must never do any of the following:

- Engage in rough, physical games including horseplay with children or vulnerable adults.
- Allow or engage in inappropriate touching of any kind. The main principles of touch are:
 - o touch should always be in response to the child or vulnerable adult's need,
 - o touch should always be appropriate to the age and stage of development of the child or vulnerable adult, and
 - o touch should always be with a child or vulnerable adult's permission.
- Do things of a personal nature for children or a vulnerable adult that they can do for themselves or that their parent can do for them.
- Make sexually suggestive comments:
 - o to or within earshot of a child or vulnerable adult, or
 - o about a child or vulnerable adult – even if there are no children or vulnerable adults in sight.
- Use corporal punishment or physical force.
- Physically restrain a child or vulnerable adult unless the restraint is to prevent physical injury of the child, other children, visitors, vulnerable adult, other vulnerable adults, staff or yourself.

In all circumstances physical restraint must be appropriate and reasonable, otherwise the action can be defined as assault.

1.6 **Staff must not:**

- take a child or vulnerable adult to the toilet unless another adult is present or has been made aware (this may include a parent, group leader). Discretion and sensitivity must be observed at all times.
- spend time alone with a child or vulnerable adult on his or her own. If you find you are in a situation where you are alone with a child or vulnerable adult, make sure that you can be clearly observed by others.

1.7 **Transportation**

Staff should not have children or vulnerable adults on their own in a vehicle.

In extreme circumstances (for example, medical emergencies) where it is required to transport a child or young person on their own, it is essential that another leader and the parent is notified immediately and that you have adequate insurance for the vehicle to cover transporting children or young people as part of the business of your work

In respect of student placements:

- no child or young person under the age of 16 or vulnerable adult should travel in a car on their own with a member of staff. Where a student is under the age of 16 or is deemed a vulnerable adult, the member of staff should be accompanied by another member of staff.
- For student placements aged 16 to 18, prior consent from the parent and school must be given prior to transporting the student in your car.
- It is advisable that in these circumstances the amount of time in the car is minimised and only takes place between the office and site.

Implications for staff

Staff who breach any of the above may be subject to the disciplinary procedure.

If an allegation against a member of staff has occurred then an investigation will be carried out in accordance with the procedure for dealing with allegations against staff (See Appendix 6). The investigating officer will be required to liaise with the designated officer to clarify if there are any relevant records or any other relevant information in relation to the individual.

1.8 **Further information**

Should any member of staff require further information, we have produced a Playwork Code of Practice. This document details appropriate codes of behaviour and good practice guidelines. Copies are available from the Play Development Officer .

1.9 **Photographic policy**

Staff and volunteers must never take photographs or videos of children or vulnerable adults without the permission of a parent, guardian or carer. The parent or guardian must be made aware of any photographs or use of the child or vulnerable adult's name to be used for publicity purposes and provide written consent prior to this taking place.

Hirers of council facilities are expected to abide by the above conditions and to comply with our photographic policy.

1.10 **Technology**

New ways for abuse against children or vulnerable adults has resulted from the increasing use of technology. For these reasons, it is imperative that staff do not allow children or vulnerable adults access to:

- mobile phone numbers unless for agreed purposes as sanctioned by line management,
- computers without appropriate supervision, or
- to meet children or vulnerable adults in chat rooms.

Appendix 3

Indicators and effects of abuse

1.0 Introduction

Even for those experienced in working with abuse regarding children or vulnerable adults, it is not always easy to recognise a situation where abuse may occur or has already taken place. It is unlikely that staff will be experts. The Health and Social Services have a statutory duty to ensure the welfare of a child or vulnerable adult and will advise accordingly.

1.2 The onus on us is to provide a safe environment by:

- employing people who are suitable for working with or to have contact with children or vulnerable adults,
- having effective and clear procedures for reporting any suspicions through their own structures to the relevant Health and Social Services Board, and
- only allowing hirers to use council facilities who have signed conditions of hire that will include requirements to have their own policy and procedures or to adhere to our policy and procedures for the protection of children and vulnerable adults.

2.0 Indications that a child or vulnerable adult may be abused include:

- unexplained or suspicious injuries such as bruising, cuts or burns, particularly if situated on part of the body not normally prone to such injuries,
- an injury for which the explanation seems inconsistent,
- the child or vulnerable adult describes what appears to be an abusive act involving him or her,
- someone else – a child or adult, expresses concern about the welfare of another child or vulnerable adult,
- unexplained changes in behaviour over time, for example, becoming very quiet, withdrawn or displaying sudden outbursts of temper,
- inappropriate sexual awareness,
- engagement in sexually explicit behaviour in games,
- distrust of adults, particularly those with whom a close relationship will normally be expected,
- difficulty in making friends,
- prevented from socialising with other children
- displayed variations in eating patterns including overeating or loss of appetite,
- loss of weight for no apparent reason, and
- increasingly dirty or unkempt appearance.

This list is not exhaustive and the presence of one or more of the indicators is not proof that abuse is actually taking place. It is stressed, however, that it is not the responsibility of members of staff to prove that abuse is taking place but is their responsibility to act upon any concerns, by reporting these to the designated officer or a deputy designated officer.

Effects of abuse

3.1 Abused children can suffer changes in normal behaviour and can suffer long term damage that may follow them into later life.

3.2 The main effects of abuse on children are as follows:

- Pain and distress.
- Behavioural difficulties, for example becoming angry and aggressive.
- School related problems.
- Developmental delay – physically, emotionally or mentally.
- Low self esteem.
- Depression or self-harm – sometimes leading to suicide.
- Difficulty in forming relationships as adults.
- Sometimes, if untreated, abusive relationships with own (or other) children.
- Permanent or temporary injury.
- Death.

3.3 Factors that might increase the likelihood of risk of abuse:

- Young children or vulnerable adults who might have difficulty telling others.
- Disabled children or adults who might have difficulty communicating or accessing people to tell.
- Children or vulnerable adults who are already experiencing some form of discrimination (for example, racial harassment) as they are more isolated from other adults or children. They may also perceive the abuse as a part of the ongoing discrimination.
- Poor relationship between child or vulnerable adult and parents or carers.
- High levels of stress.
- History of violence in the family.

3.4 The damage inflicted by bullying can be frequently underestimated. It can cause considerable distress to children or vulnerable adults to the extent that it affects their health and development or, at the extreme, causes them significant harm. In these circumstances bullying should be considered as abuse and treated as such.

Appendix 4

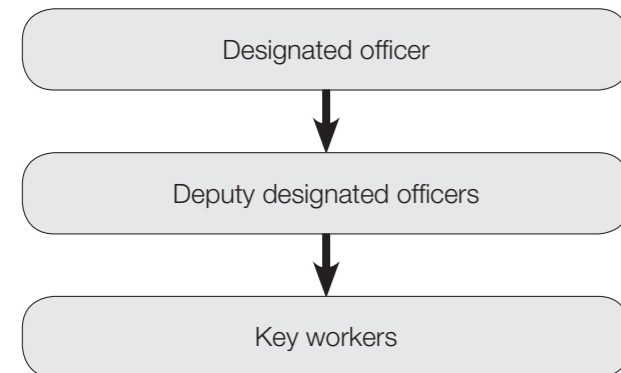
Role of designated officer and key worker

We will appoint a designated officer who will have overall responsibility in referring incidents to Social Services. Two deputy designated officers will be appointed to assist and to deputise when the designated officer is not available. The designated officer and the deputies will be familiar with protection issues regarding children and vulnerable adults and be based in a section that has regular contact with children and vulnerable adults.

Key workers will be appointed in those sections that have most contact with children or vulnerable adults. These will act as the point of contact for the section and will be responsible for ensuring our Policy and Procedures are implemented. They will provide an important point of information for staff and feedback information to the designated officer.

The designated officer, deputy designated officers and key worker(s) must attend relevant training prior to assuming responsibilities of these positions. The designated officer and deputies are required to attend additional training and conferences on an ongoing basis. The key workers are required to keep updated regarding ongoing issues through attending ongoing training and meetings. Failure to do this will result in being replaced in this position. The time commitment required for these roles must be recognised prior to a Section appointing a member of staff for the respective role.

Child protection reporting structure



Duties of designated officer

- 1 To record a disclosure of abuse made by a child or vulnerable adult to a member of the council's staff. The alleged abuse could involve either an external person or council staff.
- 2 To record our staff's suspicions of a child or vulnerable adult being abused.
- 3 In 1 or 2 above, to seek advice from the relevant agencies and report, if appropriate. If the disclosure or suspicions relate to council staff, to advise and liaise with the relevant Head of Service, if appropriate.

If a member of council staff has concerns about a colleague not fulfilling the council's policy and procedures on the protection of children and vulnerable adults, such concerns are to be taken to the relevant line manager in the first instance. As the matter is examined by the line manager, they may need to involve a designated officer; if it becomes apparent there is a protection issue.

Where the incident relates to a line manager not fulfilling the council's policy and procedures on the protection of children and vulnerable adults, such concerns are to be taken to the next relevant line manager in the first instance.

Possible involvement of a member of council staff must also be notified to the Head of Service and to the Head of Human Resources.

- 4 To record all action taken and where appropriate, advise the relevant line management. Detail of information provided will be based on the 'need to know' principle.
- 5 To ensure all written records in relation to protection issues are securely and confidentially filed.
- 6 To establish contact with child protection and vulnerable adult teams within the relevant Health and Social Services Trust if:
 - allegations of abuse against a child or vulnerable adult have been made against a member of staff, or
 - a member of staff has been made aware of alleged abuse against a child or vulnerable adult by an external person.
- 7 To liaise with the deputy designated officers and key worker(s) to ensure the ongoing implementation and review of our policy and procedures on the protection of children and vulnerable adults.
- 8 To keep the deputy designated officers and key workers informed of ongoing issues and training.
- 9 To liaise with the deputy designated officers and key workers through the key worker network.
- 10 To fulfil any other relevant duties which may become apparent as the role of designated officer develops.

Duties of key worker

- 1 To act as the point of contact for their section.
- 2 To keep up to date with relevant child and vulnerable adult protection legislation, good practice and developments.
- 3 To ensure the ongoing implementation the council's policy and procedures and good practice within their section and across the council when required.
- 4 To contribute to the review of the our policy and procedures on the protection of children and vulnerable adults
- 5 To deliver training, as appropriate, within the section and throughout the council.
- 6 To ensure all written records in relation to protection issues are securely and confidentially filed.
- 7 To fulfil any other relevant duties which may become apparent as the role of key worker develops.

Key worker network

- A key worker network will be established to meet a minimum of three times per year. The function of this network will be to:
- To liaise with the designated officer to ensure the ongoing implementation and review of our policy and procedures on the protection of children and vulnerable adults.
- To keep up to date with relevant legislation, good practice and developments.
- To liaise with other key workers and the deputy designated officers.
- To review and monitor ongoing awareness training in the protection of children and vulnerable adults.
- To contribute to the development of good practice for working with children and vulnerable adults.

The key worker network will be facilitated by the Play Development Officer (who will also be the designated officer). The role of the Play Development Officer will be to:

- assist in identifying appropriate training programmes in conjunction with the deputy designated officers, other key workers and trainers in the council and in other relevant agencies,
- co-ordinate regular meetings, and
- arrange information updates, including speakers to attend the network meetings.

To ensure effective coordination of our policy and procedures, information obtained from representation on relevant forums are to be passed to the designated officer and key worker network.

Appendix 5**Information for staff in the protection of children and vulnerable adults**

- 1 All staff are to be made aware of our policy and procedures on the protection of children and vulnerable adults
- 2 Information on the policy, reporting procedures (for example, flow charts) and contact information to be placed on staff notice boards.
- 3 Information (for example, posters) should be on public display at all facilities to inform the public that we have policy and procedures for the protection of children and vulnerable adults.

Training for staff

- 1 The aim of training is to increase the awareness and explore issues around the protection of children, vulnerable adults, staff and Belfast City Council.
- 2 All staff within the council who have contact with children will receive one of the four identified levels of training.
- 3 The co-ordination of training and identification of staff to attend training will be the responsibility of Heads of Service and unit managers.
- 4 Training will be provided by the team of accredited child protection trainers.
- 5 The content of the training will be regularly reviewed by the team of accredited trainers and other appropriate council officers.
- 6 Refresher training will be provided every five years for staff who have regular contact with children.
- 7 Additional training will be provided for those who have regular contact with vulnerable adults.
- 8 The child protection training will be provided on four different levels as follows:

Customer care

For staff who have general contact with the public

Content: codes of behaviour and familiarisation with our policy and procedures.

Basic level course

Duration: 2.5 hours

Target group: Any staff who have regular contact with children

Content: Awareness of child protection issues including:

- What is abuse?
- Who abuses?

Signs and symptoms
Dealing with disclosure

Code of behaviour:

- Why a code of behaviour?
- Protecting children and workers
- The use of a code of behaviour

Our policy and reporting procedures

Advanced level course

Duration: 4 hours

Target group: Staff who directly work with children and will potentially be in a position of unsupervised access

Content: Awareness of child protection issues including:

- What is abuse?
- Who abuses?

Signs and symptoms
Dealing with disclosure

Code of behaviour:

- Why a code of behaviour?
- Protecting children and workers
- The use of a code of behaviour

Awareness of issues around:

- Working with children from ethnic backgrounds or with disabilities
- Dealing with bullying

Our policy and reporting procedures

Full level course

Duration: 9 hours in total - 3 x 3 hour sessions

Target group: Staff who directly work with children and will potentially be in a position of unsupervised access and staff who will be involved in the selection and recruitment of non-council staff or volunteers

Content: Awareness of child protection issues:

- What is abuse?
- Who abuses?
- Signs and symptoms
- Dealing with disclosure

Recruitment and selection of staff and volunteers

Supervision, support and training

Code of behaviour:

- Why a code of behaviour?
- Protecting children and workers
- The use of a code of behaviour

Awareness of issues around:

- Working with children from ethnic backgrounds or with disabilities
- Dealing with bullying
- Residential issues

Policy and procedures:

- Our policy
- Reporting procedures
- Development of a policy
- Dealing with concerns

Appendix 6

Procedures for dealing with allegations of abuse against a child or vulnerable adult against a member of staff

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Allegations of abuse can potentially be made about any member of staff (especially those in contact with the public).
- 1.2 Abuse does occur outside the family setting and although a very sensitive and difficult issue, abuse has occurred within institutions or organisations that support children or vulnerable adults.
- 1.3 It is critical that all relevant staff are aware of such issues and how to deal with any allegations appropriately.
- 1.4 Allegations may come from another member of staff or a member of the public.
- 1.5 In all circumstances an allegation should be reported to the relevant line manager and designated officer. If however, the allegation involves the line manager a report should be made to the next level of management.

1.6 The line manager will inform the Head of Service and the Head of Human Resources.

2.0 Investigation

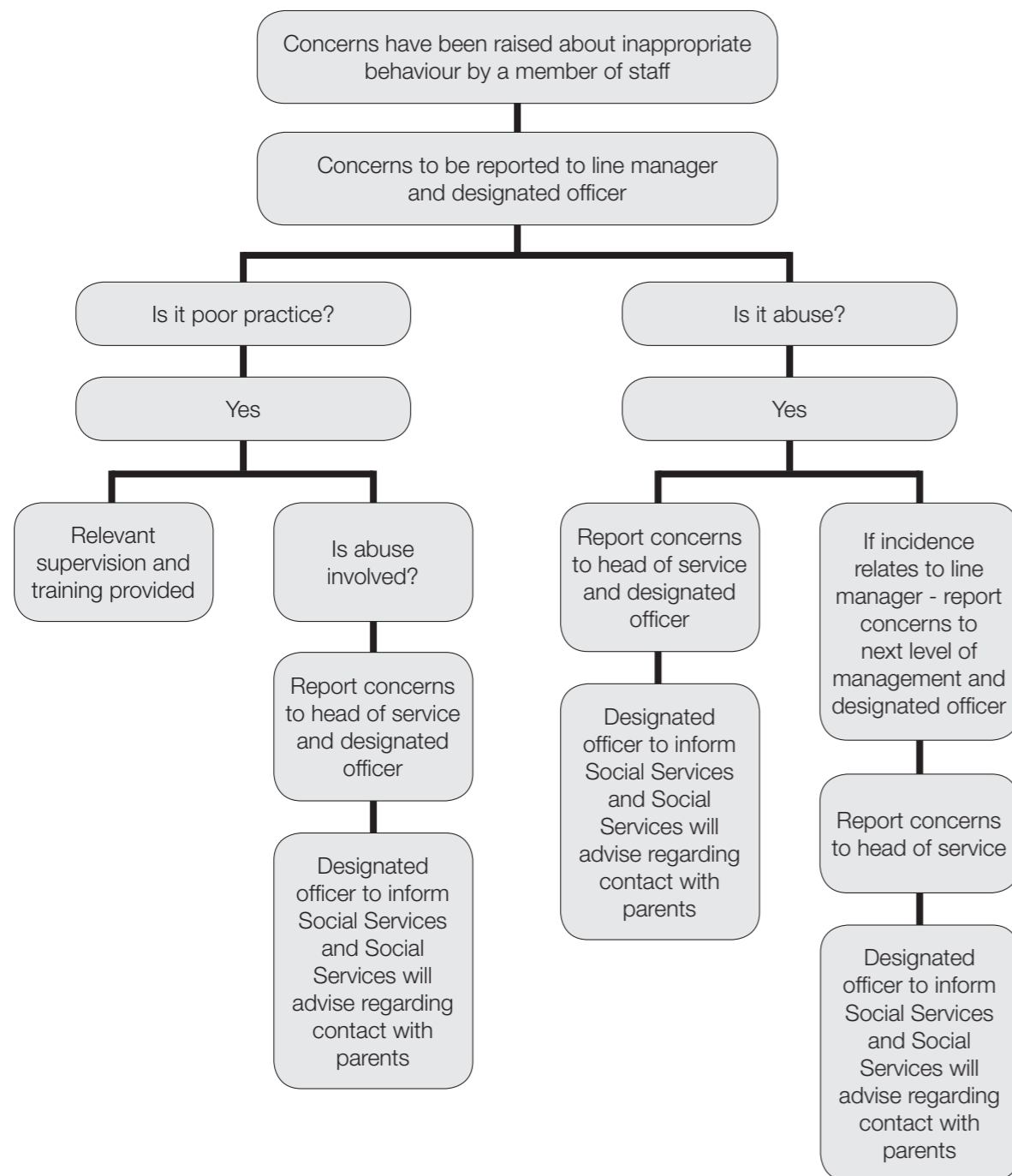
- 2.1 As a result of any allegation being received the matter will immediately be the subject of a preliminary investigation.
- 2.2 Following a preliminary investigation consideration will be given to whether or not:
- the employee(s) should be suspended from work while a full investigation is carried out,
 - there is a need to carry out a full investigation into the allegation(s),
 - the police should be informed, and
 - the Department of Health and Social Services should be informed.
- 2.3 Should there be no innocent explanation in respect of the allegation(s), and these constitute possible act(s) of gross misconduct the employee(s) will be suspended from work on full pay.
- 2.4 The relevant Head of Service will appoint two independent investigating officers who will carry out a full, formal investigation in respect of the allegation(s). The investigating officers will report to the Head of Service on completion of the investigation, as to whether or not the allegation(s) have been substantiated.

3.0 Disciplinary procedure

- 3.1 On the basis of the investigating report, and, in accordance with our disciplinary procedure, disciplinary action may take place, which may include dismissal.
- 3.2 In addition to the disciplinary investigation the police may be informed of the allegation(s) pertaining to the employee(s) concerned immediately following the alleged incident taking place.
- 3.3 Should a police investigation, or a social services investigation take place we will seek information from these parties. This information may well influence the disciplinary investigation and decision, but we will not necessarily wait for the completion of such investigations and will not necessarily be influenced by them as we will examine the impact of the allegations on the employment relationship of the employee concerned.
- 3.4 Where staff are disciplined or dismissed as a result of inappropriate behaviour in regard to children or vulnerable adults, information will be passed on to the Department of Health and Social Services by the Head of Human Resources.

Appendix 6.1

Concerns have been raised about inappropriate behaviour by a member of staff.



Once informed the line manager must take all necessary measures to ensure the safety of the child or vulnerable adults. For further information – please refer to Appendix 6.

Appendix 7

Guidance on disclosure of abuse or where a member of staff suspects a case of abuse against a child or vulnerable adult

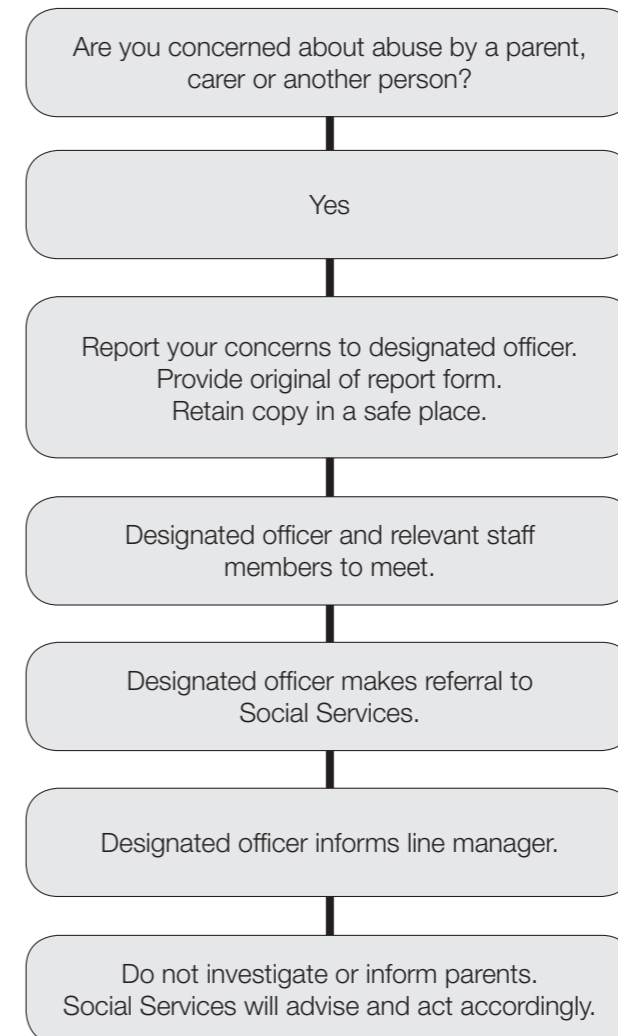
- 1.0 Introduction
- 1.1 Anyone who suspects that a child or vulnerable adult has or is being harmed or is at risk of harm has a duty to record the suspected incident and to convey this concern immediately to a designated officer within the council.
- 1.2 Line managers will be informed that an alleged incident has taken place. For reasons of confidentiality, the level of information passed to the line manager will depend on his or her direct involvement in the workplace and will be at the discretion of the designated officer.
- 1.3 It is essential that suspicions are reported to a designated officer. The consequences of failing to report an allegation or suspicion would far outweigh the risk of being wrong. It is essential that the welfare of the child or vulnerable adult must always be the first priority.
- 1.4 There is a legal responsibility to report the allegation or suspicion as withholding evidence regarding a criminal action is an offence.
- 1.5 The designated officer will advise regarding discussion of the suspected abuse with parents or carers. In situations where the parent or carer is potentially responsible for the abuse, the child or vulnerable adult might be placed at greater risk were such suspicions discussed. In certain situations, it is best for the Health and Social Services to discuss the suspected abuse with the parents or carers as they have the expertise to deal with the situation.
- 1.6 Once a worker becomes aware or suspects a case of abuse, they should ensure in so far as possible that the child or vulnerable adult is protected from the situation of danger. The worker has no power to intervene directly where the alleged abuser is the parent or carer of a child. In this latter case it is imperative that the next step is taken as quickly as possible.
- 1.7 The worker should discuss the case as early as possible with a designated officer.
- 1.8 Sharing in this matter means that the worker has an opportunity to discuss and assess their concerns in a responsible way as well as sharing some of the load with someone outside the situation.
- 1.9 Once reported, the designated officer will report the alleged incident to Social Services. The designated officer will have received relevant training and have guidelines as to reporting to the appropriate authorities.
- 1.10 Discussion should not take place with anyone else within the line management structure as this impedes investigation and affects the confidentiality of the situation. It is up to the discretion of the designated officer, as to who else is to be informed of the situation, including incidents where a member of staff may be the alleged abuser.

- 1.11 Staff should not initiate an investigation, including discussion of the potential abuse with other professionals (e.g. schools, health workers), as this is assuming the responsibility of the Social Services. By doing so they could complicate an already sensitive situation and perhaps contaminate evidence which could have negative consequence for subsequent legal proceedings.

A flow chart relating to reporting procedures is included at Appendix 7.1.
- 1.12 Once a worker becomes aware of or suspects a case of abuse it is important that they make a record of observations, happenings and discussions that are relevant. This record should be factual and not include opinions or personal interpretations of the facts presented.
- 1.13 The record should be made within 24 hours of the suspicion arising, with each recording dated, signed and stored in a secure place. Records are to be made on the relevant form as provided in Appendix 7.2
- 1.14 To assist members of staff on how to deal with a situation where a child or vulnerable adult has made a disclosure of abuse - Appendix 7.3 provides guidance on some of the dos and don'ts on how to react.
- 1.15 Where a member of staff observes possible signs of abuse, it would only be appropriate to involve another member of staff to verify the signs or symptoms. Extreme discretion must be taken when this occurs as the child, vulnerable adult or others must not be alarmed. The name of the other member of staff must be recorded on the report form.
- 1.16 Where a child or vulnerable adult discloses possible abuse, it is unlikely to be appropriate to include another member of staff in the conversation as to disclose in the first place will be traumatic enough for the child or vulnerable adult. Where another member of staff observes the disclosure, this should be recorded on the report form.
- 1.17 Decisions to refer the incident to Social Services will be taken by the designated officer, who will report the alleged incident directly to Social Services.

Appendix 7.1

Concerns about abuse by an external person



For further information – please refer to Appendix 7

Appendix 8

Immediate procedures to be taken if suspected abuse is observed taking place within the workplace

- 1.0 Introduction
- 1.1 These guidelines apply in exceptional circumstances and only when a member of staff observes suspected abuse of a child or vulnerable adult. The guidelines do not apply if the suspected abuse may have already taken place and the suspected abuser has left the premises. In these circumstances the member of staff must follow the guidelines outlined in Appendix 7.
- 1.2 Line manager or duty officer to be informed immediately and the Child Protection Branch of the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) to be contacted immediately. In case of vulnerable adults, contact the PSNI directly.
- 1.3 Staff should ensure in so far as possible that the child or vulnerable adult is protected from the situation of danger
- 1.4 As soon as it is practical and not less than 24 hours after the incidence, contact must be made with either a designated officer or key worker.
- 1.5 It is important for the member of staff who has made the observation to make a record of observations, happenings and discussions that are relevant. This record should be factual and not include opinions or personal interpretations of the facts presented. The record should be made within 6 hours of the suspicion arising, with each recording dated, signed and stored in a secure place. A copy must be provided to the designated officer with whom contact was made. Records are to be made on the relevant form as provided in Appendix 7.2.
- 1.6 Discussion should not take place with anyone else who was not involved immediately within the situation as this impedes investigation and affects the confidentiality of the situation. It is up to the discretion of the designated officer, as to who else is to be informed of the situation, including incidents where a member of staff may be the alleged abuser.

Concerns regarding suspicious behaviour

Where there are concerns regarding suspicious behaviour by a person using your facility – this should be reported directly to your line manager and a designated officer and a record made of the behaviour and dates when the behaviour occurred.

Advice is to be sought through the designated officer from the police regarding future monitoring of the situation.

Appendix 9

Concerns regarding a staff member employed through an agency

Where there are concerns of potential abuse or inappropriate behaviour regarding a member of staff who is employed through an agency, the following guidelines will apply.

Where a concern has been raised:

- the concern will be raised with the duty manager of the centre, and
- contact will be made immediately with the agency and a council designated officer.

A decision will be made jointly between the agency and the duty manager as to if the person will be asked to leave the place of work while an investigation takes place. Advice will also be sought from Social Services by the designated officer as to the removal of the member of staff. Where contact is unable to be made with the relevant member of staff at the agency, the duty officer will make the decision and inform the agency at the earliest time possible.

The person will then be informed by the duty manager that a concern has been raised and if they are requested to leave the premise.

An investigation will be undertaken by the appropriate staff from the agency in consultation with the relevant officers from the council. This will include relevant staff from the centre, the designated officer and a Human Resources representative.

We have the right to request the removal of the person concerned from employment with our centres both in the short and long term.

Regarding any issues concerning the child or vulnerable adult, our policy and procedures on the protection of children and vulnerable adults will be followed. The agency needs to ensure staff recruited have the relevant checks, training and are made aware of the policies and procedures.

The agency will be provided with sufficient knowledge to enable a decision regarding the member of staff. This will be at the discretion of our designated officer. No information will be provided that identifies the child or vulnerable adult by name or address.

Appendix 10

Out of hours concerns

Where you have an immediate concern out of hours and are unable to contact a designated officer, the following guidelines are to be followed:

1. Contact to be made with:
 - a. NSPCC 24 hour helpline - phone : 0808 800 5000
 - b. PSNI – phone: emergency dial 999 or 18000 for text phone users
2. Report form to be completed.
3. Notification to be made to a designated officer within 24 hours.

Hiring of facilities

Those groups who book the centre for six or more sessions per year and have substantial access to children, young people or vulnerable adults are required:

- to have their own child protection and vulnerable adult policy and procedures,
- to have attended relevant awareness raising training,
- to have undertaken the appropriate AccessNI checks and for staff and volunteers to be ISA registered where staff or volunteers have substantial access to children or vulnerable adults, and
- to adhere to our Playwork Code of Practice, including the provision of adequate staff supervision.

All hirers must ensure that children or vulnerable adults are supervised at all times.

We wish to remind all hirers or volunteers that the responsibility for the welfare of the children or vulnerable adult rests with them at all times.

Hiring of casual staff

Where staff are hired for specific events or activities that will involve contact with children and vulnerable adults (for example, to facilitate a workshop or face painting), information must be provided prior to the event on our policy and procedures on the protection of children and vulnerable adults

Data protection and freedom of information

We are committed to fulfilling our statutory requirements under the Data Protection Act 1998 and Freedom of Information Act 2000.

Policy and procedures on the protection of children and vulnerable adults



Report Form

Private and confidential

Please ensure questions are fully answered.

This form must be kept in a secure place.

Please note this is a discoverable document.

Department:

Section:

Work location or centre:

Provide as much details of child(ren) or vulnerable adult as known.

Age(s):

Name(s):

Home address:

Where the child or vulnerable adult's name and address is unknown, please provide a description, including approximate age(s)

What were the immediate circumstances leading to your concern?

Were there others present?

Yes No Don't know

If yes, please state who (name and position) and what role did they play?

Please detail your specific concerns

Describe any signs of physical injury evident on the child(ren) or vulnerable adult(s)

Describe any concerns regarding the behaviour of the child(ren) or vulnerable adult(s):

Any additional information (e.g. names or descriptions of others involved including adults)

Signed

Date

Referred to designated officer

Date

Policy and procedures on the protection of children and vulnerable adults



Designated officer Report Form

Private and confidential

Please ensure questions are fully answered.

This form must be kept in a secure place.

Please note this is a discoverable document.

Date of meeting(s):

Names of those attending and positions:

Department:

Section:

Work location or centre:

Briefly describe incident concerned - including dates:

Was the incident recorded by the member of staff concerned?

Yes No Date and time report received

If no, state reasons incident was not recorded:

If more than 24 hours have elapsed following receipt of the report and the initial meeting, please state reasons for delay:

Outline key issues discussed:

Outline decision taken:

Were all in agreement with the decision?

Yes No Date and time report received

If not, please state outstanding issues:

Action taken

Signed

Date

Designated officer

Others in attendance at meeting

Appendix 12

The following information is a guide as to some of the do's and don'ts on how to react when a disclosure of abuse has been made.

Do	Don't
Stay calm	Promise confidentiality
Recognise your own feelings	Probe for more information or investigate
Receive the information	Panic
Reassure	Make the child or vulnerable adult repeat the story unnecessarily
Listen	Use leading questions
Record	
Report to designated officer	
Get support for yourself (the designated officer will be able to direct staff to suitably qualified external agencies).	

Remember that how you react may mean the child or vulnerable adult telling or not telling his or her story. It may be the beginning of the healing journey for the child or vulnerable adult.

