



## Protection of Children and Young People from Abuse

### Policy

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#### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 For the purposes of this policy, a child or young person is defined as **any person under the age of 18.**
- 1.2 The governments green paper on children's services, "Every Child Counts," is a radical document, which aims to ensure that all young people fulfill their potential. Just preventing cases such as Victoria Climbié's from ever happening again is not enough. Crucially, the green paper gives council's a prime role in monitoring the welfare of young people and leading the necessary changes.
- 1.3 Top of the green paper's list to enable "early intervention and effective protection" is **information sharing.** Agencies coming into contact with young people will be able to check this information, and practitioners will be able to set early warning tags to indicate concerns. More joined up working should lead to better care for our children and young people.
- 1.4 This policy will enable South Cambridgeshire D.C. (SCDC) to play its part in meeting the social care needs of the children and young people that our representatives meet in the course of their duties.

#### 2. Application of the Policy and Background

- 2.1 SCDC representatives are defined as:
  - Employees
  - Agency staff
  - Members
  - Contract staff - when working under contract to SCDC e.g. consultants and sub contractors working in council houses.
  - Volunteers - when working by agreement for or on behalf of SCDC e.g. work experience students and tenant representatives.
- 2.2 SCDC 's representatives provide services for and come into contact with children and young people in a range of contexts. Abuse of children or young people may occur in many situations e.g. when:
  - alone, with a relative, or other(s);
  - receiving support services in their own home;
  - in other places previously assumed safe;
  - in public places;
  - a "customer" of any licence of SCDC e.g. taxi or private hire vehicle

2.3 Any SCDC representative could find themselves in situations where they suspect abuse and they need to be prepared for such an eventuality. Increasingly services are being delivered in the community through such activities as:

- Home visits e.g. homelessness and sheltered housing
- Organised activities e.g. community services sport/art events and Milton Country Park
- Applications for support e.g. benefits, development control

2.4 Children and young people have the right to:

- be protected from abuse and harm at all times and in all situations.
- appropriate protection from every person who has involvement with them
- be able to confide in somebody
- receive support when an adult feels that all is not well in their life.

2.5 Abuse can occur in various forms:

- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Psychological abuse
- Financial or material abuse
- Neglect and acts of omission
- Discriminatory abuse
- Domestic violence
- Poor professional practice
- Institutional Abuse
- Stranger Abuse
- Harm

2.6 This policy is to be used to ensure that the best interests of children and young people are maintained at all times. The over arching purpose of this policy is to provide an SCDC framework, which will guide all SCDC representatives when they are faced with potential abuse situations. Within that context the policy purpose is to:

- a) identify the procedure to be followed if abuse is suspected
- b) provide guidelines for SCDC representatives to enable them to avoid situations in which they could become falsely accused of abuse.

2.7 The SCDC representatives who will be most affected by this policy will be those who work alone and who provide a front line service e.g. those visiting people's homes or meetings at leisure or social related activities. However all representatives could find themselves in situations where they feel that abuse may be taking place or where they themselves could be falsely accused of abuse.

2.8 This policy therefore puts all SCDC representatives in a special position of alertness to the possibility of abuse of children and young people wherever and whenever this may arise.

2.9 Protecting children and young people from abuse is a complex process. Action on abuse must always be in co-operation and collaboration with Cambridgeshire Social Services (CSS) who are the lead authority on these issues. The Constabulary and the Health Services should also be involved whenever appropriate.

### **3. Training**

3.1 It is necessary to provide appropriate training to meet the assessed need. Free training, which is pitched at various needs levels, is currently available from:

- The Area Child Protection Committee (ACPC)
- Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Public Health Network

3.2 The ACPC provides various levels of training:

Level 1 – Introduction to Working Together to Safeguard Children

- For those who come into contact with children and young people

Level 2 – Working Together: Foundation

- For those who work directly with children and their families and for whom child protection is an integral part of their work

Level 3 – Working together on particular areas of practice

- Assumes level 2 training implemented and is for those involved in complex inter-agency child protection work

Level 4 – Working Together: Advanced

- Best practice seminars for established professionals who are working at an advanced level

### **4. Risk Assessments**

4.1 Training in how to carry out risk assessments will form part of the ACPC training. Line managers have the key responsibility for carrying out these risk assessments for each post to identify the appropriate level of training and whether CRB checking is necessary.

4.2 Level 1 training is appropriate for most front line SCDC representatives but Level 2 will be appropriate in some situations e.g. Homelessness Officers. Line Managers need to make this decision as part of their risk assessments and should contact CSS for advice whenever they are in doubt.

4.3 HR will arrange for CRB checks, once line managers have confirmed the need, following a risk assessment.

### **5. The Policy Statement**

5.1 The Council will ensure that all SCDC representatives, who could be faced with children and young people abuse situations, are properly equipped to respond appropriately.

5.2 Service induction checklists will include a requirement to consider whether this policy raises issues for each new employee e.g. need for a CRB check.

5.3 If the role of an SCDC representative changes (e.g. office worker begins to carry out home visits), then the line manager will carry out a risk assessment to decide whether the change necessitates a CRB check.

5.4 The council's representatives will have appropriate training to ensure they have the necessary skills, information and knowledge to ensure they will be able to:

- identify where there may be a problem
- know how to obtain speedy and professional advice
- refer concerns to relevant specialists
- protect themselves from false abuse accusations

5.5 SCDC representatives will always refer their concerns, without delay, to their line manager and/or other appropriate authorities. Incidents of alleged abuse will normally be processed from the initial SCDC representative to their line manager and then directly to CSS and/or the Constabulary.

5.6 Line Managers will ensure their SCDC representatives have read and understood this policy statement.

- 5.7 Service guidelines, in the form of user-friendly leaflets, will be made available for all staff. Service heads will look to make use of leaflets, which are already available from CSS or other agencies. SCDC representatives will be able to refer to these guidelines/leaflets for quick reference.
- 5.8 Members may choose to report any concerns directly to CSS or through an appropriate line manager.
- 5.9 Line Managers, who do not normally work in the front line but who have responsibility for front line staff will complete appropriate children and young people abuse training (e.g. ACPC Level 1).
- 5.10 SCDC representatives will record details of incidents fully, in the alleged victim's (or other person's) own words, accurately, at-the-time, legibly, and factually. Opinions will be kept to a minimum and be backed up by factual evidence.
- 5.11 Records will be stored securely in a manner that safeguards the individual's right to privacy and security. Records may be required as evidence in civil or criminal prosecutions or in disciplinary proceedings.
- 5.12 If the suspected abuser is an SCDC representative then the internal SCDC corporate disciplinary and/or whistle blowing procedure will be followed as well as external reporting aspects of this policy.
- 5.13 If there is a suspected abuse situation then it will be the responsibility of all SCDC representatives to refer the matter to their line manager and/or CSS – without exception. Issues of client confidentiality will not prevent this action. The child or young person who is suspected of being abused will be advised that this is the policy. In these situations CSS will be relied on to make appropriate judgments over issues of confidentiality.
- 5.14 **Data Protection:** No part of the Data Protection regulatory framework serves to prevent the responsible dissemination of relevant personal information in relation to the investigation of (especially) actual, suspected or reported child or young people abuse. If issues are dealt with according to this policy guidance no data protection issues will be involved to inhibit action under it.
- 5.15 In order to achieve our aims we will adopt guidance given by Central government and local Lead Authorities (i.e. CSS) to ensure all SCDC representatives who may come into contact with children and young people are fully aware of the issues.
- 5.16 Relevant representatives will:
- a) Be subject to a CRB check (where the risk assessment carried out by the line manager for the post requires it), before being employed by or otherwise allowed to represent the Council in situations where potential abuse could arise.
  - b) Have completed a recognized training programme or participate in a training programme with an approved provider (e.g. the ACPC), within 6-months of being employed or otherwise allowed to represent the Council.
  - c) Be accompanied, where potential abuse could arise, by another SCDC representative (who has had a clean CRB check), where in exceptional circumstances a required CRB check has not been completed in time.
  - d) Follow any additional service guidelines set out by their department for working with children.
  - e) Refer to the ACPC web site for in-depth advice on child protection.
- 5.17 SCDC representatives will follow the process as set out in the flow chart shown at **Appendix 1**.

- 5.18 Any representative concerned about possible abuse will follow these guidelines:
- Try to bring the matter to the attention of their line manager to discuss the appropriate way forward
  - Refer the matter to the lead link abuse officers employed by CSS
  - The CSS will normally refer issues to the Constabulary but if SCDC representatives believe an actual criminal offence is/has taken place then they can contact the Constabulary directly.
  - Assist in the development of multi-agency procedures if invited.
- 5.19 We aim to ensure that any child or young person is protected and kept safe from harm whilst with any SCDC representative.
- 5.20 SCDC representatives will not put themselves at risk.
- 5.21 **SCDC representatives will not investigate alleged or potential abuse.**
- 5.22 The “Inter-agency Referral form” will be used to refer concerns to CSS. This form identifies the type of information that needs to be gathered when deciding whether a concern is to be referred. It is not necessary to complete the form fully, especially if this would delay notification of a potential abuse situation. Initially matters of concern can be referred to CSS verbally.
- 5.23 Authoritative and extensive “**Child Protection**” guidance is provided by the ACPC, which is available on the CSS web site.
- 5.24 SCDC Representatives will contact the appropriate authority, without delay, whenever they suspect children and young people are being abused or where abuse has been alleged. The flow chart at **Appendix 1** identifies the simple clear contact process to be followed.
- 5.25 SCDC representatives will follow these general guidelines:
- a) REFER not INVESTIGATE suspicions or allegations about abuse
  - b) Avoid activities, which do not involve more than one adult being present
  - c) Take action to stop any inappropriate verbal or physical behaviour
  - d) Be aware that actions might be misinterpreted even if they are well-intentioned
  - e) Respect a child or young person’s right to personal privacy
  - f) Encourage all children and young people to respect and care for others
  - g) Only share concerns and seek support from those identified in this policy
  - h) Raise awareness amongst the general public e.g. at working groups.

## **6. Corporate issues**

- 6.1 It is essential for the Council to identify a corporate post holder who will own this policy. This person will be responsible for ensuring that:
- a) the policy is kept up to date
  - b) it is clearly displayed (wherever appropriate) and accessible (e.g. on the Intranet)
  - c) procedures are in place to ensure SCDC representatives are aware of the policy
  - d) if a line manager is absent then all SCDC representatives would know they could seek guidance from this officer
  - e) they know the CSS and Constabulary contact details
- 6.2 Like all other SCDC staff, this person is not required to be a specialist in Children or Young people abuse issues. The specialists are within the CSS, who are the lead authority. The task is not seen as onerous, although there will be an initial workload in setting up procedures and establishing appropriate information and training programmes for managers and appropriate staff. Subsequently work is expected to be reactive to any situation, which might occur. It is anticipated that this can be absorbed into a current job description.

- 6.3 Management Team identified the Head of Community Services as being appropriate to hold this responsibility as the nominated Corporate Children & Young People Abuse Officer.
- 6.4 The Head of Community Services has not been involved to date in child protection, and must complete appropriate training in child and young people abuse issues before formally accepting this responsibility.

PROCESS FLOW CHART

ALLEGED, SUSPECTED OR ACTUAL ABUSE OF CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE

