

Child Protection Policy

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1. Background

Anyone employed by Voluntary Action Westminster working directly with children does so under contract to another agency. The Safeguarding or Protection Procedures of that agency should be followed when reporting any incident of abuse. These policies are attached as an appendix to this policy. (Appendix 1: Westminster Children Centres)

2. Introduction

**Under Voluntary Action Westminster policy a child is defined as:
Anyone under the age of 18.**

The following people must comply with the Child Safeguarding Policy:

- all staff, full time, part time, and to those engaged on short-term contracts, e.g. consultants, researchers etc (referred to as “staff”);
- volunteers, board members;
- staff and representatives of partner agencies and any other individuals, groups or organisations who have a formal/contractual relationship to Voluntary Action Westminster that involves them having contact with children - unless it has been agreed expressly that the partner organisation may enforce its own safeguarding or protection policy (referred to as “staff of partner agencies”)

Voluntary Action Westminster believes that all children have the right to enjoy activities of the group in a happy, secure and safe environment.

The abuse of children and young people (physically, emotionally, sexually and neglect) is a reality that every body should be aware of. Children and young people may be abused regardless of their age, gender, religious beliefs, race, sexual orientation, culture or ability. Most often abuse is perpetrated by a person known by the child.

All those working with children and young people in community groups provide an important link in identifying individuals who have been or are at risk of being harmed in this way. The procedures produced here are by no means comprehensive and do not attempt to provide answers to all the questions which abuse raises but they do attempt to offer a practical outline of fundamental principles and good practice.

In 1993 the government produced “Safe from Harm”, a code of practice for adults working with children and young people, as a framework to base their activities to minimise the chances of abuse taking place. This code of practice has informed the development of this policy.

All volunteers, parents and staff of Voluntary Action Westminster must become familiar with and rigorously implement the following policy.

3. Statement

Voluntary Action Westminster is committed to the protection of children and the safeguarding of their welfare. We are totally committed to the right of all children to grow, develop and thrive in a safe, caring environment.

Protecting children from abuse is an integral part of the policy and practice of the entire organisation’s work.

Voluntary Action Westminster recognises that good management requires everyone to be clear about what the organisation is trying to achieve, and agree aims and policy statements for that purpose.

- All our policy statements will be brought to the attention of all new paid staff and volunteers, who will also be informed of any guidelines or training which will enable them to implement the policy statement.
- We will work in partnership with parents and carers of children wherever possible and encourage an open, honest and non-judgemental channel of communication by providing information that will help parents, carers and children exercise their choice.
- Ensure that all our services are provided in a manner that respects as far as possible the dignity, pride and identity of the children.
- Ensure that all children are treated equally and will not be discriminated on the basis of their culture, race, religion, language, gender or disability.
- Ensure that all members are aware of the procedures through which they may raise concerns and express their concerns about the welfare of children.
- Ensure that an effective, open and accountable complaints procedure is made available to the children, parents and carers and that any dissatisfaction of services is responded to and acted on in a speedy, effective and open manner.
- Monitor the appropriateness and quality of services and, where necessary, seek the use of the Local Authority Child Protection Register.

We will where possible work in co-operation with other agencies to ensure that the safety and welfare of the children comes first and is paramount to our aims and objectives. All organisations who work with Voluntary Action Westminster must abide by this Child Protection Policy.

4. Definition of Child Abuse

Child abuse is significant harm caused to any child by neglect, physical injury, sexual abuse or emotional damage.

As defined by the Children's Act 1998:

NEGLECT as the persistent or severe neglect of a child, or the failure to protect a child from exposure to any kind of danger, including cold or starvation, or extreme failure to carry out important aspects of care, resulting in the significant impairment of the child's health or development, including non organic failure to thrive.

PHYSICAL INJURY is the actual or likely physical injury to a child or young person, or failure to prevent physical injury (or suffering) to a child.

SEXUAL ABUSE is the actual or likely sexual exploitation of a child or young person.

EMOTIONAL ABUSE is the actual or likely severe adverse effect on the emotional and behavioural development of a child by persistent or severe emotional ill treatment or rejection

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse is any non-accidental physical injury to a child. Even if the parent or caretaker who inflicts the injury might not have intended to hurt the child, the injury is not considered an accident if the caretaker's actions were intentional. This injury may be the result of any assault on a child's body, such as:

- beating, whipping, paddling, punching, slapping, or hitting
- pushing, shoving, shaking, kicking or throwing
- pinching, biting, choking, or hair-pulling
- burning with cigarettes, scalding water, or other hot objects.
- severe physical punishment that is inappropriate to child's age.

Corporal (physical) punishment is distinguished from physical abuse in that physical punishment is the use of physical force with the intent of inflicting bodily pain, but not injury, for the purpose of correction or control. Physical abuse is an injury that results from physical aggression. However, physical punishment easily gets out of control and can become physical abuse. Corporal punishment is against the law in schools in some states, but not in others. In many families, physical punishment is the norm.

Hundreds of thousands of children are physically abused each year by someone close to them, and thousands of children die from the injuries. For those who survive, the emotional scars are deeper than the physical scars.

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse of a child is any sexual act between an adult and a child. This includes:

- fondling, touching, or kissing a child's genitals
- making the child fondle the adult's genitals
- penetration, intercourse, incest, rape, oral sex or sodomy
- exposing the child to adult sexuality in other forms (showing sex organs to a child, forced observation of sexual acts, showing pornographic material, telling "dirty" stories, group sex including a child)
- other privacy violations (forcing the child to undress, spying on a child in the bathroom or bedroom)
- sexual exploitation
- enticing children to pornographic sites or material on the Internet
- luring children through the Internet to meet for sexual liaisons
- exposing children to pornographic movies or magazines
- child prostitution
- using a child in the production of pornography, such as a film or magazine
- sexual exploitation – actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust, for sexual purposes, including, but not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another.

The above acts are considered child abuse when they are committed by a relative or by a caretaker, such as a parent, babysitter, or day care provider, whether inside the home or apart from the home. (If a stranger commits the act, it is called sexual assault.)

Sexual abuse is especially complicated because of the power differential between the adult and child, because of the negotiations that must occur between adult and child, and because the child has no way to assimilate the experience into a mature understanding of intimacy. Regardless of the child's behaviour or reactions, it is the responsibility of the adult not to engage in sexual acts with children. Sexual abuse is never the child's fault.

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is any attitude, behaviour, or failure to act on the part of the caregiver that interferes with a child's mental health or social development.

Other names for emotional abuse are:

- verbal abuse
- mental abuse
- psychological maltreatment or abuse

Emotional abuse can range from a simple verbal insult to an extreme form of punishment. The following are examples of emotional abuse:

- ignoring, withdrawal of attention, or rejection
- lack of physical affection such as hugs
- lack of praise, positive reinforcement, or saying "I love you"
- yelling or screaming
- threatening or frightening
- negative comparisons to others
- belittling; telling the child he or she is "no good," "worthless," "bad," or "a mistake"
- using derogatory terms to describe the child, name-calling
- shaming or humiliating
- habitual scapegoating or blaming
- using extreme or bizarre forms of punishment, such as confinement to a closet or dark room, tying to a chair for long periods of time, or terrorizing a child
- parental child abduction

Emotional abuse is almost always present when another form of abuse is found. Some overlap exists between the definitions of emotional abuse and emotional neglect; regardless, they are both child abuse.

Neglect

Neglect is a failure to provide for the child's basic needs. The types of neglect are:

- physical
- educational
- emotional

Physical neglect

Physical neglect is not providing for a child's physical needs, including:

- inadequate provision of food, housing, or clothing appropriate for season or weather
- lack of supervision
- expulsion from the home or refusal to allow a runaway to return home
- abandonment
- denial or delay of medical care
- inadequate hygiene

Educational neglect

Educational neglect is the failure to enrol a child of mandatory school age in school or to provide necessary special education. This includes allowing excessive trancies from school.

Emotional (psychological) neglect

Emotional neglect is a lack of emotional support and love, such as:

- not attending to the child's needs, including need for affection
- failure to provide necessary psychological care
- domestic violence in the child's presence, such as spousal or partner abuse
- drug and alcohol abuse in the presence of the child, or allowing the child to participate in drug and alcohol use

When authorities examine emotional neglect, they take into consideration cultural values and standards of care, as well as the level of family income, which may interfere with proper care.

Some overlap exists between the definitions of emotional abuse and emotional neglect; regardless, they are both child abuse.

5. Signs and Symptoms of Child Abuse

Some signs of physical abuse

- Unexplained burns, cuts, bruises, or welts in the shape of an object
- Bite marks
- Anti-social behaviour
- Problems in school
- Fear of adults
- Drug or alcohol abuse
- Self-destructive or suicidal behaviour
- Depression or poor self-image

Some signs of emotional abuse

- Apathy
- Depression
- Hostility
- Lack of concentration
- Eating disorders

Some signs of sexual abuse

- Inappropriate interest in or knowledge of sexual acts
- Seductiveness
- Avoidance of things related to sexuality, or rejection of own genitals or bodies
- Nightmares and bed wetting
- Drastic changes in appetite
- Over compliance or excessive aggression
- Fear of a particular person or family member
- Withdrawal, secretiveness, or depression
- Suicidal behaviour
- Eating disorders

- Self-injury

Sometimes there are no obvious physical signs of sexual abuse, and a physician must examine the child to confirm the abuse.

Some signs of neglect

- Unsuitable clothing for weather
- Being dirty or unbathed
- Extreme hunger
- Apparent lack of supervision

Who Can Abuse?

- You can't tell by looking at a person whether they are an abuser – they don't appear different from the rest of the society.
- Abusers come from all classes of society, all professions and all races.
- Abuse of children may sometimes be carried by strangers but it is much more common that the abuser is known to the child and is in a position of trust and /or authority.
- It is not only adults who abuse children; children may suffer abuse from other children and young people.

Staff & volunteers should be aware that colleagues might include:

- Adults who are unable to provide consistent care
- Some adults, including professionals, who manipulate themselves into positions of trust where they can exploit children and young people, emotionally and sexually.
- Some adults, including professionals, who by behaving inappropriately towards children and young people can cause them to suffer physical or emotional harm.
- It is very important to draw the distinction between sexual abuse and the other ways in which children may suffer harm – the reasons for the sexual abuse of children and young people are very different from the reasons why people physically abuse or neglect them.

6. Disclosure and Confidentiality

If a child comes to the organisation with an abuse situation: the member of staff should:

- Stay calm and be reassuring. Find a quiet place to talk and write down the exact words that the child uses, and not your interpretation of them. Assure the child of your support.

- Confidentiality is crucial to all our relationships- but the welfare of the child is paramount. The law allows you within limits to disclose the information to the appropriate body whether it is the management, social services or the police.
- Confidentiality must not be maintained if the withholding of information will prejudice the welfare of the child.
- The child cannot be promised confidentiality as the Designated Officer may have a duty to report any incidents. Any documents relating to the disclosure need to be kept in a safe, secure place.

7. Code of Conduct

I. All staff and representatives must:

- a) report concerns that a child is a victim of child abuse or sexual exploitation immediately in accordance with their Local Procedures.
- b) undertake induction and training on this policy which is relevant and appropriate to their position so that they can undertake their responsibilities effectively and with confidence.
- c) cooperate fully and confidentially in any investigation of concerns and allegations.
- d) respond to a child who may have been abused or exploited in accordance with the Reporting Guidelines and in accordance with the child's best interest and safety.
- e) Identify, minimise and attempt to avoid potential situations of risk for children
- f) identify and avoid potential situations which may lead to staff behaviour being misinterpreted
- g) ensure, when making images of children e.g. photographs, videos, that they are respectful, that they are adequately clothed, avoid sexually suggestive poses and obtain permission of the parent or carer.
- h) ensure that any image or recorded case history of a child does not place him/her at risk or render him/her vulnerable to any form of abuse.
- i) ensure that the [Codes of behaviour](#) is complied with if any child is to participate in any activity other than as a beneficiary, e.g. a campaigning event, awards ceremony, panel or any other event or in internet social networking;

II Voluntary Action Westminster staff and representatives must never:

- a) hit or otherwise physically assault or physically abuse children;
- b) have sexual intercourse, or engage in any sexual activity, with anyone under 18 years of age, regardless of the age of consent locally. Mistaken belief in the age of the child is not a defence;
- c) develop relationships with children which could in any way be deemed exploitative or abusive;
- d) act in ways that may be abusive or may place a child at risk of abuse;
- e) use language, make suggestions or offer advice which is inappropriate, offensive or abusive;

- f) behave physically in a way that is inappropriate or sexually provocative;
- g) have a child/children with whom they are working to stay overnight at their home (unless necessary and previously agreed with managers that this is for the safety of the child);
- h) sleep in the same bed as a child with whom they are working;
- i) sleep in the same room as a child with whom they are working (unless necessary and previously agreed with managers that this is for the safety of the child)
- j) do things for children of an intimate, personal nature that they can do for themselves;
- k) condone, or participate in, behaviour of children which is illegal, unsafe or abusive;
- l) act in ways intended to shame, humiliate, belittle or degrade children, or otherwise perpetrate any form of emotional abuse;
- m) discriminate against, show unfair differential treatment to, or favour particular children to the exclusion of others;
- n) act as negotiator in or assist the process of financial settlement between the family of a child victim of sexual abuse or exploitation and the perpetrator; or
- o) spend excessive time alone with children away from others (including in vehicles) or spend time in a child's home unless exceptional circumstances apply and they have the prior approval of their line manager.

III. All staff and representatives should aim to:

- a) plan and organise the work and the workplace so as to minimise risk of abuse, exploitation or harm coming to a child;
- b) promote a culture of openness in relation to child safeguarding issues, where any issues or concerns can be raised and discussed;
- c) ensure that a sense of accountability exists between staff so that poor practice or potentially abusive behaviour can be challenged;
- d) talk to children about their contact with staff or others and encourage them to raise any concerns;
- e) empower child beneficiaries and communicate to them their rights, what is acceptable and unacceptable, and what they can do if there is a problem;
- f) communicate to child beneficiaries what standards of professional practice they can expect of Voluntary Action Westminster staff and what to do if they feel that Voluntary Action Westminster staff are falling short of these standards.; and
- g) proactively seek to safeguard children

8. Procedures

The designated person Head of Finance & Central Services (HF&CS) should be advised of any such concerns even if the worker is of the view that the victim will report the matter.

Allegations of abuse against a child against a staff member or volunteer

- it is essential that these are investigated in line with Local Procedures at the relevant agency,. See appendix 1.
- The HF&CS should also be notified of the allegation and will be the first point of contact for the Local Authority Designated Officer appointed by The Westminster Safeguarding Board to investigate.
- In order to protect them, the staff member will be given alternative duties or suspended for the duration of the investigation.

Generally

1. In all cases where a referral (e.g. to social services) is made, the telephone conversation must be followed up with an appropriate confirmatory letter.
2. HF&CS should be contacted within one working day of the suspicion/disclosure being made. If the member of staff is unable to contact HF&CS or Head of Policy & Engagement (HP&E) and therefore contacts Social & Community Services first, the member of staff must contact Outreach Manager (OM) as soon as possible after.
3. A note of the discussion with HF&CS must be placed on file along with details of event/s within 24 hours.
4. The worker or volunteer with HF&CS should note the following on a standard form:
 - Date and time of what has occurred and the time the disclosure was made
 - Names of people who were involved
 - What was said or done by whom
 - Any action taken by the group
 - Any further action e.g. suspension of worker/volunteer
 - Names of person reporting and to whom reporting
5. The decision about whom and when to contact parents or carers should only be taken after consultation as in 3 above. The timing of these contacts will also be decided at this point.
6. The decision about who and when to contact other agencies including Local Authority Social Services Department, Police and School should only be taken after consultation. The timing of these contacts will also be decided at this point.

7. At their initial discussion of the case, the worker and HF&CS should arrange a specific review date that should take place within three working days of the initial discussion.
8. The person with overall responsibility for the implementation of this policy is (HP&CS)
9. In the event that (HP&E) is unavailable, or an allegation is made which involves (HP&E), responsibility for implementation of this policy reverts to HF&CS

Recruitment of Staff and Volunteers

Where a staff member is being recruited to work with children, the recruitment panel should include at least one member who has been trained in Safer Recruitment Practice.

All staff and volunteers taking part in the activities organised by the Voluntary Action Westminster, are vetted as part of our responsibility to our members and children. The vetting includes:

- Criminal Record Bureau checks will be undertaken for all staff working with children.
- Criminal Record Bureau checks will be undertaken for all volunteers with unsupervised access to children
- Interview
- Two references
- Probation period
- All staff and volunteers to be registered on the Independent Safeguarding Authority.

This is a standard practice for any organisation working with children and young people and is a recommendation in the Government Code of Practice

Induction and Training for Staff & Volunteers

- Staff and volunteers must read and sign this policy before working with children
- Staff and volunteers working with children will attend a child protection training course as part of their induction
- Staff and volunteers should have health and safety procedures explained to them as part of their induction

From this induction, staff and volunteers should be able to recognise all four types of abuse and know the appropriate reporting systems as outlined in this policy.

Codes of Behaviour

- Where residential events are organised, males should never enter all female rooms or toilets and vice versa.
- Parents and carers should always be immediately informed if staff or volunteers have had to do things of a personal nature for a child such as changing clothes.

- A designated person must update and inform others in the group of any changes regarding child protection laws of best practice.
- Worker or volunteer should not be left alone with a child in any circumstance

General Supervision

- Keep a check on visitors and guests to ensure safety of children.
- Ensure there are at least two adults per ten children
- Ensure health and safety procedures are adhered to.
- Written consent is given from parents and carers of any children taken off site.

Whistle blowing

Staff and volunteers should speak to HF&CS if they have any concern about members of staff or volunteers' contact with children.

Insurance

Public Liability insurance will be taken out for all activities.

Contact Details

- Designated Officer: Head of Finance and Central Services (Personnel lead) - 020 7535 0494
- Deputy Designated Officer: HP&E (VAW Children's lead) - 020 7535 0484
- Social Services Emergency Duty Team: 0207 641 1560
- Child Protection Unit - Westminster Social and Community Services, 4 Frampton Street, London, NW8 8LF: 0207 641 7668
- Social & Community Services out of hours emergency contact number: 020 7641 7560
- Belgravia Police Station, 202-206 Buckingham Palace Road, London SW1W, Tel: 020 7730 1212
- NSPCC Child Protection Helpline: 0800 800 5000
- Independent Safeguarding Authority 0300 123 1111, <http://www.isa.gov.org.uk/>

DECLARATION FORM

VAW CHILD PROTECTION POLICY & PROCEDURE

I CONFIRM THAT I HAVE READ THE POLICY AND PROCEDURES ON THIS SUBJECT.

I UNDERSTAND THE CONTENTS AND I AGREE TO FOLLOW THESE PROCEDURES WHEN I AM WORKING OR VOLUNTEERING **FOR:**

Organisation _____

Signed _____

Name _____

Date _____

Current Address

Telephone _____

Email _____

Date implemented: _____

Date Reviewed: _____

Westminster Children's Centres

Part 1 CHILD PROTECTION STATEMENT

1. Child Protection Statement

Westminster Children's Centres believe that all children have the right to grow up in safe and supportive environments, whether at home or elsewhere, so that they can enjoy and achieve their full potential. To achieve this, Westminster Children's Centres will promote children's welfare and prevent them from suffering harm by following safe recruitment practices and incorporating staff awareness of child safety and protection issues into training to ensure that children are respected as individuals and have their needs addressed.

Westminster Children's Centres operate and perform within the context of the London Child Protection Procedures (<http://www.londonscb.gov.uk/procedures/>) and The Guidance for Safer Working Practice for Adults working with Children and Young People (dcsf 2007).

2. Purpose of this statement

This statement is for all staff (including unqualified staff and volunteers) who work in a Children's Centre whether permanently or on a sessional basis.

3. Induction

All staff starting work in a Children's Centre whether on a permanent or sessional basis will have a one to one meeting with the Children's Centre manager to ensure that they have the level of skills and vetting to work in the Centre. The check list at appendix 1 will be completed for each new staff member. If there are any gaps in knowledge identified a plan will be developed to ensure safe practice.

4 Training

- All staff will attend an appropriate level of, child protection awareness training. This will ensure staff develop informed awareness of known indicators and predictors of abuse and neglect, referral procedures, exploration of personal attitudes, knowledge of the Children Act 2004 ,

'Working Together' 2006

(<http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/resources-and-practice/IG00060/>,

the work of the Local Safeguarding Board and the necessity for guidelines. This interagency training is available at 2 levels within Westminster and all staff should have attended within 3 months of starting, preferably before commencing employment. Details of these training courses can be accessed at:

<http://www.westminster.gov.uk/healthandsocialcare/familycare/safeguardingchildren/childrenboard.cfm>

- All staff will have detailed knowledge of their own agency procedures as well as the London Wide Child Protection procedures.
- All staff will be familiar with "What to do if you are worried a child is being abused", Every Child Matters (2006) and should know where to access a copy within each setting they are working. This can be accessed at:

<http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/files/FD21D51F594298457CF64BE9CDF6F179.pdf>

5. Prevention

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children depends on effective joint working and integrated systems. The children's centres will ensure that all staff work within the context of interagency plans rather than in isolation and all staff will use the Common Assessment Framework (CAF.) There will be 3 levels of integrated information sharing and planning in Children's centres to ensure that children can get the support they need as early as possible.

These are:

Universal – Core Team meetings (these will be operational from September 2009). The aim of these are for the centres to ensure that there are integrated systems in place to reach all families and to identify those families who may begin to 'fall through the net' as early as possible.

Targeted – Family Support panels, where children in need will have their needs considered by a multi-agency panel of key family support agencies.

Children in need of Protection – children and families reaching this threshold may be a part of a child protection plan.

6. Risk assessment

Risk assessment is an integral part of any activity and vital to ensuring the safety of children. All Children's Centre activities whether in a setting or outside must be risk assessed and a copy given to the Centre Manager.

7. Safe Recruitment

- All Children's Centre staff and volunteers will be screened to ensure suitability for working with children and vulnerable adults. Staff and volunteers working in Children's Centres must meet the following requirements:
 - Suitability of applicants to work with children to be specifically addressed in reference requests.
 - One reference to be provided by applicant's most recent employer.
 - Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks are to be obtained on all successful applicants prior to a permanent offer of employment or involvement as a sessional member of the team / volunteer in any activities.

8. Reporting and Record keeping

Staff will record any incidents of concern.

Actual or suspected abuse must be reported to children's services immediately as required by the London Child Protection Procedures.

9. Staff Supervision

All staff working with children and families, whether employed directly or provided from another agency, must receive a minimum of monthly supervision. This will include attitude and suitability for working with children as well as performance, assessment and discussion of individual children's welfare.

10. Safe Environment

All of the Children's Centre premises and capital project improvements will be designed and maintained to safeguard children, their carers, staff and other users from accidents and harm, and adhere to current legislation for Health and Safety. It is the responsibility of all staff to ensure a safe environment for children.

11. Information to Parents

Any Children's Centre leaflets designed for users must reference and include a statement on safeguarding.

Links with the Safeguarding Board

The Head of Children's Centres Development sits on the quality and standards sub group of the Local Safeguarding Children Board and will act as the link to the Board.

PART 2

1. Procedure to be followed in the event of suspected abuse

Where there is suspicion of potential or actual abuse, whether as the result of a single incident or emerging over a period of time, you as a professional have a responsibility to:

- Discuss with your line manager (supervisor) who then has responsibility to determine the status of the concerns, and make a decision regarding notification to Social Services. The Children's Centre manager, as the designated person for child protection in each Children's Centre, should also be informed of any Child Protection issues.
- If you have believe or suspect a child is at risk of immediate harm, and your supervisor is unavailable on the day for discussion, refer to Social Services **immediately**. If you are **uncertain** about the risk of harm to a

child and your supervisor is unavailable on the day for discussion, make a general enquiry to Social Services Assessment Team on 0207 641 7478 or the Child Protection Unit on 0207 641 7674 to discuss the incident.

- Discuss your concerns with the parents (unless to do so would increase the risk of harm to the child). If you uncertain as to whether this criteria is met, discuss with the Social Services Assessment Team on 0207 641 7478 or the Child Protection Unit on 0207 641 7674.
- It is essential to remember that an allegation of child abuse or neglect may result in a criminal investigation so workers or volunteers must not do anything to jeopardise a police investigation, such as asking the child leading questions - it is your duty to refer , not to investigate.
- If a referral is to be made, the practitioner who witnessed the incident is to complete the referral on the same day and follow up in writing within 48 hours.
- Always write accurate and contemporaneous records of the event/s and submit a copy to the Sure Start Programme Director and or line manager.
- You may be asked to attend a strategy meeting.

There is a summary flowchart for staff on action to be taken at appendix 2.

2. Procedure to be followed if a child discloses to you that they or another child are being abused

- Whenever a child reports that they are suffering or have suffered significant harm through abuse or neglect, or have caused or are causing physical or sexual harm to others, the initial response from all professionals should be limited to listening carefully to what the child says to:
 - Clarify the concerns;
 - Offer re-assurance about how the child will be kept safe;

- Explain what action will be taken.
- The child must not be pressed for information, led or cross-examined or given false assurances of absolute confidentiality, as this could prejudice police investigations, especially in cases of sexual abuse.
- If the child can understand the significance and consequences of making a referral to LA children's social care, they should be asked their view.
- However, it should be explained to the child that whilst their view will be taken into account, the professional has a responsibility to take whatever action is required to ensure the child's safety and the safety of other children.

Please see flow chart at appendix 2.

3. Procedure to be followed in the event of reported or anonymous allegations of abuse

- All allegations of abuse must be referred the same day to social services.
- Listen, clarify and record accurately the information given.
- Request that the informant refer directly to social services. Even if they agree to do so, you still need to refer to social services.
- Refer to social services.
- Discuss incident with your line manager and the Children's Centre manager.
- If you have believe or suspect a child is at risk of immediate harm, and your supervisor is unavailable on the day for discussion, refer to Social Services **immediately**. If you are **uncertain** about the risk of harm to a child and your supervisor is unavailable on the day for discussion, make a general enquiry to Social Services Assessment Team on 0207 641 7478 or to the Child Protection Unit on 0207 641 7674 to discuss the incident.

4. Procedure to be followed in the event of a child being found unattended in a Children's Centre

- It is important to ensure the safety of the child. Inform the manager at the setting where you are working.
- Help should be summoned immediately by contacting the local social services department or the local police station.
- If the parent / carer returns, you need to discuss your concerns regarding the child being left unattended and explain the need to share your concerns with social services.
- Discuss with your line manager and refer to Social Services. Inform the Children's Centre manager.

5. Procedure to be followed in the event of an allegation of abuse against a staff member or volunteer in a Children's Centre

- Despite all efforts to 'vet' staff effectively before starting there will be occasions when allegations of abuse against children are raised. It is essential that these are investigated.
- Allegations of this nature must be reported to the designated person for safeguarding in the Children's centre.
- The designated officer should immediately notify the lead officer Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) appointed by Westminster Safeguarding Board to oversee such allegations.
- LADO or Child Protection Advisor will offer advice on next steps
- On the advice of the LADO or CPA Action should immediately be taken to ensure the staff member or volunteer is removed from direct contact with children until the matter is resolved. The staff member or volunteer may be given alternative duties during this time, may continue to work with another adult present or may be suspended for the course of the investigation
- The person about whom the allegation is made is fully informed of the allegation and kept informed of the procedures social services and the line management are undertaking.

- The person who has raised the concern will be protected from victimisation where disclosures have been made in good faith and should refer to the Council's whistle –blowing policy.

6. Named Links

- There will be a designated officer for Safeguarding in each Children's Centre. Staff must be made aware of this named person
- A central list of designated officers can be accessed by telephoning Amjad Fazal on 020 7641 5745

Appendix 1

Induction check list for all staff working in a Children's Centre

Is there an up to date CRB – record date and number.		
Discuss role and responsibilities in the Children's Centre and conduct and behaviour expected re children, families and colleagues.	What is role etc..?	
Discuss conduct and behaviour expected and a copy of The Guidance for Safer Working Practice for Adults working with Children and Young People (dcsf 2007). given to staff member		
Who is the staff member's line manager?		
When was last CP training?		
Where was the training?		
Was the training interagency?		
Date of next Westminster interagency training to be attended?		
Child Protection procedures discussed and what to do if staff		

member has a concern		
Role of the safeguarding Board discussed		
Name of local designated staff member for CP		

Quick referral flowchart



