



(Insert Group Name here) has a duty through its members, management, staff and volunteers to protect from abuse children and young people with whom they come into contact.

1. The 1989 Children Act identifies four categories of abuse:
 - Physical Abuse
 - Sexual Abuse
 - Emotional Abuse
 - Neglect

Physical Abuse

Actual or likely physical injury to a child or young person under age 18 or failure to prevent physical injury.

Sexual Abuse

Actual or likely sexual exploitation of a child or young person. The child may be dependent or developmentally immature.

Neglect

The persistent, or severe neglect of a child or the failure to protect a child from exposure to any kind of danger, resulting in the significant impairment of a child's health or development, including non-organic failure to thrive.

Emotional Abuse

Severe or persistent emotional ill-treatment or rejection likely to cause adverse effects on the emotional and behavioural development of a child. All abuse involves some emotional ill-treatment.

2. Historical Abuse

There may be occasions when an adult will disclose abuse (either sexual or physical) which occurred in the past, during their childhood. This information needs to be treated in exactly the same way as a disclosure or suspicion of current child abuse. The reason for this is that the abuser may still represent a risk to children now.

3. Awareness

Members, trustees, paid staff or volunteers, etc., are not responsible for diagnosing abuse. They do have a responsibility, however, to be aware and alert to signs that all is not well with a child or young person. Not all concerns about children or young people relate to abuse, there may well be other explanations.

It is important that members, trustees, paid staff or volunteers, etc., keep an open mind and consider what they know about the child and its circumstances.

4. What to do

As someone in a childcare role, as well as a citizen, when abuse is disclosed or observed you should take the following action:

- 4.1 Inform whoever has disclosed the information that the information cannot be kept confidential and will have to be passed on to appropriate agencies.
- 4.2 Inform your line manager about the disclosure within 24 hours. S/he to treat the disclosed information as top priority and seek advice urgently. You might also consider keeping an accurate and contemporary record for future reference.
- 4.3 Line Manager will report and discuss the information with Social Services or with the PSNI Child Protection & Sexual Offence Investigation Teams (CARE Units).
- 4.4 Line Manager/Worker to ensure that the “discloser” is kept informed about what will happen next, so they can be reassured about what to expect.

5. Support to Staff and Volunteers

As a result of reporting concerns, you may find the person who disclosed the information is upset or angry. The Line Manager will support you. If Social Services or the Police need further information or involvement from you, your Line Manager will talk with them and you about how this will happen.

Staff may also be subject to allegations of abusing children. While support will be offered, GROUP will ensure that Social Services or the Police are given all assistance in pursuing any investigation. Suspension and/or the disciplinary procedure may be implemented.

6. Confidentiality

Confidentiality is crucial to all our relationships - but **the welfare of the child is paramount.** This law does not allow anyone to keep concerns relating to child abuse to themselves.

Confidentiality may not be maintained if the withholding of the information will prejudice the welfare of the child.

7. Recruitment of Staff and Volunteers/Appointment of Trustees, etc.

(Insert group name here) will ensure that criminal records statements are obtained and acted upon, prior to their engagement, from paid/unpaid trustees/staff/volunteers new to the organisation; and with these statements, make “disclosure applications” to the P.S.N.I.

Those people on whom we will make such applications are those in any position having regular contact with / access to children and young people up to age 18, including those in “positions of trust” and supervisors as well as people in frontline roles.

Two references will be sought for new staff and volunteers and followed up as necessary. A medical reference may also be required.

A rigorous and probing approach to the application process (e.g., using application forms designed to elicit the full, relevant history of applicants), interviews and selection for positions with GROUP will be adhered to. Proof of identity may be sought.

8. Other Measures

The work of (Insert group name here) is planned in ways which minimise risks to children e.g., physical layout and surrounding, clear roles for everyone, supervising people involved with (Insert group name here). Concerns about children’s welfare will always be taken seriously.

In cases of misconduct towards children involving staff, volunteers, trustees, etc., these are reportable to the DHSS for possible inclusion on the List of unsuitable people to work with children.

Signature: Chairperson

Date: