

Digital:works

## **Child Protection Policy**

### **General Statement**

Digital:works as an organisation does not necessarily have regular service users and works almost exclusively with other organisations and institutions such as schools, youth services and voluntary organisations. However, it is the responsibility of digital:works to protect individuals from any identified form of abuse and work collaboratively with other agencies to prevent abuse to children.

We aim to work in collaboration with other agencies and professionals who have active child protection policies and to ensure that we have effective procedures in place and to report any allegation or suspected abuse promptly.

### **1. DEFINITION OF CHILD ABUSE**

Digital:works adopts the following definition from the London Child Protection Procedures:

**'Child abuse and neglect is a generic term encompassing all ill treatment of children including serious physical and sexual assaults as well as cases where standard of care does not adequately support the child's health'**

The categories of abuse are:

- Neglect
- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Emotional abuse

These categories of abuse overlap and a child may suffer more than one form of abuse.

Children may be abused or neglected through the infliction of harm or failure to act to prevent harm. Abuse can take place in a family or an institutional or community setting. The perpetrator may or may not be known to the child.

***Appendix 1 provides a more detailed definition, symptoms, and risk indicators of recognising abuse.***

### **2. RESPONDING TO ALLEGATIONS**

If a child discloses abuse or makes allegations, the member of staff must respond by listening carefully and sensitively without pressing for information.

The response must be limited to the following:

- Clarify the concerns
- Offer reassurance on how s/he will be kept safe
- Explain what action will be taken
- Seek medical attention for any serious injuries.

The child must not be pressed for further information, asked leading questions or cross-examined under any circumstances as this may jeopardise police investigations. The Child Protection Unit (CPU) and Social Services (SS) have responsibilities for investigation and making enquires in child protection matters.

### **3 SUSPECTED ABUSE**

Digital:works must make a referral to Social Services if there are signs that a child under the age of 18 years or an unborn baby:

- Is likely to suffer significant harm in the future
- Is experiencing or may already have experienced abuse or neglect.

### **4. REFERRALS**

As we work with other agencies such as schools and the youth service, the adult professional working with the child will be informed about the allegation and any intention to inform Social Services. Referrals must be made to Social Services promptly following the correct procedures. This can be made verbally and must be followed up in writing within 48 hours. Digital:works will follow up all allegations to ensure that the agency they are working with has followed the correct reporting procedure to ensure the welfare of the child.

Where possible and appropriate the following actions are to be taken before referrals are made to Social Services:

- Discuss concerns with adult working with child;
- Inform the child of the referral and ask them about their view if they can understand the significance and consequence;
- Where possible concerns should be discussed with the parents or family member and agreement sought to refer to Social Services unless this places the child at risk of significant harm.

In some situations decision might be taken to refer to Social Services without parental consent. Details of reasons why this decision was taken must be fully recorded following the recording procedure.

## **5. RECORDING**

The following written records **must** be kept:

- Detailed notes of any discussion with the child, parent and manager
- Detailed notes of Information provided to Social Services.
- Decisions taken, which must be timed, dated and signed
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The records should be:

- Clear, concise and accurate.
- Use straightforward language.
- Differentiate between Fact, Observation, Allegation and Opinion.

## **6. INFORMATION SHARING**

For the purposes of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the children it is essential for information to be shared amongst professionals working with Children and Families. All information sharing must be done in accordance with the following legislations:

- Common Law
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Data Protection Act 1998
- Children Act 1989

## **7. LEGAL FRAMEWORK**

It is important for professionals working with children to have knowledge of the following legislations:

- The Local Government Act 2000
- The Children Act 1989 mainly Section 17, 27, 38, 44 and 47

## **8. INVESTIGATIONS AND ENQUIRES**

Social Services and Child Protection Unit of the Police are responsible for carrying out all investigations. The Chair of the Management Committee will take a lead in any internal investigation by assisting SS and CPU.

Digital:works will take the following actions where allegations are made against:

### **a) Services User**

If an allegation is made about a service user, digital:works will ensure the service user does not take part in any activities or training whilst the investigation is taking place.

### **b) Visitors**

If the allegation is about a visitor to a digital:works project, we will seek agreement to exclude them from the property pending the outcome of the investigation.

### **c) Staff Members**

If an allegation is made against a staff member they will be suspended whilst the investigation is taking place.

## **9. AWARENESS OF STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS**

All staff members or volunteers who work directly with or come into contact with children will have clear understanding of the child protection procedures. Staff members and volunteers will be required to provide up to date CRB checks when working directly with children.

## **10. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY.**

Digital:works recognises different social and cultural upbringing of children and works to ensure that staff members are sensitive and tolerant of diverse customs and views. However the safety and welfare of child is paramount and therefore digital:works will not tolerate any practices, customs or view that are illegal and/or puts the child at significant harm. Some examples of this are exposure to pornography, female genital mutilation or forced marriage.

Digital:works aims to promote equality and diversity within its services and will not tolerate any form of abuse or discrimination.

## **11. Monitoring**

Staff are responsible for recording all incidents relating to child protection and forwarding all information to the Management Committee.

## **12. Record keeping**

Records will be kept according to digital:works's Record Keeping Policy.

## **13. LONDON CHILD PROTECTION PROCEDURES**

In addition to digital:works' own procedures, the London Child Protection Procedures are made accessible to refuges

## **Appendix 1**

### **RECOGNISING ABUSE**

#### **Definition**

Digital:works adopts the following definition from the *London Child Protection Procedures*:

**'Child abuse and neglect is a generic term encompassing all ill treatment of children including serious physical and sexual assaults as well as cases where standard of care does not adequately support the child's health or '**

Children may be abused or neglected through the infliction of harm or failure to act to prevent harm. Abuse can take place in a family or an institutional or community setting. The perpetrator may or may not be known to the child.

*Working Together to Safeguard Children* sets out definitions and examples of the four broad categories of abuse which are:

- Neglect
- Physical Abuse
- Sexual Abuse
- Emotional Abuse.

These categories of abuse overlap and a child may suffer more than one form of abuse. These categories of abuse are used for child protection registration.

The information on the final pages provide definitions, impact and risk indicators of abuse. *The London Child Protection Procedures* should be used for more detailed information.

It is important to ensure facts are established before coming to any conclusion about the abuse. In certain cases such as neglect and emotional abuse, it can be subtle and long term. It is crucial that staff working with children remain alert and record any observations that may indicate suspicion of abuse.

## ***Physical Abuse***

### **Definition of Abuse:**

This may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or any other type of ill treatment that will inflict physical harm, for example Munchausen Syndrome by Proxy.

### **Impact of Abuse:**

- Physical injuries or disability, neurological damage or death in extreme cases.
- Can lead to emotional and behavioral problems and aggressive behavior.

### **Risk Indicators:**

- An explanation which is inconsistent with injury
- Unexplained delay in seeking treatment
- Reluctance of parent/carer to give information or uninterested and undisturbed by the injury
- Bruising that is non accidental
- Bite marks or scars
- Any burns or scald with clear outlines
- Fractures of non-mobile children

## ***Neglect***

### **Definition of Abuse:**

This involves persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and /or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health.

Neglect may involve failure to provide adequate food, shelter, clothing or protection from physical harm or danger. Neglect can also be failure to ensure access to medical care or treatment.

### **Impact of Abuse:**

- Impairment of growth, health, intellectual and educational progress
- Difficulties with social functioning and relationships
- Death in extreme cases

### **Risk Indicators:**

- Failure to meet basic needs such as adequate food, clothes, warmth, hygiene and medical care
- Abandoned or left alone
- Act in a way that is inappropriate to age and
- Frequently absent from school or appointments

- Parent or carer involved in Domestic violence
- Unrealistic expectation of the child by parent /carer

## ***Sexual***

### **Definition of Abuse:**

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, which can involve physical contact including penetrative or non-penetrative acts.

Sexual abuse may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of pornographic materials, watching sexual activities or encouraging sexually inappropriate behaviour.

### **Impact of Abuse:**

- Disturbed behavior such as self-harm, depression and low self esteem
- Severity of impact linked to length and extent of abuse and the older the child is the more the severe the impact.
- Difficulties with social functioning and relationships

### **Risk Indicators:**

- Inappropriate sexualized conduct
- Sexually explicit behaviour, play or conversation, inappropriate to the child's age
- Continual and inappropriate or excessive masturbation
- Pain or itching of genital areas
- Sexually transmitted diseases
- Injuries to the genital or anal area.
- Bruising to buttocks, abdomen and thighs.
- Pregnancy in younger girls where identity of the father is not disclosed.

## ***Emotional***

### **Definition of Abuse:**

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional ill treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent effects on the child's emotional and may involve:

- Conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person
- Imposing any inappropriate expectations.
- Causing children to feel frightened –e.g. witnessing domestic violence
- Exploitation or corruption of children



Some level of emotional abuse is involved in most types of ill treatment of children, though emotional abuse may occur alone.

**Impact of Abuse:**

- Mental health and behavioural problems
- Low self esteem
- Impairment of intellectual and educational progress
- Difficulties with social functioning and relationships
- Impact is long term

**Risk Indicators:**

- Failure to thrive e.g. underweight, behind on all milestones
- Indiscriminate attachment or failure to attach.
- Aggressive behaviour towards others
- Scape-goated within the family
- Low self-esteem and lack of confidence
- Withdrawn or seen as a 'loner'- difficulty relating to others.