

CFAB PROTECTION OF CHILDREN PROCEDURES

Introduction¹

Child safeguarding is a general term, covering the prevention of child abuse through to identification and action. Child protection procedures are the steps to address concerns about this significant harm. These procedures set out what CFAB does to prevent, identify and take action to protect children from abuse, although in most cases CFAB will only become aware of a case when there is a serious child protection concern.

CFAB's social work team frequently may come across cases of child abuse, which are in the process of being addressed through a relevant authority either in the UK or abroad. However, it is not usual that anyone working at CFAB will come into direct contact with children. These procedures concern observations or suspicions of abuse of a child/ren which may be perpetrated by a staff, trustee, volunteer or other person associated with our work. It is everyone's responsibility to safeguard children.

What is child abuse?

Child abuse is any action by another person – adult or child – that causes significant harm to a child. It can be physical, sexual or emotional, but can just as often be about a lack of love, care and attention.

Children develop and mature at different rates. So what's worrying for a younger child, might be normal behaviour for an older child. If a child looks or acts a lot older or younger than their age, this could be a cause for concern. Some symptoms of child abuse include:

- Talks of being left home alone or with strangers.
- Poor bond or relationship with a parent, also known as attachment.
- Acts out excessive violence with other children.
- Lacks social skills and has few if any friends.

For more examples about what child abuse may look like at different ages, visit:

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/signs-symptoms-effects/>

Who should I report child abuse to?

- If there is an imminent threat to a child, you should report it to the police on: 999 (within the UK).
- Unless there is a conflict of interest, all concerns should be reported to CFAB's CEO (Carolyn Housman, carolyn.housman@cfab.org.uk, 07833249638), who is the accountable person for child protection or to the Chair of the Policy and Practice Committee of the Board, David Jones, acts as a secondary point of contact for anyone concerned about a safeguarding risk. David can be reached on 01604414345 or davidnjones@peopleneedpeople.org.uk. The Principal Social Worker (Noriko Takahashi) is responsible for delivering effective safeguarding in our social work practice.
- If you are concerned about a child located in the UK, children services can be contacted at any local council. You can find their details here: <https://www.gov.uk/report-child-abuse-to-local-council> Every local authority has a statutory responsibility to have a Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) who is responsible for co-ordinating the response to concerns that an adult who works with children may have caused them or could cause them harm.

¹ These procedures are largely based on Charity Commission guidance on Safeguarding Children and Young People <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safeguarding-children-and-young-people/safeguarding-children-and-young-people>

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The Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) works within Children's Services and gives advice and guidance to employers, organisations and other individuals who have concerns about the behaviour of an adult who works with children and young people.

- You should receive acknowledgement of your reported concern within 24 hours. If you do not have acknowledgement within 72 hours, please raise with the Principal Social Worker (if case-related) or the CEO, Carolyn Housman, (if related to staff or partners) to escalate with the local authority.
 - If the local authority's response is inadequate, or doesn't sufficiently address the risk of abuse, employees must discuss this with the appropriate person (Principal Social Worker or CEO) on the same day. The appropriate person must then review the details on the same day and make a decision to take action regarding any escalation required.
- If you are concerned about the actions of a CFAB employee but cannot report it through CFAB's procedures, and it is not urgent, you can check the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) website for advice and support. CFAB's office are located within Westminster, and our LSCB information is here: [Welcome to lscb | lscb \(rbkc.gov.uk\)](https://www.rbkc.gov.uk/lscb/)
- NSPCC offers free advice 24 hour/day for concerns about child abuse. You can reach them on 0800 800 5000.
- The National Crime Agency has a team of child protection advisers if you are worried about online sexual abuse. You can find out more here: <https://www.ceop.police.uk/safety-centre/>
- The Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) Act 2003 provides a mandatory duty for reporting FGM. This legislation requires regulated health and social care professionals and teachers in England and Wales to make a report to the police where, in the course of their professional duties, they either:
 - Are informed by a girl under 18 that an act of FGM has been carried out on her; or
 - Observe physical signs which appear to show that an act of FGM has been carried out on a girl under 18 and they have no reason to believe that the act was necessary for the girl's physical or mental health or for purposes connected with labour or birth.
- Employees may receive safeguarding concerns from the general public via email or the telephone Advice Line as part of our referral intake process. Where the concern is received via telephone, the employee must:
 - listen to the concern
 - as soon as possible during the call, advise the caller that their concern will be passed onto a qualified social worker
 - take the caller's contact details and send these to the Principal Social Worker or Senior Social Worker, confirming receipt of the message with the designated person. They will then determine whether safeguarding thresholds have been breached and how to take forward the concern.
 - The Principal Social Worker or Senior Social Worker will then advise the caller on the steps taken.
- If the safeguarding concern arises within the context of CFAB's working with a partner organisation or service (for example, an ISS partner or Independent Social Worker), employees must check with their manager for any agreed safeguarding processes contained in the Service Level Agreement or ISS Safeguarding Policy. Usually, this will involve contacting the designated officer within the partner organisation. Employees must also consider any local safeguarding children or adults multi-agency arrangements, including their local child protection or adults at risk procedures which are detailed on the Local Safeguarding Children Partners and Local Safeguarding Adult Board Websites.

Should I record the incident?

Yes, you should. If you're in a situation where a child discloses abuse to you, there are a number of steps you can take. Remember, the protection of the child is the most important consideration.

Receive: Listen to what is being said without displaying shock or disbelief. A common reaction to news as unpleasant and shocking as child abuse is denial. However, if you display denial to a child, or show shock or disgust at what they are saying, the child may be afraid to continue and will shut down. Accept what is being said without judgement. Take it seriously.

Reassure: Reassure the child, but only so far as is honest and reliable. Don't make promises that you can't be sure to keep, e.g. "everything will be all right now". Reassure the child that they did nothing wrong and that you take what is said seriously. Don't promise confidentiality – never agree to keep secrets. You have a duty to report your concerns, but you should always try to achieve consent first. Tell the child that you will need to tell some people, but only those whose job it is to protect children. Acknowledge how difficult it must have been to talk. It takes a lot for a child to come forward about abuse.

React: Listen quietly, carefully and patiently. Do not assume anything – don't speculate or jump to conclusions. Do not investigate, interrogate or decide if the child is telling the truth. Remember that an allegation of child abuse may lead to a criminal investigation, so don't do anything that may jeopardise a police investigation. Let the child explain to you in his or her own words what happened, but don't ask leading questions. Do ask open questions like "Is there anything else that you want to tell me?" Communicate with the child in a way that is appropriate to their age, understanding and preference. This is especially important for children with disabilities and for children whose preferred language is not English. Do not ask the child to repeat what they have told you to another member of staff. Explain what you have to do next and whom you have to talk to.

Record: Make some very brief notes at the time and write them up in detail as soon as possible. Do not destroy your original notes in case they are required by Court. Record the date, time, place, words used by the child and how the child appeared to you – be specific. Record the actual words used; including any swear words or slang. Record statements and observable things, not your interpretations or assumptions – keep it factual. Refer directly to CFAB's CEO, Carolyn Housman, or to our trustee child protection representative, David Jones. If you need to share this information and cannot get consent from the child, you must consider, on the facts of each case, whether it is in the public interest to share all or some of the information you have.

Do not discuss the case with anyone outside the social work team or the safeguarding leads.

When sharing information you should ensure it is necessary, proportionate, relevant, adequate, accurate, timely and secure. You can find more information from the Government's Information Sharing guidance for practitioners providing safeguarding services to children, young people, parents and carers:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/419628/Information_sharing_advice_safeguarding_practitioners.pdf

What are the responsibilities of staff, volunteers or trustees?

- Please refer to CFAB's Child Protection Policy and the Staff Handbook for a more detailed description of the code of behaviour for trustees, staff and volunteers; the consequences of breaching this code are clear and linked to disciplinary and grievance procedures.
- CFAB operates a safe recruitment, selection and vetting procedures that include checks into the eligibility and the suitability of all trustees, staff and volunteers who have direct or indirect (eg helpline, email) contact with children; in the case of trustees, because of their position within the charity, the commission takes the view that whenever there is a legal

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entitlement to obtain a DBS check in respect of such a trustee, a check should be carried out - this goes beyond circumstances where the trustee comes into contact with children.

- All staff that may come into contact with children (i.e. CFAB's social workers) have enhanced DBS checks. The Principal Social Worker ensures that staff are monitored and supervised and that they have opportunities to learn about child protection in accordance with their roles and responsibilities. Safeguarding induction training is mandatory for all those who work directly with children, young people, their families and/or carers.
- Trustees, staff and volunteers should learn about child protection in accordance with and as appropriate to their roles and responsibilities, including the emerging issues of eSafety, domestic violence, forced marriage, female genital mutilation, children who live away from home or go missing, child sexual exploitation, race and racism and extremism. More information and support can be sought from CFAB's CEO.
- CFAB is a regulated activity provider (RAP), which brings obligations under the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2016, for example a duty to refer to the Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS) when an employer or organisation believes a person has caused harm or poses a future risk of harm to vulnerable groups, including children. Trustees should also report this (and any other abuse or alleged abuse) as a serious incident to the Commission.

The accountable person for child protection (Carolyn Housman) has responsibility for:

- Making sure all staff are aware how to raise safeguarding concerns
- Ensuring all staff understand the symptoms of child abuse and neglect
- Referring any concerns to social care
- Maintaining accurate and secure child protection records