

Multi Horizons Child Contact Centre

Safeguarding Children Policy

Multi Horizons Child Contact Centre is committed to building a 'culture of safety' in which the children in our care are protected from abuse and harm. Multi Horizons Child Contact Centre believes that all children have the right to be protected at all times and that the welfare of the child is paramount. It recognises that child abuse occurs in all religions, all cultures, and all social classes. Confidentiality issues will be overridden by the need to act for the welfare of the child. All children have the right to be safe and not to be hurt.

1. Responsibility for a child or children using our Child Contact Centre always rests with their parents and not with volunteers. Nevertheless, every member of staff or volunteer is responsible for:

- Preventing the physical, sexual and emotional abuse of children whilst using the Child Contact Centre
- Listening to concerns expressed by parents or children and advising them how to report any abuse
- Reporting abuse themselves in certain circumstances

2. Child abuse is any form of physical, emotional, or sexual mistreatment or lack of care that leads to injury or harm. An individual may abuse or neglect a child directly, or by failing to protect them from harm. Some forms of child abuse and neglect are listed below:

- **Emotional abuse** is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child so as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve making the child feel that they are worthless, unloved, or inadequate. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.
- **Physical abuse** can involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer feigns the symptoms of, or deliberately causes, ill health to a child.
- **Sexual abuse** involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. This can involve physical contact, or non-contact activities such as showing children sexual activities or encouraging them to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.
- **Neglect** is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and emotional needs. It can involve a failure to: provide adequate food, clothing or shelter, to protect a child from physical and emotional harm, ensure adequate supervision or allow access to medical treatment.

Signs of possible abuse and neglect may include:

- significant changes in a child's behaviour
- deterioration in a child's general well-being
- unexplained bruising or marks
- comments made by a child which give cause for concern
- inappropriate behaviour displayed by other members of staff, or any other person. For example, inappropriate sexual comments, excessive one-to-one attention beyond the requirements of their role, or inappropriate sharing of images.

3. Where there is an allegation of, or suspected child abuse, the interests and safety of the child / children involved must always come first. This means that if there is a conflict of interest between a parent and a child, the interests of the child should always be put first. Multi Horizons Child Contact Centre will ensure that:

- Users and referrers are aware that Multi Horizons Child Contact Centre has a Child Protection/Safeguarding Policy which they can see upon request.
- All staff/volunteers have an understanding of what constitutes child abuse and procedures that need to be followed to report or prevent it. Staff and volunteers will receive regular training and will be kept up to date of any new policies or procedures relating to safeguarding.
- Any staff/volunteer who receives information relating to child abuse, or who suspects such abuse, will report it directly to the Coordinator, who will take appropriate action.
- The centre will not knowingly accept a referral when somebody involved has been convicted of any offence relating to abuse of any child unless there are exceptional circumstances and they have sought appropriate professional advice.
- The risk of volunteers being potential, actual, or convicted perpetrators is reduced by taking the following actions prior to their appointment:
 - The completion of an application pack
 - An interview
 - Obtaining references from two people who have firsthand knowledge of them
 - Carrying out Disclosure and Barring (DBS) checks.
- Staff and volunteers are aware that in most situations, parents should accompany children to the toilet. *A member of staff will remain outside the toilet with the toilet door open, they will not accompany the parent inside the toilet. If the child is confident to attend the toilet by themselves then they should be allowed to do so.*
- If there has been a request for a staff/volunteer to take the child to the toilet, or there is a concern about a parent, they should be accompanied by another worker. Staff/volunteers should not take the children on their own.
- Staff/volunteers are supported by the Coordinator if they have to deal with a family where there have been allegations of child abuse.

4. The Multi Horizons Child Contact Centre policy in relation to child protection is reviewed and if necessary updated annually.