The Triangle Community Garden

Safeguarding Children: Policy and Procedure

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Revision History

Date	Details	Author	Review Due
Feb 2010	New policy	Vicky Wyer	
Aug 2012	Policy revised	Vicky Wyer	Nov 2013
Jan 2014	Policy revised	Vicky Wyer	Jan 2015
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Feb 2025	DSL Contact details updated	V Wyer	Feb 2026

1. Policy Statement

1.1. Purpose

The Triangle Community Garden believes that children have a right to be safe and should be protected from all forms of abuse and neglect. We have a responsibility to promote the welfare of all children and young people and to keep them safe. We are committed to practice in a way that protects them.

We recognise that:

- safeguarding children is everyone's responsibility
- the welfare of the child/young person is paramount;
- all children, regardless of age, disability, gender, racial heritage, religious belief, sexual orientation or identity, have the right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse;
- It is better to help children as early as possible, before issues escalate and become more damaging
- children and families are best supported and protected when there is a coordinated response from all relevant agencies.

Children have said that they need:

- vigilance: to have adults notice when things are troubling them
- understanding and action: to understand what is happening; to be heard and understood; and to have that understanding acted upon
- stability: to be able to develop an ongoing stable relationship of trust with those helping them
- respect: to be treated with the expectation that they are competent rather than not information and engagement: to be informed about and involved in procedures, decisions, concerns and plans
- explanation: to be informed of the outcome of assessments and decisions and reasons when their views have not met with a positive response support: to be provided with support in their own right as well as a member of their family
- advocacy: to be provided with advocacy to assist them in putting forward their views
- protection: to be protected against all forms of abuse and discrimination and the right to special protection and help if a refugee

1.2. Scope and definitions of who this policy applies to

The aim of this policy and procedure is to provide **those engaged with The Triangle Community Garden** (TCG)'s **activities**, ie staff, volunteers, trustees, support workers, service users, tutors, hirers and contractors (see box on page 3 for definitions of those terms), with information on the appropriate action to take to safeguard children and young people from abuse.

It sets out the **responsibilities** of those engaged with TCG's activities, with regard to the recognition and prevention of abuse, and the actions to take in the event that abuse is suspected or identified.

For definitions of abuse see 3.0 and Appendix A

1.3. Context

As a voluntary sector provider of services in Hertfordshire, The Triangle Community Garden is required to comply with Hertfordshire County Council policies.

This policy and procedure is based on and must be used in conjunction with Hertfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (HSCP) Interagency Child Protection and Safeguarding Children Procedures Manual. This document is established as the **one procedure** in the county to be used by public agencies and private voluntary services in the safeguarding of the welfare of children and young people. It can be found at https://hertfordshirescp.trixonline.co.uk/chapter/key-chapters

Definitions:

Safeguarding:	Protecting children from maltreatment and promoting their welfare
Child, children, young person, young people:	those under the age of 18

Those engaged with TCG include the following:

Staff:	Anyone who undertakes a specific role within The Triangle Community Garden (TCG), whether paid or unpaid, with the exception of project volunteers and casual volunteers. Unpaid staff roles include activity leader, bookings clerk, workshops coordinator, workshop opener/closer, etc. Support workers are also included within this definition.
TCG Activity leader:	An activity or event organiser – see above
Support worker	A support worker **employed by TCG** to support a session or participant at one of our projects
External Support Staff	A support worker **not employed by TCG** who attends one of our projects to provide support to a gardener or service
Project volunteer:	A volunteer supporting the work of one of TCG's projects (eg Growing Ability, New Shoots, GOGA etc)
Casual volunteer:	A volunteer participating in community gardening activities or community events organised by TCG
Volunteer:	Collective term covering project and casual volunteers
Visitor:	Anyone attending a Triangle Garden workshop, walk or talk, or visiting the site
Gardener:	Someone with support needs attending one of our projects: eg Growing Ability, New Shoots, GOGA
TCG tutor:	Anyone contracted to conduct a workshop on behalf of the Triangle Garden
Hirer (organised group):	Any person or group hiring our venue or gazebos for group activities over which they have a duty of care
Hirer (casual):	Anyone hiring our venue or gazebos for their own purposes (eg a private party)
Contractor:	Anyone undertaking maintenance or other work for TCG eg electrician, tree surgeon.

2 Responsibilities

2.1 The Triangle Community Garden will ensure:

- robust recruitment and selection processes are in place;
- DBS checks will be obtained for all TCG staff and volunteers for whom there is a legal obligation. Please refer to TCG's DBS policy for further details;
- everyone engaged with TCG's activities is made aware of relevant policies, procedures and codes of conduct, together with information about child safeguarding and good practice in the following ways: as part of their induction, via signage at our sites and via TCG's website;
- the provision of effective management of staff, volunteers and trustees through supervision and support;
- training is provided where this is identified as necessary
- the provision of a Triangle Community Garden Designated Child Safeguarding Lead, with responsibility to share any safeguarding concerns with agencies who need to know, involving parents and children appropriately, (see Appendix C for who to contact locally)

2.2 The Triangle Community Garden expects everyone engaged in its activities to:

- protect all children and young people from significant harm ;
- report abuse/neglect or suspected abuse/neglect and to act on complaints of abuse/neglect in a timely fashion;
- ensure that other considerations, such as fear of damaging relationships with adults, do not get in the way of protecting children from abuse and neglect;
- be aware of and work within the guidance laid down in this and related documents;
- be aware of, understand, and adhere to, the local multi-agency safeguarding arrangements in Hertfordshire.
- work in partnership with families and carers in order to ensure children and young people are protected from harm;
- adhere to the principle that agencies should work together in order to ensure health and social care is appropriately co-ordinated and people are safeguarded from potential or actual abuse.

Responsibilities of those engaged with TCG's activities **do not** include **investigating** suspected abuse or **questioning** children when they have disclosed abuse: this is the role of Social Services or NSPCC, who have statutory powers and obligations under the Children Act 1989.

3 Understanding and identifying abuse and neglect

3.1 What constitutes abuse and neglect?

- Abuse and neglect are forms of maltreatment – a person may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent that harm.
- Child welfare concerns may arise in many different contexts and can vary greatly in their nature and seriousness.

- An abused child will often experience more than one type of abuse, as well as other difficulties in their lives.
- Abuse and neglect can happen over a long period of time, but can also be a one-off event.
- Child abuse and neglect can have major long-term impacts on all aspects of a child's health, development and well-being.
- "What To Do If You're Worried a Child is Being Abused" (DH Guidance, reissued 2015)* provides non-statutory guidance for those whose work brings them into contact with children, to help identify child abuse and neglect. It can be found online here:
- https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/what-to-do-if-youre-worried-a-child-is-being-abused--2
- The guidance identifies the main forms of abuse in four categories. They are:
    - Physical abuse
    - Emotional abuse
    - Sexual abuse and exploitation
    - Neglect

See Appendix A for more information on types of abuse

3.2 How to recognise abuse and neglect?

The warning signs and symptoms of child abuse and neglect can vary from child to child. Parental behaviours may also indicate child abuse or neglect. By understanding the warning signs, you can respond to problems as early as possible and provide the right support and services for the child and their family.

It is important to recognise that a warning sign doesn't automatically mean a child is being abused. See Appendix B for warning indicators

3.3 Who may be the abuser?

Children and young people may be abused by those known to them or by a stranger. They may be abused by an adult or adults, or another child or children.

3.4 Where can abuse occur?

Anywhere - children or young people may be abused in a family, in an institutional setting or community setting, or via the internet. In some cases eg female genital mutilation, a child may be taken out of the country to be abused.

3.5 Taking action

'What to do if you're worried a child is being abused' identifies four key steps to follow to help individuals identify and respond to possible abuse and/or neglect:

- Be alert
- Question behaviours
- Ask for help
- Refer

It is not always appropriate to go through all four stages sequentially.

If a child is in immediate danger or is at risk of harm this should be reported to the Hertfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (HSCP) and/or the police **immediately**. Before doing so you should try to establish the basic facts. However it is the role of social workers and the police to investigate cases and make a judgement on whether there should be a statutory intervention and/or criminal investigation.
(see Appendix C for contact details and guidance on circumstances,).

You should record in writing all concerns and discussions about a child's welfare, the decisions made and the reasons for those decisions. (see Appendix G on recording information)

It is important to treat all cases of suspected or actual abuse seriously from minor to serious incidents.

3.6 Information Sharing

It's important to remember that throughout the four stages, early information-sharing is key to providing effective early help where there are problems. Decisions on how much information to share, with whom, and when, can have a profound impact on people's lives.
For more information on sharing information which includes a myth-busting guide see Information Sharing: Advice for practitioners providing safeguarding services to children, young people, parents and carers, which can be found online here: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safeguarding-practitioners-information-sharing-advice

4 Implementation Procedure

4.1 Role of The Triangle Community Garden' Trustees

TCG trustees are responsible for ensuring that policies and procedures are in place to ensure the welfare and safeguarding of children and young people when engaged in TCG activities. TCG trustees have designated a named Child Safeguarding Lead to act on their behalf and with their full support.

4.2 Role of TCG's Child Safeguarding Lead

The Triangle Community Garden's Designated Child Safeguarding Lead is responsible for responding promptly and appropriately to the concerns raised and notifying the suspected case of abuse to the appropriate organisation – either the police or Hertfordshire County Council Children's Services. Contact details are given in Appendix C.

The TCG Designated Child Safeguarding Lead

(TCG DSLC) is:

Name……Hayley Lanfear

Mobile No……07887 725962

Email……hayley@trianglegarden.org

4.3 Asking for help

4.3.1 Concerns about a child's welfare can vary greatly in terms of their nature and seriousness, how they have been identified and over what duration they have arisen. Any individual who has concerns about a child, should ask for help.

4.3.2 Any individual suspecting possible abuse **must** discuss their concerns with the TCG DCSL when they first become concerned, regardless of the level of their concern, minor or serious.

4.3.3 If the individual is concerned that the alleged abuser is the TCG DCSL, they should discuss their concerns with the TCG Chair of Trustees or contact HCC Children's Services, either direct or via the call centre. (see Appendix C)

4.3.4 You can also seek advice at any time from the NSPCC helpline – help@nspcc.org.uk or 0808 800 5000.

4.3.5 The TCG DCSL, with that individual, should then decide:

- What is the nature of the actual/possible abuse?
- Is there reasonable explanation?
- Is medical attention / examination needed?
- What is the current risk to the child?

4.3.6 Direct contact should be made with the Police (see Appendix C) if:

- There is an immediate or real risk of injury
- A suspected crime has been / is being committed

4.3.7 Otherwise contact should be made with the Hertfordshire County Council Children's Services who will involve the Police if required. Once notified of the suspected case of abuse it is the responsibility of Children's Services to manage the child protection investigation. The TCG DCSL will be the main point of contact and provide assistance as required.

4.3.8 If you have concerns about the safety or welfare of a child and feel they are not being acted upon by your manager/designated safeguarding lead, **it is your responsibility to take action.**

4.3.9 The HCC investigation team or emergency duty team will take the lead in considering the need and any arrangements for a safeguarding plan. Where the alleged abuser is a child then duty of care considerations may apply to that person.

4.3.10 Information received should be recorded in as verbatim format as possible, and any rough notes retained even after completion of an incident report (see Appendix D). The considerations at para 4.3.5. by the TCG DCSL and the individual first aware of possible abuse, should be similarly recorded. All records and notes should be signed and dated.

4.3.11 Guidance for anyone engaged with TCG's activities on behaviour is at Appendix E and F respectively and guidance on handling complaints and communication on such issues is at Appendix G.

4.3.12 If, at any time, you see further signs of potential abuse and neglect, report and refer again.

4.4 Allegations against those engaged with TCG's activities

4.4.1 The Triangle Community Garden is responsible for following its own complaints procedures when an allegation of abuse is made against those against TCG's engaged activities, or when Children's Services, or the Police, suggest that an individual is removed from working with a suspected victim of abuse.

4.4.2 The Triangle Community Garden's Project Manager/trustees must ensure that any actions taken in such cases do not prejudice wider investigations by Hertfordshire County Council or the police.

5 Publication

5.1 This policy will be available at Ransom's Pavilion, and on the Triangle Garden website: www.trianglegarden.org. It is available on request in hard copy – please email info@trianglegarden.org or write to Triangle Community Garden, c/o Hitchin Initiative, 1A Churchyard, Hitchin SG5 1HR.

5.2 All those engaged with TCG's activities will be made aware of its existence and any revisions made.

Appendix A: Types of Abuse and Indicators

Physical abuse is deliberately physically hurting a child. It might take a variety of different forms including hitting, pinching, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning or suffocating a child.
Physical abuse can happen in any family, but children may be more at risk if their parents have problems with drugs, alcohol and mental health or if they live in a home where domestic abuse happens. Babies and disabled children also have a higher risk of suffering physical abuse.
Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child.

Some of the following signs may be indicators of physical abuse:
- Children with frequent injuries;
- Children with unexplained or unusual fractures or broken bones; and
- Children with unexplained bruises or cuts; burns or scalds; or bite marks.

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child. It is also sometimes called psychological abuse and can cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. Although the effects of emotional abuse might take a long time to be recognisable, practitioners will be in a position to observe it, for example, in the way that a parent interacts with their child. It may involve deliberately telling a child that they are worthless or unloved and inadequate. It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say and how they communicate. Emotional abuse may involve serious bullying – including online bullying through social networks, online games or mobile phones – by a child's peers.

Some of the following signs may be indicators of emotional abuse:
- Children who are excessively withdrawn, fearful, or anxious about doing something wrong;
- Parents or carers who withdraw their attention from their child, giving the child the 'cold shoulder';
- Parents or carers blaming their problems on their child; and
- Parents or carers who humiliate their child, for example, by name-calling or making negative comparisons.

Sexual abuse and exploitation

Sexual abuse is any sexual activity with a child. You should be aware that many children and young people who are victims of sexual abuse do not recognise themselves as such. A child may not understand what is happening and may not even understand that it is wrong. Sexual abuse can have a long-term impact on mental health.
Sexual abuse may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (e.g. rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. It may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in the production of sexual images, forcing children to watch sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the Internet)
Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

Some of the following signs may be indicators of sexual abuse:

- Children who display knowledge or interest in sexual acts inappropriate to their age;
- Children who use sexual language or have sexual knowledge that you wouldn't expect them to have;
- Children who ask others to behave sexually or play sexual games; and
- Children with physical sexual health problems, including soreness in the genital and anal areas, sexually transmitted infections or underage pregnancy.

Child sexual exploitation is a form of sexual abuse where children are sexually exploited for money, power or status. It can involve violent, humiliating and degrading sexual assaults. In some cases, young people are persuaded or forced into exchanging sexual activity for money, drugs, gifts, affection or status. Consent cannot be given, even where a child may believe they are voluntarily engaging in sexual activity with the person who is exploiting them. Child sexual exploitation doesn't always involve physical contact and can happen online. A significant number of children who are victims of sexual exploitation go missing from home, care and education at some point.

Some of the following signs may be indicators of sexual exploitation:

- Children who appear with unexplained gifts or new possessions;
- Children who associate with other young people involved in exploitation;
- Children who have older boyfriends or girlfriends;
- Children who suffer from sexually transmitted infections or become pregnant;
- Children who suffer from changes in emotional well-being;
- Children who misuse drugs and alcohol;
- Children who go missing for periods of time or regularly come home late; and
- Children who regularly miss school or education or don't take part in education.

Neglect is a pattern of failing to provide for a child's basic needs, whether it be adequate food, clothing, hygiene, supervision or shelter. It is likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Children who are neglected often also suffer from other types of abuse. It is important that practitioners remain alert and do not miss opportunities to take timely action. However, while you may be concerned about a child, neglect is not always straightforward to identify.

Neglect may occur if a parent becomes physically or mentally unable to care for a child. A parent may also have an addiction to alcohol or drugs, which could impair their ability to keep a child safe or result in them prioritising buying drugs, or alcohol, over food, clothing or warmth for the child. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal drug or alcohol abuse.

Some of the following signs may be indicators of neglect:

- Children who are living in a home that is indisputably dirty or unsafe;
- Children who are left hungry or dirty;
- Children who are left without adequate clothing, e.g. not having a winter coat;
- Children who are living in dangerous conditions, i.e. around drugs, alcohol or violence;
- Children who are often angry, aggressive or self-harm;
- Children who fail to receive basic health care; and
- Parents who fail to seek medical treatment when their children are ill or are injured.

Appendix B: Possible Warning Signs

Some of the following signs **might** be indicators of abuse or neglect:

- Children whose behaviour changes – they may become aggressive, challenging, disruptive, withdrawn or clingy, or they might have difficulty sleeping or start wetting the bed;
- Children with clothes which are ill-fitting and/or dirty;
- Children with consistently poor hygiene;
- Children who make strong efforts to avoid specific family members or friends, without an obvious reason;
- Children who don't want to change clothes in front of others or participate in physical activities;
- Children who are having problems at school, for example, a sudden lack of concentration and learning or they appear to be tired and hungry;
- Children who talk about being left home alone, with inappropriate carers or with strangers;
- Children who reach developmental milestones, such as learning to speak or walk, late, with no medical reason;
- Children who are regularly missing from school or education;
- Children who are reluctant to go home after school;
- Children with poor school attendance and punctuality, or who are consistently late being picked up;
- Parents who are dismissive and non-responsive to practitioners' concerns;
- Parents who collect their children from school when drunk, or under the influence of drugs;
- Children who drink alcohol regularly from an early age;
- Children who are concerned for younger siblings without explaining why;
- Children who talk about running away; and
- Children who shy away from being touched or flinch at sudden movements.

By understanding the warning signs, you can respond to problems as early as possible and provide the right support and services for the child and their family. **It is important to recognise that a warning sign doesn't automatically mean a child is being abused.**

Appendix C
Contact details for reporting abuse or suspected abuse

Please contact the Police (choose one of the 3 options below)
or Children's Services in the first instance, depending on the circumstances.

Please find the latest contact details and procedural information on
What to do if you suspect a child is being abused here:
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/what-to-do-if-youre-worried-a-child-is-being-abused--2

Police:

1. **Immediate response**

For incidents concerning a child or young person, where there is danger to life, risk of injury or a crime is being committed – dial **999**

2. **High priority**

For incidents taking place against a child or young person, where there is no immediate risk to life or property but a police response is required as soon as practicable due to the seriousness of the incident and / or potential loss of evidence dial **101**.

3. **Routine**

For incidents that have taken place against a child or young person, where that person wishes to make a report of crime please contact **101** and specify that a crime has been committed and that person wishes to make a report the crime.

Children's Services:

For all incidents of suspected child abuse please contact Children's Services (including out of hours) **0300 123 4043**
or the Joint Child Protection Investigation Team (JCPIT) on **01707 354 000**

Other support agencies:

ChildLine (Freephone)	0800 1111
Get Connected	0808 808 4994
Muslim Youth Helpline	0808 808 2008
Children's Legal Centre Helpline	0300 330 5480
NSPCC Child Protection Helpline	0808 800 5000
Family Lives	0808 800 2222
Samaritans National Helpline	08457 90 90 90
Internet Watch Foundation	https://www.iwf.org.uk/

Further contact info: http://trixresources.proceduresonline.com/nat_cont/index.htm

Who can help?

If you are worried that you or someone you know is being abused, it is usually best to talk to an adult because you will probably need help to stop the abuse happening.

If you'd like to talk to someone now, please ask for ……, who will be happy to talk with you and answer any questions.

Other people you could talk to include a relative, doctor, teacher, school nurse, neighbour, youth worker, a friend or their parents. You can also call ChildLine free on **0800 1111**.

How to make a complaint

If you have a complaint about the behaviour of a Triangle Community Garden member of staff, volunteer or other person at this venue, please contact:

Hayley Lanfear
The Triangle Community Garden's Designated Child Safeguarding Lead
Tel: 07887 725962
Email: hayley@trianglegarden.org

Alternatively, you can make a complaint to:

Vicky Wyer
The Triangle Community Garden's Chair of Trustees
Email: vicky@trianglegarden.org

Appendix D: Incident report

This report should be

- completed the individual who first becomes aware of suspected abuse, in all cases, even if no further action is taken.
- Completed as soon as possible after an incident, and within 24 hours at the latest.
- Countersigned by The Triangle Community Garden's Designated Child Safeguarding Lead (TCG DCSL) or Chair of Trustees.

This report is strictly confidential: please keep it in a secure place at all times (eg a locked filing cabinet / password protected if held in electronic format).

Date and time of incident	
Place of incident	
Child's details: Name Age Gender Relationship with The Triangle Community Garden	
Parent / guardian / carer details Name Address Telephone number	
Source of incident Direct / indirect	
Verbatim account of disclosure or incident, by whom and when	
Observed behavioural concerns	
Description of injuries if relevant (include diagram if agreed by child)	
Discussion with Herts Safeguarding Children Board's LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer)	
Action taken For everyone contacted: Organisation Contact name Date and time Comments including any advice given	
Summary (important to separate fact from fiction where possible)	
Sign off Author's name Author's signature Date and time of signature TCG DCSL's name TCG DCSL's signature Date and time of signature	

Appendix E: Code of Behaviour for Adults

Community gardens are, by nature, friendly and relaxed places. This may make it difficult for people to always know how to act appropriately: however, a friendly, relaxed atmosphere must also still seek to provide a safe environment for children. Many adults are concerned about how their contact with children might be misinterpreted or seen as inappropriate. To minimise this, consider how you will behave in advance and follow the steps set out below.

General behaviour

- Minimise the chances of spending time alone with children, and where required, tell other adults that you are doing so in advance, preferably a parent/carer.
- Where close contact is required (eg learning to use tools safely), ensure that it takes place in a group, so that all involved are in an appropriate situation.
- Avoid physical activity which is, or may be thought to be, sexually stimulating.
- Don't rely on your good name - rely on good, consistent work practices.
- Do not offer lifts to children, or agree to giving them, unless with parent/carer consent and more than one adult in the car
- Language should always be appropriate to the age and nature of the people you are working with.
- Any computer-based activity should be agreed in advance and closely supervised. TCG will not tolerate access to pornographic or other inappropriate websites.
- If you work with the children of your friends and family, ensure that you distinguish your role at work from your 'friend and family' role. For example, it is not appropriate to take children to your own home, or to offer lifts when you are in your work role.

Physical contact

- Keep everything public - a hug in the context of a group is very different to a hug behind closed doors.
- Touch should be related to the child's needs, not the adult's.
- Touch should be age appropriate and should not be initiated by the adult, except in exceptional circumstances such as where medical attention is required.
- Adults should monitor one another regarding physical contact. They should be free to help each other by pointing out anything that could be misunderstood.

Promoting healthy lifestyles

- TCG supports healthy lifestyles and where possible will promote healthy eating at its events.
- Smoking and drinking alcohol in front of children is discouraged, and a no smoking/alcohol policy is in place for adults during session times with children and young people.

Appendix F: Code of Behaviour for Children

Children and young people are expected to:

- Listen and follow instructions of activity supervisors
- Cooperate with each other
- Be friendly
- Listen to each other
- Be helpful
- Follow this code of behaviour and other rules
- Act safely and responsibly when using the internet, social networking sites, mobile phones etc
- Have good manners
- Join in
- Respect each other's differences
- Treat staff, tutors, volunteers and visitors with respect
- Report anything that worries or concerns them to the adult in charge

Children and young people shouldn't:

- Pick on or make fun of each other
- Bully each other
- Stare at others
- Yell or shout at others
- Be abusive
- Spread nasty rumours/untrue stories about others
- Use equipment to be abusive or to cyberbully – for example, by using mobile phones to send nasty messages, taking and sharing photos without permission, sending nasty emails, or 'trolling' (leaving unkind comments on a webpage or social network profile).

Appendix G: Guidance on handling communication and information sharing

Receive

- Listen to what is being said, without displaying shock and disbelief.
- Accept what is being said.
- Take notes (see *Record* below).

Reassure

- Be reassuring, but honest.
- Don't make promises you may not be able to keep, don't say things like, "I'll stay with you," or "Everything will be all right now".
- Don't promise confidentiality, you have a duty to refer.
- Do reassure them that they were right to tell you, and recognise how difficult it might have been to tell.
- Remember that they may feel guilty; refer to this if they mention it. If they don't, you could be putting the idea in their head. You could say things like "You're not to blame, it's not your fault,"; "You're not alone, you're not the only one this sort of thing has happened to".
- What you say should be appropriate to their age and stage of development.

React

- Do not interrogate them for full details. All you need to do is get enough information to decide whether or not you need to refer this further.
- Do not ask leading questions, for example "What did he do next?" (this assumes that something else did happen) or "did she touch your private parts?" Questions like this can invalidate your evidence (and the child's) in any later court case.
- Do ask open questions, like "Anything else to tell me?"
- Do not criticise the person the child is talking about; they may love him/her, and reconciliation may be possible.
- Do not ask the child to repeat what they have said to another worker or management member.
- Explain what you have to do next and who you will have to talk to.

Record

Make some brief notes as soon as possible. Do not destroy these in case they are needed by Social Services or the Police. As soon as possible, record the following information and complete an Incident Report (Appendix D), and pass to the TCG DCSL. A decision on the need to refer the matter to Police or Children's Services will be made by the TCG DCSL in consultation with the individual first made aware of the suspected abuse.

Please record as soon as possible:

- Name of person
- Parents/carer's details
- Their address and any relevant phone numbers
- What is said to have happened or was seen and where, in the words used by the person making the allegation (ie if the person uses 'pet' words, record the actual words used, rather than translating them into 'proper' words)
- The date and time it occurred
- Who else, if anyone, was present
- What was said by others present

- Any evidence of abuse, eg bruises, bleeding, unusual behaviour (draw a diagram to show the position of bruises or marks they show you, include the size, shape and colour).

Remember

- Ensure that you record, as accurately as possible, things that are really said, rather than your interpretations or assumptions.
- Follow this policy and refer any issues to a TCG DCSL as soon as possible.
- You may need support yourself: if so, please talk to the TCG DCSL or your line manager in the first instance.

Information Sharing and Confidentiality

In the case of suspected abuse, it is important to ensure as much confidentiality as possible. Allegations should not be openly discussed with others - this can be harmful for person who made the allegation as well as the person against whom the allegation was made.

Myth-busting guide to information sharing

Sharing information enables practitioners and agencies to identify and provide appropriate services that safeguard and promote the welfare of children. Below are common myths that may hinder effective information sharing:

- **Data protection legislation is a barrier to sharing information**

No – the Data Protection Act 2018 and GDPR do not prohibit the collection and sharing of personal information, but rather provide a framework to ensure that personal information is shared appropriately. In particular, the Data Protection Act 2018 balances the rights of the information subject (the individual whom the information is about) and the possible need to share information about them.

- **Consent is always needed to share personal information**

No – you do not necessarily need consent to share personal information. Wherever possible, you should seek consent and be open and honest with the individual from the outset as to why, what, how and with whom, their information will be shared. You should seek consent where an individual may not expect their information to be passed on. When you gain consent to share information, it must be explicit, and freely given. There may be some circumstances where it is not appropriate to seek consent, because the individual cannot give consent, or it is not reasonable to obtain consent, or because to gain consent would put a child's or young person's safety at risk.

- **Personal information collected by one organisation/agency cannot be disclosed to another**

No – this is not the case, unless the information is to be used for a purpose incompatible with the purpose for which it was originally collected. In the case of children in need, or children at risk of significant harm, it is difficult to foresee circumstances where information law would be a barrier to sharing personal information with other practitioners.

- **The common law duty of confidence and the Human Rights Act 1998 prevent the sharing of personal information**

No – this is not the case. In addition to the Data Protection Act 2018 and GDPR, practitioners need to balance the common law duty of confidence and the Human Rights Act 1998 against the effect on individuals or others of not sharing the information.

- **IT Systems are often a barrier to effective information sharing**

No – IT systems, such as the Child Protection Information Sharing project (CP-IS), can be useful for information sharing. IT systems are most valuable when practitioners use the shared data to make more informed decisions about how to support and safeguard a child.