
HOPE2FAMILIES SAFEGUARDING POLICY

Recognising and responding child abuse and neglect

70 Long Commons Coleraine
Coleraine, BT52 1LH
07856201383
wildfireministrys@gmail.com

Table of contents:

<u>Recognising and responding to abuse:</u>	<u>4</u>
<u>Disclosure:</u>	<u>4</u>
<u>How disclosure happens:</u>	<u>4</u>
<u>Barriers to disclosure:</u>	<u>5</u>
<u>Spotting the signs of abuse:</u>	<u>6</u>
<u>Helping children disclose abuse:</u>	<u>7</u>
<u>Encouraging children and young people to seek help and support:</u>	<u>8</u>
<u>Responding to disclosures:</u>	<u>9</u>
<u>Watch NSPCC animation on how to respond to a child's disclosure of abuse:</u>	<u>9</u>
<u>*Unbiased approach*</u>	<u>9</u>
<u>Making notes:</u>	<u>10</u>
<u>Information sharing, why information sharing is important:</u>	<u>11</u>
<u>When to share information:</u>	<u>11</u>

<u>What information to share:</u>	12
<u>Facts and opinions:</u>	12
<u>Seeking consent to share information:</u>	13
<u>Sharing information without consent:</u>	13
<u>Confidentiality:</u>	14
<u>Reporting concerns:</u>	15
<u>Criminal Law (Northern Ireland) Act 1967:</u>	15
<u>Whistleblowing:</u>	17
<u>Responding to concerns and sharing information:</u>	17
<u>child's consent.</u>	17
<u>Key guidance:</u>	17
<u>Guidance for charities: Complaints and whistleblowing</u>	18
<u>References and resources:</u>	19
<u>Childline:</u>	20
<u>Contact details:</u>	21
<u>Find out more about:</u>	22

Recognising and responding to abuse:

It can be very difficult for young people to speak out about abuse. Often they fear there may be negative consequences if they tell anyone what's happening to them. Some may delay telling someone about abuse for a long time, while others never tell anyone, even if they want to. It's crucial that young people are able to confide in our leaders and that when they disclose this personal information, our leaders are equipped with the tools to take the matter seriously and act on what they've been told.

Even if a young person doesn't tell someone verbally about what's happened to them, there may be other indicators that something is wrong. As an organisation that works with young people we need to be able to recognise the signs and know how to respond appropriately. This statement outlines the best practice for recognising and responding to abuse and some of the issues which may arise when working with children who have been abused.

Disclosure:

Disclosure is the process by which children and young people start to share their experiences of abuse with others. This can take place over a long period of time – it is a journey, not one act or action.

Children may disclose directly or indirectly and sometimes they may start sharing details of abuse before they are ready to put their thoughts and feelings in order.

Not all disclosures will lead to a formal report of abuse or a case being made or a case being taken to court, but all disclosures should be taken seriously.

It takes extraordinary courage for a child to go through the journey of disclosing abuse.

It's vital that anyone who works with children and young people undertaking this journey is able to provide them with the support they need.

How disclosure happens:

Children and young people may disclose abuse in a variety of ways, including:

- Directly– making specific verbal statements about what’s happened to them
- Indirectly – making ambiguous verbal statements which suggest something is wrong
- Behaviourally – displaying behaviour that signals something is wrong (this may or may not be deliberate)
- Non-Verbally – writing letters, drawing pictures or trying to communicate in other ways

Young people may not always be aware that they are disclosing abuse through their actions and behaviour.

Sometimes young people make partial disclosures of abuse. This means they give some details about what they’ve experienced, but not the whole picture. They may withhold some information because they:

- Are afraid they will get in trouble with or upset their family
- Want to deflect blame in case of family difficulties as a result of the disclosure
- Feel ashamed and/or guilty
- Need to protect themselves from having to relive traumatic events

When children do speak out it is often many years after the abuse has taken place

(McElvaney, 2015).

Barriers to disclosure:

Some young people are reluctant to seek help because they feel they don’t have anyone to turn to for support. They may have sought help in the past and had a negative experience, which makes them unlikely to do so again.

They may also:

- Feel that they will not be taken seriously
- Feel too embarrassed to talk to an adult about a private or personal problem
- Worry about confidentiality
- Lack trust in the people around them (including parents) and in the services provided to help them
- Fear the consequences of asking for help
- Worry they will be causing trouble and making the situation worse

- Find formal procedures overwhelming

(Mental Health Foundation and Camelot Foundation, 2006).

Spotting the signs of abuse:

Young people who have been abused may want to tell someone, but not have the exact words to do so. They may attempt to disclose abuse by giving adults clues, through their actions and by using indirect words.

(Allnock and Miller, 2013; Cossar et al, 2013).

Our leaders need to be able to notice the signs that a young person might be distressed and should in turn be able to ask them appropriate questions about what might have caused this.

> Read factsheet on the definitions and signs of child abuse via the NSPCC LEARNING website.

Child protection training will help equip our leaders with the confidence in recognising the indicators of abuse and understanding the different ways a young person might try to share what they have experienced.

> Learn more about child protection training requirements and how you can continually update your knowledge via the NSPCC LEARNING website.

You should never wait until a young person tells you directly that they are being abused before taking action. Instead, our leaders will ask the young person if everything is okay (if the circumstance is pressing) or will discuss their concerns with our organisation's designated safeguarding lead.

Waiting for a child to be ready to speak about their experiences could mean that the abuse carries on and they, or another child, are put at further risk of significant harm.

(Cossar et al, 2013).

Not taking appropriate action quickly can also affect the child's mental health. They may feel despairing and hopeless and wonder why no-one is helping them. This may discourage them from seeking help in the future and make them distrust adults. Something we as an organisation do not want to happen.

Helping children disclose abuse:

It's important to create an environment where young people are comfortable about speaking out if anything is worrying them. They need to:

- Be able to recognise abuse and know it is wrong.
- Know who they can talk to about it.

When a young person discloses information, our leaders need to listen, understand and respond appropriately so the child gets the help, support and protection they need.

Talking PANTS (the underwear rule) is a simple way to talk to children as young as four about staying safe from sexual abuse. It helps children to:

- Name their body parts and know which parts should be private
- Know the difference between appropriate and inappropriate touch
- Understand they have the right to say "no"
- Think about who they trust and who they can ask for help

> See the PANTS resources for schools and teachers via the NSPCC LEARNING website.

> Find out more about Speak out. Stay safe via the NSPCC website.

The NSPCC Childline service offers children and young people confidential help and advice. Calls to 0800 1111 are free and children can also contact Childline online or find advice on the Childline website.

> Visit the Childline website

Encouraging children and young people to seek help and support:

Many children and young people will seek help because they know where to go and believe that it will make a difference.

Others may not have the confidence to seek support or be too scared to ask for help. They may not get the help they need until they reach crisis point.

(Garvey et al, 2009).

As an organisation we want to make it as easy as we can for the young people we lead to find and take up the offer of help. So we:

- Reinforce positive messages about those who seek help – seeking help is a sign of strength
- Encourage parents to support their children in seeking help.
- Be positive about young people, their capacity for change and their resilience
- Listen to the people we help
- Shout about your work – lack of awareness is a significant barrier to young people seeking help
- See the whole person – engage with young people both in terms of their strengths and their weaknesses
- Build trust – treat young people with respect
- Help young people to help each other – equip young people with the skills and tools to support their friends/peers and family members

(Garvey et al, 2009).

Responding to disclosures:

The NSPCC found three key interpersonal skills that help a child feel they are being listened to and taken seriously:

- **Show we care, help them open up:** Give our full attention to the child or young person and keep your body language open and encouraging. Be compassionate, be understanding and reassure them their feelings are important. Phrases such as 'you've shown such courage today' help.
- **Take our time, slow down:** Respect pauses and don't interrupt the child – let them go at their own pace. Recognise and respond to their body language. And remember that it may take several conversations for them to share what's happened to them.
- **Show our understanding, reflecting back:** Make it clear that we are interested in what the child is telling you. Reflect back what they've said to check your understanding – and use their language to show it's their experience.

If a child tells you they are experiencing abuse, it's important to reassure them that they've done the right thing in telling you. Make sure they know that abuse is never their fault.

Never talk to the alleged perpetrator about the child's disclosure. This could make things a lot worse for the child

Watch NSPCC animation on how to respond to a child's disclosure of abuse:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bvJ5uBIGYgE>

Unbiased approach

It's vital that any child who is trying to disclose abuse feels that they are being listened to and taken seriously.

But there can be a risk that if professionals just believe the child's account without thoroughly investigating the situation, this can lead to unfair bias against the alleged abuser as formal investigations progress.

(Child Protection Resource, 2021; Transparency Project, 2018).

This means it's important to maintain an unbiased approach when responding to disclosures and follow your organisation's procedures to ensure each case is treated in a fair and transparent manner and that the child gets the protection and support that they need.

Making notes:

It's important to keep accurate and detailed notes on any concerns you have about a child. As an organisation we will need to share these with your nominated child protection lead.

Include:

- The child's details (name, age, address)
- What the child said or did that gave you cause for concern (if the child made a verbal disclosure, write down their exact words)
- Any information the child has given you about the alleged abuser

Information sharing, why information sharing is important:

Sharing information about a child's welfare helps professionals build a clearer picture of the child's life and gain a better understanding of any risks the child is facing.

Information sharing helps to ensure that an individual receives the right services at the right time and prevents a need from becoming more acute and difficult to meet.

(DfE, 2018a).

General principles of best practice for information sharing are outlined below. Refer to your organisation's procedures as well as local multi-agency arrangements to ensure you are following the information sharing processes that are most appropriate for your role.

> Find out more about best practice for multi-agency working via the NSPCC website

When to share information:

Timely information sharing is key to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.

Leaders who work with children, whether in a paid or voluntary role, may need to share information about the children and families they are involved with for a number of reasons. These include:

- We are making a referral to arrange additional support for someone in the family
- Someone from another agency has asked for information about a child or family
- Someone in the family has asked to be referred for further help
- A statutory duty or court order requires information to be shared
- We are concerned that a child or a member of their family may be at risk of significant harm
- We think a serious crime may have been committed or is about to be committed which involves someone in the family

As an organisation we must always have a clear and legitimate purpose for sharing a child's personal information. We must Keep a record of the reasons why we are sharing or requesting information about a child or their family.

We should also make sure that we are not putting a child's safety and welfare at risk by sharing information about them. Some professionals have a legal duty to share information relating to safeguarding concerns.

Always seek consent to share information about a child and their family. However if consent isn't given, we can still share information with relevant professionals under certain circumstances, for example if we are protecting a child from significant harm. The Data Protection Act 2018 and General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) do not affect this principle.

To learn more about getting permission to share information, see the Consent tab.

> Find out more about GDPR and children via the NSPCC website

What information to share:

As an organisation we need to decide what specific information is appropriate to share and who to share it with by:

- Prioritise the safety and welfare of the child and anyone else who may be affected by the situation
- Make sure we share the information quickly and securely. The sooner you report your concerns the better. This means the details will be fresh in your mind and action can be taken quickly
- Identify how much information should be shared. This will depend on the reasons for sharing it
- Use language that is clear and precise. Different agencies may use and understand terminology differently
- Make sure the information we are sharing is accurate. Make it clear what information is factual and what is based on opinion (yours or other people's)

Facts and opinions:

When working with children and families we will gather information from a variety of sources. How we interpret this information can depend on:

- Any previous information received
- Our knowledge of research and theory
- Our own frame of reference

When recording information we should be as factual as possible. If we need to give our own or somebody else's opinion we will make sure it is clearly differentiated from fact. We should identify whose opinion is being given and record their exact words.

Seeking consent to share information:

Young people should be given the opportunity to decide whether they agree to their personal information being shared. If a young person doesn't have the capacity to make their own decisions, we will ask their parents or carer (unless doing so would put the child at risk of harm).

The Gillick competency and Fraser guidelines help professionals to assess whether a child is mature enough to make decisions.

> See the guidance on the Gillick competency and Fraser guidelines

You should always seek consent to share information about an adult.

Tips for getting consent:

- Be open and honest
- Make sure the person you're asking for consent understands what information will be shared and why
- Explain who will see the information and what it will be used for
- Make sure the person you're asking for consent understands the consequences of their information not being shared
- Get the consent in writing, in case there are any disputes in the future. If it's only given verbally, make a written record of this
- Make sure the person knows they can withdraw consent at any time.

Sharing information without consent:

If consent is refused or if you're unable to seek consent, you can still share information with relevant professionals if this is in the public interest.

This includes protecting children from significant harm and promoting the welfare of children. The Data Protection Act 2018 and General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) do not affect this principle.

> Find out more about GDPR and children via the NSPCC website

When deciding whether to share information without consent, as an organisation we should consider each case individually.

- Decide if the need to share information is in the public interest and whether it outweighs the need to maintain confidentiality
- Consider all the implications of sharing the information, for example if you are sharing sensitive details about a person's life

If we're not sure what to do, we will contact the NSPCC helpline for advice. We will make sure we are following the relevant legislation and guidance.

If we're sharing information without consent we will keep a written record explaining:

- What steps you took to get consent
- The person's reasons for not giving consent (if known)
- Why we felt it was necessary to share information without consent

Confidentiality:

Never promise a child that you will keep the things they're telling you a secret. Explain that you need to share what they've told you with someone who will be able to help.

If a child or young person needs confidential help and advice direct them to Childline. Calls to 0800 1111 are free and young people can also contact Childline online.

Reporting concerns:

If a child is suffering or at risk of suffering significant harm, we can share information with appropriate agencies or professionals without the child's or their parent's consent

If a child is in immediate danger, call the police on 999

If a child is not in immediate danger

- **We will follow our organisation's safeguarding policies and procedures** as soon as possible. These should provide clear guidelines on the steps you need to take if a child discloses abuse. They will state who in our organisation has responsibility for safeguarding or child protection and who you should report your concerns to.

> Find out more about the role of the nominated child protection lead via the NSPCC website

Options for contact:

- **Contact your local child protection services.** Their contact details can be found on the website for the local authority the child lives in.
- **Contact the police.** They will assess the situation and take the appropriate action to protect the child.
- **Contact the NSPCC Helpline** on 0808 800 5000 or by emailing help@nspcc.org.uk. Our trained professionals will talk through your concerns with you, give you expert advice and take action to protect the child as appropriate. This may include making a referral to the local authority.

If we have made a verbal referral to local children's services we should follow this up with a written referral as soon as possible, ideally within 48 hours.

If anyone is uncertain that our organisation doesn't have a clear safeguarding procedure or they are not comfortable with how our organisation has responded, they can contact the Whistleblowing Advice Line to discuss their concerns.

Criminal Law (Northern Ireland) Act 1967:

Under Section 5 of the Criminal Law (Northern Ireland) Act 1967 it is an offence to fail to report a 'relevant offence' to the police. This includes:

- Knowing or believing that an offence has been committed
- Having information which could lead to the apprehension, prosecution or conviction of an offender.

This legislation covers offences against children and adults.

Whistleblowing:

Whistleblowing is when someone reports wrongdoing on the basis that it is in the public interest for the wrongdoing to be brought to light. This is usually something they've seen at work but not always. The wrongdoing might have happened in the past, be happening now, or be something the whistleblower is concerned may happen in the near future.

(Gov.uk, 2019).

The NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line offers free advice and support to professionals with concerns about how child protection issues are being handled in their own or another organisation.

Contact the Whistleblowing Advice Line on:

- 0800 028 0285
- help@nspcc.org.uk

Responding to concerns and sharing information:

Article 16 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child states that all children have a right to privacy. The convention also states that children should be protected from abuse and that their best interests should be prioritised when making decisions that affect them. This means that, if a child is at risk of harm, it is in their best interests for an adult to share information with relevant agencies – even without the child's consent.

In England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, the Data Protection Act 2018 sets out how personal information should be processed under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). The introduction of GDPR does not affect the principle that adults should share child protection information with other agencies in order to keep a child safe.

Key guidance:

Statutory guidance across the UK highlights the responsibility of those in the education, community and care sectors to safeguard children from all forms of abuse and neglect. It explains how practitioners should respond to concerns and how agencies should work together to protect children.

- Child protection in Northern Ireland

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) has published a quality standard on child abuse and neglect. This describes how child abuse and neglect should be recognised, assessed and responded to by health and social care practitioners in England (NICE, 2019). There is also specific guidance on data protection and sharing personal information. The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) has provided a Data sharing code of practice (PDF) to help UK organisations that need to share personal data (ICO, 2011).

In **Northern Ireland**, Chapter five of the Code of practice on protecting the confidentiality of service user information (PDF) by the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS), covers disclosing personal information relating to children (DHSSPS, 2012).

The Department of Health has also provided Guidance on information sharing for child protection purposes (Department of Health, 2021).

Guidance for charities: Complaints and whistleblowing

If you are worried that your organisation or another organisation is not responding to or sharing child protection information appropriately, it's vital that you share your concerns to keep children safe.

Legislation across the UK ensures that you shouldn't be treated unfairly or lose your job because you 'blow the whistle' (Gov.uk, 2021). In **Northern Ireland**, The Public Interest Disclosure (Northern Ireland) Order 1998 protects workers who 'blow the whistle' over wrongdoing.

The Department for the Economy in Northern Ireland provides guidance on the Public Interest Disclosure (Northern Ireland) Order 1998 (Department for the Economy, 2017).

> Contact the Whistleblowing Advice Line if you have concerns over how child protection issues are being handled in your own or another organisation

References and resources:

Allnock, D. and Miller, P. (2013) No one noticed, no one heard: a study of disclosures of childhood abuse. London: NSPCC.

Baker, H. et al (2019) Let children know you're listening: the importance of an adult's interpersonal skills in helping to improve the child's experiences of disclosure. London: NSPCC.

Child Protection Resource (2021) Mind your language – what's the problem with 'disclosure'?. [Accessed 07/09/2021].

Cossar, J. et al (2013) 'It takes a lot to build trust'. Recognition and telling: developing earlier routes to help for children and young people (PDF). London: Office of the Children's Commissioner.

Department for Education (DfE) (2018a) Information sharing: advice for practitioners providing safeguarding services to children, young people, parents and carers (PDF). [London]: DfE.

Department for Education (DfE) (2018b) Data protection: toolkit for schools. [London]: DfE.

Department for the Economy (2017) Guide to the Public Interest Disclosure (Northern Ireland) Order 1998 (amended October 2017). [Belfast]: Department for the Economy.

Department of Health (2021) Guidance on information sharing for child protection purposes. [Accessed 07/09/2021].

Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS) (2012) Code of practice on protecting the confidentiality of service user information. [Belfast]: DHSSPS.

Education Authority (2021) Think data online resource hub. [Accessed: 07/09/2021].

Garvey et al (2009) Help-seeking behaviour in young adults. London: NFP Synergy.

Gov.uk (2021) Whistleblowing for employees. [Accessed: 07/09/2021].

Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) (2011) Data sharing code of practice (PDF). Cheshire: Information Commissioner's Office (ICO).

McElvaney, R. (2015) Disclosure of child sexual abuse: delays, non-disclosure and partial disclosure. What the research tells us and implications for practice. *Child Abuse Review*, 24: 159-169.

Mental Health Foundation and Camelot Foundation (2006) Truth hurts: report on the national inquiry into self-harm among young people. London: Mental Health Foundation.

National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) (2019) Child abuse and neglect: quality standard [QS179]. [Accessed 07/09/2021].

Ofsted (2019) Sharing concerns and information with Ofsted about children's social care services. [Accessed: 07/09/2021].

Scottish Government (2021) Getting it right for every child (GIRFEC) information sharing. [Accessed 07/09/2021].

The Transparency Project (2018) Things children say – disclosure, allegations and why language matters. [Accessed 07/09/2021].

Welsh Government (2019) Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014. Working together to safeguard people: Information sharing to safeguard children. Non-statutory guide for practitioners (PDF). [Cardiff]: Welsh Government.

Childline:

If a child or young person needs confidential help and advice direct them to Childline. Calls to 0800 1111 are free and children can also contact Childline online.

Contact details:**Nominated child protection lead:**

Marc Taylor

07514993163**wildfireministrys@gmail.com****Deputy child protection lead:**

Heather Taylor

07856201383**wildfireministrys@gmail.com****NSPCC Helpline****0808 800 5000****We are committed to reviewing our policy and good practice annually:****This policy was last reviewed on:**..... **24th May 2022**(date)**Signed:** *Marc Taylor****[this is signed by the most senior person with responsibility for safeguarding in our organisation, our safeguarding lead on our board of trustees].***

Find out more about:

<https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/safeguarding-child-protection/children-from-black-asian-minorities-ethnic-communities>

<https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/safeguarding-child-protection/deaf-and-disabled-children>

<https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/safeguarding-child-protection/lgbtq-children-young-people>

<https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/safeguarding-child-protection-schools/safeguarding-children-with-special-educational-needs-and-disabilities-send>