

Child Protection Policy

Preston Child Contact Centre

Preston 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 a Child Contact Centre always rests with their parents and not volunteers. Nevertheless, every 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. 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 parent and a child, the interests of the child should always be put first.

Preston Child Contact Centre will ensure that:

- a. Child Contact Centre users and referrers are aware that the Child Contact Centre has a Child Protection Policy they can see upon request.
- b. All volunteers have an understanding of what constitutes child abuse and procedures that need to be followed to report or prevent it.
- c. There is a recognised procedure for Child Contact Centre volunteers to report allegations of or suspected child abuse.
- d. The Child Contact Centre will not knowingly accept a referral when somebody involved has been convicted of any offence relating to a) physical or b) sexual abuse of any child, unless there are exceptional circumstances and they have sought appropriate professional advice.
- e. The risk of volunteers being potential, actual or convicted perpetrators is reduced by one or a combination of the following prior to their appointment:
 - * The completion of an application form.
 - * An interview.
 - * Obtaining references from two people who have first hand knowledge of them.
 - * Carrying out Enhanced Criminal Records checks.
 - * Making any appointment conditional on the successful completion of a probationary period.
- f. Volunteers are aware that in most situations parents should accompany children to the toilet. If there has been a request for a volunteer to take a child to the toilet, or there is concern about a parent, they should be accompanied by another volunteer. Volunteers should not take children to the toilet on their own.

- g. There is an easily accessible and ongoing support structure available to volunteers who have to deal with a family where there has been alleged or actual child abuse.
- h. The Child Contact Centre policy in relation to child protection is reviewed and if necessary updated annually.

Information / Action

What is child abuse?

The Children Act 1989 states that abuse should be considered to have happened when someone's actions have caused a child to suffer 'significant harm' to their health or development.

Significant harm

Can be caused by:

- * Punishing a child too much;
- * Hitting or shaking a child;
- * Constantly criticising, threatening or rejecting a child;
- * Sexually interfering with or assaulting a child;
- Not looking after a child, not giving them enough to eat, ignoring them, not playing or talking with them, or not making sure that they are safe.

All children have the right to be safe and not to be hurt

What to do when child abuse has either been disclosed or alleged

Act immediately but.....

- * Remain calm, sensitive and focused;
- * Take whatever steps are necessary to ensure the safety of the child / children involved;
- * Involve another volunteer at the earliest opportunity;
- * Listen carefully to what the child / children or adult / adults are telling you. Offer respect, kindness and comfort. Say they were right and brave to tell;
- * As the responsibility for investigating child abuse rests with the local Social Services department and it may jeopardise their enquiries, do not ask the child or adult any
 - * leading or searching questions;
 - * Do not promise 'never to tell';
- * Write down what the child / children or adult / adults making the allegations is telling you. Only record the facts and avoid including personal opinions and judgements; wherever practical get the Centre co-ordinator and / or Team leader involved at the earliest opportunity
 - Report what has been said along with the names and addresses of the adults / children involved to the local Social Services department immediately;
 - To make it easier to report your concerns we have included the following two forms for use by the Centre:

- Reporting allegations or suspicions of abuse information form

- Checklist for reporting suspected abuse

- * Contact the Police immediately if you feel that a child is at risk of harm once they leave your Child Contact Centre;
- * Do assure the child that it is wrong for children to be hurt and that they have right to be safe;
- * Whatever they say or do make sure that the child / children's welfare remains paramount;
- Do not be afraid to share your feelings with somebody else and ask for help if the process of dealing with actual or alleged child abuse upsets or distresses you. (This is not a sign of weakness but rather that you are human!).

How to behave towards a child who has disclosed some form of abuse

- * Look at them directly.
- * Accept what they are saying.
- * Be aware that they may have been threatened.
- * Tell them that they are not to blame.
- * Do not press for information.
- * Reassure them that they are right to tell and that you believe them.

Reporting allegations or suspicions of abuse Information Form

Everyone involved with the Child Contact Centre should be aware of the identity of the person within the organisation who should always be informed of any concerns about a child being abused.

Names:– Lynn Yates and Norman Yates
Job/Role/Title: Centre Co-ordinators
Telephone Number: 07946 435767

and of appropriate contacts outside the organisation:
Preston Social Services
Address: Balfour Court, Leyland, PR25 2TF.
Telephone No: 0845 602 1043

Preston Police
Address: Lawson Street, Preston
Telephone: 999 / 01772 203203

NSPCC Child Protection Helpline: 0808 800 5000 (free 24-hour service which provides counselling, information and advice to anyone concerned about a child at risk of abuse.)

NSPCC Asian Child Protection Helpline: 0800 096 7719 (Mon-Fri 11am-7pm)

NSPCC Cymru/Wales Child Protection Helpline: 0808 100 2524 (Mon-Fri 10am-6pm)

Textphone (for people who are deaf or hard of hearing): 0800 056 0566

Others

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Checklist for reporting suspected abuse

(to be completed by nominated person responsible for reporting allegations or concerns)

Name of child

Age and date of birth

Ethnicity

Religion.....

First language.....

Disability

Any special factors.....

Resident parent's name

Home address.....

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Telephone number.....

Are you reporting your own concerns or passing on those of somebody else?

Give details:

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Brief description of what has prompted the concerns: include dates, times etc. of any specific incidents

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Any physical signs? Behavioural signs? Indirect signs?

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Have you spoken to the child? If so, what was said?

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Have you spoken to the parent(s)? If so, what was said?

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Has anybody been alleged to be the abuser? If so, give details

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