



Procedure for dealing with and recording of Disclosures and concerns about a child

At Triple A we support our staff to be confident about

- Legislative responsibilities
- Their personal responsibilities
- Our policies and procedures
- The need to be alert to the signs and indicators of possible abuse, including possible child sexual exploitation, female genital mutilation and radicalization.
- The need to record concerns
- How to support and respond to a child or young person who makes a disclosure of abuse
- Triple A will if required support staff who have been affected by such reports.

To ensure any child or young person using Triple A services is protected from harm, we need to understand what types of behaviour constitute abuse and neglect.

1. What is Abuse

Physical Abuse

Defined as the actual or likely injury to a child, or failure to prevent physical injury or suffering which may include:

- Physical signs such as injuries that are unexplained
- Injuries that have not received medical attention
- Medical problems that go unattended such as persistent pressure sores and skin infections
- Scalds or unusual bruises

Behavioural Signs

- Bullying and aggression or abuse of others
- Withdrawal or feelings of depression

- Fear of going to a certain place or having contact with a particular person

Neglect

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the vulnerable individual's health or development. Some of these signs may include:

- Appearance of malnutrition or dehydration
- Untreated medical problems
- Lack of physical aids when they are normally required to live
- Accommodation which falls below minimum practical standards
- Poor physical appearance or condition
- Not appearing to be receiving prescribed medication
- Prolonged period of absence from Triple A activities

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse can involve forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, whether or not that person is aware of what is happening. This again may be difficult to identify, but there are some indicators which include:

- Disclosure in full or partially that sexual abuse is or has occurred
- Withdrawn behaviour or poor concentration
- Running away
- Age inappropriate sexually explicit knowledge or behaviour

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional ill-treatment of a child causing severe and persistent adverse effects on their development. It may feature age or developmentally

inappropriate expectations being imposed on that child or young person. This form of abuse is more difficult to identify, but there are some signs to be aware of:

- A parent/guardian always being present
- Self-harm
- Low self-worth, lack of confidence, worried appearance
- Increased levels of confusion
- Lack of growth or development
- Submissive behaviour
- Excessive distress

Bullying

Bullying is the use of aggression with the intention of hurting another person. It results in pain and distress for the victims. It may occur in many ways such as:

- A member of staff, volunteer or peer group member intimidating or being over officious
- Being unfriendly towards or excluding others
- Verbal, name calling, teasing, spreading rumours
- Electronic, eg emails, texting, comments on social networking sites

Financial Abuse

Financial abuse can take many forms. Money can become a tool by which the abuser can control the victim, ensuring either the child's financial dependence on them, or shifting the responsibility of keeping a roof over the family's head onto their shoulders. Some examples may include:

- Unexplained loss of valuable items

2. TAKING ACTION

Triple A staff and volunteers should always maintain an attitude of "It could happen here"

In an emergency, take immediate action necessary to protect the child, if necessary, call 999 .

- Record the factual details that have been disclosed to you including:
 - A) Date/time /location of the incident
 - B) Date/time location of the report
 - C) Name/role of the person to whom the concern was reported to and their Contact details
 - D) Names of all parties involved including any witnesses
 - E) Any action taken
- Report your concerns as soon as possible to the Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO) this should in any case be before the end of the day
- Do not start your own investigation
- Should there be any injury, provide a note or sketch of the injury where possible to the DSO
- Share information on a need-to-know basis only, do not discuss the issue with Colleagues and/or friends and family
- Seek support for yourself if require

3. REPORTING CONCERNS

All concerns are to be reported to Triple A designated safeguarding officer.

There will be occasions when staff or volunteers may suspect a child or young person is subject to harm or abuse. These concerns may arise because of issues within Triple A activities or an outside environment. Their behaviour may have changed, they may show signs of confusion or distress, or physical indicators may have been noticed. In these circumstances staff or volunteers should give them the opportunity to talk and ask if they are ok, or if they can help in any way.

Staff and volunteers should report these early concerns to the DSO. If the child does reveal that they are being harmed, they should follow the advice below and discuss their concerns with the DSO. It takes a lot of courage for anybody to disclose that they are being abused, there are even greater blocks for children and young people. They may feel ashamed, particularly if the abuse is sexual; their abuser may have threatened what will happen if they tell; they may have lost all trust in adults; or they may believe, or

have been told, that the abuse is their own fault. Sometimes they may not be aware that what is happening is abusive.

If a child or young person talks to a member of staff/volunteer about anything that indicates a potential risk to their safety or wellbeing, the staff member/volunteer will, at the appropriate time, let the person know that in order to help them they must pass the information on to someone who can help or advise (the DSO)

- Appropriate questioning is a specialist area which should be undertaken by social services or police officers. It is important that staff/volunteers report all information that is being shared with them at the time of the disclosure

- Remain calm and don't over-react
- Give reassuring nods or words of comfort

- Don't be afraid of silence

- Under no circumstances ask investigative questions

- At an appropriate time tell the child or young person that in order to help them, you must pass on the information to the Triple A DSO to get advice and support

- Do not automatically offer any physical touch or comfort, if the child/young person is upset and initiates the contact themselves, this should be reported

- Tell the child what will happen next

- Report verbally to the DSO

- Provide reassurance, but false promises of confidentiality should never be made

- Seek support for yourself as managing concerns always has an emotional impact

4. Notifying a parent/guardian

Triple A will normally seek to discuss concerns about a child with a parent or legal guardian. This must be handled sensitively, and the DSO will make contact with the parent/guardian in the event of a concern, suspicion or disclosure – unless Triple A believes that notifying them could increase the risk to the child or exacerbate the problem. In this case, advice will be sought from Children's Services and/or the police before parents/guardians are contacted.

5. Confidentiality and sharing information

All staff and volunteers will understand that safeguarding issues warrant a high level of confidentiality, not only out of respect for the person involved but also to ensure that information being released into the public domain does not compromise evidence or any subsequent investigation.

Staff and volunteers should only discuss concerns with the DSO. That person will then decide who else needs to have the information, and they will disseminate it on a need-to-know basis.

However, any member of staff can contact children's services if they are concerned about a child.

Safeguarding information will be stored and handled in line with the General Data Protection Regulations.

Information sharing is guided by the following rules and principles:

- Neither data protection legislation and guidance or human rights law are barriers to sharing information in the interests of safeguarding
- Be open and honest
- Seek advice from Triple A DSO or statutory agencies
- Share information with consent where possible
- Always consider safety and wellbeing

The information shared is necessary, proportionate, relevant, adequate, accurate, timely, and secure.

6. Referral to Children's Services

The DSO will make a referral to Children's services if it is believed that a child or young person is suffering or is at risk of suffering significant harm. The child and their parent/guardian will be told that a referral is being made, unless doing so increases the risk to that person.

Any member of staff or volunteer may make direct referral to Children's services if:

- They believe independent advice and action is necessary to protect a child
- The situation is an emergency, and the DSO is unavailable
- They are convinced that a direct report is the only way to ensure the child or young person's safety

- For any other reason they make a judgement that direct referral is in the best interests of the child.

7. Guidance for staff and volunteers dealing with sexting incident/disclosure

There is no accepted definition of 'sexting' but most professionals agree that it refers to the sending or posting of sexually suggestive images, including nude or semi-nude photographs of a person under 18 years of age, via mobiles or over the internet. Sexting does not include the sharing of sexual photos and videos of people under 18 with or by adults. This is a form of child sexual abuse and must be referred to the police.

Guidance for staff and volunteers dealing with sexting incident/disclosure:

- The incident should be referred to the DSO immediately and the DSO will clarify the concerns with any staff involved in reporting, ensuring concerns are accurately recorded.
- Never view, download or share the imagery yourself, or ask a child to share or download – this would be classed as a criminal offence
- If you have already viewed the imagery by accident (e.g. if a child has shown it to you before you could ask them not to), report this to the DSO
- Do not delete the imagery or ask the child to delete it
- Do not ask the children who are involved in the incident to disclose information regarding the imagery. This is the responsibility of the DSO
- Do not share information about the incident with other members of staff or volunteers, the children it involves or their, or other parents/guardians
- Do not say or do anything to blame or shame any child involved
- Do explain to them that you need to report it and reassure them that they will receive support and help from the DSO
- If there is a concern a child or young person has been caused distress, harmed or is at risk of harm a referral will be made to the police immediately

