

Beyond Limits Dumfries & Galloway provides policies and procedures to promote safe and consistent practice across the Organisation. The framework laid down within our policies and procedures lets everyone know how we work and reflects our values and mission statement. Our policies and procedures are written to help us, employees of Beyond Limits Dumfries & Galloway, to make good, safe decisions.

Beyond Limits Dumfries & Galloway expects all employees to be familiar with the contents of all policies and procedures relevant to their role and to understand how to apply them within their daily work.

None of these documents stand alone, all fit within the larger framework of the way we work and any associated policies which are particularly relevant will be directly referenced.

# Child Protection

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## Child Protection Policy – what this means to Beyond Limits Dumfries & Galloway

Beyond Limits Dumfries & Galloway is an organisation that provides support to adults and young people (16+) in transition with the label of learning disability or a diagnosis of mental health. We may support people who have children of their own or may be around children within their families. We are committed to the protection of children and regard the safeguarding and promoting of the interests and well-being of children as of paramount concern. We consider it the duty of all those employed or involved with the organisation to prevent the abuse (as defined within The Children's (Scotland) Act 1995) of all children with whom they have contact, including reporting any abuse discovered or suspected.

*More information can be found on the following link:*

[Child abuse and neglect | NSPCC Learning](#)

### **Who needs protection?**

Children and young people under the age of 16 and young people between the ages of 16 and 18 who are affected by disability or are vulnerable.

## **What is Child Abuse?**

The Children (Scotland) Act 1995 defines child abuse as:

### **Physical Injury**

Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or Carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child.

### **Sexual Abuse**

Sexual abuse 'involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching 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 adults but can also be perpetrated by other children.

### **Emotional Abuse**

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond the child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction.

It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying, causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

## **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 child's health or development.

Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or Carer failing to:

- Provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment)
- Protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger
- Ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-givers)
- Ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.

**It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.**

## **Signs of Child Abuse**

The following may help you decide whether a child's welfare is at risk of abuse, harm or neglect.

### **Signs, which may suggest physical abuse:**

- Any bruising to a baby – pre walking stage
- Multiple bruising to different parts of the body
- Bruising of different colours indicating repeated injuries
- Fingertip bruising to the chest, back, arms or legs
- Burns of any shape or size
- An injury for which there is no adequate explanation

### **Signs, which may suggest sexual abuse:**

- Something a child has told you
- Something a child has told someone else
- A child who shows worrying sexualised behaviour in their play or with other children
- A child who seems to have inappropriate sexual knowledge for their age
- A child who may be visiting or being looked after by a known or suspected sexual offender.

**Signs, which may suggest emotional harm:**

- Parents are over critical and emotionally distant, or who are unable to meet their child's emotional needs
- Children whose behaviour is excessive, for example, excessive bedwetting, overeating, rocking, head banging
- Children who self-harm, for example, they may cut or scratch themselves or overdose
- Children who attempt suicide
- Children who persistently run away from home
- Children who show high levels of anxiety, unhappiness or who are withdrawn

**Signs, which may suggest neglect:**

- Squalid, unhygienic or dangerous home conditions
- Parents who fail to attend to their children's health or development needs
- Children who appear persistently undersized or underweight
- Children who continually appear tired or lacking in energy
- Children who suffer frequent injuries due to lack of supervision

**What to do if you think a child or young person is at risk of abuse or following a disclosure**

Be supportive to the child or young person if appropriate, listen with care but do not ask any unnecessary questions. Take what the child or young person is saying seriously and advise them you will have to pass the information on.

Write down the nature of your concern and anything the child or young person may have told you using, so far as possible, the words used by the child or young person. Remember to sign and date the notes taken. You should be aware that this written report may be used as evidence so it should be readable and factual.

If the child is unable to communicate verbally i.e. is too young or has communication difficulties then you may be required to share your own observations and views or concerns regarding the welfare of the child. You should still write down the details of your concern and date and sign this

report. Again, you should be aware that this written report may be used as evidence so it should be readable and factual.

### **Remember**

- Do not question or interrogate the child or young person
- Never use leading questions
- Do not show disbelief or show strong emotions (shock, disgust, anger)
- Do not be judgemental and never introduce personal or third-party experiences of abuse

Immediately report the grounds of your concern to Lea Graham, Senior Service Leader or Rebecca Chadwick, Managing Director who will take steps to pass the information on to the appropriate person or organisation who will investigate the concerns. Do not delay in reporting your concerns; remember the very serious nature of any abuse. Where possible you must raise the issue on the same day the concern arises.

If you are unhappy with the response from the person you speak to, or you feel that you are unable to speak with someone from within the organisation, you should contact the appropriate Children's Service or Partner agencies and outline your concerns and the basis for them.

### **Dumfries & Galloway Contacts:**

If you are worried that a child or young person may be at risk of harm then you should call 030 33 33 3001 and ask for the Social work Access Team.

**Or**

Parentline Scotland free helpline: 08000 28 22 33, website: [Scotland's National Children's Charity | Children 1st](https://www.scotland'snationalchildrenscharity.org.uk/), email: [parentlinescotland@children1st.org.uk](mailto:parentlinescotland@children1st.org.uk).

**If you suspect a child is in immediate danger, dial 999.**

## **Duty of Care**

There are complications for organisations like our own where we may be commissioned to provide support to a person with a learning disability or mental health problem that has a child/children. The difficulty arises if they are the person who may be abusing the child.

Regardless of our duty of care to the person we support, our duty of care to the child always takes priority.

It is essential that we are completely honest with all of the people involved with our organisation including the people we support and their families and we make it clear to them that the duty of care to the child will always remain our priority.

This does mean that if we were providing support to a person and we reported them to the authorities we would recognise the need for a re-evaluation of the support we provide to them and make provision for the person we support to consider if they want us to continue to provide them with support. We would also need to consider any individual employee member involved in reporting issues and their role with the person we support in this situation and remove them if deemed necessary.

## **Confidentiality**

Children, young people and their parents will always be told; while Beyond Limits Dumfries & Galloway respects an individual's right to confidentiality, if a child or young person may be at risk of harm this will always override a professional or organisational requirement to keep information confidential. Those employed or involved with the organisation have a responsibility to act to make sure that a child whose safety or welfare may be at risk is protected from harm.

## **Action to be taken by the Named Person**

All cases of suspected or alleged abuse must be treated seriously and the relevant Children's services should be contacted immediately. The concerns should be clearly stated including the basis for them. When the local office is closed, out of hours should be contacted.

If you are unhappy with the response from Children's services or Out of Hours, you can contact the local Police or NSPCC Scotland – 0800 800 5000 – [help@nspcc.org.uk](mailto:help@nspcc.org.uk).



### **What happens next?**

It is the duty of Children's services to investigate matters of concern in relation to the protection of the child or young person. Where it is alleged a crime has been committed against a child the matter is likely to be investigated jointly with the Police.

The investigating Social Worker/Police Officer may require to speak to the person with whom the concerns originated. You must co-operate fully with any future enquiries and you should be aware that your written reports may be used as evidence.

### **What if it is someone within the organisation that you are concerned about?**

If you have observed an employee of the organisation acting in a way that has caused you to be concerned and feel the matter needs to be investigated you should contact Lea Graham, Senior Service Leader outlining your concerns and the basis for them. She will take your concerns seriously and decide on an appropriate course of action. This may involve the use of the organisation's Disciplinary Procedures and/or a referral to Children's services or Police.

### **On-going support for the child or young person**

The child or young person may continue to be involved with the organisation following the reporting of the concerns.

It is important that employees and those involved with the child or young person act in a supportive manner. You should continue to listen to the child/young person, and always act with care. Reassurance that the child or young person was right to tell, should always be given.

Affirm the child or young person's feelings as expressed by them. Do not question or interrogate the child or young person and never use leading questions. Do not show disbelief or show strong emotions (shock, disgust, anger). Do not be judgmental and never introduce personal or third party experiences of abuse.

### **IMPORTANT CONTACTS if you are worried about a child**

Social Work Access Team: 030 33 33 3001, [Accessteam@dumgal.gov.uk](mailto:Accessteam@dumgal.gov.uk)

NSPCC Scotland: 0808 800 5000, [help@nspcc.org.uk](mailto:help@nspcc.org.uk)

Parentline Scotland: 08000 28 22 33, [parentlinescotland@children1st.org.uk](mailto:parentlinescotland@children1st.org.uk).