

Child protection procedures

These procedures are to ensure that all staff and volunteers involved in working directly with under 18's on Back Up services, understand their responsibilities in safeguarding children.

What is child abuse?

Abuse and neglect are both forms of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm, or by not acting to prevent harm.

Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting: by those known to them or, more rarely by a stranger.

Disabled children are more likely to experience abuse than their non-disabled peers.

It can happen to any child. Abuse is always wrong and it is never the child's fault.

Child abuse is any action by another person/s – adult or child – that causes significant harm to a child or a young person under the age of 18

Types of Abuse

Physical

When children are hurt or injured by parents or other people.

Hitting, kicking, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, beating with objects, throwing and shaking are all types of physical abuse. Injuries can be pain, cuts, bruises and broken bones and even death. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child. Children living in a home where there is domestic violence are also considered to need protection even if the violence is not towards them.

Sexual

When children are forced or persuaded into sexual acts or situations by others.

Involves enforcing 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 (for example, rape, kissing, touching outside of clothing). They may also include non-contact activities such as encouraging children to look at pornography, be sexually exploited, be harassed by sexual suggestions or comments, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

Emotional

When children are not given love, approval or acceptance.

The persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. They may be criticised, blamed, bullied (including cyber bullying), sworn at and verbally put down. It may include conveying to a child that they are worthless or not giving them the opportunity to express their views. It may also include limiting their learning or participating in normal social interactions. This often includes being rejected by the person they look to for affection. They may experience emotional abuse online. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

Neglect

When parents or others looking after children do not provide them with basic physical and/or psychological needs such as enough food, warmth, shelter, clothing, care and protection.

Neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to; provide adequate food, clothing, shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment); protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger; ensure adequate supervision; ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. Neglect may also occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Children being looked after by someone with a serious drug or alcohol problem are also sometimes considered to need extra protection.

There are also emerging types and methods of child abuse, including:

- Female genital mutilation (FGM)
- Trafficking of children in order to exploit them sexually, financially, via domestic servitude, or via the involvement in activity such as the production and sale of illegal drugs
- Abuse linked to beliefs such as spirit possession or witchcraft
- Radicalisation and the encouragement or coercion to become involved in terrorist attacks
- Online abuse

Safeguarding disabled children

- Children who have disabilities are at an increased risk of being abused compared with their non-disabled peers (Jones et al, 2012). They are also less likely to receive the protection and support they need when they have been abused (Taylor et al, 2014).
- Factors that contribute to disabled children being at a greater risk of abuse include:
 - Communication barriers
 - Increased isolation
 - Dependency on others
 - Inadequate support
 - Misunderstanding the signs of abuse

Recognising Abuse

How you could become aware of abuse:

- ✿ A child might tell you
- ✿ Someone else might tell you a child has told them, or that they strongly believe a child has been or is being abused
- ✿ A child might show some signs of physical injury for which there appears to be no satisfactory explanation
- ✿ A child's behaviour may indicate to you that it is possible that he or she is being abused
- ✿ Something in the behaviour of a staff member, volunteer, parent or young person, or in the way they relate to a child, alerts you or makes you feel uncomfortable in some way
- ✿ You observe one child abusing another



Responding to a cause for concern, signs or suspicions

Our **child protection policy** emphasises the need to be valuing, listening to and respecting children and the fact that in some cases, for the welfare of the child, we may need to share information with other agencies to ensure the child and their family get the support they need to keep the child safe.

Our **code of conduct** gives guidelines on safe behaviour and is there to protect you as well as children and young people.



Ella Provan, our Safeguarding Children Officer, **along with Andy, Interim Head of Services** and Sarah, Chief Executive decide whether we should involve other agencies like the NSPCC, children's services or police if a concern, suspicion or allegation is reported.

In your role, you may have limited opportunity to recognise a cause for concern with a child. But it is really important that, if you were at all concerned about a child, you would know what to do. Back Up volunteers across our services receive a child protection training session during training weekends so that they can fully understand these procedures, including what would be a cause for concern, and be able to discuss different scenarios and what they should do.

Our **reporting flow chart** summarises what actions need to be taken if you have a concern about a child's welfare.

3 R's of Child Protection
RECOGNISE CONCERN
REPORT IT
RECORD IT

Responding to a child making an allegation of abuse

- **Stay calm.**
- **Listen** carefully to what is said.
- Find an appropriate early opportunity, if possible and if it does not put the child at risk, to explain that it is likely the information will need to be shared with others - **do not promise to keep secrets**
- **Allow** the child to continue at his/her own pace.
- **Do not investigate** once there has been a disclosure of abuse.
- **Reassure** the child that they have done the right thing in telling you.
- **Tell them** what you will do next and with whom the information will be shared.
- **Record** in writing, within 24 hours, what was said and using the child's own words. Note the date, time, any names mentioned, to whom the information was given and ensure the record is signed and dated. Do not use your phone to take photos or write the report as it could be taken away and then the record is lost.
- If the child is under the duty of care of the hospital contact **a member of hospital staff** as soon as possible.
- Speak to Back Up's **Designated Safeguarding Children Officer** within 24 hours to notify them about what happened and what action was taken
- Where there is a serious and immediate threat to a child or young person phone 999.
- Remember you are not responsible for deciding whether abuse has or has not occurred, and that concerns about the welfare of a child always override any concerns about confidentiality.

Responding to signs or suspicions of abuse

- **Ask questions of individuals for clarification only**, and at all times avoid asking questions that suggest a particular answer.
- **Tell the person involved** what you will do next and with whom the information will be shared - if this poses no risk to anyone involved.
- **Record** in writing your concerns within 24 hours. Note the date, time, and signs, what has been discussed (including any names mentioned and using the other person's words to record what they said), to whom the information was given and ensure the record is signed and dated. Do not use your phone to take photos or write the report as it could be taken away and then the record is lost.
- If the child is under the duty of care of the hospital, contact **a member of hospital staff** as soon as possible.
- Speak to Back Up's **Designated Safeguarding Children Officer** within 24 hours to notify them about what happened and what action was taken.
- Remember you are not responsible for deciding whether abuse has or has not occurred, and that concerns about the welfare of a child always override any concerns about confidentiality.

These procedures also apply if there is an allegation or suspicion against a worker of Back Up or another organisation. The GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018 do not prevent, or limit, the sharing of information for the purposes of keeping children and young people safe.