

## **Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy (January 2021)**

### **1. Background**

My mission is to enable emotional and therapeutic support to be provided to children from the age of 5. Children may, through the relationships provided to them, take the opportunity to share information about a harmful experience or incident. This may happen in a direct way through a verbal disclosure, or indirectly through play or demeanour. In addition, there may be some physical evidence of neglect or apparent injury, which is noted by myself. Parents may also have cause to be concerned about the welfare of their children.

### **2. Purpose and application of Policy**

I believe that it is always unacceptable for a child or young person to experience abuse of any kind and recognise my responsibility to safeguard the welfare of all children and young people. I am fully accountable for ensuring appropriate actions are taken by myself in order to safeguard any of my service users. For the purpose of clarity in this policy, when we refer to Children or Young people, we mean from the ages from 0 (unborn) and anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday. The child centred approach is fundamental to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of every child. A child centred approach means keeping the child in focus when making decisions about their lives and working in partnership with them and their families.

#### **I recognise that:**

- the welfare of the child / young person is paramount
- all children, regardless of age, disability, gender, racial heritage, religious belief, sexual orientation or identity, have the right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse
- working in partnership with children, young people, their parents, carers and other agencies is essential in promoting young people's welfare.

#### **The purpose and scope of the policy**

- to provide protection for the children and young people who receive my services, including the children of adult clients.

#### **I will seek to safeguard children and young people by:**

- valuing them, listening to and respecting them
- adopting safeguarding and child protection guidelines
- sharing information about child protection and good practice with children and parents as well as authorities
- sharing information about concerns with agencies who need to know, and involving parents and children appropriately

**ensure that:**

- the safety and wellbeing of the child is promoted
- the law and statutory guidance concerning child protection and safeguarding is complied with.

Disclosures or concerns arising out of any of these areas of service delivery will be treated the same and are all covered by this policy.

### **3. Statutory and legal framework**

- The Children Act 1989 and 2004 provides the overall framework for safeguarding children and promoting their welfare. The child's welfare is to be the paramount consideration in all decision-making.
- The Government's guidance on safeguarding children in England is called Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 (often shortened to Working Together).

This policy has also been drawn up in accordance with the following:

- Children Act 1989
- United Convention of the Rights of the Child 1991
- General Data Protection Regulation
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Sexual Offences Act 2003
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006
- Protection of Freedoms Act 2012
- Children and Families Act 2014
- Special educational needs and disability (2014) code of practice - Guidance on the special educational needs and disability (2014) system for children and young people aged 0 to 25, from 1 September 2014
- Information sharing: advice for practitioners providing safeguarding services

### **4. Recognition and reporting**

It is essential that those who work with children and families should be alert to the signs of child abuse.

There are four main categories of abuse:

**Physical Abuse** - A form of abuse which 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.

**Neglect** - 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.

**Emotional Abuse** - 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 a child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person
- not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate
- age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children
- interactions that are beyond a child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction
- seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another
- serious bullying (including cyber 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 (Working Together 2018)

As highlighted above, Domestic Abuse is generally treated as falling under emotional abuse. The government definition (2014) of domestic violence and abuse is as follows:

Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. The abuse can encompass, but is not limited to psychological, physical, sexual, financial and emotional.

I consider that domestic abuse is a child protection issue and that if children witness or hear domestic abuse, this must be treated as a child protection matter, even if they are not directly involved in the incidents. The Adoption and Children Act 2002 states that impairment can be caused by seeing or hearing the ill treatment of another.

**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 nonpenetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing.
- 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.

Sexual abuse can take place online, and technology can be used to facilitate offline abuse. Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children (Working Together 2018)

### **Other safeguarding concerns:**

In addition to the above concerns, children **self-harming or expressing suicidal ideas** must be treated as safeguarding and child protection issues.

**Child Criminal Exploitation** - As set out in the Serious Violence Strategy, published by the Home Office, where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, control, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into any criminal activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial or other advantage of the perpetrator or facilitator and/or (c) through violence or the threat of violence. The victim may have been criminally exploited even if the activity appears consensual. Child criminal exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.

**Child Sexual Exploitation** - Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.

**County Lines** - As set out in the Serious Violence Strategy, published by the Home Office, county lines is a term used to describe gangs and organised criminal networks involved in exporting illegal drugs into one or more importing areas within the UK, using dedicated mobile phone lines or other form of 'deal line'. They are likely to exploit children and vulnerable adults to move and store the drugs and money, and they will often use coercion, intimidation, violence (including sexual violence) and weapons.

**Extremism and PREVENT Duty** - Any concerns about radicalisation and extremist views or behaviours in children and young people must be reported as a safeguarding concern. I work in line with Prevent Duty 2015 guidance and will consult with local Prevent Coordinators where necessary. 'Extremism' goes beyond terrorism and includes people who target the vulnerable – including the young – by seeking to sow division between communities on the basis of race, faith or denomination; justify discrimination towards women and girls; persuade others that minorities are inferior; or argue against the primacy of democracy and the rule of law in our society. Extremism is defined in the Counter Extremism Strategy 2015 as the vocal or active opposition to our fundamental values, including the rule of law, individual liberty and the mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs. We also regard calls for the death of members of our armed forces as extremist'. (Working Together 2018)

**Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)** - Concerns that a child has been, or may be about to be, subjected to FGM, fall under this policy and must also be reported as a safeguarding concern.

**Forced Marriage** - In forced marriage, one or both spouses do not consent to the marriage and some element of duress is involved. Duress includes both physical and emotional pressure and abuse. Forced marriage is primarily, but not exclusively, an issue of violence against females. Most cases involve young women and girls aged between 13 and 30, although there is evidence to suggest that as many as 15 per cent of victims are male. These procedures are aimed at dealing with forced marriage for a child / young person under 18 years of age.

**'So-called' Honour-Based Violence** - The term "honour crime" or "honour-based violence" embraces a variety of crimes of violence (mainly but not exclusively against women), including assault,

imprisonment and murder where their family or their community is punishing the person. They are being punished for (actually or allegedly) undermining what the family or community believes to be the correct code of behaviour. In transgressing this correct code of behaviour, the person shows that they have not been properly controlled to conform by their family and this is to the “shame” or “dishonour” of the family.

### **Contextual safeguarding**

Contextual Safeguarding is an approach to understanding, and responding to, young people's experiences of significant harm beyond their families. It recognises that the different relationships that young people form in their neighbourhoods, schools and online can feature violence and abuse.

Contextual safeguarding facilitates looking at these areas, when assessing a child / young person's needs, and is used by some of the Local authorities that we work in.

The areas considered are:

**Home** - Domestic abuse, siblings or possible neglect

**Peer group** - Peer association, intimate partner violence and peer group sexual offending

**School** - Bullying, corridor culture and peer recruitment

**Neighbourhood** - Gang affected neighbourhood, robbery, CSE in parks and shopping centres

### **For safeguarding advice / guidance and reporting**

In instances where disclosure is made, I shall decide based on my experience and training to either call the local authority or parents/carers and report the disclosure. I will then contact my clinical supervisor. Factual notes will be taken of the disclosure and handed to the appropriate authorities.

## **5. Confidentiality**

In establishing an initial contract with the child and the parent/carer, the limits of confidentiality must be explained, i.e. that I will contact the relevant safeguarding authorities if there are concerns about the child's safety. This is an important part of the contract with the child at the outset of the work. This is in line with national guidance 'Working Together 2018', 'Keeping Children Safe in Education 2019' and 'Information Sharing 2018'. It is for the child or parent to choose what is and is not spoken about during counselling sessions or assessments. The duty to safeguard children and share information about child protection concerns takes priority over all other considerations, including the confidential nature of the counselling relationship. I fully participate in multi-agency working, in line with government guidance, in order to share information and safeguard children.

“The Data Protection Act 2018 and GDPR do not prohibit the collection or sharing of personal information, but rather provide a framework to ensure that personal information is shared appropriately. In particular, the Data Protection Act 2018 balances the rights of the information subject (the individual whom the information is about) and the possible need to share information about them”.

**I am committed to reviewing this policy and good practice annually. Policy written January 2021 to be reviewed in January 2022 by Laura Thomas.**