

# Social Solutions Child Protection Policy

## 1.0

Child Protection is provided by the Social Services Department, which supplies support for families whose children are in need of safeguarding to promote their welfare and upbringing.

All Social Solutions Inst (SSI) staff, consultants and volunteers should be aware of the possible indications of abuse or neglect and of the procedure for dealing with suspected cases.

### 1.1 What is Child Abuse?

Child abuse occurs when a relative or guardian deliberately harms or neglects a child or young person or fails to protect the child or young person from being harmed by another person. In addition to physical injuries, the abuse can be of an emotional or sexual nature. For example:

- **Neglect:** the persistent or severe neglect of a child, or the failure to protect a child from exposure to any kind of danger, including cold and starvation, or failure to carry out important aspects of care, resulting in the significant impairment of the child's health or development, including non-organic failure to thrive.
- **Physical abuse:** the actual or likely physical injury to a child, or failure to prevent physical injury, or suffering, to a child.
- **Sexual abuse:** the actual or likely sexual exploitation of a child or adolescent.
- **Emotional abuse:** the actual or likely severe adverse effect on the emotional and behavioural development of a child, caused by persistent or severe emotional ill treatment or rejection.

## 1.2 Referrals of child abuse

**If a child or young person arrives with injuries SSI staff, consultant or volunteer should:**

- ✓ Ensure immediate medical attention, if necessary.
- ✓ Ask the young person how the injuries occurred.
- ✓ Explanations, however puzzling, should be accepted and accusations should not be made. Make a written record when and where possible, including diagrams, of observations and explanations given. Have a witness wherever possible. This recording of information is to ensure that reasonably full and clear information is obtained in order to be able to make an appropriate referral to the Social Services if necessary.
- ✓ If you suspect that the injuries have been caused by assault or by failure to protect the young person or any other form of abuse you must inform Lead Practitioner or the Director. The Lead Practitioner or the Director must contact the Child Protection Officer in the Social Services Office for the area in which the young person resides.

## 1.3 Suspicion of Abuse

If through conversation or other contact with the child or young person you have cause to suspect physical, sexual or emotional abuse or neglect:

- ✓ Listen to what the child or young person says. Be comforting and sympathetic. Ensure that the child or young person feels as little responsibility as possible.
- ✓ It is particularly important not to make any suggestions to the child or young person regarding how the incident may have happened, therefore do not question the young persons except to clarify what s/he is saying.

Note: Inform the young person of your intentions to record their statement.

- ✓ Write down when and where necessary exactly what the child or young person says, or what actions concern you, and what you have said in response. Sign and date it.
- ✓ Do not make assumptions about whom the allegation might concern. If a member of the client organisation of our team may be involved, appropriate steps must be taken to ensure the safety of the child or young person and other youth.
- ✓ Inform the Lead Practitioner or the Director of your suspicions and the Lead Practitioner or the Director, must contact the Child Protection Officer in the Social Services Office for the area in which the child or young person lives.
- ✓ Once a child or young person is referred to Social Services they will make an assessment of the child or young person's needs.

#### **1.4 Subsequent Action**

Following such a referral, Social Services and possibly the Police will undertake enquiries. The SSI staff, consultants and volunteers may be required to provide statements and attend an Initial Child Protection Conference.

#### **1.5 What happens if a referral is made and the child or young person has not been abused?**

This can be very upsetting for parents and children – nevertheless remember that child protection referral is not an accusation. It is the sharing of a concern and many children have been saved from being seriously harmed and families assisted at time of great stress because of prompt action. In many cases, referrals will come to nothing; however we must act in the best interest of the child or young person.

#### **1.6 What can parents or carer do to prevent a false alarm?**

Children and young persons benefit most from their education when SSI staff, consultants, volunteers and parents will need to have good communication between the service provision and home. If a child or young person has been hurt accidentally, has a medical condition which may lead others to suspect that they may have been abused, or is particularly upset about something which had happen at home; the parent or carer should tell SSI staff, consultant or volunteer.

#### **1.7 What can a parent or carer do if they feel they may have gone too far in punishing a child or young person, or are afraid that they might harm them?**

Parents or carers can contact a Social Worker from their local Social Services office.

#### **1.8 Confidentiality**

The Social Solutions Inst (SSI) has the right to share any information regarding offending, life threatening self-harm and child protection with other agencies. All information will be kept confidential except when the there are concerns in the aforementioned areas.