

# **SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN POLICY**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Our Vision is of a society where all people can live with dignity, lead fulfilled lives and realise their full potential.

Our Mission is to improve the quality of life by delivering effective, responsive services that meet people's needs and aspirations.

### We Value

The dignity of every human being  
Our inclusivity and accessibility  
The diversity of the services we deliver  
Our capacity to take risks to meet need  
Our independence and autonomy  
Our entrepreneurial spirit  
Our charitable status and heritage  
The talent and contribution of all our people

Local Solutions Safeguarding Children Policy has been written to encompass all the work carried out by Local Solutions. For the avoidance of doubt the use of the word 'child' within this policy refers to anyone who has not yet reached their 18<sup>th</sup> Birthday. 'Children' therefore means 'children and young people' throughout. The fact that a child has reached 16 years of age, is living independently or is in further education, is a member of the armed forces, in hospital, in prison or in a Young Offenders Institution, does not change his or her status or entitlement to services or protection under the Children Act 1989.

This policy applies to all staff, including directors and the board of trustees, paid staff, volunteers and sessional workers, agency staff, students or anyone working on behalf of Local Solutions.

## 2. PURPOSE

The purpose of the policy;

- To protect children and young people who receive Local Solutions services. This includes the children of adults who use our services;
- To provide staff and volunteers with the overarching principles that guides our approach to safeguarding and child protection;

Local Solutions believes that a child or young person should never experience abuse of any kind. We have a responsibility to promote the welfare of all children and young people to keep them safe. We are committed to practice in a way that protects them.

The Policy is based on Every Child Matters (2010), Working Together to Safeguard Children (2013, 2015) and Local Authority Safeguarding Procedures Manuals which is particularly informed by the law and guidance that seeks to protect children, namely;

Children Act 1989, 2004

United Convention of the Rights of the Child 1991

Data Protection Act 1998

Human Rights Act 1998

Sexual Offences Act 2003

Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006

Protection of Freedoms Act 2012

Children and Families Act 2014

***We recognise that:***

The welfare of the child is paramount.

- All children, regardless of age, disability, gender, racial heritage, religious belief, sexual orientation or identity, have a right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse.
- Some children are additionally vulnerable because of the impact of previous experiences, their level of dependency, communication needs and other issues.
- Working in partnership with children, young people, their parents, carers and other agencies is essential in promoting young people's welfare

We will seek to keep children and young people safe by valuing them, listening to and respecting them.

All children deserve the opportunity to achieve their full potential. To achieve this, children need to feel loved and valued, and be supported by a network of reliable and affectionate relationships. If they are denied the opportunity and support they need, children are at risk not only of an impoverished childhood, but a risk of disadvantage and social exclusion in adulthood.

Local Solutions safeguarding arrangements are underpinned by two key principles:

- ***Safeguarding is everyone's' responsibility***
- ***A child-centered approach***; for our services to be effective they will be based on a clear understanding of the needs and views of children

Safeguarding and promoting welfare of children is defined for the purposes of the policy as:

- Protecting children from maltreatment
- Preventing impairment of children's health or development
- Ensuring that children are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care.

The primary aim of the Safeguarding Children Policy is to give direction and guidance to all staff dealing with children. In addition, it also aims to provide sufficient information for those involved with the various children's services within Local Solutions to be vigilant and to be aware of what to do in situations where child abuse may be a concern or suspicion.

Local Solutions has a duty of care for all children attending their provision. The child's welfare is paramount and there may be times when we must inform and work in partnership with other professionals. This would be if we felt a child was or likely to be in danger of significant harm.

### **3. CONFIDENTIALITY**

Effective information-sharing underpins integrated working and is a vital element of both early intervention and safeguarding. Research and experience have shown repeatedly that keeping children safe from harm requires practitioners and others to share information about:

- A child's health and development and any exposure to possible harm.
- A parent who may need help, or may not be able to care for a child adequately and safely; and
- Those who may pose a risk of harm to a child.

Often, it is only when information from several sources has been shared and is then put together, that it becomes clear that a child has suffered, or is likely to suffer, significant harm. Staff should be proactive in sharing information as early as possible to help identify, assess and respond to risks or concerns about the safety and welfare of children. This includes when problems first emerge, or where a child is already known to local authority children's social care (e.g. they are being supported as a child in need or have a child protection plan).

Staff should also be alerted to sharing important information about any adults with whom that child has contact, which may impact on the child's safety or welfare.

If Local Solutions decides after due consideration that they will submit a report to the relevant Local Authority Children's Social Services Department and/or the police, we will inform the parent/carer/legal guardian of that child, unless doing so is likely to endanger the child or place them at further risk.

A decision not to inform the parent/legal guardian should be recorded on the file together with the reasons for not doing so.

It is not Local Solutions' responsibility to make enquiries of parents/legal guardians. Any queries made of parents/carers/legal guardians prior to making a report to Social Services must be made by a trained Child Protection Officer or senior member of staff who will treat the matter sensitively.

In **all** situations, including those in which the cause of concern arises from a disclosure made in confidence, it is extremely important to record the details of an allegation or reported incident, regardless or not whether a referral is subsequently made.

Confidentiality in relation to this policy is about managing sensitive information that arises, in a trusting relationship and doing so in a manner that is respectful, professional and purposeful.

### **Confidentiality must not be confused with secrecy**

In matters of child abuse never promise to keep secret any information, which may need to be divulged. Explain to the child/ young person that it cannot be kept a secret but that only those people who need to know will be informed. Passing information to the relevant authorities is not a breach of confidentiality.

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.

To effectively share information:

- All practitioners should be confident of the processing conditions which allow them to store, and share, the information that they need to carry out their safeguarding role. Information which is relevant to safeguarding will often be data which is considered 'special category personal data' meaning it is sensitive and personal;
- Where practitioners need to share special category personal data, they should be aware that the Data Protection Act 2018 includes 'safeguarding of children and individuals at risk' as one of conditions that allows practitioners to share information with others without consent:
- Information can be shared legally without consent, if a practitioner is unable to/cannot be reasonably expected to gain consent from the individual, or if to gain consent could place a child at risk;

Relevant personal information can also be shared lawfully if it is to keep a child or individual at risk safe from neglect or physical, emotional or mental harm, or if it is protecting their physical, mental, or emotional well-being.

Practitioners looking to share information without consent should consider which processing condition in the Data Protection Act 2018 is most appropriate in the

circumstances of the case. This may be the safeguarding processing condition or another relevant provision.

Any reports must be stored in a safe and secure location. Any Manager who has concerns about storing records at their location for any reason must advise Local Solutions Head of HR immediately who will make alternative arrangements. These documents must be kept whilst the child remains in Local Solutions' care and for 80 years after they leave our care.

#### **4. THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD**

Local Solutions Safeguarding Children Policy gives due consideration to both the rights of children and the rights of adults while also seeking to protect both groups in their association and work with each other.

The rights of children have been clearly outlined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child that was adopted by the United Nations in 1989.

##### **4a. Early Help**

Providing early help is more effective in promoting the welfare of children than reacting later. Early help means providing support as soon as a problem emerges, at any point in a child's life, from the foundation years through to the teenage years. Early help can also prevent further problems arising, for example, if it is provided as part of a support plan where a child has returned home to their family from care.

Professionals should be alert to the potential need for early help for a child who:

- is disabled and has specific additional needs;
- has special educational needs;
- is a young carer;
- is showing signs of engaging in anti-social or criminal behavior;
- is in a family circumstance presenting challenges for the child, such as substance abuse, adult mental health problems and domestic violence;
- has returned home to their family from care; and/or
- is showing early signs of abuse and/or neglect.

If an employee believes an Early help assessment is required they need to speak to their line manager for guidance.

**An Early help assessment is not for a child or young person about whom you have concerns that they might be suffering or may be at risk of suffering significant harm.**

**\*Please note that Flintshire use the Team Around Family.**

The Team around the Family approach in Flintshire fits into the Welsh Government's Families First agenda, implementing an integrated multi-agency framework, designed to provide families with low-level, pre-statutory preventative support.

The team will work with families and agencies, to support families out of poverty (Child Poverty Strategy and Delivery Plan 2010).

This is an entirely family-led, needs focussed approach and relies on the family engaging with the process and consenting to having information shared across agencies. The team will work with the family to draw up a plan of support and then invite the family to meet with the agencies involved, regularly, to monitor progress. The process targets the family's strengths and aims to implement a support plan that enables a family to utilise their strengths to reach their goals.

Any family member or practitioner working with the family can refer into the process through a short assessment and this will be passed to a TAF Officer to enable them to engage with the family and initiate the support process.

## **5. UNDERSTANDING AND RECOGNISING SIGNIFICANT HARM, NEGLECT AND ABUSE**

Local Solutions has appointed Child Protection Officers throughout the company who are trained to deal with potential safeguarding issues. (A list of all officers is contained in Appendix One.)

### The Definition of Significant Harm

The Children Act 1989 introduced the concept of Significant Harm as the threshold that justifies compulsory intervention in family life in the best interests of children.

Section 47(1) of the Children Act 1989 states that:

'Where a local authority... have reasonable cause to suspect that a child who lives, or is found, in the area and is suffering, or is likely to suffer, Significant Harm, the authority shall make, such enquiries as they consider necessary to enable

them to decide whether they should take any action to safeguard or promote the child's welfare... the enquiries shall be commenced as soon as practicable and, in any event, within 48 hours of the authority receiving the information.'

- Harm means ill-treatment or impairment of health or development including for example impairment suffered from seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. The Adoption and Children Act 2002 broadens the definition of Significant Harm to include the emotional harm suffered by those children who witness domestic violence or are aware of domestic violence within their home environment.
- Development means physical, intellectual, emotional, social or behavioral development;
- Health means physical or mental health;
- Ill-treatment includes sexual abuse and forms of ill-treatment which are not physical.

There are no absolute criteria on which to rely when judging what constitutes Significant Harm. Consideration of the severity of ill-treatment may include:

- The degree and extent of physical harm;
- The duration and frequency of abuse or neglect;
- The extent of premeditation;
- The degree of threats and coercion;
- Evidence of sadism, and bizarre or unusual elements in child sexual abuse.

Each of these elements has been associated with more severe effects on the child, and/or relatively greater difficulty in helping the child overcome the adverse impact of the ill-treatment.

Sometimes, a single traumatic event may constitute Significant Harm. In other circumstances Significant Harm is caused by the cumulative effect of significant events, both acute and long-standing, or the damaging impact of neglect which interrupt and change or damage the child's physical and psychological development.

When judging what constitutes Significant Harm it is necessary to consider:

- The family context, including the family's strengths and supports;

- The child's development within the context of the family and within the context of the wider social and cultural environment;
- Any special needs, such as a medical condition, communication difficulty or disability that may affect the child's development and care within the family;
- The nature of harm in terms of the ill-treatment or failure to provide adequate care;
- The impact on the child's health and development;
- The adequacy of parental care.

Under Section 31(10) of the Children Act 1989:

Where the question of whether harm suffered by a child is significant on the child's health and development, his health or development shall be compared with that which could reasonably be expected of a similar child.

It is important always to take account of the child's reactions, and his or her perceptions, according to the child's age and understanding.

### **5a. Categories of Abuse and Neglect**

Someone may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm or by failing to act to prevent harm. In the context of child protection, abusive or neglectful behavior is behavior towards a child or young person which has the deliberate intention of causing harm or is so reckless to the consequences that harm is caused.

The following definitions are taken from Appendix A of Working Together to Safeguard Children. They have been included to assist staff providing services to children in assessing whether the child may be suffering actual or potential harm.

#### **Physical Abuse**

A form of abuse which may involve

- Hitting,
- Shaking,
- Throwing,
- Poisoning,
- 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.

### Emotional Abuse

The persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development.

- Conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved,
- Making children feel inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person.
- It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or making fun of what they say or how they communicate.
- 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 (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.

### 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 adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

### 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); or
- Ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.
- It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

### Organized Abuse

This occurs when one person moves into an area/institution and systematically entraps children for abusive purposes (mainly sexual) or when two or more adults conspire to similarly abuse children using inducements.

### Peer Abuse

In some cases of abuse the alleged perpetrator will also be a child. In these situations the Child Protection Procedures will apply for both the victim and the alleged abuser. If there is any conflict of interest the victim's welfare is of paramount importance.

### Bullying

Repeated aggression be it verbal, psychological or physical which is conducted by an individual or group against others and including:

- Teasing
- Taunting
- Threatening
- Hitting
- Extortion

### Child Sex Exploitation

Sexual exploitation of children and young people under 18 involves exploitative situations, contexts and relationships where young people (or a third person or

persons) receive 'something' (e.g. food, accommodation, drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, affection, gifts, money) as a result of them performing, and/or another or others performing on them, sexual activities.

Child sexual exploitation can occur through the use of technology without the child's immediate recognition; for example being persuaded to post sexual images on the Internet/mobile phones.

In all cases, those exploiting the child/young person have power over them by virtue of their age, gender, intellect, physical strength and/or economic or other resources. Violence, coercion and intimidation are common, involvement in exploitative relationships being characterized in the main by the child or young person's limited availability of choice resulting from their social/economic and/or emotional vulnerability. Further information and tools can be found [here](#).

### Child Criminal Exploitation

There is no legal definition of child criminal exploitation (CCE) through organized crime groups in England and Wales.

For Local Solutions, the exploitation of children and young people under-18 is defined as that which:

'involves exploitative situations, contexts and relationships where young people (or a third person or persons) receive 'something' (e.g. food, accommodation, drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, affection, gifts, money) as a result of them completing a task on behalf of another individual or group of individuals; this is often of a criminal nature.

Child criminal exploitation often occurs without the child's immediate recognition, with the child believing that they are in control of the situation. In all cases, those exploiting the child/young person have power over them by virtue of their age, gender, intellect, physical strength and/or economic or other resources.

Violence, coercion and intimidation are common, involvement in exploitative relationships being characterized in the main by the child or young person's limited availability of choice resulting from their social/economic and/or emotional vulnerability.

### Domestic Abuse

Domestic Abuse is any type of controlling, bullying, threatening or violent behavior between people in a relationship. Domestic Abuse includes emotional, physical, sexual, financial or psychological abuse. Domestic Abuse can seriously harm children and young people. Witnessing domestic abuse is child abuse.

## Online Abuse

Online abuse is any type of abuse on the web, either through social network, online games or mobile phones. Children can be at risk of online abuse from people they know, as well as from strangers.

## Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

FGM is partial or total removal of external female genitalia for non-medical purposes. FGM is child abuse, dangerous and a criminal offence.

## Child Trafficking

Child Trafficking and Modern Slavery are child abuse. Children are recruited, moved, or transported and then exploited, forced to work or sold. Trafficked children experience multiple forms of abuse and neglect.

## **6. Response by Professionals in Agency**

Staff should follow Local Solutions procedure and discuss concerns with the nominated person for safeguarding.

Prior to making a referral to Children's Care consideration should be given to the complexity of the child's needs and the need for an Assessment. It is therefore important that staff consider whether a child's and their family's needs can be more appropriately supported through Early Help.

Before submitting an online MARF (multi agency referral form) It is important all staff carefully consider the LSCP Responding to Need, which can be found [here](#)

Professionals who submit an online MARF and have not appropriately applied the Levels of Need Framework will be expected to initiate an Early Help Assessment.

If an Early Help Assessment is not initiated within 10 working days, a member of the Early Help Hub will contact the professional to support them in progressing this. Complex situations requiring co-ordination of services and in-depth assessment are appropriate referrals under the Children in Need Procedures and must be made using the MARF.

Outcomes of discussions within Local Solutions may be:

- No further action;
- Child is not at risk of Significant Harm but has additional needs:

If the child is subject to a Common Assessment contact Lead Professional and discuss concerns to assess further action according to EHA (Early Help Assessment) guidance;

- An EHAT (CAF) will need to be undertaken if not already in place.
- The Early Help Assessment Tool promotes multi-disciplinary and multi-agency working at an early stage in order to identify and provide services to children in need of additional support before their needs escalate
- The EHAT Form is not a referral form although if there is an OPEN completed EHAT in place this may be used to support a referral as opposed to completing a Multi Agency Referral Form (MARF).

The Responding to Need Guidance and Levels of Need framework clearly identifies when it is appropriate for agencies or professionals to make a referral to Liverpool Children's Social Care in respect of a Child in Need.

Where Urgent medical attention is needed:

- Medical attention must be sought immediately from Accident & Emergency, (dialling 999 where appropriate);

In any other circumstances, Children's Social Care and the Police are responsible for ensuring that any medical examinations required as part of enquiries are initiated.

Where Immediate safety action is needed – see above.

Where the Child is admitted to hospital:

- Where abuse is alleged or suspected and the child has been taken to hospital, contact must be made with Children's Social care to make a referral and a MARF (multi agency referral form) must be submitted within one working day.
- The child must not be discharged until an Assessment is completed by Children Social Care.

## **7. Indicators of Significant Harm**

Several factors may give rise to suspicion about the cause of an injury, the most obvious being a statement by the child and/or another person that the injury has been caused deliberately or not accidentally.

The following guidance is intended to help staff who encounter children. It should not be used as a comprehensive guide, nor does the presence of one or more factors prove that a child has been abused, but it may however indicate that further enquiries should be made. The following factors should be considered when assessing risks to a child.

Professionals should be alert to situations where a child is injured and:

- The explanation provided by the parent or carer is apparently incompatible with the physical injury.
- There are conflicting or different explanations provided.
- There is no explanation provided or a lack of awareness of how the injury occurred.
- There is a reluctance on the part of the parent or carer to provide information about the current or previous injuries.
- There is a reluctance to agree to medical assessment.
- There is a delay or failure to seek appropriate medical attention for an injury.
- There are frequent minor injuries or presentations of the child at Accident and Emergency Departments.
- The parent or carer is impatient, angry or aggressive towards the child.
- The parent or carer is under the influence of alcohol or another substance.
- A child reacting in a way that is inappropriate to his/her age or development.
- The parent indicates difficulties in coping with the child.
- There is evidence of domestic abuse or parental mental ill health

Many families under stress can care for children and meet their needs in a warm loving and supportive environment. For other families, stress has a negative impact on the child's health, development and well-being either directly or because it affects the capacity of parents to respond to the child's needs. This is particularly the case where there is no other significant adult who can respond to the child's needs.

## **8. If someone makes a disclosure**

It is important to note that child abuse is not always readily visible and may not be clearly observable. It is important to recognize that many signs of child abuse are non-specific and that alternative explanations for indicators should always be considered.

It is vital that anyone who discloses abuse feels supported. They feel afraid, angry, despondent and guilty. It is important that any negative feelings regarding the

disclosure are not increased by the response they receive. Any such disclosure is an act of trust and should be treated with respect, sensitivity and care. It is important to remember the following:

- 1 Find somewhere private to continue the conversation as soon as possible
- 2 React calmly and try not to reveal your personal feelings
- 3 Listen carefully and attentively
- 4 Reassure the child/young person
- 5 Do not make false promises (particularly around secrecy)
- 6 Only ask questions for clarification (try to avoid leading questions)
- 7 Check with the child/young person that what you understand is accurate
- 8 Record the conversation in as much detail as you can, as soon as possible. Sign and date that statement -see Appendix Four.
- 9 Explain Local Solutions' procedures
- 10 Treat the information as confidential following Local Solutions procedures

**Under no circumstances should any individual attempt to confront an alleged abuser.**

## **9. SAFER RECRUITMENT PRACTICES**

The majority of people who apply to work with children either on a voluntary or paid basis are interested, well-motivated and suitable for the various tasks involved. It is, nonetheless, essential that Local Solutions takes all reasonable steps to ensure that only suitable people are recruited to work with children. Unfortunately people with a propensity to child abuse are frequently attracted to positions and organisations that offer them access and the opportunity to spend time with children. Local Solutions Recruitment Procedures have been developed to assess an applicant's suitability and should in itself act as a deterrent to potential abusers.

Local Solutions is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.

The following are key elements of the recruitment and selection process:

- 1 Clear Job Description/Person Specification
  - 2 Application Form
  - 3 Identity Check
  - 4 Interview
  - 5 Health Questionnaire
  - 6 Verification of Qualifications
  - 7 References (Past employer, professional/character)
  - 8 Enhanced DBS Disclosure (if applicable)
  - 9 Probation Period
  - 10 Staff Induction
- 10. Training**
- 11. Training**

Volunteers contribute their unpaid personal time to different projects and activities within Local Solutions. Given the responsible roles played by volunteers it is essential that their work is supported and that their ability to deal with children in a fair and ethical manner is consistently supervised. Volunteers will therefore be requested to complete an application form, supply references and have them checked and receive a Disclosure before commencing any activities.

It will be made clear to applicants for certain posts within the company that the position is exempt from the provisions of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974

All applicants for work within the company, whether paid or voluntary will be interviewed (face to face) before an appointment is made and will be asked about their commitment to safeguarding children. They will also be asked to provide two references, which will be followed up. In the case of an applicant with unexplained gaps in their employment history, or who have moved rapidly from one job to another, explanations will be sought.

All employees and volunteers who are responsible for working with children/young people will have their reference thoroughly checked when they begin work with Local Solutions. When a post is directly working with children and young people a job commencement can only start when satisfactory references are obtained.

Disclosures will be sent for and re-assessed every 3 years as a minimum. Certain posts will be conditional on the receipt of a satisfactory Disclosure. Employees and volunteers will not be permitted to work unsupervised with children/young people until a Disclosure is received.

Employees and volunteers will be asked to sign a Declaration (at Appendix Five) prior to joining the company whilst we await the results of reference and Disclosure checks stating that there is no reason why they would be unsuitable to work with young people.

All trainees/work experience students, staff and volunteers under the age of 18 years will also be recognised as young people and therefore will be covered by our Safeguarding Children's Policy and that of Local Solutions.

## **12. SAFE PRACTICES**

Local Solutions will maintain records on children accessing their services including parental details, and where available, medical details, special needs and emergency contact numbers.

Accident books are available at all sites and details of all accidents are recorded. Incident books are also available and record any breaches of professional standards and/or related concerns, which may arise. All records are reviewed regularly by the Operational Manager.

Local Solutions will ensure that buildings and/or facilities used by children are safe, secure and there is adequate heating and ventilation, sanitation facilities, fire precautions, first aid facilities and access to a telephone.

Children must never be left unattended and managers must be aware of their whereabouts and what they are doing. All activity should have constant adult supervision.

Consent must be obtained from the parent/legal guardian before any photos or videos are taken of the children in Local Solutions care. It is the Managers responsibility to ensure that such consent has been given. Digital cameras or mobile messaging handsets must not be used on Local Solutions premises without the express consent of the parent/legal guardian of all the children involved. They must not be used in changing rooms, showers, toilets under any circumstances and care should always be taken.

We will seek out training opportunities for all staff who deal with children to ensure that they recognise the signs, symptoms and behaviours of possible physical abuse, neglect, emotional abuse and sexual abuse. This will be ongoing continuous professional development

### **13. CODES OF BEHAVIOUR**

It is essential ALL staff and volunteers are familiar and adhere to 'Guidance for Safer Working Practice for Adults who Work with Children and Young People'. This can be accessed in the HR Policy Manual Folder on P:/ drive or from the Head of HR.

Employees and volunteers should be sensitive to the risks involved in participating in some contact sports with children/young people and exercise caution in areas such as swimming pools, showers, etc.

Full account must be taken of Local Solutions Anti-Bullying, Anti-Harassment and Anti-Discrimination Policy.

Employees and volunteers should be aware of the possibility that they may become over involved or spend a great deal of time with any one young person. They should be clear about the purpose and nature of their relationship with any child/young person. Personal relationships with children/young people outside what is reasonably expected to perform work related duties are discouraged and could lead to action being taken under Local Solutions Disciplinary Procedures.

Where another employee or volunteer has a concern about the nature of a particular relationship involving themselves or another employee, volunteer or child/young person, they should discuss it with their Line Manager. Long term 'helping' or 'support' relationships should be reviewed on a regular basis.

All employees and volunteers should be aware of the potential risk to personal safety and false allegations, which may arise when they meet a child/young person alone. Where it is feasible they should consider leaving a door slightly ajar and informing another colleague that they will be alone with the individual.

It is not recommended that employees and volunteers give lifts in their cars to individual young people. If they have to in the course of their duties they must advise their Line Manager (or another colleague if they are not available) first. Potential long journeys

must always be discussed with the Line Manager and where possible parental/carer consent sought.

Physical contact of a comforting and reassuring nature is a valid way of expressing concern and care, where such contact is appropriate and acceptable to all persons concerned. Employees and volunteers should be aware however that such actions could be misunderstood. No one may physically punish or be in any way verbally abusive to any child/young person in Local Solutions care. Any such behaviour will lead to formal disciplinary action and will be considered gross misconduct.

#### **14. DEALING WITH CHALLENGING BEHAVIOUR**

When dealing with a disruptive individual(s) it is recommended that where possible more than one person is present. Any instances of disruptive behaviour, which require intervention and put anyone's safety at risk, should be documented in the Incident book.

The report should describe:

- What was happening at the time
- What happened
- Who was involved
- Where and when it happened
- What was said (if significant)
- Any injury to person or property (injuries to people also need to be recorded in the Accident Book)
- How the situation was resolved

The person making the report and the parent/legal guardian/carer at the next available opportunity should then sign it.

You may also wish to consider completing a Concern Sheet or Diary as shown in Appendices Three and Four.

#### **15. TRIPS AWAY FROM HOME**

Before taking children away on trips the following must be put in place/considered:

- Safety – activities, buildings, transport etc. A full Health & Safety assessment must be carried out on each planned activity. If in doubt seek the advice of Local Solutions Health & Safety Officer.
- Insurance – check it is adequate to cover all aspects of the trip.
- Parental/legal guardian consent – written consent must be obtained from the parents/carers before taking children /young people away on trips.
- Medical concerns – medical information which may be relevant e.g. allergies etc, should be known prior to leaving.

If staying away then the sleeping arrangements should be checked with sleeping areas for males and females in separate quarters and supervised by adults of the same sex.

## 14.REPORTING PROCEDURES

Abuse, harm or neglect of children can take many forms (Appendix Two). It is not the responsibility of anyone working within Local Solutions in a paid or unpaid capacity to decide whether abuse has taken place.

It is therefore vital that staff raise all cases of alleged abuse in line with the procedures identified within this policy. It is important to do this, as there may already be concerns expressed by others and failure to report concerns may put a child at risk.

You must report any concerns, allegations or disclosure of abuse through the formal channels set out in this policy, no matter who the alleged perpetrator is. If you raise a concern about an organization or individual, and you are acting in good faith, you will be supported whatever the outcome of the investigation.

Keep a record of the incident. You should make a written account of what has happened as soon as possible, including:

- What you saw/heard/were told
- How the incident occurred – do not speculate
- The time
- The place
- The names of the people involved including other potential witnesses
- Any obvious evidence e.g. weapon, blood
- The state/appearance of the clothing of the child and perpetrator
- Any injuries that either the abused child the alleged perpetrator have received
- The behaviors and attitudes of the people involved in the incident

In an **emergency** such as assault or rape you must **dial 999** for either the police or an ambulance and immediately inform your operational manager or if out of working hours the senior manager on call.

If there is a possibility that sexual/physical abuse has occurred then whoever has found the child must not encourage/assist the alleged victim to wash, bathe, change clothes, groom hair or take food or drink until the Police have been consulted.

In all cases of concern, allegation or disclosure of abuse you must inform your line manager or Child Protection Officer as soon as possible. If the allegation or disclosure is about your line manager or a Child Protection Officer then please report to a Senior Manager within Local Solutions. It may not always be possible to tell you what is happening about the allegation. The exact nature of the action taken will vary. You will be expected to co-operate with the investigation. You may be required to provide

a report, attend a strategy meeting or be interviewed by the police. A strategy meeting is where professionals from multi agencies meet to discuss the best method of investigation and ways to safeguard the child until a child protection or child in need plan can be implemented. Social Services are the lead agency and will manage the investigation process.

**Do not start the investigation yourself by asking the person questions about the incidents, it may damage a Police/Social Care investigation.**

Anyone who knows or suspects that a child/young person has been harmed must convey this information to:

- The relevant Child Protection Officer (see Appendix One) or;
- Their Director or;
- Local Solutions Head of HR or;
- Local Solutions Director of Corporate Services.

They will then inform the appropriate Social Services Department as soon as possible.

The Child Protection Officer (or Director or Head of HR- depending on who has been informed) must also compile a file detailing:

- The report from the person reporting the alleged/suspected abuse, in writing.
- Their actions
- Any other people that they have felt it necessary to inform,
- The results of their action, where known.

Well-kept records provide an essential underpinning to good child protection practice. Records should be clear, accurate and contemporaneous, ensuring there is a documented account of contact with a child or family, and a record of face to face discussions and telephone conversations with other professionals, decisions made during such discussion, and the responsibility for carrying out decisions made. This is an essential source of evidence for investigations and inquiries and may also be disclosed in court proceedings.

The Operational Manager or Child Protection Officer is responsible for logging concerns on electronic safeguarding tracker. The tracker will be periodically reviewed to identify any patterns or trends, or identify areas where safeguarding is not being reported and identify and address reasons for this.

The Child Protection Officer, or relevant manager is responsible for liaising with the relevant Local Authority Safeguarding Unit (Appendix One and Six) for seeking guidance and for overseeing the process if a formal referral is made. The Child

Protection Officer or relevant manager is responsible for making sure they are aware of Local Authority Safeguarding Children Procedures. Under no circumstances must the reporting process be delayed. If an allegation of abuse has been disclosed then this should be acted on immediately and the relevant Local Authority Safeguarding Unit contacted.

If the alleged perpetrator contacts you, you must not talk to them about the incident. Do not give them any information about the alleged abused child.

Information regarding the allegation must be held in a secure place. Only other Child Protection Officers and any appropriate Director should access the information.

Where Local Solutions is aware that children/young people in our care are already on the 'at risk' register they should ensure that we have the contact details for the appropriate Social Worker and report any suspicions or findings to that Social Worker. Some children/young people may be referred to Local Solutions because of the abuse they have received. In those circumstances Managers must agree with Social Services and/or the referral agency the steps that need to be taken to address any further concerns and put in place any additional, required procedures.

Child Protection Officers must ensure that they are easily identified and that their Projects are well aware of who to turn to and how they should approach such issues.

Local Solutions will ensure that all people who have responsibility for the care of children within the organisation have an appropriate Disclosure and Barring check. For further details please see Local Solutions Disclosure and Barring Policy.

## **15. INTERNAL SUSPICIONS**

If the suspected abuser is an employee or volunteer with Local Solutions then the matter must be brought to the attention of the relevant Director or Head of HR - or Director of Corporate Services as soon as possible.

There may be up to four strands in the consideration of an allegation:

- A police investigation of a possible criminal offence
- Enquiries and assessment by children's social care about whether a child is in need of protection or in need of services
- Referral to Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)
- Consideration by an employer of disciplinary action

Local Solutions reserves the right to suspend any employee or volunteer which an allegation of abuse or harm is being investigated. Suspension should not be seen as punishment and will be on full pay. Counselling can be arranged via Human

Resources. This action helps safeguard the child and the accused whilst a full investigation takes place.

An internal inquiry will be set in place immediately. As any proven allegations would be considered Gross Misconduct the matter will be dealt with under Local Solutions Disciplinary procedures. Local Solutions will ensure that the inquiry is thorough and as timely as possible.

If the matter is proven or there are any reasonable doubts that an employee or volunteer has harmed or posed a risk of harm to children then the case will be referred to Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS). Managers **must** refer to guidance in **Working Together to Safeguard Children – Procedures for managing allegations against people who work with children**. A copy of this publication can be found in Human Resources.

No child must be exposed to unnecessary risk whilst the matter is dealt with and all parties should seek a speedy resolution.

## **16. ANONYMOUS COMPLAINTS**

Anonymous complaints can be difficult to deal with but must not be ignored. In all cases the safety and welfare of the child is paramount. Any such complaints relating to inappropriate behaviour should be brought to the attention of the Child Protection Officer, Director or Head of HR.

## **17. CO-OPERATION with PARENTS/CARERS**

Parents or carers of a child/young person deemed to be at risk should be treated with respect. For this reason families should be informed by an appropriate person if a report about them is to be submitted to Social Services, unless doing so is unlikely to endanger the child or undermine an investigation. Advice must be sought from the statutory authorities about the best procedure to follow and that advice recorded on the file.

## **18. ALLEGATIONS MADE AGAINST ANOTHER YOUNG PERSON**

If an allegation is made against another child/young person, it should be considered a Child Protection issue for both the children/young people involved and Safeguarding Children Procedures should be adhered to for both the victim and the alleged abuser. The parents/carers/legal guardians of the children/young people concerned must be informed immediately. Advice should be sought from Social Services as how this may best be done. Decisions regarding the participation within Local Solutions of the child/young person alleged to have committed abuse should be made at a senior management level after that advice has been received from Social Services.

## **19. APPLICATION OF FAIR TREATMENT**

Volunteers or employees about whom there are concerns should be treated fairly. They should be helped to understand the concerns expressed and the processes being operated, and be clearly informed of the outcome of any investigation and its implications for their future employment/involvement with Local Solutions. Any investigations will be completed as soon as possible.

The fact that legal action may not always be pursued does not mean that Local Solutions will not take action in relation to protecting children or disciplining the employee/volunteer. It is important that allegations are thoroughly assessed and a decision reached.

Support will be given to all affected individuals if an incident is suspected and counselling can be arranged through the Human Resources.

## **20. REVIEW**

This policy is subject to an annual review (or sooner if necessary) by the Head of HR the next review is due August 2021.

## **21. SUPPORTING POLICIES**

- 1 Local Solutions Anti-discrimination, Anti-Harassment and Anti-Bullying Policy
- 2 Local Solutions Whistle blowing Policy
- 3 Local Solutions Equality and Diversity Policy
- 4 Local Solutions Recruitment Procedures
- 5 Local Solutions Recruitment of Ex-Offenders
- 6 Local Solutions Learning and Development Policy
- 7 Local Solutions Staff Development and Performance Review Policy
- 8 Local Solutions Volunteer Policy and Procedures
- 9 Local Solutions Dignity in Care Policy
- 10 Local Solutions DBS Disclosure Policy
- 11 Local Solutions Confidentiality Policy
- 12 Local Solutions Data Protection Policy
- 13 Local Solutions Code of Conduct for Employees

## **Appendix One**

### **LOCAL SOLUTIONS NOMINATED CHILD PROTECTION OFFICERS**

- Supported Lodgings Debbie Cooke  
0151 482 2467
- Liverpool Watersports Centre Debbie Cooke  
0151 482 2467
- Homecare Judith Webb  
0151 705 2412
- Homeground Debbie Cooke  
0151 482 2467
- Training Sue Murphy  
0151 705 2344
- Domestic Abuse/IDVA/ABC Debbie Cooke  
0151 482 2467
- Sunraye/Plas Belin Angela Harrison  
07803200479

### **Useful Contact Numbers**

- Director – On Call (Out of Hours) 07891 391100
- Head of Human Resources 0151 705 2348
- Main Switchboard(s) 0151 709 0990/ 0151 286 6016
- Careline (Liverpool) 0151 233 3700
- Wirral Council Emergency Duty Team 0151 677 6557/ 0151 606 2008
- Knowsley Children's Social Care Duty Team 0151 443 3792 / 0151 443 3798
- Sefton Plus 0845 140 0845
- Denbighshire Social Services 01824 712900 / 0845 0533116
- Flintshire Childrens Services 01352 701000
- Merseyside Police 0151 709 6010
- Emergency/Non Emergency Services 999/101
- NSPCC 0808 800 5000
- Childline 0800 1111

## Appendix Two

### DEFINITIONS

Child abuse can be categorized into six different types: neglect, emotional abuse, organized abuse, peer abuse, physical abuse and sexual abuse. A child may be subjected to more than one form of abuse at any given time. Local Solutions Child Protection Officers have been trained to recognize the signs and symptoms of abuse and should be approached where staff have any concerns over children's/young peoples behavior.

Local Solutions have adopted the following definitions:

#### Neglect

Where a child suffers sufficient harm or impairment or development by being deprived of food, clothing, warmth, hygiene, intellectual stimulation, supervision and safety, attachment to and affection from adults, or medical care.

Whether it is significant is determined by their health and development as compared to that which could reasonably be expected of a similar child.

Neglect generally becomes apparent in different ways over a period of time rather than at a specific point. For instance, a child who suffers a series of minor, explained injuries is not having their needs met for supervision and safety. A child whose ongoing failure to gain weight may be deprived of adequate nutrition.

#### Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is normally to be found in the relationship between a caregiver and a child rather than a specific event or pattern of events. It occurs when a need for affection, approval, consistency and security is not met. Examples include:

- Persistent criticism, sarcasm, hostility or blaming
- Conditional parenting, in which the level of care shown to a child is made contingent on their behaviour or actions
- Unresponsiveness, inconsistent or inappropriate expectations of a child
- Premature imposition of responsibility
- Unrealistic or inappropriate expectations
- Under or over protection
- Failure to show interest in, or provide age appropriate opportunities for cognitive and emotional development
- Use of unreasonable or over harsh disciplinary measures
- Exposure to domestic violence

Children show signs of emotional abuse by their behaviour, their emotional state or their development.

### Physical Abuse

Causing significant harm, and including:

- Shaking
- Use of excessive force in handling
- Deliberate poisoning
- Suffocation
- Munchausens's syndrome by proxy (where parents fabricate stories of illness about their child or cause physical signs of illness)
- Allowing or creating a substantial risk of significant harm to a child

### Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse occurs when a child is used by another person for their gratification or sexual arousal, or for that of others, for example:

- Exposure of the sexual organs or any sexual act intentionally performed in the presence of a child
- Intentional touching or molesting of the body of a child whether by a person or object for the purpose of sexual arousal or gratification
- Masturbation in the presence of a child or involvement of the child in the act of masturbation
- Sexual intercourse
- Exposure to material which has a sexual content

**Appendix Three**

**CONCERN DIARY**

Name of Child

Date of Birth

Person Recording

Status

<b>Date / time</b>	<b>Incident</b>	<b>Physical injury</b>	<b>Non-attendance</b>	<b>Conversation</b>	<b>Behaviour causing concern</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Signature</b>



**Appendix Five**

**LOCAL SOLUTIONS DECLARATION**

**Name**.....

**Address**.....

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

**Date** .....

I,..... declare that there is no reason why I would be unsuitable to work with children and/or young people.

Signed.....

*If you have any queries regarding this declaration please contact Human Resources on 0151 705 2348 prior to completion.*

**IF YOU HAVE A CONCERN ABOUT A CHILD**

