



SAFEGUARDING & THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN POLICY & PROCEDURES

Policy Statement

We recognise that:

- The safety and well being of children and vulnerable adults is of paramount importance
- All children, regardless of age, disability, gender, racial heritage, religious belief, sexual orientation or identity, have the right of equal protection from all types of harm or abuse
- We have a responsibility to work in a way that protects those who are at a risk of abuse
- All staff and volunteers are risk assessed prior to working with children and young people
- We have a strict procedure of checks before staff and volunteers are allowed to work with children and young people
- All staff and volunteers are required to undertake an enhance DBS check which is signed off by the executive Director who is a signing agent on behalf the Disclosure and Barring service. All staff and volunteers undertake a DBS which is rechecked every three years
- Staff and volunteers must be appropriately trained and supported to both recognise and deal with situations where someone is at risk of abuse
- Working in partnership with children, young people, their parents, carers and other agencies is essential in promoting young people's welfare
- Clear guidance should be available to ensure disclosures are dealt with in a timely and effective manner.
- All staff and volunteer are required to undertake safeguarding training which is refreshed at least every three years.

Sharon Cumberbatch is the designated Children's Safeguarding Officer, she is a senior manager for family services. She is a member of the Local Safeguarding Children's Board and is required to undertake NSPCC training at least every two years.

What is Child Abuse?

The NSPCC defines child abuse as:

"Child abuse is the term used when an adult harms a child or a young person under the age of 18. ...Child abuse can take four forms, all of which can cause long term damage to a child: physical abuse, emotional abuse, neglect and child sexual abuse. Bullying and domestic violence are also forms of child abuse.

Abuse is always wrong and it is never the young person's fault."

Definition of abuse

- Physical abuse - includes hitting, punching, burning
- Emotional abuse - includes constantly threatening or putting a child or young person down so that they feel unloved and worthless
- Sexual abuse - includes forcing or persuading a child or young person to take part in any kind of sexual activity. It can include inappropriate touching, kissing, sexual intercourse. It can also involve looking at or being involved in pornographic materials or videos
- Neglect – not providing enough food, clothing, shelter, medical care or education. It can also mean leaving a child alone and at risk
- Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is also referred to as female circumcision or cutting. FGM is child abuse in the UK and considered to be a serious violation of the human rights of girls and women. There is no religious basis for FGM.

The Law

The Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003 makes it illegal to;

- Practice FGM in the UK
- To take girls who are British Nationals or permanent residents of the UK abroad for FGM whether or not it is lawful in that country
- To aid, abet, counsel or procure the carrying out of FGM abroad

PENALTY up to 14 years in prison or a fine

Who is affected?

UK communities most at risk of FGM includes Kenyans, Somalis, Sudanese, Sierra Leoneans, Egyptians, Nigerians and Eritreans. Women from non-African communities that are at risk of FGM include Yemeni, Kurdish, Indonesian and Pakistani

Indicators FGM is about to happen

- Family from an affected community
- Mother or siblings have had FGM
- Extended holiday, particularly to a practising country
- Child is going to “become a woman” or have a “special celebration”;
- Child may begin to display a behavioural change

Indicators FGM has happened

- Girl may spend long periods of time away from the classroom associated with bladder or menstrual problem;
- The child requiring to be excused from physical exercise;
- Prolonged absences from school plus a noticeable behaviour change

Trafficking of persons

“Trafficking of persons” shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs;

Spirit Possession and Witchcraft

Where parents, families and the child themselves believe that an evil force has entered a child and is controlling them, the belief includes the child being able to use the evil force to harm others. This evil is variously known as black magic, kindoki, ndoki, the evil eye, djinns, voodoo, obeah. Children are called witches or sorcerers.

Parents can be initiated into and / or supported in the belief that their child is possessed by an evil spirit by a privately contacted spiritualist / indigenous healer or by a local community faith leader. The task of exorcism or deliverance is often undertaken by a faith leader, or by the parents or other family members.

A child may suffer emotional abuse if they are labeled and treated as being possessed with an evil spirit. In addition, significant harm to a child may occur when an attempt is made to 'exorcise' or 'deliver' the evil spirit from the child.

Significant harm is defined as a situation where a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, a degree of physical, sexual and / or emotional harm (through abuse or neglect) which is so harmful that there needs to be compulsory intervention by child protection agencies into the life of the child and their family.

The forms the abuse can take include:

- Physical abuse: beating, burning, cutting, stabbing, semi-strangulating, tying up the child, or rubbing chilli peppers or other substances on the child's genitals or eyes;
- Emotional abuse: in the form of isolation (e.g. not allowing a child to eat or share a room with family members or threatening to abandon them). The child may also be persuaded that they are possessed;
- Neglect: failure to ensure appropriate medical care, supervision, school attendance, good hygiene, nourishment, clothing or warmth;
- Sexual abuse: within the family or community, children abused in this way may be particularly vulnerable to sexual exploitation.

Reasons for Abuse

A belief in spirit possession is not confined to particular countries, cultures, religions, or communities. Common factors that put a child at risk of abuse include.

- Belief in evil spirits: this is commonly accompanied by a belief that the child could 'infect' others with such 'evil'. The explanation for how a child becomes possessed varies widely, but includes through food that they have been given or through spirits that have flown around them;
- Scapegoating because of a difference: it may be that the child is being looked after by adults who are not their parents (i.e. privately fostered), and who do not have the same affection for the child as their own children;
- Rationalising misfortune by attributing it to spiritual forces and when a carer views a child as being 'different' because of disobedience, rebelliousness, over-independence, bedwetting, nightmares, illness or because they have a perceived or physical abnormality or a disability;

Disabilities involved in documented cases included learning disabilities, mental ill health, epilepsy, autism, a stammer and deafness;

- Changes and / or complexity in family structure or dynamics: there is research evidence (see [Stobart, Child Abuse Linked to Accusations of Spirit Possession \(DfES, 2006\)](#)) that children become more vulnerable to accusations of spirit possession following a change in family structure (e.g. a parent or carer having a new partner or transient or several partners). The family structure also tended to be complex so that exact relationships to the child were not immediately apparent. This may mean the child is living with extended family or in a private fostering arrangement. In some cases, this may even take on a form of servitude;
- Change of family circumstances for the worse: a spiritual explanation is sought in order to rationalise misfortune and the child is identified as the source of the problem because they have become possessed by evil spirits. Research evidence is that the family's disillusionment very often had its roots in negative experiences of migration:
 - In the vast majority of identified cases in the UK to date, the families were first or second generation migrants suffering from isolation from extended family, a sense of not belonging or feeling threatened or misunderstood. These families can also have significantly unfulfilled expectations of quality of life in the UK;
- Parental difficulties: a parent's mental ill health appears to be attributed to a child being possessed in a significant minority of cases. Illnesses typically involved include post-traumatic stress disorder, depression and schizophrenia.

Recognising child abuse or Neglect linked to spirit possession:

Indicators of abuse include:

- A child's body showing signs or marks, such as bruises or burns, from physical abuse;
- A child becoming noticeably confused, withdrawn, disorientated or isolated and appearing alone amongst other children;
- A child's personal care deteriorating, for example through a loss of weight, being hungry, turning up to school without food or food money or being unkempt with dirty clothes and even faeces smeared on to them;
- It may also be directly evident that the child's parent does not show concern for or a close bond with them;
- A child's attendance at school becoming irregular, or being taken out of school all together without another school place having been organised;
- A child reporting that they are or have been accused of being evil, and / or that they are having the devil beaten out of them.

Professionals who are best placed to recognise when a child has been labeled as spirit possessed are those who have regular contact with children - teachers and school nurses, health professionals, community groups and churches, Children's Services professionals. Professionals working with parents may also become aware that a parent has come to believe that an evil spirit has entered their child.

This policy applies to all staff, including senior managers and the Board of Trustees, paid staff, volunteers and sessional workers, students or anyone working on behalf of Carers of Barking & Dagenham

Action Checklist

YOU MUST:-

- *Follow the guidelines of Carers of Barking & Dagenham child protection procedures.*
- *Carry out correct recruitment and employment checks when employing staff paid or unpaid including (DBS enhanced checks) rechecked every three years.*
- *Arrange appropriate supervision and training as stated in the policy for all staff paid or unpaid working with children.*
- *Ensure that comprehensive, holistic care and risk assessments are carried out and detailed care plans are in place, which have been agreed with the child's carer before work with the child commences.*
- *Ensure all staff are fully aware of the procedure to follow should a concern arise.*

No Staff Member or volunteer will be allowed to work with children and young people until a fully enhanced DBS check has been received, we will use a risk assessment form to measure risk of a staff member or volunteer working within the office and in a group setting until the DBS check has been received and approved by the Executive Director.

By developing an environment where children and young people are respected and feel confident we believe children and young people are more likely to report abuse and with the following guidelines we will ensure any disclosure is dealt with in a professional, sensitive and supportive manner.

We will seek to safeguard children and young people by:

- Valuing them, listening to and respecting them
- Adopting child protection guidelines through procedures and a code of conduct for staff and volunteers
- Recruiting staff and volunteers safely, ensuring all necessary checks are made including enhanced disclosure DBS checks
- Sharing information about child protection and good practice with children, parents, staff and volunteers
- Sharing information about concerns with agencies who need to know, and involving parents and children appropriately
- Providing effective management for staff and volunteers through supervision, support and training.

Code of Behaviour

You must:

- Treat all children and young people with respect
- Provide an example of good conduct you wish others to follow
- Ensure that, whenever possible there is more than one adult present during activities with children and young people or at least that you are within sight or hearing of others
- Respect a young person's right to personal privacy/encourage young people and adults to feel comfortable and caring enough to point out attitudes or behaviour they do not like
- Remember that someone else might misinterpret your actions no matter how well-intentioned
- Be aware that even physical contact with a child or young person may be misinterpreted
- Recognise that special caution is required when you are discussing sensitive issues with children or young people
- Operate within the organisation's principles and guidance adhering to all policies and procedures
- Challenge unacceptable behaviour and report all allegations/suspicions of abuse to your line manager or next available manager immediately.

You must not:

- Have inappropriate physical or verbal contact with children or young people
- Allow yourself to be drawn into inappropriate attention-seeking behaviour/make suggestive or derogatory remarks or gestures in front of children or young people
- Jump to conclusion of others without checking facts
- Either exaggerate or trivialise child abuse issues
- Show favouritism to any individual
- Rely on your good name or that of the organisation to protect you
- Believe "it could never happen to me"
- Take a chance when common sense, policy or practice suggests another more prudent approach

You should give guidance and support to inexperienced helpers.

PROCEDURES FOR STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

NB

These procedures are to be read in conjunction with the following:

- **Confidentiality Policy**
- **Dealing with Disclosures Document**

Introduction

If, when you are working with an adult or young person, and they are about to 'disclose' something of a personal nature you **must remind them of the confidentiality policy**, even if you know they are aware of it.

You may be asked to keep the information confidential; however, you **must never promise** absolute confidentiality. You must explain to the person that if you think they are in danger of abuse you have a duty to inform someone else in order to protect them.

If ever you are concerned about the general welfare of someone you should always discuss it with your line manager at the earliest opportunity to determine what you should do.

Steps to take in the event of:

- Disclosure
- Suspected Abuse

1. Talk to your line manager as soon as is practicable, within the same working day. If it is outside normal office hours you should contact the 'on call' manager. If your manager is not available, speak to either another manager or the Director.
2. Record details of all actions/conversations/dates/times on the client file. Ensure this is **accurate and non-judgemental**. Your line manager should countersign the record if appropriate.

3. It is the responsibility of the line manager to notify the appropriate agency immediately. If there is no senior manager available, the worker should do this. This will be recorded on the file, including details of who took the referral, contact telephone numbers, actions to be taken. (See Borough Child Protection/Vulnerable Adult Abuse Procedures.)
4. The line manager will discuss with the appropriate agencies i.e. Social Services and/or police, whether it is appropriate to inform the family of the referral.
5. The line manager will discuss with the worker and other agencies how any future support will be given to the individual/family concerned.
6. The line manager will be responsible for liaison with other agencies in relation to any potential police/social services investigation.
7. Support will be provided to the staff members/volunteers as appropriate by the line manager

Steps to take in the event of:

- An allegation of inappropriate behaviour by a staff member/volunteer towards an adult or young person
 1. Talk to your line manager as soon as is practicable, within the same working day. If it is outside normal office hours you should contact the 'on call' manager. If your manager is not available, speak to either another manager or the Director.
 2. Record details of all actions/conversations/dates/times on the client file. Ensure this is **accurate and non judgemental**. Your line manager should countersign the record if appropriate.
 3. Do not discuss the allegation with any staff members, volunteers, clients, or the person about whom the allegation has been made.
 4. The manager should make minimal enquiries to determine whether it is physically possible for the allegation to be true.
 5. The manager will immediately inform the line manager of the individual concerned. If they are not available the Director must be informed.

The line manager of the individual against whom the allegation has been made will then:

1. Notify the Director of the situation
2. Meet with the Director and the member of staff/volunteer, on the same day where possible.
3. Suspend the individual with immediate effect.
4. Inform the individual what action will be taken.
5. Take steps to ensure any outstanding work of the suspended person will be dealt with by other staff/volunteers.

The Director will:

1. Notify the appropriate personnel within other agencies as appropriate.
2. Inform the Chair as soon as practicable that an allegation has been received.
3. Establish an investigation internally – however, in the event of a police investigation, guidance will be sought as to when this will take place.

DEALING WITH DISCLOSURES from children and young people

Receive

- Ensure children and young people are offered environments which respect and nurture them. Children and young people will more likely disclose abuse if they feel confident and trust the person or people who run the activities and project.
- Listen to the child or young person. If you are shocked by what they tell you, try not to show it. Take what they say seriously. Young people rarely lie about abuse. To be disbelieved adds to the traumatic nature of disclosing. Young people may retract what they have said if they meet with revulsion or disbelief.
- Accept what the young person says. Be careful not to burden them with guilt by asking: 'Why didn't you tell me before?'

Reassure

- Stay calm and reassure the young person that they have done the right thing in talking to you. It's essential to be honest with a young person, so don't make promises you may not be able to keep, like 'I'll stay with you' or 'Everything will be all right now'.
- Don't promise confidentiality: you have a duty to refer a young person who is at risk.
- Try to alleviate any feelings of guilt that the young person displays. For example, you could say: 'You're not to blame' or 'You're not the only one this sort of thing has happened to'.
- Acknowledge how hard it must have been for the young person to tell you what happened.
- Empathise with the young person - don't tell them what they should be feeling.

React

- React to the young person only as far as is necessary for you to establish whether or not you need to refer this matter. Do not 'interrogate' them for full details.

- Do not ask 'leading questions' such as: 'What did he do next?' (this assumes that he did do something else!) or 'Did he touch your private parts?' Such questions may invalidate your evidence (and that of the young person) in any later prosecution in court. Instead ask open questions such as: 'Anything else to tell me?' or prompt them gently by just saying 'Yes?' or 'And...?'
- Do not criticise the perpetrator: the young person may love him/her and reconciliation may be possible.
- Do not ask the young person to repeat everything to another worker.
- Explain what you have to do next and who you need to speak to.
- Inform the designated person for child protection (this will probably be your Line Manager).
- Try to see the matter through yourself and keep in contact with the young person.
- If a Social Services interview is to follow, ensure that the young person has a 'support person' (possibly yourself) present if they wish.

Record

- Make some brief notes at the time of the disclosure on any paper which comes to hand and write these up as soon as possible.
- Do not destroy your original notes in case they are required by a court.
- Record the date, time and place of the disclosure, along with the words used by the young person and any noticeable non-verbal behaviour. If the young person uses their family's own private sexual words, record the actual words used, rather than translating them into 'proper' words.
- Draw a diagram to indicate the position of any bruising.
- Be objective in your recording include statements and observable things, rather than your interpretations or assumptions.

Support

- Make sure that you continue to support the young person, providing time and a safe space throughout the process of investigation and afterwards.
- Get some support for yourself, without disclosing confidential information about the young person to colleagues.