



# **SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN POLICY**

**Approved by Board of Directors \_\_\_\_\_**

# SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN POLICY

## Statement Policy and Principles

Newstart Education Centre is committed to the safeguarding and protecting of children and young people. It is the policy of organisation to promote the best interests and welfare of children and young people, this principle is enshrined in both Children Order (NI) 1995 and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Newstart Education Centre is deeply committed to ensuring the full realisation of the rights of all children across Northern Ireland and recognises its obligations as laid out in the Regional Child Protection Policy and Procedures.

A child is defined as anyone under the age of 18. However this policy applies where possible (and particularly if they are known to social services) to a young person who is looked after or leaving care or is registered disabled and between the ages of 18 and 21 years.

It is the policy of Newstart Education Centre to safeguard the welfare of all children and young people with whom we come into contact by attempting to protect them from neglect, physical, sexual and emotional abuse. Newstart Education Centre will safeguard children by adopting and implementing this safeguarding children policy. The policy applies to staff, volunteers, sub-contractors, Board members and young people. For the purposes of this policy the term *staff* includes employed workers and volunteers.

Newstart Education Centre believes in confidentiality for everyone involved with the organisation. Information will not be disclosed to a third party or discussed inappropriately within the organisation. Confidentiality will, however, be breached if it is felt that a child is at risk. A child and/or their carer will be informed and consent sought before such action is taken. Should it, however, not be reasonable to do so or it is considered that this would place the child at further risk then they and their carer shall be informed as soon as is deemed reasonable. Therefore whilst

preferable consent from a carer/parent or young person is not necessary when making a disclosure to social services.

While young people under 18 or 21 (where appropriate) are deemed children they may also be parents and the child protection policy also applies to their children as well as any other children they may have contact with.

We are committed to fostering a culture of openness within the organisation so that staff, volunteers and young people can share concerns about the conduct of people within the organisation in the assurance that these will be received and dealt with in a sensitive manner.

Everyone in the organisation including young people and their carers will be provided with a copy, in an appropriate format, of this policy and have it explained. It will also be easily accessible. A statement will be prominently displayed on the premises.

Staff, volunteers and Board members will receive training, which will enable them to implement this policy and procedures. Newstart Education Centre is committed to effective staff management through supervision, support and training of its staff.

For the purposes of this policy staff includes employed and volunteers.

## **Principles**

These expand on the key principles of the Children Order (NI) 1995 and the UNCRC and place clear responsibilities on Include Youth.

1. The welfare of the child is paramount. At all times the protection of the child must be the primary concern of all staff. The Safeguarding Children policy takes precedence over all other Newstart Education Centre policies and procedures.

2. Effective training and adequate resources will be provided for staff to ensure that they have skills, knowledge and resources to recognise and respond to children who may be at risk or have been abused. This training will recognise that safeguarding issues take many forms and these include the use of technology and images of children.
3. Children have the right to be listened to, consulted and involved in decisions whenever possible. They shall be kept involved and kept informed of decisions and actions taken unless to do so places a child at further risk.
4. Dealing with suspected or known incidents of child abuse will take priority over any other work.
5. Carers should, where possible, be kept informed and involved in discussions and decision making about the needs of their children and treated with honesty and respect.
6. If there is a potential conflict between the needs of the child and carer, the child's interests must always come first.
7. Co-operation with other agencies, especially those with a legal responsibility for child protection are necessary on all occasions. There should be clear and agreed communication established
8. Where concern exists that a person in contact with the agency may be a risk to children, Include Youth will endeavour to ensure that they are prevented from having access to children and their involvement with the organisation will be suspended pending investigation.
9. The agency believes that in order to have an effective child protection service all agencies involved should work together and have a shared mutual understanding of aims, objectives and good practice. They should have clear and agreed communication with each other.

## Responsibilities

1. The organisation has appointed a **Safeguarding Officer** and Deputy Safeguarding Officer who is responsible for ensuring that staff are supported when necessary to protect children and young people. One must be available at all times when Newstart staff are working with young people.
2. All staff and service users of Newstart Education Centre are subject to and must be aware of the Safeguarding Children Policy. It is the responsibility of the Director to ensure that the policy is regularly reviewed, freely available and implemented throughout the organisation. All staff must ensure that they have relevant contact details at all times which must include their line manager, designated safeguarding officer (and deputy), duty and out-of-hours social workers and the young person's social worker.
3. It is the responsibility of the Safe Guarding Officers to ensure that staff receive regular training in this area and are fully aware of the policy and procedures.
4. Staff are responsible for ensuring that third party organisations (ie where a staff member is providing a service or where a service is being provided to the organisation) are informed of the Safeguarding Policy and that Newstart Education Centre staff are fully aware of the third party organisation's procedures.
5. When abuse is suspected this must be discussed with the line manager or designated safeguarding officer immediately ensuring that relevant actions are taken and that the staff member is properly supported and the child protected.
6. All staff and who have any contact with children/young people will be subject to our selection procedure. This procedure will include an application form, a declaration that there is no reason why they would be unsuitable to working with

children/young people, an interview, and for successful candidates the uptake of references and AccessNI check.

7. All disclosures involving suspected or actual child abuse to a third party must also be recorded and reported to the Director or the Deputy & Safeguarding Officer.
8. No member of staff should deal with an incident of child abuse alone. Advice and consultation with managers or colleagues must always be sought. Consultation should also take place with social services as deemed appropriate.
9. On the occasions when we are facilitators on a third party location (eg training organisation or custodial facility) we will inform the service and ensure that they are instigating their own safeguarding/child protection procedures. Regardless of this Newstart Education Centre may decide to proceed with its own process.
10. Staff involved in a child protection case will be receiving supportive supervision to give them an opportunity to confront and address their own feelings whenever possible. Such supervision will be conducted at the workers own pace.
11. Staff should always endeavour to meet young people in public places when carrying out one to one work.
12. Whenever staff should take young people in their car they will inform and seek agreement from the young person's carer.
13. Staff should never:
  - a. take young people to their home.
  - b. engage in rough, physical or sexually provocative games including horseplay or inappropriate touching of any form.
  - c. make sexually suggestive comments about or to a young person even in fun.
  - d. never ignore allegations made by a young person.

- e. do things of a personal nature for young people that they can do for themselves

## **Procedure and Guidelines**

### **Statement**

It is the responsibility of all Newstart Education Centre staff to take seriously any suspicion, disclosure or any signs of abuse both past and present that is affecting or may affect children and young people. It is important to consider that information about abuse no matter how dated may indicate that other children may be at risk.

Safeguarding issues may come to the attention of staff and young people in the following ways:

- Direct observation
- Observation of signs and symptoms
- Information provided by a third party (eg other young person or worker)
- Disclosure by a child or young person themselves.

Staff will receive training, which will enable them to implement this policy and procedures. This training will begin with an introduction to our Safeguarding Children policy and procedures at induction and regularly thereafter.

Concerns about abuse maybe immediate or on-going.

### **Immediate**

If a staff member has suspicions, evidence or it has been disclosed that a child or young person is at risk of, is being or has been abused then the situation must be discussed with a line manage or a safeguarding officer. If neither is available and it

is felt that an immediate response is necessary then the following action must be taken:

1. Concerns must be reported formally first verbally then in writing.
2. The young person's social worker (if any) or Gateway team must be contacted. If unavailable then the senior or duty social worker must be informed. The concerns must be reported formally.
3. If out of hours the 'out of hours' team must be contacted.
4. If no social worker is involved then the duty social worker must be contacted.
5. The child and carer should be informed of any action to be or already taken if deemed appropriate and does not place the child at further risk.
6. All reports should be followed up within 24 hours both verbally and in writing.
7. Concerns and any action taken must be recorded in client's files and then reported to the Safeguarding Officer who will record it in a 'confidential incidents file'.

## **On-going**

Newstart Education Centre endeavours to support the children and young people we work with. Many of the young people have experienced significant harm or trauma themselves which impacts on their lives and may also affect the care of their own children or others. The situation needs to be observed as part of the ongoing work and fed back to the relevant social worker regularly verbally and in writing as well as being recorded in the young person's file. If there is a noted change such as a sudden accumulation of incidents of neglect, or if any new signs and symptoms are noted, then immediate action, as outlined above, must be taken. If staff are in doubt they must seek advice.

## **Recognising Abuse**

Newstart Education Centre will assist staff to acquire information, awareness and develop skills as part of its training, support and supervision processes.

## **Disclosure**

Children/young people rarely discuss the subject spontaneously - it may take weeks or months for a child to talk about his/her experiences. Never promise to keep information a young person/child is giving you a secret. If a young person/child is telling you it is because he/she wants it to stop. Carefully explain that to get it stopped you will have to pass the information on. Children should feel that they have some measure of control over the action you take. Always let them know who you are going to tell and the implications of telling them.

- Stay calm and reassuring
- Find a quiet place to talk, informing colleagues that this is occurring ensuring that actions cannot be mistaken for collusion
- Take seriously what you are told
- Listen but do not press for information
- Say that you are pleased the child/young person told you
- Acknowledge the child/young person's confused feelings stressing that it is not their fault
- Follow the procedure
- Do not attempt to deal with the matter further on your own informing the child of your intended actions and the reasons for them
- Record the conversation as soon as possible
- Do not ask leading questions.

## **Recording**

1. It is important that timely and accurate records are kept about any child protection concerns which may relate to either how the child appears/behaves or to the way they cared for
2. Staff must record information in the young person's file and on the Safeguarding Children Form and complete the checklist as soon as possible within 24 hours after any issue concerning actual or suspected child abuse

3. All records must be signed, dated and timed. Records should be an account of factual information and any view/judgement expressed about these facts should be clearly qualified as such
4. Records need to cover four specific areas:
  - **Everything and everyone that was seen or**
  - **Any allegations or disclosures made** by child/young person, carers or anyone else; if possible it is best practice to write down the actual words used to describe the abuse
  - **Any explanations** given for injuries or statements made by the child/young person or others
  - **All action taken** such as discussion with line manager, contact with Statutory Social Services, teacher, third party organisation or others
5. Where a child's circumstances are a cause of longer term concern, staff must ensure that a regular summary of work is entered on the file, followed by clear objectives and targets for the next phase of work
6. Line managers have a responsibility to ensure that adequate recording is maintained and that staff are aware of their responsibilities in this area. Line managers should regularly look at files to monitor their adequacy
7. All records should be kept in a secure place and all files should be kept confidential to the young person/child concerned. Where possible the young person's own word should be used.

### **Allegations against Staff**

Newstart Education Centre's disciplinary and grievance procedure will be enacted if any allegations of child abuse are made against a member of staff. This can be found attached to terms and conditions of employment or volunteer agreement. The procedure may be applied to whether the alleged abuse took place whilst at work or

in the staff member's private life. The Director shall decide whether suspension is appropriate whilst investigations are undertaken.

Should members of staff witness or have concerns with regards to the behaviour of a colleague then they are obliged to report this to their line manager or the Designated (Deputy) Safeguarding Officer. This information will be treated in the strictest confidence.

To avoid allegations of inappropriate behaviour staff and voluntary workers will not:

- Engage in sexually provocative or rough physical horseplay
- Make sexually suggestive comments about or to a child
- Ignore any allegations made by a child ensuring that they are addressed and recorded.
- Do things of a personal nature that a child can do for themselves.

## **Investigations**

It must be noted that a number of investigation processes (eg social services, PSNI or Newstart Education Centre's disciplinary) may be triggered by a child protection referral some of which may run simultaneously. All staff will be given training to understand each process and will be advised that they must do nothing to compromise any investigation.



# SAFEGUARDING FLOW CHART

What happens when child makes a disclosure?

What happens if staff suspects abuse,

What happens if staff accused of abuse?

