
Children & Vulnerable Adults Safeguarding policy

Cabra Resource Centre
(The Loft)

Approval date: 20/08/17

Revision date: 20/08/19

1.Responsibility for approval of policy	Board of management
2.Responsibility for implementation	Therapeutic Team Leader
3.Responsibility for ensuring review	Therapeutic Team Leader

Policy Statement.

Cabra Resource Centre CLG (operating as The Loft) recognises the rights of children and the vulnerable adults to protection from abuse, violence and exploitation. The Cabra Resource Centre is committed to providing a safe environment for children and vulnerable adults receiving services.

The Board is committed to ensuring that the organisation follows effective safeguarding protection procedures which comply with all statutory requirements and meet best practice standards.

The Cabra Resource Centre is committed to ensuring our service users, board members, staff and volunteers are fully aware of our policies and procedures in relation to the protection of children and vulnerable adults.

Children and vulnerable adults need protection for many reasons, including protection from the effects of poverty, disadvantage, exclusion, violence and exploitation.

This policy is specifically concerned with promoting welfare and protection children and vulnerable adults from abuse and exploitation while receiving a service from the Cabra Resource Centre or in contact with the Cabra Resource Centre personnel.

1. Designated Person for the Cabra Resource Centre CLG

All Safeguarding and child protection concerns may be directed to:

The Designated Person: Liz O' Driscoll: liz@theloft.ie

2. The Designated Person:

- Is responsible for being familiar with the principles and good practice for the protection of children and vulnerable adults.
- The implementation and monitoring of the safeguarding policy Children and Vulnerable Adults.
- The Designated Person is responsible for recording and relating on behalf of the Cabra Resource Centre, all documentation in relation to safeguarding matters relation to the work, staffing and governance of the organisation.
- The Designated Person should receive appropriate Child Protection training and support to carry out his/her role on behalf of the organisation.

3. What is Abuse?

Defining abuse is a difficult and a complex issue. A person may abuse by inflicting harm, or failing to prevent harm.

Abuse can constitute the physical, psychological, emotional, financial or sexual maltreatment or neglect of a child or vulnerable adult by another person. The abuse may be a single act or repeated over a period of time, it may take one form or a multiple of forms. The lack of appropriate action can also be a form of abuse.

Children are defined as a person 'less than 18 years of age'.

A 'Vulnerable Adult' is a person age 18 or older who, by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness, is or may be unable to take care of him or herself, or unable to protect him or herself against 'significant harm' or 'exploitation'.

Personnel mean's any person coming into contact with child/vulnerable adult while acting on the Cabra Resource Centre's behalf.

- **Categories of child abuse:**

Physical Abuse: physical abuse is any form of non-accidental injury which results from wilful or neglectful failure to protect a child. Examples include hurting or injuring a child, inflicting pain, poisoning, shaking or otherwise causing physical harm to the child.

Sexual Abuse: sexual abuse occurs when a child is used by another person for his or her gratification or sexual arousal, or for that of others. This includes direct or indirect sexual exploitation or corruption of children by involving them (or threatening them) in inappropriate sexual activities.

Emotional Abuse: emotional abuse is normally to be found in the relationship between a care-giver and a child rather than a specific even or pattern of events. It occurs when a child's need for affection, approval, consistency and security are not met, for example repeatedly rejecting children, humiliating them, frightening them or denying their worth and rights as human beings.

Neglect: neglect is defined as the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and physiological needs. This can be defined in terms of an omission, where a child's health, safety, development or welfare is being avoidably impaired by being deprived of food, clothing, warmth, hygiene, intellectual stimulation, supervision and safety, attachment to and affection from adults or medical care.

Examples of abuse and exploitation of vulnerable adults

See Appendix 1 & 2 for further guidelines and indicators

4. Appropriate Conduct for the Cabra Resource Centre Personnel

The Cabra Resource Centre is aware that children or adults it comes into contact with may be particularly vulnerable for a number of reasons including;

- Lack of parental support
- Intellectual or physical disability
- Mental health problems
- Communication difficulties
- Previous experience of abuse
- Fear of not believed
- Fear and uncertainty regarding the future
- Involvement in high risk activities

Personnel should be aware that many children and adults we come into contact with are vulnerable to abuse and may have been abused in the past. It is important that the Cabra Resource Centre's personnel are aware of this and comply with the highest ethical and moral standards of behaviour and conduct in their contact with children and vulnerable adults, even if others do not explicitly expect it.

4.1 Appropriate behaviour includes:

- Respecting the confidentiality of information and the clients rights to privacy
- Not exposing clients to risks
- Not behaving in a manner which causes distress to clients for ones' own benefits
- Not communicating in a manner which causes distress to the client or may be misinterpreted

4.2 Best Practice

The following are some key principles for the best practice:

- Acknowledge the rights of children to be protected, treated with respect, listen to and have their own views taken into consideration.
- Recognise that the welfare of children must always come first, regardless of all other considerations.
- Adopt the safest possible practices to minimise the possibility of harm or accidents happening to children and protect workers from the necessity to take risks and leave themselves open to accusations of abuse or neglect.
- Remember that a child's age, gender and background affects the way they experience and understand what is happening to them.
- Be open with parents/guardians and consult them about everything that concerns their children and encouraging them to get involved with the organisation whenever possible.
- Co-operate with other childcare and protection agencies and professionals by sharing information when necessary and working together towards the best possible outcome for the children concerned.

**(Children First Guidelines, published by the Department of Health and Children, Ireland (1999).
(www.dohc.ie)**

5. Dealing with Disclosures/ Reporting Procedures

Should a young person disclose abuse to you the following important points should be taken into consideration:

- Take what the young person says earnestly
- Be as calm and as natural as possible. Remember that you have been approached because you are trusted and possibly liked. Do not panic.
- Be aware that disclosures can be very difficult for the young person.
- Reassure the young person that it was right to tell somebody what happened and that they have done nothing wrong.
- Remember that the young person may initially be testing your reactions and may only fully open up over a period of time.
- Listen to what the young person has to say. Give them the time and opportunity to tell as much as they are able and wish to tell. Do not pressure the young person. Allow him/her to disclose at their own pace and in their own language.
- Be careful when asking questions. Your job is not to investigate but to support the young person. Avoid leading questions such as whether a specific person carried out the abuse, or whether the specific acts mentioned by the young person occurred. Such questions may complicate an official investigation.
- Do not express any opinion about the alleged abuser to the young person.
- It may be necessary to reassure the young person that your feelings towards him/her have not been affected in a negative way as a result of what he/she has disclosed.
- Record the information and report to your manager and the designated office as soon as possible.

6. Procedures – Child Abuse

Disclosures and Suspicions made known to the Cabra Resource Centres' Personnel

- **A disclosure** is defined as a specific allegation of abuse. It may or may not be made against a named individual.
- **A suspicion** is when concern is expressed about abuse that may have taken place or concern that abuse may take place.
- An allegation or suspect of child or vulnerable adult abuse may be made known to the Cabra Resource Centres' Personnel.
- The Designated Person in the organisation will be available to provide support and advice.
- The safety and protection of the child or vulnerable adult should be the paramount concern.
- It is not our responsibility to investigate, assess or determine if abuse has occurred. It is our responsibility to record the information or concern and communicate this to the Statutory Authority.
- All disclosures and suspicions must be reported to the Statutory Authorities, i.e. Health Services Executive staff and An Garda Síochána.

The Cabra Resource Centre has a Standard Referral Form (see **Appendix 2**) which should be used to report Suspected or alleged abuse or practice which may create risk for a client.

In making a report on suspected or actual abuse, the individual should ensure that the first priority is always for the safety and welfare of the child and/or vulnerable adult. In emergency situations, the information should be communicated directly.

7. Allegations concerning the Cabra Resource Centre Personnel

Reports may be made by any concerned person who has reason to believe a Cabra Resource Centre worker has abused a child or vulnerable adult. This includes co-workers or colleagues, parents, social workers, carers or other stakeholders. Children or vulnerable adults can also disclose to an adult who may make a report on their behalf, or support them in making a report.

In event of such a report being made contact should be made with the Designated Person. The Designated Person will assess and review the information that has been provided as quickly and effectively as possible.

- The Designated Person may contact the HSE or other relevant authorities for informal advice relating to the allegation, concern or disclosures. All actions will be taken in consultation with the relevant Statutory Authority.
- The relevant Manager will be advised of the allegation and will then communicate to the person concerned that an allegation has been made against him/her and the nature of the allegation. The person about whom the allegation has been made will be offered the opportunity to respond to the allegations. This response will be documented, signed by both parties and retained.

- Any Cabra Resource Centre personnel implicated in an allegation may be suspended from work or not deployed without prejudice, pending the results of an investigation. It should be made clear that this suspension does not imply guilt but rather protects all parties whilst an investigation/assessment is undertaken.

It is essential in reporting any case of allegation/suspected abuse that the principle of confidentiality applies. The information should only be shared on a 'need to know' basis and the number of people that need to be informed should be kept to a minimum.

- In all situations where there are reasonable grounds for concern, that abuse may have occurred, the information will be reported to the relevant statutory authorities.
- If the worker is found to have been engaged in poor practice, the representative will be warned about the practice and it may constitute grounds for termination.
- In an emergency a report should be made directly to the Garda Síochána or The Health Service Executive.

9. Record Keeping.

The **Designated Person** is responsible for keeping the records related to Child and Vulnerable Adult Safeguarding in a secure storage, including:

- Any disclosures, concerns or allegations of abuse;
- The follow up to any complaints, disclosures, concerns or allegations, including informal advice from the relevant authorities or agencies, official reports and the minutes of any meeting in relation to reports.

The **Board of Management** will be responsible for ensuring that all relevant and necessary procedures are followed and records maintained, including:

- Signed acceptance forms of the Cabra Resource Centres' Child and Vulnerable Adult Safeguarding Policy.
- All Garda Vetting Forms and related correspondence.
- The Board of Management will ensure that all reports are maintained permanently.

10. Communication and Implementation

10.1. The policy is also available on the organisation website (www.theloft.ie)

10.2. The Cabra Resource Centre will review and evaluate its Child protection policy every year. Amendments and additions to the policy will be recorded.

10.3. The Board of the Cabra Resource Centre will consider a Safeguarding Report every twelve months.

10.4. All personnel working for and with the Cabra resource Centre will be provided with a copy of this Policy.

NOTE: The Protection for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act provides protection for persons making a 'bona fide' report of a child abuse concern

APPENDIX 1

Definition of Child Abuse

Child Abuse generally described under the following five headings:

Neglect

Neglect can be defined in terms of an omission, where the child suffers significant harm or impairment of development by being deprived of food, clothing, warmth, hygiene, intellectual stimulation, supervision and safety, attachment to and affection from adults and medical care. The threshold of significant harm is reached when the child needs are neglected to the extent that his or her well being and/or development are severely affected.

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is normally to be found in the relationship between the care-giver and a child rather than a specific event or pattern of events. It occurs when a child's need for affection, approval, consistency and security are not met. Unless other forms of abuse are present, it is rarely manifested in terms of physical signs or symptoms. Examples of emotional abuse include;

- The imposition of negative attitudes on children, expressed by persistent criticism, sarcasm, hostility or blaming.
- Conditional parenting.
- Emotional unavailability by the child's parent/carer.
- Unrealistic, inappropriate expectations of the child.
- Failure to show interest in, or providing age appropriate opportunities for the child's cognitive and emotional development.
- Unreasonable or over harsh disciplinary measures.
- Exposure to domestic violence.

The threshold of significant harm is reached when abusive interactions dominate and become typical of the relationship between the child and the parent/carer.

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse is any form of non-accidental injury or injury which results from wilful or neglectful failure to protect a child.

Examples of physical abuse include:

- Shaking a child.
- Use of excessive force in handling a child.
- Deliberate poisoning.
- Suffocation.
- Munchausen's syndrome by proxy.

The threshold of significant harm is reached when abusive interactions dominate and become typical of the relationship between the child and the parent/carer.

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse occurs when a child is used by another person for his or hers gratification or sexual arousal or for that of others.

Examples of sexual abuse include:

- Exposure of the sexual organs or any sexual act intentionally preformed in the present 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.
- Sexual intercourse with a child be it oral, anal or vaginal.
- Sexual exploitation of a child.

Bullying

Bullying can be defined as repeated aggression, be it verbal, psychological or physical which is conducted by an individual or group against others. Examples of bullying include:

- Teasing.
- Taunting.
- Threatening.
- Hitting.
- Extortion.

Bullying may take place in any setting whether it be in schools, at home or in a youth service setting. The more extreme forms of bullying would be regarded as physical or emotional abuse.

While Child Abuse has been defined under the above five headings of neglect, emotional abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse and bullying, due consideration should also be giving to instances of organised abuse and peer abuse.

Organised Abuse

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

Peer Abuse

In some cases of abuse the alleged perpetrator will also be a child. In these situations the Child Protection procedures should be adhered to for both the victim and the alleged abuser (Appendix 3). If there is any conflict of interest between the welfare of the alleged abuser and the victim, the victim's welfare is of paramount importance.

Symptoms of Child Abuse

The following are some of the possible indicators of Child Abuse:

Physical Indicators

- Frequent bruising, fractures, cuts, burns and other injuries.
- Signs of neglect e.g. dirty appearance, undernourished looking.
- Failure to thrive.
- Genital injuries or soreness.
- Haemorrhages (retinal, subdural).
- Sexually transmitted infections.
- Pregnancy.

Emotional Indicators

- Unreasonable mood and/or behaviour changes.
- Aggressive or withdrawn.
- Lack of attachment.
- Depression or suicide attempts.
- Persistent nightmares, disturbed sleep, bedwetting, reluctance to go to bed.
- Fear of adults.
- Lack of peer relationship.
- Fear of the dark.
- Panic attack.

Behavioural / sexual indicators

- Over affectionate or inappropriate sexual behaviour or knowledge giving the child's age – often demonstrated in language, playing or drawing.
- Fondling or exposure of genitals areas- open masturbation.
- Sexually aggressive behaviour with others.
- Hints about sexual activity.
- Unusual reluctance to join in normal activities, which involve undressing, e.g. games, swimming.
- Overtly compliant and submissive.
- Strong dislike of physical contact.
- Prostitution- giving sexual favours in return for gifts or money.

Changes in normal behaviour for the person in question

- Unwillingness to participate in certain activities or to go to certain places that once may have been liked.
- Running away from school or avoiding school.
- Separation activities.
- Isolation.
- Tiredness and poor concentration.
- Unexplained display of wealth or gifts (bribes) or a constant shortage of money and loss of good equipment, clothes etc, (taken by bullies)

Illness

- Eating disorders such as overeating or anorexia.
- Alcoholism and/or drug addiction.
- Psychosomatic disorders.
- Some signs are more indicative of abuse than others.

These include:

- Disclosure of abuse by a child or a young person.
- Age inappropriate or abnormal sexual play or knowledge.
- Specific injuries or pattern of injuries.
- Underage pregnancy or sexual transmitted infections.

Particular behavioural signs and emotional problems suggestive of Child Abuse in young children (0-10yrs)

- Mood change e.g. child becomes withdrawn, fearful, acting out.
- Lack of concentration (change in social performance)
- Bed wetting, soiling.
- Psychosomatic complaints, pains, headaches.
- Skin disorders.
- Nightmares, change in sleep patterns.
- School refusal.
- Separation anxiety.
- Loss of appetite.
- Isolation.

Appendix 2

Report of Safeguarding Concerns (Child Protection & Vulnerable Adults)

A separate report form to be completed on each person.

http://www.hse.ie/eng/staff/Resources/hrppg/Children_First_Standard_Report_Form.pdf