



“CHILD PROTECTION - EVERYONE’S RESPONSIBILITY”

A STAFF INFORMATION LEAFLET

- This leaflet provides information on the action you can take to ensure the safety and well-being of children.
- Everyone who has contact directly or indirectly with children has a responsibility to protect them from harm.
- Children must be protected from danger, abuse, neglect and violence from whatever source.
- Within your workplace it is **YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO REPORT ANY CONCERNS ABOUT A CHILD’S BEHAVIOUR OR CONCERNS THAT ABUSE MAY HAVE OCCURRED.**
- **The Northern Area Child Protection Committee inter-agency child protection procedures** set out the steps which need to be taken by anybody who may have concerns that a child may be harmed by abuse or neglect. Your Line Manager will have a copy of the procedures.

What is child abuse?

Thousands of children suffer long-term emotional and psychological problems because of ill-treatment by their own parents/carers or those around them. There are four main types of abuse, though a child may experience more than one type of abuse at any one time in his or her life. For example the child may be both physically and emotionally abused.

Physical Abuse

This involves physical injury to a child, however slight, where there is definite knowledge or a reasonable suspicion that the injury was inflicted or knowingly not prevented.

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse occurs when an adult exploits their power, authority, or position and uses a child to gratify their own sexual needs. Both boys and girls are sexually abused and it can begin with babies who are only a few months old.

Emotional Abuse

This abuse is persistent or severe emotional ill treatment or rejection that has a serious effect on the child's normal behaviour and self esteem.

Neglect

This is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic needs and results in damage to their health or development including a failure to thrive.

What to do if you have concerns about a child's behaviour or suspect abuse.

It is your responsibility to act on your concerns by following the **NORTHERN AREA CHILD PROTECTION COMMITTEE INTERAGENCY POLICIES AND PROCEDURES.**

You should:

- Make an immediate, careful record of what has been said by a child or adult, and record any observations if applicable.
- Discuss your concerns with your line manager.
- Record in writing the fact that you have reported the situation to a named individual.

What happens next:

- A referral will then be made to Social Services or the Police by the appropriate person in your Department.
- In exceptional circumstances, where you fear for the immediate safety of a child, contact your local Social Services Department or the Police direct.

Remember:

- Do not keep things to yourself.
- Do not rely on someone else to take action.
- Do not question the child.

If you have any doubts about whether to act or not - **remember the consequences of not reporting a concern of child abuse could result in a tragedy for the child.**

Child Abuse - Myths and Facts

- MYTH Children are usually abused by strangers
- FACT **Most children are abused by adults who they know and trust**
- MYTH Women do not sexually abuse children
- FACT **Although the overwhelming majority of child sex abusers are male, in around 5-10 per cent of cases, the abuse is by a woman**
- MYTH Some cultures believe that child abuse is acceptable
- FACT **Child abuse is unacceptable in all cultures**
- MYTH Disabled children are less likely to be victims of abuse
- FACT **Disabled children are more likely to be abused because they are more vulnerable, more dependent on others and less able to communicate what has happened to them**
- MYTH Children often lie about abuse
- FACT **Children rarely lie about abuse, and their great fear is that they will not be believed. Abusers often tell the victims that no one will believe them if they report what has happened**

MYTH Child abusers have deprived backgrounds and are of below average intelligence

FACT Abusers come from a very wide range of social and intellectual backgrounds and may be married, well liked and respected members of society

MYTH Children are always safe in groups

FACT This is not always true: young children have, for example, been sexually assaulted in nursery school while other adults and children were present

MYTH Children abused by their parents are always taken into care

FACT Child protection professionals recognise that there are many benefits in keeping a child with his or her birth family, so they try to protect a child within the home where possible

MYTH Only girls are subjected to sexual abuse

FACT Boys can, and are, subject to sexual abuse in significant numbers.

Remember - It is important that you take time to discuss this leaflet with your line manager - read it, keep it in a safe place and use it.

Further information and advice may be obtained by contacting:

Training & Development Officer
Northern Area Child Protection
Committee Office
Holywell Hospital Site
60 Steeple Road
ANTRIM
BT41 2RJ

Telephone: 028 94 413159/413269

Fax: 028 94 487655

Email acpc@homefirst.n-i.nhs.uk

You may contact your local Social Services Department or Police Service Northern Ireland - C.A.R.E. Unit (Child Abuse and Rape Enquiry) for advice.