



CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

This Policy aims to:

adopt the highest possible standards and

take all reasonable steps in relation to the safety and welfare of the children with whom Mind in Croydon comes into contact with in the course of its work.

It is impossible to ensure that no child ever comes to any harm while in contact with Mind in Croydon. However implementing this policy and following the guidelines will enable those who undertake work with children for Mind in Croydon to be confident that they have taken all reasonable precautions to prevent harm occurring while being prepared to deal with an incident should it occur.

Mind in Croydon expects all those working with children and young people under the age of 18 years in any capacity – paid or voluntary - to apply this policy.

Mind in Croydon's work with children, young people and their parents

It is important to remember that as someone who works in a paid or voluntary capacity at Mind in Croydon you may come into contact with children in a wide range of situations in connection with any one of our services.

To whom does this policy apply

The policy applies to all staff, trustees, volunteers and contractors.

All those covered by the policy have a duty to do everything reasonable in their power to ensure the safety and welfare of children while they are in contact with Mind in Croydon.

Duties

You are expected to:

- Respect the wishes of a child as you would an adult, you must not impose yourself on them
- Take all reasonable steps to ensure the health, safety and welfare of any child in contact with Mind in Croydon
- Remember that children regard adults as role models and ensure your behaviour, language, gestures etc. are appropriate and above reproach
- Be aware of Child Protection issues in relation to the work you do and do not become complacent and believe 'it could never happen to me'
- Prevent any other member of staff or volunteer from putting any child in a situation in which there is a significant risk to their health and safety

- Take appropriate action if you become aware of anyone physically, emotionally or sexually abusing a child
- Report any evidence or reasonable suspicion that a child has been physically, emotionally or sexually abused whether by an adult or another child to the Chief Executive or in his absence, the Director of Client Services
- Not physically, emotionally or sexually abuse any child or young person

Responsibilities

In most instances the children you come into contact with will be accompanied by a parent. However if, due to illness or another unexpected event a member of staff or Mind in Croydon volunteer is left in charge of a child or children, they should act and make decisions in accordance with this Policy and Guidelines. The member of staff or volunteer should maintain appropriate child to adult ratios as required by the relevant local authority. This must underpin your main aim of providing an enjoyable and safe experience for the children.

Golden Rule - Safety in numbers

In as many situations as possible we should aim to ensure that no adult is in a one to one situation with a child. Safety in numbers should be the golden rule, whether the numbers are other children or adults.

Disclosure

Appointments

All staff who come into contact with clients and/or their children are required to apply to The Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) prior to appointment.

The appointment will only proceed if:

the pre-employment checks prove satisfactory

and

the Disclosure provides no cause for concern as to their suitability to work with children.

This applies whether the appointment is the result of recruitment or an internal move. Managers must also be mindful of these requirements as the content of posts develop over time and new tasks are assigned.

Allegation of abuse

It is to be hoped that you will never have to deal with an alleged incident of child abuse. But it is sensible that you are prepared to do so if necessary and this will be assisted if you have discussed the issue locally

There are four likely scenarios which you should be aware of and be prepared to deal with if necessary. These are;

- There is suspicion or evidence that a child is being abused by a member of staff or other person associated with Mind
- A child accuses a member of staff or other person associated with Mind of abusing them
- Abuse takes place or is suspected on Mind premises by an individual unrelated to Mind
- A child discloses abuse happening elsewhere eg at home

In all cases you must:

Be prompt, calm, assured and professional

Keep any details strictly confidential and share only on a 'need to know' basis.

Allegations against staff

Though our focus must be on safeguarding children you must also be aware that allegations of abuse made by children about adults do occasionally happen. Some prove mistaken or, very rarely, malicious. The Policy and Guidelines are there to help you to avoid situations in which well-intentioned actions could be misinterpreted and ensure that you do not find yourself in a situation where an allegation by a child, young or vulnerable person can be made.

Use of Information relating to children

Information about children eg names and addresses must be treated confidentially.

Discussion of the issues

Open discussion of child protection should be encouraged since this helps to make staff more comfortable with the issues involved. Do not keep it 'under wraps' for fear of upsetting or embarrassing people.

Reviewed, Updated and Approved February 2010