



Sentinus Child Protection Policy

January 2008

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this Child Protection Policy is to ensure that Sentinus takes all necessary steps to protect from harm, those children and young people who participate in its programmes and to ensure they enjoy their involvement in a safe environment. This policy establishes the organisation's position, role and responsibilities and clarifies what is expected from members of staff, associate staff and volunteers. It very clearly highlights the importance placed by Sentinus on the protection of children and young people.

Every child and young person who participates in the activities of Sentinus should be able to participate in an enjoyable and safe environment and be protected from abuse. This is the responsibility of every adult involved in this organisation. We recognise however, that child abuse is a very emotive and difficult subject. It is important to understand the feelings involved but not to allow them to interfere with our judgement about any action to be taken. Sentinus recognises its responsibility to safeguard the welfare of all children and young people by protecting them from physical, sexual or emotional abuse, neglect and bullying. It is determined to meet its obligation to ensure that Sentinus provides opportunities for children and young people to do so, with the highest possible standard of care.

This policy will ensure that:

- The welfare of the child is paramount;
- All children, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious beliefs or sexual identity, have the right to protection from abuse;
- All suspicions and allegations of abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately;
- All staff (paid/unpaid) working for this organisation have a responsibility to report concerns to the Chief Executive.

Guiding Principles

Sentinus will take responsibility for;

- Respecting and promoting the rights, wishes and feelings of children and young people;
- Recruit, train and supervise all volunteers and staff members to adopt best practice to safeguard and protect children and young people from abuse;
- Recruit all employees and volunteers to adopt and abide by the appropriate codes of conduct and the Child Protection Policies and Procedures outlined within this document;

- Ensure all staff and associate staff are appropriately vetted for working with children.
- Respond to any allegations appropriately;
- Regularly review the policy.

A child is defined as a person under the age of 18 (The Children NI Order 1995).

Promoting Good Practice

Child abuse, particularly sexual abuse, can arouse strong emotions in those facing such a situation. It is important to understand these feelings and not allow them to interfere with your judgement about the appropriate action to take.

Abuse can occur within many situations including the home, school and the sporting environment. Some individuals will actively seek employment or voluntary work with young people in order to harm them. All suspicious cases of poor practice should be reported to the Chief Executive and the guidelines in this policy should be followed.

Good Practice means:

- Always working in an open environment, where possible, avoiding private or unobserved situations and encouraging open communication;
- Treating all young people equally with respect and dignity;
- Always putting the welfare of each, young person first;
- Maintaining a safe and appropriate distance with service users (e.g. it is not appropriate for staff or volunteers to have an intimate relationship with a child or to share a room with them);
- Building balanced relationships based on mutual trust and empowering children to share in decision making;
- Keeping up to date with training, qualifications and insurance;
- Involving children/young people/ parents/carers wherever possible;
- Being an excellent role model – this includes not smoking or drinking alcohol in the company of young people;
- Giving enthusiastic and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism;
- Recognising the developmental needs and capacity of young people;
- Keeping a written record of any injury that occurs while engaged in any Sentinus activity, along with the details of any treatment given.

Named Person for Child Protection

The named contact for Sentinus is the Chief Executive.

What Should You Do if a Young Person Reports Abuse to You?

If someone discloses that they are being abused, whether in the home or any other setting, then upon receiving the information you should:

- React calmly but take what the child says seriously;
- Reassure the child that they were right to tell and that they are not to blame;
- Listen carefully and take what the child says seriously. Don't ask direct questions. Avoid 'Who?', 'What?', 'When?', 'Where?'.
- Encourage the child to talk - 'Do you want to tell me about this?' - but do not pressurize him or her.
- Recognise the inherent difficulties interpreting what is said by young children
- Ask no more questions than are necessary to ensure that you are clear enough about what has happened to pass the child's concerns on.
- Do not prevent a child from recalling events;
- Reassure the child but do not promise confidentiality. Explain that you will have to speak to someone else who can help.
- Remember that young or disabled children may not be able to express themselves verbally. Communication difficulties may mean that it is hard for them to complain or be understood. Sometimes abuse of disabled children has gone unrecognized because behavioural clues were interpreted as part of their disability;
- Inform the child/young person what you will do next;
- Make a full and written record of what has been said/heard as soon as possible and don't delay in passing on the information;

You Should Not:

- Panic;
- Allow your shock or distaste to show;
- Probe for more information than is offered;

- Speculate or make assumptions about what has happened;
- Make negative comments about the alleged abuser;
- Approach the alleged abuser
- Agree to keep secrets.

The Report Should Include the Following:

- The child's name, age and date of birth;
- The child's home address and telephone number;
- Whether or not the person making the report is expressing their own concerns or those of someone else;
- The nature of the allegation, including dates, times and special factors and other relevant information;
- Make a clear distinction between what is fact, opinion or hearsay;
- A description of any visible bruising or other injuries. Also any indirect signs, such as behavioural changes;
- Details of witnesses to the incidents;
- The child's account, if it can be given, of what has happened and how any bruising or other injuries occurred;
- Whether the parents have been contacted;
- If so, what has been said?
- Whether anyone else has been consulted, if so, record details
- Where possible referral to the police or social services should be confirmed in writing as soon as possible and the name of the contact who took the referral should be recorded.

If there are concerns about sharing the above information with Sentinus Chief Executive you can contact NSPCC's free and confidential 24 hour helpline service at 0808 800 5000 or you can contact the Police Service of Northern Ireland on 028 9065 0222.

What Sentinus Will do Next

It is not our responsibility to decide whether abuse has taken place. However we will pass on the information to the appropriate Health & Social Services Trust. Write

down all of the information so that if we are asked at a later time we can produce a written report. Severe and obvious cases of abuse will be reported immediately.

Types of Abuse and Neglect

Signs/indicators of abuse and neglect are helpful if they are used with some caution. They are not necessarily evidence of abuse or neglect. However, if you are concerned about a child or young person they can help you think about why you have that concern.

Signs that may suggest physical abuse include:

- Multiple bruising to different parts of the body;
- Bruising of different colours indicating repeated injuries;
- Fingertip bruising to the chest, back, arms or legs;
- Burns of any shape or size;
- An injury for which there is no adequate explanation.

Sexual Abuse

Indications that sexual abuse has occurred can include:

- Something a child has told you;
- Something a child has told someone else;
- A child who shows worrying sexualised behaviour in their play or with other children;
- A child who seems to have inappropriate sexual knowledge for their age;
- A child who may be visiting or being looked after by a known or suspected sexual offender.

Emotional Harm

The following signs may be present in children whose parents are over-critical and emotionally distant, or who are unable to meet their child's emotional needs:

- Children whose behaviour is excessive. For example, excessive bedwetting, overeating, rocking, head banging;
- Children who self harm. For example, they may cut or scratch themselves or overdose;

- Children who attempt suicide;
- Children who persistently run away from home;
- Children who show high levels of anxiety, unhappiness or withdrawal;
- Children who usually seek out or avoid affection.

Neglect

Indications that neglect has occurred can include:

- Squalid, unhygienic or dangerous home conditions;
- Parents who fail to attend to their children's health or development needs;
- Children who appear persistently undersized or underweight;
- Children who continually appear tired or lacking in energy;
- Children who suffer frequent injuries due to lack of supervision.

Please note that these lists are possible indicators of abuse, any signs of abuse have to be considered in context.

Positive Ways of Protecting Children

What do children need?

- To feel safe and secure;
- Health and happiness;
- Appropriate affection;
- Lots of smiles;
- Praise and encouragement;
- To be able to talk to someone;
- To be listened to;
- Respect for their feelings;
- Rewards for their efforts.

The protection of children at all times is paramount and Sentinus wishes to ensure



that its activities are carried out in a safe environment to allow them to be enjoyed fully and for young people to derive maximum benefit.