



Hope in Haringey – Safeguarding Procedures

**For Staff, Trustees,
Volunteers and Contractors**

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Contents

- 1. Recognising and Responding to Abuse**
- 2. Identifying Concerns and Disclosure**
- 3. How Disclosure Happens**
- 4. Barriers To Disclosure**
- 5. Spotting Signs of Abuse**
- 6. Helping Children Disclose Abuse**
- 7. Encouraging Children to Seek help and Support**
- 8. Responding to Abuse**
- 9. Information Sharing**
- 10. Gaining Consent**
- 11. Reporting Concerns**
- 12. Whistleblowing**

1 Recognising and Responding to Abuse

1.1 It can be very hard for children and young people to speak out about abuse. Often, they fear there may be negative consequences if they tell anyone what's happening to them.

1.2 Some may delay telling someone about abuse for a long time, while others never tell anyone, even if they want to.

1.3 It's vital that children and young people are able to speak out and that whoever they tell takes them seriously and acts on what they've been told.

1.4 Even if a child doesn't tell someone verbally about what's happened to them, there may be other indicators that something is wrong. People who work with children need to be able to recognise the signs and know how to respond appropriately.

2. Identifying concerns and Disclosure

2.1 Disclosure is the process by which children and young people start to share their experiences of abuse with others. This can take place over a long period of time – it is a journey, not one act or action.

2.2 Children may disclose directly or indirectly and sometimes they may start sharing details of abuse before they are ready to put their thoughts and feelings in order.

2.3 It takes extraordinary courage for a child to go through the journey of disclosing abuse.

2.4 Not all disclosures will lead to a formal report of abuse or a case being made or a case being taken to court, but all disclosures should be taken seriously.

2.5 It is vital that anyone who works with children and young people knows how to provide them with the support they need if they have experienced abuse.

3 How disclosure happens

3.1 Children and young people may disclose abuse in a variety of ways, including:

- directly– making specific verbal statements about what’s happened to them
- indirectly – making ambiguous verbal statements which suggest something is wrong
- behaviourally – displaying behaviour that signals something is wrong (this may or may not be deliberate)
- non-verbally – writing letters, drawing pictures or trying to communicate in other ways.

3.2 Sometimes children and young people make partial disclosures of abuse. This means they give some details about what they’ve experienced, but not the whole picture. They may withhold some information because of:

- fear that they will get in trouble with or upset their family
- wanting to deflect blame in case of family difficulties as a result of the disclosure
- feelings of shame and guilt.

3.3 When children do speak out it is often many years after the abuse has taken place

4 Barriers to disclosure

4.1 Some children and young people are reluctant to seek help because they feel they don’t have anyone to turn to for support.

4.2 They may have sought help in the past and had a negative experience, which makes them unlikely to do so again.

They may also:

- feel that they will not be taken seriously

- feel too embarrassed to talk to an adult about a private or personal problem
- worry about confidentiality
- lack trust in the people around them (including parents) and in the services provided to help them
- fear the consequences of asking for help
- worry they will be causing trouble and making the situation worse
- find formal procedures overwhelming

5. Spotting the signs of abuse

5.1 Children and young people who have been abused may want to tell someone, but not have the exact words to do so. They may attempt to disclose abuse by giving adults clues, through their actions and by using indirect words

5.2 Adults need to be able to notice the signs that a child or young person might be distressed and ask them appropriate questions about what might have caused this.

5.3 Child protection training can help increase adults' confidence in recognising the indicators of abuse and understanding the different ways a child might try to share what they have experienced.

5.4 You should never wait until a child or young person tells you directly that they are being abused before taking action. Instead, ask the child if everything is OK or discuss your concerns with your organisation's designated safeguarding lead, or the NSPCC helpline.

5.5 Waiting for a child to be ready to speak about their experiences could mean that the abuse carries on and they, or another child, are put at further risk of significant harm

5.6 Not taking appropriate action quickly can also affect the child's

mental health. They may feel despairing and hopeless and wonder why no-one is helping them. This may discourage them from seeking help in the future and make them distrust adults.

6. Helping children disclose abuse

6.1 It's important to create an environment where children and young people are comfortable about speaking out if anything is worrying them. They need to:

- be able to recognise abuse and know it is wrong
- know who they can talk to about it.

6.2 The people they choose to disclose to need to listen, understand and respond appropriately so the child gets the help, support and protection they need.

6.3 Talking PANTS (the underwear rule)¹ is a simple way to talk to children as young as four about staying safe from sexual abuse. It helps children to:

- name their body parts and know which parts should be private
- know the difference between appropriate and inappropriate touch
- understand they have the right to say "no"
- think about who they trust and who they can ask for help.

6.4 **Childline**² offers children and young people confidential help and advice. Calls to 0800 1111 are free and children can also contact Childline online or find advice on the Childline website.

7. Encouraging children and young people to seek help and support

7.1 Many children and young people will seek help because they know where to go and believe that it will make a difference.

7.2 Others may not have the confidence to seek support or be too scared to ask for help. They may not get the help they need until they reach crisis point.

¹ > [Find Talk PANTS resources for parents on the NSPCC website](#)

> [See the PANTS resources for schools and teachers](#)

² > [Visit the Childline website](#)

7.3 HiT staff, volunteers and contractors want to make it as easy as possible for young people to find and take up the offer of help by

- Reinforcing positive messages about those who seek help – seeking help is a sign of strength.
- Encouraging parents to support their children in seeking help.
- Be positive about young people, their capacity for change and their resilience.
 - Listening to the people we help and at the same time improving our services using feedback from service users.
- Seeing the whole person – engaging with young people both in terms of their strengths and their weaknesses.
- Building trust – treating young people with respect.
- Helping young people to help each other – equipping young people with the skills and tools to support their friends/peers and family members.
- Considering the role of new technologies in the way that they can complement other ways of supporting young people.

7.4 Through **Childline**, children and young people can access a range of support including:

- information and advice
- online and telephone counselling
- peer support message boards
- therapeutic tools.

8. Responding to abuse

8.1 In a situation where a child discloses abuse, there are a number of steps that should be taken.

- **Listen carefully to the child.** Avoid commenting on the matter or showing reactions like shock or disbelief which could cause the child to retract or stop talking.
- **Let them know they've done the right thing.** Reassurance can make a big impact on a child who may have been keeping the abuse secret.
- **Tell them it's not their fault.** Abuse is never the child's fault and they need to know this.
- **Say you will take them seriously.** A child could keep abuse secret in fear they won't be taken seriously. They've spoken out because they want help and trust that someone will listen to and support them.
- **Don't talk to the alleged abuser.** Confronting the alleged abuser about what the child has told you could make the situation a lot worse for the child.
- **Explain what you'll do next.** If age appropriate, explain to the child that this will need to be reported to someone who will be able to help.
- **Don't delay reporting the abuse.** The sooner the abuse is reported after the child discloses the better. Report as soon as possible to your nominated child protection lead so details are fresh in the mind and action can be taken quickly.

8.2 Non-biased approach

8.2.1 It's vital that any child who is trying to disclose abuse feels that they are being listened to and taken seriously.

8.2.2 But there can be a risk that if professionals just believe the child's account without thoroughly investigating the situation, this can lead to unfair bias against the alleged abuser as formal

investigations progress.

8.2.3 This means it's important to maintain an unbiased approach when responding to disclosures and follow either HiT's procedures or those of the agency to whom HiT is supplying services to ensure each case is treated in a fair and transparent manner and that the child gets the protection and support that they need.

8.3 Making notes

8.3.1 It's important to keep accurate and detailed notes on any concerns you have about a child. You will need to share these with your nominated child protection lead.

8.3.2 Include:

- the child's details (name, age, address)
- what the child said or did that gave you cause for concern (if the child made a verbal disclosure, write down their exact words)
- any information the child has given you about the alleged abuser.

9. Information sharing

9.1 Sharing information about a child's wellbeing helps professionals build a clearer picture of the child's life and gain a better understanding of any risks the child is facing.

9.2 Information sharing helps to ensure that an individual receives the right services at the right time and prevents a need from becoming more acute and difficult to meet

9.3 General principles of best practice for information sharing are outlined below. Refer to your organisation's procedures as well as local multi-agency arrangements to ensure you are following the information sharing processes that are most appropriate for your role.

9.4 When to share information

9.4.1 Timely information sharing is key to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.

9.4.2 HiT staff, volunteers and contractors may need to share information about the children and families they are involved with for a number of reasons. These include:

- you think someone in the family may benefit from additional support
 - someone from another agency has asked for information about a child or family
 - someone in the family has asked to be referred for further help
 - a statutory duty or court order requires information to be shared
-
- you are concerned that a child or a member of their family may be at risk of significant harm
 - you think a serious crime may have been committed or is about to be committed which involves someone in the family.

9.4.3 You must always have a clear and legitimate purpose for sharing a child's personal details.

9.5 What information to share

9.5.1 You need to decide what specific information is appropriate to share and who to share it with.

- Identify how much information should be shared. This will depend on the reasons for sharing it.
- Use language that is clear and precise as different agencies may use and understand terminology differently.
- Make it clear what information is factual and what is based on opinion (yours or other people's).
- Prioritise the safety and wellbeing of the child and anyone

else who may be affected by the situation.

9.6 Facts and opinions

9.6.1 When working with children and families you will gather information from a variety of sources. How you interpret this information can depend on:

- any previous information received
- your knowledge of research and theory
- your own frame of reference.

9.6.2 When recording information, you should be as factual as possible. If you need to give your own or somebody else's opinion make sure it is clearly differentiated from fact. You should identify whose opinion is being given and record their exact words.

10 Gaining consent to share information

10.1 Children should be given the opportunity to decide whether they agree to their personal information being shared. If a child doesn't have the capacity to make their own decisions ask their parent or carer (unless doing so would put the child at risk of harm).

10.2 The Gillick competency and Fraser guidelines³ help professionals to assess whether a child is mature enough to make decisions.

10.3 You should always get consent to share information about an adult – unless doing so would put them or someone else at risk of harm or affect the investigation of a serious crime.

To get consent:

- be open and honest
 - make sure the person you're asking for consent understands what information will be shared and why
- explain who will see the information and what it will be used for
- make sure the person you're asking for consent

understands the consequences of their information not being shared

- get the consent in writing, in case there are any disputes in the future. If it's only given verbally, make a written record of this
- make sure the person knows they can withdraw consent at any time.

10.4 If you're not given consent to share information, you should still go ahead if you are concerned a child's safety or wellbeing is at risk.

10.5 If you're sharing information without consent keep a written record explaining:

³ NSPPC Note > [See our guidance on the Gillick competency and Fraser guidelines](#)

- what steps you took to get consent
- the person's reasons for not giving consent (if known) • why you felt it was necessary to share information without consent.

10.6 Pass a copy of this record on to the agency/agencies you're sharing the information with.

11. Reporting concerns

11.1 If a child is suffering or at risk of suffering significant harm, you can share information with appropriate agencies or professionals without the child's or their parent's consent

11.2 If a child is in immediate danger, call the police on 999.

11.3 If a child is not in immediate danger:

11.3.1 If you have safeguarding concerns about a child or young person because of

- your own or third party observations or
- some other disclosure or
- because a child makes a disclosure to you

follow the guidance at section 8 of this policy **AND** report your concerns to the HiT safeguarding officer as soon as possible.

12 Whistleblowing

12.1 Whistleblowing is when someone reports wrongdoing that is in the public interest. This is usually something they've seen at work but not always. The wrongdoing might have happened in the past, be happening now, or be something the whistle blower is concerned may happen in the near future

HiT is small and therefore needs to work with larger more experienced organisations for some aspects of its

Safeguarding Procedures. Therefore we encourage staff, volunteers and contractors who have safeguarding concerns about HiT which the concerned individual cannot raise or has unsuccessfully raised with the managers and trustees of HiT to use the NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line. This offers free advice and support to those with concerns about how child protection issues are being handled in their own or another organisation.

12.2 Contact the NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line on:

0800 028 0285
help@nspcc.org.uk

12.2.1 Contact the NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line if:

- you believe that concerns aren't dealt with properly or may be covered up
- a concern that was raised hasn't been acted upon
- you are worried that repercussions are likely to arise if you raise a concern.

12.2.2. This applies to incidents that happened in the past, are happening now, or may happen in the future.