



Policy Title	Child Protection Policy
Last Reviewed	September 2023
Next Review	September 2024
Responsible Officer	Olaide Obajimi

Child Protection Policy

Background

Mitus Care Ltd, “the company”, will provide its services in environments in which adults, children and young people feel safe, secure and cared for.

This policy is underpinned by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in which Article 19: Protection from Abuse and Neglect requires:

Governments must do all they can to ensure that children are protected from physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse whilst in the care of parents, legal guardian or any other person who has the care of the child.

Such protective measures should, as appropriate include effective procedures for the establishment of social programme to provide the necessary support for the child and those who have the care of the child, as well as other forms for prevention and for identification, reporting, referral, investigation, treatment and follow-up of incidences of child maltreatment described heretofore, and as appropriate for judicial involvement.

The Company will ensure that all members of staff are informed about child abuse, the forms that it can take, signs and symptoms of possible abuse and the steps that they can take in recognizing and preventing child abuse. This policy should be read alongside the Protection of Vulnerable Adults Policy.

The Director, Care Manager and staff will take account of the local child and adult protection guidelines in the authority area in which they are working.

The Company has nominated Mr. Jide Oni as the designated person with special responsibility for vulnerable adults’ protection issues. He will undertake appropriate training approved by the Board.

This person will be a Director or other member of the Board.

The Care Manager and Safeguarding Manager has been appointed to the role of designated person by the Board but will be required to write a report for presentation at every meeting of the Board.

The Board will receive from the designated person a quarterly report which sets out and reviews how they have discharged their duties throughout the year.

Definitions

For child protection purposes this policy refers to any child aged 0 – 16 years (18 years for Children with Additional Support Needs). A parent is defined as any person who has parental responsibility over a child. For example: a mother or father. We may also include in this; foster and adoptive parents and carers, including those who may have substantial care of a child.

A child carer: These people may not have specific parental responsibilities but nonetheless have a duty of care for the child. This is inclusive of [care] staff.

Child Abuse

The term child abuse is used to describe ways in which children are intentionally or inadvertently harmed or placed at risk of harm, usually by adults or often people they trust.

Categories of Abuse – There are a number of categories of abuse recognized by the legislation.

- **Physical Injury:** This is defined as any injury inflicted or knowingly not prevented by any person having custody or care of a child. Physical abuse is often defined by injuries that cannot be explained by the normal play activities of a child and is defined as hitting or hurting a child on purpose.
- **Neglect:** This is defined as the willful failure to meet the basic needs of a child, for example, not clothing, feeding or caring for a child adequately and leaving them without adequate supervision.
- **Emotional Abuse:** This is defined as any abuse or torment, which would have an effect on the mental health and wellbeing of a child. Most commonly emotional abuse is categorized as shouting at a child, making a child feel worthless, exposing a child to inappropriate and severe punishment and inconsistency of behaviour towards a child.
- **Sexual Abuse:** This is defined as the exploitation of children in order to meet the demands of adults or other children. Sexual abuse may include: involvement of children in masturbation, involvement of children in pornographic activity, including taking pornographic photographs and involving children in watching or viewing pornographic materials, involvement of children in sexual activity, including; rape, sodomy, oral sex and sexual intercourse with a child, even with their consent.
- **Bullying:** Bullying is defined as any form of abuse on a child which is inflicted upon them by their peers, this abuse can be subtle, including, teasing, being ignored or left out, being pushed or pulled about, or having money or possessions taken.

Recognition of Child Abuse

The Company does not require members of staff to identify the specific category of abuse that a child may be experiencing but rather to highlight any causes for concern to the appropriate person and organizations. Some children may display some of the following, which may be symptoms of child abuse or in times of stress. These signs and symptoms do not necessarily mean that the child is being abused. The list is not exhaustive but indicates where a member of staff will report the occurrence:

- Injuries to the child, which are not consistent with the normal, play activities of a child, either in position or type.
- Inconsistent or unreasonable explanation of an injury by a child, parent or carer.
- Behaviour observed which is not generally regarded as appropriate for the age of a particular child. This may be sexually explicit remarks or actions; mood swings; uncharacteristic quietness; or aggressively severe tantrums.
- A child becoming isolated socially.
- A child observed displaying extremes of overeating or loss of appetite; weight loss; or weight gain.
- A child who is inappropriately dressed or consistently ill-kept and/or dirty Signs of self-inflicted injury are observed.
- Open distrust of, or discomfort with, parent, support workers or carers Delayed social development, poor language and speech.
- A child is excessively nervous behaviour, such as rocking or hair twisting.
- Low self esteem

General indicator of abuse, which are often typical of sexual abuse;

Recurring Abdominal Pain

Reluctance to go home or to be alone with a particular adult Flinching when approached or touched

Recurring headaches

Recording and Reporting of an Incident – Suspicions of Abuse

All incidents which may indicate child abuse will be recorded. It is also very important for staff to communicate about matters of this kind. If a member of staff suspects that a child is under threat, there are a number of steps that will be taken:

All suspicious will be reported to Safeguarding Manager, who will refer the matter to the Children's Single point of Access (C-SPA).

The safeguarding manager will maintain detailed records of suspicions, following the local procedures set out later in this document, which will include the following information:

- The nature of the suspicion
- Details of any injury
- Times, dates and any other relevant information
- Dates, times and names of other adults involved with the child who may substantiate the suspicion.

All agencies/organization within Children Services Trust who work with children have a duty to comply with and follow, the **Child Protection Procedures**.

Most importantly, matters must be reported to the Local Authority Designated Officer, (LADO), Monday to Friday from 9am to 5pm. Where an individual has:

- I. behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child; or**
- II. possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child; or**
- III. behaved in a way that indicates he/she is unsuitable to work with children**

Where it is an extremely serious allegation/concern (such as it is evident that the child has suffered significant harm or is likely to suffer significant harm) and/or there is a current injury (for example cut, bruise, scratch, graze, swelling, broken bone, etc.), risk of losing forensic evidence, danger to child/public/staff or crime ongoing, you should immediately contact (prior to making contact with the LADO): Police (emergency - 999, non-emergency - 101)

Staff and Child Protection

The Company recognizes that it can be a traumatic experience for a member of staff to be witness to a child's disclosure of abuse; therefore, all staff will be offered information on counselling services to help them through this time.

Child Protection involves several agencies working together, these include; Local Safeguarding Children Boards, and Childcare organizations. In order to maintain the levels of protection, all persons working with children will have an Enhanced Disclosure through the Disclosure and Barring Service and have completed an application process, interview and have 2 valid references. The Company may also ask for a doctor's reference.

Responding to a Child who confides in member of staff

Staff will be instructed that in the event that a child confides in them they will:

- Stay Calm;
- Not make promises which they cannot keep.
- Offer reassurance and support;
- Immediately tell their line manager and the responsible person;
- Record the facts and discussion in the child's own words and give a copy to their manager and the responsible person;
- Not take control of the situation themselves, maintain confidentiality at all times;
- Keep detailed and accurate records; Talk to the right people

All parents will be made aware that members of staff attend regular child protection training

in order that children are kept safe from harm.

Reporting allegations of Abuse against Members of Staff

This policy applies to all staff, Directors, administrative, management or support staff. The word “staff” is used for ease of description.

In rare instances, staff has been found responsible for abuse of children in the care of vulnerable adults. Because of their frequent contact with vulnerable adults, staff may have allegations of children abuse made against them when vulnerable adults are present.

The Company recognizes that an allegation of abuse of children made against a member of staff may be made for a variety of reasons and that the facts of the allegation may or may not be true.

It is imperative that those dealing with an allegation will maintain an open mind and the investigations will be thorough and not subject to delay.

The Company recognizes that the Children Act 1989 states that the welfare of the child is the paramount concern. But it also recognizes that hasty or ill-informed decisions in connection with a member of staff can irreparably damage an individual’s reputation, confidence and career.

Therefore, those dealing with such allegations within the Company will do so with sensitivity and will act in a careful, measured way.

Training

All staff receive training as part of their induction and in the form of annual updates to ensure that they are familiar with child protection issues and responsibilities and the Company’s policies and procedures. The course covers:

- Definitions of abuse.
- Signs and symptoms of child abuse.
- Current District Council procedures following concern about a child.
- The inter-agency approach to safeguarding.

Additional training, in the form of a gateway one-day course 'Understanding Child Protection' is available from the Council’s Safeguarding Children Board. We may require staff to attend this course and more specialist courses if it is applicable to their job role.

Legislation

The Children Act 1989

Children Act 2004

Human Rights Act 1998

Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN 1989)

Children and Young Persons Act 1933

Children and Young Persons Act 2008
Protection of Freedoms Act 2012
A Pathway of Care for Vulnerable Families (0-3) 2011
Sex Offenders Act 1997
Sexual Offences Act 2003
Sexual Offences Act 2003 (Remedial) Order 2012
Adoption and Children Act 2002
Education Act 2011
Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003
Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004
Serious Organized Crime and Police Act 2005
Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006
Children and Adoption Act 2006
Forced Marriage (Civil Protection) Act 2007
Safeguarding Children: Working Together Under the Children Act 2004
Home Office circular 16 / 2005 Guidance on offences against children
Carers (Recognition and Services) Act 1995
Carers and Disabled Children Act 2000

This policy is in accordance with the above legislation and consistent with:
“Working Together to Safeguard Children”, HM Government, 2015.

Our organization has in place arrangements that reflect the importance of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, including:

- A clear line of accountability for the commissioning and/or provision of services designed to safeguard and promote the welfare of children;
- A senior board level lead to take leadership responsibility for the organization's safeguarding arrangements;
- A culture of listening to children and taking account of their wishes and feelings, both in individual decisions and the development of services;
- Arrangements which set out clearly the processes for sharing information, with other professionals and with the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB);
- A designated professional lead (or, for health provider organizations, named professionals) for safeguarding.

Their role is to support other professionals in their agencies to recognize the needs of children, including rescue from possible abuse or neglect. Designated professional roles should always be explicitly defined in job descriptions. Professionals should be given sufficient time, funding, supervision and support to fulfill their child welfare and safeguarding responsibilities effectively; Safe recruitment practices for individuals whom the organization will permit to work regularly with children, including policies on when to obtain a criminal record check; Appropriate supervision and support for staff, including undertaking safeguarding training:

- Employers are responsible for ensuring that their staff are competent to carry out their responsibilities for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and creating an environment where staff feel able to raise concerns and feel supported in their safeguarding role.
- Staff are given a mandatory induction to Care Certificate standards, which includes familiarization with child protection responsibilities and procedures to be followed if anyone has any concerns about a child's safety or welfare.

All professionals should have regular reviews of their own practice to ensure they improve over time. Clear policies in line with those from the LSCB for dealing with allegations against people who work with children. An allegation may relate to a person who works with children who has:

- behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child; possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child; or
- behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children.

In addition:

County level and unitary local authorities should have a Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) to be involved in the management and oversight of individual cases. The LADO should provide advice and guidance to employers and voluntary organizations, liaising with the police and other agencies and monitoring the progress of cases to ensure that they are dealt with as quickly as possible, consistent with a thorough and fair process; Any allegation should be reported immediately to a senior manager within the

organization. The LADO should also be informed within one working day of all allegations that come to an employer's attention or that are made directly to the police;
If an organization removes an individual (paid worker or unpaid volunteer) from work such

as looking after children (or would have, had the person not left first) because the person poses a risk of harm to children, the organization must make a referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service. It is an offence to fail to make a referral without good reason.

Procedures and Processes

Recognizing abuse

It is the duty of all our people to be vigilant regarding the welfare of children with whom we have contact in the course of providing services. Staff and volunteers likely to be in contact with children and their families will be trained to recognize the signs of abuse when they occur and to respond in accordance with national and local child protection policies and procedures.

Reporting abuse

Any of our people who know or believe that abuse of a child is occurring has an obligation to report it as quickly as possible to their manager.

Action in emergency situations

If the situation is an emergency, with a child in immediate danger, our people should take urgent action to intervene and call for assistance as soon as possible. They should give any necessary first aid and contact appropriate emergency services if necessary. If the abuser remains present, our people should seek to calm the situation. Our people have a right to avoid putting themselves at risk of violence or other harm.

Immediate action to be taken by the Safeguarding Manager or senior management staff in his absence

All incidents which may indicate child abuse should be recorded. It is also very important for staff to communicate about matters of this kind.

If a member of staff suspects that a child is under threat there are a number of steps that will be taken:

All suspicions will be reported to Jide Oni, Director Manager, who will refer the matter to the Local Authority Designated Officer, LADO, at the District Council Safeguarding Children Board, within one working day of all allegations that come to an employer's attention.

The safeguarding manager will maintain detailed records of suspicions which will include the following information:

- The nature of the suspicion
- Details of any injury
- Times, dates and any other relevant information
- Dates, times and names of other adults involved with the child who may

substantiate the suspicions

In every case where a report is made to a Local Safeguarding Children Board and/or the police a report will be made to the Board of Directors, which will meet as a matter of urgency, to consider the matter and identify any further action which is to be taken.

Reporting to the police

If it is suspected that a criminal act might have been committed, the situation should be reported to the police. Every effort should be made not to interfere with possible evidence.

Contact details

Matters must be reported to the Local Authority Designated Officer, (LADO), where an individual has:

- **behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child; or**
- **possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child; or**
- **behaved in a way that indicates he/she is unsuitable to work with children**

Where it is an extremely serious allegation/concern (such as it is evident that the child has suffered significant harm or is likely to suffer significant harm) and/or there is a current injury (for example cut, bruise, scratch, graze, swelling, broken bone, etc.), risk of losing forensic evidence, danger to child/public/staff or crime ongoing, you should immediately contact (prior to contacting the LADO):

- Police (emergency - 999, non-emergency - 101)

The Council Local Safeguarding Children Board Telephone:

0300 470 9100 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday

Out of hours: 01483 517898 to speak to the emergency duty team

Email: cspa@surreycc.gov.uk

Website: <http://www.surreycc.gov.uk>

Action to be taken in the absence of further evidence

In instances where an investigation by the social services, police or others against a member of staff or volunteer of this agency is inconclusive, the appropriate manager should nevertheless proceed

with an internal investigation within the disciplinary policy, should take any necessary steps to safeguard the child as far as possible, and should keep the situation under review in case it becomes possible or necessary to take further action.

Keeping records

All details associated with allegations of abuse will be recorded clearly and accurately. The record will be securely kept and the agency's rules on confidentiality carefully followed.

Recruitment

Safe recruitment, selection and vetting procedures that include checks into the eligibility and the suitability of all staff and volunteers who have direct or indirect (e.g. helpline, email) contact with children. This organization takes great care in the recruitment of our people, carries out all possible checks on recruits to ensure that they are of a high standard and will co-operate in all government initiatives regarding the sharing of information on staff who are found to be unsuitable to be involved in work which brings them into contact with children. We ensure that DBS checks are made at appropriate intervals prior to and during employment.

Independent Safeguarding Authority's Vetting & Barring Scheme

The Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA) was set up to govern the Vetting and Barring Scheme (VBS). It replaces the current List 99, Protection of Children Act (POCA), Protection of Vulnerable Adults (POVA) and Disqualification Order regimes. The aim of the scheme is to reduce the incidence of harm to children and vulnerable adults by helping to ensure that:

- Employers benefit from an improved vetting service for those that work with children and vulnerable adults.
- Those who are known to be unsuitable are barred from working with children or young adults at the earliest opportunity.

Although the scheme has been scaled back following a review, the ISA's barring responsibilities and referral regulations introduced in October 2009 still apply at present. All proposed changes resulting from the review will become law in early 2012. Current regulations still in force are:

- Any person that is barred from working with children or vulnerable adults will be breaking the law if they work or volunteer with these groups.
- An organization that knowingly employs someone that is barred to work with these groups will be breaking the law.
- If an organization works with children or vulnerable adults and it dismisses a staff member or volunteer because they harmed a child or vulnerable adult or would have dismissed them for this had they not left, the organization must tell the Independent Safeguarding Authority.

Identifying, Assessing and Managing Risk associated with Safeguarding

Safeguarding vulnerable children and promoting their social inclusion form twin obligations of

health and social care services, but these goals are commonly experienced by frontline staff as in conflict with one another. As stated by the Department of Health, socially inclusive practice demands a *new* approach to professional boundaries. Therefore, local services, professional bodies and inspection agencies all share a responsibility to support the safeguarding agenda whilst also promoting social inclusion.

Risk enablement should become an integral part of the transformation of children's social care into a system which puts the child in control. It cannot be a 'bolt-on' solution to existing systems which do not have the person at the center. It is important for our organization to have a positive risk enablement culture and policies.

A supportive system is one which clearly incorporates self-directed support with safeguarding policy and practice, abuse detection and prevention. Enabling risk, ensuring safety enablement and safeguarding training for staff, people using services, carers and families is important.

There are specific problems with regard to lone working. [These are addressed and communicated to staff in our Lone Working Policy].

Emerging research suggests that a rebalancing of social work resources towards frontline activity with people using services, their carers and families could enhance overall organizational risk management and safeguarding. 'Positive risk taking' or 'risk enablement' is central to this philosophy.

Communication which supports risk enablement and safeguarding should be led by the language and understanding of the child. This approach should be a core part of self-directed support, including assessment and regular review of outcomes.

Risk Identification and Assessment

Before we enter into an agreement to provide a service, we will always ensure that a thorough identification and assessment of the prospective service user's needs has been undertaken, both by the referring agency, (if any), and under our own procedures. The assessment will include the identification of young people who are especially vulnerable in general (through, for example, a permanent physical disability) or who have specific areas or times of special vulnerability (such as a recurrent illness or periods when they are alone). The vulnerability of a young person will be re-assessed when the service user's care of plan is reviewed or more frequently if circumstances alter. We will respect the right to the greatest possible degree of independence, which vulnerable young person retain.

Our risk enablement approaches are person-centered and focus on the perspectives and understandings of the person using the service (and their carers and family, where appropriate).

We believe that people may be more at risk if they become lost in a complex, over technical 'risk management' process which does not listen to their voices or account for their individual situations: Our person-centered planning approaches identify what is important to a person from his or her own perspective and find appropriate solutions.

For any situation which might carry a significant risk, a formal risk assessment will be undertaken by a trained and qualified person at the time of the drawing up or revision of the care plan.

Preferably, each risk assessments should list the possible benefits of taking the risk against the possible adverse outcomes, the precautions which should be taken, and the arrangements for reconsidering the matter when appropriate. These factors and the conclusion of the risk assessment will be recorded in the care plan, and the responsibility of the relevant support workers in relation to any risk likely to be faced by the Young person will be clarified. Risk assessments will be reviewed at regular intervals or whenever circumstances change significantly, or a new risk arises.

An environmental risk assessment of the premises a Young person occupies will be undertaken by this organization at the commencement of care provision, or as soon as possible, dependent upon how quickly we have to respond to care need.

The assessment of need will consider all sources of possible danger. These include the service user's own behaviour, illnesses or disabilities, their living environment, specifically dangerous items including medicines, the actions of other people regularly or occasionally present in the home, and the possible intrusion of strangers or others from outside. The agency's limited capacity to react to some of these sources of risk will be recognized and considered in the care plan, but it may, with the service user's permission, be possible to alert other people or agencies who can act to minimize the danger.

If a vulnerable Young person does not follow the action agreed in relation to the assessment of any risk and therefore puts themselves in unacceptable danger, the relevant support worker will communicate this fact to their supervisor who will consider whether any further action is required, for example, further discussion with family members or other professionals, revision of the risk assessment and care plan, or in extreme circumstances the withdrawal of service. Any discussion and the action taken will be fully recorded.

Involving Others in Decisions about Vulnerable Young People

Except for the small minority for whom the lack of capacity to take responsible decisions about their own welfare has been specifically identified and agreed, our Young People retain the right to take decisions about the lifestyles and the risks they choose to take. In decisions about care or risk-taking we will only involve others — carers, family members, friends, representatives or other professionals — with the specific permission of the Young person.

Legislation, Guidance and Reference

This Policy and Procedures have been developed in line with the principles of The Children Act 1989 and The Children Act 2004, and with reference to the following:

Working Together to Safeguard Children, HM Government, (2015).

Mitus Care Services

