

Lomond & Argyll Advocacy Service

Policy Manual

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

FOREWORD

Lomond & Argyll Advocacy Service have a moral and legal obligation to ensure that when we are involved in casework that may affect children and young people our employees and volunteers provide them with the highest possible standard of care.

Through the implementation of a policy for child protection, and support for our advocates, Lomond & Argyll Advocacy Service along with a growing number of Voluntary and Statutory agencies, will maintain the safeguards of good practice which are associated with the organisation.

What is Child Protection?

The Children (Scotland) Act 1995 states that each child has the right to protection from all forms of abuse, neglect or exploitation. It also states that children should have the right to express their views on any issues or decisions affecting them.

The policy will outline the following key areas:

- It recognises the responsibility of all those involved in providing advocacy to safeguard and promote the interests and well being of the children and young people with whom they are working;
- It emphasises the value of working closely in partnership with other agencies to protect children and young people from harm and discrimination;
- It acknowledges that abuse does take place. Consequently, there is both a need to raise awareness and understanding of the main causes of abuse; and also to establish clear, transparent procedures for reporting any suspicions of it happening. This will further safeguard not only the children and young people that we work with, but also the advocates who are working with these clients.

KEY PRINCIPLES

Anyone under the age of 16 should be considered as a young person for the purposes of this policy

The welfare of all young people is paramount

All people, whatever their age, gender, culture, ability, language, religious beliefs, racial origin, and/or sexual identity should be safe from abuse of any kind

It is the responsibility of child protection experts to determine whether abuse has taken place, but it is everyone's responsibility within the advocacy service to report concerns.

All suspicions and allegations of abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately

Individual advocates working with young people will be made aware of good practice in order to ensure that they are not placed in situations where allegations could be made.

Working in partnership with parents/carers is essential for the protection of young people.

Lomond & Argyll Advocacy Service recognises the statutory responsibilities of Social Work, Education, Health and the police in ensuring the welfare of young people and is committed to complying with Local Authority and Health Board Child Protection policies.

RECOGNISING ABUSE

Abuse is a very powerful and emotive term. It is a term used to describe ways in which individuals that they know and trust harm children, often.

It is not always easy to differentiate exactly what constitutes abuse, albeit intentional or unintentional. It is not, therefore, the responsibility of employees or volunteers in the Advocacy Service to determine whether or not abuse is taking place. **It is, however, their responsibility to identify poor practice and possible abuse and to act if they have a concern about the welfare of a young person.**

The four main types of abuse are:

Emotional Abuse

This occurs when individuals persistently fail to show young people due care, love or affection, where a young person may be constantly shouted at, threatened or taunted, or be subjected to sarcasm and unrealistic pressures. There may also be over protection, preventing young people from socialising, or bullying to perform to high expectations. The young person may lose self-confidence and may become withdrawn and nervous.

Indicators

- Low self-esteem
- Decline in concentration levels
- Continual self-depreciation
- Emotional immaturity
- Extremes of behaviour

Abuse by Neglect

This occurs when a young person's essential needs for food, warmth and care fail to be met. Failing to or refusing to provide love and affection could also be deemed as neglect.

Indicators

- Constant hunger and tiredness
- Poor personal hygiene
- Poor state or inappropriate clothing
- Low self-esteem
- Poor peer relationships

Physical Abuse

This occurs when individuals, including some young people, deliberately inflict injuries on a child, or knowingly do not prevent such injuries from being

inflicted. It includes injuries caused by hitting, shaking, squeezing, biting or using excessive force. It also occurs when individuals give young people alcohol, or inappropriate drugs, or fail to supervise their access to these substances.

Indicators

- Current unexplained injuries
- Inappropriate excuses to explain injuries
- Untreated injuries
- Fear of returning home
- Aggression towards others

Sexual Abuse

Girls and boys are sometimes abused by adults, both male and female, who may use young people to meet their own sexual needs. An example would be forcing a child to take part in a sexual activity.

Indicators

- Unexplained changes in behaviour
- Inappropriate sexual awareness
- Engaging in inappropriate sexual behaviour
- Distrust of adults
- Inappropriate language

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

In order that Lomond & Argyll Advocacy Service's Child Protection Policy is implemented effectively, there must be recognition that employees and volunteers must work together to ensure that young people are in a safe environment.

The Role of Lomond & Argyll Advocacy Service:

- To produce a Child Protection Policy
- To monitor the Child Protection Policy
- To provide support, training and guidance for employees and volunteers
- To provide relevant resources to support the Child Protection Policy
- To make decisions on and record all reported cases

RESPONDING TO DISCLOSURE, SUSPICIONS AND ALLEGATIONS

In all cases of reported abuse, the following principles must be adopted:

Listen and Reassure

Do:

- **Stay calm** – do not rush into inappropriate action. React calmly in order not to alarm the young person;
- **Reassure the child** – that they are not to blame and confirm that you understand how difficult it must be to confide;
- **Listen sympathetically** – to what the child says and show that you take them seriously;
- **Keep questions to a minimum** – the law is very strict and child abuse cases have been dismissed where the child has been asked leading questions or words and ideas have been suggested. Only ask questions to clarify;

- **Ensure you clearly understand what the child has said** – in order that the information can be passed on to the appropriate agencies;
- **Consult with your supervisor or line manager** – ensuring that you communicate all the information accurately;
- **Maintain confidentiality** – all incidents will be treated with an open mind and will be handled in a fair and equitable manner. Confidentiality must always be maintained;
- **Ensure the safety of the young person** – if urgent medical attention is required, then call an ambulance, inform the doctors of the concerns and ensure they are aware that this may be a child protection issue.

DO NOT:

- Panic – or allow your feelings to be evident;
- Make promises that you cannot keep and do not promise secrecy – explain that you need to tell other people;
- Make the child repeat the story unnecessarily;
- Delay;
- Speculate or make assumptions;
- Approach the alleged abuser;
- Take sole responsibility.

RECORD

Information passed to external agencies must be as helpful as possible. It will be necessary to make a detailed report at the time of the disclosure. The report should contain the following detail:

- The young person's name, address, date of birth, race, ethnic origin, and any disability or mental health issue they may have;
- Nature of the allegation;
- A description of any injuries/bruising;

- Any observations about the behaviour/emotional state of the young person;
- Times, locations, dates;
- The young person's account in their own words of what has happened;
- Actions that have been taken as a result of your concerns;
- Whether the person writing the report is expressing their own opinion or those of a third party;
- Sign and date;
- Keep a copy;
- Keep a record of the name and designation of the Social Worker or Police Officer to whom your concerns were passed.

DO NOT INVESTIGATE YOURSELF.