

CHAT Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy

Churches Housing Action Team (CHAT) recognises that the welfare of a child is paramount and that respect should be shown for a child's rights, wishes and feelings. CHAT is determined to ensure that all necessary steps are taken to protect from harm those children and young people who we come into contact with through our housing and advice services.

This policy establishes CHAT's position, role and responsibilities and clarifies what is expected from everybody involved within the organisation. It very clearly highlights the importance placed by CHAT in the protection of children and young people.

1. Key Principles

- a. The welfare of the child is paramount
- b. A child is defined as a person under the age of 18 (The Children Act 1989)
- c. Every child and young person should be able to live in a safe environment and be protected from abuse. This is the responsibility of all staff.

CHAT will take responsibility for:

- d. Safeguarding the welfare of all children and young people we come into contact with by protecting them from physical, sexual, emotional or financial abuse, neglect and bullying.
- e. Respecting and promoting the rights, wishes and feelings of children and young people
- f. Recognising that all children, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious beliefs and/or sexual identity, have the right to protection from abuse
- g. The recruitment, induction, training and supervision of all volunteers and staff members so that they adopt best practice in safeguarding and protecting children and young people from abuse, taking into account the Protection of Children Act 1999 and Working Together to Safeguard Children 1999
- h. Ensuring all suspicions and allegations of abuse are taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately
- i. Regularly reviewing the policy.
- j. Ensuring all staff who have contact with children or young people receive training from the Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB) when joining the organisation and then to be refreshed every three years.
- k. Promoting Good Practice

Good Practice means:

- Always working in an open environment 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
- Keeping up to date with training, qualifications and insurance.
- Reporting all suspicions and allegations to the named person for child protection

2. Definitions of abuse, signs and symptoms.

- a. Child abuse consists of anything which individuals, institutions, or processes do or fail to do which directly or indirectly harms children or damages their prospects of safe and healthy development into adulthood.
- b. The main categories of child abuse are physical, sexual, emotional, financial and neglect or bullying. Staff can refer to the document 'What to do if you are worried your child is being abused' for more information. **See Appendix for more details on categories of abuse**
- c. Staff should be aware that children and young people may show physical signs of abuse or neglect, they may make disclosures, or they may exhibit different sorts of behaviour, which may be out of character and may indicate abuse. For example, aggressive behaviour, running away, sexual promiscuity, self-harm and drug abuse.
- d. Where the behaviour of a young person is becoming challenging, staff should follow the CHAT policy and procedure for Managing Challenging Behaviour and/or Anti-bullying and Harassment.
- e. Staff should be aware that a picture of signs and symptoms of abuse may indicate organised sexual exploitation and trafficking that might have wider and more serious implications.
- f. Staff should discuss their concerns or suspicions with the Designated Child Protection Officer or Deputy.

3. Staff training

- a. All new frontline staff receive induction training (Level 1 LSCB training) on how to identify abuse when it occurs thereby raising awareness of the need for child protection, and enabling them to have a knowledge and understanding of the relevant procedures for reporting concerns.
- b. All frontline staff will then receive Level 2 training with the LSCB once Level 1 has been completed. This is refreshed every 3 years.

- c. The Designated Officer and Deputy are trained to Level 3 LSCB, which is also refreshed every 3 years.

4. Role of Designated Child Protection Officer

The Designated Child Protection Officer is Angela Ford

The Designated CP Officer can be approached by any member of staff about a safeguarding concern of a child or young person. They will:

- assist with your induction when you join the organisation
- listen to your concerns about a child or young person
- listen to your concerns and allegations made against volunteers, staff, including managers and trustees about a child or young person
- keep your concerns confidential at all times and pass information on where necessary, only on an agreed needs to know basis in accordance with Government Information Sharing Protocol
- report your concerns to MASH (see below) where appropriate
- report your concerns on to LADO (see below) where appropriate
- liaise with officers dealing with reported cases where required
- ensure staff involved fully cooperate with recommendations of official bodies such as Police, Social Services or Domestic Violence Officers
- record / log all reports and concerns and store in designated confidential place – see section 13.
- keep the Coordinator informed of concerns, reports or investigations as required, keeping names and details confidential, as appropriate.

5. What you should do if a young person reports abuse to you:

- React calmly
- Reassure the child that they were right to tell you
- Keep questions to an absolute minimum to ensure a clear and accurate understanding of what has been said. Don't ask about explicit details
- Reassure but do not promise confidentiality, which might not be feasible in the light of subsequent developments
- 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
- The report should include as much of the following as possible:
 - 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 of those of someone else.

- The nature of the allegation, including dates, times and other relevant factors
- 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 behavioral concerns
- Details of witnesses to the incident
- The child's account, if it can be given, of what has happened and how it occurred

We recognise 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 judgment about any action to be taken.

6. Reporting a disclosure, concern or allegation

Once a suspicion, allegation or report of disclosure has come to light YOU MUST report it to the Designated Officer

Angela Ford, the Designated Child Protection Officer.

She will be responsible for assisting you and where necessary ensuring a report of your concerns is made to either Early help Co-ordination Centre (triage system), or direct to MASH (Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub) if appropriate – see below - or LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer) depending on the nature of the suspicion or allegation – see section 8 & 9.

Devon Early help Co-ordination Centre on 0345 155 1071

E-mail: earlyhelp@devon.gov.uk

PO Box 723, Exeter, EX1 9QS

Devon MASH (Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub) on 0345 155 1071 or 0845 6000 388 (Emergency out of hours number)

E-mail: mashsecure@devon.gcsx.gov.uk

Please be aware of the following when contacting MASH:

- As an agency CHAT is expected to make the client aware that a referral to MASH is being made. We are unable to make an “anonymous” referral, and the client would be informed of the source of the referral.
- In the event of a CHAT client making us aware of a concern about a child, the client should be encouraged to contact MASH directly if they wish to remain anonymous as CHAT cannot make an anonymous referral on their behalf.

- If a member of staff is unsure if a full MASH referral is required, they can contact the Professionals consultation line for MASH on 0345 155 1071, and can then discuss with a member of staff there whether a full referral needs to be made. If they advise that a full MASH referral is not required please record carefully the name of the adviser, time of call and advice given. If a MASH referral is advised, then proceed to a full referral.

For Looked after Children from outside the area, staff may need to report a concern or incident to the Authority in that area. Details of the Authority will be contained on the young person's file.

If you consider a young person to be in danger of **immediate** harm you may wish to consider in the first instance contacting the Police on **999 or 112** from a mobile

When a MASH enquiry is made MASH will:

- Develop a document recording the concern information and all other available related information in the Hub within agreed timescales. A children's social care Manager will make an informed decision using all of the available information.
- Develop concern information into a children's social care referral if services are required under Section 17 or 47 of The Children Act 1989.
- Liaise with the Early Response Service for children and young people who need services but do not meet The Children Act 1989 threshold.
- Provide consultation about thresholds, appropriate action to be undertaken and services.
- MASH will contribute to improved outcomes for safeguarding children because it has the ability to swiftly collate and share information held by various organisations' and to provide a multi-agency risk assessment of each case for 'actual or likely harm'.

7. Reporting allegations against trustees, staff or volunteers

- a. Allegations or concerns against volunteers, staff, including managers and trustees, constitutes any behaviour which is outside of normal professional boundaries or working practises.
- b. You MUST report any concerns to your line manager or the Designated Child Protection Officer where staff, volunteers or trustees have behaved in a way that has harmed, or may have harmed, a child or young person, or, possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child or young person, or, behaved in an inappropriate way towards a child or

young person which may indicate that they are unsuitable to work with children or young people.

- c. You should not:
- attempt to deal with the situation yourself;
 - make assumptions, offer alternative explanations or diminish the seriousness of the behaviour or alleged incidents;
 - keep the information to yourself or promise confidentiality;
 - take any action that might undermine any future investigation or disciplinary procedure, such as interviewing the alleged victim or potential witnesses, or informing the alleged perpetrator.
- d. LADO Officers (Local Authority Designated Officers) at Devon County Council provide advice and guidance regarding concerns about a person working or volunteering with children and young people who may have behaved inappropriately, or if information has been received that may constitute an allegation.
You may contact a Duty LADO **on Exeter (01392) 384964** just to seek advice
- A Duty LADO will respond to your request for advice within 2 working days.
 - If, following that advice, the Duty LADO considers a LADO referral is necessary, you must inform your line manager or Designated Officer unless it involves that member of staff or would compromise another. In these circumstances you should inform the Coordinator or, in their absence, the Chair of Trustees.
 - Please be aware that if you have discussed an incident/allegation with a Duty LADO Officer it may not be the same LADO proceeding with the referral.
- e. The LADO and designated manager should consider:
- whether further details are needed to enable a decision about how to proceed and
 - how and by whom they may be gathered,
 - how and by whom the parents or carers of the child or young person concerned should be informed of the allegation, if they are not already aware
 - how and when the alleged perpetrator should be informed. This should always be done as soon as possible after consultation with the LADO, but if there is a need for a strategy discussion or it is clear that the police or social services need to be involved in the decision about what can be disclosed, the accused person should not be informed until it has been agreed by all.

8. Procedure once an incident has occurred or an allegation has been made.

- a. Once you have been made aware of an incident/allegation YOU MUST discuss the details with your line manager or the Designated Child Protection Officer and record/log the details. The signs and symptoms of the alleged abuse should be viewed objectively and impartially when a formal report is being considered.
- b. If the allegation involves either your line manager or the Designated Child Protection Officers you should go to the Coordinator or, if they are not available, the Chair of Trustees. Please consult CHAT Whistleblowing Policy for procedures for reporting concerns/allegations outside of normal line management.
- c. If it is considered that a LADO referral is needed, the line manager or Designated Officer will decide, depending on the circumstances, who is the most appropriate person to make the referral. There may be a number of factors involved in making this decision. The referral needs to be made within one working day of receiving a report or allegation.
- d. The Coordinator will be informed that a referral has been made, unless they are involved in the allegation, in which case the Chair of Trustees will be informed.
- e. All relevant information should be gathered to include:
 - The details of the alleged perpetrator and any witnesses.
 - the child/children's' details, as LADO procedures cannot begin without this information.
 - your name, your organisation's address and the role you have in your organisation will also be required.
 - times and dates of any other incidents or concerns about the child or young person or the member of staff/volunteer concerned together with actions taken and outcomes

Once this information is available, please ring the

Local Authority Designated Officer on Exeter (01392) 384964

If you consider an incident or allegation to be an emergency, and that a child/ children may be in danger of **immediate** harm, you may wish to consider in the first instance contacting either the Police on **999** (or **112** from a mobile phone) or the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub on **0345 155 1071** or via email **mashsecure@devon.gcsx.gov.uk**

- f. The LADO Administrator will take the details of the incident/allegation and contact the Duty LADO to pass them the details of the incident/allegation.
- g. A Duty LADO will respond to your referral within 2 working days. They may either contact you or the Designated Officer to discuss the incident/allegation or they may also need to initially consult with the Police and/or other key agencies in order to determine the next course of action.
- h. The Duty LADO will give advice on how to proceed and/or recommend a LADO Strategy meeting for further investigation, which will include Police consultation.
- i. If the decision is to set up a LADO Strategy Meeting, the LADO Administrator will send you details informing you of the meeting date, time and venue and also of the LADO chairing the meeting, who would be proceeding with the case.
- j. The person reporting the initial allegation or concern should be kept informed of what action is taken taking account of information sharing protocols and the need to maintain confidentiality.
- k. The Coordinator, or Chair of Trustees will inform the alleged perpetrator or person, about whom there is a concern, about the allegation or concern as soon as possible after consulting with the LADO and in accordance with any restrictions on information sharing that may be imposed by the police or social care. They will be told how enquiries will be conducted, possible outcomes and any disciplinary action that may be taken.
- l. Once an investigation has been completed and disciplinary action is recommended, the decision to hold a hearing will be made within 2 working days and the hearing itself will be held within 15 working days.
- m. If you feel your concerns are not being heard or acted upon to your satisfaction you can raise your concerns in accordance with the **CHAT Whistleblowing Policy**.

9. Information sharing.

Where it is considered necessary to share information, staff should follow the following guidelines;

- a. Explain openly and honestly what information you will share, with whom and why. The only time that you should not do this is if letting them know may leave someone at risk of significant harm.
- b. You should respect the wishes of the young person and family members involved if they do not want information shared unless someone will be placed at risk of significant harm if you don't share the information.
- c. If in doubt speak to the Designated Officer or seek general advice from MASH or LADO.
- d. Make sure you have an up to date signed Disclosure Form giving consent to share. If you decide to share information without consent, you should keep the young person and family, where relevant, informed of the steps you have taken, unless doing so puts the child or young person at greater risk.
- e. Make sure that the information that you are sharing is accurate, up to date, necessary for the purpose for which you are sharing it and only shared with those who need to know it. The information should also be shared securely. Having decided to share information you need not tell everyone everything.
- f. You should always record the reason for your decision, whether you shared the information or not.

10. Ongoing support of the child / young person

- a. Sometimes the relevant authorities may be unable to get involved. This could be because the situation is not serious enough, or because there isn't yet enough information. In this case, you should continue to follow up your concerns and collect further information. This may mean reviewing your support plan or risk assessments for the young person or family. Do not stop until you are sure that the child or young person's needs are being met or that there is no need to be concerned. If you feel your concerns are not being heard please consult the CHAT Whistleblowing Policy.
- b. Where an investigation is being carried out, staff should ensure that the welfare of the child or young person remains paramount. Measures should be put in place to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the young person in full cooperation with any course of action recommended by LADO or MASH. Support plans and risk assessments should be updated as required. In doing so, staff should respect and promote the rights, wishes and feelings of the young person.
- c. Where sexual exploitation and/or trafficking is suspected, careful consideration should be given to the effect any action might have on the outcome of any investigation and/or the safety of the child or young person. Staff should cooperate fully with relevant authorities ensuring that information sharing protocols and Risk Management Procedures are closely followed.

11. Staff Supervision

Regular staff supervision sessions are mandatory for all members of staff in the organisation and child protection and safeguarding is routinely discussed during supervision sessions with frontline staff. Staff responsible for supervision receive training on supervision skills. Staff are also offered external supervision which is taken up at the discretion of each staff member.

12. Recording and storage of confidential information

All members of staff have responsibility for highlighting all child protection concerns / allegations on the client's individual record on the AdvicePro Database under 'social issue'. However, no confidential information or named individuals should be recorded here.

All confidential records related to concerns and allegations, or child protection reports, reviews and case conference notes, are stored securely in the designated location by the Designated Officer under the control of the Coordinator.

13. Additional information advice and guidance

For further information please see www.devonsafeguarding.org.

This Policy should be viewed in conjunction with:

CHAT Managing Challenging Behaviour Policy
CHAT Whistleblowing Policy
CHAT Anti-Bullying and Harassment Policy

Appendix

Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child.

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or unvalued

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, including prostitution, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative (e.g. rape, buggery or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts. They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual on-line images, watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born it may involve a parent failing to:

- provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment)
- protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger
- ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-givers)
- ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.

It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.