

Safeguarding Policy 2023



19/08/25

Muirhead Outreach Project

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Policy Statement

The purpose and scope of this policy statement

Safeguarding: to protect from harm or damage with an appropriate measure.

Child Protection - The processes involved in consideration, assessment and planning of required action, together with the actions themselves, where there are concerns that a child may be at risk of harm from abuse, neglect or exploitation.

Safeguarding - This is a much wider concept than child protection and refers to promoting the welfare of children, young people and protected adults. It encompasses protecting from maltreatment, preventing impairment of their health or development, ensuring that they are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care, and taking action to enable all children, young people and protected adults to have the best outcomes. Child protection is part of this definition and refers to activities undertaken to prevent children suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm, promoting the welfare of children, young people and protected adults.

Muirhead Outreach Project strongly believes that every child or young person and adult should never experience abuse of any kind and has the right to be protected from abuse, neglect, and exploitation. The Project has a responsibility to promote the welfare of all service users and to keep them safe. We are committed to practice in a way that protects them.

As a family outreach agency, Muirhead Outreach Project must act to protect the children, young people and adults with whom the Project works, where there is reason to believe they have been abused or neglected or likely to be so treated. The Project recognises that encountering abuse or neglect will not be uncommon in its work because it engages with vulnerable children and young people as well as families under stress.

Muirhead actively promotes the welfare and wellbeing of its employees and of all children, young people and adults whom staff encounter during any form of engagement across their work.

In particular, as an organisation we are committed to ensuring:

- children's and young people's rights to care and protection from harm in any form are firmly upheld as outlined within the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).
- Adults' personal interests, dignity and care, protection from harm are safeguarded;
- we fulfil our legislative duties related to safeguarding, including child protection;
- the interests of all staff are safeguarded as they go about their work and engage with service users of all ages;
- and all staff within Muirhead are suitably trained in how to respond to safeguarding matters.

As a voluntary organisation, MOP works with children and families on a voluntary basis. This means that MOP's normal approach is one of partnership, entailing the building of trust and mutual respect with children and young people, and their parents and carers. MOP recognises that it is crucial that it works in cooperation with statutory bodies. Project staff and volunteers must be clear about their responsibilities and the practical steps they must take to prevent or stop abuse or neglect.

The purpose of this policy is:

- to protect all children and young people and adults who receive services from Muirhead Outreach Project;
- to provide staff and volunteers with the overarching principles that guide our approach to safeguarding.

This policy and the accompanying procedures have been drawn up based on law and guidance that seeks to protect children and young people in Scotland, specifically the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, as well as recognising the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998. The policy and procedures are written to be in line with National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland issued by the Scottish Government 2014 and the principles that underpin this guidance: Getting it right for every child (GIRFEC)¹; the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child²1991; Children's Charter³ and the Framework for Standards⁴

Principles of this Policy: The welfare and rights of all children, young people and protected adults are always the primary concern; Protecting children, young people and protected adults is everyone's responsibility; Every child, young person and protected adult should be treated as an individual and has a right to a positive sense of identity. UNCRC Article 8 (right to preserve identity); All children, young people and protected adults have the right to be protected from all forms of abuse, neglect and exploitation. UNCRC Article 19 (protection from all forms of abuse or neglect); All children, young people and protected adults have the right to express their views on matters affecting them.

To promote these principles, we will: treat everyone with respect and encourage children, young people and protected adults to respect others; promote the rights, including privacy and dignity, of children, young people and protected adults as defined by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC); respect confidentiality and only share information and concerns about children, young people and protected adults with those who need to know; take action to stop any inappropriate verbal or physical behaviour and emotional abuse, including bullying; treat all concerns and allegations seriously and respond appropriately, operating within our agreed policy, procedures and guidance; and refer our concerns, not investigate.

Muirhead Outreach Project believes that:

- The health, safety and well-being of children and young people and adults are paramount.
- all service users, regardless of sex, age, disability, gender, racial heritage, religious belief, sexual orientation or identity, have a right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse.
- some individuals are additionally vulnerable because of the impact of previous experiences, their level of dependency, communication needs or other issues
- Working in partnership with children, young people, their parents, carers and other agencies is essential in promoting young people's welfare.

We will seek to keep children and young people safe by:

- valuing them, listening to and respecting them
- adopting child protection practices through procedures and a code of conduct for staff and volunteers
- developing and implementing an effective e-safety policy and related procedures
- providing effective management for staff and volunteers through supervision, support and training
- recruiting staff and volunteers safely, ensuring all necessary checks are made
- sharing information about child protection and good practice with children and young people, parents, staff and volunteers
- sharing concerns with agencies who need to know and involving parents and children appropriately.

Recruitment and Training

This policy aims to ensure that: Muirhead Outreach Project operates a robust and safe selection and appointment process which requires all employees who have opportunities to engage regularly with children in the course of their normal duties be members of the Protecting Vulnerable Groups (PVG) Scheme and to participate in relevant professional learning; during all forms of engagement, we create a safe environment for children, young people and adults at risk, and the adults who work with them; Muirhead staff are equipped with the information, knowledge, support and guidance to keep children, young people and adults at risk, safe and protected; and we take account of local inter-agency child protection guidelines and our local authority's legal obligation to safeguard and protect any group at risk, including children and protected adults.

All staff will be vetted under Disclosure Scotland as part of the recruitment process. Applicants are invited to complete an application form. Under interview, they are further invited to perform a short presentation for at least one trustee and the project manager. We request a minimum of two references.

All staff and volunteers will undertake training with the NSPCC, and other eLearning to inform of child protection and safeguarding.

All Staff and volunteers will undertake in-house training on Child Protection, safeguarding and GIRFECC, this training will be yearly and as part of CPD. The manager and Senior Support Worker are qualified to carry out this training.

All staff will be trained to understand, recognise, and respond to all forms of abuse and harm, including;

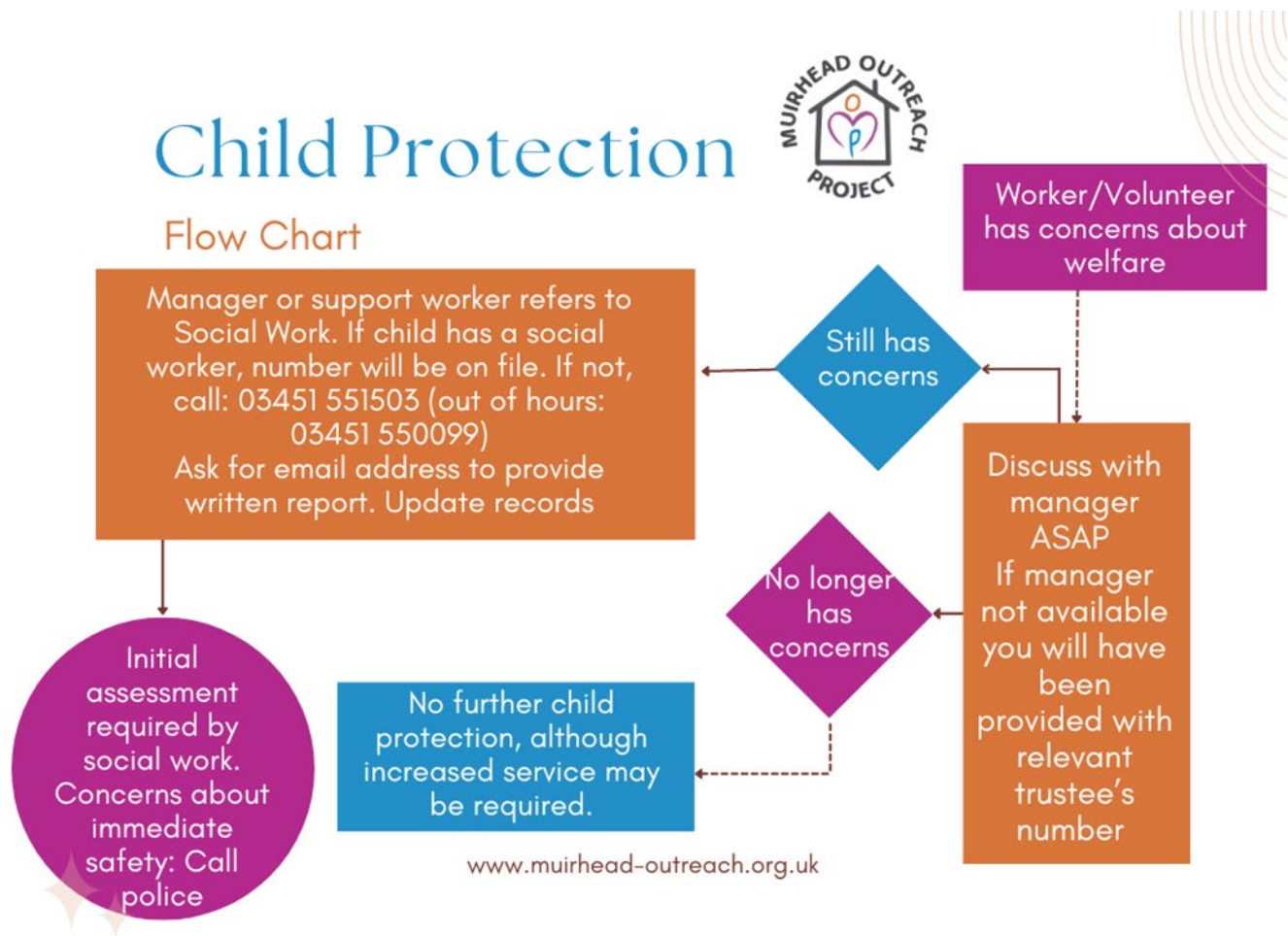
- Sexual
- Physical
- Emotional Neglect
- Domestic abuse
- Online Grooming

- FGM
- Human trafficking
- Sexual exploitation
- Criminal Exploitation

No matter what other demands or pressures exist, all members of staff and volunteers at Muirhead Outreach Project will ensure that their first consideration is to secure the protection of the children/young people they are working with.

All concerns will be reported and recorded. All staff will work within trauma informed practice. All concerns will be followed and dealt with appropriately by the manager.

All staff will be aware of the procedures flow chart.



Reporting and procedures

Identifying concerns

Disclosure

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.

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.

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.

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

It's vital that anyone who works with children and young people undertaking this journey is able to provide them with the support they need.

How disclosure happens

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.

Children and young people may not always be aware that they are disclosing abuse through their actions and behaviour.

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 they:

- are afraid they will get in trouble with or upset their family
- want to deflect blame in case of family difficulties as a result of the disclosure
- feel ashamed and/or guilty
- need to protect themselves from having to relive traumatic events.

When children do speak out it is often many years after the abuse has taken place (McElvaney, 2015).

Barriers to disclosure

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

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

(Mental Health Foundation and Camelot Foundation, 2006).

Not all children and young people realise they have experienced abuse, for example if they have been groomed.

Spotting the signs of abuse

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 (Allnock and Miller, 2013; Cossar et al, 2013).

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.

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.

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 (Cossar et al, 2013).

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.

Responding to disclosures

Research shows these three key interpersonal skills that help a child feel they are being listened to and taken seriously:

- show you care, help them open up: Give your full attention to the child or young person and keep your body language open and encouraging. Be compassionate, be understanding and reassure them their feelings are important. Phrases such as 'you've shown such courage today' help.
- take your time, slow down: Respect pauses and don't interrupt the child – let them go at their own pace. Recognise and respond to their body language. And remember that it may take several conversations for them to share what's happened to them.

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- show you understand, reflect back: Make it clear you're interested in what the child is telling you. Reflect back what they've said to check your understanding – and use their language to show it's their experience.

If a child tells you they are experiencing abuse, it's important to reassure them that they've done the right thing in telling you. Make sure they know that abuse is never their fault.

Never talk to the alleged perpetrator about the child's disclosure. This could make things a lot worse for the child.

Non-biased approach

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

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 (Child Protection Resource, 2021; Transparency Project, 2018).

This means it's important to maintain an unbiased approach when responding to disclosures and follow your organisation's procedures to ensure each case is treated in a fair and transparent manner and that the child gets the protection and support that they need.

Making notes

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.

Include:

- the child's details (name, age, address)

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- 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.

See the flowchart on page 7 for the reporting process.

Procedures for managing allegations against staff

Any allegation or concern that an employee or volunteer has behaved in a way that has harmed, or may have harmed, a child will be taken seriously and dealt with sensitively and promptly, regardless of where the alleged incident took place by the safeguarding officer; Shannon Wright.

Depending on the situation, an appropriate response may involve:

- the police investigating a possible criminal offence
- local child protection services making enquiries and/or assessing whether a child is in need of support
- Disclosure Scotland
- our organisation will follow the relevant disciplinary procedures with individuals concerned.

We will also make sure any children involved are given appropriate support.

Concerns must be reported to the police, social work or the project manager. Contact details are on page 13. All staff are subject to checks by Disclosure Scotland.

Useful Contacts:

Shannon Wright –Manager: manager@muirhead-outreach.org.uk; 07765 991728

Kylie Christie – Chair of Trustees: KCK9@outlook.com; 07850 341129

Social Work: sw.enquiries@fife.gov.uk 03451 551503 or, out of hours: 03451 550099

Police: 999 or 101

*The designated safe-guarding person/child protection officer for Muirhead is **Shannon Wright**.*

We are committed to reviewing our policy and good practice annually.

This policy was last reviewed on:19 August 2025.....(date)

Signed: 

Date:19/08/25.....

Other policies linked:

- *Recruitment*
- *Staff Handbook*
- *Grievance procedure*
- *Whistleblowing*
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