

KINGSTON MENCAP

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

1. PREAMBLE

- 1.1. The Kingston Mencap Child Protection policy and procedure sets a standard for best practice with children and their families.
- 1.2. Good practice in child protection is about how club leaders and volunteers and Trustee committee deal individually and collectively with children and their families. All individuals and clubs are expected to comply with these procedures.
- 1.3. Kingston Mencap's Child Protection Policy details responsibilities, working practices and procedures for implementation, complementary to the above procedures. At all times the emphasis must be on a multi-disciplinary and multi-agency approach and commitment to the protection, support and safeguarding of children from harm as per Kingston upon Thames Child Protection policy.

2. PRINCIPLES

- 2.1. The child's welfare is always paramount and this overrides all other consideration. All children, without exception, have the right of protection from abuse.
- 2.2. All allegations and concerns of abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately.
- 2.3. Actions necessary to protect a child where there is suspicion of abuse will take priority over all other work.
- 2.4. Children have a right to be heard, to be listened to and be taken seriously taking account of their age and understanding. They will be consulted and involved in all matters and decisions which may affect their lives, as appropriate.
- 2.5. The process of protecting the child from harm will be carried out with the parents/carers involvement whenever possible and they will be encouraged to exercise their responsibilities. Where there is a conflict the child's interests remain paramount.
- 2.6. Supporting parents/carers to prevent harm or further harm and alerting them to the dangers for children is the core of Kingston Mencap's child protection work.
- 2.7. The child's race, culture, religion and language, as well as gender and disability, are considered a priority. All actions taken will take account of the specific needs of the child and the written record will identify these.
- 2.8. When Kingston Mencap club leaders or volunteers are working with children they will ensure that they are familiar with the Kingston Mencap Child Protection Procedures.
- 2.9. When Kingston Mencap club leader or volunteers suspect that a child is or is likely to suffer significant harm, this will be reported to the Kingston Child Protection Team, in line with the guidance outlined in this policy. All adults representing Kingston Mencap have a responsibility to report concerns in line with Kingston Mencap's internal procedures and attend Child Protection Training sessions to ensure correct use of all procedures.

- 2.10. Communication with the child, the parents/carers and all the professional disciplines involved is of the utmost importance.
- 2.11. Each agency will have an understanding of one another's professional values and accept each other's role, power and responsibility.

3. GOOD PRACTICE

- 3.1. The Chair must ensure that all workers are familiar with the Kingston Inter-Agency Child Protection Procedures.
- 3.2. Staff and volunteers are advised not to make unnecessary physical contact with children. However, there may be occasions when physical contact is unavoidable, such as providing comfort and reassurance for a distressed child, or physical support in play. However, it must be emphasised that comforting a distressed child is the responsibility of the child's parents/carers.
- 3.3. To prevent harm immediate intervention by any adult may be required, but sanction of the child's behaviour is the responsibility of their parents/carers.
- 3.4. Tickling and wrestling games should be avoided at all times.
- 3.5. Toileting and changing of nappies is the responsibility of the child's parents/carers.
- 3.6. Club leaders and volunteers, will as part of Kingston Mencap's child protection work, help children learn to say NO if they don't want to be touched. Older children may need extra help to work out how to seek comfort from an adult without clinging to them.
- 3.7. Should an adult other than the parent/carer need to be alone with a child they must alert others to the reason before doing so.
- 3.8. A sessional log to be kept, primarily to record achievements and activities, but also to note behaviour and concerns where appropriate (including what seemed to cause behaviour of concern, how long it lasted and how it was dealt with) and any details of falls or bumps.

4. PRACTISE NEVER TO BE SANCTIONED

- 4.1. NO smacking is allowed at any time, its club sessions or during group activities arranged by Kingston Mencap off site.
- 4.2. No shouting or swearing is allowed at any time within the club, its grounds or during group activities arranged by Kingston Mencap off site.

5. RESPONDING TO SUSPICIONS AND ALLEGATIONS

- 5.1. The Club Leader is the designated member of staff responsible for coordinating action and liaising with other agencies, in consultation with Kingston Mencap Chair of Trustees.

5.2. There are three levels of action:-

- 5.2.1. Where a club leader or volunteer feels there are factors that cause concern, consult with the line manager or member of staff responsible for the activity session. They have a responsibility to make the Chair aware of concerns.
- 5.2.2. If it is felt that concerns are insufficient for further action, continue to **observe**:
 - Think more about the situation;
 - Look out for other factors or events;
 - Talk in confidence to internal and interagency colleagues that also have contact with the child.
- 5.2.3. If factors lead to a feeling that a child may be at risk or being abused, but you are unsure what action to take, **consult**:
 - As above, plus;
 - Discuss concerns further with the Club leader and Kingston Mencap Chair of Trustee committee;
 - Consult with Kingston Social Services Child Protection Team for advice, telephone number 020 8547 6587 or the Emergency Duty Team out of hours 0208770 5000
- 5.2.4. If it is believed that there are significant concerns and that an enquiry into the well-being of the child is necessary, **refer to Social Services**:
 - As above, plus;
 - Refer to the Child Protection Team, telephone number 0208547 6587 following up in writing within 48 hours.
- 5.3. Allegations against Kingston Mencap club leader or volunteers must be dealt with within the Kingston Child Protection Procedures.
 - 5.3.1 Some allegations arise in the form of complaints about poor care by carers, it is important that these are seen from the perspective of expectations of the caring role in question.
 - 5.3.2 Support for the staff member or volunteer through an investigation is important, but must be kept separate from any investigating role. Kingston Mencap will give consideration to the need for independent support through an investigation if the worker or volunteer so wishes.
 - 5.3.3. It may be decided that it is not appropriate for the staff member or volunteer to return to work until the allegation has been investigated. If this is the case then staff members will usually be suspended on full pay during the investigation. This is in no way a judgement about the outcome of the investigation.
- 5.4. The Operational Manager must ensure further contact with the Child Protection Team contact person, to enquire the result of the investigation, to ascertain whether a case conference is to be held and if so, details of date, time and venue to ensure Kingston Mencap's attendance. Written confirmation from the Child Protection Team should always be sought by the Operational Manager. If this is not forthcoming, the Operational Manager should write formally stating his/her understanding of the position.

- 5.5. If there is uncertainty about a situation, telephone the Children's "Ask Team" on 0208547 5888 for informal advice.
- 5.6. At all stages the parents/carers must be informed of actions taken.

6. ENSURING CONFIDENTIALITY

- 6.1. Where there are concerns, specifics are not to be talked about openly. Any concerns are to be raised in private with the club leader or member of staff responsible for the activity session.
- 6.2. People aware of the concern need to be recorded with the details in the session log.
- 6.3. Disclosure of information must only be on a need to know basis, where disclosure is proportionate to the need to protect the welfare of a child to whom the confidential information relates.

7. STAFF AND VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT

- 7.1. All staff and volunteers working for Kingston Mencap will need to complete a full recruitment process, involving completion of an application form giving details of past and relevant work (including reasons for leaving), an interview, provide two referees and have an enhanced Police Check from the Criminal Records Bureau.
- 7.2. References will be actively pursued before employment commences. Pre-written references are not acceptable.
- 7.3. All staff and volunteers will be required to attend all sessions of an induction programme, including health & safety procedures, child protection procedures and good practice.
- 7.4. All staff and volunteers will have an agreed probationary period, with agreed aims for this period and an appraisal at the conclusion. Knowledge of the child protection procedures needs to be demonstrated at the appraisal.

APPENDIX 1

THE NATURE OF CHILD ABUSE

Somebody may abuse a child by inflicting harm or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused in a family, in an institution or in a community setting; by those known to them or, more rarely, by a stranger.

PHYSICAL ABUSE can range from over chastisement, slapping with the hand, a belt, a stick or other object, to shaking a child, punching or throwing a child across the room. Children can be burnt and/or scalded. Children have died as a result of deliberate physical injury by parents or other carers. Physical abuse can be anywhere along the continuum between acute and chronic, short or long term. The abuse may be perpetrated by parents, other carers or siblings.

Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scolding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. 'Munchausen Syndrome by Proxy' may also constitute physical abuse, whereby a parent or carers feigns the symptoms of, or deliberately causes ill health in a child.

Be especially concerned about:

- Any injuries at all – even small bruises – to young babies who are not yet able to move independently.
- Injuries which do not match the explanations given for them.
- Bruises in places you would not normally expect to find them, in soft tissue, for example rather than bony prominence.
- Bruises which have a distinctive shape or pattern, like hand prints, grasp or finger marks or belt marks.
- Burns or scalds with clear outlines.
- Bite marks – bruises like “love-bites”.
- Bruising in or around the mouth, especially in babies.

SEXUAL ABUSE is the involvement of a child or adolescent in sexual activities they do not understand, cannot give consent to and which are not acceptable in our society. This includes inappropriate touching, obscene photographs, child pornography as well as attempted or actual sexual intercourse or buggery. Sexual abuse is usually long term and escalating in severity. Whilst some children are abused by strangers, most are abused within the family or by someone known to the family. The perpetrator can be male or female, adult, adolescent or younger. The abuser may use different ways to persuade the child to co-operate such as bribery, threats or physical force.

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative or non-penetrative acts. They may include

non-contact activities, such as involving children looking at pornographic material or watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

Often sexual abuse does not cause any outward signs of physical injury. It can happen to boys as well as girls and to children from any age, from birth to 18 years old. For many children abuse is a normal part of their lives and they may not show any outward signs of ill-treatment. UK evidence suggests disabled children are at increased risk of abuse or neglect.

Be especially concerned about a child who:

- Exhibits sexually explicit behaviour
- Has inappropriate sexual knowledge for his or her age
- Attempts suicide or self-inflicts injuries
- Repeatedly runs away from home

EMOTIONAL ABUSE ranges from rejecting a child, refusing to show a child love or affection, or deliberately making a child unhappy by continually belittling her/him or verbally abusing him/her. Conversely some parents may be so over protective and possessive that they prevent normal social contact or normal physical activity. Emotional abuse is usually chronic and long term. It can be perpetrated by parents/carers or siblings.

Emotional abuse is the persistent ill-treatment of a child as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to the child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may involve causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. A child living with domestic violence is also suffering emotional harm. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill-treatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

Be especially concerned about a child who is:

- Continually withdrawn and depressed
- Runs away or is frightened to go home
- Is persistently blamed for things that go wrong
- Is made to carry out tasks inappropriate to their age
- Is not allowed to do normal childhood activities
- Displays excessive fear of their parents or carers
- Is excessively clingy and tearful
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NEGLECT can range from ignoring a child's developmental needs to not feeding or clothing her/him adequately and/or not supervising her/him adequately. It is usually chronic and long term.

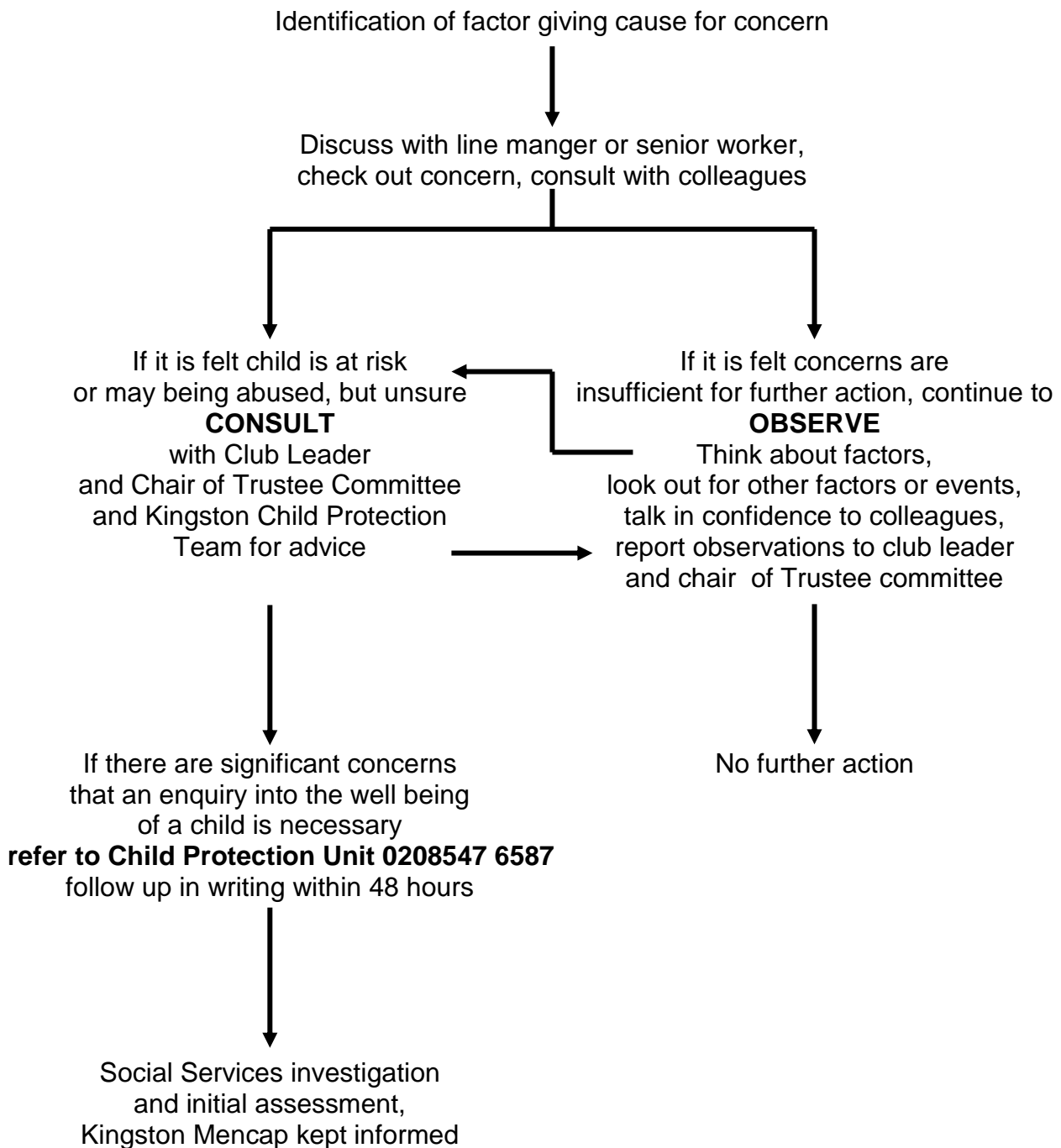
Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. It may involve the parent or carer failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, failing to protect a child from physical harm or danger, or the failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of a child's basic emotional needs.

Be especially concerned about a child who:

- Is constantly hungry, greedy or stealing food.
- Has lingering illnesses which have not been treated.
- Is continually smelly, scruffy and dirty.
- Is often dressed in inadequate or unsuitable clothing for the weather conditions.
- Suffers repeated accidents, suggesting lack of proper supervision.
- Is constantly tired
- Does not respond when given attention or, on the other hand, one who craves attention and affection from any adult

APPENDIX 2

FLOW CHART OF ACTION FOLLOWING A CAUSE FOR CONCERN



See Kingston Child Protection Procedures Section 2.1 for referral flow chart and Social Services procedure.

See DoH publication 'What to do if you're worried a child is being abused, summary' page 10 for referral flow chart required by Government.

Kingston Mencap's Child Protection Policy

APPENDIX THREE

LISTENING TO THE CHILD

If a child says that he or she is being abused or provides information that suggests that they are being abused, the person receiving that information should:

- Be calm
- Do not make promises you cannot keep, for example telling the child that you won't tell anyone else, or say everything will be alright.
- Discuss with the child who needs to be told about the situation.
- Take what the child says seriously.
- Ask questions to clarify understanding of what the child has said. Do not interrogate the child. Ask open questions e.g. "who hit you?". Do not introduce any information that the child has not volunteered,
- Let the child know you understand what they have said and that you will act upon it.
- Keep the child informed of what is happening.

APPENDIX 4

SUMMARY OF AGENCY ROLES AND CONTACT DETAILS

Area Child Protection Committee – oversees the child protection system, and made up of managers from all the key Agencies who work with children and families in Kingston. Divided into 3 sub-groups to further the work of Child Protection: Training, Policy & Procedures, Prevention.

Kingston Child Protection Team – carry out assessments, investigations, support children and families. Provide informal advice and maintain interagency links pertaining to child protection practice.

Early Years Development & Child Care Partnership – Provide advice on child minding and day care provision, as well as training (including child protection training) for persons who involved in child minding or day care provision.

NSPCC – national charity with a duty to protect children from abuse and neglect and has the statutory power to bring care proceeding in its own right. Operate a 24 hour child protection line which accepts referrals and passes the information to the relevant social service department.

The Royal Borough of Kingston Child Protection Procedures can be found on the Council web site www.kingston.gov.uk under: Directorates – Community & Education – Children & Families – Children’s Planning Unit.

See also the DoH summary guidance “What To Do If You’re Worried A Child Is Being Abused” giving advice and guidance to front line staff. Available from Department of Health Publications Tel: 08701 555455, www.doh.gov.uk/safeguardingchildren/index/htm