

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY



DEFINITIONS

Child: In this document, as in the Children Act 1989 and 2004, a Child is anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday. 'Children' therefore means 'Children and Young People' throughout. The fact that a Child has reached 16 years of age, is living independently, is in further education, is a member of the armed forces, is in hospital, in prison or in a Young Offenders' Institution, does not change his or her status or entitlement to services or protection under the Children Act 1989 and 2004.

Vulnerable Adult: The definition of vulnerable adult in "Who Decides?" (Lord Chancellor's Office 1997) and as used in this document is anyone who is over 18 who:

- Is or may be in need of community care services by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness; and
- Is or may be unable to take care of himself or herself; or
- Is unable to protect themselves against significant harm or serious exploitation

RECOGNITION OF ABUSE OR NEGLECT

Abuse and neglect are forms of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting, by those known to them or, more rarely, by a stranger. They may be abused by an adult or adults, or another child or children.

Abuse can take many forms and all Voices of Colour staff and volunteers should be aware that abuse, neglect and safeguarding issues are rarely standalone events that can be covered by one definition or label. In most cases multiple issues will overlap with one another.

(1).Physical Abuse - a form of abuse which 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.

(2).Emotional abuse - 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 a child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond a child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyber bullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

(3). Neglect – 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. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child’s basic emotional needs.

(4). Sexual abuse & exploitation– Involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

TAKING ACTION

Voices of Colour has in place 4 key steps to follow to help to identify and respond appropriately to possible abuse and or neglect.

Be alert -> Ask for help -> Refer -> Question behaviours

Voices of Colour will record, in writing, all concerns and discussions about a child’s welfare the decisions made and the reasons behind those decisions.

RESPONDING TO DISCLOSURES

It is recognised that a child may seek to share information about abuse or neglect or talk spontaneously individually or in groups during the sessions run by the programme team. In these situations, the following actions will be taken:

- Listen carefully to what the child/young person is saying
- Take seriously what the child/young person is saying
- Write down as soon as possible what the child/young person said
- Tell your Designated person as soon as possible
- Make sure the child/young person is safe (i.e. support in school)
- Do not tell the child/young person it is not their fault
- Do not panic
- Do not immediately rush off to find someone else
- Do not promise to keep secrets
- Keep the child/young person informed of any action you are planning to take, where appropriate
- Do not make judgements or say anything about the alleged abuser
- Do not ask detailed questions or press the child/young person for more information
- Ask open questions

If a child discloses information to Voices of Colour, in relation to abuse or neglect, the designated safeguarding person will be alerted and contacted about the situation. If a child is in immediate danger of being harmed, the police should be called on 999.

IMPORTANT POINTS TO REMEMBER

- Try not to display any signs of shock or disapproval when the child/young person is making a disclosure
- The child/young person may not regard the experience as either bad or painful, they may not feel guilty or angry
- Be aware of your own feelings which may be different from those of the child/young person
- Take care of yourself by making sure that you have an opportunity to discuss your feelings with someone at a later stage
- Do not destroy any evidence as it may be useful in a court of law
- Initial disclosure, even if retracted, still must be referred

WORKING WITH CHILDREN & VULNERABLE ADULTS

All Voices of Colour staff must adhere to the following at all times when working with children and/or vulnerable adults:

- Recognise that the role of a Voices of Colour member of staff, mentor and volunteer places him/her in a position of trust with regard to children/vulnerable adults with whom they come into contact in the performance of their role.
- Avoid using inappropriate language in front of, about or to a child or vulnerable adult. Staff, mentors and volunteers must display consistently high standards of professional behaviour and appearance, acting as a positive role model for Voices of Colour
- Be aware that even well-intentioned physical contact may be misconstrued by the child/vulnerable adult, observers or by anyone to whom this action is described. Never make physical contact with a child in a way which may be construed as being indecent. Be aware of cultural or religious views about physical contact and always be sensitive to issues of gender.
- Be fully aware that any sort of bullying or unkind behaviour will not be tolerated
- Not share any personal information with children/vulnerable adults and not request, or respond to, any personal information from them unless it is appropriate as part of their role within Voices of Colour
- Not make arrangements to contact, communicate or meet with children/vulnerable adults outside the normal activities of the education system unless it is within the context of an approved Voices of Colour activity e.g. workshops, programme events that have been agreed in advance by both the partners organisations and Voices of Colour
- Do not discuss and share information about any personal social media platforms.

PHOTOGRAPHIC & VIDEO IMAGES

Staff should be aware of the procedure for using images and videos of children and young people in regard to Voices of Colour activities, events, social media sites and promotional material as detailed in the Voices of Colour Photography and Video policy.

Photography and Video consent forms will be obtained when participants join the programme. Consent will be obtained from parents of the students and the students themselves. Measures will be put in place to make sure that students who have requested not to be photographed or videoed at events will not be.

This policy is reviewed annually.

This policy has been reviewed and updated December 2020.