



Safeguarding Procedures

The following procedures apply to all staff and volunteers with **COVENTRY SLINGS C.I.C.** whether or not they are directly responsible for, or coming into contact with children and young people. These procedures apply during all activity of the Sling Library including consultations, workshops and sling meets. For the purposes of this policy a child refers to anyone under the age of 18.

What are we protecting children from?

Child abuse is any action by another person – adult or child – that causes or fails to prevent significant harm to a child. It can be physical, sexual or emotional, but can just as often be about a lack of love, care and attention. Neglect, whatever form it takes, can be just as damaging to a child as physical abuse.

An abused child will often experience more than one type of abuse, as well as other difficulties in their lives. It often happens over a period of time, rather than being a one-off event. And it can increasingly happen online.

Types of Abuse

1. Physical Abuse

- Physical abuse is deliberately hurting a child causing injuries such as bruises, broken bones, burns or cuts.
- It isn't accidental - children who are physically abused suffer violence such as being hit, kicked, poisoned, burned, slapped or having objects thrown at them. Shaking or hitting babies can cause non-accidental head injuries (NAHI). Sometimes parents or carers will make up or cause the symptoms of illness in their child, perhaps giving them medicine they don't need and making the child unwell – this is known as fabricated or induced illness (FII).

2. Physical Abuse

- Physical abuse is deliberately hurting a child causing injuries such as bruises, broken bones, burns or cuts.
- Neglect is the ongoing failure to meet a child's basic needs. A child may be left hungry or dirty, without adequate clothing, shelter, supervision, medical or health care.
- A child may be put in danger or not protected from physical or emotional harm. They may not get the love, care and attention they need from their parents.
- A child who's neglected will often suffer from other abuse as well. Neglect is dangerous and can cause serious, long-term damage - even death.

3. Sexual Abuse

- A child is sexually abused when they are forced or persuaded to take part in sexual activities. This doesn't have to be physical contact, and it can happen online. Sometimes the child won't understand that what's happening to them is abuse. They may not even understand that it's wrong.

4. Online Abuse

- Online abuse is any type of abuse that happens on the web, whether through social networks, playing online games or using mobile phones. Children and young people may experience cyberbullying, grooming, sexual abuse, sexual exploitation or emotional abuse.
- Children can be at risk of online abuse from people they know, as well as from strangers. Online abuse may be part of abuse that is taking place in the real world (for example bullying or grooming). Or it may be that the abuse only happens online (for example persuading children to take part in sexual activity online).
- Children can feel like there is no escape from online abuse – abusers can contact them at any time of the day or night, the abuse can come into safe places like their bedrooms, and images and videos can be stored and shared with other people.

Possible signs of abuse

The signs of child abuse aren't always obvious, and a child might not tell anyone what is happening to them. Children might be scared that the abuser will find out, and worried that the abuse will get worse. Or they might think that there's no-one they can tell or that they won't be believed. Sometimes, children don't even realise that what is happening is abuse.

Children develop and mature at different rates. So what is worrying for a younger child, might be normal behaviour for an older child. If a child looks or acts a lot older or younger than their age, this could be a cause for concern. However, if a child develops more slowly than others of a similar age and there is not a cause such as physical or learning disabilities, it could be a sign they are being abused.

Below is a list of indicators which may cause concern. This list is not exhaustive and should you have a concern, you should report it regardless of whether or not it appears below.

- A child talks of being left home alone or with strangers, is reluctant to go home or to have people visit
- Poor bond or relationships between child and parent, parent shows little interest in child.
- A child acts out excessive violence with other children, lacks social skills or has few if any friends.
- A significantly underweight child but eats well when given food.
- A significant change in a child's behaviour, for example becomes secretive and reluctant to share information, or becomes withdrawn when previously outgoing.
- A child reaches developmental milestones late
- A child speaks or acts in a way which is inappropriate for their age (i.e. drinking from an early age or uses inappropriate sexual awareness).
- A child is concerned for younger siblings without explaining why.
- A child talks of running away.

What to do if you suspect a child is being abused

If you have a concern about a child you should immediately speak to the directors of **COVENTRY SLINGS C.I.C.** You should not discuss your concerns with anyone else. Our contact details can be found at the end of this document.

Should you feel uncomfortable talking to the directors (for instance the concern you have involves them) or you cannot contact them, you can call the NSPCC helpline on 0808 800 5000.

If you are worried a child is in immediate danger you should call 999.

What to do if a child tells you they are being abused

If concerns arise because a child discloses information, be supportive, listen with care but do not ask any unnecessary questions. Take it seriously and advise them that you will have to pass it on. Write down the nature of the concern, so far as possible, using their own words.

Never promise an individual that you will keep their secret. Even if a retraction is then made, the initial concerns should still be recorded and reported.

What happens to information given to the directors of **COVENTRY SLINGS C.I.C.**

All cases of suspected or alleged abuse will be treated seriously and the librarian will contact NSPCC helpline for further support and advice. Alternatively they may contact the child's local social services child protection team. This will be done as soon as possible and within 48 hours of the report being made.

The directors of **COVENTRY SLINGS C.I.C.** will keep a written record of any reports made and actions taken. These records will be stored securely.

Where it is alleged a crime has been committed, the investigating social worker and/or police officer may be required to speak to the person with whom the concerns originated. You should co-operate fully with any enquiries. □

Never promise an individual that you will keep their secret. Even if a retraction is then made, the initial concerns should still be recorded and reported.

Confidentiality

Privacy and confidentiality should be respected where possible but if doing this leaves a child at risk of harm then the child's safety has to come first.

Legally, it is fine to share information when the welfare or safety of a child is concerned. However, the privacy of the parties involved (the child/their family etc.) is also paramount so only people who need to know should be told.

COVENTRY SLINGS CIC recognises that being involved in a child protection issue is potentially traumatic and wishes to look after the welfare of its staff and volunteers. Should you require further support to deal with any issues raised by the incident/report, please speak to the directors of **COVENTRY SLINGS C.I.C.** or call NSPCC helpline on 0808 800 5000.

It is not child protection issue but I am still concerned

There are many circumstances that may cause harm to a child and require a response but fall short of a concern that a child is being abused. Nevertheless, a build-up of concerns over time may become serious enough that the child is considered to be at risk of abuse. In the first instance you should talk to the librarian about these concerns. Together you should address incidents as they arise with parents/carers and record your concerns and actions. The directors of **COVENTRY SLINGS C.I.C.** may decide to speak to a statutory agency (i.e. social work services or health visitor).

Training and awareness

All staff and volunteers with the **COVENTRY SLINGS C.I.C.** will be made aware of the Safeguarding Procedures, the Child Protection Policy and the Code of Conduct. All staff and volunteers will also complete online awareness of child abuse and neglect training. The directors of **COVENTRY SLINGS C.I.C.** will undertake appropriate levels of training and a safeguarding briefing for volunteers will be offered periodically.

Users of the Sling Library (i.e. parents/cares) can access these documents online and receive a copy via email or post upon request. Venues/other partners will be sent a copy of these documents upon request.

This document was drawn up using guidance from the NSPCC and the Safe Network. We are committed to reviewing our policy, procedures and good practice annually.

This policy was last reviewed on: 07/11/2016

Signed: G Ryan, E. Molloy

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