

# Child Protection Policy



Oxford Sexual Abuse  
& Rape Crisis Centre

Supporting female survivors of sexual violence

This document sets out OSARCC's policy with regard to suspected or known child abuse. Please also refer to OSARCC's Protection of Vulnerable Adults Policy and Data Protection Policy.

## Legal Context

OSARCC recognises that all children have the right to equal protection from all types of harm and abuse and that we have a responsibility and commitment to protect children who are at risk from significant harm.

### Article 19 on the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child

This act states that in all respects, all measures should be taken to:

*"Protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s) legal guardians or any other person who has the care of the child."*

### The Children Act 1989

This act **defines a child as a person under the age of 18 years**. The fact that a child is 16 years old and may be living independently, or is in further education, is a member of the armed forces, is in hospital, or in custody, does not change their status as a child or their entitlement to services and protection under the act.

The same act **introduced the concept of significant harm as the threshold**. The act places a statutory duty on local authorities to make enquiries to decide whether they should take action to safeguard and/or promote the welfare of a child who is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm. Local authorities may then act to intervene in family life in the best interests of children. The welfare of a child is deemed to be paramount.

## Definitions

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children involves:

1. Protecting children from maltreatment
2. Preventing the impairment of children's health or development
3. Ensuring that children are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care

In line with government guidelines "**Working Together to Safeguard Children and Young People**" and the **Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board (OSCB)**, we use the following definitions:

## 1. Physical abuse

This 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

This 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:

- a) Conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person
- b) Not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate.
- c) Age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond the child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction.
- d) 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.

Important Note: Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

## 3. Sexual abuse

This 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:

- a) 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.
- b) 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)

Important note: Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

## 4. Neglect

This 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.

**Policy**

## **In line with our organisational principles:**

We will support female children (anyone under the age of 18) in the same way that we do all our female callers: remaining non-directive, challenging self-blame, offering unconditional belief, and providing confidentiality.

## **In line with our safeguarding commitments we recognise the:**

- a) Special vulnerability of children by virtue of their dependence on adults for their well-being and safety.
- b) Particular dilemmas for children and young people in telling about abuse. They may need time and reassurance to be able to tell and they will only do so when they feel ready and safe to do so.

Some children may use the services of OSARCC to get reassurance. However, as an organisation, OSARCC is clear that ***children cannot be the sole arbiters of their safety. The responsibility for investigating child abuse rests with local authority safeguarding professionals.***

We have a commitment to safeguarding children which means that if we are given information we believe to be relevant OSARCC has a duty to pass this on to professionals who will act to safeguard the child. Where we understand a caller is a child whom we believe to be experiencing or at risk of significant harm, ***OSARCC has a responsibility to seek advice from and/or report relevant information to the local authority where appropriate and possible.***

Relevant information includes a name, address/telephone number, and/or other details about the child/the child's circumstances.

## **OSARCC seeks to safeguard children by:**

1. Adopting child protection guidelines and procedures for staff and volunteers
2. Recruiting staff and volunteers safely, ensuring all appropriate checks are made, including enhanced CRB checks
3. Ensuring child protection information and best practice is shared with staff, volunteers and service users and that all OSARCC workers are aware of their safeguarding responsibilities
4. Providing effective management for staff and volunteers through supervision, support and training
5. Nominating a designated safeguarding officer who will attend regular training