

## Child Protection Policy

It is acknowledged that it is not often that volunteers/ employees will come into direct contact with children during the course of an evening outreach or when meeting a client during the day. It is, however, possible that this may occur and therefore it is necessary and appropriate to ensure that a procedure is in place to clarify what course of action will be taken if required.

**All child protection issues are to be referred immediately to the Project Manager or her deputy if she is absent. Gareth Owens is the Mustard Tree Foundation's Child Protection lead, please contact him if you have any questions.**

### Purpose

To ensure the protection, safety and welfare of children by promoting the right code of behaviour amongst employees and volunteers.

#### 1. Statement of intent

The Rahab project, Reading, is committed to ensuring the safety and welfare of children and agrees to abide by the Berkshire Child Protection Procedures and agrees to work together with other relevant professionals to achieve this end. This policy covers children 0-18 years and unborn children.

#### 2. Practical issues

2.1 The Rahab project recognises the need to build constructive links with childcare agencies and other relevant professionals (e.g. Community Midwives etc).

#### 3. Recognising abuse in children from birth to 18 years of age

3.1 The following definitions of child abuse are recommended as criteria throughout England and Wales by the Department of Health, Department for Education and Skills and the Home Office in their joint document, Working Together to Safeguard Children England 1999.

"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."

##### 3.2 Physical abuse

"Physical abuse 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 feigns the symptoms of, or deliberately causes ill-health to a child whom they are looking after. This is commonly described using terms such as 'factitious illness by proxy' or 'Munchausen Syndrome by proxy'."

##### 3.3 Emotional abuse

"Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional ill treatment of a child such as to cause severe and continuous adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate or valued only so far as they meet the needs of another person. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate

<sup>1</sup> The Children Act (1989) defines any person under the age of 18 as a child.

<sup>2</sup> It is not uncommon for a person that we meet to already have children and for these to be in the permanent care of another adult, whether the birth mother has agreed to this or not.

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expectations being imposed on children. It may involve causing children to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill treatment of a child, though it may occur alone.”

### **3.4 Sexual abuse**

“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 (e.g. rape or buggery) or non-penetrative acts. They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, pornographic material or watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.”

### **3.5 Neglect**

“Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psycho-logical needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. It may involve a 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, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.”

## **4. Unborn children**

4.1 It's not uncommon for women who're working on the streets to continue to work & misuse substances whilst pregnant. These activities put both the mother & the unborn baby at risk.

## **5. Young people under the age of 18 working in prostitution**

5.1 Child prostitution is any form of sexual exploitation of a child that involves payment or reward of some kind.

5.2 Some young people may not recognise that they are in an exploitative relationship, although this may be clear to those around them. Young people engaging in sexual activity in return for a place to stay, food etc may not see themselves as being involved in prostitution. They may have been groomed over a period of time and formed an emotional attachment to their abuser or someone who is coercing them.

5.3 All children who are involved in sexual exploitation are being exploited even if they appear to be engaging in the activity voluntarily. Most children who are drawn into prostitution are vulnerable and due to their age, circumstances and past experiences, are unable to give truly 'informed' consent to the activity.

5.4 If a volunteer/ employee meets a child who is working in prostitution, this must be reported immediately to the Project Manager. If there are enough identifying details about the child, the local social services duty team will be contacted. If identifying information is not known, the local duty team will still be informed.

## **6. What to do if:**

**6.1 You receive information that someone we are working with is putting their children at risk/ exposing them to risk and or harm, as defined in Sections 3-5 above.**

6.1.1 Reporting concerns to the Project Manager (Lorraine Joslin) /Deputy (Gareth Owen\*) You must report concerns as soon as possible to the Project Manager. In the absence of the Project Manager, the matter should be brought to the attention of the Deputy (Gareth Owen\*). In the event of both of these persons being unavailable you should contact the Director of the Mustard Tree Foundation (Tim Clewer).

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- 6.1.2 You should not discuss the information with anyone other than those noted above.
- 6.1.3 Once you have referred the matter to the Project Manager, they will discuss the situation with the Deputy (Gareth Owen\*) or the Director of MTF. They will then make a decision on whether to refer the situation to Children's Services.
- 6.1.4 The Project Manager does not have to refer every situation to them but will document all incidents and communication action taken to the volunteer / employee who initially raised the concern. If the Project Manager is in doubt they may contact the CCPAS (Churches Child Protection Advisory Service) help line or Children's Services for advice.
- 6.1.5 The Project Manager will share limited information on a need-to-know basis with the Steering Group whilst carefully respecting the need for confidentiality.
- 6.1.6 Under no circumstances will the Project Manager carry out any investigation. This is the role of the statutory authorities.

### **6.2 You come across a woman who is pregnant whilst working on the streets and misusing substances.**

- 6.2.1 You should attempt to find out if the woman is accessing medical services, e.g. has a Community Midwife, or find out if she has had a scan etc.
- 6.2.2 If the woman is not accessing any medical services, you should offer the support of the project for someone to go with her to the Baker Street Clinic or similar.
- 6.2.3 If a woman is not accessing services and does not want to access any, you should act as laid out in 6.1.1 above.

### **6.3 You come across a person under age 18 who is working on the streets**

Section 6.1.1 applies as above.

**\*Gareth Owen - 07834 288 436 (Project Officer for MTF and Youth Worker for MTF) Gareth is the lead for Child Protection in the Mustard Tree Foundation.**

This Equal Opportunities Policy was written in January 2008 by Anita Hawthorne, and modified in August 2009, May 2010 & March 2011 by Lorraine Joslin.

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