



Child Protection Policy

Definition

OSCARS believes that children have the right to be completely secure from both the fear and reality of abuse, and we are committed to protecting children and young people from harm.

Purpose

OSCARS is committed to reviewing its Child Protection policy and procedures at regular intervals. The policy and its procedures will be shared with parents/carers during their child's settling in period.

OSCARS child protection procedures comply with all relevant legislation and other guidance or advice from the Child Protection Team.

Procedure

The Manager of OSCARS will take on the role of Child Protection Officer. This Officer will have suitable experience, training and expertise, and will be responsible for liaising with social services, the Child Protection Team and Ofsted in any child protection matter. A nominated member of the committee will also take on the role of Child Protection [RO. Responsible Officer]. They will receive appropriate training.

1. Recognising Child Abuse

Child abuse manifests itself in a variety of different ways, some overt and others much less so. All staff has child protection training and will be vigilant to signs and evidence of physical, sexual and emotional abuse or neglect.

a. Physical Abuse

This involves hitting, shaking, throwing, burning, suffocating or any other physical harm. Deliberately causing a child's ill health also constitutes physical abuse.

b. Sexual Abuse

This involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, and may involve penetrative or non-penetrative acts. Showing children pornographic materials, sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways also constitutes sexual abuse.

c. Emotional Abuse

Varying degrees of emotional abuse is present in virtually all child protection incidents, but can also constitute abuse in its own right. Emotional abuse involves persistent or severe emotional ill-treatment or torture causing, or likely to cause, severe adverse effects on the emotional stability of a child. Such behaviour may involve conveying to a child that they are worthless, unloved, or inadequate, or making them feel unnecessarily frightened or vulnerable.

d. Neglect

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical, emotional or psychological needs, such as is likely to have a severe impact on the child's health, development or emotional stability. Neglect may involve failing to provide adequate food, shelter or clothing for a child, or failing to adequately protect them from physical harm or ill health. Neglect can also manifest itself in a failure to meet the basic emotional needs of a child.

2. Staff Support and Training

OSCARS is committed to ensuring that it meets its responsibilities in respect of child

protection through the provision of support and training to staff. Therefore, OSCARS will ensure that: all staff and volunteers are carefully recruited, have verified references and have Enhanced DBS Checks.

All staff and volunteers will sign a Staff Suitability Declaration form annually on their first working day on or after the 1st March.

All staff and volunteers are given a copy of OSCARS Child Protection Policy and Procedures during their induction, and have its implications explained to them.

All staff and volunteers receive regular training and supervision in child protection issues and are provided with any relevant information and guidance.

All staff are provided with supervision and management support commensurate with their responsibilities in relation to child protection, and their requirement to maintain caring and safe relationships with children.

All staff are aware of the main indicators of child abuse.

All staff are aware of their statutory requirement in respect of disclosure or discovery of child abuse and the procedure for doing so. All students and volunteers are instructed to report the disclosure or discovery of any abuse to the Manager.

5. Safe Caring

All staff understand OSCARS child protection procedures and have had appropriate training and guidance in the principles of safe caring. To this end:

- Every effort will be made to avoid or minimise time when members of staff or volunteers are left alone with a child. If staff are left alone with a child, the door of the room should be kept open and another member of staff should be informed.
- If a child makes inappropriate physical contact with a member of staff or volunteer, this will be recorded fully in the Incident Record Book.
- Staff will never carry out a personal task for child that they can do for themselves. Where this is essential, staff will help a child whilst being accompanied by a colleague. Unless a child has a particular need, staff should not accompany children into the toilet. Staff are aware that this and other similar activities could be misconstrued.
- Staff will be mindful of how and where they touch children, given their age and emotional understanding. Unnecessary or potentially inappropriate physical contact will be avoided at all times.

6. Dealing with Allegations

OSCARS is committed to ensuring that it meets its responsibilities in respect of child protection by treating any allegation seriously and sensitively. OSCARS will not carry out any investigation itself into a suspected child abuse incident. On discovering allegation of abuse, the Child Protection Officer (The Manager) will immediately refer the case to the local statutory child protection agencies and notify the designated RO.

Further to the above, the following principles will govern any suspected or reported cases:

- Where actual or suspected abuse comes to the attention of the staff, they will report this to the Manager at the earliest possible opportunity.
- Staff are encouraged and supported to trust their professional judgement and if they suspect abuse has or is taking place, to report this.
- Full written records of all reported incidents will be produced and maintained. Information record will include full details of the alleged incident; full details of all parties involved; any evidence or explanations offered by interested parties; relevant dates, times and locations and any supporting information or evidence from members of staff. Oscars will display great care in distinguishing between fact and opinion when recording suspected incidents of child abuse.
- The Manager will be responsible for ensuring that written records are dated, signed and kept confidentially.
- Staff will ensure that all concerns and allegations are treated with sensitivity and confidentiality.
- Any children involved in alleged incidents will be comforted and reassured.
- If the allegation is against a member of staff, the Manager will inform the Chairperson and the responsible officer. The staff member will be suspended, and a full investigation will be conducted, see appendix 1 for the full procedure.
- If the allegation of abuse is made against the Manager, the Registered Person will be informed as soon as possible. They will then assume responsibility for the situation or delegate this role to a senior member of staff or the designated member of the management committee. The Manager will be suspended, pending a full investigation, see appendix 1 for the full procedure.
- In circumstances where a child makes an allegation or disclosure, the member of staff concerned will:
 - Listen fully to what the child has to say:
 - Make no observable judgement
 - Ask open questions that encourage the child to speak in their own words.
 - Ensure that the child is safe, comfortable and not left alone.
 - Make no promises that cannot be kept; such as promising not to tell anybody what they are being told.
- Staff will be aware of the Department of Health's booklet 'What to do if You're Worried A Child is Being Abused' (2006) and their recent guidance on 'Child Protection procedure for people working with children'

7. Referring Allegations to Child Protection Agencies

If the Manager has reasonable grounds for believing that a child has been, or is in grave danger of being subject to abuse, the following procedure will be activated:

- Contact will be made, at the earliest opportunity with the local social services. See appendix 2.
- The Manager will communicate as much information about the allegation and related incidents as is consistent with advice given by social services and the police.

- At all times, the safety, protection and interests of children concerned will take precedence.
- The Manager and staff will work with and support parents/carers as far as they are legally able.
- OSCARS will assist the social services and the police, as far as it is able, during any investigation of abuse or neglect. This will include disclosing written and verbal information and evidence.
- Ofsted will be informed of any allegations of abuse against a member of Staff, student or volunteer, or any abuse that is alleged to have taken place on the premises or during an outing.

Appendix 1

ALLEGATIONS AGAINST WORKERS OR MANAGEMENT

Ofsted must be kept informed of any allegations of abuse made against a member of Staff, student or volunteer, or any abuse that is alleged to have taken place on the premises or during an outing.

1 If a child or parent makes allegations against any person working for OSCARS whether paid or unpaid, the following procedure will come into force - incident reports will be made at all stages as appropriate:

1a. The person receiving the complaint will contact the Manager who will at once contact the Chairman, or his/her deputy and the Committee Member whose role is Child Protection [RO Responsible Officer] On receipt of the complaint, the Manager or RO will contact Social Services to appraise them of the situation. Normally this will be by informal channels but if there is a criminal allegation, the contact will be formal to the duty social worker and also to the police.

1b. If the allegation is made against the Manager, the Chair Person will be informed immediately. They will assume responsibility for the situation or delegate this role to a senior member of staff or the designated member of the management committee.

1c. The Chairman should inform the person against whom an allegation has been made as soon as possible UNLESS THERE APPEARS TO BE A CASE THAT THIS MIGHT PREJUDICE A CRIMINAL INVESTIGATION. This will require consultation with the police to ascertain.

2 The course of action to be taken from thereon will be decided by the nature of the allegation (s).

2a If a criminal allegation e.g. of sexual abuse and impropriety is made, or physical assault, or inappropriate behaviour, the Chairman will activate the Disciplinary Procedure and suspend the person from any activity in OSCARS under the heading of alleged Gross Misconduct. If it is warranted, this may be without pay, should the evidence appear strong enough to justify the matter. For example, a worker discovered in a situation of actual wrongful behaviour. The matter must then be reported immediately to the police and duty social worker. The suspension will remain in force unless and until the police and/or social services confirm there was no substance to the report. An incident report will be made and treated as confidential.

2b If there is no criminal allegation the Manager/RO will gather as much detail from available sources of information as possible, by way of investigation, but not including seeking to interview any child if there is a criminal allegation (which is a matter for the authorities). The Manager should examine to see if there is any prior knowledge relating to a child protection matter concerning any involved child. This is most important. Where appropriate, the Manager/RO should consider whether suspension of the worker is advisable and recommend accordingly to the Chairman. This may include a situation which, though non-criminal, could lead to a decision of gross misconduct.

2c The Manager/RO will report to the Chairman on the outcome of such an investigation and will recommend whether the circumstances constitute grounds either:

A. to treat the matter as a disciplinary issue, either as misconduct or gross misconduct, with associated rights of appeal

Or B. to dismiss the allegations as unfounded, or to make such other non-disciplinary recommendations as are appropriate. The Chairman shall consider such recommendations and report to the next meeting of the Management of action taken.

The person against whom such non-criminal allegations are made should have opportunity to give an explanation or answer to any allegation at an interview conducted by the RO and the course of such an interview should be minuted by the Manager who should be present.

2d. In the case of 2b above the suspension will remain in force on completion of the RO's enquiries if the Chairman is of the view that the misconduct is so serious as to constitute grounds for immediate termination of employment or voluntary service until the dismissal

procedure has been implemented. The person suspended should be advised by the Chairman of the person within the OSCARS organisation whom s/he can communicate during the period of suspension on matters relating to their employment, and the person so appointed should be told clearly, as should the person suspended the address to which any communication should be made, whether or not communication includes personal contact, and the hours/times of contact.

2e. In the situation of 2a above, if legal proceedings result in the conviction of the person for a serious offence involving a child, the Chairman shall consider any report or information from the police and /or social services and shall recommend to the committee the appropriate course of action up to and including instant dismissal. If the proceedings do not result in a conviction but there is evidence to suggest misconduct, the procedure in 2b may be invoked.

2f. In the situation of 2b above the Chairman shall write to the person concerned to inform them of the outcome of the investigation and will inform the person of any decision to terminate employment or of the date and conditions, if any, of a return to duties, where a disciplinary offence has been committed but is not of a nature as to warrant immediate dismissal.

2g. Under no circumstances is any person suspended to re-enter OSCARS premises or property whilst under suspension. This prohibition includes activities where there are no children/ young person's present.

2h. In appropriate circumstances, in consultation with the Manager and with other Officers as available, the Chairman may effect an instant dismissal if the evidence warrants it. For example, someone caught in the act of committing an offence involving a child in OSCARS care. This will be reported in the manner detailed above, and the Manager/RO will make the appropriate reference to Social Services, or, if appropriate the Police (remembering to report to Social Services). The personal file of such a worker will have the necessary note of action taken entered in it.

2i. Lesser forms of misconduct involving a worker in a child protection incident where the worker's actions or behaviour are inconsistent with children's welfare should be reported and dealt with under the ordinary Misconduct provisions of the Disciplinary Procedure, with appropriate records made in the person's file. Social Services should be informed if the matter is related to child protection, and it is possible they may express a view on the person's suitability to continue to work in the Project. Each case will be individual, judged on its own merits. The RO and the Chairman will liaise on such issues, with the Manager, and a report with recommendations made if necessary to the Management next meeting.

Appendix 2

Ofsted

Complaints or concerns about any childcare service
0300 1231231

Safeguarding/Child Protection

- First Point 01454 86 6000
- SGSCB (South Gloucestershire Safeguarding Children's Board)
Angela King
Tel: 01454 863253 E-mail: angela.king@southglos.gov.uk

Out of Hours call

- The Emergency Duty Team 01454 615165

Important

If you feel a child is in immediate danger, should not go home, should not go with the adult due to collect, **ring 999**

Date first adopted by OSCARS management committee	March 2005
Date of latest review	
Review signed on behalf of OSCARS	
Position	