

# MAGNIFICO TRAVEL LTD SUMMER SCHOOL

SAFEGUARDING AND CHILD  
PROTECTION POLICY-  
Simplified Version



Summer Campus

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# **Magnifico Travel Ltd Summer School**

## **Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy - Simplified Version**

### **POLICY STATEMENT**

#### **1.3 Statement of commitment**

Magnifico is committed to a practice with procedures where safeguarding the welfare of students in our care is of paramount importance. The company's duty of care to the student is our primary concern and the company accepts its part in recognising its responsibilities.

#### **1.4 Entitlement of the Under 18s**

**All** students (children 0-17 years of age) without exception have the right to protection regardless of gender, ethnicity, disability, sexuality or beliefs.

**No** student must be treated any less favourably than another in being able to access services that meet their particular needs.

**All** concerns and allegations of abuse will be taken seriously and responded to appropriately.

#### **1.5 What are an adult's responsibilities?**

All adults working for Magnifico accept and recognise the company's responsibilities for developing awareness of issues which might put students at risk of harm and that they have a legal 'duty of care'. Adults must be vigilant and must report any concerns they may have for a student's welfare to a DSP or the DSL.

It is the DSL's responsibility to liaise with and report to the appropriate Local Authorities, eg. Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB), the police, the Prevent coordinator.

All adults are asked to complete an online basic awareness training course. They also receive face-to-face training at their respective levels.

#### **1.8 Roles and responsibilities**

The students are given a Student Handbook, which, as well as providing information about the course in general, alerts the students to the rules and

regulations of the campus and what happens if you break them, fire drills, safety on the coaches, talking about problems, safety on the Net and fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs. All these issues are highlighted in the induction for the students shortly after their arrival and in a post induction session on the same day, and they are encouraged to discuss and comment on the contents of the Handbook as well as to look out for each other and to report any concerns they may have about other students. The students are informed who they can contact and where those people can be contacted for any problems, concerns or complaints they may have during their stay.

All the students at all times are required to wear a lanyard, which includes a badge with emergency contact numbers. This identifies them clearly to all adults and fellow students on campus, and adults working for Magnifico are expected to challenge any student not wearing their lanyard.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) is Janet Harfield, the Academic Manager, who is based at the three campuses in London, Leicester and Reading. The DSL has received Specialist Safeguarding Training and is responsible overall for the training of staff within the organisation and for reporting any concerns to the appropriate Local Authorities. The DSL runs the training sessions for the DSPs and may also train all other members of staff to Level 1, or provide the DSPs with the materials to run the Level 1 Safeguarding Training sessions for them. The DSL can be reached at +44 0744 830 1320, through the Head Office on 0208 427 9792, or on the Magnifico internal network on 420 or 421.

Magnifico has two Designated Safeguarding Persons (DSP) on each of its three sites – the Centre Manager and the Academic Centre Manager. In some cases the Activity manager may also have been trained to the level of Designated Safeguarding Person. The DSPs meet students on the morning of their first full day on campus and are a point of contact for day-to-day matters throughout the course. Students are shown where they can find the DSPs offices and issued with their mobile telephone numbers. All DSPs have received Advanced Safeguarding Training and they cover each other's absences.

This policy document is available on our website to all staff, agents and group leaders before the beginning of the courses and in printed form both in the Centre Manager's office and the Academic Centre Manager's office. A 'user friendly', shortened version of the policy is sent to all adults via email before the season opens and given to all adults in printed form during the on-site induction before students arrive.

**All** adults have a legal 'duty of care' to the students attending our courses. There are clear guidelines about raising concerns and who to contact. Communication is of the utmost importance and it is emphasized that all adults must be vigilant and report anything they feel is of concern, no matter how small.



All adults at all times (on and off duty on campus) are required to wear a lanyard, which identifies them as working for Magnifico. Adults are expected to challenge any colleagues or students not wearing their lanyard and, most importantly, to challenge the presence of any other adult in areas where Magnifico is running its courses, who is unknown to the company.

### **1.11 Where the policy is available and in what formats**

This policy is available in its full and simplified versions on our website. Printed copies of the full version are available for consultation in the offices of the Centre Manager and the Academic Centre Manager and a copy of the simplified version is sent by email and given out in its printed form to all adults.

## **CODE OF CONDUCT**

### **2.1 Overview and principles**

Magnifico aims to safeguard the welfare of all students in its care and to protect them from the risk of significant harm, which includes any form of abuse (physical, emotional or sexual) or neglect. Magnifico is committed to creating a safe environment in all areas of the programme provided where students can feel comfortable and secure and can build bonds of trust with all adults. Whilst the student must always come first, Magnifico also recognises the need to protect both students and adults working for the company from any behaviour or actions which might be misconstrued.

### **2.2 Position of trust**

Staff should be aware that according to the Sexual Offences Act 2003, any person in a position of trust (teacher, activity staff, etc.) who engages in sexual activity of any kind with students under the age of 18 **is breaking the law**, even though the legal age of consent is 16.

Staff should be aware that this is not a matter for disciplinary action only, it is a criminal offence and the appropriate authorities will be involved.

### **2.3 Setting standards**

All adults must be aware of the importance of their role in helping to set standards of conduct in order to promote good relations between themselves and the students. This can be achieved by:

- Always putting the welfare of the student first.
- Treating all students equally with respect and dignity.
- Encouraging and praising students.
- Building balanced relationships based on mutual trust and empowering students to share in decision making.
- Recognising the developmental needs and capacity of students.
- Respecting a student's right to privacy.
- Being an excellent role model.

- **Being a role model means:**

- Setting an example, which you would wish others to follow.
- Conducting yourself in a professional manner with maturity and integrity.
- Demonstrating good judgement.
- Dressing smartly and in an appropriate manner both on and off duty.
- Never presenting yourself in a state of undress in front of students.
- Using appropriate language with students and challenging any inappropriate language used by students.
- Not drinking or smoking in the presence of students.
- Not using or condoning the use of addictive substances.
- Not using your mobile phone, other than for the purposes of work, when you are on duty.
- Respecting other people in line with the Equality Act 2010.

#### **2.4 Interaction between adults and Under 18s**

All adults must use the following guidelines related to interaction between adults and students both on and off duty:

- Always work in an open environment avoiding private or unobserved situations and encourage open communication.
- Maintain a safe and appropriate distance with students.
- Avoid engaging in rough physical or sexually provocative games, including horseplay.
- Never allow or engage in any form of inappropriate physical contact.
- Never allow students to use inappropriate language unchallenged.
- Never make sexually suggestive comments to a student, even in fun.
- Never do things of a personal nature for students that they can do for themselves.
- Never reduce a child to tears as a form of control.
- Ensure that adults do not enter students' rooms or invite students into their rooms. If it is necessary to do the former, staff should always do so in pairs and knock before entering.
- Not agreeing to meet students outside of working hours.

It should be stressed, particularly in relation to physical contact with the students, that there may be circumstances when adults will need to intervene physically:

- To break up a fight
- To stop them walking in front of a passing car
- To assist with a medical emergency (an epileptic seizure, for example)

#### **2.5 Appropriate appearance**

Adults must be aware of the effect their appearance can have on many students, especially those coming from cultural backgrounds where the exposure of certain parts of the body is a sensitive issue. It is hard for the students to respect an adult, if s/he does not present themselves appropriately.

Adults must ensure that their appearance is appropriate both on and off duty:

- Good personal hygiene (regular showers, especially after sports activities, and clean hair)
- Sufficient clothes and footwear to ensure that you always have a clean change
- Avoid clothing that has explicit/offensive language or images
- Avoid plunging necklines, very short skirts or shorts, see-through garments, ripped or torn clothing and a style of dress where underwear is visible.
- Never present yourself in a state of undress in front of the students, not even when the weather is hot when adult males might be tempted to strip to the waist, during the night getting a drink or going to the bathroom, during a fire drill/alarm or for entertainment.

## **2.6 Alcohol, drugs and smoking**

For the students, there is a 'no tolerance' policy to alcohol, drugs and smoking on and off campus. The disciplinary procedures for the non-observance of this rule are set out in the Student and Staff/Group Leader Handbooks.

All adults need to be aware that, with regard to alcohol and smoking, that it is illegal in the UK to sell alcohol/cigarettes to or to purchase alcohol/cigarettes for Under 18s, and that adults seen offering alcohol or cigarettes to students will be subject to the disciplinary procedures set out in the Staff/Group Leader Handbook.

Adults should challenge any attempt by students or other adults to make light of or joke about addictive substances. The approach should be of educating students and making them aware of the risks and dangers.

Adults, on the other hand, who wish to drink alcohol or smoke, may do so only when they are off duty and not in the presence of the students or in areas that students might have access to. The use of addictive substances is absolutely forbidden.

## **2.7 IT and Social Networks**

All campuses have, to a greater or lesser extent, unlimited access to a wi-fi network, and because these campuses are generally intended for use by adults, there will not always be filters in place to cover 10 to 17 years-olds. As a consequence, since it would be impractical to deny access altogether (especially considering that some under-18s would be capable of overcoming a relatively simple obstacle like a password) and since the mobile phone is the preferred medium for parents contacting their children, Magnifico promotes a policy of education, limits and sanctions in order to safeguard its students.

## Background

- Generally speaking, students are often more comfortable and more 'savvy' with technology than adults.
- Under-18s are more trusting and believe what they read, and this makes them particularly vulnerable.
- Large numbers of under-18s receive unwanted sexual or unpleasant comments via the Internet and text messages.
- There is a vast number of websites offering illegal or inappropriate material such as pornography, promoting self-harm, drinking games, hate sites and many more.

## How to safeguard

- **Educate** The DSPs together with other staff members are responsible for highlighting the Safety on the Net section of the Student Handbook during the induction at the beginning of the course. This includes the following:
  - Things online are forever
  - Things online are for the world to see and not just a few friends
  - The police can trace anything online
  - Inappropriate pictures or words sent via a social network or text message are cyber bullying and NOT a joke
  - It is easy to lie online using false words and photos, and many people do
  - Learn how to block people online and report to an adult anyone who sends sexual messages
  - You must be 13 years old to use Facebook
  - Time spent online and playing games online (health issue)
  - Copyright and illegal downloading
- **Set limits** The following rules are in addition to the general rules for the campus, which can be found in the Student Handbook, and are specifically mentioned by the Centre Manager and other staff members during the induction on the first day of the course:
  - Do not give out any personal information
  - Never open messages from people you do not know
  - Never access illegal or inappropriate sites during the course
  - Never do anything online or on your mobile phone that you wouldn't do face-to-face
- **Sanctions** These are the same as those mentioned in the Student Handbook for any rule that is broken whilst on the course.

No adult may request or maintain any electronic contact with a student of a non-professional nature, either before, during or after a course. Any contact should only be made using a professional email address or website, for example.



Adults may take and share photographs of staff and students, but strictly with the Management Team and for publicity and promotional purposes **only**.

Mobile phone numbers from students will be required during off-campus visits and excursions, but they should not be registered on any adult's personal mobile phone. Instead a printed list will be provided by the Centre Manager, which should be returned at the end of the day. Social networking on Facebook etc is strictly prohibited.

In any electronic contact with students, adults must pay particular attention to use neutral, un-emotive language that will not be misconstrued. Adults must not exchange any information with a student that they would not be happy to share with the company or the student's parents/group leader/agent.

Electronic contact is defined as the communication or publication of information (including images) between two or more people using an electronic device. This may occur using (but is not limited to) landline and mobile phones, other handheld electronic devices, gaming equipment, computers, laptops and tablets. Electronic contact may include but is not limited to voice communication, text communication, instant messaging, email, social networking sites, blogs, photos and videos.

## **2.8 Accommodation**

Adults and students are housed in university halls of residence in flats containing between four and ten rooms and a shared kitchen. In order to guarantee cover based on a ratio of 1 adult for every 15 students, adults will be allocated rooms in the same flats as students where there are single ensuite facilities (rooms with private bathrooms). Where there are single standard facilities (rooms with shared bathrooms), adults will be allocated rooms in a separate apartment in the same building, and where necessary, they will keep one student key from each apartment where an adult is not present, in order that they can carry out checks and gain access in case of an emergency. All rooms can be locked from the inside and no key can open the room of another student or adult unless it is a master key. Master keys are held exclusively by the Centre Manager and by members of the local university staff (Accommodation Officer and Housekeeping staff).

Male students and female students are generally housed in separate apartments, except where accompanying group leaders decide otherwise. Group leaders may occupy a room in apartments that have both single ensuite and single standard facilities and use the same student key system described above should they have students in more than one apartment.

Adults should pay particular attention to conduct in the environments of the bedroom and bathroom, where privacy is important. It is suggested that a rota system is established where bathroom facilities are shared that take into

consideration mealtimes, lesson and activity times, meetings etc., where punctuality is essential.

Adults should refer to all points covered under the Code of Conduct of this policy document for guidance on how to behave appropriately in the accommodation.

The students also receive guidelines about conduct in the accommodation in the Student Handbook, which includes keeping their room tidy, lights out and noise levels, the use of the kitchen and a dress code.

## **2.9 Transport**

Magnifico uses private coach companies, minibus and taxi services for individual and group airport transfers and excursions, and all their drivers are required to be DBS checked.

As part of the induction on the first day, the Centre Manager refers to the section of the Student Handbook, which deals with safety on the coach and minibus.

## **2.10 Whistleblowing**

All adults have a legal obligation to inform the DSL/DSP/senior management of any concerns they may have regarding the inappropriate behaviour of a colleague. Our primary concern is for the welfare of the students in our care and their needs must come first. Any adult working with Magnifico found to be in breach of the Code of Conduct must be reported to the DSL/DSP/senior management. If the concern is regarding a DSP, it should be reported to another DSP, and if that is not possible, it should be reported to the DSL.

An adult reporting a concern regarding a colleague will not be penalised and their report will remain confidential.

Summer Campus

## **CHILD PROTECTION**

### **3.1 Overview**

Magnifico meets its child protection responsibilities by making sure that all adults are aware of their responsibilities and legal obligations. We have at least two DSPs in all centres at all times, and a DSL who travels between the three campuses and the Head Office in London. Training is provided at the appropriate level for all adults and the DSL attends training sessions given by the local authorities and English UK.

Magnifico makes every effort to ensure that, should either adults or students have concerns, they will be listened to and taken seriously. Policies exist and procedures are in place to assist both adults and students in managing any such concerns.

It is the responsibility of the DSL/DSPs to ensure that information is available to and shared between all those involved in the company and its activities. Some information is confidential and should only be shared on a strictly need-to-know basis.

### **3.2 Designated Safeguarding Staff**

Magnifico has the following nominated adults with designated roles for Safeguarding and Child Protection:

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) Head Office, London & centres below:	Janet Harfield	Academic Manager
Designated Safeguarding Person (DSP) University of Reading,	Emanuela Romeo Emile Martin Barbara Lo Gaglio	Centre Manager Academic Centre Manager Activity Manager
Designated Safeguarding Person (DSP) University of Leicester,	Valentina Stocchi Paula Rajpaulsingh	Centre Manager Academic Centre Manager

Designated Safeguarding Person (DSP) University of Westminster, Harrow Campus	Daniela Galli Sarah Nicholson Enrico Bernardi	Centre Manager Academic Centre Manager Activity Manager
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### **3.3 When adults need to respond**

It is vital that all adults are aware of their legal duty of care to safeguarding the students and have a working knowledge of company policy regarding Safeguarding and Child Protection.

#### **What may be a cause for concern**

Cases of abuse become apparent in a number of ways and any one of these may lead an adult to have safeguarding concerns about a student:

- A student may tell someone they are being abused.
- Someone may disclose that a student has told them, or they believe a student is being abused or has been abused.
- A student may show signs of physical injury with no satisfactory explanation for its cause.
- A student's behaviour may indicate that it is likely s/he is being abused.
- An adult's behaviour or the way s/he relates to a student may be of concern.

#### **Information for staff**

All adults are asked to complete a pre-course online basic safeguarding course and produce a certificate as proof of having done so. They receive a copy of Magnifico's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and a copy of the Student Handbook. They also receive face-to-face Level 1 training during the induction. Training is conducted by the DSPs (or the DSL) who receive Advanced Safeguarding Training prior to the commencement of the summer courses from the DSL who, in turn, receives Specialist Safeguarding Training from English UK.

As part of this training, adults are made aware of who they need to contact (DSP) to raise a concern and of the need to complete a Concern (& Disclosure/Allegation) Form. Adults are also informed of the sensitivity of any information regarding a concern and of the importance of confidentiality in dealing with any issue surrounding a concern.

#### **Information for students**

During the induction on the first day of the course all students receive information about how, and with whom, they can share their concerns, complaints and anxieties. The Student Handbook lists the people students can contact, and where, when and how they can be reached. It is imperative that students understand that Magnifico is ready and willing to listen to any concerns that they may have, no matter how minor they may consider them to be, and that all concerns are taken seriously.



## Managing a concern

All adults must report any concerns they may have for a student's welfare to the DSP. It is the DSP's responsibility to handle concerns and to report to the DSL. No adult should not take any action without first consulting the DSP, except where the student is at immediate risk of harm and has to be kept safe, or where, for example, there is an incident of bullying that leads to physical aggression or a fight breaks out and an adult has to intervene.

Any adult raising a concern with the DSP will be asked to fill in a Concern (& Disclosure/Allegation) Form. The DSP will be available to assist, if necessary. All forms regarding concerns, disclosures and allegations are kept locked in the DSP's office.

Once a concern has been raised, it is the DSP's responsibility to respond. Responses depend on the nature of the concern and are taken forward in the following manner:

- **Investigate**  
Gather information in a sensitive manner, avoiding interrogation-style questioning.
- **Record**  
Complete a Concern (& Disclosure/Allegation) Form. It is important to record the facts and not opinions.
- **Inform**  
Inform, as necessary, the parents, group leader, agent, other DSP, DSL, senior management.
- **Monitor**  
Continue to record any developments, as required, until No Further Action (NFA) can be recorded.

### 3.4 Recognising symptoms of abuse

The factors described below are frequently found in cases of child abuse or neglect. Their presence is not proof that abuse has occurred, but:

- Must be regarded as indicators of the possibility of significant harm;
- Indicates a need for careful assessment and discussion with the DSL;
- May require consultation with and/or referral to the Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB) and / or the police.

The absence of such indicators does not mean that abuse or neglect has not occurred.

### **Recognising physical abuse**

The following are often regarded as indicators of concern:

- An explanation which is inconsistent with an injury;
- Several different explanations provided for an injury;
- Unexplained delay in seeking treatment;

- The parent/s are uninterested or undisturbed by an accident or injury;
- Reluctance to give information or mention previous injuries;
- Wearing clothing that covers injuries, even in hot weather;
- Refusal to undress for sports.

### **Bruising**

Children can have accidental bruising, but the following must be considered as indicators of harm unless there is evidence or an adequate explanation provided. Only a paediatric view around such explanations will be sufficient to dispel concerns listed below:

- Two simultaneous bruised eyes, without bruising to the forehead, (rarely accidental, though a single bruised eye can be accidental or abusive);
- Repeated or multiple bruising on the head or on sites unlikely to be injured accidentally;
- Variation in colour possibly indicating injuries caused at different times;
- The outline of an object used (e.g. belt marks, hand prints or a hair brush);
- Bruising or tears around, or behind, the earlobe/s indicating injury by pulling or twisting;
- Bruising around the face;
- Grasp marks on small children;
- Bruising on the arms, buttocks and thighs may be an indicator of sexual abuse.

### **Bite marks**

Bite marks can leave clear impressions of the teeth. Human bite marks are oval or crescent shaped. Those over 3cm in diameter are more likely to have been caused by an adult or older child.

A medical opinion should be sought where there is any doubt over the origin of the bite.

### **Burns and scalds**

It can be difficult to distinguish between accidental and non-accidental burns and scalds, and will always require experienced medical opinion. Any burn with a clear outline may be suspicious, e.g:

- Circular burns from cigarettes (but may be friction burns if along the bony protuberance of the spine);
- Linear burns from hot metal rods or electrical fire elements;
- Burns of uniform depth over a large area;
- Scalds that have a line indicating immersion or poured liquid (a child getting into hot water of its own accord will struggle to get out and cause splash marks);

- Old scars indicating previous burns / scalds which did not have appropriate treatment or adequate explanation.

## **Fractures**

Fractures may cause pain, swelling and discolouration over a bone or joint, and loss of function in the limb or joint.

There are grounds for concern if:

- The history provided is vague, non-existent or inconsistent with the fracture type;
- There are associated old fractures;
- Medical attention is sought after a period of delay when the fracture has caused symptoms such as swelling, pain or loss of movement;

## **Scars**

A large number of scars or scars of different sizes or ages, or on different parts of the body, may suggest abuse.

## **Recognising emotional abuse**

Emotional abuse may be difficult to recognise, as the signs are usually behavioural rather than physical.

The indicators of emotional abuse are often also associated with other forms of abuse. Staff should therefore be aware that emotional abuse might also indicate the presence of other kinds of abuse.

The following may be indicators of emotional abuse:

- Developmental delay, either physical or emotional;
- Abnormal attachment between a child and an adult (e.g. anxious, indiscriminate or no attachment);
- Indiscriminate attachment or failure to attach;
- Aggressive behaviour towards others;
- Passive behaviour towards others;
- Child used as a Scapegoat;
- Frozen watchfulness;
- Low self esteem and lack of confidence;
- Withdrawn or seen as a 'loner' – difficulty relating to others;
- Overreaction to mistakes and continual self-depreciation
- Neurotic behaviour (rocking, hair twisting, self-mutilation)

## **Recognising sexual abuse**

Sexual abuse can be very difficult to recognise and reporting sexual abuse can be an extremely traumatic experience for a child. Therefore both identification and disclosure rates are deceptively low.

Boys and girls of all ages may be sexually abused and are frequently scared to say anything due to guilt and / or fear.

If a child makes an allegation of sexual abuse, it is very important that they are taken seriously. Allegations can often initially be indirect as the child tests the adult's response. There may be no physical signs and indications are likely to be emotional / behavioural.

Behavioural indicators which may help to identify child sexual abuse include:

- Inappropriate sexual conduct with objects or peers;
- Sexually explicit behaviour, play or conversation, inappropriate to the child's age;
- Continual and inappropriate or excessive masturbation;
- Self-harm (including eating disorder), self-mutilation and suicide attempts;
- Involvement in sexual exploitation or indiscriminate choice of sexual partners;
- An anxious unwillingness to remove clothes for e.g. sports events (but this may be related to cultural norms or physical difficulties);
- Becoming withdrawn or clingy;
- Mood swings, especially within relatively short periods of time;
- Sudden changes in personality and insecurity;
- Unaccountable fear or dread of certain places or people;
- Becoming secretive.

Physical indicators associated with child sexual abuse include:

- Pain or itching of genital area;
- Blood on underclothes;
- Pregnancy in a child;
- Physical symptoms such as injuries to the genital or anal area, bruising to buttocks, abdomen and thighs, sexually transmitted disease, presence of semen on vagina, anus, external genitalia or clothing.

Sex offenders have no common profile, and it is important to avoid attaching any significance to stereotypes around their background or behaviour. While media interest often focuses on 'stranger danger', research indicates that as much as 80 per cent of sexual offending occurs in the context of a known relationship, either family, acquaintance or colleague.

### **Recognising neglect**

It is rare that an isolated incident will lead to agencies becoming involved with a neglectful family. Evidence of neglect is built up over a period of time. Staff should therefore compile a chronology and discuss concerns with any other agencies which may be involved with the family, to establish whether seemingly minor incidents are in fact part of a wider pattern of neglectful parenting.



Some of the indicators of neglect include:

- Failure by parents or carers to meet essential physical needs (e.g. adequate or appropriate food, clothes, warmth, hygiene and medical or dental care);
- Failure by parents or carers to meet essential emotional needs (e.g. to feel loved and valued, to live in a safe, predictable home environment);
- A child seen to be listless, apathetic and unresponsive with no apparent medical cause;
- Failure of child to grow within normal expected pattern, with accompanying weight loss;
- Alcohol or drug abuse.

Disabled children and young people can be particularly vulnerable to neglect due to the increased level of care they may require.

Although neglect can be perpetrated consciously as an abusive act by a parent, it is rarely an act of deliberate cruelty. Neglect is usually defined as an omission of care by the child's parent, often due to one or more unmet needs of their own. These could include domestic violence, mental health issues, learning disabilities, substance misuse or social isolation/exclusion.

While support and services to these parents are clearly essential, it is crucial to maintain a clear focus on the needs of the child.

### **3.5 Disclosure by a child and what to do**

What should you do if a child comes to you and tells you that they are being abused? It's normal to feel overwhelmed and confused in this situation. Child abuse is a difficult subject that can be hard to accept and even harder to talk about. Children who are abused are often threatened by the perpetrators to keep the abuse a secret, so telling an adult takes a great deal of courage. Children have to struggle with a lot of issues, including the fear that no one will believe them. Care must be taken to remain calm and to show support to the child throughout the disclosure phase. The following guidelines will help lessen the risk of causing more trauma to the child and/or compromising a criminal investigation during the disclosure phase.

#### **Receive:**

Listen to what is being said without displaying shock or disbelief. A common reaction to news as unpleasant and shocking as child abuse is denial. However, if you display denial to a child, or show shock or disgust at what they are saying, the child may be afraid to continue and will shut down.

Accept what is being said without judgement. Take it seriously.

## **Reassure:**

Reassure the child, but only so far as is honest and reliable. Don't make promises that you can't be sure to keep, e.g. "everything will be all right now". Reassure the child that they did nothing wrong and that you take what is said seriously.

Don't promise confidentiality – never agree to keep secrets. You have a duty to report your concerns.

Tell the child that you will need to tell some people, but only those whose job it is to protect children.

Acknowledge how difficult it must have been to talk. It takes a lot for a child to come forward about abuse.

## **React:**

Listen quietly, carefully and patiently. Do not assume anything – don't speculate or jump to conclusions.

Do not investigate, interrogate or decide if the child is telling the truth. Remember that an allegation of child abuse may lead to a criminal investigation, so don't do anything that may jeopardise a police investigation. Let the child explain to you in his or her own words what happened, but don't ask leading questions.

Do ask open questions like "Is there anything else that you want to tell me?" Communicate with the child in a way that is appropriate to their age, understanding and preference. This is especially important for children with disabilities and for children whose preferred language is not English.

Do not ask the child to repeat what they have told you to another member of staff. Explain what you have to do next and whom you have to talk to.

Refer directly to the named DSP/DSL in your organisation.

Do not discuss the case with anyone except the DSP/DSL/senior management.

## **Record:**

Make some very brief notes at the time and write them up in detail as soon as possible. Do not destroy your original notes in case they are required by Court.

Record the date, time, place, words used by the child and how the child appeared to you – be specific. Record the actual words used; including any swear words or slang.

Record statements and observable things, not your interpretations or assumptions – keep it factual.

**The next step is to make sure the student is safe, supported and reassured and this should be carried out with the assistance of the DSP. The DSL should be informed immediately and/or a member of senior management.**

The DSL should then do the following:

- Appoint a DSP to support the victim and if/when safe and appropriate return the victim to their normal routine.
- Ensure the DSP advises the victim not to talk about their disclosure with anyone else.
- Ensure the DSP advises any witnesses to the incident not to talk about it.
- Ensure that a complete written record is being kept.
- Contact the LSCB.

The LSCB will tell the DSL what to do next.

The DSL should expect the following:

- **Some action to be taken in agreement with the LSCB:**
  - Immediate action to protect the victim.
  - When and what to tell the parents/group leaders/agents.
  - What to tell the person facing the allegation and if that person should be suspended.
- **The involvement of other agencies:**
  - Children's Social Care for the under 18 victim.
  - The Local Authority's Designated Officer (DO), but this person mostly deals with internal staffing matters involving local authority staff.
  - Police, for both the victim and the accused, if a crime has been committed.
  - No involvement from other agencies and the incident is passed back to the school to deal with using their existing (disciplinary) procedures.
- **Variable responses depending on a number of factors:**
  - The nature of the allegation made.
  - How possible a resolution is.
  - Whether the under 18 wishes to press charges against the accused.
  - How well the situation is being managed by the school.