CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to set out what actions are required of staff working in Aberness Recruitment Agency when dealing with child protection and to ensure effective links are made into the North East of Scotland Child Protection Committee (nespc), Child Protection Guidelines 2010. This document should be read in conjunction with these guidelines.
The Child Protection guidelines sets out common standards for interagency work in Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire and Moray to make clear how agencies should work together to protect children and improve outcomes for them.

2. INTRODUCTION

a. Aberness Recruitment Agency recognises its responsibility in the care and protection of children. No one discipline or agency can protect a child; neither can guidance or procedures alone. This policy in conjunction with nespc Child Protection Guidelines will ensure effective interagency communication and provide a framework within which decisions can be made and implemented. Neither guidance nor procedures can replace professional judgement based on thorough assessment and critical analysis.
b. It is the policy of Aberness Recruitment Agency to support and protect anyone who receives our service. Although our clients are generally adults, we are committed to the protection of anyone which includes children at risk of harm and the safeguarding and promoting of the interests and well-being of such children is of paramount concern.
c. In cases where Aberness Recruitment Agency suspects that a child is suffering or is likely to suffer harm, this will be reported to the appropriate authority. Social Services have responsibility to take appropriate action. Aberness Recruitment Agency will take whatever steps are practicable to protect the child.
e. Aberness Recruitment Agency will ensure that staff will be alert to the possibility that they may become aware of children requiring support and protection who are not service users e.g. relatives, friends, visitors etc. In all cases staff will report their concerns using our reporting procedures.
f. Aberness Recruitment Agency recognises that Child Protection is placed above all other operating principles and supersedes the principle of confidentiality

3. LEGISLATION

In Scotland there are two Acts of the Scottish Parliament which relates specifically to Child Protection. These are:

- **Children (Scotland) Act 1995** – The key legislation - This Act creates the requirement for Scottish Ministers to maintain a ‘List of Persons Disqualified from Working with Children’ and a requirement for organisations to notify such details following disciplinary action. It also creates an offence for an individual who is disqualified from working with

children to apply for, offer to do, accept or do any work in a childcare position.

- **Protection of Children (Scotland) 2003 Scottish Executive** - This Act creates the requirement for Scottish Ministers to maintain a 'List of Persons Disqualified from Working with Children' and a requirement for organisations to notify such details following disciplinary action. It also creates an offence for an individual who is disqualified from working with children to apply for, offer to do, accept or do any work in a childcare position.

There are also publications that have been produced by the Scottish Government. It is a means for translating the commitments made to children in the Charter into practise with the Framework for Standards:

- **Scottish Executive Protecting Children and Young People: The Charter (2004) Scottish Executive** - It sets out what children and young people need and expect to help protect them when they are in danger of being, or already have been, harmed by another person. It has been developed through talking to children and young people who have experienced the need to be protected and supported - but what they are saying is how any child facing difficulties could expect to be treated.
- **Protecting Children and Young People: Framework for Standards (2004)** - This Framework for Standards for child protection has been developed for children and young people, their parents and for all adults and agencies that work with children in Scotland. It sets out what each child in Scotland can expect from professionals and agencies to ensure that they are adequately protected and their needs are met. It also sets out what parents or other adults who may report abuse and neglect can expect.

3.1 Everyone has a duty of care to report concerns regarding any child who is, or who appears to be at risk of harm to Social Work Services. If you are concerned that a child is at risk of abuse of any kind, then Police must be notified as well as Social Work. However, in order to avoid confusion and to have clear lines of accountability, Aberness Recruitment Agency staff should report any concerns directly to their line manager immediately.

3.2 For the purposes of the Children (Scotland) Act, a 'child' is a person aged 16 and under.

4. WHAT IS ABUSE?

Child abuse is the physical, sexual or emotional mistreatment or neglect of a child or children. It is any act or series of acts of commission or omission by a parent, sibling, other relative or carer that results in harm, potential harm or threat of harm to a child.

There are four types of child abuse. They are defined in the UK Government guidance Working Together to Safeguard Children 2010 (1.33 – 1.36) as follows:

1. Physical abuse

2. Emotional abuse
3. Sexual abuse
4. Neglect

Bullying is not defined as a form of abuse in Working Together but there is clear evidence that it is abusive and will include at least one, if not two, three or all four, of the defined categories of abuse. For this reason it has been included in our policy.

5. TYPES OF HARM

Physical abuse – physical injury or neglect of the child:

- Punching, pushing, hitting, shaking, scratching, burning, scalding, drowning, suffocating
- Administration of toxic substances
- Lack of appropriate care e.g. Food, clothing, cleanliness, shelter and warmth
- Deprivation or access to healthcare
- Inappropriate restraint

Emotional/Psychological Abuse – Failure to provide for the child's basic emotional needs which will have a severe effect on the behaviour and development of the child:

- Excessive shouting, bullying, humiliation
- Not giving opportunity to express their views, silencing them or making fun of what they say
- Prevention of social interaction, isolation or sensory deprivation
- Conveying to child they are worthless or unloved or inadequate
- Seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another
- Threatening to cause physical harm, causing fear

Sexual Abuse – 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:

- Physical contact involving penetration or non-penetration
- Non-contact activities e.g. 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).

Neglect - 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**:**

- Ignoring medical or physical care needs
- Failure to provide access to appropriate health, social care and educational services
- Withholding of the necessities of life such as nutrition, appropriate heating etc.

- provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment)
- protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger
- ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-givers)

6. TRAINING

a. All staff employed by Aberness Recruitment Agency will receive awareness training in Child Protection as part of their initial induction.
b. Employees will be made aware of the Child Protection Policy and procedure and their responsibilities in relation to the Child Protection process by issuing them all with a copy at induction.
c. Staff can access the Child Protection Policy at all times at Aberness Recruitment Agency office or on our website.

7. CONFIDENTIALITY

There is a clear requirement across agencies to cooperate in relation to Child Protection. Aberness Recruitment Agency will ensure appropriate mechanisms are in place for staff to report any concerns to Social Work Services and/or the Police, as may be appropriate in the circumstances. We will also ensure that appropriate mechanisms are in place in relation to any on-going involvement and assistance by us, in consultation with the relevant statutory agencies.
To ensure appropriate protective measure can be put in place, it is recognised that confidential information will need to be shared with other staff and other agencies on a 'need to know' basis.
Aberness Recruitment Agency has a duty to report concerns about any child thought to be at risk of harm.
Where a child is seen to be at risk of harm, this will always override a professional or organisational requirement to keep information confidential, subject to the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998. It is the responsibility of those employed or involved with Aberness Recruitment Agency to take appropriate action to ensure the child deemed to be at risk is protected from harm.

8. PRINCIPLES OF REPORTING AND INFORMATION SHARING

a. Child Protection is placed above all other operating principles and supersedes the principle of confidentiality. Any concerns a member of Aberness Recruitment Agency may have regarding the safety and well-being of a child at risk of harm should be brought to the attention of their line manager immediately.
b. Although it is recognised that a service user's privacy must be protected at all times, in situations where child abuse is suspected, there must be free communication between participating agencies throughout the investigation. If a staff member is given information relating to child abuse 'in confidence' they must

make clear that any information relating to adult or child abuse must be passed on to Social Work Services and/or Police for investigation.

PROCEDURE

INTRODUCTION

The procedure details the action staff should take on suspecting harm or poor practise to ensure the welfare and safety of children at risk of harm.

DETECTION OF ABUSE

Detecting abuse can be very difficult and is not a simple process. It is not your responsibility to decide whether or not child abuse has taken place or if a child is at significant risk of harm from someone. Staff however, have both a responsibility and duty of care, as set out in our child protection procedures, to act in order that the appropriate agencies can investigate and take any necessary action to protect a child. It is important for all staff to be vigilant regarding the welfare of children with whom we have contact in the course of providing services. Aberness Recruitment Agency staff will be aware of signs of child abuse which include:

- bruises or injuries that is either unexplained or inconsistent with the explanation given, or visible on the 'soft' parts of the body where accidental injuries are unlikely, e g, cheeks, abdomen, back and buttocks.
- Cigarette burns, bite marks, broken bones, scalds
- Fear of parents being approached for an explanation
- Flinching when approached or touched
- sexual knowledge which is beyond their age, or developmental level
- self-harm or mutilation, sometimes leading to suicide
- constantly dirty or 'smelly'
- mentioning being left alone or unsupervised.

These definitions and indicators are not always definitive that abuse has taken place, but only serve as a guide to make staff aware of possible signs. Many children may exhibit some of these indicators at some time, and that the presence of one or more should not be taken as proof that abuse has occurred. There may well be other reasons for changes in behaviour such as a death or the birth of a new baby in the family or relationship problems between parents/carers. Staff at Aberness Recruitment Agency should always report their concerns as per our reporting procedures.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Any report that a child may be at risk of harm, including anonymous referrals, should be taken seriously. All cases should be considered with an open mind. In all instances, the information given must be reported immediately to the line manager. In the event that you become aware that a child may be at risk of harm or you are told directly by a child that they are being or have been abused, staff should be

aware that the child may be feeling vulnerable or upset when disclosing this information.
Staff should be supportive and reassure the child by listening carefully, but not ask unnecessary questions.
If the situation is an emergency, with a child in immediate danger, staff should take urgent action to intervene and call for assistance as soon as possible. They should give any necessary first aid and contact appropriate emergency services. If the abuser remains present, staff should seek to calm the situation. Aberness Recruitment Agency staff has the right to avoid putting themselves at risk of violence or other harm.

REPORTING

Staff should advise the child that the information will have to be passed on to the line manager and that Social Work Services may be required to investigate further.
If it is appropriate to leave the child who has disclosed the abuse, the information given should be passed on immediately to the line manager.
If there is any concern for the immediate safety and wellbeing of the child, emergency services should be contacted i.e. Ambulance or Police. Do not delay.
The line manager should be contacted once you are satisfied that the child is safe.
If there is a suspicion that a criminal act has been committed (e.g. in cases of physical or sexual abuse) staff should contact the Police immediately and steps should be taken to preserve evidence. The line manager should be contacted thereafter.
If staff are unhappy with the response from their line manager, they should raise this through our complaints procedure.

RECORDING

Write down the nature of your concern and anything the child may have told you using, as far as possible, using their own words. Remember to sign and date the notes taken. This information will form the basis of the referral and will also be required if there is an investigation.

REFERRAL

The line manager will telephone the relevant Social work Services with details of the alleged abuse.
In accordance with the Multi Agency Adult Protection Procedures, the information should be followed up in writing within 24 hours.
Where information is given to the line manager out of hours, the information will be passed onto Social Work Service out of hours Service Team and again the information documented on the relevant paperwork and emailed immediately for their attention in the morning.
The line manger making contact with social Work Services must make a note of the following:

- The date and time that contact was made. Where contact cannot immediately be made, the reason for this must be recorded. Details of all unsuccessful attempts must also be recorded.
- Name and telephone number of those contacted

The line manager will also complete a notification to the Care Inspectorate in relation to the alleged abuse.

FOLLOW UP

Once a referral has been made, it is the duty of the Social Work Services to make enquiries and to investigate matters of concern in relation to the child deemed to be at risk of harm. Where it is alleged that a crime has been committed against the child, investigation is likely to be progressed jointly in consultation with the Police. The investigating officers may need to speak to the staff from whom the concerns originated and anyone involved in the report. Aberness Recruitment Agency staff will cooperate fully with any Police or Social Work Services enquiries.
The line manager will take advice from the investigating officer about any staff who may be formally charged with alleged abuse.

RELEVANT CONTACTS for Dundee

If you believe a child is in immediate danger, please contact Police Scotland emergency service on 999. For other concerns about a child / children please use the following numbers:

Child Protection Concerns - **Tel: 01382 307999 (24 hr)**
All other enquiries - **Tel: 01382 307940**

Operating Hours - Weekdays 8.45am to 5.00pm

Out of Hours Social Work
Tel: 01382 307964 (answering machine 9.30am to 4.30pm)

Out of Hours Social Work operates during the following times:

- Weekdays - 4.30pm to 9.30am
- Weekends - 4.30pm (Friday) to 9.30am (Monday)

All public holidays are covered on a 24 hour basis

Service Information

- Child Protection
- Support to children and their families at home

The Childcare and Protection Service is the first point of contact for any concerns you may have about children living in the Dundee area. The service works in close co-operation with other agencies such as health, education and police.

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RESPONSIBILITY

All those persons referred to within the scope of this policy are required to be familiar with the terms of this policy.

Maintenance, regular review and updating of this policy is conducted and agreed by the Director. Revision, amendments and alterations to the policy can only be implemented following consideration and approval by the Director of Aberness Recuitment Agency.