



You and Me Counselling

## **Child Safeguarding and Protection Policy You and Me Counselling**

### **A. Policy Statement**

You and Me Counselling aims to improve the mental health and emotional wellbeing of children and young people in North East London through counselling, psychotherapy and peer support. We have a strong focus on supporting young people and their families who have become involved in crime and antisocial behaviour, and we often find that their behaviour is a manifestation of an underlying mental health issue, as a result of their family background and unsettled home environment. We take a holistic approach, working with young people, their families and their support networks, to tackle the root causes of psychological distress through counselling, group therapy, and training. In 2018, You and Me Counselling successfully tendered for, and became an approved provider for, Havering Borough Council to supply counselling services to schools. Since then, we've expanded our work to support children and young people in Barking and Dagenham, Redbridge and Waltham Forest.

You and Me Counselling is committed to providing a safe environment for children, staff, volunteers, visitors and to promote a culture where children and adults will feel confident about sharing any concerns that they may have about their own safety or the well-being of others.

The Children Act 1989 defines a child as being up to the age of 18 years old. Extensions of this exist for children who have special needs and for those in local authority care settings. The Children's Act makes it clear that the welfare of the child is paramount and it gives everyone involved in the care of children a responsibility for the protection of those children.

You and Me Counselling believes that all children, regardless of age and background, have at all times and in all situations, the right to enjoy the charity's activities and support in a happy, safe and secure environment. Furthermore, we believe that children should never experience abuse of any kind. You and Me Counselling will ensure that this is the case by rigorously implementing this policy. All staff and volunteers who have regular contact with children and young people will be checked through the Disclosure and Barring Service prior to employment with the organisation. This policy applies to all staff and volunteers at You and Me Counselling and other people who use You and Me Counselling services.

Our policy and protocols have been developed on the basis of law and guidance that seeks to protect children, namely:

- Children Act 1989
- United Convention of the Rights of the Child 1991
- Data Protection Act 1998
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Sexual Offences Act 2003
- Children Act 2004
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006
- Protection of Freedoms Act 2012
- Children and Families Act 2014
- Special educational needs and disability (SEND) code of practice: 0-25 years – Statutory guidance for organisations which work with and support children and young people who have special educational needs or disabilities; HM Government 2014
- Information sharing: Advice for practitioners providing safeguarding services to children, young people, parents and carers; HM Government 2015
- Working together to safeguard children: a guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children; HM Government 2018
- Keeping Children Safe in Education, HM Government 2019

<b>Designated Safeguarding Lead:</b>	Elizabeth Dickinson, Clinical Manager Contact No: 01708 477663 Contact Email: <a href="mailto:elizabeth.dickinson@youandmecounselling.org.uk">elizabeth.dickinson@youandmecounselling.org.uk</a>
<b>Deputy Safeguarding Officer</b>	Bolaji Olagunju, CEO Contact No: 01708 477663 Contact Email: <a href="mailto:bolaji.olagunju@youandmecounselling.org.uk">bolaji.olagunju@youandmecounselling.org.uk</a>

## B. Types of abuse

Child abuse is generally divided into four categories:

### 1. 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. A person might do this because they enjoy or need the attention they get through having a sick child.

Physical abuse, as well as being a result of an act of commission can also be caused through omission or the failure to act to protect.

### 2. Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional ill treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve making a child feel or believe that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person

### 3. 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, or consents to, what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative acts such as rape, buggery or oral sex or non-penetrative acts such as fondling.

Sexual abuse may also 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.

Boys and girls can be sexually abused by males and/or females, by adults and by other young people. This includes people from all different walks of life.

### 4. Neglect

Neglect 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. 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.

## C. Recruitment

All reasonable steps will be taken to ensure unsuitable individuals are prevented from having any involvement with You and Me Counselling.

Employee/volunteer recruitment procedures will include a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check, at the appropriate level, for all personnel with access to children and should always include self-declaration and the use of references. All prospective employees/volunteers should be interviewed. We will ensure that all employees/volunteers have appropriate qualifications and training.

Should any concerns arise following a DBS check then these will be passed onto You and Me Counselling's Designated Safeguarding Lead, who may seek further independent safeguarding advice. Any Disclosure that causes concern will be assessed to establish the level of risk the subject poses to children, other service users, colleagues, the general public and/or our organisation. A number of questions will be asked:

- Does the offence relate directly to work with children?
- What is the seriousness of the offence/s and the circumstances surrounding it?

- How long it is since the offence was committed?
- Does the subject have a pattern of offending?
- Has the subject's situation changed since the offence occurred?
- What is the subject's explanation of the offence?
- Did the subject declare the offence prior to the Disclosure?

If all these questions are not answered satisfactorily then the prospective employee/volunteer will not be allowed to join the organisation. All new employees/volunteers will go through a probation and induction process, including relevant training. Ongoing training and supervision will ensure all employees/volunteers are adequately supported.

DBS checks are renewed by the charity at least every three years.

#### **D. Training and supervision of staff, volunteers and Trustees**

New staff, volunteers and Trustees will have a designated person who will ensure that a proper induction takes place. The supervisor will provide regular support and supervision to the new member of staff and volunteer in all areas of their work including child protection. All new staff, volunteers and Trustees will read and understand this policy as part of their induction process. Staff and volunteers will be able to identify the signs of abuse and will be confident about the steps to take and who to report any concerns.

All staff, volunteers and Trustees will attend external training on child protection and safeguarding; for core staff this will take place annually. For new starters, until external training is possible, child protection training will be cascaded by supervisors/managers at You and Me Counselling. Staff and volunteers will keep a check on visitors and guests whether their visit is by invitation or unsolicited. This will ensure the welfare of the children is safeguarded at all times.

#### **E. Creating a Safe and Caring Environment:**

- Risk Assessment should be undertaken prior to any offsite visits or new types of activities.
- Employees/volunteers working with children should be appropriately trained and qualified to ensure the safe provision of services, use of equipment, activities undertaken, etc.
- Employees/volunteers working with children should carefully plan activity sessions with the care and safety of children as their main concern including the use of activities at an appropriate age/ability level.
- Wherever possible we will encourage an 'open environment' e.g. avoiding private or unobserved situations and discouraging the keeping of secrets. Employees/volunteers should avoid being alone with a child at any time, including for telephone mentoring sessions. When this is unavoidable, it should be done with the full knowledge and consent of someone in charge of the organisation and/or the children's parents/carers.
- Employees/volunteers must treat all children/young people with respect.
- Employees/volunteers must not make racist, sexist or any other remarks which upset or humiliate.
- Employees/volunteers must take care to avoid showing any favouritism.
- It is the responsibility of employees/volunteers to prevent the abuse of younger or weaker children by older or stronger children through bullying, cruelty or any other forms of humiliation.
- Arrangements for parents/carers dropping off and collecting children from activities/trips need to be clearly stated and agreed by parents/carers, children and employees/volunteers.

#### **F. Behaviour guidelines for employees/volunteers**

Safety of participants and employees/volunteers is of prime consideration at all times. All accidents involving anyone should be recorded in the organisation's accident book immediately or as soon as practicably possible.

Employees/volunteers are responsible for familiarising themselves with building/facility safety issues, such as, fire procedures, location of emergency exits, location of emergency telephones and first aid equipment. Employees/volunteers are responsible for reporting suspected cases of child abuse to the appropriate individuals and/or agencies.

Employees/volunteers will be expected to keep an attendance register for all organised sessions.

Appropriate employees/volunteers should have access to any parent consent/emergency consent forms for all children taking part in any activities [this information should be confidential].

Employees/volunteers should ensure that their activities start and end on time. Employees/volunteers are expected to promote, demonstrate and incorporate the values of fair play, trust and ethics throughout their activities.

Employees/volunteer should ensure that they are adequately insured, to protect against claims of negligence, through their organisation or their own personal insurance if acting as a self- employed agent.

Employees/volunteers should set examples of appropriate behaviour. As young people learn by example, volunteers should avoid using sarcasm or discrimination, direct criticism, labelling and unnecessary competition or comparison.

Employees/volunteers should avoid situations in which they risk putting themselves or the young person at risk. This includes being alone with a young person unnecessarily. Pre-arranged meetings with a child outside of school premises should not be permitted unless approval is obtained from their parent or carer and the lead contact at the school.

If a home visit is required, a risk assessment should be undertaken and there should be agreement that the parent or carer will remain in the home throughout the session. Where there is little or no information available about the home environment, visits should not be made alone.

Employees/volunteers should offer respect to the young person at all times and strive to be sensitive to their feelings.

Employees/volunteers should never let a child's allegation go either unacknowledged and/or unrecorded.

Employees/volunteers should never do things of a personal nature for a child or young person. If you do have to do things of a personal nature for a child e.g. take to the toilet, support, lift, etc. particularly if they are very young or a child with additional needs, then you should obtain the full consent of their parents and permission from your line manager or person in charge. In an emergency situation, which requires this type of help, parents and your line manager, should be fully informed as soon, as is practicable.

Employees/volunteers should never reduce a child to tears as a form of control.

Employees/volunteers should never undertake any tasks involving children for which they feel inadequately trained or have concerns about.

Employees/volunteers should always maintain appropriate professional boundaries and avoid behavior which may be misinterpreted by others. They should report and record any incident with this potential.

Employees/volunteers should never invite a child they work with into their home, unless the reason for this has been firmly established and agreed with parent/carers and the charity's Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Confidentiality is paramount and information concerning the safeguarding of children should only be shared on a need-to-know basis. In circumstances where a child's identity does not need to be disclosed the information should be used anonymously.

The giving of gifts to a child should be part of an agreed policy for supporting positive behavior or achievements. There are occasions when children or parents wish to pass small tokens of appreciation to adults. However, it is unacceptable to receive gifts of significant value or on a regular basis from children or their families.

Employees/volunteers should not give their personal contact details to children including personal email, or home telephone, unless the need to do so is agreed with parents/carers and the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Employees/volunteers should not establish or seek to establish social contacts with children for the purpose of securing a friendship. If there is an existing social relationship with a child You and Me Counselling is working with, the Designated Safeguarding Lead should be informed and any situation recorded which might compromise the charity or the employee/volunteer's professional standing.

During the course of activity facilitated by the charity, physical contact may need to be made with children. This should be in response to their needs, of limited duration, and appropriate to their age, stage of development, gender, ethnicity and background. It is not possible to be specific about the appropriateness of each physical contact; employees/volunteers should use their professional judgement. However, physical

contact must never be secretive; where feasible, employees/volunteers should seek the child's permission before initiating the contact.

The use of physical intervention to manage behaviour should be avoided. It should only be used to manage a child's behaviour if it is necessary to prevent personal injury to the child, other children, or an adult, to prevent serious damage to property, or what would reasonably be regarded as exceptional circumstances. Under no circumstances should physical force or intervention be used as a form of punishment.

Communication with children, by whatever method, should take place within clear and explicit professional boundaries. Employee/volunteers should set their social media settings to private and not engage in private social media activity with children. If children seek 1:1 contact via social media e.g. to make a disclosure or to discuss a concern, this should be raised with the Designated Safeguarding Lead before a course of action is agreed. Employees/volunteers should ensure all communications are transparent and open to scrutiny. Text messaging should only be used as part of an agreed protocol and when other forms of communication are not available.

## **G. Admission Procedures**

A register of names, addresses, next of kin and contact addresses and telephone numbers for emergencies will be kept.

## **H. Designated Person**

There will be a named designated person and a deputy-designated person for child protection.

You and Me Counselling Designated Safeguarding Lead is Bolaji Olagunju, Chief Executive. Our Deputy is Elizabeth Dickinson our Clinical manager.

As much of our work is in schools, we will establish contact with the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead at the start of our school-based programmes.

In the event of any concerns regarding a child then You and Me Counselling's Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) will be informed at the earliest available opportunity. If necessary the DSL will inform the relevant designated school safeguarding lead and/or Social Services Department without delay. All safeguarding concerns will also be recorded and shared with You and Me Counselling Board of Trustees at our regular Board meetings.

In our work outside of school environments, children and parents/carers will be made aware of the name of You and Me Counselling's Designated Safeguarding Lead, to whom they may report any worries or concerns.

## **I. Signs of Abuse**

The signs summarised below do not necessarily mean that a child is being abused. Similarly there may not be any signs; you may just feel something is wrong. If you are worried report it to the designated person. It is not your responsibility to decide if it is abuse, but it is your responsibility to act on your concerns and do something about it by reporting.

### **Signs of Physical Abuse:**

- Unexplained injuries or burns
- Improbable excuses given to explain injuries
- Refusal to discuss injuries
- Untreated injuries
- Admission of punishment which appears excessive
- Bald patches
- Withdrawal from physical contact
- Arms and legs covered in hot weather
- Fear of returning home
- Fear of medical help
- Self-destructive tendencies
- Aggression towards others
- Running away from home

### **Signs of Neglect:**

- Constant hunger
- Poor personal hygiene
- Constant tiredness
- Poor state of clothing
- Emaciated
- Frequent lateness or non attendance at school
- Untreated medical problems
- Destructive tendencies
- Low self esteem
- Neurotic behaviour
- No social relationships
- Running away from home
- Compulsive stealing or scavenging

#### **Signs of Emotional abuse:**

- Physical, mental and/or emotional development slows down
- Admission of punishment which appears excessive
- Over-reaction to mistakes
- Continual self-deprecation
- Sudden speech disorders
- Fear of new situations
- Inappropriate emotional responses to painful situations
- Neurotic behaviour e.g. thumb sucking, hair twisting, etc.
- Self-mutilation
- Fear of parents being contacted
- Extremes of passivity or aggression
- Substance misuse
- Running away from home
- Compulsive stealing, scavenging

#### **Signs of Sexual Abuse:**

- Lack of trust in adults and/or fear of a particular individual[s]
- Over familiarity with adults or provocative behavior
- Withdrawal and introversion/problems with peer relationships
- Running away from home/sudden behaviour changes e.g. falling standards, truancy, Stealing etc.
- Low self esteem
- Substance misuse
- Displaying sexual knowledge beyond age group
- Involvement in prostitution
- Over-sexed behaviour
- Sleeplessness, nightmares, fear of the dark
- Bruises, scratches, bite marks
- Depression, suicide attempts
- Anorexia nervosa/eating disorder or a change in eating habits
- Pregnancy, particularly when reluctant to name the father
- Recurring urinary tract problems/vaginal infections

Employees/volunteers who suspect that a child is being abused will record any concerns using the protocol outlined in Appendix A.

#### **J. Photography, video, etc:**

Formal permission from parent/carers should be obtained before taking photographs, videos, etc. If the photograph is used, avoid naming the pupil.

#### **K. Review**

You and Me Counselling will ensure that issues of child protection receive continuous attention and will regularly review the way that we operate to support this principle. This safeguarding policy and associated protocol will be reviewed at least annually and when there are any changes in legislation.

**Policy last reviewed:** 6 January 2023



## A. Responding to disclosures of abuse

It is not the responsibility of employees/volunteers to deal with suspected abuse but it is their responsibility to report concerns to the appropriate person. It is important that all employees/volunteers should be aware of their responsibilities if child abuse is suspected.

If you notice any social changes in the behaviour of a child, worrying marks or bruises or hear a child/children talking about things which give cause for concern, then your first responsibility is to the child. It is not safe to assume that someone else will take action. As an adult you have a duty to take appropriate action. Recognising and coping with child abuse is very stressful and the person reporting the concern will not have to cope alone.

If a child spontaneously talks of experiences which give cause for concern, staff and volunteers at the You and Me Counselling should:

- 1.Explain to the child that if he/she discloses information which leads you to believe they are being abused, you will be unable to keep it confidential.
- 2.Listen to the child without questioning him/her. Be aware of your own reactions as showing disapproval may stop the child from continuing with their disclosure.
3. Do not try to stop the child from recalling events. Make a note of what is said, in what context, the setting, the timing and which people were present.
- 4.Reassure the child, tell them that they are right to tell you [do not promise to keep it a secret as it is your responsibility to inform others].
- 5.Stay calm – ensure the child is safe and feels safe.
- 6.Accept what you have been told. [This should not be seen as believing or disbelieving what you have been told]
- 7.Reassure the child and stress that they are not to blame.
- 8.Tell the child that you will offer support but you will have to pass the information on.
- 9.Do not question the child and/or rush into details that may be inappropriate.
- 10.Monitor the individuals concerned; encourage them to continue to take part in the charity's activities.
- 11.Do not make promises you cannot keep.
- 12.Do not approach or contact the alleged abuser[s].

## B. Reporting procedures

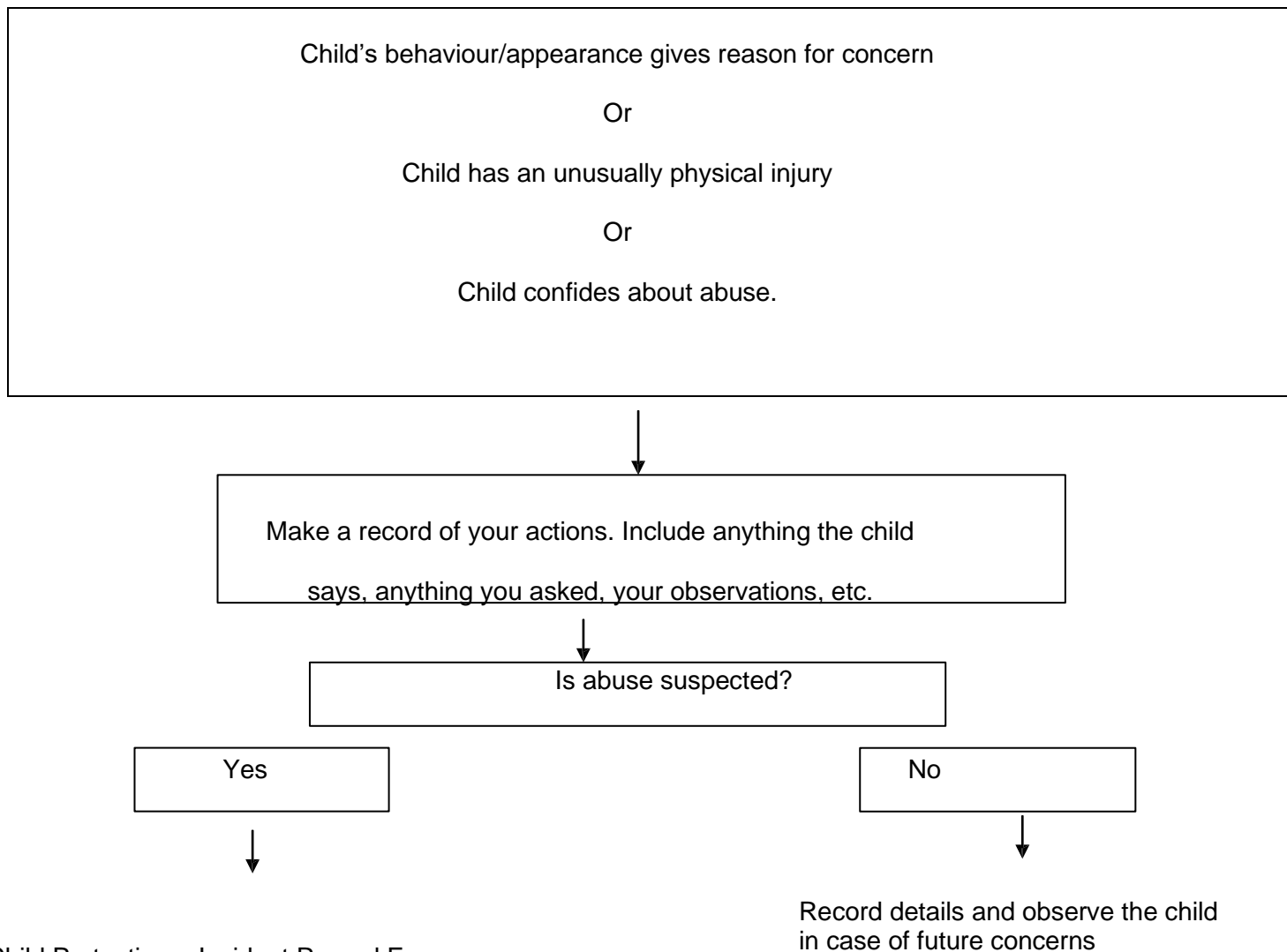
- Record the concern or incident in the Child Protection register, including, date and time of what has occurred and the time the disclosure was made. Record the names of the people involved and what was said and done by whom and any action taken.
- Inform You and Me Counselling's Designated Safeguarding Lead or Deputy, who will then refer as appropriate:
  - If the incident occurs as part of the charity's work in schools, even if the disclosure is not made on school premises, the first step should be to discuss the concern with the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead.
  - If the incident occurs outside the charity's schools work, You and Me Counselling's Designated Safeguarding Lead will contact the appropriate authorities including the Duty Social Worker in the area where the child lives as soon as possible.
- If the matter is urgent and the Safeguarding Lead or Deputy cannot be contacted, then contact either the School's Designated Safeguarding Lead, or, if outside a school setting, social services or the police.
- Concerns would normally be shared with parents/carers as soon as possible. However, there could be circumstances when this could put the child at greater risk or there may be concerns that parents/carers will not respond appropriately.



- Every effort will be made by Social Services to respect the anonymity, if requested, of the person reporting the abuse, however, if allegations result in Court proceedings this may not be possible.
- If an allegation of abuse is made against a member of staff or volunteer, Social Services will follow the same procedure as they do to investigate allegations of abuse for a family.

If you witness concerning behaviour by a professional outside of our group, you should speak to the Designated Safeguarding Lead. If you witness inappropriate behaviour by a member of the YMC team, you should speak initially to the CEO, or a Trustee if she is not available.

### C. Reporting procedure for suspected cases of child abuse



Child Protection – Incident Record Form

Report concerns directly to:

- a) YMC Designated Safeguarding Lead, who will refer to one or more of the following:

- School Designated Safeguarding Lead
- Social Services team in area where the child lives
- Police – 999 emergency or 101 non-emergency
- NSPCC child protection helpline 0808 800 5000

Record details and observe the child in case of future concerns

Discuss concerns with School Designated Safeguarding Lead/ YMC Designating Safeguarding Lead

## You and Me Counselling Child Protection Incident Record Form

Your name	
Your position	
Child's name	
Child's address	
Parent/carer names and address (if different)	
School	
Incident Date	
Incident Time	
Incident Description	

## **Details of local Safeguarding Boards**

### **Barking and Dagenham**

020 8227 3811

[childrenss@lbbd.gov.uk](mailto:childrenss@lbbd.gov.uk)

### **Havering**

Monday to Friday (9am to 5pm) - 01708 433222

Out of hours/weekends - 01708 433999

### **Redbridge**

Tel: 020 8708 3885

E-mail: [CPAT.referrals@redbridge.gov.uk](mailto:CPAT.referrals@redbridge.gov.uk)

During the evening or at weekends, please call the Emergency Duty Team on 020 8708 5897.

### **Waltham Forest**

Call 020 8436 2310 or email [MASHrequests@walthamforest.gov.uk](mailto:MASHrequests@walthamforest.gov.uk)

Outside of office hours, if your concerns are urgent, you can call the Emergency Duty Team on 020 8436 3000.

If you believe you or someone else is in immediate danger, do something straight away - contact 999 and tell the operator what is happening.