

Contributed by Leonora Borg, Consortium for Street Children

### **Child safeguarding: what is it?**

Keeping all children safe from harm is every child's right as laid out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child: safe from physical, sexual and emotional abuse and neglect. Child safeguarding is not just about recognising and responding to abuse; it is also about creating child-safe environments, raising awareness of abuse and involving children in keeping themselves and others safe.

### **What are the types of abuse?<sup>1</sup>**

Physical abuse: includes hitting, kicking, punching and other ways of inflicting pain or injury such as poisoning (perhaps with harmful drugs or alcohol)

Emotional abuse: undermining a child's confidence and sense of self-worth – for example by ignoring them, giving degrading punishments, or constantly threatening or humiliating them. It also includes witnessing domestic violence and bullying

Sexual abuse: when a child is used sexually by an adult or young person. Making a child look at pornographic magazines or films is also sexual abuse

Neglect: When parents or carers persistently fail to provide for a child's basic needs – such as food, warmth and shelter, safety, and access to medical attention.

### **What should I do if I am worried about a child?**

It is the responsibility of EVERY adult to respond promptly to concerns that a child is being abused or at risk of being harmed. If the child is supported by your organisation, the best thing is to report your concern to your line manager UNLESS the child is in immediate danger, in which case the police or social services should be contacted. Alternatively you can call the NSPCC or social services for advice. LOG your concern, date it and file it securely. Confidentiality is key: talk to who you need to when you need to; it is NOT a conversation to be shared in your local cafe! The welfare of every child is always the most important consideration.

### **Top Tips on promoting the safeguarding of children:**

1. Get children involved in putting together child safeguarding policies and practice
2. Encourage children to inform the wider community about child safeguarding
3. Ensure all staff and volunteers are carefully screened including seeking references and obtaining a Criminal Records Check or local equivalent
4. Make sure everyone understands and actively promotes child safeguarding, including the policy, code of conduct and reporting procedures
5. Work together with others on child safeguarding to promote good practice and lessons learnt.

### **For more information:**

Consortium for Street Children ([www.streetchildren.org.uk](http://www.streetchildren.org.uk)) – The Consortium for Street Children (CSC) offers Child Safeguarding training; supports its members with Child Safeguarding Policy advice and development; and holds best practice meetings. Contact [leo@streetchildren.org.uk](mailto:leo@streetchildren.org.uk) for more information

Keeping Children Safe Coalition ([www.keepingchildrensafe.org.uk](http://www.keepingchildrensafe.org.uk)) (a member of CSC)

NSPCC ([www.nspcc.org.uk](http://www.nspcc.org.uk))

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child ([www.unicef.org/crc](http://www.unicef.org/crc))

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<sup>1</sup> NSPCC definitions of child abuse