

Policy	Author & Board member	Date to Review	Responsible staff
Child Protection	Samantha Johnson: CEO	Jan 2027	SJ / AE – to update

ECHO Child Protection Policy

This policy applies to all staff including senior managers, directors, volunteers, trustees, sessional workers, students or anyone working in the name of ECHO.

1) The purpose of this policy

- To protect the children and young people who use ECHO's services or support, this includes children of adult service users and staff/volunteers.
- To provide staff with an overview that guides our approach to principles of child protection and safeguarding

ECHO believes that no child or young person should experience abuse of any kind. We have a responsibility to keep children and young people safe and promote their wellbeing. All of our working practices will focus on protecting them.

ECHO acknowledges its responsibility to safeguard and protect the welfare of every child and young person who uses their service and is committed to working to provide a safe environment for all members. This policy deals with the protection of children.

Children are those under 18 years of age. We acknowledge that every child or young person who participates in ECHO activity or service should be able to take part in an enjoyable and safe environment and be protected from poor practice and abuse.

This is the responsibility of every adult involved with ECHO.

This policy has been drawn up on the basis of law and guidance that seeks to protect children namely:

- Children's Act 1989
- United Convention of the rights of the child 1991
- Data Protection 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 who:
 - Have special educational needs or disabilities. HM Government 2014
 - NSPCC policy support and information guidance

2) The guiding principles of ECHO child protection policy are that:

- The child's welfare is paramount.



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- All children and young people have a right to be protected from abuse regardless of their age gender, disability, culture, language, racial origin, religious beliefs or sexual orientation.
- All allegations and suspicions of abuse will be taken seriously and responded to in accordance with local policies and procedures in full partnership with those agencies charged with statutory child protection duties.
- All staff (paid/unpaid) have a responsibility to report concerns to the Designated Person with responsibility for child protection.
- Staff/volunteers are not trained to deal with situations of abuse or to decide if abuse has occurred.
- ECHO staff, volunteers or any adults having direct access to children and young people or those with opportunity to develop trusting relationships will be required to complete a full DBS check.
- ECHO staff and volunteers having direct access to children and young people will receive safeguarding training and updates every three years.

3) What to do if you suspect any abuse of any child

You must immediately inform the designated person for child protection;

Samantha Johnson CEO samantha@echo-uk.org 0207 998 4710 or 07730 146 154

- If this person is not available, you should then contact the named child protection officer at the event or the **chairperson, Steve Wood.**
- You must not try to investigate the matter on your own, staff are not equipped or qualified to do so.
- If a child talks to you about a child protection issue, listen but do not lead, write notes as soon as safe to do so.

The role of the designated person is to:

- Obtain information from staff, volunteers, children or parents and carers who have child protection concerns and to record this information.
- Assess the information quickly and carefully and ask for further information as appropriate.
- They should also consult with a statutory child protection agency such as the local social services department or the NSPCC to clarify any doubts or worries.
- The designated person should make a referral to a statutory child protection agency or the police without delay.

- 1) The designated person has been nominated by ECHO to refer allegations or suspicions of neglect or abuse to the statutory authorities. In the absence of Samantha Johnson the matter should be brought to the attention of Steve Wood.
- 2) Suspicions will not be discussed with anyone other than those nominated above.
- 3) It is the right of any individual to make direct referrals to the child protection agencies. If for any reason you believe that the nominated persons have not responded appropriately to your concerns, then it is up to you to contact the child protection agencies directly.

4) We will seek to keep children and young people safe by:

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Canterbury House, 1 Royal Street, London, SE1 7LL Tel: 0207 998 4710



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- Listening, valuing and respecting them
- Appointing a designated safeguarding officer (DSO) for children and young people within ECHO and at each event
- Adopting child protection practices in everything we do
- Developing and producing e-safety policy
- Providing support to all staff or adults within ECHO
- Recruiting staff, volunteers and trustees safely, ensuring all safety checks are made
- Recording information securely about safety concerns and sharing our policy with the wider ECHO community
- Share our concerns with relevant agencies when needed
- Ensure we have effective complaints and whistleblowing measures in place
- Ensuring we provide a safe physical environment for our children, young people, staff and volunteers by applying health and safety measures.
- Training and supporting staff, volunteers and trustees
- Risk assessments for events, activity and day to day projects

5) CHILD PROTECTION

There are four ways in which adults can put children and young people in danger of abuse and major harm. The Government has provided the following definitions to guide all professionals working with children and families, to help them identify when there are serious causes for concern about children.

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.

This covers situations where children suffer because the people who care for them fails to do things such as provide enough food, clothes or a warm home for them. This failure would have to be severe and it would need to be connected to the concern about the child's health or development.

Physical abuse:

Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, harm, 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 they are looking after. This situation is commonly described using terms such as fabricated or induced illness.

If an adult physically injures a child or young person, this would be abuse. Different families have different ideas about how to punish children, but if an adult physically injures a child as punishment, this is abuse. It may also be that an adult has not actually caused the injury, but should have taken better care of the child to prevent the injury happening. Fabricated or induced illness is where parents continually take their children for medical treatment when they are not ill. The parents may also deliberately make the child ill by giving them medicine or other substances to intentionally suffocate them, interfere with medical equipment or exaggerating symptoms that may cause unnecessary investigations.



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 what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative (for example, rape or buggery) or non-penetrative acts. They may 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.

Sexual abuse is where adults try to use a child for their own sexual intentions. This may involve pornography, fondling, sexual intercourse or other forms of sexual activity that the child does not agree to and does not understand.

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 conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only in so far as they meet the needs of another person. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed upon children. It may involve causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill treatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

Emotional abuse is where an adult continually treats a child cruelly, or in a way which rejects and undermines them, for example, by constantly picking on a child, taunting or humiliating them to the point where the child becomes very nervous or withdrawn.

Recent guidance notes other sources of stress for children and families, such as social exclusion, domestic violence, the mental illness of a parent or carer, or drug and alcohol misuse. These may have a negative impact on a child's health and development and may be noticed by an organisation caring for a child. If it is felt that a child's well-being is adversely affected by any of these areas, the same procedures should be followed.

The following signs may or may not be indicators that abuse has taken place:

Physical signs of abuse

- Any injuries not consistent with the explanation given for them
- Injuries which occur to the body in places which are not normally exposed to falls or games
- Unexplained bruising, marks or injuries on any part of the body
- Bruises which reflect hand marks or fingertips (from slapping or pinching)
- Cigarette burns
- Bite marks
- Broken bones
- Scalds
- Injuries which have not received medical attention
- Neglect-under nourishment, failure to grow, constant hunger, stealing or gorging food, untreated illnesses, inadequate care
- Repeated urinary infections or unexplained stomach pains

Changes in behaviour which can also indicate physical abuse:

- Fear of parents being approached for an explanation
- Aggressive behaviour or severe temper outbursts
- Flinching when approached or touched
- Reluctance to get changed, for example, wearing long sleeves in hot weather
- Depression
- Withdrawn behaviour
- Running away from home

Emotional signs of abuse

The physical signs of emotional abuse may include;

- A failure to thrive or grow particularly if a child puts on weight in other circumstances e.g. in hospital or away from their parents' care
- Sudden speech disorders
- Persistent tiredness
- Development delay, either in terms of physical or emotional progress

Changes in behaviour which can also indicate emotional abuse include:

- Obsessions or phobias
- Sudden under-achievement or lack of concentration
- Inappropriate relationships with peers and/or adults
- Being unable to play
- Attention seeking behaviour
- Fear of making mistakes
- Self-harm
- Fear of parent being approached regarding their behaviour

Sexual Abuse

The physical signs of sexual abuse may include:

- Pain or itching in the genital/anal area
- Bruising or bleeding near genital/anal areas
- Sexually transmitted disease
- Vaginal discharge or infection
- Stomach pains
- Discomfort when walking or sitting down
- Pregnancy

Changes in behaviour which can also indicate sexual abuse include:

- Sudden or unexplained changes in behaviour e.g. becoming withdrawn or aggressive
- Fear of being left with a specific person or group of people
- Having nightmares
- Running away from home
- Sexual knowledge which is beyond their age or developmental level
- Sexual drawings or language
- Bedwetting



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- Eating problems such as over-eating or anorexia
- Self-harm or mutilation, sometimes leading to suicide attempts
- Saying they have secrets they cannot tell anyone about
- Substance or drug abuse
- Suddenly having unexplained sources of money
- Not allowed to have friends (particularly in adolescence)
- Acting in a sexually explicit way with adults

Neglect

The physical signs of neglect may include:

- Constant hunger, sometimes stealing food from other children
- Constantly dirty or smelly
- Loss of weight or being constantly underweight
- Inappropriate dress for the conditions

Changes in behaviour which can also indicate neglect include:

- Complaining of being tired all the time
- Not requesting medical assistance and/or failing to attend appointments
- Having few friends
- Mentioning being left alone or unsupervised

Allegations of physical injury or neglect

If a child has a symptom of physical injury or neglect the designated person will:

- 1) Contact Social Services for advice in cases of deliberate injury or concerns about the safety of the child. The parents should not be informed by the organisation in these circumstances.
- 2) Where emergency medical attention is necessary it will be sought immediately. The designated person will inform the doctor of any suspicions of abuse.
- 3) In other circumstances speak with the parent/carer/guardian and suggest that medical help/attention is sought for the child. The doctor will then initiate further action if necessary.
- 4) If appropriate the parent/carer will be encouraged to seek help from Social Services. If the parent/carer/guardian fails to act the designated person should in case of real concern contact social services for advice.
- 5) Where the designated person is unsure whether to refer a case to Social Services then advice from the Area Child Protection Committee will be sought.

Allegations of sexual abuse

In the event of allegations or suspicions of sexual abuse the designated person will:

- 1) Contact the Social Service duty social worker for children and families directly. The designated person will not speak to the parent (or anyone else)
- 2) If the designated person is unsure whether or not to follow the above guidance then advice from the Area Child Protection Committee will be sought.



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- 3) Under no circumstances must the designated person attempt to carry out any investigation into the allegation or suspicions of sexual abuse. The role of the designated person is to collect and clarify the precise details of the allegation or suspicion and to provide this information to Social Services whose task it is to investigate the matter under section 47 of the Children Act.
- 4) Whilst allegations or suspicions of sexual abuse should normally be reported to the designated person, their absence should not delay referral to Social Services.

Responding to a child making an allegation of abuse

- Stay calm; listen carefully to what is being said.
- Find an appropriate early opportunity to explain that it is likely that the information will need to be shared with others – do not promise to keep secrets.
- Allow the child to continue at his / her own pace.
- Ask questions for clarification only and at all times avoid asking questions that suggest a particular answer.
- Reassure the child that they have done the right thing in telling you.
- Tell them what you will do next and with whom the information will be shared.
- Record in writing what was said using the child's own words as soon as possible, note the date, time, any names mentioned, to whom the information was given and ensure that the record is signed and dated.

Helpful statements to make

- I believe you (or showing acceptance of what the child says)
- Thank you for telling me
- It's not your fault
- I will help you

Do not say

- Why didn't you tell anyone before?
- I can't believe it!
- Are you sure that this is true?
- Why? Who? When? Where?
- Never make false promises

6) What to do after a child has talked to you about abuse

The procedure

- 1) Make notes as soon as possible (ideally within 1 hour of being told) you should write down exactly what the child has said and what you said in reply and what was happening immediately before being told (i.e. the activity being delivered). You should record the dates, times and when you made the record. All hand written notes should be kept securely.

You should use the form "Reporting allegations or suspicions of abuse" This form is attached at the back of this policy and is available at www.echo-uk.org



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- 2) You should report your discussion with the designated person as soon as possible. If this person is implicated you need to report to (second designated person) - If both are implicated report to Social Services.
- 3) You should under no circumstances discuss your suspicions or allegations with anyone other than those nominated above.
- 4) After a child has disclosed abuse the designated persons should carefully consider whether or not it is safe for a child to return home to a potentially abusive situation. On these rare occasions it may be necessary to take immediate action to contact Social Services to discuss putting safety measures into effect.

7) What to do if a child shares an intention of self-harm or suicidal thoughts

If a child or young person expresses any intention of self-harm or suicidal thoughts whilst sharing their concerns, this must be recorded and the Designated Person notified straightaway.

8) Recruitment and appointment of workers and volunteers

In recruiting and appointing workers we (ECHO) will be responsible for the following:

- Identifying the tasks and responsibilities involved and the type of person most suitable for the job.
- Drawing up the selection criteria and putting together a list of essential and desirable qualifications, skills and experience.
- All applicants should apply in writing and their application will cover their personal details, previous and current work/volunteering experience.
- We will always send a copy of our child protection policy with the application pack.
- We will make sure that we measure the application against the selection criteria
- All applicants need to sign a declaration stating that there is no reason why they should be considered unsuitable to work with children. The Rehabilitation of Offenders Act (1974) requires that people applying for positions which give them "substantial, unsupervised access on a sustained or regular basis" to children under the age of 18 must declare all previous convictions which are then subject to police checks. They can then only be offered a job subject to a successful police check. This includes potential employees, volunteers and self-employed people such as sports coaches. They are also required to declare any pending case against them. It is important that your applicant in this particular category understands that all information will be dealt with confidentially and will not be used against them unfairly.
- We will ask for photographic evidence to confirm the identity of the applicant e.g. their passport.
- We will request to see documentation of any qualifications detailed by the applicant.
- We will always interview our candidates, ask for two references and a DBS (DBS -if appropriate for the role).
- We will have at least two people on the interview panel.



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- We will request two written references from people who are not family members or friends and who have knowledge of the applicant's experience of working with children. We will ask the referee to also comment on their suitability for working with children. We will also try and follow up written references with a telephone call.
- The same principles apply to young people who have been involved with the organisation and have become volunteers.
- We will ensure that successful applicants working or volunteering within the hospital or with direct access to children and/or young people obtain an Enhanced DBS check.

9) Allegations against a member of staff

We will assure all staff/volunteers that it will fully support and protect anyone, who in good faith reports his or her concern that a colleague is, or may be, abusing a child. Where there is a complaint against a member of staff there may be three types of investigation:

- A criminal investigation,
- A child protection investigation,
- A disciplinary or misconduct investigation.

The results of the police and child protection investigation may well influence the disciplinary investigation, but not necessarily.

Action if there are concerns

1) Concerns about poor practice

- If, following consideration, the allegation is clearly about poor practice; this will be dealt with as a misconduct issue.
- If the allegation is about poor practice by the Designated Person or if the matter has been handled inadequately and concerns remain, it should be reported to the Chair who will decide how to deal with the allegation and whether or not the organisation should initiate disciplinary proceedings.

2) Concerns about suspected abuse

Any suspicion that a child has been abused by either a member of staff or a volunteer should be reported to the Designated Person, who will take such steps as considered necessary to ensure the safety of the child in question and any other child who may be at risk.

- The Designated person will refer the allegation to the social services department who may involve the police, or go directly to the police if out-of-hours.
- The parents or carers of the child will be contacted as soon as possible following advice from the social services department.
- If the Designated Person is the subject of the suspicion/allegation, the report must be made to the appropriate Manager or Chair who will refer the allegation to Social Services.

3) Internal Enquiries and Suspension

- The Designated Person will make an immediate decision about whether any individual accused of abuse should be temporarily suspended pending further police and social services inquiries.



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- Irrespective of the findings of the social services or police inquiries the organisation will assess all individual cases to decide whether a member of staff or volunteer can be reinstated and how this can be sensitively handled. This may be a difficult decision; particularly where there is insufficient evidence to uphold any action by the police. In such cases, the organisation must reach a decision based upon the available information which could suggest that on a balance of probability; it is more likely than not that the allegation is true. The welfare of the child should remain of paramount importance throughout

10) Supervisory arrangements for the management of ECHO activities and services.

We will aim to protect children from abuse and our team members from false allegations by adopting the following guidelines:

- We will keep a register of all children attending our activities.
- We will keep a register of all team members (both paid staff members and volunteers)
- Registers will include arrival and departure times and the names of others in the building at the time.
- We will keep a record of all sessions including monitoring and evaluation records.
- Our team members will record any unusual events on the accident/incident form.
- Written consent from a parent or guardian will be obtained for every child attending our activities.
- Where possible our team members should not be alone with a child, although we recognise that there may be times when this may be necessary or helpful
- Team members should escort children of the same sex to the toilet but are not expected to be involved with toileting.
- We recognise that physical touch between adults and children can be healthy and acceptable in public places. However our team members will be discouraged from this in circumstances where an adult or child are left alone.
- All team members should treat all children with dignity and respect in both attitude, language and actions.

11) Support and Training

We (ECHO) are committed to the provision of child protection training for all our staff members.

- Every 3 years ECHO staff members must undertake retraining in child protection as part of the internal training delivered at Guys & St Thomas NHS Foundation Trust.
- This Child Protection Policy is reviewed on an annual basis and given to all employees, sessional workers, volunteers and trustees – who must sign and date that they have read and reviewed the documents.
- The ECHO staff team holds policy review meetings every two weeks as part of their regular staff meetings, ensuring all staff are fully briefed on all ECHO policies on a regular basis across the year.



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- All existing volunteers are asked to review the updated Child Protection Policy and Safeguarding Statement every year as part of their ongoing volunteer training.
- Every event has an allocated child protection lead who will speak at the start of any workshop, activity or event to ensure all volunteers and staff are aware of who it is.
- If any child protection issues are raised the volunteer or staff member will be offered support and information from the Volunteer Manager, the CEO, or an external consultant depending on the level of need.

12) Members of the public, service users and partner professionals

We (ECHO) commit to putting this policy on the ECHO website www.echo-uk.org so young people, adults and professionals can access it when needed and raise concerns if appropriate.