



Child Safeguarding Policy

Our objective is to alleviate the distress of family breakdown through the provision of family mediation, adult counselling, children's counselling and housing mediation. Our Child Safeguarding Policy conforms to NFM's Safeguarding Policy.

The purpose of this Safeguarding Policy is:

- To protect children and young people who receive MiD Mediation's services from harm. To ensure a child/young person is not suffering from any signs of abuse (see appendix I). This includes the children of adults who use our mediation services as well as our counselling.

Everyone who works with children has a responsibility for keeping them safe. No single practitioner can have a full picture of a child's needs and circumstances and, if children and families are to receive the right help at the right time, everyone who comes into contact with them has a role to play in identifying concerns, sharing information and taking prompt action. (Chapter 1 section 16 WTTSC)

Organisations and agencies working with children and families should have clear policies for dealing with allegations against people who work with children. Such policies should make a clear distinction between an allegation of abuse, a concern about the quality of care or a complaint about the practice. An allegation may relate to a person who works with children who has:

- Behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child
- Behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children
- Behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children (Chapter 2 section 4 page 61)

This policy applies to anyone working on behalf of MiD Mediation and Counselling including mediators, counsellors, admin staff and Trustees.

There is a nominated lead for child safeguarding and a nominated member of the Board of Trustees for child safeguarding (details at the end of this policy)

We believe that:

- Children and young people should never experience abuse of any kind
- We have a responsibility to promote the welfare of all children and young people, to keep them safe and to practise in a way that protects them.

Moving Families Forward

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Child Safeguarding Guidelines And Procedure

1. All members of MiD Mediation Team including Mediators/counsellors have a responsibility under Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018) to ensure that information about a child believed to be at risk is reported to an agency with statutory powers to investigate and protect children.
2. At the start of mediation/counselling, mediators/counsellors must ensure that all participants understand that, although communications between them in the course of mediation/counselling (except financial facts in All Issues Mediation) are confidential and legally privileged, there is one exception - when it appears to the mediator/counsellor that a child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm. Clients are asked to sign statements at the MIAM (Confidentiality Agreement) and at the start of mediation (contained in the Agreement to Mediate) to confirm they understand that there are exceptions to confidentiality where there are safeguarding concerns.
3. In the event of child protection issues being identified, the mediation/counselling session should be reviewed with the PPC to discuss whether it is suitable to be continued.
4. If the family concerned is the subject of court proceedings or already known to social services, the director or nominated lead for child safeguarding should discuss the matter with social services to establish whether or not the information is already known to them.
5. Information about Local Safeguarding Children Board(s) in MID's main catchment areas, and a list of relevant telephone numbers, must be readily available in the office and all mediators/counsellors should familiarise themselves with them. (Telephone numbers on notice board in main office.)
6. All staff, mediators, counsellors and Trustees to have yearly training in safeguarding and policy document to be updated annually.

7. Dealing with Allegations or Admissions of Child Abuse

Listen carefully to what they're saying:

a) In all cases the mediator/counsellor should be patient and focus on what you're being told. Try not to express your own views and feelings. If you appear shocked or act as if you don't believe them it could make them stop talking and take back what they've said.

b) Give them the tools to talk

If they're struggling to talk to you, show them Childline's letter builder tool. It uses simple prompts to help them share what's happening and how they're feeling.

c) Let them know they've done the right thing by telling you
Reassurance can make a big impact. If they've kept the abuse a secret it can have a big impact knowing they've shared what's happened. Remember to tell them it's not their fault. Abuse is never a child's fault. It's important they hear and know this.

d) Say you'll take them seriously
They may have kept the abuse secret because they were scared they wouldn't be believed. Make sure they know they can trust you and you'll listen and support them.

e) Don't confront the alleged abuser.
Confronting the alleged abuser could make the situation worse for the child.

f) Explain what you'll do next.
For younger children, explain you're going to speak to someone who will be able to help. For older children, explain you'll need to report the abuse to someone who can help.

g) Report what the child has told you as soon as possible.
Report as soon after you've been told about the abuse so the details are fresh in your mind and action can be taken quickly. It can be helpful to take notes as soon after you've spoken to the child. Try to keep these as accurate as possible.

h) In the rare cases when it seems that a child is at imminent risk, immediate action must be taken and the matter reported at once to the relevant police child protection team (or local police station outside office hours). (Telephone numbers on notice board in main office.)

i) If the parent has alleged another parent or family member has abused their child, the mediator/counsellor should ask what action is being taken by the parent making the allegation and try to establish whether the matter has already been reported to the statutory authorities or any other agency. The parent should be encouraged to make a referral themselves if this has not been already done.

j) It should be emphasised to the parent concerned that their allegations are being taken seriously, that they will be discussed by the mediator/counsellor with the Professional Practice Supervisor/Counselling Supervisor, and if concerned will be reported by MID to the social services department. Our Professional Practice Consultant is Mrs Helen Keville who is the nominated lead on Safeguarding and Child Protection.

k) Following the ending of the session, the matter should be discussed immediately with the Professional Practice Consultant or, if that is not possible, with the Director or another mediator/counsellor. Contact with the relevant social services department should be made at the earliest opportunity.

l) Disclosure to the police or social services department should only be in accordance with the Kingston and Richmond Safeguarding Children's Partnership (KRSCP), and should only contain factual information regarding the child protection issue provided by the complainant.

m) Telephone contact with the police or social services should be confirmed in writing using the appropriate KRSCP referral form which is available online. Careful records of action taken should be kept on the client file.

n) If an allegation is made about a counsellor, mediator, member of staff, they would be immediately suspended (which is a neutral action) whilst a full investigation takes place by the Safeguarding lead. The outcome of this investigation will be considered and actioned by nominated Trustees and, if required, reported to other agencies.

o) Since 31 October 2015, it is mandatory to report any allegations of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) made to a regulated health and social care professionals or teachers. Should an allegation of FGM be made to any MiD counsellor or mediator, such allegation should be treated as a safeguarding issue, discussed with the PPC and reported in line with MiD Safeguarding procedures and the KRSCP guidance.

p) For cases concerning self-harm please see the MiD policy.

7 Online Sessions

a) For sessions which have to take place online, the counsellor/mediator needs to ensure the child is in a safe and secure place and is happy to talk openly.

b) If the session is online, the counsellor/mediator should ask the individual if they are on their own, and, if there is any doubt, they should ask the child to show the room on the video screen.

c) All zoom links must only be used once with new ones set up for each session.

APPENDIX I

DIFFERENT TYPES OF ABUSE TO BE NOTED

Physical abuse: When someone purposefully hurts or harms another person.

Sexual abuse: When someone is forced or tricked into engaging in sexual activities.

Emotional or Psychological abuse: When someone is subject to emotional mistreatment.

Neglect by others: When there has been the continuous failure to meet the basic needs of a child.

Discriminatory abuse: When someone is treated unfairly because they are deemed 'different' – this could include disability, race, gender, age, religion, cultural background, sexual orientation, political convictions or appearance.

FGM: When someone has been forced into the practice of FGM.