The Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults Order (2003)

The purpose of this order is to ensure that appropriate action is taken when a young person up to the age of 18 years is suspected by mentors or workers of being abused, being at risk from parents, guardians, carers, adult visitors to the home and other responsible adults.

Similar action should also be taken in the case of a young person being suspected of being abused by another young person, including within the young person’s own relationships, abuse between siblings etc.

Many of us think that child and vulnerable adult abuse takes place only in the home. This is not true. Abuse can also take place in schools, recreation and sports areas, places of work, places of entertainment, in fact anywhere where people gather together to socialise, learn, compete or work with each other.
The Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults Order (2003)

There is a lot that can be done by the management of such organisations to prevent abuse.

- Formulate, adopt and promote a protection policy;
- Publicise a statement of zero tolerance to abuse;
- Adopt and implement a policy of best practice and ensure procedures are in place to deal with poor practice;
- Ensure that your organisations policy on child protection is clearly publicised;
- Establish procedures through which complaints and concerns can be voiced and dealt with confidentially;
- Ensure that all adults with substantial access to children and vulnerable adults agree to undergo criminal record (CRB) checks.
Outcomes...

When you have completed this module successfully, you will be able to:

- Know the different categories of abuse.
- Identify appropriate/inappropriate treatment of children;
- Understand various types of bullying;
Individual actions…

You should never:

• Strike a child or vulnerable adult;
• Enter into any financial discussion or arrangement
• Use profane, insulting, harassing or otherwise offensive language;
• Spend excessive time alone with the same child or vulnerable adult;
• Take children alone on car journeys, however short, without first consulting the parents;
• Share a bedroom with a child;
• Take children to your home where they will be alone with you;
• Do things of a personal nature for children or disabled adults that they can do for themselves;
• Intrude into the private life of a child;
• Engage in rough, physical or sexually provocative games;
• Allow or engage in any form of inappropriate touching (see note below);
• Make sexually suggestive comments to a child or young person even in fun;
• Allow a child to use inappropriate language unchallenged;
• Reduce a child to tears as a form of control;
• Allow allegations of abuse or poor practice to go unrecorded;
• Allow a sexual relationship to develop between yourself and a young person who, by their age, is legally considered to be a child.
Activities involving physical contact...

- Particular care should be taken where activities are undertaken that may involve physical contact. This can include sports such as athletics, dance, therapy.

- In such cases this should be undertaken openly and with the prior agreement of all parties concerned.
Bullying at school…

Bullying that occurs at school or transit to/from school can include:

• teasing and name calling;
• threats and physical violence;
• damage to property;
• leaving pupils out of social activities deliberately;
• spreading rumours;
• upsetting mobile phone or email messages.
Bullying at school (continued)...

If a child is being bullied:

Finding out that a child is being bullied is very upsetting, but parents or guardians should try to talk calmly to the child about what is happening and:

- make a note of what they say: who was involved, where, when and how often;
- reassure the child that they have done the right thing by telling you;
- tell the child to report any further incidents to a teacher straightaway;
- talk to the child’s teacher about the bullying.
Bullying in the home…

Parental Bullying

Sometimes parents can be guilty of bullying without realising it. Take, for example, a situation where a child is less favoured by parents than other children and is treated differently. This might result in:

- A disproportionate number of household 'chores' to perform;
- Less pocket money than siblings;
- Less privileges than siblings;
- Hand-me-down clothes rather than new;
- A harsher code of conduct than more favoured children.
Bullying in the home
(continued)...

Sibling Bullying
This is where a brother and/or sister gang up on (usually) a younger child. The types of bullying to be expected are similar to those found in school. The underlying reasons may be:

• Envy;
• Jealousy;
• Rivalry;
• Hatred.
Talking with Young People…

The remaining sections in this course deal with the actions and responsibilities of volunteers or workers in the field of child protection. Such persons may be employed by local government agencies, social services or organisations such as the RSPCC, Child Watch etc.

The volunteer/worker may be the first person the young person has discussed the abuse with. The volunteer/worker’s response to the young person at this stage is crucial.
Talking with Young People
(Continued)…

It is important to tell the young person that you will do something about it. The young person should be assured that the volunteer/worker would support them in getting information and help to stop the abuse.

Young people rarely lie about abuse, particularly sexual abuse. They may try to conceal the truth in order to protect adults, particularly where they have been told that something terrible may happen to those adults if they tell. They may be confused on details like when and where, but the main point of the story is usually accurate. Young people have been known to try to tell adults of their abuse of a long period of time and been disbelieved or fobbed off.
Talking with Young People
(Continued)...

Volunteers/workers should tell the young person that they believe what they have said. It is appropriate to express regret at the abuse -"I'm sorry that this had been/is happening to you." It is important to emphasise to the young person that they have done nothing wrong and it is the abuser who is at fault. It is also helpful to praise the young person's courage in speaking out.

This discussion should take place at the young person's own pace; they should not be 'cross-examined'.

Young people may have to relate their experience to other professionals and it is important that they do not have to do this more than necessary.
Confidentiality…

Volunteers/workers should never indicate to a young person or adult that they would keep secrets. A feature of sexual abuse in particular is the secrecy that exists between the perpetrator and the young person. Volunteers/workers can find themselves pulled into this relationship in a destructive way.

Consequently, volunteers/workers should discuss such cases fully with colleagues and managers and not work in isolation.
Confidentiality…

Approaches from young people along the lines of –“If I tell you something, you won’t tell anyone else, will you?” should be met with a firm but gentle explanation…“I can’t promise that some things you might tell me I won’t decide to share with someone else. What, I can promise is not to do that without you knowing.”.

Young people may then choose not to tell but usually they are looking for someone to help them break out of their secret, not join them in it. For young people who do not tell, the volunteer/worker should make sure the young person knows of organisations that may operate in confidence (e.g. Childline, Incest Survivors Groups).

Perpetrators are often abusing other young people at the same time and although the volunteer/worker may not be in contact with these young people, their safety is also of concern and this needs to be taken into account when determining a course of action.
Recordings…

The volunteer/worker should make notes of what a young person who has been abused has said. Care should be taken to do this in such a way that does not block the young person from talking: they could, for instance, be agreed with the young person at the end of the session.

The notes that a volunteer/worker may keep can be used as a basis for supporting the volunteer/worker during a difficult process. Any other evidence should be kept safe and intact.

These notes should be kept safely; for volunteers, this should be a safe place in their homes; workers should keep notes in a locked cabinet in their office. These notes are not admissible as evidence and should only be shared with other agencies or individuals with the full agreement of the person. At the end of the work, there should be a joint decision about the destruction or further safe keeping of such notes.

Where a case is referred to Social Services, the volunteer/worker and/or their manager may submit a written report of what has happened, drawing on the volunteers/workers notes.
Categories of Abuse...

The procedures outlined cover:

- Physical
- Sexual
- Emotional abuse
- Neglect
Physical abuse…

**Identification**
The first task should be check out the incident or injuries which have aroused the volunteer’s/worker’s concern. This may be done by speaking with the person.

**Satisfactory Explanations**
If the volunteer/worker is satisfied with the explanations, a note should be made of the incident and a senior member of staff contacted. This is to ensure that volunteers/workers and the senior member of staff are alerted to a pattern of repeated incidents or injuries, each with an apparently satisfactory explanation.

Appropriate action may include:
- Considering the need for emergency medical treatment;
- Senior member of staff checking the Child Protection Register;
- Involving Social Services in obtaining help for the person;
- Monitoring the person against future risk.
Physical abuse…

Serious Incidents

It is obvious that serious injuries will need immediate medical treatment and volunteers/workers should ensure that this happens. A record should be made of the incident by the volunteer/worker and stored as above. When a referral has been made to the Social Services Department, all co-operation should be given to Social Workers in any arrangements they may wish to make for the young person e.g. a medical examination and a full report should be given to the Project Co-ordinator.
Child Sexual Abuse…

Identification

Child sexual abuse usually comes to light in a different way to physical abuse or neglect. Volunteers/workers may become concerned about a change in young person’s behaviour or personality. The most usual route is that the young person confides in a volunteer/worker. This is usually described by other agencies as “disclosure”.

Child Sexual Abuse…

Appropriate Action

The volunteers/workers role is not to discuss the detail of the case with the young person, or with their parent/carer, but to listen, reassure and support the young person in taking action.

The volunteer/worker must not ask leading questions or interrogate the young person, because it is important not to ‘contaminate evidence’. Also if a referral is made to other agencies (Police, Social Services), the young person will be interviewed and it is important not to subject them to unnecessary questioning.
Child Sexual Abuse…

 Volunteers/workers who have any concerns about a young person who may be experiencing sexual abuse must share those concerns with the Project Co-ordinator. Such appropriate action could include:

- Monitoring the young person’s behaviour (where no disclosure has been made);
- Taking advice from Social Services;
- Contacting Social Services following disclosure;
- Checking the Child Protection Register.

It is important that the volunteer/worker states clearly what might happen when the young person talks to Social Services or the Police. The volunteer/worker should also make it clear that she or he cannot tell the Police what has happened, but that the young person will have to tell them, although the volunteer/worker will be present to give them support.
**Emotional Abuse…**

Emotional abuse is a part of all abuse, but can also exist stand-alone.

It is defined as ‘the actual or likely severe adverse effect on the emotional and behavioural development of a young person caused by persistent or severe emotional ill-treatment.’

The role of the volunteer/worker is to recognise and record indicators of abuse, consult with their Manager about appropriate action and refer where appropriate.
Neglect…

For neglect to be considered, it needs to be persistent or severe, resulting in a ‘significant impairment of the person’s health or development’. This could be for example through inadequate care in their environment, insufficient knowledge from the carer, carer is impaired to carry out duties through financial, alcohol or mental health problems.

The role of the volunteer/worker is to recognise and record indicators of abuse, consult with their Manager about appropriate action, and refer where appropriate.
Summary…

There can be little doubt that the protection of children and vulnerable adults is an undertaking not to be taken lightly.

Over the years in the United Kingdom there have been several well publicised cases where well meaning Social Services personnel have made decisions that resulted in the false accusation of innocent people.

On the other hand, children and vulnerable adults have died because care workers have moved too slowly to deal with a case or failed to understand the evidence before them or have done little or nothing at all.

No-one is saying that it is an impossible task. But it is a task that requires careful and detailed training, tact, sympathy and a great deal of understanding about human beings and what, under certain circumstances, they are capable of doing to each other.
Summary (continued)…

The best care workers share their case histories with their colleagues and their immediate superiors. There is no better way of dealing with the myriad complexities of adult and child protection than collectively appraising a situation and arriving, together, at a fair and balanced decision as to the best course of action to take.