**SAFEGUARDING AND CHILD PROTECTION POLICY**

**Recognition and Reporting**

It is always unacceptable for a child or young person to experience abuse of any kind, and as Counsellors / Counsellors in Training it is our responsibility to safeguard the welfare of all children and young people.

It is essential that those who work with children and families should be alert to the signs of child abuse.

There are four main categories of abuse:

**Physical Abuse** - a form of abuse which 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 fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child.

**Neglect** - 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. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to:

* provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment)
* protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger
* ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-givers)
* ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child’s basic emotional needs.

**Emotional Abuse** - the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child’s emotional development. It may involve:

* conveying to a child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person
* not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or ‘making fun’ of what they say or how they communicate
* age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children
* interactions that are beyond a child’s developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction
* seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another
* serious bullying (including cyber bullying), 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 maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone (Working Together 2018)

As highlighted above, Domestic Abuse is generally treated as falling under emotional abuse. The cross Government definition (2014) of domestic violence and abuse is as follows:

Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. The abuse can encompass, but is not limited to psychological, physical, sexual, financial and emotional.

**Sexual Abuse** - involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve:

* physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or nonpenetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing.
* non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse

Sexual abuse can take place online, and technology can be used to facilitate offline abuse. Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children (Working Together 2018).

Other safeguarding concerns include;

* Child criminal exploitation
* Child sexual exploitation
* County Lines (gangs and criminal networks involved in exporting illegal drugs)
* Extremism and PREVENT duty (radicalisation / extremist views)
* Female genital mutilation
* Forced marriage
* ‘So called’ honour based violence (crime against mainly women by their community.

Therapy Centre Services fully participates in multi-agency working, in line with Government guidance, in order to share information and safeguard children.