**Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy**

1. **Introduction**

Choices Mentoring is committed to safeguarding the welfare of children and young people. Safeguarding is a relatively new term which is broader than ‘child protection’ as it also includes prevention. Safeguarding is taking all reasonable measures to ensure that the risks of harm to children and young people’s welfare are minimized.

In this respect Choices mentoring acknowledges its responsibility as a provider of transport services for children and young people, many of whom may have social, emotional, behavioural difficulties or physical disabilities.

As Choices mentoring works with many children and young people every year, we have developed this policy to primarily protect children and young people in our care. It is designed to reassure service users, their parents/carers/advocates, and the contracting/commissioning bodies for whom we provide transport services. It also establishes the roles and responsibilities of everyone who works for Choices mentoring in relation to safeguarding the children and young people with whom we work. It does this by setting out clear guidance, so Staff, Volunteers, trainees and management committee members are able act appropriately in any given situation.

This policy is based on and reflects, the principles of both UK legislation and guidance and other relevant Choices mentoring policies and procedures. The approach has been developed in such a way as to be consistent with 'Best Practice' within the field of safeguarding children and young people.

1. **Statutory Framework**
	1. The Children’s Act 1989 provides the legal framework for the protection of children in the UK. Under the Children’s Act a child is defined as any person under 18 years of age.
	2. The Protection of Children Act 1999 requires employers to carry out Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks before employees are allowed to meet children. Choice’s mentoring is required under this legislation to apply for enhanced disclosure from the Criminal Records Bureau for staff working with children.
	3. The Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 was passed 8 November 2006 and is scheduled for full implementation during Autumn 2008. This Act will introduce a new vetting and barring system which will integrate the current List 99 (for teachers) and the Protection of Children Act lists (for those working in childcare settings). It will transfer the responsibility for barring decisions to a new statutory Independent Board and for the first time enable employers to make a ‘real time’ instant check of whether a prospective employee is barred with secure online access. As this Act is implemented Choice’s mentoring will amend this policy to meet its requirements.
2. **Forms of Abuse**

Abuse can take many forms. These include:

* 1. **Physical Abuse**

	This may include hitting, shaking, throwing burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a young person. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer feigns the symptoms of, or deliberately causes ill health to a young person who they are looking after. This is commonly described using such terms as ‘fictitious’ illness by proxy or ‘Munchausen’s Syndrome by proxy’.
	2. **Sexual Abuse**

Involves forcing or enticing a young person to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the young person is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative (e.g. rape) or non-penetrative acts. They may include non-contact activities such as involving young people in looking at, or in the production of, pornographic materials or watching sexual activities, or encouraging young people to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

* 1. **Neglect**

This is the persistent failure to meet the young person’s basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the young person’s health or development. It may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing; failure to protect a young person from physical harm or danger, or failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a young person’s basic emotional needs.

* 1. **Emotional Abuse**

	This is the persistent emotional ill-treatment of a young person such as to cause severe and persistent effects on the young person’s emotional development. It may involve conveying to young people that they are worthless and unloved, inadequate, or valued only so far as they meet the needs of another person. It may involve age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on young people. It may involve causing young people frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of young people. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill-treatment of a young person, though it may occur alone.
	2. **Significant Harm**

	Some young people may be in need because they are suffering or likely to suffer significant harm. The Children Act V section 47 (1) introduced the concept of significant harm as the threshold that justifies compulsory intervention in family life in the best interest of the young person.
1. **Protection From Harm or Abuse**It is everyone at Choices mentoring responsibility to promote the safety of the children and young people we work with. Staff, volunteers, trainees, and management committee members are always expected to maintain a sense of proportion, apply common sense to situations and protect the child' or the young person’s welfare as the key priority.

It is also Choices mentoring duty to ensure that staff, volunteers, trainees and management committee members are never placed in situations where abuse might be alleged. It is not intended that the policy should restrict staff, volunteers, trainees, and management committee members from normal ways of working, but they always need to consider how an action or activity may be perceived as opposed to how it is intended.
2. **Principles of Good Practice**Choices mentoring considers that:

	1. All children and young people, regardless of age, disability, gender, racial or ethnic origin, religious belief and sexual identity have a right to be treated with care, respect, and dignity;
	2. The welfare of the child or young person is the paramount consideration;
	3. Those working for Choice’s mentoring will be perceived by children and young people as trusted representatives of Choices mentoring
	4. It is important to ensure communication with children and young people is open and clear;
	5. It is essential to assess the risks to children and young people of its activities through comprehensive risk assessment at the inception of the contract or transport request.
	6. It is important for staff, volunteers, trainees, and management committee members to avoid physical contact with children and young people except for that which is clearly outlined in the service user’s risk assessment and the duties outlined in job descriptions and role profiles.

1. **Designated Safeguarding Children and Young People Officer**The Designated Safeguarding Children and Young People Officer is Richard Witt Director. Contact details may be found under Appendix A.

The role of the designated member of staff for safeguarding children and young people is to:

	1. Ensure that Choices mentoring Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy is implemented throughout the organisation and;

		1. Carry out all necessary child protection/safeguarding-related enquiries, procedures, and investigations;
		2. Ensure secure and confidential record-keeping on safeguarding matters, that a "need to know" confidentiality policy is preserved on such matters and that all staff, volunteers, trainees and management committee members apply themselves fully to the Data Protection Act, 1998;
		3. Liaise with social services and the police in the relevant boroughs on child protection/safeguarding matters, both formally and informally;
		4. Report allegations and suspicions of abuse to the appropriate authorities;
		5. Ensure there are adequate and appropriate induction and training for all Staff, volunteers, trainees and management committee members on child safeguarding matters;
		6. Ensure that all activities carried out by s Choices mentoring satisfy safeguarding requirements about personnel, practices and premises;
		7. Check and countersigns all incident reports made by staff making such reference to outside agencies as is appropriate.
	2. Report on the implementation of the Safeguarding Children Policy at all Choices mentoring management committee meetings.
2. **Staffing Issues and Disclosure**
	1. **New Appointments**
		1. Choice’s mentoring is registered with the Disclosure and barring service. (DBS). provides a disclosure service for organisations who have staff positions that involve regular unsupervised contact with children and enables employers to make more thorough recruitment and selection checks for positions which involve working with children and young people. As part of the Choices mentoring recruitment and selection process, offers of employment to positions where working with children and young people unsupervised is an expected part of the job, will be subject to DBS enhanced disclosure. This applies to persons engaged on permanent or agency contracts.
		2. If the disclosure reveals that that they have been convicted of any offence relating to children or young people; and/or subject to any disciplinary action or sanction relating to children or young people, the candidate will not be appointed to that post or area of work.
		3. If the disclosure shows that the candidate has previous convictions, but they are not related to children or young people, Choices mentoring will consult with any contracting body and will decide whether the candidate is suitable for the post they have applied for.
		4. Any decision will be recorded in writing and stored for future reference.
	2. **Current Staff**
		1. All current members of Staff, volunteers or trainees who have unsupervised access to children and young people will have been subject to a DRB enhanced disclosure on appointment. If they continue to undertake unsupervised work, i.e. regularly transporting or assisting children and young people, their DRB disclosure will be updated every three years.
		2. If the disclosure reveals that that they have been convicted of any offence relating to children or young people and/or subject to any disciplinary action or sanction relating to children, Choices mentoring Grievance and Disciplinary Procedure will be enacted.
		3. If the disclosure shows that the candidate has received a conviction, but that it is not related to children or young people, Choices mentoring in consultation with any contracting body will decide whether the candidate can remain in post.
		4. If the disclosure reveals no convictions or disciplinary action or sanctions the post holder will remain in post and no further action will be taken.
		5. Any decision will be recorded in writing and stored for future reference.
	3. There may be instances where Choices mentoring staff, volunteers, trainees, or management committee members who do not ordinarily work directly with children and young people are required to do so.

		1. If access is always supervised by an authorised person who has received a cleared enhanced DBS disclosure it is not necessary for the staff member, volunteer, trainee or management committee member to be subject to a DBS check.
		2. If access is unsupervised for any period of time an enhanced DBS check will be undertaken and clauses 7.2.2, 7.2.3 and 7.2.4 will apply.
		3. Any decision will be recorded in writing and stored for future reference.
	4. **Current Staff Convictions**

Irrespective of the requirements outlined under 7.2.1 should a member of Choices mentoring personnel be charged or convicted of any offence clauses 7.2.2. or 7.2.3 will apply.

1. **Procedures for Choices mentoring Personnel (Staff, Volunteers, Trainees, Management Committee Members)**Reporting Witnessed Incidents or Abuse or Reports from Children and Young People

	1. **Reporting Witnessed Incidents**
		1. All Choices mentoring staff, volunteers, trainees or management committee members should be alert to any signs of abuse and report any concerns or suspicions to their line manager or in the case of management committee members directly to the Designated Child Safeguarding Officer, immediately or as soon as it is practicable to do so i.e. at the end of a journey;
		2. The member of staff, volunteer, trainee or management committee member will be required to complete an occurrence report;
		3. In the case of staff, volunteers or trainees the line manager will refer this matter to the Designated Children and Young People Safeguarding Officer who should contact the contracting authority or agency. The contracting authority or agency’s child protection/safeguarding children and young people’s procedures will then apply;
		4. If the alleged incident did not occur within the context of a contract operated by Choices mentoring the local authority within which the alleged incident occurred should be contacted and/or the police. Their guidance should then be followed;
		5. A record of the incident and action taken must be kept and filed within Choices mentoring Record-keeping on safeguarding children matters must be secure and confidential, that a "need to know" confidentiality policy is preserved on such matters and that all staff and members of the management committee within Choices mentoring must apply themselves fully to the Data Protection Act, 1998.
	2. **Reports from Children and Young People**

		1. If a child or young person tells a member of Choices mentoring personnel of any incident of abuse, or states any concerns about the behaviour of any person (transport related or not i.e. friends or family) this person must inform the child or young person that this matter cannot remain confidential;
		2. The member of Staff, volunteers or trainee should contact their line manager who will require them to complete an occurrence report. If this is a management committee member they should contact the Designated Children and Young People Safeguarding Officer;
		3. The line manager will then refer this matter to the Designated Children and Young People Safeguarding Officer who should contact the contracting authority or agency. The contracting authority or agency’s child protection/safeguarding children and young people’s procedures will then apply;
		4. If the alleged incident did not occur within the context of a contract operated by Choices mentoring the local authority within which the alleged incident occurred should be contacted and/or the police. Their guidance should then be followed;
		5. A record of the incident and action taken must be kept and filed within Choices mentoring Record-keeping on safeguarding children matters must be secure and confidential, that a "need to know" confidentiality policy is preserved on such matters and that all staff and members of the management committee within Choices mentoring must apply themselves fully to the Data Protection Act,1998.
	3. **Allegations Made Against Choices mentoring Staff, Volunteers, Trainees or Management Committee Members**
		1. If an allegation against any person working for Choice’s mentoring is made the following procedure must be followed. The person or persons making the allegation will be required to complete an occurrence report. This should be taken by a member of Choices mentoring senior management team. The manager will then refer this matter to the Designated Child Safeguarding Officer;
		2. The Designated Safeguarding Children and Young People’s Officer or his nominee (i.e. the staff member or trainee’s Contract Manager or Head of Operations at their depot) should inform the Choices mentoring employee against whom the complaint has been made as soon as possible, unless there appears to be a case that this might prejudice a criminal investigation. The Designated Safeguarding Children Officer or his/her nominee should consult with the contracting authority regarding police notification and involvement and take direction from the contracting authority. If the allegation/s made is/are of a criminal nature, e.g. allegations of sexual abuse, physical assault or inappropriate behaviour, the Designated Safeguarding Children Officer or nominee will enact Choices mentoring Grievance and Disciplinary Procedure and suspend the person from any activity in Choices mentoring for reasons of alleged gross misconduct;
		3. The member of Staff, Volunteer, trainee or management committee member in question will remain suspended unless and until the police and/or social services confirm there was no substance to the report. An incident report will be made and treated as confidential.
		4. If no criminal allegation has been made the Designated Safeguarding Children’s Officer’s or nominee will conduct an investigation by gathering as much detail as possible from available sources of information. For Staff, Volunteers and trainees the investigation will follow Choices mentoring Grievance and Disciplinary Procedure. The contracting authority (if relevant) will be informed of the outcome of the investigation process and any resultant appeal.
2. **Review and Evaluation**
	1. Documenting Disclosure
	In all cases outlined above written records of the process and the decisions taken throughout must be maintained. In the first instance this will include the completion of an incident report.
	2. Monitoring, Review and Evaluation

Incidences of breaches of this policy should be kept and reviewed at contract/depot meetings and Senior Managers meetings to review how these matters were dealt with to inform future policy and practice.

Appendix A

**Designated Safeguarding Children Officer**

Richard Witt
Director

(GROUP NAME and ADDRESS) - Choices Mentoring, 59 Hyde end road,Shinfield, Reading, Berkshire, RG29EP

(EMAIL ADDRESS)- richard@choicesmentoring.co.uk

(TEL No.) - 07980224465

**Choices mentoring Safeguarding Children Occurrence Report Form**

Date Name of the Person Filing the Report

Name of the Child

Details of the Incident

Please describe what happened, what you have noticed or been told?

Are there any witnesses? If so please give details:

Signed

Are there any witnesses?

Has the Child been told that you can’t keep this private?

A record of the incident and action taken must be kept and filed within Westway CT. Record-keeping on safeguarding children matters must be secure and confidential, that a "need to know" confidentiality policy is preserved on such matters and that all staff and members of the management committee within Westway CT must apply themselves fully to the Data Protection Act, 1998.