

Lower Earley *Family Contact Centre*

Domestic Abuse and Conflict Management Policy

Lower Earley Family Contact Centre believes that everyone has the right to live safely and without the fear of abuse and cruelty. We recognise that domestic abuse is unacceptable and that it occurs throughout society, irrespective of class, income, race, sexuality, gender, culture, or religion. Its effects are far-reaching and can impact on others, notably the children. We recognise that every child has the right to grow and develop in an environment free of domestic abuse, whether directly as a victim or witness of abuse in its own home or community.

Lower Earley Family Contact Centre accepts that some families using its Centre will have experienced varying levels of domestic abuse and we will ensure that they will receive sensitive and appropriate services. We also accept that the Centre needs to be organised and run in a way which allows these families, other Centre users and volunteers to be safe. To meet these requirements, we ensure that:

1. The Centre's Referral Form asks one or more questions about domestic abuse.
2. No family is accepted until a referral form has been completed in full and received by the co-ordinator.
3. Any information concerning domestic abuse, or the abuse of drugs / alcohol will be treated seriously.
4. Use of the Centre will be denied to individuals or families where the co-ordinator feels their presence is likely to present a threat to the well-being of other Centre users, especially the children and volunteers.
5. Once a family has been accepted the co-ordinator considers their needs and develops a means by which they can be met. These include:
 - parents being invited to visit the Centre separately in advance of contact commencing.
 - parents being given clear instructions in writing about which entrances to use and what times to arrive.
 - where appropriate, resident parents being asked to explore the possibility of someone other than themselves or their new partner bringing the child(ren) to the Centre.
 - the contact waiting room doors being kept closed and precautions taken to ensure parents do not visit the toilets at the same time.
 - asking one parent to wait at the end of contact until the other has left the Centre and the area immediately around it and
 - ensuring that addresses, telephone numbers and other sensitive information always remain strictly confidential.
6. Any distress to children or adults brought about by bullying or pressure to disclose information will be dealt with promptly and firmly.
7. If an individual or family's behaviour is threatening, causes distress or is disruptive they will be asked to leave. If an individual or family refuses to leave the police will be called.

To further reduce the likelihood and potential impact of an incident, the Centre ensures that:

1. There is always a minimum of five volunteers on duty.
2. Volunteers are made aware of the particular needs of each family attending the Centre.
3. All volunteers receive guidance in the areas of domestic abuse, child protection and conflict management.
4. Volunteers have immediate access to a telephone when the Centre is open.
5. The Centre has an agreed procedure to follow in the event of an incident or an emergency. All volunteers are made aware of this. See "Fire and Emergency Procedures".
6. The Centre has a recognised and easily accessible system for offering support to volunteers who have become involved in stressful or violent incidents. See Volunteer Policy and "Supporting Volunteers".