

## **DEALING WITH DISCLOSURES OF CHILD ABUSE AND RISK**

In the course of counselling and psychotherapy at MCPS clients may disclose child abuse:

- They experienced in the past;
- Historical abuse they are aware of;
- Current and immediate risk of abuse to children.

Metanoia institute is not a statutory agency and MCPS does not have a role in administering Child Protection legislation. However, the service is committed to ensuring good practice and safety in Child Protection policy and reporting guidelines.

Under s.47 of the Children Act 1989, the local authority has a statutory duty to investigate situations where a child under 18 is suffering, or is likely to suffer 'significant harm', whether physical or psychological in nature. There is no general legal duty on citizens (or on counsellors as such) to report suspected child abuse.

The nature of counselling and psychotherapy requires trust and confidentiality. In most cases best practice requires the practitioner to seek to empower the client in addressing the situation. Where a disclosure by practitioner is required it is important to seek the consent for any disclosure of personally sensitive information.

If there is a risk of harm to children the client must be given adequate information and time to make a considered decision.

Procedure for dealing with allegations of child abuse and risk:

- Report the incident to the Head of Clinical Services. Discuss the circumstances and options for dealing with the incident, referring to the Counselling/Psychotherapy agreement and other MCPS procedures;
- Report the incident to your primary supervisor and discuss in relation to professional codes of ethics and advice about clinical strategies. If a supervision session is some time away you may need to place an urgent phone call to your supervisor.
- You may need to consult the insurance legal helpline and obtain legal advice about the best course of action;
- You may wish to consult Ealing Children's' Services Consultation and Advice Service. They offer help to all professionals to think through and discuss issues that relate to safeguarding children with a view to whether a referral should be made to Children's' Service Mondays, Wednesday and Fridays 9.30am-4.30pm on 020 8825 6134.

In cases where you need to report child abuse you can contact:

- The social services. In Ealing, the number for the children and families service is (020) 8825 8000;
- A specialist agency can be contacted anonymously. NSPCC has a recognised statutory role and legal authority in this field. NSPCC Child Protection Helpline (24 hours): Tel: 0808 800 5000.

In emergencies you can contact:

- The police on 999;
- Ealing Children's Services Emergency Duty Team on 020 8825 5000.