

Safety, Care and Protection when working with children or vulnerable adults

Definitions

We use the term 'person' to refer to both children and vulnerable adults.

Wherever we work, we will ensure we are familiar with local law, guidance, procedure and good practice; local definitions of safety, care and protection; and know local expert contacts.

Protection

If an associate hears information which leads him or her to believe a person may be at risk of harm (abuse, neglect, self harm, risk taking activities or exposure to others' risk taking that could lead to serious harm) then **all** these steps should be followed:

- The person's consent to sharing information should be sought, and where possible, the person should be supported to share the information with appropriate services him/herself. Where consent is not obtained, the associate still has a duty to pass the information on.
- The Director of Comas (or agreed key contact) should be informed, without delay. Together, the Director and associate will agree on a course of action. This will involve informing the local Social Work department or Police (or relevant official agency), deciding any follow up action required (including liaison with the referring agency if necessary) and support arrangements for the associate and the person involved. The Director will follow the Lothian & Borders Child Protection Committee protocol (or any other national protocol outside the UK, aiming towards a high standard of response as outlined in the Lothian & Borders protocol).
- Clear notes on what has been heard/seen should be made by the associate and passed to the Director, which will be shared with relevant agencies responsible for investigating concerns if necessary.

At times, information may be shared by a person concerning safety and protection issues which are historic, or already known to services. Care should be taken to clarify information sharing in these circumstances and where there is doubt about information sharing or a person's safety and protection, always discuss the matter with the Director.

Comas has a commitment to providing training for associates on safety, protection and good practice in working effectively with vulnerable people, and we have a commitment to supporting our associates professionally, practically and emotionally where work with vulnerable people is challenging and demanding.

If a person makes allegations concerning an associate, Comas will follow the procedures outlined in the Associate Terms and Conditions, in addition to co-operating with any procedures initiated by other agencies.

Care

Comas promotes high standards of care, welfare and protection practices in all our working relationships. Where associates become concerned about the standard of care, safety and protection of vulnerable people within the organisations we work with, we believe we share a duty of care to the vulnerable people involved. We will do all we can to develop an organisation's good practice and work with staff, Board and other stakeholders to improve standards of care, safety and protection of

vulnerable people. Where we believe that there is immediate concern for the safety of vulnerable people we will report this immediately, taking the steps outlined above.

Safety

In all our activities Comas will work to ensure the safety of people involved in our work in any capacity. We will conduct appropriate risk assessments for all pieces of work and ensure associates have clear guidelines for safety, and plans to respond to risks wherever work is to be carried out.

We will seek the informed consent of individuals to participate in Comas activities whenever this is appropriate, and where the person is a minor, the permission of parents or guardians for their involvement.

We will invite any organisation or individual involved in Comas activities to report any concerns to us (the Director and/or Trustees) regarding the safety of activities or the conduct of staff. These will be fully investigated and action taken according to Associate Terms and Conditions.

Recruitment

Recruitment of UK nationals (to paid or voluntary conditions) will include Disclosure Checking and requirement for a complete work history and two independent referees which will be followed up.

Recruitment of non-UK nationals will include all reasonable steps to formally verify a candidate's suitability for working with us, along with a complete work history and independent referees.

Staff/volunteer induction will include introduction to this policy and full training in child protection and the protection of vulnerable adults, health and safety, and risk assessment.

Our expectations: *Comas takes care, safety and protection very seriously. Failure to comply with these guidelines will lead to disciplinary action outlined in the Associate Terms and Conditions.*