**Transcript for EA CPSS - Level One Training, Programme 1of 2**

Welcome to the first of two ‘awareness raising’ sessions for all EA staff.

I'm Elaine Craig, head of the Child Protection Support Service, or CPSS. Our role is to support schools and EA services to keep children safe.

This session covers some essential information about child protection. The training is mandatory for all staff, but it is primarily aimed at staff or volunteers, whose role does not bring them into day-to-day contact with children.

Our vision here in the EA is to inspire, support and challenge all our children and young people to be the best that they can be. However, we cannot even begin to achieve this unless we ensure our children are safe and protected from harm.

All of our staff play a role in creating a culture where children’s rights are respected and their needs are prioritised. This training will provide you with a basic awareness of child protection issues. Most importantly, you will learn about what to do if you have a concern about a child or young person.

You must supplement this training by reading the EA Child Protection Policy which is available in the Policy and Procedures section of our intranet. There is also a quick-guide leaflet which accompanies this training, which you may wish to keep for future reference.

The CPSS deliver training to staff and provide advice on specific child protection issues. We also manage the area of children in entertainment and employment; the C.E.E.T. team.

I will take you through some key principles in child protection and safeguarding. We will explore the definitions of child abuse and neglect and this will include some of the common warning signs that you all need to be aware of.

By its very nature, Child Protection is a sensitive subject area. It is really important that you look after yourself and your emotional health.  I would encourage you to take breaks as you need through the programme. If any of the topics covered raise a particular issue for you, then please seek further support.

So what is Safeguarding and Child Protection? And is safeguarding your responsibility?

As a society, thankfully, it is accepted that the welfare of our children is the paramount concern. As an employee or volunteer within the EA, this is central to your role.

It is useful to think of the term ‘safeguarding’ as an umbrella term. This means that there are different concepts and actions that all contribute to how we can ensure children and young people are kept safe. Part of these are our policy, procedures and guidance. These govern how we as an organisation will do things properly. These are constantly being reviewed and updated as new challenges arise.

CPSS employs highly qualified staff who have a detailed understanding of safeguarding issues. Through our training for staff in schools and across EA services, we help build our collective knowledge and skills in this area.

All aspects of our work are underpinned with prioritising the health and wellbeing of all of our children. This also extends to our staff as we ensure that appropriate guidance and support systems are in place.

Preventative activities are key in helping to identify problems early and providing targeted support to children, families and staff members.  Much of this type of work involves collaborative working across the EA; and also with colleagues in external statutory and voluntary services.

These partnerships enable the development and implementation of best safeguarding practices. At a strategic level, the EA is a partner of the Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland. On an operational level we often work closely with the Health and Social Care Trusts and the PSNI.

Child protection is only one aspect of safeguarding. It applies to the specific activity needed to protect an individual child or young person; who has been harmed; or is at risk of being harmed. This harm may be experienced through physical, emotional, sexual, exploitative or neglectful abuse.

Harm can be experienced by a child through abuse perpetrated against them in their family home or in their community. It also occurs in a settings like schools, youth centres and churches.

Children who are victims of abuse, are usually harmed by adults. Often these adults are known to them and should be responsible for their care.

Children can also be harmed by other children and young people, particularly if there is a difference in age, ability and perceived power or status. However, it is important to remember that an older child can be harmed by a younger child, for example in the case of a child with special needs or a physical disability.

One of the most important messages for you to take away from this training is that child abuse is real.

Here in Northern Ireland, children are being abused on a daily basis. This is not a pleasant thing for us to think about. However, it is only by first accepting that these things do take place that we can begin to open our eyes to the signs and symptoms.

Schools and EA services have contact with these children on a daily basis.  As such, we are well placed to be able to help these children, and to play our role in keeping them safe.

We are now going to explore the 5 categories of child abuse in turn.

Physical Abuse is defined as ‘deliberately physically hurting a child. It might take a variety of different forms, including hitting, biting, pinching, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning or suffocating a child.’

Physical abuse is often seen to be the easiest to identify. For example, a child may present with bruising or an untreated injury. They may tell you that they are in pain and something has happened to them. A child might tell you about Domestic Abuse taking place in their family home and how they have been caught in the middle of this.

Children’s behaviour may change - they may become more withdrawn, anxious or fearful. They may begin to act out or behave in a way which is uncharacteristic for them.

Children who have been physically abused may present as wary or fearful of a particular individual.  Any sudden change in a child’s presentation and behaviour is a clear sign that something is not right. This should be noted and followed up.

When considering physical abuse, we often talk about accidental injury verses non-accidental injury. I am going to give you a brief overview of the differences between both.

Anyone who has ever spent time with children, will know that as they play and explore their world, they pick up bumps and bruises. We refer to these as accidental injuries.  This kind of injury is a normal part of a child’s development. For example a child could be running during play and trip and fall.

Common sites for accidental injury are the knees, elbows, shins and the palm of the hand.

These injuries should be in keeping with a child’s stage of development. For example; if a three year old child broke their arm after falling out of a tree; the obvious question is; should a three year old have been in a position where they are allowed to climb a tree unsupervised? This kind of scenario should begin to raise a concern.

Conversely, if a 14 year old broke their arm playing sports, this would be in keeping with their stage of development and would not normally be of concern, as long as they have been able to access proper medical treatment.

Let me be very clear with you: we are not asking you to investigate suspected child abuse. However, it would be well within your duty of care to a child, to ask some basic questions and establish facts around an injury.

Any questions you ask should be neutral and open. For example, you might ask simply “What happened?” By the very act of asking, you are demonstrating to a child that you care about them.

It is important to note that children who are non-mobile due to either their young age or physical disability, cannot easily sustain accidental injuries and so these should always be treated as a concern.

Non-accidental injury is the term used to describe when an injury has been deliberately caused to a child.

Again, I want to be very clear. It is not your job to investigate this, but if you do think there is a possibility that a child has been harmed, then it is your job to pass this information on.

Common sites for non-accidental injuries are bruises around the eyes and cheek; sometimes you can observe what looks like finger marks on a child’s face. Bruising on the upper and inner forearms, for example, where a child may have been grabbed. Marks on the neck, ears, shoulders, back and genitals can be a sign of non-accidental injury.

If an injury does not fit the explanation given then this should raise concern. It is also important to consider that a potential abuser could be a parent, care giver or colleague.

Emotional Abuse is defined as the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child. It is also sometimes called psychological abuse and it can have severe and persistent adverse effects on a child’s emotional development.

Emotional abuse may involve deliberately telling a child that they are worthless, or unloved and inadequate. It may include not giving a child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them, or ‘making fun’ of what they say or how they communicate.

Emotional abuse may involve bullying - including online bullying through social networks, online games or mobile phones’. This could be done by an adult, or by a child’s peers.

Emotional abuse may be hard to identify as it is often hard to say where banter, teasing and joking ends; and bullying and abuse begin. A key word in this definition is persistent. If you tell a child the same thing often enough; for example, “you are stupid” or “worthless”, then they will internalise this. These beliefs will then severely impact on a child’s self-esteem and emotional safety.

Emotional abuse can also include having unrealistically high expectations of a child, which leads to them feeling like a failure, useless or not being good enough.

So what are the signs and symptoms of emotional abuse?

Children and young people who are experiencing emotional abuse may present as withdrawn or under stimulated. They may display poor concentration; have disrupted sleep or eating patterns. They may engage in self-harm or other destructive behaviours.

Children might also experience the extremes of either working excessively hard to please; or they may appear to be apathetic and struggling to achieve. Where there are other forms of abuse taking place, such as physical or  sexual, then it is almost certain that a child is also suffering emotional abuse.

As with the guidance for physical abuse these indicators are just that. They should raise a question mark for you. Additional information should always be sought.

For example, there may be a child who is presenting as failing to thrive and listless. However, they may have a diagnosed medical problem and are already receiving professional help for this.

An important rule of thumb for all child protection situations is to never assume. Do not assume that a child is being abused, but equally, do no assume there is always a reasonable explanation.

These are complex issues and if in doubt, you should always seek support from your line manager or person with designated responsibility.

We are now going to consider Neglect.

Neglect is defined as the failure to provide for a child’s basic needs. This could be not providing adequate food, clothing, hygiene, supervision or shelter for a child. This lack of provision is then likely to result in the serious impairment of a child’s health or development.

Children who are neglected often also suffer from other types of abuse.

Neglect is most often seen via physical symptoms.  For example; a child failing to thrive; a child constantly presenting with lice; a child persistently coming to school dirty or a child who is undernourished.

A sign of neglect could be a child who may be soiling and wetting at an age when this would not be expected.

A neglected child may experience a range of unsafe situations through a lack of physical care or supervision.

They may also experience poor emotional and caring relationships. This may lead them to be additionally vulnerable to exploitation and harm in the community.

They may also be vulnerable to school bullying, isolation from peers and poor school attendance.

As well as observing physical symptoms, it is of vital importance that you listen to children as they tell you about their home lives.

Neglect is not always the result of deliberate intentions and may be as a result of inadequate parenting, poverty, a lack of knowledge, or skills on the part of parents or carers.

It may be due to other stressors within the family, for example; a significant bereavement; illness within the family, or poor parental mental health.

There can also be underlying issues related to substance abuse or domestic violence.

Neglect can be challenging to identify as it usually takes place over an extended period. You may have a concern that a child is being neglected. This might be a ‘niggle’ or a worry which is always there, but difficult to be specific about. It is important that you share your concerns with the appropriate person. Firstly, they might already have more information than you, which contributes to a bigger picture. Secondly, this will enable that child to be formally monitored over a longer period of time.

There is a wealth of family support services available out there, and if we can identify neglect early, there is a good chance that the family can be supported to improve the situation for a child.

Children who grow up in homes characterised by neglect are more likely to experience problems later on in life, such as substance abuse, poor educational attainment, unemployment or mental health problems.

We are now going to explore issues surrounding sexual abuse.

Sexual Abuse is when others use and exploit children sexually for their own gratification, gain or the gratification of others.

Sexual abuse may involve physical contact. This includes assault by penetration, for example, rape, or oral rape.

Sexual abuse can also include non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside clothing.

It may include non-contact activities; such as involving children in the production of sexual images; forcing children to look at sexual images or watch sexual activities; encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways or grooming a child in preparation for abuse. This can often include using the internet and social media to access a vulnerable child.

Most abusers are known to a child or their family in some way, and while the majority are male, it is important to remember that a child can be sexually abused by a female or another child.

Sexual abuse can take place within our institutions, and can be perpetrated by professionals.  A child who is being sexually abused may have physical signs of this. For example; bruising; lacerations; swelling to the mouth or genitals; sexually transmitted diseases or an unexplained pregnancy.

The child may also engage in self destructive and high risk behaviours including self-mutilation, running away or substance abuse. They may develop poor peer or adult relationships. They may display a fear of going home or to a specific place.  It is important to be aware that both boys and girls can be the victims of sexual abuse.

Children who are victims of sexual abuse can display inappropriate sexualised behaviour, which is not in keeping with their age and stage of development. They may have knowledge about sex that is not age appropriate and they may use highly sexualised language.

In addition to the signs you may observe, a child may disclose to you that they have been sexually abused. If this happens then you must pass this on to the appropriate person.

We are now going to look at the fifth and final category of child abuse - Exploitation.

Exploitation is probably the least well known category of child abuse.

Exploitation is defined as the intentional ill-treatment, manipulation or abuse of power and control over a child or young person. This is done to take selfish or unfair advantage of a child, young person or situation, for personal gain.

It may manifest itself in many forms such as child labour, slavery, servitude, engaging in criminal activity, begging, benefit or financial fraud, or child trafficking.  It extends to the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of children for the purposes of exploitation.  Young people who are in employment that is not adequately regulated, are at particular risk of exploitation.

Exploitation can be sexual in nature. Professionals call this Child Sexual Exploitation and this is sometimes shortened to ‘CSE’. CSE involves the abuse of trust and power. A perpetrator gains the trust of a child or young person and then sexually manipulates and exploits them for their own or others gratification or gain.

As with the other categories of abuse you need to be aware of the fact that this type of abuse does happen within Northern Ireland. It is happening in the town where you live and it is happening to children that the EA supports.

The first step in stopping this abuse starts with someone picking up the signs. You should watch out for children and young people; receiving unexpected gifts or money; using their phone secretively; having significantly older friends or being picked up from school by strangers.

Children who regularly go missing from school and home may be at greater risk of exploitation. Children who are being abused in this way may present as distressed or distant. CSE does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.

If a child is being exploited, they are not able to give consent to sexual activity, even if they say they are voluntarily engaging in this. This is always considered child abuse and must be reported.

We have now covered the five main categories of child abuse; physical; emotional; neglect; sexual and exploitation. It is vital that you take your increased awareness of these issues and apply it to your work within the EA. I appreciate that what you’ve heard today can be shocking and scary for us even to consider. It is important that you seek support should you need to, and I would signpost you to your line manager and EA Health and Wellbeing.