

[NAME OF GROUP]

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

INTRODUCTION

[NAME OF GROUP] has a legal and moral responsibility to provide a duty of care for children, and implement procedures to safeguard their well-being and protect them from abuse. All references to child and/or children in this document apply equally to young people.

DEFINITIONS

The Children Act, 2004 defines a child as being up to the age of 18 years old. Extensions of this exist for children who have special needs and for those in local authority care settings.

AIM

To define the practice and procedures for employees and volunteers, in order to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. It is aimed at protecting both the child and the member of staff/volunteer.

OBJECTIVES

- To ensure that all employees and volunteers working with children are carefully selected, understand and accept responsibility for the safety of those individuals in their care. And to ensure that the child's welfare is of paramount importance when undertaking any activities.
- To respond swiftly and appropriately to all suspicions or allegations of abuse and to ensure confidential information is restricted to the appropriate individuals within **[NAME OF GROUP]** and appropriate external agencies.

RECRUITMENT

All reasonable steps will be taken to ensure unsuitable individuals are prevented from having any involvement with **[NAME OF GROUP]** and the recruitment procedures will include a Criminal Records Bureau Disclosure for all personnel with access to children.

This will include all members of the management committee. All prospective employees/volunteers should be 'interviewed', for volunteers this need not be a formal interview. **[NAME OF GROUP]** will ensure that all employees/volunteers have appropriate qualifications and training.

Should any concerns arise following a Criminal Records Bureau Disclosure then this will be passed onto the Management Committee.

All new employees/volunteers will go through a probation and induction process, including relevant training. Ongoing training and supervision will ensure all employees/volunteers are adequately supported. Any concerns about an employee/volunteer should be passed on to the Chair of the Management Committee.

CREATING A SAFE AND CARING ENVIRONMENT

- Employees/volunteers working with children should be appropriately trained and qualified to ensure the safe provision of services, use of equipment, activities undertaken etc.
- Wherever possible **[NAME OF GROUP]** will encourage an 'open environment' e.g. avoiding private or unobserved situations between staff and children/young people.
- Employees/volunteers must treat all children/young people with respect and must take care to avoid showing any favouritism.
- Employees/volunteers must not make racist, sexist or any other remarks which upset or humiliate.
- It is the responsibility of employees/volunteers to prevent the abuse of younger or weaker children by older or stronger children through bullying, cruelty or any other forms of humiliation.

CHILD ABUSE

Responding to Signs of Abuse:

It is not the responsibility of employees/volunteers to deal with suspected abuse but it is their responsibility to report concerns to the appropriate person. It is important that all employees/volunteers should be aware of their responsibilities if child abuse is suspected.

If a child reveals that they are being abused:

- Reassure the child, tell them that they are right to tell you [do not promise to keep it a secret as it is your responsibility to inform others].
- Stay calm – ensure the child is safe and feels safe, accept what you have been told. [This should not be seen as believing or disbelieving what you have been told]. Reassure the child and stress that they are not to blame. Tell the child that you will offer support but you will have to pass the information on.
- Do not question the child and/or rush into details that may be inappropriate. Do not make promises you cannot keep. Do not approach or contact the alleged abuser[s].
- Complete the Incident Record Form as soon as possible after the event detailing what you and the child discussed. Inform the designated person or deputy. If this is not possible contact the Chair or an appropriate member of the management committee. If the matter is urgent and none of the above can be contacted, then contact social services or the police.
- Concerns would normally be shared with parents/carers as soon as possible. However, there could be circumstances when this could put the child at greater risk or there may be concerns that parents/carers will not respond appropriately.

If allegations are made against a member of staff/volunteer of [NAME OF GROUP]:

- Social Services will be immediately notified and action taken on their advice.
- If there are genuine grounds for concern, the member of staff/volunteer will be immediately notified of the allegations made against them and they will not be allowed to work in any shape or form with the young people in [NAME OF GROUP]. Other members of staff/volunteers associated with [NAME OF GROUP] will be advised that they should not discuss with the accused any aspect of the alleged incident(s) or the enquiry that follows disclosure, as this may seriously affect the outcome of the enquiry. The outcome of the enquiry will determine whether the member of staff/volunteer accused of abuse is allowed to continue to work with [NAME OF GROUP].
- If the [NAME OF GROUP] Designated Child Protection officer is the subject of the suspicion/allegation, the report must be made to the Chair of [NAME OF GROUP] who will refer the allegation to Social Services.

TYPES OF ABUSE

Neglect:

The persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and psychological needs, which is likely to result in damage to the child's health and/or development. Neglect in recreational or social activities might occur if employees/volunteers fail to ensure that children, in their care, are safely protected or are exposed to undue risk of injury, cold, excessive heat etc.

Sexual Abuse:

Actual or likely sexual exploitation of a child is the involvement of children in sexual activities they do not truly comprehend, to which they are unable to give informed consent, that violate social taboos of family roles and as such are illegal. Recreational and social situations may involve physical contact (e.g. supporting and guiding children) and could potentially create situations where sexual abuse may go unnoticed. Abusive situations occur if adults misuse their power over children in order to meet their own sexual needs.

Physical Abuse:

Actual or likely physical injury to a child or failure to prevent physical injury or suffering to a child e.g. hitting, burning, shaking etc. In recreational activities this might occur where the nature and intensity of activities exceeds the capacity or ability of the child or where drugs are used to enhance performance.

Emotional Abuse:

The persistent emotional ill treatment or rejection of a child resulting in severe adverse effects on the emotional, physical and/or behavioural development of a child. It can involve coldness or hostility towards a child, conveying to children that they are worthless or inadequate, causing a child to feel frightened or in danger etc.

Emotional abuse in recreational or social activities might also include situations where parents, employees/volunteers subject children to constant criticism, sarcasm, bullying or unrealistic pressure to perform to high expectations.

Indicators of Abuse:

The signs summarised below do not necessarily mean that a child is being abused. Similarly there may not be any signs; you may just feel something is wrong. If you are worried report it to the designated person.

It is not your responsibility to decide if it is abuse but it is your responsibility to act on your concerns and do something about it by reporting.

Signs of Physical Abuse:

- Unexplained injuries or burns
- Improbable excuses given to explain injuries
- Refusal to discuss injuries
- Untreated injuries
- Admission of punishment which appears excessive
- Bald patches
- Withdrawal from physical contact
- Arms and legs covered in hot weather
- Fear of returning home
- Fear of medical help
- Self-destructive tendencies
- Aggression towards others
- Running away

Signs of Neglect:

- Constant hunger
- Poor personal hygiene
- Constant tiredness
- Poor state of clothing
- Emaciated
- Frequent lateness or non attendance at school
- Untreated medical problems
- Destructive tendencies
- Low self esteem
- Neurotic behaviour
- No social relationships
- Running away
- Compulsive stealing or scavenging

Signs of Emotional abuse:

- Physical, mental and/or emotional development slow downs
- Admission of punishment which appears excessive
- Over-reaction to mistakes
- Continual self-deprecation
- Sudden speech disorders
- Fear of new situations

- Inappropriate emotional responses to painful situations
- Neurotic behaviour e.g. thumb sucking, hair twisting etc.
- Self mutilation
- Fear of parents being contacted
- Extremes of passivity or aggression
- Substance misuse
- Running away
- Compulsive stealing, scavenging

Signs of Sexual Abuse:

- Lack of trust in adults and/or fear of a particular individual(s)
- Over familiarity with adults or provocative behaviour
- Withdrawal and introversion/problems with peer relationships
- Running away from home/sudden behaviour changes e.g. falling standards, truancy etc.
- Low self esteem
- Stealing
- Substance misuse
- Displaying sexual knowledge beyond age group
- Involvement in prostitution
- Over-sexed behaviour
- Sleeplessness, nightmares, fear of the dark
- Bruises, scratches, bite marks
- Depression, suicide attempts
- Anorexia nervosa/eating disorder or a change in eating habits
- Pregnancy, particularly when reluctant to name the father
- Recurring urinary tract problems/vaginal infections

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF EMPLOYEES/VOLUNTERS

Safety of participants and employees/volunteers is of prime consideration at all times. All accidents involving anyone should be recorded in the organisation's accident book immediately or as soon as practicably possible.

Employees/volunteers are responsible for familiarising themselves with building/facility safety issues, such as, fire procedures, location of emergency exits, location of emergency telephones and first aid equipment.

Employees/volunteers will be expected to keep an attendance register for all organised sessions.

Appropriate employees/volunteers should have access to any parent consent/emergency consent forms for all children taking part in any activities (this information should be confidential).

Employees/volunteers should ensure that their activities start and end on time.

Employees/volunteers are expected to promote, demonstrate and incorporate the values of fair play, trust and ethics throughout their activities.

Employees/volunteers should ensure that they are adequately insured, to protect against claims of negligence, through their organisation or their own personal insurance if acting as a self employed agent.

DESIGNATED PERSON

The Child Protection officer has been designated as **[NAME OF PERSON]**; his/her **[delete, as appropriate]** contact details are listed below. He/She **[delete, as appropriate]** is the current designated person and if necessary the deputy-designated person **[NAME OF PERSON]** is available at all times for child protection. In the event of any concerns regarding a child then the designated person or deputy will be informed at the earliest available opportunity.

If necessary the designated person will inform the relevant Social Services Department without delay and the management committee. The designated person will also ensure that the child protection procedures are kept up to date and reviewed.

Employees/volunteers should never:

- Engage in rough physical activities.
- Engage in sexually proactive activities.
- Allow or engage in inappropriate touching of any form.
- Allow young people to use inappropriate language.
- Make sexually suggestive comments about or to a Young person.
- Reduce a young person to tears as a form of control.
- Undertake any tasks involving a young person for which they feel inadequately trained or have concerns about.

Photography, video, etc:

Formal permission will be obtained prior to the start of every course.etc.

REVIEW

[NAME OF GROUP] will ensure that issues of child protection receive continuous attention and will regularly review the way that we operate to support this principle.

Designated officer Contact Details

[NAME]
[ADDRESS]
[TEL:]
[OUT OF HOURS TEL:]

Deputy Designated Officer

[NAME]
[ADDRESS]
[TEL:]
[OUT OF HOURS TEL:]

Other Useful Contacts

[NAME / ORGANISATION]	[TEL. NO.]

Incident Report Form

Name of person concerned:

Address:

Age:

Any special factors:

Brief description of the alleged incident/ of why concern is being expressed:

Possible signs/symptoms suggesting the incident occurred:

To whom has the incident been reported (Manager, Social Services, Police, etc.):

Any other action taken: