

Sample Child Protection Policy

The Really Good Club 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 applies 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.

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.

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 The Really Good Club and appropriate external agencies.

Recruitment:

All reasonable steps will be taken to ensure unsuitable individuals are prevented from having any involvement with The Really Good Club.

Employee/volunteer recruitment procedures will include a Criminal Records Bureau Disclosure, at the appropriate level, for all personnel with access to children and should always include self-declaration and the use of references. This will include all members of the management/executive committee. All prospective employees/volunteers should be 'interviewed', for volunteers this need not be a formal interview.

We 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 Executive Committee. Dudley CVS and/or Dudley Area Child Protection Committee/Children's Safeguarding Board will be contacted for information and guidance. Any Disclosure that causes concern will be assessed to establish the level of risk the subject poses to children, other service users, colleagues, the general public and/or our organisation. A number of questions will be asked:

Does the offence relate directly to work with children?

What is the seriousness of the offence[s] and the circumstances surrounding it?

How long is it since the offence was committed?

Does the subject have a pattern of offending?

Has the subject's situation changed since the offence occurred?

What is the subject's explanation of the offence?

Did the subject declare the offence prior to the Disclosure?

If all these questions are not answered satisfactorily then the prospective employee/volunteer will not be allowed to join the organisation.

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 Designated person, deputy or member of the management committee.

Creating a Safe and Caring Environment:

- Risk Assessment should be undertaken prior to any offsite visits or new types of activities.
- Employees/volunteers working with children should be appropriately trained and qualified to ensure the safe provision of services, use of equipment, activities undertaken, etc.
- Employees/volunteers working with children should carefully plan activity sessions with the care and safety of children as their main concern including the use of activities at an appropriate age/ability level.
- Wherever possible we will encourage an 'open environment' eg avoiding private or unobserved situations and discouraging the keeping of secrets. This especially includes employees/volunteers should being alone with a child at any time. When this is unavoidable, it should be done with the full knowledge and consent of someone in charge of the organisation and/or the children's parents/carers.
- Employees/volunteers must treat all children/young people with respect.
- Employees/volunteers must not make racist, sexist or any other remarks which upset or humiliate
- Employees/volunteers must take care to avoid showing any favouritism.
- 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.
- Arrangements for parents/carers dropping off and collecting children from activities/trips need to be clearly stated and agreed by parents/carers, children and employees/volunteers.

Roles and Responsibilities of employees/volunteers:

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 are responsible for reporting suspected cases of child abuse to the appropriate individuals and/or agencies.

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/volunteer 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.

Admission Procedures

A register of names, addresses, next of kin and contact addresses and telephone numbers for emergencies will be kept.

Parents/carers, and where appropriate older children, will be given a copy of a written statement which specifies the action which will be taken in the event of a child becoming ill or being injured and which indicates that any information which suggests that a child has been abused will be passed on to the Social Services Department and/or the police.

Designated Person

There will be a named designated person and if necessary a deputy-designated person 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.

Named Person:

Children and parents/carers will have a 'named person' to whom they may report any worries or concerns. This person will normally be the designated person or deputy.

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.

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 eg 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 slows down
- 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 eg 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 eg 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

Employees/volunteers should never:

- Engage in rough physical activities, even when playing.
- Engage in sexually proactive activities.
- Allow or engage in inappropriate touching of any form.
- Allow children to use inappropriate language.
- Make sexually suggestive comments about or to a child.
- Let a child's allegation go either unchallenged and/or unrecorded.
- Do things of a personal nature for a child. If you do have to do things of a personal nature for a child eg take to the toilet, support, lift, etc particularly if they are very young or a child with additional needs, then you should obtain the full consent of their parents and permission from your line manager or person in charge. In an emergency situation, which requires this type of help, parents and your line manager, should be fully informed as soon, as is practicable.
- Reduce a child to tears as a form of control.
- Undertake any tasks involving children for which they feel inadequately trained or have concerns about.

Photography, video, etc:

Formal permission from parent/carers should be obtained before taking photographs, videos, etc.

Adult to child ratio:

In youth work practices the ratio of legally responsible adults to children tends to be 1.8 regardless of age, other guidance suggests 1.10 for older children. It is recommended that there is a minimum of two employees/volunteers with legal responsibility present at all times for children under eight years old.

Review:

The Really Good Club will ensure that issues of child protection receive continuous attention and will regularly review the way that we operate to support this principle.

Sources of Further Information:

The Department of Health web-site www.doh.gov.uk contains a practical guide to the law relating to child protection, especially The Protection of Children Act 1999. It also has a link to a publication entitled: "What to do if you're worried a child is being abused". This publication has been developed to assist practitioners to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. It sets out the process for safeguarding children. It is aimed at those who come into contact with children and families in their everyday work.

The booklet 'Safe from Harm': Code of Practice for safeguarding the welfare of Children in Voluntary Organisations in England and Wales' is available from the Home Office web-site www.homeoffice.gov.uk .

For England and Wales, the Criminal Records Bureau are providing a regulated 'one stop' service of records checks from information provided by Police, Department of Health and Department of Education and Skills. Further details can be found on their web-site www.disclosure.gov.uk

All Social Services Departments have an Area Child Protection Committee, (ACPC). This is the key inter-agency forum for child protection, comprising representatives from all the relevant statutory organisations and representing the voluntary sector. In Dudley the contact for voluntary/community organisations is Mike O'Sullivan, Assistant Director Children's Services, NCH West Midlands. He can be contacted at mike.osullivan@nch.org.uk. Any child protection concerns in respect of a particular child should be passed on to the local Social Services Area office (or the Emergency Duty Team if out of office working hours) or the police (who have specialist child protection officers).

NSPCC. A registered charity established to prevent cruelty to children. Help line for concerns about a child's welfare. 0808 800 5000 [24 hours], web-site www.nspcc.org.uk

Keeping Arts Safe, protection of children, young people and vulnerable adults involved in arts activities - Arts Council England.

Sports organisations contact Rachael McKiernan-Doyle, Principal Sports and Recreation Officer at Dudley MBC. Telephone:01384 815599
E-mail: rachael.doyle@dudley.gov.uk

Barnardo's will support with child protection training. For further information contact: Martine Mcfadden. Telephone 01384 411722
E-mail: martine.mcfadden@barnardos.org.uk

Police Family Protection Unit: 0121 626 8165
West midlands Police: 0121 113 5000.

