

Families Fighting For Justice

Children and Vulnerable Adults Safeguarding Policy

Reviewed 1st March 2023

Statement of Policy

We will endeavour to ensure that children and vulnerable adults are safeguarded from harm while they visit our properties or participate in our activities.

We will do this by:

1. Making sure our trustees, staff and volunteers are carefully selected.
2. Providing appropriate training in issues of child protection.
3. Taking all reasonable steps to ensure the health, safety and welfare of any child or vulnerable adult in contact with the organisation.
4. Not physically, emotionally, or sexually abusing any child or vulnerable adult in contact with the organisation.
5. Taking all reasonable steps to prevent anyone involved in the organisation or any persons working for us or member of the public from putting any child or vulnerable adult in a situation in which there is an unreasonable risk to their health and safety.
6. Taking all reasonable steps to prevent anyone involved in the organisation, persons working for us or member of the public from physically, emotionally, or sexually abusing any child or vulnerable adult.
7. Reporting to a designated officer any evidence or reasonable suspicion that a child or vulnerable adult has been physically, emotionally, or sexually abused in contact with the organisation.
8. Implementing this policy in conjunction with any health and safety guidelines already in place.

Definitions

Neglect: The actual or likely persistent or significant neglect of a child or vulnerable adult, or the failure to protect a child or vulnerable adult from exposure to any kind of danger, including cold or starvation, or persistent failure to carry out important aspects of care, resulting in the significant impairment of the child's or vulnerable adult's health or development.

Physical Injury: Actual or likely deliberate physical injury to a child or vulnerable adult, or wilful neglect failure to prevent physical injury or suffering to a child or vulnerable adult.

Sexual Abuse: Actual or likely sexual exploitation of a child or vulnerable adult. The involvement of children and adolescents in sexual activities they do not truly comprehend or to which they are unable to give informed consent.

Emotional Abuse: Actual or likely persistent or significant emotional ill treatment or rejection resulting in severe adverse effects on the emotional, physical and/or behavioural development of a child or vulnerable adult. All abuse involves some emotional ill treatment.

Children and Vulnerable Adults Safety and Welfare Guidelines

These guidelines apply to:

- Any situation involving children and young people up to age 18, whether accompanied by adults or not. The organisation also recognises that vulnerable people of any age will benefit from similar safeguards. Whenever the guidelines refer to vulnerable adults, this is taken to also include children.
- All staff, contractors and consultants working at the organisation's property or events.

General duties of all staff and volunteers regarding the safety and welfare of children and similarly vulnerable people:

- To take all reasonable steps to protect vulnerable adults from hazards;
- To take appropriate action if an accident occurs;
- To strictly observe the code of behaviour given here;
- To take all reasonable steps to prevent abuse of vulnerable adults in contact with the organisation;
- To report any incident or suspicion of abuse.

Admission Policy

Children and vulnerable adults are welcome at any location where the organisation conducts its activities. Where unaccompanied children or vulnerable adults are concerned, staff and volunteers need to exercise discretion, where practicable contact details, for unaccompanied vulnerable adults, should be obtained at the point of entry in case of accident.

The main factors to consider are:

- The nature of the site;
- Age and understanding.

It would be unwise for instance, to let a young child roam unsupervised on a site with lots of water features, tempting heights or hiding places. This may also be the case for certain vulnerable adults. If you are worried on that account, it is fully acceptable to refuse admission –in a friendly manner – but explain that they will be welcome another time if accompanied.

Age, maturity, or understanding can be hard to judge. How sensible they are matters more than a child's age. If only an older child accompanies a group of young children, it can help to ask, 'Who's in charge?'

Code of Behaviour for all staff and volunteers

People working with the organisation must always observe the following requirements where children, young people or similarly vulnerable people are concerned.

You should always:

- Uphold the spirit and specific provisions of the Statement of Policy and these guidelines.
- Do your best to behave in an open and friendly manner but avoid being over familiar in word or action.
- In so far as possible, avoid situations in which you are alone with children or similarly vulnerable people. If necessary, move to a place where you can both be seen by other colleagues or other adults.
- If a child is hurt or distressed, do your best to comfort or reassure them without compromising their dignity or doing anything to discredit your own behaviour.
- Try to avoid any physical contact or behaviour that could be unwelcome or misconstrued. Physical touch should only be in response to a child's need and should respect their age and individual stage of development.

It may be appropriate to hold a child's hand, to put a comforting arm around their shoulder or carry them - for instance, if they have fallen. However, you should first explain what you have in mind and ask directly if that is what they want. Otherwise, it may be unwelcome or misinterpreted.

- Where you have to rely on your own judgement, always treat the child's welfare as paramount.

You have a strict duty never to subject any child to any form of harm or abuse. Failure to honour this will be treated as gross misconduct. This means that that it is unacceptable for example:

- To distress a child by shouting at them or calling them derogatory names;
- To slap a child;
- To hold a child in such a way that it causes pain, or to shake them;
- To physically restrain a child except to protect them from harming themselves or others;
- To take part in horseplay or rough games;
- To allow or engage in appropriate touching of any kind;
- To do things of a personal nature for vulnerable adults that they can do for themselves or an accompanying adult can do for them; this includes going to the toilet with a child unless another adult is present;
- To allow or engage in sexually suggestive behaviour within a child's sight or hearing, or make suggestive remarks to or within earshot of a child;
- To give or show a child anything which could be construed as pornographic;
- To seek or agree to meet vulnerable adults anywhere beyond normal visitor areas or off the organisation's property without the full prior knowledge and agreement of their parents or guardians.

Support in exercising your best judgement.

If you witness or suspect abusive behaviour towards a child, you should use the procedural guidelines that follow. We all appreciate that this may call for fine judgement and even courage.

As long as you honour this Code of Behaviour and the other guidance given here, you will have the practical, moral and legal support of senior colleagues in any situation where you have to rely on

your own judgement. If you are in any doubt as to what to do then you should contact the designated officer who will be able to provide you with the necessary advice.

Guidelines: What to do in particular circumstances

1. Protecting vulnerable adults from hazards or rash behaviour

We recognise that it is impossible to ensure that no person ever comes to harm. However, you should also at all times be alert to potential dangers, taking swift appropriate action to ensure safety, for example, getting repairs done, new warning notices, altering barriers etc. 'Reasonable' and 'likely' are the operative terms here. **This means allowing for factors such as the following**, especially when children or vulnerable adults are unaccompanied by adults:-

- Children are usually smaller than adults. So, for example something set at a reasonable height for an adult may be dangerous for a child or above their sight line.
- Also children are usually less strong than adults, which may affect the design of doors or gates.
- Children are primed to explore or play games. This means that we have got to do our best to anticipate adventurous behaviour and assess the risks involved.
- Children and possibly vulnerable adults may have less experience or a lower degree of understanding as to what constitutes danger. They can be unaware or heedless of dangers you can clearly recognise. Even when aware of danger, they may act through bravado.

You have a duty to prevent young people from coming to harm through their own rash actions.

- You need to judge carefully how to intervene.
- Often the best course is to guide them into a safe course of action, rather than just telling them to stop what they're doing – and it is better to give positive rather than negative instructions (e.g. "Walk on the grass, please" instead of "Get off the wall"). Or it may work to distract them from something dangerous.
- If you must tell them to stop what they're doing, try to be clear and definite about it. It helps to take a deep breath before you say anything!
- Avoid being officious or challenging. You need to exert your authority, not 'prove' it.
- If, despite your efforts, a young person persists in jeopardising their own or other people's safety, get help if you can or consider asking them to leave the site.
- If they are in danger and you cannot persuade them away from it, you should treat this as an emergency and contact the emergency services.

Restraint: If you think it is necessary to restrain a child from doing something, try nonphysical approaches – e.g. by talking to them, by asking them not to move if they are injured, by standing in the way. If you do have to use physical restraint, it should be the minimum necessary for their safety. If they are in imminent danger, you might need to hold them by their clothing. Whatever the circumstances, physical restraint must be appropriate and reasonable. Otherwise, it may be regarded as assault.

Alcohol and Illegal Drugs: If there appears to be illegal drinking in or around one of our properties, or you see anyone apparently taking drugs, giving them to others or being given them:

- You should not try to stop them, but;
- You should notify the Police – and try to keep an eye that they do not otherwise endanger themselves. Police involvement does not mean necessarily that they will be charged with any offence, but it does alert the Police and should result in experienced handling of the situation.

You must also take all reasonable steps to ensure that no other member of staff, volunteer, or member of the public compromises the health and safety of any child in contact with the organisation. For example, someone might move a barrier that has been placed with vulnerable adults in mind or overlook the likelihood of vulnerable adults being at an event or suggesting an activity that is inherently risky.

- This means intervening directly to prevent this or reporting the situation to someone with more authority to intervene.
- In dealing with the person, bear in mind that the situation is more likely to arise through enthusiasm or thoughtlessness than wilful negligence.

2. What to do if an accident happens

- Depending on your judgement of the situation, go to the scene immediately if possible and/or contact the emergency services.
- With vulnerable adults it can be hard to tell whether they have been injured or whether an injury is serious. If you have any doubt about this, you should err on the side of caution and contact the emergency services. Even if a child is accompanied and you think an accident is not being treated seriously enough, get medical assistance on your own initiative if necessary.
- Normal accident recording and reporting procedure apply.

First Aid

- Unless there is a good reason, First Aid should not be administered without the permission of the child's parent, teacher or accompanying adult. **A child cannot give consent.** If the parent is not on site, get their phone number, if possible. However, if a child is alone and say, unconscious, the situation should be dealt with as for any other visitor.
- If at all possible, treatment should only be given by a trained First Aider or Appointed Person.
- Provided this does not put the child at risk, always try to administer First Aid within sight and sound of other adults.
- Always tell the child exactly what you are doing and why.
- Unless it is irrelevant, ask the child or vulnerable adult if they use medication (e.g. for asthma, diabetes and epilepsy) or have any allergies. Some people have allergic reactions to stings. Unless it is a first occurrence, a parent, teacher or accompanying adult should know of any such conditions.
- For minor injuries, it is all right to use a non fluffy cloth or sticking plaster, but you may not offer any medication, including antiseptics or pills of any kind. If you have any doubts about

helping someone to use their own medication, phone **National Health Service Direct on 0845 4647 or the emergency services.**

- Any treatment should be as little as necessary without threatening the individual's well being. **If a child or vulnerable adult comes to you for comfort** because of a minor accident or fright, it is perfectly in keeping with the Code of Behaviour to hold their hand or put your arm around them. Just make sure:
 - That you know about any injury and do nothing to make it worse.
 - That physical contact is what the individual wants, and the kind of contact between you is appropriate to their age and stage of development.
 - Do your best to stay in sight of other adults.

If a child or vulnerable adult needs a doctor or hospital, call the emergency services.

It is nearly always best to stay on site with them and wait for the ambulance. You should only take the risk of bringing in the individual yourself if the emergency services ask you to do so because of exceptional circumstances.

3. **What to do if a child/vulnerable adult is unattended or lost**

- If you see a child or vulnerable adult who seems unattended or who is definitely lost, introduce yourself, find out their name, and try to establish whom they are with and where they last saw them. Ask them to come with you to the reception point/main entrance/designated meeting place. Remember that the other person(s) will be looking for the individual too, so stay within obvious places. If you come across an individual who is definitely lost, try to keep them from getting distressed – perhaps by distracting them with something interesting or giving them a 'job' to do. Make sure to keep them in your sight, and if you must leave them, only pass them on to someone you can rely upon to look after them.
- If a child or vulnerable adult is reluctant to come with you, explain that you are going to look – but try to keep them in sight while you do so. Do not try to force them to come with you. If necessary, call for help or stay with them until they have been reunited with someone that the individual recognises and is willing to be with.

Contact with unaccompanied children/vulnerable adults.

Try to avoid situations where you are alone with children/vulnerable adults, especially anywhere you are unlikely to be seen or heard. This is as much to protect yourself from suspicion as to protect the individual.

If you cannot avoid being alone with a child or vulnerable adult, you should take prudent precautions:

- Try to move with the individual to a place where there are other people.
- Avoid unnecessary physical contact.
- If you do have to touch the individual, make sure to get their agreement beforehand and try not to be over-familiar.

- If whomever the individual is with has not been found after a reasonable time, you should notify the Police. You must judge how long to wait before doing this; it depends on the individual and the circumstances. (If the police have been notified, it is important also to let them know if a lost person has been reunited with whoever accompanied them.)
- If you find a child or vulnerable adult in distress, do your best to comfort and reassure them without compromising their dignity or privacy. Again, it may help to distract them while you take practical steps to help them but be careful that what you do is openly in their best interests.
- If you come across a lost person who does not speak English, they probably have been accompanied and other visitors may be able to help find whoever that is.

Key details if reporting a lost child/vulnerable adult:

- **Name**
- **Age**
- **Accompanying person's name**
- **Address or name of school/group**
- **Physical description of the individual (height, colour of hair, distinctive clothing)**
- **Where the individual is now**
- **Where and when the individual was last seen**

4. What to do if someone is being violent to a child/vulnerable adult

If you come across someone hitting, hurting, or violently shouting at a child or vulnerable adult, you should try to prevent the abuse, if you can do so without unreasonable risk to the child/vulnerable adult or yourself.

- You have to judge whether it is a fleeting incident, which warrants showing your disapproval or a threat of actual harm that requires someone to intervene.
- You also have to judge whether intervening is likely to stop the abuse or to inflame the situation. This can be even more complicated if one child/vulnerable adult is being abused by another.
- So long as you are mindful of the individual's welfare, you are entitled to intervene by:
 - Asking or telling the perpetrator to stop
 - Explaining that such behaviour is not acceptable on the organisation's property or at its event
 - Restraining a child/vulnerable adult from abusing another
 - Saying that you will report the incident – as a matter of fact, not a threat
 - Summoning help
 - Notifying the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) or the police
 - Asking the perpetrator to leave the property
- While you have to be firm, it can only help if you are calm and un-antagonistic. Bear in mind that you may be dealing with an upset or angry adult as well as a distressed child.

- Never use or threaten physical force as this could inflame the situation and result in further violence.
- If you have any doubt about what to do, consult the Designated Officers or one of the following:
 - 24 hour NSPCC Protection Helpline;
 - The local Social Services, there is normally a duty social worker available at all times.
- If you are worried about any incident, you should record the details and report it to the Designated Officer.

The same principles apply if there is a 'flasher' on site or someone behaving suspiciously towards children/vulnerable adults.

5. If you suspect a colleague or receive an allegation of abuse

We hope that you will never encounter any situation of abuse while you are with the organisation. However, you must know what to do if you discover an incident of abuse, suspect a colleague of abuse, or receive an allegation of abuse.

If you suspect a colleague

It is your duty to report your suspicions to the designated officer. **It is not your responsibility to investigate your suspicions.** Nor should you concern yourself with looking for evidence of abuse. This requires expertise you are not expected to have; your role is to respond appropriately.

If an allegation is made to you about a colleague

It is not your responsibility to investigate any allegation. Nor should you concern yourself with looking for evidence of abuse. This requires expertise you are not expected to have. Your role is to respond appropriately and to report what you have been told to the designated officer.

If a child/vulnerable adult makes a disclosure to you about abuse not involving organisation staff or volunteers.

It is not your responsibility to investigate any disclosure. Nor should you concern yourself with looking for evidence of abuse. This requires expertise you are not expected to have. **Your role is to respond appropriately and to report what you have been told to the NSPCC or local social services.** You should also inform the designated officer.

If a disclosure or allegation is being made to you:

- Listen carefully and sensitively, stay calm and offer understanding and reassurance.
- Check your understanding of the situation, without being investigative.
- Record what you have been told.
- Alert a senior colleague at the earliest opportunity within 24 hours.

Guidance on responding to a disclosure of abuse

DO YOUR BEST TO

- Stay calm
- Receive the information
- Listen, reassure
- Record the information
- Report to an appropriate colleague
- Accept your own feelings and consider getting support for yourself

DO NOT

- Probe in an investigative way or ask leading questions.
- Make a child/vulnerable adult repeat the story unnecessarily.
- Promise confidentiality.

If you become suspicious about the behaviour where children/vulnerable adults are concerned, of a colleague or someone associated with the organisation, steps 2, 3 and 4 above also apply.

If you think the situation is sufficiently seriously and urgent, contact the Designated Officer or, failing that the Police. Do not let anxiety that you might have jumped to a wrong conclusion deter you from reporting any genuine worries that you have. Procedures put in place will be used to follow up any such report, and we will not hold it against you should a well-intentioned, but mistake report be made.

If you feel you need expert support, because you come across abuse while working with us, we recommend that you discuss it with the designated officer.

6. If an allegation of abuse is made against you

- If an allegation is made directly to you, you should advise the Designated Officer, even if you think it is trivial.
- If we receive an allegation against you, we will inform you.
- All allegations of misconduct will be subject to standard disciplinary procedures.
- You are entitled to the moral and practical support if an unwarranted allegation of misconduct is made against you. If your behaviour is in line with the policy and these guidelines, we cannot envisage any allegation of misconduct being justified.
- Any allegation will be scrupulously investigated, with due regard for confidentiality.
- This should not be interpreted as indicating culpability. It is part of our duty to protect people working with us from any unfounded allegation.
- If your behaviour contravenes this policy and guidelines, it will be treated as gross misconduct.
- If you have concerns about how an allegation against yourself or anyone else is being dealt with, you should inform a colleague at the most senior level you think appropriate.

Supporting the Policy

Confidentiality

We recognise that it is important for us all to feel that any information about alleged or actual abuse will only be disclosed where it is in best interests of the child/vulnerable adult to do so. Furthermore, we have a responsibility to protect the identity of anyone reporting suspected or actual abuse. No such disclosure will be made without careful consideration.

The role of the designated officer

The nominated child and vulnerable adult protection officer(s) is (are):

Their role is twofold: to serve as a centre for information and guidance on child welfare issues, and to support trustees, staff, and volunteers in dealing with any suggestion of misconduct or need for expert advice (see Appendix A).

Disseminating information about this policy

- Everyone working or applying to work for us is to be made aware of our policy for children and vulnerable adult's welfare. Furthermore, these guidelines are being issues to all trustees, volunteers, staff, and other people who are likely to have contact with children as part of their work with us.
- Queries or suggestions regarding the policy or guidelines should be channelled through the designated officer.

Appendix A: The Role of the Designated Officer

The Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy must include the name(s) of the Designated Officer(s), her/his role, and responsibilities and how s/he can be contacted.

The Designated Officer(s) should ensure that they are knowledgeable about child protection and that they undertake any training considered necessary to keep updated on new developments.

The Designated Officer(s) is the link between the members of the public, staff and statutory agencies. They will take responsibility for monitoring and reporting to the Board on how the policy impacts on vulnerable adults and organisation staff/volunteers.

The Designated Officer(s) will have the following functions:

- To promote awareness of the child/vulnerable adult protection policy within the organisation;
- To influence policy within the organisation in order to prioritise the needs of children and vulnerable adults;
- To be an advisor on best practice in regard to the child/vulnerable adult protection policy;
- To advise on and co-ordinate training for others, as appropriate;

- To build a network with relevant personnel in the Statutory Authorities;
- To agree incident reporting procedures;
- To keep records of incidents and reports, together with any other relevant information;
- To report incidents to the Statutory Authorities and ensure that appropriate information is available at the time of referral and that the referral is confirmed in writing, under confidential cover;
- To ensure that individual case records are maintained of the action taken by the organisation.

The Designated Officer does not have the responsibility of investigating or validating protection concerns within the organisation and has no counselling or therapeutic role.

Appendix B: Referral Contact List

- National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) 24 Hours Protection Helpline: 0808 800 5000
- Liverpool Social Services:
0151 233 3700 for Careline Children's Service
0151 233 3800 for Careline Adult Services (for all queries about people aged 18 and over)

If you are deaf or hard of hearing you can use the Minicom – 0151 225 2500