

PROTECTION OF CHILDREN & VULNERABLE ADULTS POLICY

Good Practice in Safeguarding Children and Young People

At [name of project] we want to do a good job, professionally and caringly, with our children and young people. We want them to be happy to come to us and we want their parents to be sure their children are safe.

This document is designed to protect both children and those who work with them and to continue the openness and trust between all parties involved in our work at [name of project].

A Safe Environment

It is our aim that work and activities are planned so as to minimise opportunities for the abuse of children and for unfounded accusations being made against adults, as far as this is practicable. This will include:

- It is desirable to have 2 leaders with any group
- A single child will not be left with an older person unless they can be clearly observed by other workers nearby
- Wherever possible, leaders of each gender are to be present in mixed gender groups
- To be conscious of how our words and actions can be misconstrued by others as harmful
- Any child not collected on time, and after the project centre is closed, will wait with 2 leaders at the main entrance.

Recruitment of Staff and Volunteers

Vetting and Barring will come into force in 2008. Initially this will relate to statutory agencies and faith groups will follow, possibly by 2010. In the meantime:

- All potential staff members and volunteers will be asked to apply for a Criminal Records Check (Disclosure) prior to the acceptance onto the project team.
- Full details and guidance will be given to the applicant (where required) for their application for a Disclosure.
- Disclosure applications will be sent to the [name of umbrella organisation] for application.
- Upon successful receipt of a Disclosure the applicant may then begin working with children and/or young people.
- If there is a concern raised by a disclosure, a risk-assessment must be conducted in line with an advisor regarding the individual's work with youth or children.
- The whole application process will be conducted in a professional and confidential manner.

Support for Staff and Volunteers

The primary aim of our work with children and young people is to encourage a deepening of their faith and to develop their social relationships.

- Staff members and volunteers will receive, in writing, guidelines on their tasks and to whom they are responsible and from whom they can seek support
- Regular meetings with other workers in the same team will be held to plan teaching and activities and to give mutual support.

Recognition of Abuse

Those who work in statutory agencies are well trained to identify child/vulnerable adult abuse. However, they often have to rely on people close to children, spotting the signs that something is wrong. So we as project workers and volunteers have a special responsibility to look out for children in difficulty.

Abuse may be neglect, e.g. when important aspects of care are needed; or physical, e.g. where adults seek sexual gratification by using children; or emotional, e.g. when children are harmed by persistent lack of love and affection, or by threats taunting, etc.

Child abuse may be suspected for a number of reasons:

- The child may tell you outright that they are being abused
- You may notice bruises that cause you concern
- Another child may alert you to a friend that is being ill-treated
- An adult may admit they've harmed a child in some way
- An allegation may be made on a child's behalf by a parent or carer.

Making our response

We are to pass on information carefully.

Any report should be recorded in writing, signed and dated; it follows that any suspected abuse must be taken seriously. It is important to let a child know that he or she is being listened to. It is not advised to promise confidentiality since the nature of the problem may be so serious as to require professional intervention. Even if confidentiality is not requested by a child, always explain to the child that information will be shared.

What steps to take if abuse is suspected

Speak at once to the person who you are responsible to for your work. Do this even if you're not sure, but your suspicions have been aroused. If neither person is available speak to another responsible person, e.g. a manager.

Vulnerable Adults Safe from Harm - What does the term mean?

The broad definition of a 'vulnerable adult', referred to in the 1997 Consultation Paper *Who decides?*, issued by the Lord Chancellor's Department, is a person:

"Who is or may be in need of community care services by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness; and

Who is or may be unable to take care of him or herself or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation"

In other words the people who are most likely to be the subject of mistreatment, are those people who:

- Are very frail
- Are older people
- Have a mental illness including dementia
- Have a physical or sensory disability
- Have a learning disability
- Have a serious physical illness

GUIDELINES FOR PROJECTS WHEN WORKING WITH VULNERABLE ADULTS

All staff and volunteers authorised by the project should be checked under the CRB procedure, [as they are for children's work] and a register should be maintained.

All staff and volunteers who are official project workers are to carry identification for their role and official records of their function is to be kept in the project centre.

Where people are visiting residential homes, etc, these homes should be given a basic copy of the project's policy and a list of staff and volunteers expected to visit that institution.

Where people visit vulnerable people on their own, staff and volunteers should keep a detailed record of the visit.

The following is a list of people who are likely to need registration under the policy:

- Sunday School / Crèche / Youth Workers etc
- Those who visit residential homes for the elderly
- Those who take Communion to the sick in their home, institution or hospital
- Those who are involved in luncheon clubs
- General community groups (a clause should be added to the hire of hall agreements to include vulnerable people)
- Those who visit people living in sheltered accommodation
- Those who undertake pastoral visiting in the parish
- Those who offer transport services
- Those likely to come into regular contact on their own.

The adult protection procedure identifies three distinct roles in the protection of vulnerable people. This comes from the Government's paper on Vulnerable Adults *Safe from Harm*. The same principles apply to safeguarding children.

- Alerters
- Investigators
- Managers

Project worker and volunteers act as Alerters. Their duty is:

- To report suspected acts of abuse
- To be alert to what abuse means and take seriously what they are told

- To think about what they see and ask if it is acceptable practice
- To work strictly in accordance with anti- racist, anti sexist, anti-ageist and anti disability practices
- To ensure the safety of the person you suspect is being mistreated as well as your own safety
- To contact the emergency services first, e.g. police, ambulance, if in a life-threatening situation.
- To be alert to hints, signals and non-verbal communication that could indicate abuse, which is being denied or deliberately hidden.

What to do if someone discloses abuse to you:

- Stay calm and try not to show shock
- Listen carefully rather than question directly
- Be sympathetic
- Be aware of the possibility that medical evidence might be needed

Tell the person that:

- They did right to tell you
- You are treating this information seriously
- It was not their fault

DO NOT:

- Press the person for more details
- Stop someone who is freely recalling significant events as they may not tell you again
- Promise to keep secrets: explain that the information will be kept confidential, i.e. information will only be passed to those people who have "a need to know"
- Make promises that you cannot keep (such as "This will not happen to you again")
- Contact the alleged abuser
- Be judgemental (e.g. "Why didn't you run away?")
- Pass on information to anyone who doesn't have a "need to know" i.e. do not gossip

Project workers should inform their manager.