

Leicestershire and Rutland District Folk Committee

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Leicestershire & Rutland District Folk Committee recognises that every child has a right to protection from any kind of abuse, be it physical, emotional or sexual. It is the responsibility of all volunteers involved in activities organised or sponsored by the District Committee to be aware of the correct procedures for dealing with any suggested incidences of abuse. Child Protection is not an isolated issue and the Committee will work in partnership with other organisations to update procedures and adopt current legislation.

Formal Definition of Child Abuse

The basic needs of a child are not being met in a manner appropriate to his or her age and stage of development and the child is at risk through avoidable acts of commission or omission on the part of his or her parent(s), sibling(s) or other relative(s) or carer(s). The categories commonly used to describe areas of abuse are:

- Physical abuse - where adults physically hurt or injure children or give them alcohol, inappropriate drugs or poison
- Sexual abuse - where children are encouraged or forced to observe or participate in any form of sexual activity through inappropriate or unnecessary physical contact or through suggestive comments or innuendo or showing pornography materials
- Emotional abuse - persistent lack of love and affection or being constantly shouted at, threatened or taunted
- Physical neglect - lack of food, warm clothing or medical attention or being left alone unsupervised

CHILD PROTECTION PROCEDURES

Dealing with an Incident

All volunteers involved in activities organised or sponsored by the District Committee will be made aware that it is not their responsibility to investigate matters of child abuse but to REFER suspicions or allegations of abuse to the Designated Person whose responsibility it is then to refer on to the Area Social Work Office or the Police as appropriate.

Upon receipt of any information from a child, it is necessary to:

- Listen to the child and take what he or she is saying seriously
- Tell them that if they continue to tell you information that you cannot keep it secret and you will have to pass this on to others who can help
- Reassure them that they are doing the right thing by telling you
- Remain calm and neutral, no matter what they are telling you
- Clarify anything you are unsure of but do not interrogate
- Allow them the time they need to speak – it may be very difficult for them to tell you some things and you must let them say it in their own words – remember, they must trust you very much at this moment
- Write down accurately everything that was said or seen and what action you took

- Treat everything said as confidential between you, the child and the Designated Person and tell the child this
- Pass on all information to the designated person and allow him or her to deal with it

Dealing with Urgent Cases

If the situation is clearly an urgent case, the child is too frightened to go home or there are serious doubts about the child's safety, contact Social Work Services or the Police immediately.

The Role of the Designated Person

The designated person is responsible for ensuring that this policy is up to date, that it is clearly displayed (if possible) and that volunteers are aware of its content, have read and understood it. He or she will keep up to date with current guidelines (available from the Child Protection Officer at County Hall) and be aware of who the designated social worker is for the area and have to hand at all times the telephone numbers of the social worker and the police, who should be contacted for advice and guidance. All referrals will be discussed thoroughly by the statutory agencies prior to any action being taken.

The Designated Person should:

- Hold a register of every child regularly involved in District activities in the absence of his or her parent or carer and have a contact name close to hand in case of emergencies
- Remember that some issues are confidential
- Where possible consider activities which involve more than one adult being present or at least within sight and hearing of others
- Remember, someone might misinterpret actions that are well-intentioned
- Respect a child's right to personal privacy
- Provide time for children to talk
- Encourage children to respect and care for others
- Take action to stop any inappropriate verbal or physical behaviour
- Remember to **REFER not INVESTIGATE** any suspicions or allegations of abuse
- Only discuss issues of child abuse with the necessary and appropriate people

The designated person may consider that complaints of a lesser nature (although still serious) such as bullying, cheating etc. may be handled internally without outside involvement. It must be emphasized however, that each case must be properly investigated and remedied to the satisfaction of the young persons concerned.

Recruitment and Selection of Staff and Volunteers

Those who subject children to abuse look just like any other adult and may seek employment either paid or unpaid in roles which bring them into contact with young people. The Leicestershire & Rutland District Folk Committee may organise or sponsor activities which involve children on an occasional basis, such as in a school environment in the presence of the school teachers, or in providing opportunities for public participation in dancing, but does not normally expect to carry out activities involving regular access to children. Should there be special cases in which volunteers are likely to have regular access to children the District Folk Committee will take all reasonable steps to check the suitability of those involved in the following way:

- All staff and volunteers with regular access to children will be screened by social services and have a police check carried out
- Previous addresses will be requested on application forms
- The names of two referees will be requested so that written references can be provided. We may also interview referees personally
- All prospective volunteers and staff will be interviewed
- All relevant previous experience of staff and volunteers will be noted
- All staff and volunteers will undergo a 6-month probationary period

Training of Volunteers

All volunteers will be aware of the contents of this policy and guidance and will attend appropriate Child Protection training where possible and appropriate. They will be made familiar with reporting procedures and the identity of the Designated Person. All volunteers will be consulted on the appropriateness of this document and stated procedures on an annual basis.

Complaint of Abuse against a Member of the Committee or a Volunteer

Should this type of complaint be made, there may be three types of investigation:

- A criminal investigation
- A child protection investigation
- A disciplinary or misconduct investigation

Issues of misconduct will be dealt with by a committee of Child Protection Officers and the Chair of the District Committee who should ensure that appropriate action is taken and at all times recognise the importance of maintaining confidentiality where required in a legal context.

Name of the Designated Person

Jenny Crane

CHILD PROTECTION CODE OF CONDUCT

This guide is intended to reduce the situations for the abuse of young people and help to protect staff and volunteers by promoting good practice.

- Adult volunteers and staff are advised not to spend excessive time alone with young people. All adults should always be publicly open when working with young people. Adults should avoid situations where they are completely unobserved. Do not go into the toilet alone with young people.
- Individual meetings with young people should take place as openly as possible. Avoid making arrangements to meet a young person alone in your home outside organised activities, unless it is with the full knowledge and consent of the parents and the District Committee is aware of the meeting.
- If on occasion, privacy is required, the Designated Person should be informed and if possible should be within earshot of the conversation. The door should be left open.

- When working with mixed groups in an outdoor environment with young people, there should be a male and female adult present. If this is not possible, parents should be requested to stay to help supervise.
- Adults should avoid unnecessary physical contact with young people. On occasion, when an injury occurs or a young person is distressed, the involved adult should explain to the young person what he or she is doing but only with the consent of the injured party and in full view of as many persons as possible. Some parents/guardians are sensitive about physical contact (manual support) and their views should always be carefully considered.
- All adults should be careful of extending hugs and being in situations where bodily contact is involved. This is important not only for adult protection but for the protection of the young person also.
- If a young person touches an adult in an inappropriate place record the incident and report it to the Designated Person. While an incident could be purely innocent, efforts should be made to inform the young person concerned that this behaviour is not acceptable in a manner that does not intimidate the young person involved.
- Car journeys, however short, should be with the full knowledge and consent of the parent/guardian of young person and should always be undertaken by an adult volunteer who is known to the Committee member. It is not good practice to be alone with a young person in the car and if possible make your pickup point or drop-off point with at least two young people present.
- Never engage with any young person in the group in a sexually provocative manner or indulge in horseplay, which may be construed in the wrong manner.
- Do not make sexually suggestive comments about, or to a young person, even in fun.
- Never let any allegations made by a young person go without being addressed and recorded.
- Never let the use of foul language go unchallenged.
- If a complaint is made, the child protection Designated Person or one of the committee members should be informed immediately and a record of that meeting logged.
- Never keep suspicions of abuse by a colleague to yourself. If there is an attempt to cover up you could be implicated by your silence. Inform the appropriate person of your suspicions.

The above rules are designed to be observed for general day-to-day routine and normal activities that take place as part of the group's normal activities. In addition to the above procedures, additional rules may apply to special situations.

This policy was approved by the Committee on 18 October 2009

It was reviewed on 2 February 2014 and will be reviewed again no later than February 2017.