



The Ark Charity Child Protection Policy

DEFINITIONS

The term child abuse is used to describe ways in which children or young people are harmed, usually by adults and often by those they know and trust.

EMOTIONAL ABUSE: Occasions when adults fail to show young people due care and attention or threaten, use sarcasm, taunt or shout at a YP causing him / her to lose self confidence or self esteem and become nervous or withdrawn. It includes situations where young people are overprotected preventing them from socialising. It may also occur when an adult repeatedly ignores or fails to respond to a YP's efforts or progress, or places the YP under unrealistic pressure to perform to high expectations constantly.

SEXUAL ABUSE: Occurs when males and females use children or young people to meet their own sexual needs. Examples include forcing a YP to take part in sexual activity such as sexual intercourse, masturbation, oral sex, anal intercourse, fondling or exposure to pornographic material. This also includes suggestions that sexual favours can help (or refusal can hinder) a career. Sexual abuse might also occur when inappropriate physical contact takes place. (e.g. through inappropriate touching of children or young people).

BULLYING: This is not easy to define and can take many forms. The three main types are physical (e.g. hitting, kicking and theft), verbal (e.g. racist or homophobic remarks, threats or name calling) and emotional (e.g. isolating an individual from activities).

There is also the abuse of trust---Where young people are indoctrinated with attitudes to training, drugs and cheating, or social, political and religious views.

IDENTIFYING ABUSE

INTRODUCTION

It is the policy of The Ark Charity to ensure that every young person who is involved with the Charity has a safe environment and be protected from physical, sexual and emotional abuse.

THE KEY PRINCIPLES THAT UNDERWRITE THIS POLICY ARE THAT:

Anyone under the age of 18 years should be considered as a child for the purpose of this document.

The young person's welfare is paramount.

All young people whatever their age, culture, ability, gender, language, racial origin, religious belief and / or sexual identity have the right to protection from abuse.

All suspicious incidents and allegations of abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately.

Adults working with young people are also provided protection and are aware of the best practice so they can be protected from wrongful allegations.

The Ark Charity recognises the statutory responsibility of Social Services to ensure the welfare young people and it is committed to working with the appropriate Child Protection agencies and to comply with their procedures.

POSSIBLE SIGNS INCLUDE:

Fear of particular adults----especially those with whom a close relationship would normally be expected.

Inappropriate sexual awareness.

If you are concerned about the welfare of a young person YOU MUST ACT. Do not assume that someone else will.

THE ROLE OF The Ark Charity:

To accept that all Support Workers, Managers, Volunteers and Committee members have responsibilities in this area and to be prepared to respond to any indication of abuse.

. To be ready to amend bad practice.

. To maintain confidentiality of the young person and the accused.

RESPONDING TO COMPLAINTS AND ALLEGED OR SUSPECTED INCIDENTS

ABUSE MAY BECOME APPARENT IN A NUMBER OF WAYS:

A young person may tell you.

A third party may have reported an incident, or may have a strong suspicion.

You may have suspicion.

If an allegation is brought to your attention.

Step 1---Listen and Reassure

DO

Stay calm: do not rush into inappropriate action.

Reassure the young person: that they are not to blame and confirm that you know how difficult it must be to confide

Listen to and believe: show that you believe what the child says and that you take them seriously.

Allow only one adult to talk to the young person: Any discrepancies in statements may lead to legal problems.

Keep questions to a minimum: In many cases it may be more appropriate to nod and acknowledge the young persons account. If you must question the young person then use open ended questions i.e. those where more than a yes / no response is required. The law is very strict and child abuse cases have been dismissed if it appears that the young person has been led or words and ideas have been suggested.

Ensure that you clearly understood what the young person has said: You should then pass it on to the appropriate person.

Maintain confidentiality: Only the minimum number of people possible should be informed.

DO NOT

Panic: Follow the guidelines laid down here.

Make promises you cannot keep: Explain that you may have to tell other people in order to stop what is happening whilst maintaining maximum possible confidentiality.

Delay: Appropriate follow-up action must be taken immediately.

Take sole responsibility for further action: Contact an appropriate person as soon as possible

STEP 2---RECORD

Record what the young person has said and/or your concerns legibly and accurately. Details should include:

The young person's name and date of birth.

Date of time of the incidents and/or nature of allegation.

Your observations e.g. describe the behaviour and emotional state of the young person

The young person's account---if it can be given ---of what has happened.

Any action that you took as a result of your concerns e.g. comments made to the young person,

Whether the parents/carers have been contacted.

Record whether the person writing the report is expressing his or her own concerns or passing on those of someone else.

Sign and date the report.

Keep a copy of the report.

Please note that when a disclosure is made, it is the person to whom the disclosure is made that the authorities (Police and/or social services) will come to for an account of what was said. This first hand account is of primary importance.

STEP 3---INVOLVE THE APPROPRIATE PEOPLE

Once you have completed your report you must ensure that a Manager of The Ark Charity has been informed so a decision can be made as to the most appropriate action.

If you are unhappy with the Ark Charity's handling of the incident or unhappy that the allegations are made specifically against a particular individual you should contact the person in charge immediately and make a record of this. This person might be the Chairman, Committee member or the Chief Executive

If you are unsure what to do, advice can be obtained from the Family Protection Unit.

GUIDANCE FOR THE TRUSTEES

When reports of misconduct or allegations are brought to your attention a decision must be made as to whether the allegation made is abuse, or related to poor practice.

If the allegation is abuse, the following process should be followed:

Make a full report of any allegations or suspicions.

Report immediately to the person in charge (definition as above) or the Social Services Department and make a record of this.

The relevant Child Protection Officer should also be informed and kept up to date with any local developments. They will make a decision regarding the accused in the period prior to appointing a Disciplinary Panel.

Confidentiality must be maintained.

If the allegation relates to poor practice the following process should be followed:

Make a record of the allegations.

The relevant Child Protection Officer should be informed so that a Disciplinary Panel can be appointed and an investigation can be carried out.

PROMOTING GOOD PRACTICE

By promoting good practice throughout the Charity it is possible to reduce situations where abuse of young people can arise.

The Charity should have a policy that ensures young people are protected and kept safe from harm, and everyone should know what to do if there are concerns about abuse and where the procedures are kept.

The appointment of a Child Protection Officer is key in this process and he / she will be encouraged to promote good practice throughout the Charity by ensuring everyone is aware of their responsibilities. This role may include leading by example organising simple training briefings.

Bullying. There is a possibility that bullying may occur between young people and all involved in the charity are encouraged to be aware of this possibility. The Ark Charity is encouraged to adopt an anti-bullying policy and ensure that everyone understands that bullying will not be tolerated in any form.

The Charity must be prepared to take the problem seriously and investigate any incident and decide on appropriate action, also ensuring that young people are able to report the instance of bullying to someone in authority.

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR PEOPLE WORKING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

To ensure that all forms of abuse are prevented and to help protect people who work with young people the following guidelines should be followed:

Always be publicly open working with young children. Avoid situations where you and an individual the young person are completely unobserved.

Adults must constantly display high standards of personal behaviour and appearance.

Adults should never overtly criticise young people or use sarcasm where it may cause the young person to lose self-esteem or confidence.

Everyone should also be aware that as a general rule it does not make sense to:

Spends amounts of time alone with young people away from others.

Take children or young people to your home if they will be alone with you.

If it should arise such situations are unavoidable they should only take place with the full knowledge and consent of someone in charge. In addition you must discourage overenthusiastic kisses and embraces.

If you accidentally hurt a young person, or cause distress in any manner, or the young person appears to be sexually aroused by you actions, or misunderstand or misinterprets something you have done, report the incident as soon as possible.

YOU SHOULD NEVER:

- a. Engage in rough physical or sexually provocative games, including horseplay.
- b. Share a room with a young person.
- c. Permit or engage in any form of inappropriate touching.
- d. Permit young people to use inappropriate language unchallenged.
- e. Make sexually suggestive comments to a young person, even in fun.
- f. Allow allegations made by a young person to go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon.
- g. Do things of a personal nature that a young person can do for themselves.

ADVICE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE ON MISCONDUCT BY OTHERS

WHAT IS MISCONDUCT?

Very broadly, any form of unacceptable behaviour towards you such as sexual misbehaviour, physical acts, inappropriate remarks, suggestive gestures, or some other forms of abuse such as physical violence and all forms of bullying.

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO AVOID SUCH MISCONDUCT?

If you have to leave the house tell someone---where you are going, why you are going, how long you are likely to be, and report to them when you return.

Do not allow anyone to talk to you about something personal concerning themselves or yourself if it has nothing to do with their job.

If they still persist, walk away and complain to someone in a senior position.

Do not agree to meet anyone on your own at any time without informing another adult.

Do not be over friendly towards those who work with you.

IF MISCONDUCT HAPPENS WHAT SHOULD YOU DO?

Tell that person to stop at once.

Tell others who may be present what happened.

If they actually saw what happened remember who they are so they can be your witnesses.

If the misconduct continues, tell that person again to stop at once then leave if you can or shout for help. If this is not possible then you must report the matter as soon as possible, to another official or adult.

Keep a record of the date, time and place and what has happened, and make a list of any witnesses.

If any other young people have suffered the same sort of experience, ask them to make a similar record.

Ask any witnesses to do the same.

WHAT YOU SHOULD DEFINITELY NOT DO:

Do not wrongly complain if nothing happened.

Do not exaggerate if something did happen.

Do not ignore behaviour that makes you uncomfortable.

Do not keep to yourself what happened

Do not delay before complaining.

Do not agree to hush up or hide what happened.

Do not be afraid or embarrassed to tell someone about it.