



Abraham's Children in Crisis

Child Protection Policy

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For annual review

Designated ACIC Child Protection/Safeguarding Officer

Adam Bushnell
10, Frosterly Close
Durham
07834 721294
adam@story-tales.co.uk

CODE OF BEHAVIOUR

Statement of Intent

It is the policy of Abraham's Children in Crisis to safeguard the welfare of all children and young people by protecting them from all forms of abuse including physical, emotional and sexual harm.

This organisation is committed to creating a safe environment in which young people can feel comfortable and secure whilst engaged in any activities involving the work of the charity.

Personnel should at all times show respect and understanding for a child's individual's rights, safety and welfare and conduct themselves in a way that reflects the ethos and principles of the charity, Abraham's Children in Crisis and the United Nations Convention on the rights of the child.

Abraham's Children in Crisis adopts the following as its Child Protection Policy for working with children in any role as a member of ACIC through which it will exercise its 'Duty of Care'.

CODE OF CONDUCT

ATTITUDES

All members of ACIC, including partner organisations and individuals operating on behalf of ACIC, should comply with this Child Protection Policy and be committed to:

- Providing a safe and welcoming environment for all children and young people with whom it works by treating children and young people with respect and dignity.
- To provide protection for all children and volunteers whenever children are the responsibility of the Charity.
- To always listen to what a child or young person is saying.

BY EXAMPLE

- To provide an example, which we would wish others to follow.
- To use appropriate language with children and young people.
- Respect a child or young person's right to privacy.

MEMBERS OF ACIC SHOULD:

- Not spend excessive amounts of time alone with children away from others.
- In the event of meeting an individual child or young person make every effort to keep this meeting as open as possible.

- If privacy is needed, ensure that appropriate adults are informed of the meeting and its whereabouts.
- Never engage in sexually provocative or rough physical games or 'horseplay'.
- Never do things of a personal nature for a child or young person that they can do for themselves.
- Be aware that someone might misinterpret our actions no matter how well intentioned.
- Never draw any conclusions about others without checking the facts.
- Never allow ourselves to be drawn into inappropriate attention-seeking situations such as tantrums or crushes.
- Never exaggerate or trivialize child abuse issues or make suggestive remarks or gestures about, or to a child or young person, even in fun.
- Never allow or engage in any inappropriate touching of any kind.
- Never abuse or exploit a child in any way.
- Never exchange money, goods or services for sexual favours
- Never behave in a way which threatens the security of ourselves or others.
- Never download, create or distribute inappropriate material, such as pornography.

WORKING ABROAD

ALL MEMBERS OF ACIC SHOULD:

- Remember that there are cultural differences that should be taken into account.
- Make every effort to understand and work within these differences and to operate accordingly and with respect for local laws and customs.
- Know, if necessary, where to report any safeguarding issues in the areas where ACIC operate.

The Charity Commission recommend 'The Keeping Children Safe Coalition' standards document which contains a toolkit for people working in child protection across the world. Each member of ACIC must have access to a copy of this toolkit and comply with the standards therein as it applies to the work of ACIC. A copy can be found in the Child Protection File in ACIC's office or a downloadable pdf. copy of the document is available from the Keeping Children Safe web site www.keepingchildrensafe.org.uk

TRUSTEE RESPONSIBILITY

- To appoint a Trustee to oversee Child Protection matters and maintain necessary good practice in the charity.
- To ensure that all those who work with or for the Charity or who hold relevant office within it are properly selected, trained and supported.

- To establish and implement a Charity Policy on the use of the criminal records checks through DBS to complement other selection procedures.
- To maintain appropriate records, including volunteer's declaration forms, references, DBS information, children's contact and health information and permission forms.
- To encourage those with any responsibility for children to undertake training, particularly in Child Protection Awareness.
- To support, resource, and monitor the work of all volunteers.
- To maintain a record of all those authorized to do children or young people's work on behalf of the Charity and to review this list annually.
- To acknowledge that being convicted cautioned or bound over for a criminal offence does not automatically debar an individual from working with children or young people. However, due care must be exercised where the victim has been a child, vulnerable adult or where the act involved the abuse of power and control.

WHAT IS CHILD ABUSE?

Good Child Protection practice means ensuring that all involved in volunteering to work with the charity know how to recognise child abuse. This does not mean that volunteers are responsible for deciding whether or not child abuse has occurred but that they do have a responsibility to be alert to the behaviour by children or workers, which suggest something may be wrong.

Even for “experts” it is often very difficult to decide if a child has been abused.

There are four different categories of officially defined abuse used by every local authority in England and Wales.

Physical Abuse: Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer (almost always a mother) feigns the symptoms of, or deliberately causes ill health to a child whom they are looking after. This situation is commonly described using terms such as fictitious illness by proxy or Munchausen Syndrome by Proxy

Emotional Abuse: Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional ill treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child’s emotional development. It may involve conveying to a child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only in so much as they meet the needs of another person. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. It may involve causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill treatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

Neglect: Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. It may involve failure to protect a child from physical harm or danger, or failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child’s basic emotional needs.

Sexual Abuse: Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or a young person to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative (e.g. rape or buggery) or non-penetrative acts. They may include non-contact activities such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, pornographic material or watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

A child is **never** to blame for sexual abuse

Child sexual abuse is prevalent among all classes, professions, cultures and ethnic groups.

Most child abuse takes place by adults the child knows and trusts. In 75% of reported incidents the abuser is someone known to the child.

It is not only men who sexually abuse children – women also abuse but the most commonly quoted figure is that around 90% of all sexual abuse is by men, most of whom are heterosexual.

Boys are abused as well as girls.

Disabled children are more vulnerable to abuse. They are more dependent on intimate care and sometimes less able to tell anyone or run away from abusive situations.

There are rarely any obvious physical signs that a child has been sexually abused. Child abuse is very hard to “diagnose” – even for professionals.

Child sexual abuse is abuse of power – it is an abuse of the power that adults have over children.

Sexual abuse has serious long-term effects on children and young people. If untreated, the effects of abuse on children can be devastating and continue into adulthood.

Children and young people who are sexually abused can be very good at

hiding their unhappiness and distress.

Children very seldom make false accusations that they have been abused and in fact frequently deny the abuse or take back an accusation after they have made it.

The reported cases of child abuse are just the tip of the iceberg of the cruelty, exploitation and neglect to which some children in our society are subject.

WHO ABUSES CHILDREN?

Good child protection practice means ensuring that volunteers know who can abuse.

Did you know?

You can't tell by looking at a person whether they are an abuser – they don't appear different from the rest of society;

Abusers come from all classes in society, all professions and all races;

Abuse of children may sometimes be carried out by strangers, but it is much more common that the abuser is known to the child, e.g. parent, sibling, baby-sitter, relative or friend of the family;

It is not only adults who abuse children – children may suffer abuse from other children and young people;

Sometimes people in a position of trust or authority abuse children such as a teacher, youth worker, children's worker or a church worker/leader;

Sometimes, paedophiles and others who may abuse children set out to join organisations to obtain access to children.

You need to be aware that your volunteers may include:

Some adults who are unable to provide consistent care;

Some adults, including professionals, who manipulate themselves into positions of trust where they can exploit children, physically, emotionally or sexually;

Some adults, including professionals, who, by consistently behaving inappropriately towards children can cause them to suffer physical or emotional harm;

It is very important to draw the distinction between sexual abuse and other ways in which children may suffer harm – the reasons for sexual abuse of children are very different from the reasons why people physically abuse or neglect them.

Sexual abuse can be an addictive and developing process involving careful planning and manipulation

These are just some of the ways an abuser may try to befriend and reach children.

- By befriending, spending time with them; spending money on sweets and presents;
- By targeting vulnerable children and their families, e.g. lone parent families, isolated children who may have been emotionally deprived, neglected or previously abused;
- By "grooming" – gradually introducing a child to physical contact, cuddles and kisses that a parent may feel is quite innocent. Physical contact becomes increasingly sexual over a period of time;
- By taking photographs or videos or by introducing a child to information and material on the internet;
- By saying to a child that what is happening is OK – parents won't mind etc. – or threatening dire things if a child should "tell".

HOW MAY I BECOME AWARE OF THE ACTUAL OR LIKELY OCCURRENCE OF ABUSE?

- A child may tell you;
- Someone may tell you that a child has told them or that they strongly believe a child has been or is being abused;
- A child may show signs of physical injury for which there appears to be no satisfactory explanation;
- A child's behaviour may indicate to you it is likely that he or she is being abused;
- Something in the behaviour of one of the volunteers or in the way a volunteer relates to a child alerts you or makes you feel uncomfortable in some way;
- Your awareness of a suspicion about abuse may come about as a result of something disclosed to you by a third party (parent, friend, co-worker) who suspects or has been told of the abuse.

ACTIONS FOR DEALING WITH REPORTS OF ABUSE

Do's

- Stay calm.
- **Listen** and hear.
- Give time to the person to say what they want.
- **Reassure** that they have done the right thing in telling.
- **Record in writing** what was said as soon as possible.
- **Report** to the chair of trustees (unless they are the alleged abuser) and/or coordinating trustee.
- **Record** your report.
- **Inform** the parents unless to do so would be contrary to the child's welfare.

Don'ts

- Do not panic.
- Do not promise to keep secrets.
- Do not enquire into the details of the abuse.
- Do not ask probing, leading or suggestive questions.
- **Do not investigate** any allegations.
- Do not make a child repeat the story unnecessarily.
- **Do not contact the person the child alleges has abused them.**

- **If you receive third party information do not contact the person alleged to have been abused.**
- **Under no circumstances should any individual volunteer attempt to deal with the problem alone.**
- **The primary responsibility of the person who first suspects or is told of abuse is to report it and to ensure that their concern is taken seriously.**
- **In the first instance the concern should be reported to the chair of trustees. The coordinating trustee should then be contacted immediately.**
- **Failure to observe these guidelines may leave a child unprotected against further abuse.**

If you are concerned that a child or young person has been or is at risk of abuse, you have no choice but to act