

## A. Introduction

Through this Policy we aim to:

- adopt the highest possible standards and
- take all reasonable steps in relation to the safety and welfare of the children.

It is impossible to ensure that no child ever comes to any harm while they are within our play areas. However implementing this policy and following the guidelines will enable us to undertake your work with children confident that we have taken all reasonable precautions to prevent harm occurring while being prepared to deal with an incident should it occur.

The Council expects you to apply this policy to all of our work with children and young people under the age of 18 years. We should apply similar safeguards when dealing with vulnerable people of all ages. All references to child or children throughout this Policy and Guidelines should be taken to refer to those referred to above.

### **The Council's work with children and young people**

It is important to remember that as a member of Council staff we may come into contact with children in a wide range of situations:

- children using recreation facilities
- children attending shows or events at the Community Centre
- children attending Playgroups at the Community Centre

It is important that this policy is seen to apply and the guidelines followed in all situations in which we have contact with children, young people and vulnerable people of all ages.

The policy applies to:

- all staff (including permanent, fixed term and short term temporary appointments) and

to those whose work with the Council brings them into contact with children eg.

- contractors
- volunteers
- any other person working with the Council or on Council land who a member of the public might reasonably assume was an Council member of staff

All those covered by the policy have a duty to do everything reasonable in their power to ensure the safety and welfare of children while they are in contact with the Council. All references to staff throughout these documents should be taken to include all those listed above.

## **B. Duties**

You are expected to:

- Respect the wishes of a child as you would an adult, you must not impose yourself on them.
- Take all reasonable steps to ensure the health, safety and welfare of any child in contact with the Council.
- Remember that children regard adults as role models and ensure your behaviour, language, gestures etc. are appropriate and above reproach.
- Be aware of Child Protection issues in relation to the work you do and do not become complacent and believe 'it could never happen to me'.
- Prevent any other member of staff from putting any child in a situation in which there is a significant risk to their health and safety. Take appropriate action if you become aware of anyone physically, emotionally or sexually abusing a child.
- Report any evidence or reasonable suspicion that a child has been physically, emotionally or sexually abused whether by an adult or another child to the Child Protection Team.
- Not physically, emotionally or sexually abuse any child or young or vulnerable person.

## **C. Responsibilities**

Where children are accompanied by an adult primary responsibility for the children remains with that person. Council staff should nonetheless use the Child Protection Policy and Guidelines as the basis for their action and any advice they offer. They should not agree to anything which contravenes the Policy and is not in line with the Guidelines.

If, due to illness or another unexpected event a Council member of staff is left in charge of a child or group then they should act in accordance with the Council Policy and Guidelines.

### **Occasional assistance provided by a member of staff who has not been through the Disclosure process**

Any member of staff may assist in activities with children on an occasional basis. They may do so only if the group is led by a parent who has been appointed following the pre-appointment checks. The Council must not agree to anything which is not in line with the Council Policy and Guidelines.

### **Volunteers 'recruited' by the Council**

Offers of help whether from other members of staff or other individuals are always welcome and should be encouraged.

When a volunteer is 'recruited' directly by the Council, and is to work with children they must be made aware we have a Policy and Guidelines and agree to work in accordance with them.

## **D. Golden Rule - Safety in numbers**

In as many situations as possible we should aim to ensure that no adult is in a one to one situation with a child. Safety in numbers should be the golden rule, whether the numbers are other children or adults.

## **E. Disclosure**

### **Appointments**

All individuals appointed to posts which involve regular, substantial or unaccompanied contact with children will be subject to pre-appointment checks aimed at assuring the Council of their suitability to work with children. These will include the applicant being asked to apply to Disclosure and Barring Service [DRB] or Disclosure Scotland, for either a Standard or Enhanced Disclosure. For most posts a Standard Disclosure will be appropriate.

The appointment will only proceed if:

- the pre-employment checks prove satisfactory
- and
- the Disclosure provides no cause for concern as to their suitability to work with children.

### **Staff and job applicants subject to checks previously**

Some staff, job applicants or volunteers may have been subject to a Disclosure (or other appropriate check prior to December 2012). If they offer this evidence they must be asked to send it in a sealed envelope marked 'Restricted Private' to a co-signatory. The co-signatory will request a Disclosure in all appropriate cases where the previous one was obtained more than 3 months previously and may do so in other instances if they consider it necessary.

Individuals are free to share the contents of a Disclosure with whoever they wish but under no circumstances must they be required to do so. No copies may be taken and held locally. This is illegal.

## **F. When Working With Others Involves Children**

### **Contractors**

Council may only engage Contractors whose work involves 'regular, substantial or unaccompanied' contact with children if the individual produces a Disclosure certificate. If the Co-signatory requires a further Disclosure or a Disclosure at a different level is sought the Council will act as the Co-Signatory though the individual will be required to pay the fee.

## **Council funding other organisations**

Where the Council is funding, whether through cash or other contributions the work of other organisations and that work involves children we should, if necessary, seek to influence the way in which the organisation carries out that work to ensure that Child Protection is a factor in the way their work is carried out.

## **G. Incidents**

Any unit which deals regularly with children, whether accompanied or unaccompanied should have an agreed framework for dealing with a lost or injured child. All staff in the unit should be made aware of the framework.

## **H. Allegation Of Abuse**

It is to be hoped that we will never have to deal with an alleged incident of child abuse. But it is sensible that we are prepared to do so if necessary and this will be assisted if we have discussed the issue locally

There are four likely scenarios which we should be aware of and be prepared to deal with if necessary. These are;

- There is suspicion or evidence that a child is being abused by a member of an organisation using the Community Centre.
- A child accuses a member of staff or other person associated with the Council of abusing them.
- Abuse takes place or is suspected on Council land or at a Council event by individual unrelated to the Council.
- A child discloses abuse happening elsewhere eg at home

In all cases you must:

- Be prompt, calm, assured and professional
- Keep any details strictly confidential and share only on a 'need to know' basis.

## **I. Allegations Against Staff**

Though our focus must be on safeguarding children we must also be aware that allegations of abuse made by children about adults do occasionally happen. Some prove mistaken or, very rarely, malicious. The Policy and Guidelines are there to help us to avoid situations in which well-intentioned actions could be misinterpreted and ensure that we do not find ourselves in a situation where an allegation by a child, young or vulnerable person could be made.

**J. Use Of Information Relating To Children**

Information about children eg names and addresses must be treated confidentially. It must be kept securely by staff, stored only as long as necessary and disposed of in a way which maintains their confidentiality.

**K. Discussion Of The Issues**

Open discussion of child protection should be encouraged since this helps to make staff more comfortable with the issues involved. Do not keep it 'under wraps' for fear of upsetting or embarrassing people.