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## **Bristol Children's Help Society**

### **Child Protection Policy**

#### **(Safeguarding Children and Young People)**

For the attention and response of anyone who has access to children and young people at the Barton Children's Centre (BCC) or any activities arranged in association with the Bristol Children's Help Society (BCHS)

#### **Our Child Protection Policy Statement**

The BCHS has a duty of care and will ensure the safety and protection of all children involved in the use of its premises at the BCC by ensuring that groups hiring our premises must have their own Child Protection policies. This has to be confirmed by the hirer as an acceptable condition for the use of the premises. All children have a right to protection, and the needs of disabled children and others who may be particularly vulnerable must be taken into account.

The policy recognises the obligations and duty of care on organisations working with children and young people as covered in The Children Act 1989 and Every Child Matters 2006. A child is defined as a person under the age of 18. The policy is applicable to all workers, paid staff and volunteers. The BCHS policy is used to train the staff teams on BCHS run weeks.

The policy is designed to encourage the development of good practice and to prevent the physical, emotional and sexual abuse of young people and children while they are in the care of the BCHS. It stresses the responsibility of all workers to be alert to signs of abuse and provides for a prompt and effective reporting procedure should abuse be suspected, disclosed or discovered, regardless of the setting in which the abuse has taken place. The policy is also intended to protect those who work with young people and children from unfounded accusations or from behaving in ways which may be well-intended but inadvisable, and to enable the BCHS to fulfil the 'duty of care'.

As one of its major activities the BCHS seeks to serve the needs of young people by providing a residential experience at the BCC. In doing so, the BCHS takes seriously the welfare of all young people and children who come on its premises or who are involved in BCHS activities.

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**The aim of the Child Protection Policy is to promote good practice:**

**The BCHS:**

- Aims to welcome children and young people into an appropriately safe and protective environment with a happy and friendly atmosphere.
- Recognises that it is the responsibility of each one of its staff, paid and volunteers, to prevent the physical, sexual or emotional abuse of young people and children and to respond confidently to child protection issues, reporting abuse discovered or suspected.
- Recognises its responsibility to implement, maintain and regularly review procedures, which are designed to prevent and to be alert to such abuse.
- Is committed to supporting, resourcing and training those who work with young people and children and to providing supervision.
- Is committed to maintaining good links with schools and other statutory child care bodies.

**Promoting good practice**

Child abuse, particularly sexual abuse, can arouse strong emotions in those facing such a situation. It is important to understand these feelings and not allow them to interfere with your judgement about the appropriate action to take.

Abuse can occur within many situations including the home, school and the temporary residential environment. Some individuals will actively seek employment or voluntary work with young people in order to harm them. A coach, instructor, teacher, official, volunteer or contractor will have regular contact with young people and be an important link in identifying cases where they need protection.

All suspicious cases of poor practice should be reported following the guidelines in this document.

**Good practice guidelines**

All personnel should be encouraged to demonstrate exemplary behaviour in order to protect themselves from false allegations. The following are common sense examples of how to create a positive culture and climate.

**Good practice means:**

- Always working in an open environment avoiding private or unobserved situations and encouraging open communication. Minimise situations where the possibility of abuse may occur.
- Treating all young people/disabled adults equally with respect and dignity.
- Always putting the welfare of each young person first.
- Maintaining a safe and appropriate distance with children (eg it is not appropriate for staff or volunteers to have an intimate relationship with a child or to share a room with them).
- Building balanced relationships based on mutual trust and empowering children to share in decision making.
- Making sport fun, enjoyable and promoting fair play.
- Ensuring that if any form of manual/physical/medical/hygiene support is required, it should be provided openly and with specialist knowledge.
- Keeping up to date with technical skills, qualifications and insurance.

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- When children have to be supervised in the swimming changing rooms or dormitories, always ensure staff work in pairs.
- Always ensure appropriate ratios of leadership to children are observed according to age and gender.
- Record should be kept of which children and staff are involved in specific activities and any significant incidents.
- When children are transported by car or minibus, arrange as far as possible, to have more than one passenger in the vehicle.
- Ensure that children, when returning from their holiday at the BCC, are collected by adults known to have permission to do so.
- There may be occasions when a worker has to work individually with a child in which case the member of staff/volunteer should inform the Child Protection Officer (CPO), remain visible, establish mutually understood behaviour at the outset and record.
- BCHS holidays always involve mixed girls and boys groups and they should always be accompanied by a male and female member of staff. However, remember that same gender abuse can also occur.
- Adults should not invite children into their rooms.
- Being an excellent role model – this includes not smoking or drinking alcohol in the company of young people.
- Giving enthusiastic and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism.
- Recognising the developmental needs and capacity of young people and disabled adults – avoiding excessive training or competition and not pushing them against their will.
- Securing parental consent in writing to act in loco parentis, if the need arises to administer emergency first aid and/or other medical treatment.
- Keeping a written record of any injury that occurs, along with the details of any treatment given.
- Requesting written parental consent if leaders are required to transport young people in their car
- A CPO should be appointed from within the BCHS to have responsibility for the co-ordination and implementation of the BCHS's Child Protection Policy and Procedures.
- The BCHS's CPO should ensure that each BCHS holiday has a named CPO on site for the duration of that holiday.
- All staff and volunteer workers should have clear roles during the holiday weeks (see Guidelines Appendix)
- Make sure that all volunteers working with children and young people know the name of a suitable person with whom they could put the child or young person in contact, or to whom they could turn for help.
- Ensure the telephone number of Childline or similar organisation, on a notice board, which is regularly seen by children and young people.

### **Practices to be avoided**

The following should be **avoided** except in emergencies. If a case arises where these situations are unavoidable (e.g. the child sustains an injury and needs to go to hospital, or a parent fails to arrive to pick a child up at the end of a session), it should be with the full knowledge and consent of someone in charge or the child's parents.

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**Otherwise, avoid:**

- Spending excessive amounts of time alone with children away from others.

**Practices never to be sanctioned**

**The following should never be sanctioned. You should never:**

- Engage in rough physical or sexually provocative games, including horseplay.
- Share a room with a child.
- Allow or engage in any form of inappropriate touching.
- Allow children to use inappropriate language unchallenged.
- Make sexually suggestive comments to a child, even in fun.
- Reduce a child to tears as a form of control.
- Allow allegations made by a child to go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon.
- Do things of a personal nature for children or disabled adults that they can do for themselves.
- Invite or allow children to have your personal telephone number and address or make further contact with the children outside the holiday period without a parent or other adult being present.

**NB**

It may sometimes be necessary for staff or volunteers to do things of a personal nature for children, particularly if they are young or are disabled. These tasks should only be carried out with the full understanding and consent of parents and the children involved. There is a need to be responsive to a person's reactions. If a person is fully dependent on you, talk with him/her about what you are doing and give choices where possible. This is particularly so if you are involved in any dressing or undressing of outer clothing, or where there is physical contact, lifting or assisting a child to carry out particular activities. Avoid taking on the responsibility for tasks for which you are not appropriately trained.

**Incidents that must be reported/recorded**

**If any of the following occur you should report this immediately to another colleague and record the incident. You should also ensure the parents of the child are informed:**

- If you accidentally hurt a child
- If he/she seems distressed in any manner
- If a child appears to be sexually aroused by your actions
- If a child misunderstands or misinterprets something you have done.

**Use of photographic/filming equipment**

There is evidence that some people have used sporting events as an opportunity to take inappropriate photographs or film footage of young and disabled sports people in vulnerable positions. All leaders and volunteers should be vigilant and any concerns should be reported to the CPO.

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### **Recruitment, training, induction and support of staff and volunteers**

BCHS recognises that anyone may have the potential to abuse children in some way and that all reasonable steps are taken to ensure unsuitable people are prevented from working with children.

- All volunteers/staff should complete an application form. The application form will elicit information about an applicant's past and a self-disclosure about any criminal record.
- Consent should be obtained from an applicant to seek information from the Criminal Records Bureau.
- Two confidential references, including one regarding previous work with children. These references must be taken up and confirmed through telephone contact.
- Evidence of identity should be provided (e.g. passport or driving licence with photo).
- Explore applicant's experience of working or having contact with young people and/or children through family contacts, through work with voluntary organisations, schools etc.
- At least three hours of training should take place for new volunteers and the Child Protection Policy should be part of this.
- An experienced adult leader should be allocated time to debrief and support volunteers.
- Regular opportunities should be made for volunteers to meet together to review and plan their work, to share their experiences, to receive training and to talk about their relationships with the children and young people.
- The job requirements and responsibilities should be clarified.
- They should sign up to the BCHS Code of Conduct.
- Child protection procedures are explained and training needs are identified.
- Analyse their own practice against established good practice, and to ensure their practice is likely to protect them from false allegations.
- Recognise their responsibilities and report any concerns about suspected poor practice or possible abuse.
- Respond to concerns expressed by a child or young person.
- Work safely and effectively with children.
- Relevant personnel to undergo national first aid training (where necessary).

### **Responding to allegations or suspicions**

It is not the responsibility of anyone working for BCHS, in a paid or unpaid capacity, to decide whether or not child abuse has taken place. However, there is a responsibility to act on any concerns through contact with the appropriate authorities.

BCHS will assure all staff/volunteers that it will fully support and protect anyone who in good faith reports his/her concern that a colleague is, or may be, abusing a child.

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## **Types of Abuse**

- **Physical** - actual or likely physical injury to a child, or failure to prevent physical injury (or suffering) to a child, including deliberate poisoning, suffocation and Munchausen's syndrome by proxy.
- **Sexual** - actual or likely sexual exploitation of a child or adolescent.
- **Emotional** - actual or likely severe adverse affect on the emotional and behavioural development of a child caused by persistent or severe emotional treatment or rejection. All abuse involves some emotional ill treatment. This category is used where it is the main or sole form of abuse.
- **Neglect** - persistent or severe neglect of a child or the failure to protect a child from exposure to any kind of danger, including cold and starvation or extreme failure to carry out important aspects of care, resulting in the significant impairment of a child's health or development, including non-organic failure to thrive.

## **Where there is a complaint against a member of staff there may be three types of investigation:**

- A criminal investigation
- A child protection investigation
- A disciplinary or misconduct investigation.
- The results of the police and child protection investigation may well influence the disciplinary investigation, but not necessarily.

## **Action**

### **1. Concerns about poor practice:**

- If, following consideration, the allegation is clearly about poor practice, the Child Protection Officer will deal with it as a misconduct issue.
- If the allegation is about poor practice by the CPO, or if the matter has been handled inadequately and concerns remain, it should be reported to the chairman of the BCHS who will decide how to deal with the allegation and whether or not to initiate disciplinary proceedings.

### **2. Concerns and reaction to suspected abuse:**

- Do not delay.
- Do not confront the person who is alleged to be responsible for the abuse.
- Record any observations (See Information: Social Services, Police and Confidentiality).
- It is not your role to investigate - concentrate on presenting information clearly.
- Any suspicion that a child has been abused by either a member of staff or a volunteer should be reported to the CPO, who will take such steps as considered necessary to ensure the safety of the child in question and any other child who may be at risk.
- The CPO will refer the allegation to the Social Services Department which may involve the Police, or go directly to the Police if out-of-hours.
- The parents or carers of the child will be contacted as soon as possible following advice from the Social Services Department.

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- The CPO should also notify the chairman of BCHS who will deal with any media enquiries.
- If the CPO is the subject of the suspicion/allegation, the report must be made to the Chairman of BCHS or in his absence, a Director of the BCHS. who will refer the allegation to social services.

#### **If a child or young person wants to talk about abuse**

- Accept what the child or young person says, keeping calm and looking at them directly.
- Let them know that you need to tell someone else, do not promise confidentiality, even when a child or young person has broken a rule they are not to blame.
- Be aware that the child or young person may be being threatened.
- Never push for information.
- Reassure the child or young person they were right to tell you and you believe them.
- Let the child or young person know what you are going to do next and that you will let them know what happens.

#### **Confidentiality**

Every effort should be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned. Information should be handled and disseminated on a need to know basis only.

#### **This includes the following people:**

- The CPO
- The parents of the person who is alleged to have been abused
- The person making the allegation
- Social Services/Police
- The Chairman of the BCHS
- The head of the organisation who has responsibility for the child attending the camp
- The alleged abuser (and parents if the alleged abuser is a child).
- Seek Social Services advice on who should approach the alleged abuser.
- Information should be stored in a secure place with limited access to designated people, in line with data protection laws (eg that information is accurate, regularly updated, relevant and secure).

#### **Internal enquiries and suspension**

Irrespective of the findings of the Social Services or Police inquiries the BCHS will assess all individual cases to decide whether a member of staff or volunteer can be reinstated and how this can be sensitively handled. This may be a difficult decision, particularly where there is insufficient evidence to uphold any action by the police. In such case the BCHS must reach a decision based upon the available information, which could suggest that on a balance of probability, it is more likely than not that the allegation is true. The welfare of the child should remain of paramount importance throughout.

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### **Support to deal with the aftermath of abuse**

- Consideration should be given to the kind of support that children, parents and members of staff may need. Use of helplines, support groups and open meetings will maintain an open culture and help the healing process. The British Association for Counselling Directory is available from:
- The British Association for Counselling, 1 Regent Place, Rugby CV21 2PJ, Tel: 01788 550899, Fax: 01788 562189, Email: bac@bacp.co.uk
- Consideration should be given to what kind of support may be appropriate for the alleged perpetrator.

### **Allegations of previous abuse**

Allegations of abuse may be made some time after the event (e.g. by an adult who was abused as a child or by a member of staff who is still currently working with children).

Where such an allegation is made, the BCHS should follow the procedures as detailed above and report the matter to the Social Services or the Police. This is because other children may be at risk from this person.

Anyone who has a previous criminal conviction for offences related to abuse is automatically excluded from working with children. This is reinforced by the details of the Protection of Children Act 1999.

### **Action if bullying is suspected**

If bullying is suspected, the same procedure should be followed as set out in 'Responding to suspicions or allegations' above.

#### **Action to help the victim and prevent bullying:**

- Take all signs of bullying very seriously.
- Encourage all children to speak and share their concerns (It is believed that up to 12 children per year commit suicide as a result of bullying, so if anyone talks about or threatens suicide, seek professional help immediately). Help the victim to speak out and tell the person in charge or someone in authority.
- Investigate all allegations and take action to ensure the victim is safe. Speak with the victim and the bully(ies) separately.
- Reassure the victim that you can be trusted and will help them, although you cannot promise to tell no one else.
- Keep records of what is said (what happened, by whom, when).
- Report any concerns to the CPO or the school (wherever the bullying is occurring).

#### **Action towards the bully(ies):**

- Talk with the bully(ies), explain the situation, and try to get the bully(ies) to understand the consequence of their behaviour. Seek an apology to the victim(s).
- Inform the bully(ies)'s parents.
- Insist on the return of 'borrowed' items and that the bully(ies) compensate the victim.
- Provide support for the volunteer working with the victim.

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- Impose sanctions as necessary.
- Encourage and support the bully(ies) to change behaviour.
- Meet with the families, if appropriate, to report on progress.
- Keep a written record of action taken.

### **3. Concerns outside the immediate BCHS environment (e.g. a parent or carer):**

- Report your concerns to the CPO, who should contact Social Services or the Police as soon as possible.
- See 4 below for the information Social Services or the Police will need.
- If the CPO is not available, the person being told of or discovering the abuse should contact Social Services or the Police immediately.
- Social Services and the CPO will decide how to involve the parents/carers.
- The CPO should also report the incident to the Chairman of the BCHS Board.
- Maintain confidentiality on a need to know basis only.

### **4. Information for Social Services or the Police about suspected abuse:**

- To ensure that this information is as helpful as possible, a detailed record should always be made at the time of the disclosure/concern, which should include the following:
- The child's name, age and date of birth of the child.
- The child's home address and telephone number.
- Whether or not the person making the report is expressing their own concerns or those of someone else.
- The nature of the allegation. Include dates, times, any special factors and other relevant information.
- Make a clear distinction between what is fact, opinion or hearsay.
- A description of any visible bruising or other injuries. Also any indirect signs, such as behavioural changes.
- Details of witnesses to the incidents.
- The child's account, if it can be given, of what has happened and how any bruising or other injuries occurred.
- Have the parents been contacted?
- If so, what has been said?
- Has anyone else been consulted? If so, record details.
- If the child was not the person who reported the incident, has the child been spoken to? If so, what was said?
- Has anyone been alleged to be the abuser? Record details.
- Where possible referral to the Police or Social Services should be confirmed in writing within 24 hours and the name of the contact who took the referral should be recorded.
- If you are worried about sharing concerns about abuse with a senior colleague, you can contact Social Services or the Police direct, or the **NSPCC Child Protection Helpline on 0808 800 5000**, or **Childline on 0800 1111**.

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**Declaration**

On behalf of **Bristol Children's Help Society** we, the undersigned, will oversee the implementation of the Child Protection Policy and take all necessary steps to ensure it is adhered to.

**Signed:**

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NB One of the signatories should be the Child Protection Officer)

**Name:**

**Name:**

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**Position:**

**Position:**

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**Date:**

**Date:**

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This signed copy is attached to the minutes of the Board of Directors of Bristol Children's Help Society

**Registered Charity Number :**

**Registered Company Number:**

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All Risk policies and assessments are reviewed annually each September.