

Challenge Adventure Group



Child Protection Policy

Child Abuse

Challenge Adventure Group considers Child Protection to be extremely important and undertakes to ensure that all volunteers who work with children have been checked under recognised procedures and have received information that will enable them to recognise the signs of a child in distress and to follow the referral procedure.

Responsibilities of volunteers

- Volunteers have a responsibility to protect children from abuse
- Volunteers must be able to respond appropriately to a child's disclosure of abuse, ensuring the information they receive is handled correctly
- Volunteers are not responsible for judging whether an allegation is true or for sorting it out
- Volunteers have a responsibility to report and protect

Forms of child abuse

The main forms of abuse are:

- **Physical abuse**
Where adults physically hurt or injure children, hitting, shaking, squeezing, burning and biting are all forms of physical abuse. Giving children alcohol, inappropriate drugs or poison and attempted suffocation or drowning are also physical abuse.
- **Sexual abuse**
Girls and boys are abused by adults who use children to meet their own sexual needs. This might be full sexual intercourse, masturbation, oral sex, anal intercourse or fondling. Showing children pornographic magazines or videos is also included.
- **Emotional abuse**
Persistent lack of love and affection damages children emotionally. Being constantly shouted at, threatened or taunted can make the child very nervous and withdrawn.
- **Neglect**
An adult may fail to meet a child's basic needs, like food or warm clothing. Children might be constantly left alone unsupervised.

Abuse in any form can affect a child of any age.

Identifying signs of possible abuse

Volunteers may be important links in identifying a case where a child needs further protection. Child abuse may come to light in a number of ways.

- A child may tell you what has happened to them
- From a third party (e.g. another child)
- Through the child's behaviour
- A suspicious, unexplained injury to the child

Recognizing abuse is not easy. Most children will receive cuts, grazes and bruises from time to time and their behaviour may give reason for concern. There may be other reasons for these factors aside from abuse, but any concerns should be immediately discussed with the individuals outlined below.

Warning signs that may alert to possible abuse include:

- Unexplained bruising, cuts or burns on the child, particularly if these parts of the body are not normally injured in accidents

- An injury which a parent/carer tries to hide or for which they might have given different explanations
- Changes in behaviour such as a child suddenly becoming very quiet, tearful, withdrawn, aggressive or displaying severe tantrums
- Loss of weight without a medical explanation
- An inappropriately dressed or ill kept child who may also be dirty
- Sexually explicit behaviour, for example playing games and showing an awareness inappropriate for the child's age
- Continual masturbation, aggressive and inappropriate sex play
- Running away from home, attempted suicides, self inflicted injuries
- A lack of trust in adults, particularly those who would normally be close to a child
- Disturbed sleep, nightmares and bed wetting, particularly if a child has previously been dry.
- Eating problems, including over eating or loss of appetite

Procedures to follow with a child if you suspect abuse:

- i. Talk to the child sensitively to find out if there is anything worrying them
- ii. Keep questions to a minimum but make sure you are absolutely clear about what the child has said
- iii. Do not take sole responsibility. Discuss your concerns with the committee member designated for Child Protection
- iv. Contact with parents should be delayed until advice has been sought from Social Services. The designated committee member will seek this advice.

Procedures to follow when a child discloses abuse

- i. Never promise to keep a secret. If you do so and the child is being hurt you will not be able to help them. Tell the child you may need to talk to someone about it. Emphasise that you will be talking to someone who wants to help.
- ii. Allow the child to decide if s/he wants to open up. Do not push them to do so.
- iii. Avoid using "leading" or "directing" questions.
- iv. Allow the child to talk at their own pace, do not pressure them to disclose anything they do not want to.
- v. Do not leave the child until they are ready, then talk to the designated committee member as soon as possible. Even if the child has decided not to disclose, you should still inform the committee member.
- vi. Volunteer and committee member must compile a written report, which details all the factual information.
- vii. Anyone dealing with a child that has disclosed information can be referred for professional help to enable them to deal with the experience.

Behaviour guidelines for volunteers working with young people

The aim of these guidelines is to ensure the safety and well being of all young people and to support the volunteers in providing a safe, caring environment.

- Volunteers should set examples of appropriate behaviour. As young people learn by example, volunteers should avoid using sarcasm or discrimination, direct criticism, labelling and unnecessary competition or comparison.
- Good behaviour should be positively encouraged
- Volunteers should not physically punish any young person
- Volunteers should not deprive any young person of, or force any child to consume, food or drink.
- Volunteers should not humiliate or frighten any young person
- Volunteers should avoid situations in which they risk putting themselves or the young person at risk. This includes being alone with a young person unnecessarily.
- Volunteers should offer respect to the young person at all times and strive to be sensitive to their feelings.
- Adult to young person ratios should reflect best practice (1:10 max for 10 years and over, 1:8 max under 10)