



Child

Children's Network N.I.

Charity Reference Number: XR11252

Policy Statements

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2005

www.childni.org.uk

Dear Service Partner,

Child is pleased to provide you with this updated and comprehensive set of policy statements. *Child* is 100% committed to providing a quality service to all children attending our events and all agencies using our service. Since 1996 *Child* has provided Summer holidays for 1200 children - drawn from the majority of the Health and Social Service trusts and a number of community groups throughout N. Ireland. Subsequent service-partner evaluations, written and oral contact from social workers, parents and children indicate 100% satisfaction with the service provided. *Child* is proud of its strong reputation for providing a quality service for needy children. Purchasers of our service during are 100% satisfied that the £180 cost per place represented good value for money. In light of the Children’s Order, and in anticipation of strong demand for our Summer 2005 holiday programme, *Child* is issuing our policy statements to service partners now to allow you to plan for and secure the necessary holiday funding for the next financial year.

Ten Reasons why you can have confidence in Child

- ◆ *Child* operates a comprehensive selection, recruitment and screening program for prospective volunteers.
- ◆ *Child* operates a comprehensive Child Protection Policy.
- ◆ *Child* is a registered user of the pre-employment consultancy service of the DHSS.
- ◆ *Child* is a registered charity.
- ◆ *Child* works in partnership with social service, community groups and other service partners.
- ◆ *Child* provides quality documentation to service partners and parents.
- ◆ *Child* operates professional standards of child care, volunteer recruitment and administration.
- ◆ All *Child* volunteers who work directly with the children are required to attend a week long residential training course. This course is assessed, and a pass/fail system operates.
- ◆ *Child* has formed successful partnerships with the majority of Health and Social Service Trusts throughout N.I.
- ◆ *Child* provides a quality service that you can have 100% confidence in

For Summer 2005 the price of holidays has been held at £180. As a non-profit making children’s charity we are keen to provide a professional service - child/staff ratio of 3:1, professionally trained staff, professional vetting and recruitment procedures etc. - this cost money.

Brochures and application forms for Summer 2005 will be sent to your offices in March. In the meantime please feel free to contact me to discuss any matter of interest/concern.

Yours faithfully

Martin Breen, Chairperson

Child Protection Policy

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Introduction

Developing a safe, caring environment within which children can thrive is central to our work. Children deserve the highest standards of care and respect. This means that no form of child abuse and neglect will be accepted during any *Child* event. Any information that comes to *Child* in the form of disclosure or allegation of child abuse and neglect will be dealt with under the procedures outlined in this document.

Parents and children will be offered easily accessible opportunities to make complaints about the care and treatment provided in relation to any *Child* event. Any complaints made about treatment or child abuse and neglect will be dealt with under the procedures outlined in this document.

Staff working for *Child* receive training in dealing with suspicions, allegations and disclosures of child abuse and neglect. Senior staff receive further training in the area of child protection.

What is Child Abuse? - Definitions

There are 4 main types of abuse though a child may experience more than one kind of abuse at any one time;

Neglect: The severe and persistent failure to provide food, hygiene, warmth, clothing, stimulation, appropriate love and care. The failure to provide supervision and safety precautions appropriate to the age of a child to such an extent that the child is at physical risk or that the child’s behaviour and development are severely affected. Children who are neglected usually show signs of being unhappy in some way. They may appear withdrawn or unusually aggressive, or they may have lingering health problems or difficulties at school.

Physical abuse: Physical injury to a child, whether the injury was deliberately inflicted or knowingly not prevented. Physical abuse can cause injuries including bruising, burns, fractures, internal injuries and brain damage. In the most extreme cases, physical abuse can cause death.

Sexual Abuse: The sexual exploitation of a child or adolescent. Sexual abuse takes place when an adult forces a child to take part in a sexual activity, using the child to satisfy his or her own sexual desires. This can include sexual intercourse, fondling, masturbation, oral sex and anal intercourse, or exposing children to pornography, videos, books magazines and other material. Sexual abuse can have very damaging and long-lasting effects.

Emotional Abuse: The severe adverse effect on the emotional and behavioural development of a child caused by persistent coldness, hostility, rejection, or emotional ill-treatment. Emotional abuse hurts children very deeply. Children need love, reassurance and praise from their parents and carers so that they can feel confident and happy in themselves.

Child Protection Procedures

Section A: For Children;

Children must be informed of the Child Protection Policy at the start of any *Child* event by the event Co-ordinator.

- (1) Sometimes you may think you are not being treated well or something may happen to you that you don’t like or that makes you feel uncomfortable.
- (2) Talk to your group leader if you are unhappy about anything or if you want to complain about something.
- (3) If you don’t want to talk to your group leader or if you are not happy with what they say talk to the event co-ordinator. Their name is
- (4) If you are still not happy talk to your parents or the people who normally look after you and ask them to make contact with:

Mr Martin Breen, Chairperson *Child*, 18 Watt Street, Belfast. BT6 8JX
Telephone:

- (5) Remember, if you are unhappy with anything don’t be afraid to talk about it.

Section B: For Parents/Guardians

- (1) Parents/guardians will be made aware of the commitment of *Child* to professional care standards and of the complaints procedure available to them as part of the literature which is sent before children become involved in *Child* events. (Appendix 1)
- (2) In the event of a potential complaint the Chairperson of *Child* should be contacted with the nature and detail of the complaint.
- (3) The Chairperson of *Child* will investigate any such complaint and make an initial response to the parents/guardians within 24 hours. A full reply will be made within 7 working days.
- (4) The Chairperson of *Child* will contact any other relevant agencies (e.g. Social Services or the Police) if necessary.

Section C: For Staff and Volunteers

There are many ways in which child abuse/neglect could come to our attention:

- i. Through our own observations of a child’s physical state and/or behaviour.
 - ii. A child may tell us directly.
 - iii. Another staff member may tell us
- (1) If you suspect that a child has been/is being abused or if a child tells you they have been/are being abused you must immediately inform the event co-ordinator.
 - (2) The above applies to **all** situations.
 - (3) The event co-ordinator must immediately contact the Chairperson of *Child* for guidance and instruction. If the Chairperson is unavailable a previously designated contact person must be contacted immediately. (see Appendix 3)
 - (4) The Contact person will contact Social Services or the Police for guidance and keep the event co-ordinator fully informed.
 - (5) Under no circumstances should the child be questioned or medically examined. These arrangements will be made, as necessary, by Social Services and the Police.
 - (6) All information must be treated as strictly confidential.
 - (7) Any release of information can only be given with the permission of the Chairperson of Council.

Our task is to ensure that children are protected and removed from situations of risk. However, the investigations of suspicions and allegations of child abuse and neglect should be properly overseen by the responsible agencies (i.e. Social Services and the Police).

Appendix 1: Statement for parents/guardians

The following statement will be made to parents/guardians of children involved in *Child* events as part of the literature that accompanies confirmation of arrangements.

“Child provides professional standards of care and protection to all children involved in our events. The safety and well-being of children is of paramount importance in all circumstances. This aim is achieved through the rigorous screening of prospective staff and volunteers, the intensive training which is provided, the structure and supervision operated during Child events, and our policy of dealing with difficulties and complaints. Your child will be given a clear explanation at the start of our event about how our systems work and how to make any complaints.

If you as a parent or guardian wish to bring any concerns or difficulties to our attention or make a complaint please do so by telephone or in writing to:

Mr Martin Breen, Chairperson *Child*, 18 Watt Street, Belfast. BT6 8JX
Telephone:

The Chairperson will make an initial response within 24 hours and provide a written response within 7 working days. If you do not wish to bring your concerns or difficulties to our attention directly or make your complaint to us directly we would advise you to make your views known to your sponsoring agency and tell them to convey them directly to us. You may also wish to convey positive views on your child’s experience. Please convey these to the chairperson at the above address.”

Appendix 2: Guidance for Staff if a child tells them that they are being/have been abused

- Do take what you are being told seriously.
- Do not make any promises to the child not to pass the information on.
- Do listen and be prepared to believe the child.
- Do not question the child.
- Do reassure/support the child.
- Do not make the child feel guilty.
- Do tell the event co-ordinator immediately.
- Do not tell anyone else (staff/volunteers/other children)
- Do make a written record of the conversation. This should be clear, concise and objective and should be given to the event co-ordinator as soon as possible.

Appendix 3: Guidance and procedures for event co-ordinators

1. Your role is to provide a professional child care service for the children in your care during the *Child* event.
2. It is not possible to legislate for every situation. The following is intended as guidance to assist you in dealing with child protection issues.
3. At the start of every *Child* event **you must:**
 - a) inform all staff of the child protection policy and procedures operated by *Child* and stress the importance of dealing with child protection issues professionally and confidentially.
 - b) inform all children of the child protection policy and procedures and of how they can make complaints.
4. You may become aware of child protection issues through a variety of channels - staff/volunteers, children or personal observation. Some of these may be dealt with in a sensible manner e.g. dangerous areas being placed out of bounds, dangerous activities/behaviour stopped, unhygienic centre conditions tackled etc. If in doubt refer to the Chairperson of *Child* for guidance.
5. Other child protection issues (child abuse and neglect) are properly investigated by the responsible agencies (Social Services and the Police). If you believe that a child has been/is being abused you must act as quickly as possible. **You must:**
 - a. Obtain as much information from the person relaying the information as possible - get them to write it down.
 - b. Ensure that the child/ren involved are removed from risk and not left unsupervised.
 - c. If a member of staff is implicated suspend them immediately.
 - d. Do not attempt to question the child or any staff member implicated yourself.
 - e. Inform the Chairperson of *Child* immediately.
 - f. Act on any instructions given by the Chairperson of *Child* immediately. They will assess the need to involve Social services and the Police and in consultation with those agencies will advise you of what action needs to be taken by you.
 - g. Fill in the Child Protection Record (CPR1) and forward it to the Chairperson of *Child* within 24 hours. Attach any relevant information (e.g. statements from staff/volunteers).
 - h. If you feel unable to deal with particular issues you should inform the Chairperson of *Child* who will provide information and guidance and if necessary visit the event.

Additional Guidance:**Dealing with Concerns about staff**

During a *Child* event you may have concerns about a member of staff’s conduct with children. You may suspect they are involved in child abuse or a child may have directly implicated them in child abuse. In all circumstances you should immediately contact the Chairperson of *Child* for guidance and instruction. The Chairperson of *Child* will advise you of how to proceed. Depending on the nature of your concerns/allegations they may decide to involve the volunteer disciplinary procedure, involve the responsible agencies, suspend the member of staff etc. While staff have the right to be treated fairly you have a duty to protect the children in your care which over-rides all other considerations.

In the event of suspension you must:

- a. Inform the staff member that suspicions/allegations have arisen (not the detail of these) and that you have contacted the Chairperson of *Child*.
- b. Inform the staff member that they must leave the event immediately, that they are to have no further contact with the event nor the staff/children on the event.
- c. Instruct the staff member to gather their belongings and arrange for them to leave the event as soon as possible.
- d. Do not allow the staff member to have further contact with the children and do not leave them unsupervised prior to their leaving the event.
- e. Advise the staff member of the Volunteer Grievance Procedure.
- f. Inform the staff member that any subsequent communication between them and *Child* should be via the Chairperson of *Child* at the HQ address.
- g. If you feel unable to deal with this situation contact the Chairperson of *Child* and request that they visit the event as soon as possible.

Appendix 4: Responsibilities of the contact person and the Chairperson of *Child*.**Responsibilities of the Contact Person**

- a. to respond urgently to the contact from a *Child* event.
- b. to assess with the event co-ordinator the information in question.
- c. to initiate further actions where appropriate in terms of
 - the need for the immediate involvement of outside agencies (i.e. Social Services and the Police)
 - the need for an immediate visit to the event
 - the need for the immediate removal from the event of appropriate person/s
 - the need for further inquiries either at the event or from outside agencies
- d. to agree if appropriate that no further action be taken.
- e. to record the contact and actions taken on the appropriate form (CPR2)
- f. to inform the Chairperson of *Child* as soon as possible if the Chairperson was not the contact person.

Responsibilities of the Chairperson of *Child*

- a. **Contact from *Child* events**

If not the initial contact person, the Chairperson will assume responsibility as soon as possible for investigations into the issue in question.
- b. **Contacts from parents**

Contacts from parents to be investigated urgently. A first written response is to be made within 24 hours. Parents to receive a full reply within 7 working days.
- c. The Chairperson has responsibility for contact with any relevant outside agencies.
- d. The Chairperson is responsible for reporting matters arising from the Child Protection Policy to Council.

Volunteer Recruitment Policy

Child protection is a key principle guiding our work. In the interests of children applicants will be recruited and vetted carefully. All applicants will be required to complete a written application form, and provide the Council with the names of two referees. References will be taken up. If an applicant passes this initial set of checks, we will use the information provided to assess each volunteer and their potential for attendance at one of our training courses. Applicants who pass this assessment stage will be subject to police vetting. If police vetting is clear then the applicant will be offered a place on an initial residential training course. The training course is assessed and a volunteer who proves unsuitable will be failed, and may take no further part in the work of *Child*. Successful volunteers will be offered supervised holiday and follow-up work placements. A volunteer contract has been established to help volunteers clarify their roles and responsibilities vis-a-vis *Child*. At any stage of the process *Child* reserves the right to decline the services of an applicant or existing volunteer.

Pre-Employment Child Protection Checks

1. Prospective volunteer completes written application form providing details of two referees.
2. References taken up.
3. If applicant is considered suitable, an assessment will take place.
4. If application assessment successful, police vetting will be undertaken.
5. If police vetting clear, applicant will be offered place on 7 day assessed residential course.
6. If applicant successfully passes course, offer of holiday placement will follow.
7. Volunteer record card completed and file kept on all contacts volunteer has with children while working for Child.

Checks During Employment

1. During all subsequent holiday and follow-up placements, volunteer will be supervised and assessed by experienced and trained staff.
2. Volunteer Record card and file maintained.
3. Volunteer Contract operates outlining right and responsibilities of Organisation and volunteer vis-a-vis each other.

Post Employment Checks

1. Volunteer Records kept on file.

***Child* reserves the right to decline the services of an existing volunteer or applicant at any stage.**

Discipline Policy

Good discipline is essential to the success of any holiday, and the best form of discipline is self-discipline. Children should be encouraged to be self-disciplined, and we can assist this process by providing the right atmosphere on the holidays we run. Children thrive best in an ordered environment where the structures are clear, consistently enforced, where good behaviour is rewarded and where poor behaviour is actively discouraged. Children appreciate the existence of clear rules, boundaries, guide-lines and channels of support. As child-care professionals we have a responsibility to all the children who come on holiday with us, to provide them with a secure, nurturing environment, free from danger and filled with fun. There are times though, even with the best will in the world, when children find it difficult to behave properly on holidays, and group-leaders will, during the course of any holiday, find themselves ticking-off children, withdrawing privileges etc. This is a natural and healthy way of reminding children of their responsibilities and obligations to others; while establishing boundaries and limits on acceptable behaviour. The quality of the relationship that staff establish with each child is vital to their success in disciplining children. Children accept discipline best from those whom they trust, those who explain the reasons behind their actions and those who are consistent in their approach. In short, those who have shown a genuine interest in the child as a person; those who criticize the act rather than the child.

To deal with situations which are more difficult Child has adopted a discipline policy that is targeted at supporting staff and kids. This discipline policy has operated on previous holidays for a number of years and staff on these holidays have felt supported by the structures laid down; structures that are clear, helpful and aimed at tackling the real problems they may face with difficult young people. Children are supported as much as staff by the policy - receiving over three hours of individualised counselling. Most children do not progress beyond stage 3, but occasionally it is necessary to progress to Stage 5, and to sent a child home. This is always a difficult process for staff and child, but at least with a structured approach, we as a staff group can identify the real reasons behind our decision, and the serious attempts we have made to prevent this situation from occurring. In short, we have been professional in our approach to the situation, and fair in our approach with the child. In summary then, the discipline policy is a structured policy that supports staff and kids - staff know where to turn to for help; children are given clear guidance about the nature and implications of unacceptable behaviour. The net result is a happy and disciplined holiday for all. This is the rationale behind the discipline policy that will operate on all *Child* holidays.

Discipline Policy - Outline of Stages

- Stage 1 Staff to deal with discipline problems within groups. Staff may refer to members of support team for ideas/suggestions on discipline techniques/sanctions when necessary.
- Stage 2 Staff refers child to member of support team. Clear reasons given for referral and negative behaviours identified. Support team member to talk through with child and verbally agree a way forward. Assistant director informed. Event/action recorded on discipline policy sheet. (15 mins. withdrawal/counselling)
- Stage 3 Child referred to Assistant Director. Clear reasons given for referral and negative behaviours identified. Assistant Director to talk through problems with child, concentrating on behaviour patterns and verbally agree a way forward. Event/action recorded on discipline policy sheet. Social services / agency / parents may be contacted for advice and to inform them of the problems/progress to date. (30 mins. withdrawal/counselling)
- Stage 4 Child referred to Assistant Director/s. Assistant Director to talk through problems with child, concentrating on behaviour patterns and establish a written contract with the child. Event/action recorded on discipline policy sheet. Social services / agency / parents will be contacted for advice and to inform them of the problems/progress to date.(90 mins. withdrawal/counselling).
- Stage 5 Child referred to Director. Assistant director to outline the history of earlier stages and action / results to date. Director to discuss situation with child, agree a final written contract on the way forward and issue final warning. At this stage, the child will be told that a further breach of contract will lead to him/her being sent home. Event/action recorded on discipline policy sheet. Social services / agency / parents contacted to inform them of the problems/progress to date. (90 mins. withdrawal/counselling).

If after stage 5, the child still persists in negative behaviour, or breaches written contract then child will be sent home.

Anti-Bullying Policy

Child regards bullying as a serious issue and it is our policy that no child should be subject to bullying during a *Child* event. Staff are trained to recognise and deal with incidents of bullying. The discipline policy exists to deal in a structured way with children engaging in bullying. The care system at group and holiday level - offering 24 hour care, supervision and protection has been designed to support children who are bullied and deal firmly but supportively with those children who engage in bullying.

Smoking Policy

Child agrees with the Department of Health’s view that smoking presents a serious threat to health. It is *Child*’s view that no child under the age of 16 should be allowed to smoke while involved in *Child* events. In the past *Child* has found that some of the children who come on holiday do smoke. A small number of these children also smoke openly at home. *Child* recognises that the need to safeguard the health of a child in our care must be balanced against the wishes of the child’s parents/legal guardians. In framing a smoking policy, *Child* seeks to balance the views of parents with the philosophy of the organisation.

If a child arrives on holiday with smoking materials and/or indicates that they wish to smoke the following policy will operate:

1. No child may smoke without the Director having first obtained parental approval. Where a sponsoring agency is involved, their approval should also be obtained.
2. No member of staff may purchase cigarettes for children, even if they have obtained parental approval allowing the child to smoke. Where staff are aware that children under 16 are attempting to purchase cigarettes they must inform the shopkeeper that the children are under age. Holiday Directors may review this provision in consultation with parents.
3. Children who are permitted to smoke must be restricted to defined places and times away from other children.
4. No child may hold smoking materials. All smoking materials must be removed from the child at the start of the holiday.
5. All staff to be vigilant about smoking and act in accordance with *Child*’s smoking policy.