

Ocean Youth Trust South

Child Protection Policy



1. Policy Statement

- The child's welfare is paramount.
- All children whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious belief and/or sexual identity, have the right to protection from abuse.
- All children have the right to be safe and to be treated with dignity and respect.
- All suspicions and allegations of inappropriate behaviour will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately.
- All staff and volunteers have recourse against any allegation made against them
- As defined in the Children Act 1989, anyone under the age of 18 years should be considered as a child for the purposes of this document.

Policy Aims

Ocean Youth Trust South Child Protection Policy, is part of an induction package to all those employed, whether paid or unpaid, who will have direct contact with children.

The Policy aims:

- To create a healthy and safe environment for all the time the children are with us.
- To ensure children are listened to, and kept safe from harm.
- To support and encourage carers to voice their opinions regarding the welfare of their children.
- To ensure staff and volunteers who carry out the activities are well informed, supported and protected.
- To demonstrate Best Practice in Child Protection.

Objectives

- To raise the level of awareness of staff and volunteers about what children are entitled to be protected from.
- To raise the level of awareness of staff and volunteers about child abuse and the different forms it can take.
- To ensure that all staff are able to recognise signs which could signify the abuse of a child.

- To promote the general welfare, health and full development of children when with us.
- To develop effective procedures in recording and responding to accidents, complaints and to alleged or suspected incidents.
- To implement an accreditation procedure for activities and personnel.

2. A code of practice & procedures

(i) Recruitment (paid staff and volunteers)

No person without CRB clearance is to have unsupervised access to young people.

All applications for work, whether paid staff or volunteers, will be subject to scrutiny. The application form seeks to elicit information about the applicant's motivation, past career or experience and to establish if any criminal record exists.

Process:

- Individual expresses interest in supporting the trust.
- Individual completes application form, which includes the details of 2 independent referees.
- References taken up, with additional telephone contact with referees if required.
- Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) enhanced disclosure applied for on receipt of completed application form.
- Individual's details, including CRB application number logged on OYT staff database.
- Staff database updated on receipt of CRB enhanced disclosure.
- For any disclosure of offences, the application is referred to the board of Trustees.
- Applicant conducts Familiarisation voyage, mates training or attends other voyage as group leader and receives interview and debrief from Skipper.
- Formal assessment of the applicant is conducted within a voyage. The Skipper's assessment is recorded and passed to OYT office and the database updated. The individual is debriefed at the end of the assessment.
- If an applicant or sea staff member has a gap in contact with the Trust of 12 months, contact will be attempted by email / letter to inform that their details or registration will be deleted if nothing is heard within 1 month.
- No young person may sail onboard *John Laing* on a youth voyage, except as a member of voyage crew, without completing and submitting a sea staff registration form. This form is to be received by the OYT office prior to sailing and processed as soon as possible.
- A copy of the register of cleared staff is to be held onboard.

- m. CRB clearance is to be included on the crew / sea staff list for each voyage.
- n. Group leaders sailing with their groups are to provide evidence of a current CRB disclosure or current Police Check at the time of booking.
- o. CRB Disclosures will be subject to a routine review.

(ii) Prevention of abuse

Good Practice Guide for the Trustees

Child abuse is a very difficult issue for the Trust. Having the right system can help prevent it. Abusers have great difficulty operating in a well-run organisation with good quality management and training.

- Plan the work of the organisation so as to minimise situations where the abuse of children can occur. Usually this involves taking some simple steps - see Good Practice Guide.
- Appoint a member of staff to fulfil the role of Child Protection Co-ordinator
- Train staff and volunteers, their line managers or supervisors, and policy makers in the prevention of child abuse
- Give all staff and volunteers clear roles
- Issue guidelines on how to deal with the discovery of abuse
- If children tell staff about abuse, follow agreed procedures. Develop systems, which allow children's complaints to be heard.

Good Practice Guide for Volunteers/All Staff

You can reduce situations for abuse of children and help to protect staff and volunteers from false allegations being made by promoting good practice. Some common sense guidelines for everyone within OYT South:

- Do not spend excessive amounts of time alone with children away from others
- Do not take children alone on journeys, however short
- Where any of these are unavoidable, ensure they only occur with the full knowledge and consent of someone in charge in the organisation or the child's parents / carers.
- Design activities that are within the ability of the individual child

You should never:

- Engage in rough, physical or sexually provocative games, including horseplay
- allow or engage in inappropriate touching of any form
- allow children to use inappropriate language unchallenged
- make sexually suggestive comments to a child, even in fun
- let allegations a child makes go unchallenged or unrecorded; always act
- do things of a personal nature that children can do for themselves.

However, it may be sometimes necessary for your staff or volunteers to do things of a personal nature for children, particularly if they are very ill or disabled. These tasks should only be carried out with the full understanding and consent of parents / carers. In an emergency situation, which requires this type of help, parents / carers should be fully informed. In such situations, it is important to ensure all staff are sensitive to the child and undertake personal care tasks with the utmost discretion.

In addition, medical consent should be obtained in the event where medication or treatment is required to be administered in the absence of the parent / carers; this includes hospitalisation. Such procedures would cover the organisation from accusations of neglect.

Photography

The publication of articles and photos is an excellent way of recognising young people's achievement and promoting the work of OYT South. Young people and staff will also wish to record their experiences aboard. However it is important to minimise the risk of images being misused.

- Do not photograph or video young people, or publish their pictures, without the knowledge and consent of the young person and their carers.
- The OYT South booking form contains a photographic consent section
- Young people's names and personal details will not be linked to photographs.
- Care will be taken in the storage and access to images.
- This policy does not preclude personal photographic records of voyages by young people and sea staff, recognising an individual's entitlement to privacy.

Social Networking websites

OYT South uses social networking websites to enable young people who sail with us to keep in touch with one another. Individual adult staff and volunteers should not use these sites to make friends on-line with crew members under the age of 18.

Abuse of Position of Trust

It is an offence for a person aged 18 or over, intentionally to engage in, causes or incite, participate or cause a child under the age of 18 to watch a sexual act when the adult is in a position of trust in respect of the child (Sexual Offences Act 2003).

Provision of Sexual Health Advice

When seeking to protect a child from sexually transmitted infection, protecting the physical safety of a child, preventing a child from becoming pregnant, or promoting the child's emotional well-being by giving advice (including the provision of contraception), a person will not commit an offence under section 14 of the sexual offences act 2003. This exception applies as long as the person does not act to cause or encourage the sexual activity to take place, or for the purpose of sexual gratification.

Child Protection Co-ordinator

The job description for The Child Protection Co-ordinator is: to ensure that the organisation has an up to date policy with procedures to support it; and that relevant staff and volunteers understand the procedures and put them into practice; to receive reports of any concerns or allegations; in conjunction with the person in charge, to decide on the appropriate action to be taken; to keep a record.

What to do if abuse is suspected/alleged to have to have occurred

Trustees

Although it is a sensitive and difficult issue, child abuse can occur and does occur outside and in the family setting. Child abuse has occurred within institutions and may occur in other settings. If a child has been abused in a public setting, other children will be involved.

Where there is an allegation of abuse 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 social services investigation may well influence the disciplinary investigation, but not necessarily.

It is important that we have a means to address misconduct. Disciplinary procedures are in place.

It is important to understand that a member of staff reporting a case of child abuse, particularly by a colleague, may undergo a very high degree of stress, including feelings of guilt for having reported the matter. It is therefore important to ensure that appropriate counselling and support is available for staff in such a situation.

Paid/Volunteers (Sea Staff and Shore Helpers)

What should I do if a child tells me s/he is being abused?

Always:

- stay calm - ensure the child is safe and feels safe
- show and tell the child that you are taking what s/he says seriously

- reassure the child and stress that s/he is not to blame
- be honest, explain you will have to tell someone else to help stop the alleged abuse
- make a note of what the child has said as soon as possible after the event
- maintain confidentiality - only tell others if it will help protect the child.

Never:

- rush into actions that may be inappropriate
- make promises you cannot keep
- ask inappropriate questions, which may jeopardise any impending police investigation
- take sole responsibility - consult someone else (the person in charge or someone you can trust) so you can begin to protect the child and gain support for yourself.

If I do something, might it make things worse?

Taking appropriate action if you are worried about abuse is never easy - it takes courage but it protects a young life.

You may be upset about what the child has said or you may worry about the consequences of your actions. Sometimes people worry about children being removed from their families as a result of abuse but in reality this rarely happens. However, one thing is certain - you cannot ignore it. The effects of abuse on children can be devastating, especially if children are left unprotected or do not receive help to cope with the abuse. The most serious effect is that children can and do die as a result of abuse. They can develop behavioural difficulties, problems at school, their development can be delayed and they can become depressed and withdrawn. Some of these problems, if left untreated, can persist into adulthood.

Recording information

When recording information, it is important that you do not carry the process beyond gathering information about the allegation, into beginning an investigation. Unnecessary interviews with child complainants could prejudice the integrity of evidence that may eventually have to be presented in court.

There are particular problems with regard to gaining information from children with limited communication skills. Care should be taken that appropriate means are used to find out what the allegation is about without “leading” the child.

The environment for recording information needs to be considered carefully. Try and ensure that you are in sight of another adult, but that your conversation won't be overheard. You also need to be careful about physical contact during an interview because it may not be what the child wants. The rule is to let the child initiate any actions and to remain positive and supportive throughout.

Recognising abuse

This section explains what child abuse is, how to recognise it and what to do if you have concerns.

What is child abuse?

Child abuse is a term used to describe ways in which children are harmed, usually by adults and often by people they know and trust. It refers to the damage done to a child's physical or mental health. Children can be abused within or outside their family, at school and in a sports or community environment. Child abuse can take many forms:

Physical abuse where adults or other children:

- physically hurt or injure children (e.g. by hitting, shaking, squeezing, biting or burning)
- give children alcohol, inappropriate drugs or poison
- attempt to suffocate or drown children
- in sport situations, physical abuse might also occur when the nature and intensity of training exceeds the capacity of the child's immature and growing body

Neglect includes situations in which adults:

- fail to meet a child's basic physical needs (e.g. for food, warm clothing, essential medication)
- consistently leave children alone and unsupervised
- fail or refuse to give children love, affection or attention
- neglect in a sports situation might also occur if a teacher or coach fails to ensure children are safe or exposes them to undue cold or risk of injury

Sexual abuse. Boys and girls are sexually abused when adults (male or female) or other young people use them to meet their own sexual needs. This could include:

- full sexual intercourse, masturbation, oral sex, fondling
- showing children pornographic books, photographs or videos, or taking pictures for pornographic purposes
- sport situations which involve physical contact (e.g. supporting or guiding children) could potentially create situations where sexual abuse may go unnoticed. Abusive situations may also occur if adults misuse their power over young people

Emotional abuse can occur in a number of ways. For example, where:

- there is persistent lack of love or affection

- there is constant overprotection which prevents children from socialising
- children are frequently being shouted at or taunted
- there is neglect, physical or sexual abuse
- emotional abuse in sport might also include situations where parents or coaches subject children to constant criticism, bullying or unrealistic pressure to perform to high expectations.

Bullying

Bullying may be seen as deliberately hurtful behaviour, usually repeated over a period of time, where it is difficult for those bullied to defend themselves. The bully may often be another young person.

Although anyone can be a target of bullying, victims are typically shy, sensitive and perhaps anxious or insecure. Sometimes they are singled out for physical reasons - being overweight, physically small, having a disability or belonging to a different race, faith or culture.

How would I recognise if a child is being abused?

It is not always easy to spot when children have been abused even for the most experienced carers. However, some of the more typical symptoms, which should trigger your suspicions would include:

- Unexplained or suspicious injuries such as bruising, cuts or burns, particularly if situated on a part of the body not normally prone to such injuries
- sexually explicit language or actions
- a sudden change in behaviour (e.g. becoming very quiet, withdrawn or displaying sudden outbursts of temper)
- The child describes what appears to be an abusive act involving him/her
- a change observed over a long period of time (e.g. the child losing weight or becoming increasingly dirty or unkempt)
- a general distrust and avoidance of adults, especially with whom a close relationship would be expected
- an unreasonable reaction to normal physical contact
- difficulty in making friends or abnormal restrictions on socialising with others.

However, it is important to note that a child could be displaying some of all of these signs, or behaving in a way which is worrying - this does not necessarily mean the child is being abused. Similarly, there may not be any signs; you may just feel something is wrong.

If you are worried, it is NOT your responsibility to decide if it is abuse BUT it is your responsibility to act on your concerns and do something about it.

What should I do if I have concerns?

Discuss your concerns with the skipper and / or the designated Child Protection Co-ordinator. It is their responsibility to make the decision to contact the parents / carers, Social Services or Police.

Child Protection Co-ordinator

Steve Lacey, the Child Protection Co-ordinator can be contacted via:-

1. Tel 07775 728492
2. Tel 01929 439471
3. Tel / Fax 01929 463503
4. Email tacatone@aol.com
5. Email s.p.lacey@dorset-cc.gov.uk

Where can I get further help?

If you want to talk things through to gain some advice, you can phone the following 24-hour free telephone numbers. You do not have to give your name but it is helpful if you can.

NSPCC helpline:

0808 800 5000

www.nspcc.org.uk

ChildLine:

0800 1111

www.childline.org.uk

RYA Child Protection Co-ordinator

Tel: 023 8060 4104

Email: jackie.reid@rya.org.uk

Allegations made against yourself

If you are a member of staff and have had an allegation made against you, you are strongly advised to seek legal advice.

Advice and support can be gained from the following sources:

Your Trade Union

(Volunteers and paid members of staff are entitled to become members of the Community and Youth Work Union)

Local Citizens' Advice Bureau:

Refer to Yellow Pages for contact details

RYA Legal:

023 8062 7422

Recording information

In cases of child abuse the main aim is to keep calm and provide a positive, friendly attitude to encourage the child to talk.

DO listen

Do take notes

Do tell OYT South and make sure that all information is passed onto the Social Services / Police if appropriate.

DON'T ask direct questions

Don't try to stop the child telling you about their problem

Don't make promises

Don't allow anyone else outside the police or social services to interview or ask questions of the child

Don't assume!

The complexity of child protection issues means that there can never be a set of prescriptive questions. Don't try to get too much information, rather, let the child give you as much as they feel prepared to give. The adult listening should try to act as naturally as possible throughout. Makes notes during the interview, but only those necessary; it might be possible to gain certain contact information from existing administrative records.

COMMON QUESTIONS that could be used in some situations.

THE DOs - open questions/statements

Would you like to tell me what happened?

Can you tell me where/when this happened?

Would you like to tell me who was involved?

Can you tell me what happened next?

Is there anything else you would like to tell me?

Thank you for telling me this but you do realise I will have to do something about it

THE Don'ts - leading/closed questions/comments

Was it your father/coach/friend that did this to you?

Are you sure that's what happened?

Why did you let them do that to you?

Why do you think this happened?

I expect you must be very upset about this.

This can be our little secret

Ocean Youth Trust South

Child Protection Incident report form

Try and keep the process friendly rather than a formal; you want the child to feel as comfortable as possible during this stressful process.

Interviewer's details

Name: _____

Position: _____

Contact details: _____

Child's details

Name: _____

Date of birth: _____

Address: _____

Parents' / Carers' names: _____

Address: _____

Record what was said and reported (use additional paper, as required)

Action taken

POLICE: reported to which police station? _____

Officer reported to: _____

Date / time incident reported: _____

Details of advice received:

Reported to OYT South Child Protection Officer? YES /NO

Date / time incident reported: _____

Details of advice received:

OTHER: contacted other organisations for advice? Date / time of call: _____

Which organisation(s): _____

Person advice received from: _____

Details of advice received:

Signed by interviewer, as above: _____ Date: _____