



STAR

Support & Training Against Racism for under 8's workers and parents
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Registered Charity No. 1023528

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY STATEMENT

STAR aims to help create a positive environment for all children under 8 at home and at school.

STAR takes the welfare of all children who are involved in its activities seriously and aims to ensure they are welcomed into a safe, caring and friendly atmosphere.

STAR recognises that it is the responsibility of each one of its employees and volunteers who are involved with children, to prevent the physical, sexual or emotional abuse of young people and children and to report any abuse discovered or suspected.

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

As STAR offers support to under 8's workers and parents its activities sometimes involve contact with children. STAR is keen to encourage children to use its multicultural resources and to welcome them into its Multicultural Resource Library with their parents or carers.

STAR aims to take all reasonable steps to ensure the health, safety and welfare of children and other vulnerable people attending its activities and events.

A booklet "What to do if you are worried a child is being abused", which outlines the steps to take, is displayed on the STAR office notice board.

STAR has adopted set procedures for the appointment of employees and volunteers and established guidelines for them to work to. The policy sets out what to do if there are concerns about a child's welfare and outlines the procedure on what action to take.

This policy will be implemented through:

- Observing competent management procedures
- Striving to maintain a safe environment for activities
- Helping to keep children safe from any form of abuse

In this policy "child" means anyone under the age of 18

Employment and management procedures

STAR carries out a full recruitment procedure for all employees and volunteers who come into contact with children.

This includes:

- Completed application form
- Interview to assess the applicant's suitability to work with children and ensure their acceptance of this policy.
- References followed up and asked to comment on the applicant's suitability to work with children.
- Undertaking appropriate Criminal Records Bureau Disclosure checks to verify the suitability of the applicant

STAR implements and issues guidelines to all employees and volunteers on how to recognise and deal with cases of abuse or suspected abuse.

All employees and volunteers who will come into contact with children are to have read and understood the Child Protection Policy and guidelines and to have signed a statement to that effect.

Maintaining a safe environment

STAR undertakes risk assessments to ensure that its equipment and activities are safe in accordance with its Health & Safety Policy.

Helping to keep children safe from any abuse

STAR expects all employees and volunteers to agree to help create a working environment that does not allow bullying, shouting, racism, sexism or discrimination against disabled children or children with special needs to occur.

STAR would regard acts of harassment as gross misconduct under the disciplinary procedure.

Review

The Child Protection Policy shall be reviewed at least annually by STAR's management committee and employees. The Child Protection Policy will be considered when reviewing STAR's other policies.

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY GUIDELINES

No individual employee or volunteer should take it upon themselves to investigate and resolve a suspected or disclosed case of abuse; most of us lack the skills and back-up to deal with it effectively, and may inadvertently prejudice any future legal case.

Employees and volunteers

- Employees and volunteers should never place themselves in a position that could cause any doubts about their actions
- Whilst respecting the need for privacy and confidentiality, employees and volunteers should try never to be alone with a young person but make sure that there are others within earshot and preferably within vision
- Employees and volunteers should never touch a young person in a way that could be misunderstood

If an employee or volunteer receives an allegation about themselves or another STAR worker:

- Immediately tell the Development Worker or Nominated Child Protection Person. Record the facts as you know them and give them a copy.
- STAR will ensure that the person against whom an allegation has been made is not given further access to children until the matter is resolved.

Reacting to Abuse

Employees and volunteers should remember:

- Your primary responsibility is to protect the child
- You have a duty to take action and report incidents of suspected abuse
- You will not have to cope alone
- Action at an early stage could stop a deteriorating situation becoming a crisis
- Social Services aim to support the family rather than breaking up the family unit
- You may never have to face a suspected case of child abuse, but you must be aware of and recognise the signs and symptoms of it
- If a child opens up to you don't let the opportunity be lost. Always agree to listen to a child's concerns or ask them if they would prefer to talk to a different person.
- Explain to the child that you might have to share information that they disclose to you.

If an employee or volunteer suspects abuse, discovers or witnesses abuse, or if someone reports abuse to them, the following guidelines should be followed:

- Do not delay
- Do not confront the person who is alleged to be responsible for the abuse
- Record any observations. These records must be accurate and factual
- Present the information clearly
- Pass on information to an appropriate person - Development Worker or Nominated Child Protection Person
- Do not discuss the incident with anyone other than the person to whom you should report the matter

If an allegation is made by a child:

Do:

- Allow the child to talk freely and listen uncritically
- Make the child aware that you will have to share what they tell you with others if it is a serious matter so that action is taken but without putting them at further risk
- Take the allegations seriously
- Only ask open questions e.g. "Can you tell me what has happened?" NOT "Did they do xxx to you?"
- Reassure the child that he/she was right to tell you and that the alleged abuse was not their fault
- Do what you can to boost their self-esteem and self-confidence
- Record all discussions/observations/evidence in writing
- Report all concerns, allegations and information to the Development Worker or Nominated Child Protection Person
- Share information only within appropriate professional contexts
- Keep child protection records securely locked
- Seek support if you are personally or emotionally affected by the experience

Don't:

- Interrupt a child who is freely recalling significant events
- Ask leading questions - these may be interpreted as putting ideas into the child's mind or as imposing ones own assumptions
- Give undertakings of confidentiality
- Jump to conclusions, speculate or accuse anyone
- Examine or undress the child
- Collude with anyone in relation to an allegation or hold on to significant information

Seek information from the child with tact and sympathy. You may feel shocked and even guilty that you suspect child abuse. Try not to convey your shock to the child.

You must be aware that the way in which you talk to a child can have an effect on the evidence that is put forward if there are subsequent criminal proceedings. Care must be taken in asking and interpreting children's responses to questions about indications of abuse.

When talking to a child you need to be supportive, trustworthy and emotionally calm. Make yourself available to listen, in a suitable place, and demonstrate to the child that he/she is being taken seriously. Let him/her know that what they say is being accepted without criticism. Communicate with the child in a way that is appropriate to their age, understanding and language preference.

If a child requests that the information is kept secret, do not make promises about confidentiality. Tell the child in a sensitive way that you have a responsibility to tell someone else (i.e. appropriate agencies) for his/her own sake. The child must be assured that the matter will be disclosed only to people who need to know about it and who can help them.

At the first opportunity and with discretion, share your thoughts with either the Development Worker or Nominated Child Protection Person.

Reporting Abuse:

Employees and volunteers should inform the Development Worker or the Nominated Child Protection Person of incidents or suspected or disclosed abuse at the first opportunity and with discretion.

The Development Worker and Nominated Child Protection Person:

- Must discuss the incident and decide on what action to take
- It may then be appropriate to discuss the incident with the parents/carers to find out if they have noticed any changes in behaviour and seek explanations for bruises etc. However, it will often be better to leave this to social services or other professional staff to undertake.
- If, after an explanation by the parent or carer, a feeling of dissatisfaction persists, they should discuss, decide and record the decision. They might decide to keep an eye on the situation for a few days, seek advice from a partner organisation, outside agency or report suspicions to social services.
- Incidents must be recorded in the incident record book in the STAR office
- It is the Nominated Child Protection Person's responsibility to ensure that cases of abuse are reported to Social Services
- NSPCC can be contacted for advice
- If it is decided to take action contact the social services duty desk (01225) 395308
- The parent should be informed of the action taken

It may be necessary to ask for an explanation for an injury, share suspicions, or tell a parent/carer that you have identified Social Services about possible abuse or to encourage good parenting - in all cases, adopt a calm, direct, honest and non-collusive approach. Give parents/carers privacy and time and listen very carefully to their concerns. Aim to be detached and professional and at the same time warm and understanding.

Recording incidents

It is not STAR's responsibility to investigate suspected abuse. However it is important to keep accurate records of observations and of anything said by the child or others in connection with the suspected abuse.

Child protection records are confidential and must be stored securely. Records must only be shared with those who need to know, e.g. social workers to maintain confidentiality and privacy.

It is the Development Worker's or the Nominated Child Protection Person's responsibility to support the person who has noticed the suspected abuse and to help them to record in writing everything that has been noticed.

The following should be entered in the incident record book as soon as possible:

- Date
- Name of child and address
- Parent's/carer's details
- Relevant telephone numbers

- When it occurred
- Who else was there
- What was said by those involved
- Observations - physical and behavioural
- Child's explanation
- Parent's/carer's explanation
- Who has been told about it
- Decision taken

Medical Emergencies

If a child is in need of immediate medical attention the senior employee present takes responsibility and may need to:

- Telephone for an ambulance
- Ring the child's doctor
- Ask the carer to take the child to the doctor or hospital at once
- Offer to take the carer and child to the hospital/surgery/clinic
- Take the child to hospital/surgery/clinic

The child is the legal responsibility of the parent/carer and that person must be involved at once. If the medical attention is needed as a result of suspected abuse the procedures set out in this document above should be followed.

See Appendix 1 - Signs and Symptoms of Child Abuse
Appendix 2 - Emotional Abuse

Further information can be found in the booklet "What to Do If You're Worried a Child is Being Abused - Summary." Department of Health Publications, in the STAR office.

Web site: www.doh.gov.uk/safeguardingchildren/index.htm

STAR's Nominated Child Protection Person is:

Janey Mondal – Management Committee Member

Telephone: 01225 426255

STAR Policies

The Child Protection Policy should be followed in conjunction with:

- The Health & Safety Policy
- The Equal Opportunities Policy
- The Racial Equality Policy
- The Confidentiality Policy
- The Complaints Policy

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APPENDIX 1 - Signs and Symptoms of Child Abuse

There is no clear dividing line between one type of abuse and another, but the following section is divided into 4 areas to help categorise what is seen or heard. Look for a cluster of signs and symptoms.

PHYSICAL ABUSE

- Bruises in unusual places (e.g. on the face below eye-line, around the ears, on the tummy, groin area, small of the back, backs of legs)
- Scratches
- Bite marks
- Marks consistent with either straps or slaps
- Burns that don't have an explanation consistent with the marks, cigarette burns
- Fear of adults shown by ducking when approached, as if anticipating being hit
- Fearful watchfulness
- Failure to thrive

PHYSICAL NEGLECT

- Inadequate/inappropriate clothing
- Constant hunger
- Poor standard of hygiene
- Untreated illnesses

EMOTIONAL ABUSE

Emotional abuse may occur by itself or in conjunction with physical abuse. It may occur when a child is physically well cared for.

- Overly withdrawn child
- Overly aggressive child
- Constant wetting or soiling
- Frequent vomiting
- Persistent rocking movement
- Very poor language development
- Inability to relate to peers or adults

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APPENDIX 2 - Emotional Abuse in School or Other Childcare Settings

- Overly restricting access to toilets for very young children
- Threatening to tell parents of unsatisfactory work or behaviour
- Rejecting or ignoring the child or their work
- Verbally abusing children
- Ridiculing or belittling children
- Harassing or bullying
- Labelling as "dumb" or "stupid"
- Reducing to tears
- Failure - setting tasks which are too hard
- Physical violence
- Inducing fear or guilt
- Failure to address (colluding with) allegations or suspicions of abuse

Result: Child becomes disaffected in future years