

## 1.0 Child Protection Policy

All organisations that make provision for children and young people must ensure that:

- **The welfare of the child is paramount.**
- **All children, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious beliefs and/or sexual identity, have the right to protection from abuse.**
- **All suspicions and allegations of abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately.**
- **All Councillors/staff (paid/unpaid) have a responsibility to report concerns to the appropriate officer.**

## 2.0 Child Protection Policy Statement

Castle Morpeth Borough Council (CMBC) has a duty of care to safeguard all children involved in its activities from harm. 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.

Castle Morpeth Borough Council will ensure the safety and protection of all children involved in its activities through adherence to the Child Protection Policy adopted by Castle Morpeth Borough Council.

A child is defined as a person under the age of 18 (The Children Act 1989).

This Policy also applies to vulnerable disabled adults.

## 3.0 Policy aims

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

- Providing children and young people with appropriate safety and protection.
- Allow all staff/volunteers to make informed and confident responses to specific child protection issues.
- To ensure that Councillors/staff of CMBC co-operate and work effectively with other agencies to protect children and young people.

## 4.0 Promoting good practice

4.1 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.

4.2 Abuse can occur within many situations including the home, school and the sporting environment. Some individuals will actively seek employment or voluntary work with young people in order to harm them. A coach, instructor, teacher, official or volunteer 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.

4.3 In connection with Castle Morpeth Borough Council, it is expected that the majority of contacts with children will be through schemes arranged for sports or arts development, however there may be other circumstances under which contact might occur such as visiting private dwellings within the

Borough. In all circumstances the principles of this Policy must be followed. When a child enters a scheme having been subjected to child abuse outside the activity environment, the activity can play a crucial role in improving the child's self-esteem. In such instances CMBC must work with the appropriate agencies to ensure the child receives the required support.

## **5.0 Good practice guidelines**

5.1 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.

### **5.2 Good practice means:**

- Always working in an open environment avoiding private or unobserved situations and encouraging open communication.
- Treating all young people/disabled adults equally with respect and dignity.
- If you call at someone's home and a child answers the door, ask for the child's parent or carer – do not enter the house until the parent or carer asks you in.
- If a telephone call is answered apparently by a child – ask for the parent or carer of that child – do not enter into conversation with the child.
- Always putting the welfare of each young person first.
- Maintaining a safe and appropriate distance with players (e.g. 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 and other events fun, enjoyable and promoting fair play.
- Ensuring that if any form of manual/physical support is required, it should be provided openly. If necessary advice should be sought in advance from the experts listed on the Families and Children's Trust Website (FACT) operated by Northumberland County Council. . Some parents are becoming increasingly sensitive about manual support and their views should always be carefully considered.
- Keeping up to date with technical skills, qualifications and insurance.
- Involving parents/carers wherever possible. For example, encouraging them to take responsibility for their children in the changing rooms. If groups have to be supervised in the changing rooms, always ensure parents, teachers, coaches or officials work in pairs.
- Ensuring that if mixed teams are taken away for the day or night, a male and female member of staff should always accompany them. However, remember that same gender abuse can also occur.
- Ensuring that at tournaments or residential events, adults should not enter children's rooms or 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 [see form A within this Policy], if the need arises to administer emergency first aid and/or other medical treatment.

- Keeping a written record of any injury that occurs, (see form B within this Policy) along with the details of any treatment given.
- Keeping a written record of any incident that occurs e.g. a broken window (see form C within this Policy) together with any action taken.
- Keeping a written record of any child protection issue e.g. incidents of bullying, racial threats etc (see form D within this Policy) together with any action taken,

## 6.0 Practices to be avoided

6.1 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 in the club or the child's parents.

6.2 Otherwise, **avoid**:

- Spending excessive amounts of time alone with children away from others.
- Taking or dropping off a child to an event.

## 6.3 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 stay with you at your home unsupervised.

**6.4 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 child or young person involved. (see also the advice in section 5.2) . Avoid taking on the responsibility for tasks for which you are not appropriately trained.

## 7.0 Incidents that must be reported/recorded

**7.1 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 become aware that a child or a vulnerable adult is on their own .
- if you accidentally hurt a child or young person. (Form B)
- If he/she seems distressed in any manner (Form C).
- if a player appears to be sexually aroused by your actions (Form C).

## 8.0 Use of photographic/filming equipment in schemes or at events

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

Video as a coaching aid: there is no intention to prevent coaches and teachers using video equipment as a legitimate coaching aid. However, performers and their parents/carers should be made aware that this is part of the coaching programme and such films should be stored safely. Where Video is to be used or photographs ensure that the appropriate section on Form A has been completed by a parent or guardian.

## **9.0 Recruitment and training of staff and volunteers**

9.1 Castle Morpeth Borough Council 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.

### **9.2 Job Application**

**Pre-selection checks must include the following:**

- 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).
- The Human Resources and Performance Unit will arrange for CRB checks to be carried out on all successful applicants BEFORE they will be permitted to begin work which involves contact with children or disabled adults.

### **9.3 Interview and induction**

**All employees (and volunteers) will be required to undergo an interview carried out to acceptable protocol and recommendations. All employees and volunteers should receive formal or informal induction, during which:**

- A check should be made that the application form has been completed in full (including sections on criminal records and self-disclosures).
- Their qualifications should be substantiated.
- The job requirements and responsibilities should be clarified.
- Child protection procedures are explained and training needs are identified.

### **9.4 Training**

**In addition to pre-selection checks, the safeguarding process includes training after recruitment to help staff and volunteers to:**

- 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.

**Requires:**

- Delivery staff to attend a recognised -2-hour good practice and child protection awareness-training workshop, to ensure their practice is exemplary and to facilitate the development of a positive culture towards good practice and child protection.
- Non-delivery staff and volunteers to complete recognised awareness training on child protection.
- Relevant personnel to receive advisory information outlining good practice and informing them about what to do if they have concerns about the behaviour of an adult towards a young person.
- Relevant personnel to undergo national first aid training (where necessary).
- Attendance of update training when necessary.

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

10.1 It is not the responsibility of anyone working in a paid or unpaid capacity for Castle Morpeth Borough Council, 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.

10.2 Castle Morpeth Borough Council will assure all its Councillors/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.

### **10.3 Where there is a complaint against a Councillor/member of staff/Volunteer involving children or disabled adults there may be three types of investigation:**

- A criminal investigation
- A child protection investigation
- A disciplinary or misconduct investigation.

10.4 The results of the police and child protection investigation may well influence the disciplinary investigation, but not necessarily.

## **11.0 Action**

### **11.1 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 Child Protection Officer, or if the matter has been handled inadequately and concerns remain, it should be reported to the relevant officer who will decide how to deal with the allegation and whether or not to initiate disciplinary proceedings.

### **11.2 2. Concerns about suspected abuse:**

- Any suspicion that a child has been abused by either a member of staff or a volunteer should be reported to the Child Protection Officer, 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 Child Protection Officer will refer the allegation to the social services department of Northumberland County Council, which may involve the police, or go directly to the police if out-of-hours, and will also advise by email the Chief Executive of the referral
- The parents or carers of the child will be contacted as soon as possible following advice from Northumberland County Council social services department.
- The Chief Executive will deal with any media enquiries

- If the Child Protection Officer is the subject of the suspicion/allegation, the report must be made to the Chief Executive or in his/her absence the Deputy Chief Executive who will refer the allegation to social services.

### **11.3 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.

11.4 This includes the following people:

- The Child Protection Officer
- Chief Executive
- The parents of the person who is alleged to have been abused
- The person making the allegation
- Social services/police

11.5 The alleged abuser (and parents if the alleged abuser is a child). Seek social services advice on who should approach the alleged abuser.

11.6 Information should be stored in a secure place with limited access to designated people, in line with data protection laws (e.g. that information is accurate, regularly updated, relevant and secure).

## **12.0 Internal enquiries and suspension**

The Chief Executive will make an immediate decision about whether any individual accused of abuse should be temporarily suspended pending further police and social services inquiries. Irrespective of the findings of the social services or police inquiries the Chief Executive 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 cases, the Chief Executive 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.

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

13.1 Consideration should be given to the kind of support that children, parents and members of staff may need. Use of help lines, support groups and open meetings will maintain an open culture and help the healing process. Within the local area, Victim Support offers help and advice to victims and witnesses.

Victim Support Northumberland, 30A Front Street, Belington 01670-510259.

Their website can be viewed at [victimsupport.org.uk](http://victimsupport.org.uk).

13.2 Consideration should be given to what kind of support may be appropriate for the alleged perpetrator, particularly if the perpetrator is an employee of the Authority.

## **14.0 Allegations of previous abuse**

14.1 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).

14.2 Where such an allegation is made, the procedures as detailed above should be followed and the matter reported to 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.

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

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

### **15.2 Action to help the victim and prevent bullying in activities:**

- 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 Child Protection Officer or the school (wherever the bullying is occurring).

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

- Talk with the bully(ies), explain the situation, and try to get the bully(ies) to understand the consequences 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 victim's coach.
- Impose sanctions as necessary.
- Encourage and support the bully(ies) to change behaviour.
- Hold meetings with the families to report on progress.
- Inform all organisation members of action taken.
- Keep a written record of action taken.

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

- Report your concerns to the Child Protection Officer, who should contact social services or the police as soon as possible.
- See Form D attached for the information social services or the police will need.
- If the Child Protection Officer is not available, the person being told of or discovering the abuse should contact social services or the police immediately.
- Social services and the Child Protection Officer will decide how to involve the parents/carers.
- The Child Protection Officer should also report the incident to the Governing body. The governing body should ascertain whether or not the person/(s) involved in the incident play a role in and act accordingly.

- Maintain confidentiality on a need to know basis only.

### **15.5 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, [Complete incident form D at the end of this Policy].

If you are worried about sharing concerns about abuse with a senior colleague, you can contact social services or the police direct. The Northumberland Families and Children's Trust (FACT) website has a useful list of advisors at <http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/drftp/10541.doc>.

Social Services Emergency Duty Team – 0845 - 6005252  
Northumbria Police - 01665 872555

Date of Policy& Guidelines Adoption: by Council: