

Coventry Sea Cadets Child Protection Policy

1 Child Abuse

Coventry Sea Cadets considers Child Protection to be very important and undertakes to ensure that all staff 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.

2. Responsibilities of staff

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

3 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 Being constantly shouted at, threatened or taunted can make the child very nervous and withdrawn.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.

4 Identifying signs of possible abuse

Staff 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

Recognising 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

5 Procedures to follow with a child if you suspect abuse

1. Talk to the child sensitively to find out if there is anything worrying them
2. Keep questions to a minimum but make sure you are absolutely clear about what the child has said
3. Do not take sole responsibility. Discuss your concerns with the Commanding Officer
4. Contact with parents should be delayed until advice has been sought from Social Services. The Commanding Officer will seek this advice.

6 Procedures to follow when a child discloses abuse

1. 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.
2. Allow the child to decide if s/he wants to open up. Do not push them to do so.
3. Avoid using "leading" or "directing" questions.
4. Allow the child to talk at their own pace, do not pressure them to disclose anything they do not want to.

5. Do not leave the child until they are ready, then talk to the Commanding Officer as soon as possible. Even if the child has decided not to disclose, you should still inform the Commanding Officer.
6. The member of staff and the Commanding officer must compile a written report, which details all the factual information.

7 Behaviour guidelines for staff 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 staff in providing a safe, caring environment.

- Staff should set examples of appropriate behaviour. As young people learn by example, staff should avoid using sarcasm or discrimination, direct criticism, labelling and unnecessary competition or comparison.
- Good behaviour should be positively encouraged
- Staff should not physically punish any young person
- Staff should not deprive any young person of, or force any child to consume, food or drink.
- Staff should not humiliate or frighten any young person
- Staff should avoid situations in which they risk putting themselves or the young person at risk. This includes being alone with a young person unnecessarily.
- Staff should offer respect to the young person at all times and strive to be sensitive to their feelings.