

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY – KEY POINTS

Introduction

New Horizon Trust is an organisation which often works with children by providing activities which are both high quality and accessible. This includes a responsibility to ensure that young people are developing in a safe and secure environment. New Horizon Trust is committed to ensuring that its staff, both paid and unpaid, are able to identify when a child may be suffering, or may be likely to suffer significant harm. This policy should be read in conjunction with the Guide of Good Practice in Safeguarding Children (June 2010).

In accordance with Nottingham City Safeguarding Children Board guidelines and HM Government Working Together to Safeguard Children (March 2010), staff and volunteers should recognise child abuse under the following categories:

1. Physical abuse

This may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces illness in a child.

2. Emotional abuse

This is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as, to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond the child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyber bullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

3. Sexual abuse

This involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in

preparation for abuse (including via the internet). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

4. Neglect

This is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to:

- provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment)
- protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger
- ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-givers)
- ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment

It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

The following are important policy key points which all trustees, staff and volunteers are expected to comply with:

- Any reports of abuse should be taken seriously and the procedures followed.
- The most effective means of preventing abuse is the active promotion of the well-being of all children.
- There is a responsibility on both organisations and individuals who work, directly and indirectly, with children and young people to safeguard and promote their welfare. Paramount within this is the need for protection from abuse.
- New Horizon Trust strives to ensure that children and young people have the opportunity to achieve their full potential in order that they avoid the experience of disadvantage and social exclusion in adulthood.
- It should be made clear that New Horizon Trust expects its child protection procedures to be followed by such contracted parties, except where there is an agreement to follow the procedures of the other party. This must be clarified and ratified in writing with the other organisation.
- It is the responsibility of staff at New Horizon Trust to act if there is cause for concern, in order that the appropriate agencies can investigate and take any action necessary to protect a child.
- You do not make the judgement as to whether the allegation is true or not.
- You do not make a decision as to whether this child or young person should be believed
- Staff at New Horizon Trust do not investigate
- You do, however, need to make the judgement "if this incident or situation were true, is this cause for concern?"
- If you consider that there is a cause for concern, then your responsibility is to Consult, Report, Record.
- When recording, be sure you separate fact from opinion.
- Always remember that any records relating to CP might be accessed by third parties such as Social Services, Police, The Courts, Solicitors.

- Any disclosure, suspicion, allegation or incident of abuse must be reported to a designated Child Protection Officer in New Horizon Trust as soon as possible. It should be remembered that there may be siblings or other children or young people who are also at risk.
- The principle of child protection and safety takes absolute precedence over the principle of confidentiality.
- In all circumstances the child's or young person's immediate health and safety must take priority.

New Horizon Trust must request information from referring agencies as to Schedule 1 status of staff and volunteers in accordance with (Children and Young Persons Act 1933). Schedule 1 to the Children and Young Persons Act 1933 (CYPA) lists a wide range of offences against children and young persons under the age of 18 which are, accordingly, generally known as 'schedule 1 offences'. These include sexual assaults, various forms of abuse, other forms of maltreatment – from murder to cruelty or neglect – and offences resulting in bodily injury to the victim.

All New Horizon Trust staff are expected to:

- Become familiar with the procedures (not just read them).
- Be able to apply the procedures in practice.
- Recognise abusive situations when they occur and demonstrate an understanding of the potential impacts of child abuse.
- Understand that child protection does not operate in a vacuum. An organisation which operates effective good practice principles according to the Equal Opportunities Policy (where, for example, instances of verbal sexism or racism are effectively challenged) is less likely to collude with other forms of abuse.
- Know who the designated officer is and how to contact him/her.
- Respond confidently and sympathetically to any child protection issues arising in New Horizon Trust.

Allegations and concerns against staff and volunteers

Where allegations against paid, unpaid, volunteer, casual, agency and self-employed workers are made, management will undertake their duty in accordance with Appendix 5 of Working Together to Safeguard Children (2010). This set of procedures should be used in respect of all cases in which it is alleged that a person who works with children has:

- behaved in a way that has harmed, or may have harmed, a child
- possibly committed a criminal offence against children, or related to a child
- behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates s/he is unsuitable to work with children.

Management may choose to follow one of three approaches in dealing with this matter. This should only be done after consulting with Nottingham City Safeguarding Board.

1. A police investigation of possible criminal offence
2. Enquiries and assessment by children's social care about whether a child is in need of protection or in need of services
3. Consideration by New Horizon Trust management of disciplinary action in respect of the individual

Management role in supporting those involved

New Horizon Trust will keep the person who is the subject of the allegations informed of the progress of the case, and arrange to provide appropriate support to the individual while the case is ongoing (that may be provided via occupational health or employee welfare arrangements where those exist). If the person is suspended the employer should also make arrangements to keep the individual informed about developments in the workplace. As noted in paragraph 16, if the person is a member of a union or professional association s/he should be advised to contact that body at the outset.

Importance of Confidentiality

Every effort should be made to maintain confidentiality and guard against publicity while an allegation is being investigated/ considered. In accordance with ACPO guidance, the police will not normally provide any information to the press or media that might identify an individual who is under investigation, unless and until the person is charged with a criminal offence.

Resignations and 'compromise agreements'

The fact that a person tenders his or her resignation, or ceases to provide their services, must not prevent an allegation being followed up in accordance with these procedures. New Horizon Trust will make every effort to reach a conclusion in all cases of allegations bearing on the safety or welfare of children including any in which the person concerned refuses to co-operate with the process. Wherever possible the person should be given a full opportunity to answer the allegation and make representations about it, but the process of recording the allegation and any supporting evidence, and reaching a judgement about whether it can be regarded as substantiated on the basis of all the information available should continue even if that cannot be done or the person does not co-operate. It may be difficult to reach a conclusion in those circumstances, and it may not be possible to apply any disciplinary sanctions if a person's period of notice expires before the process is complete, but it is important to reach and record a conclusion wherever possible.

New Horizon Trust will not enter into so called 'compromise agreements' by which a person agrees to resign, the employer agrees not to pursue disciplinary action, and both parties agree a form of words to be used in any future reference, must not be used in these cases. In any event, such an agreement will not prevent a thorough police investigation where appropriate. Nor can it override an employer's statutory duty to make a referral to the Independent Safeguarding Authority where circumstances require that.

Recording allegations against people who work with children

New Horizon Trust will keep a clear and comprehensive summary of any allegations made, details of how the allegation was followed up and resolved, and details of any action taken and decisions reached, on a person's confidential personnel file and give a copy to the individual. Such information should be retained on file, including for people who leave the organisation, at least until the person reaches normal retirement age or for 10 years if that will be longer.

Suspension of staff and volunteers from duties

The possible risk of harm to children posed by an accused person needs to be effectively evaluated and managed – in respect of the child(ren) involved in the allegations, and any other children in the individual's home, work or community life. In some cases New Horizon Trust will consider suspending the person. Suspension would be considered in any case where there is cause to suspect a child is at risk of significant harm, or the allegation warrants investigation by the police, or is so serious that it might be grounds for dismissal. Staff and volunteers will not be suspended automatically, or without careful thought. New Horizon Trust will consider carefully whether the circumstances of a case warrant a person being suspended from contact with children until the allegation is resolved.

Action in respect of unfounded or malicious allegations

If an allegation is determined to be unfounded or malicious, New Horizon Trust will refer the matter to children's social care to determine whether the child concerned is in need of services, or may have been abused by someone else. In the rare event that an allegation is shown to have been deliberately invented or malicious, the police should be asked to consider whether any action might be appropriate against the person responsible.

Action to take in case of allegations against staff and volunteers

If the allegation meets any of the following criteria:

- behaved in a way that has harmed, or may have harmed, a child
- possibly committed a criminal offence against children, or related to a child
- behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates s/he is unsuitable to work with children

New Horizon Trust will report it to the relevant local authority designated office within 1 working day, (in Nottingham city this will be the NCSCB administrator, Loxley house, Station Road Nottingham or by phone on 0115 876 4717).

Training Expectations

New Horizon Trust delivers an in-house Child Protection training course for all staff and volunteers working with children. All staff are in addition required to undertake local training delivered by Nottingham City Safeguarding Children Board. The training is accessible via their web site:

<http://www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=591>

Policy agreed and ratified by the trustees in June 2021 and should be reviewed every 3 years.