



Handsworth United

Child Protection Policy

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

INTRODUCTION

This policy aims to address two aspects of child protection:

- ensuring, as far as is possible, that all staff representing Handsworth United are fit to be in contact with children, and
- ensuring that all staff know how to respond when a child protection issue arises.

CONTENTS

- 1 The Designated Officer for Child Protection
- 2 Selection and Deployment of Staff
- 3 Staff Behavior
- 4 Staff Development
- 5 Admission Procedures
- 6 Responding to a Child Protection Issue
- 7 Child Protection Procedures
- 8 Responding to a child protection issue
- 9 Model code of conduct

1. THE DESIGNATED OFFICER FOR CHILD PROTECTION

- 1.1 The designated officer for Handsworth United child protection is Sharren Sawyers.

2. SELECTION AND DEPLOYMENT OF STAFF

Roles

- 2.1 Handsworth United will give all paid staff and volunteers clear roles. The abuse of children is most easily concealed where there is confusion amongst adults over roles, responsibilities and accountability. All paid staff will receive a job description and volunteers will also receive a written outline of what is expected from

them. All job descriptions will spell out clearly the staff member's responsibilities for the protection of children.

2.2 Job descriptions will contain a written description of the work the staff member is expected to do and policy guidelines they must follow to include:

- the person to whom they will be accountable for their work, line manager or supervisor;
- the person(s) whose work they will supervise (if any);
- a description of the work they will undertake with children, with reference to any relevant guidelines produced by Handsworth United for safeguarding the welfare of those children; and
- a statement of the staff member's duty to prevent the abuse of all children in contact with Handsworth United and reference to the action to be taken if abuse is discovered or disclosed.

2.3 The job descriptions of paid staff must observe employment law, but the outline of volunteers' work will not be complicated. A short list of tasks and responsibilities in addition to the information in paragraph 3.4 above will be enough.

2.4 Job descriptions will be reviewed on a regular basis and whenever the tasks change significantly. The staff member, the person to whom they are accountable, and Handsworth United will each have a copy.

Recruitment and selection

2.5 In its recruitment and selection procedures for all paid or voluntary staff, Handsworth United will recognize that some applicants may already have shown themselves to be unfit to care for children. Such people may be very plausible in the way that they present themselves.

In the process of recruiting and selecting staff, Handsworth United will:

- Require the applicant to give all previous names used, and details of all addresses in the last 5 years.
- Require the applicant to provide the names of at least two referees -
 - If the applicant is currently working with children in a paid capacity, or has previously done so, one of the referees should be the current or most recent employer and the other should also be a person who can comment on her/his work with children.
 - If the applicant is seeking to volunteer, or seeking paid work with children, for the first time, both references should be from people who can provide information which is relevant to her/his character, attitudes, behavior etc. towards children.
 - No one should be accepted on to the staff unless satisfactory references have been received.
- Ask for evidence of any qualifications, which, the applicant claims to hold;
- Ask for evidence of identity and address;
- Interview the applicant in person. At the interview the agency should:
 - Discuss with the applicant the details of the job/task that they have applied for what is to be done, where and when.
 - Identify what relevant experience the applicant has, how long ago this was and what were the circumstances, including the circumstances of his/her leaving any relevant employment.
 - Seek information about what the applicant has been doing for the last two years
 - Seek an explanation of any gaps in the applicant's employment history
 - Seek information about the level of contact between the applicant and his/her referees. If the referees are not suitable, it may be appropriate to invite him/her to nominate different referees; and

Criminal convictions

2.6 Enquiries into an applicant's background should include enquiries into any criminal convictions he/she may have -

- National Voluntary Organizations, which are members of the Voluntary Organisations Consultancy Service, can obtain criminal record checks through VOCS.
- If Handsworth United is carrying out statutory functions of the local authority under a formal contract, then the local authority can arrange for criminal record checks.
- In other situations, although the agency cannot obtain information from police records, any individual can, on payment of a fee (at the time of writing this was £10), ask the police for a copy of any personal information about him/her which it holds on computer. The applicant can be asked to do this.
- When the Criminal Records Bureau is fully operational, information about an applicant's criminal convictions will become more easily available to private and voluntary Organisations.

The Protection of Children Act list

2.7 Other (organisations) which provide services for children:

Handsworth United will consult the Child Protection Act list when they propose to appoint people to positions which would enable them to have regular contact with children in the course of their duties.

3 STAFF BEHAVIOUR

3.1 This staff code of conduct sets out the standards expected of the Handsworth United staff:

- Staff must treat children with respect,
- Staff must not make racist or sexist remarks;
- Staff must take care to avoid showing favoritism.
- It is the responsibility of staff to prevent the abuse of younger or weaker children by older or stronger children through bullying, cruel or humiliating initiation rituals etc.

4. STAFF DEVELOPMENT

- 4.1 All staff will serve a probationary period in which the staff member's performance is closely monitored.
- 4.2 All staff will receive regular supervision through observation and discussion of their work. This will identify good staff and deter potential abusers.
- 4.3 Basic child protection training will be provided:
All staff will be aware that abuse can be found in any community.
- All staff will be aware that abuse does not always occur in the child's home, it may take place at school, in the homes of friends, in places of entertainment and in public places.
 - All staff will know about the four basic types of child abuse physical abuse, neglect, sexual abuse and emotional abuse.
 - All staff will know how to respond if, while representing the agency, they find evidence that a child may have been abused. (Advice about child protection training is available from local authority departments and national voluntary Organisations.)

5. ADMISSION PROCEDURES

- 5.1 Where children are expected to attend sessions regularly it is necessary for Handsworth United to:
- Handsworth United will keep a register of names, addresses, next of kin and contact addresses and telephone numbers for emergencies;
 - Give parents, and where appropriate older children, a copy of a written statement which specifies the action which Handsworth United will take in the event of a child becoming ill or being injured and which indicates that any information which

Handsworth United receives which suggests that a child has been abused will be passed on to the Social Services Department and/or the police; and

- Handsworth United will seek a signed agreement from the parents of each child to your obtaining any necessary medical treatment in an emergency.

6. CHILD PROTECTION PROCEDURES

- 6.1 Child protection is not just about responding to specific allegations or incidents, it is also about the suitability of staff to work with children. Handsworth United will respond to any concern that a staff member may not be a suitable person.

7. RESPONDING TO A CHILD PROTECTION ISSUE

- 7.1 A child protection issue may come to the notice of a staff member in several ways -

- A child may make a direct allegation or
- A child may make a comment which seems to suggest abuse, or
- A child may have bruises or marks, or
- Something about a child's behavior may suggest the possibility of abuse, or
- Something about the behavior of a staff member may suggest that he/she is not a suitable person to care for children.

Staff will receive training on how to respond to each of these situations.

- 7.2 All child protection concerns will be reported to the Social Services Department without delay. There is a designated officer to advise staff

on these issues see above who will contact the Social Services Department.

In all cases

- 7.3 The staff member should tell the person in charge about her/his concerns. This part of the procedure should make allowance for the possibility that an allegation may be made about a member of staff, including the person in charge
- 7.4 All child protection concerns must be passed on to the Social Services Department without delay.
- 7.5 If the person in charge does not feel that there is any cause for concern but the staff member disagrees, the concerns must be passed on to the Social Services Department. Child protection is the individual responsibility of each person working with children.

When any person is concerned about a child protection issue, the concern must be passed on unless there are clear reasons not to do so.

- 7.6 The staff member should write down what the child said or the details of any significant marks or behavior which were observed, noting any names, dates and times. A note should also be made of any witnesses, did anyone else hear what the child said, see the marks or notice the behavior? This should be done while the details are still fresh in the staff member's mind. The procedure should stress that staff must write down exactly what the child said, not what they think he/she meant. Of course they may want to pass this on to Social Services as well, but they must start with what the child said.
- 7.7 The procedure will stress the need to keep the focus of any action on the welfare of the child as a possible victim of abuse.

If a child makes a direct allegation

- 7.8 The staff member must not promise to keep the allegation a secret. When an abusive or exploitative relationship exists, the agency cannot agree to keep this secret.

- 7.9 The staff member should let the child speak but should not question him/her. The basic rule is to ask only questions, which are necessary to clarify whether the child is alleging that abuse has taken place. If at any time, it becomes clear that the staff member has misunderstood the situation and that the child is not alleging that abuse has taken place, the situation should be re-assessed as it may not be appropriate to follow this procedure.
- 7.10 If the child is clearly alleging abuse, the Social Services Department and/or the Police will interview him/her and any further questions must be left for them. This does not mean that the staff member should tell the child to say nothing more until the authorities arrive. Allow the child to speak for as long as he/she wants to.
- 7.11 If a child makes a serious allegation about an adult or about an older child, there is a reason and further enquiries should be made. Staff should always take the child seriously, but this does not necessarily mean accepting everything that the child says as a fact.
- 7.12 If the child makes a clear allegation about a specific person, staff must not try to question that person themselves.

If a child's comments seem to suggest abuse

- 7.13 If the child seems to be suggesting abuse, but it is not clear, staff should try to find a suitable time and place to talk to him/her, which will allow him/her to talk freely.
- 7.14 The staff member should listen carefully, remembering that a young child may not have the vocabulary to explain clearly what it is that distresses him/her.
- 7.15 The staff member should let the child speak and should ask questions only if they are necessary to clarify whether this is something which should be referred to Social Services. As soon as it becomes clear that the child is alleging abuse, all further questions must be left to the interview by the Social Services Department and the Police.

- 7.16 Staff should not promise to keep anything as a secret until they know what it is. When an abusive or exploitative relationship exists, the agency cannot agree to keep this secret.
- 7.17 His part of the procedure should make allowance for the possibility that the child may make an allegation about a member of staff.
- 7.18 If a child makes a serious allegation about an adult or about an older child, there is a reason and further enquiries should be made. Staff should always take the child seriously, but this does not necessarily mean accepting everything that the child says as a fact.
- 7.19 If, as a result of what the child has said, staff is suspicious about a particular person, they must not try to question him/her themselves.

If a bruise or mark, or the child's behavior, causes suspicions

- 7.20 There are a number of things, which may raise questions in the mind of a member of staff; she/he may see that a child has bruises or other marks, or may notice something unusual in the child's behavior. Often these observations could have several different explanations and staff may be unsure whether they should be concerned or not. Staff, are not expected to be experts in identifying child abuse.
- 7.21 If a staff member is concerned, she/he should try to be clear in her/his own mind exactly what it is that is disturbing her/him.
- 7.22 It may be appropriate to ask the child or the parent about a mark or about unusual behavior. Suspicion may be aroused more by an evasive or unconvincing answer than by the mark or behavior itself
- 7.23 If a staff member becomes suspicious, she/he should note the names of anyone else who saw the mark, behavior etc. which caused the concern.
- 7.24 If staffs are suspicious about a particular person, they must not try to question him/her themselves.

Unsuitable staff

- 7.25 Questions about the suitability of a staff member to work with children should not be limited to situations in which there is positive evidence of abuse. Other pointers include failure to respond appropriately to the needs of children, neglecting some children in favor of others and failure to respect the wishes of parents. The agency should, be clear about the standards of care which it expects from its staff and about the result of failure to meet these standards.
- 7.26 If a staff member is felt to be unsuitable to care for children, the agency should consider whether it is appropriate to discuss their concerns with the Social Services Department.
- 7.27 If the agency decides that: -
The behavior of a member of staff has harmed a child or placed a child at risk of harm; and as a result, that person should no longer carry out childcare duties on behalf of the agency. It should consider whether to refer the person's name to the Secretary of State for possible inclusion on the Protection of Children Act list [See paragraphs 3.9-12].

Co-operating with child protection enquiries

- 7.28 Child protection enquiries are carried out by the Social Services Department and the Police, usually acting together. Staff are expected to co-operate with enquiries, as far as is reasonable within the role of Handsworth United and of the staff member. The Social Services Department and police may not always be clear about Handsworth United role and purpose, staff members can and should question any request, which seems inappropriate.

If suspicion falls on a member of the Handsworth United staff

- 7.29 If an allegation is made about a member of staff, this will be referred to the Social Services Department who will make enquiries. This will be linked to the Handsworth United disciplinary procedure.

7.30 If an allegation is made about a member of staff or for any other reason suspicion falls on a member of staff, Handsworth United will follow the advice of the Social Services Department until the enquiries are complete. It will often be necessary to suspend the staff member from involvement in any contact with children on behalf of Handsworth United. This action is intended to safeguard the welfare of children and does not assume the guilt of the staff member. The staff member will need support and to help will be provided to signpost him/her to suitable sources of support.

7.31 When suspicion falls on a staff member, there are three possible outcomes:

It may be proved to Handsworth United satisfaction that the staff member has abused one or more children,

- It may be proved to Handsworth United satisfaction that the staff member is not guilty of abuse, or
- The enquiries may be inconclusive, leaving suspicion, but no proof about the staff member's behavior.
- The last of these possibilities always raises sensitive issues and it is important that the agency has a policy about how to deal with it.

8. MODEL CODE OF PRACTICE

1. It is the policy of Handsworth United to provide a safe and secure environment in which children can thrive and develop and where all aspects of their welfare will be protected.

2. Handsworth United will minimise the situations in which the abuse of children might occur.

3. Any child using the services of Handsworth United, and anyone acting on behalf of such a child, may complain to the management about any aspect of the service they receive. There will be a simple and well-publicised process

for this and complainants will have a right of appeal to an independent person/agency if they are dissatisfied with the way a complaint is handled.

4. Any child using the services of Handsworth United may disclose to a staff member any abuse they may be suffering elsewhere in their lives and staff will be vigilant for the signs of abuse.

Any indications that a child may be suffering from abuse will immediately trigger Handsworth United child protection procedures. These procedures are consistent with the good practice guidelines of the Area Child Protection Committee.

6. In recruiting staff; either paid or voluntary, full-time or part-time, Handsworth United will follow a systematic selection process designed to assess the applicant's suitability for the post and to work with children.

7. Checks will be made to ensure that all the information provided by any potential member of staff of Handsworth United is accurate and, within the limits of procedures available, staff will be checked for any offences they may have committed against children.

8. No member of staff will be appointed to any position in Handsworth United without two suitable references being provided. All referees must be persons who can comment on relevant and recent aspects of the applicant's work with children.

9. All staff appointments to Handsworth United will be subject to a probationary period during which they will receive close supervisory attention.

10. All paid and voluntary staff of Handsworth United will have clear roles detailed for them.

11. The supervision of staff will be used as a means of ensuring that the children using the services of Handsworth United receive adequate and appropriate protection.

12. Where staff occupies high risk posts or are working in high risk settings or situations Handsworth United will be extra vigilant in its supervisory role.

13. Staff at all levels of Handsworth United will be offered and encouraged to undertake training on matters of child protection and in appropriate circumstances this training will be compulsory.

14. Handsworth United will ensure that issues of child protection receive continuous attention and will regularly review the way that Handsworth United operates to support this principle.