



New Roots Safeguarding Guidelines and Code of Conduct for Workers and Volunteers

Code of Conduct

Practice to be encouraged:

- Treat all children and young people with respect and dignity.
- Involve young people in the decisions that affect them.
- Always work in an open environment, avoiding private or unobserved situations.
- Maintain a safe and appropriate distance with young people (e.g. not sharing tents, shower facilities or having an inappropriate or intimate relationship).
- When organising activities/events for children and young people, or their attendance at activities/events, ensure the relevant information/documentation is collected (consent forms, contact details for next of kin, information relating to specific needs).x
- Use a reporting form to keep a clear note of any incidents or concerns.
- If physical contact is necessary (e.g. in an emergency), tell the young person clearly what you are doing and why, seek their permission and give choices where possible. If possible have another worker present.
- Every activity, event or session should be risk assessed to maintain the safety of young people.
- When working with a mixed gender group there should be staff/volunteers of both genders to manage all activities.

Practice to be avoided:

- Workers/volunteers should not give lifts in their car to individual children or young people or travel alone with young people. If a child or young person is at risk of being left unattended at the venue, you should attempt to phone the parent/guardian of the child or young person to confirm what you will be doing. You should also ask the young person to sit in the back seat.
- Workers/volunteers should not take young people to their home or that of another worker/volunteer.
- Workers/volunteers should avoid situations where they are alone with young people. Where a private meeting with a lone child/young person is unavoidable it should be held in an open place in view of others or in a room visible to those outside and where a colleague has agreed to visually monitor the meeting.
- If a young person participates in a review of their involvement in a programme as a result of disruptive or unacceptable behaviour, it is advisable that this review is witnessed by a second staff member/volunteer.

Unacceptable practice:

- Invading the privacy of children and young people when they are toileting or showering, changing or dressing.
- Inappropriate physical or sexually provocative games.
- Sharing sleeping accommodation with an individual child or young person.
- Making sexually suggestive comments about or to a child or young person even in fun.
- Inappropriate and intrusive touching of any form.
- Scapegoating or ridiculing a child or young person.

- Allowing inappropriate, foul, sexualised or discriminatory language to remain unchallenged.
- Any form of physical punishment.
- Illegal use of drugs.
- Use of alcohol during an event.
- Bullying of any form, including name calling or constant criticism.
- 'Picking on' a young person because of their family background, manner of dress or physical characteristic.
- Racism or sectarianism of any form.
- Favouritism and exclusion – all young people should be equally supported and encouraged.
- Abusive language or gestures.

Understanding of Abuse

Abuse to children or vulnerable young people is described under the following headings:

Neglect:

The persistent or severe neglect of a child or young person, whether willful or unintentional, which results in serious impairment to physical health and development. For example:

- exposing a child to extreme weather conditions e.g. heat and cold.
- failing to seek medical attention for injuries.
- exposing a child to risk of injury through the use of unsafe equipment.
- exposing a child to a hazardous environment without a proper risk assessment of the activity.
- failing to provide adequate nutrition and water.

Signs which **may** raise concerns about physical neglect include:

- Constant hunger
- Poor personal hygiene and/or poor state of clothing
- Constant tiredness
- Frequent lateness or unexplained non-attendance (particularly at school)
- Untreated medical problems
- Low self-esteem
- Poor peer relationships
- Stealing

Physical Injury:

Actual or attempted physical injury to a child or young person where there is definite knowledge or reasonable suspicion that the injury was inflicted or knowingly not prevented. For example:

- Deliberately hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise harming a child.

Signs which **may** raise concerns about physical abuse include:

- Refusal to discuss injuries
- Aggression towards others
- Improbable excuses given to explain injuries
- Fear of parents being approached for an explanation
- Running away
- Untreated injuries
- Excessive physical punishment
- Avoiding activities due to injuries or possibility of injuries being discovered
- Unexplained injuries, particularly if recurrent

Emotional Abuse:

The adverse effect on the behaviour and emotional development of a child or young person, caused by failure to provide for their basic emotional needs. For example:

- Persistent failure to show any respect to a child (e.g. continually ignoring a child)
- Constantly humiliating a child by telling them they are useless.
- Continually being aggressive towards a child, making them feel frightened.
- Acting in a way which is detrimental to the child's self-esteem (e.g. name calling, sarcasm, constant criticism)

Signs which **may** raise concerns about emotional abuse include:

- Low self-esteem
- Significant decline in concentration
- Running away
- Indiscriminate friendliness and neediness
- Extremes of passivity or aggression
- Self-harm or mutilation

Sexual Abuse:

Any child or young person below the age of 18 may be deemed to have been sexually abused when any person, by design or neglect, exploits the child or young person directly or indirectly, in any activity intended to lead to the sexual arousal or other forms of gratification of that person or any other person including organised networks. This includes forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities whether or not they are aware of or consent to what is happening. Sexual abuse may involve physical contact, and non-contact acts such as forcing children to look at or be involved in the production of pornographic material, to watch sexual activities or encouraging them to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

For example:

- Exposure to sexually explicit inappropriate language or jokes.
- Showing a child pornographic material or using a child to produce such material.
- Inappropriate touching.

The following signs **may** raise concerns about sexual abuse:

- Lack of trust in adults or over familiarity with adults, fear of a particular adult
- Social isolation - being withdrawn or introverted, poor peer relationship
- Sleep disturbance (nightmares, bedwetting, fear of sleeping alone)
- Running away from home
- Drug, alcohol or solvent abuse
- Display of sexual knowledge beyond the child's age

Other abusive behaviour towards children and young people:

Staff, volunteers and committee members should also be aware of other, perhaps less obvious, forms of abuse. These may be dismissed by perpetrators as 'just fun' or 'having a laugh' with young people but can have a serious impact and cannot be allowed or go unchallenged:

- Bullying of any form, including name calling or constant criticism
- 'Picking on' a young person because of their family background, manner of dress or physical characteristic
- Racism or sectarianism if any form
- Favouritism and exclusion - all young people should be equally supported and encouraged
- Abusive language or gestures

Procedure for responding and reporting abuse/neglect

Members of staff (paid and unpaid) have a duty to report any suspicions, allegations or disclosures to the Designated Safeguarding Leaders. However, the first concern must be the reassurance of the child or young person and their protection from any potential risk. During the reporting process the young person should be protected from further contact with the individual involved in the allegation.

As a worker or volunteer your role in child protection is **not** to investigate or decide if abuse has taken place. Your role is to observe, record and report. The following steps should be followed in response to suspicion or allegation of abuse:

There are signs and indicators which could point to abuse/neglect

For example, if:

- A child/young person has alleged that they are being abused
- You see or suspect abuse
- The organisation has received a third-party report that a child/young person is being abused/neglected

1. Responding when a child or young person discloses abuse

It is likely that a child or young person who has been abused will have given a lot of thought as to whether they should disclose the abuse. It is highly likely that they will be nervous and afraid that they might be rejected, blamed or not believed. It is important that staff and volunteers follow the steps outlined below:

2. Stay calm

Remain calm and natural. You have been approached because you are trusted, not because you are an expert counsellor. Do not promise to keep the information secret; you may have to inform an appropriate person. You must take any disclosure seriously and reassure the young person that you believe them.

3. Listen and take the allegation seriously

Listen to what the child or young person is saying. Give them the time and opportunity to tell you as much as they are able and willing to. Do not pressurise them and allow them to disclose information at their own pace. You should not investigate, ask leading questions or ask specific or explicit questions. You should only clarify what they are willing to tell you in their own words. Try to do this in an appropriate place, such as a room where other people can see in through an open door or window. Whilst it's important to respect the young person's privacy it should not be at the expense of other child protection measures

4. Reassure

Reassure them that you believe what they are saying and that you know it is not their fault. You should also give them some indication of what you will do next with the information that they have given you.

5. Confidentiality

Reiterate that you cannot promise to keep the information secret. You must take any disclosure seriously. Details of the disclosure should only be passed on to the Designated Safeguarding Leaders, who should refer the case to the appropriate authorities

Wherever possible you should try not to discuss any concerns that you have about a child or young person in a way that may lead others to suspect that they are being abused.

6. Record

If you are able to, make brief notes during the initial disclosure, explaining to the young person why you are doing it. If it's not possible to do so at the time, record the details as soon as possible after the disclosure with as many facts as possible (dates, times, actual words used). Detailed written records should be made of all events and what the young person or other individuals have said (where this applies). A form is supplied to help structure this. It can also be used to inform Social Work/Police of the events that have occurred. Above and beyond the facts, any opinions or personal interpretations of the facts presented can be recorded but it should be clear they are opinions, rather than facts. Records should be signed and stored in a secure place

7. Look after yourself

Being trusted with a disclosure of abuse directly from a young person can be emotionally draining, worrying and very stressful. Whilst it's essential that confidentiality is maintained at all times, it's important that you consider your own emotional feelings and discuss any anxieties you have with the Designated Safeguarding Leaders. If appropriate, they will arrange additional support for you.

8. Act immediately

Discuss your concerns with the Designated Safeguarding Leaders as soon as possible. If the allegation is about the Designated Safeguarding Lead/leaders contact one of the managerial staff. These steps should be taken as soon as possible.

Discussions should focus on: Nature of concerns; Risks to the child or young person; Action and next steps to be taken

9. Seek advice and Refer to appropriate agency

The Designated Safeguarding Leaders should contact the Social Work Department and/or the Police and ask to speak to the Duty Officer about a child protection issue. If the report is received during an evening then the Social Work Department Emergency Duty team and/or the Police should be contacted. Any further action should only be taken in line with the advice given by the Social Work Department. This includes whether the parent or carer of the young person should be informed of the child protection concerns.

Protection of Workers who report care and protection concerns

Deciding to report a colleague or volunteer you suspect of abusing or otherwise harming a child can be stressful and difficult and you may be worried about the person concerned taking action against you. The law does give you protection if you raise concerns or report a colleague as long as the report was not malicious or vexatious

Data Protection and management of confidential information

New Roots is committed to the safe and secure management of confidential information. All personnel information, including volunteer information, is kept private and can only be accessed by those that require it to carry out their role. Only relevant information is kept and this is regularly reviewed and outdated information destroyed appropriately.

New Roots is also committed to the rights of children and young people to confidentiality and this will be respected by all workers. However, where a worker feels that the information disclosed by a child or young people should be referred to their line manager for investigation by an appropriate agency, the young person should be told that confidentiality cannot be kept.

Review of Safeguarding Guidelines and Code of Conduct

This policy and procedures document will be reviewed annually by Nazia Hanif. All staff and volunteers will be notified of any changes.

This policy has been approved by: Nazia Hanif
Date: 29.09.2021