

Venture Out Expeditions Child Protection & Vulnerable Adults Policy

Introduction

All organisations which make provision for children and young people must ensure that the welfare of the child or vulnerable adult 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 and poor practice will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately.

All staff (paid/unpaid) working with young people have a responsibility to report concerns to the appropriate officer.

Staff/volunteers are not trained to deal with situations of abuse or to decide if abuse has occurred.

VENTURE OUT Policy Statement

VENTURE OUT has a duty of care to safeguard all children from harm. All children have a right to protection, and the needs of disabled children and others who may be particularly vulnerable must be considered. VENTURE OUT will ensure the safety and protection of all children involved with VENTURE OUT through adherence to the Child Protection guidelines.

When working in conjunction with a local authority organisation VENTURE OUT will adopt and adhere to their policy statement.

A child is defined as a person under the age of 18 (The Children Act 1989). A vulnerable adult is a person who is or may need community care services by reason of disability, age or illness; and is or may be unable to take care of him or herself, or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation.

Policy Aims

- The aim of the VENTURE OUT Child Protection Policy is to promote good practice and safeguard all.
- Providing children and young people with appropriate safety and protection whilst in the care of VENTURE OUT.
- Allow all staff /volunteers to make informed and confident responses to specific child protection issues.

Promoting Good Practice

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.

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 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.

Good Practice Guidelines

All VENTURE OUT personnel are encouraged to demonstrate exemplary behaviour to promote children's welfare and reduce the likelihood of allegations being made. The following are common sense examples of how to create a positive culture and climate.

Good Practice means

- Always working in an open environment (e.g. avoiding private or unobserved situations and encouraging open communication with no secrets).
- Treating all young people/vulnerable adults equally, and with respect and dignity.
- Maintaining a safe and appropriate professional distance with young people.
- Building balanced relationships based on mutual trust which empowers children to share in the decision-making process.
- Keeping up to date with technical skills, qualifications and insurance.
- 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.
- Securing parental consent in writing to act in loco parentis, if the need arises to administer emergency first aid and/or other medical treatment. Keeping a written record of any injury that occurs, along with the details of any treatment given.

Practices to be avoided

The following should be avoided except in emergencies. If cases arise where these situations are unavoidable it should be with the full knowledge of another appropriate adult. For example, a 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, the member of staff will need to act in loco parentis:

- Avoid spending time alone with children away from others

Practices not sanctioned

- Engaging in inappropriate rough, physical or sexually provocative games
- Allow or engage in any form of inappropriate touching
- Allow children to use inappropriate language unchallenged
- Make sexually suggestive comments to a child
- Reduce a child to tears as a form of control
- Fail to act upon and record any allegations made by a child
- 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

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 young people involved. There is a need to be responsive to a person's reaction. If a person is fully dependent on you, talk with him/her about what you are doing and give choices where possible. This is particularly so if you are involved in any dressing or undressing of outer clothing, or where there is physical contact, lifting or assisting a child to carry out particular activities. Avoid taking on the responsibility for tasks for which you are not appropriately trained.

Incidents that must be reported/recorded

If any of the following occur, you should report this immediately to the appropriate officer and record the incident. You should also ensure the parents of the child are informed:

- If you accidentally hurt a young person or adult.
- If he/she seems distressed in any manner.
- If a young person appears to be sexually aroused by your actions.
- If a young person misunderstands or misinterprets something you have done.

Recruitment and training of staff and volunteers

VENTURE OUT 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.

Consent will be obtained from an applicant to seek information from the Disclosure & Barring Services, and satisfactory references be obtained before they are permitted to work unsupervised.

Interview and Induction

All staff (and volunteers) will be required to undergo an interview carried out to acceptable protocol and recommendations according to VENTURE OUT's partner organisations. All staff and volunteers should receive an 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.
- They should read, understand and agree to follow the organisations Operating Procedures, Child Protection Policy and Risk Assessments.

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 not likely to result in allegations being made.
- 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 effectively with children.

Responding to allegations or suspicions

It is not the responsibility of anyone working with VENTURE OUT, in a paid or unpaid capacity to decide whether or not child abuse has taken place. However, there is a responsibility to act on any concerns by reporting these to the appropriate officer or the appropriate authorities.

VENTURE OUT will assure all staff/volunteers that it will fully support and protect anyone, who in good faith reports his or her concern that a colleague is, or may be, abusing a child.

Where there is a complaint against a member of staff there may be three types of investigation:

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

The results of the police and child protection investigation may well influence and inform the disciplinary investigation, but all available information will be used to reach a decision.

Action if there are concerns

1. Concerns about poor practice:

If, following consideration, the allegation is clearly about poor practice; the designated Child Protection Officer will deal with it as a misconduct issue.

If the allegation is about poor practice by a VENTURE OUT Child Protection Officer, or if the matter has been handled inadequately and concerns remain, it should be reported to the relevant Local Authority Designated Officer, LADO, who will decide how to deal with the allegation and whether or not to initiate disciplinary proceedings.

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 VENTURE OUT Child Protection Officer will refer the allegation to the LADO who may involve the police. The parents or carers of the child will be contacted as soon as possible following advice from the LADO.

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.

This includes the following people:

- The VENTURE OUT Child Protection Officer/s.
- The parents of the person who is alleged to have been abused
- The person making the allegation.
- LADO/Police.

Seek LADO advice on who should approach the alleged abuser (or parents if the alleged abuser is a child).

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).

Internal enquiries and suspension

The VENTURE OUT Child Protection Officer 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, the LADO or police enquiries, the VENTURE OUT Directors 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 VENTURE OUT Directors 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 proved. The welfare of the child or vulnerable adult should remain of paramount importance throughout.

Allegations of previous abuse

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).

Where such an allegation is made, VENTURE OUT will follow the procedures as detailed above and report the matter to the LADO or the police. This is to ensure the prevention of other children being exposed to 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.

Action if bullying is suspected

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

Take all signs of bullying very seriously.

Encourage all children to speak and share their concerns. Help the victim to speak out and tell the person in charge or someone in authority. Create an open environment. 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 VENTURE OUT Child Protection Officer and the school.

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's parents.
- Insist on the return of 'borrowed' items and that the bully(ies) compensate the victim.
- 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.

Most 'low level' incidents will be dealt with at the time by members of staff. However, if the bullying is severe (e.g. a serious assault), or if it persists despite efforts to deal with it, incidents should be referred to the designated Child Protection Officer as in "responding to suspicions or allegations" above.

Concerns outside the immediate VENTURE OUT programme (e.g. a parent or carer):

Report your concerns to the Child Protection Officer, who will contact the LADO or the police as soon as possible.

If the Child Protection Officers are not available, the person being told of or discovering the abuse should contact the LADO or the police immediately.

The LADO and the Child Protection Officer will decide how to involve the parents/carers.

Maintain confidentiality on a need to know basis only.

Information for the LADO 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, which should include the following:

- The child's name, age and date of birth of the child.
- The child's home address and telephone number.
- Whether or not the person making the report is expressing their own concerns or those of someone else.
- The nature of the allegation. Include dates, times, any special factors and other relevant information.
- Make a clear distinction between what is fact, opinion or hearsay.
- A description of any visible bruising or other injuries. Also any indirect signs, such as behavioural changes.
- Details of witnesses to the incidents.
- The child's account, if it can be given, of what has happened and how any bruising or other injuries occurred.
- Have the parents been contacted, if so what has been said?
- Has anyone else been consulted? If so record details.
- If the child was not the person who reported the incident, has the child been spoken to? If so what was said?
- Has anyone been alleged to be the abuser? Record details.

Where possible referral to the LADO or the Police and confirm in writing any information within 24 hours. If you are worried about sharing concerns about abuse with a senior colleague, you can contact the LADO or the police direct, or the NSPCC Child Protection Helpline on 0808 800 5000, or online via nspcc.org.uk/reportconcern, or contact Childline on 0800 1111.

Use of photographic equipment

VENTURE OUT will always obtain written consent from the parents/guardians to seek permission for their children to be photographed or filmed during activities. Photographs and videos may be used to display positive images on registered websites, only under the authorisation of VENTURE OUT management team.

Monitoring, evaluation and review

This policy will be reviewed regularly, and its implementation assessed for effectiveness.

Child Protection Officer: Kevin Beattie 07980 306869

Responsibility for Review: Company Directors/Operations Manager