



## WHY DOES MY ORGANISATION NEED A CHILD PROTECTION POLICY?

Sometimes it's difficult for an organisation to see why it should have its own Child Protection Policy.

Think of these possible scenarios.

- 1) An incident involving abuse to a child has happened at your organisation. Could the management committee put their hand on their hearts and know that they had done everything they possibly could to prevent this incident happening? This is what will be expected of them.
- 2) A child has disclosed some information to a member of your organisation. Does that member know what to do next?
- 3) A child needs to disclose some information to a member of your organisation. Have you made it as easy as possible for them to do this.

A Child Protection Policy should protect children and also protect your organisation from criticism in the event of a Child Protection incident occurring.

It also sets in place some sort of procedure in case a child or an adult should make a disclosure to a volunteer or employee of your organisation.

### TIPS FOR PUTTING TOGETHER YOUR CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

First of all, if there is an umbrella Association for organisations like yours, it would be a good idea to find out what they suggest as far as Child Protection. They will be particularly aware of issues relating to your area of work. In addition you may find it helpful to take a look at a policy produced by another similar organisation. There's no point in re-inventing the wheel!

Try to keep the policy no longer than 1-2 pages of A4 or nobody will read it!

You will need to consider including the following sections:-

- **A general statement** - i.e. what your organisation believes in as far as Child Protection e.g. *'Name of your organisation' believes that every child and young person, regardless of age, has at all times and in all situations the right to feel safe and protected.* Some organisations display this statement somewhere prominently on their premises together with the NSPCC Child Protection Helpline 0808 800 5000 and or Childline 0800 1111 phone numbers if appropriate.

- **Aims** - Why your organisation is undertaking this action. For example if your organisation does not work directly with children the aim might be: *" To guide management committee members, volunteers and employees of 'Name of your organisation' should any child protection issue arise during their work"* If your work involves direct contact with children, an example of an aim might be *"To create an environment where children and young people feel safe, secure, are listened to, valued and respected."*
- **Who the policy applies to** – Groups who work with your organisation, Committee members, volunteers, children and young people? Also what is your definition of a child/young person? (usually up to 18 years old with an extension to 25 years old if the young person has learning difficulties).
- **Responsibilities** - In broad terms list what the organisation is going to do to fulfil your aim.
  - You will need to consider having someone in your organisation who is designated as the Child Protection representative. If there is a Child Protection incident or a child discloses some information to a member of staff/volunteer, the designated Child Protection representative is the person who will take responsibility for any action taken. It is also good practice to decide who will take on this responsibility if the designated Child Protection representative is not available.
  - You will probably want to adopt a code of practice & procedure should there be a Child Protection incident or a disclosure of abuse at your organisation. The code of practice for East Hampshire (ask Community First for a copy) is good so you can just refer to that as long as your management committee and volunteers are all happy with it and have read it!
  - Many organisations ask new volunteers/staff to sign & date a copy of their Child Protection policy to show they have read and agreed to abide by it.
  - It would be wise to have a procedure about employment and/or use of volunteers who are likely to come into contact with young people ensuring that CRB checks are being carried as appropriate. Community First can help with advice about CRB checks.
  - It is also good practice for organisations that hire out their facilities to groups that work with children to require that their hirers have a Child Protection Policy in place.
  - You may want to encourage Child Protection Awareness training to staff, volunteers and/or board members especially for the person who is designated as Child Protection representative. Community First may be able to help you with finding suitable affordable training.
  - It is good practice to put together a 'List of Recommended Behaviour' for your organisation's staff and volunteers to reduce the risk of a Child Protection incident. Your list will be unique to your organisation and it will be easier to write it after you have considered what the risks are in the course of the work of your particular organisation.

It might include things like this:-

- Always have a minimum of 2 adults present when supervising children
- Do not play physical contact games with young people
- Adults should wear appropriate clothing at all time
- Make sure that accidents are recorded in an accident book
- Never do anything for a young person of a personal nature.
- Keep records in an incident book of any allegations a young person may make to any of your staff

If you are an organisation that works directly with children this list will be quite comprehensive and it may be better to present it as a volunteer/staff Child Protection Guidelines booklet and just refer to it in the Policy itself.

- **Declaration** - As in most policies, at the end, you need a declaration to say that this policy has been adopted by the management committee and what date it was adopted. It is good practice to state when the policy will next be reviewed/revisited. The approved policy should be signed by the Chairperson. Some organisations include the name and contact details of the Child Protection representative here as well.

*This document has been put together by Community First East Hampshire (Tel: 01730 710017) an organisation that supports community groups and volunteering in East Hampshire.*