

SAFEGUARDING THE WELLBEING OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Responding to Disclosure, Suspicions and Allegations

Implementation Date: Wednesday, 7th October 2009

Review Date: Monday 10th October 2022

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RESPONDING TO DISCLOSURE, SUSPICIONS AND ALLEGATIONS POLICY

It is trustee's primary responsibility is to ensure that concerns and any relevant information are passed onto the Police or Social Services without delay.

RESPONDING TO DISCLOSURE, SUSPICIONS AND ALLEGATIONS PROCEDURES

1. Responding to Disclosures of Abuse

It is vital that service users, volunteers and staff pass any concerns to the Child Protection Coordinator, or in their absence the most senior member of staff. If neither person is available, the information should be passed directly to Social Services or the Police. A Child Protection Incident Form should be completed and, together with any other written information be sent to the relevant statutory organisation within 24 hours.

2. Managing a Disclosure

If a child/ young person indicates that he/ she is being abused, or information is received which gives rise to concern that the child/ young person may be abused, the person receiving the information should:

- Stay calm and ensure that the child/ young person is safe and feels safe.
- Tell the child / young person that he / she is not to blame and it was right to tell you.

- Show and tell the child / young person that you are taking what he/ she says seriously and recognises any difficulties inherent in interpreting what the child says.
- Keep questions to a minimum to ensure a clear and accurate understanding of what has been said and make a record of all that has been said, heard or seen. (This record will be referred to during further investigations and detailed questioning should be left to the qualified investigator).
- Be honest and explain that you may have to tell someone else to help protect the child.

You should share your concerns with the Child Protection Coordinator. It is the responsibility of the Child Protection Coordinator to make the decision to contact Social Services.

The person to whom the disclosure is made is presented with a great responsibility and it is advisable, if there is uncertainty, that you seek advice on how to deal with the issue from the Child Protection Coordinator.

3. Allegations Against Members of Staff

Allegations may involve members of staff within the Charity. Although it is a sensitive and difficult issue, child abuse has occurred in a Community Work situation. It is crucial that everyone involved in working with children/ young People recognises this possibility and takes seriously any allegations made against a member of staff.

If there is any suspicion that a child/ young person has been abused by a member of staff, the Child Protection Coordinator should immediately be informed so that they can either refer the incident to Social Services (or if necessary go directly to the police).

If the allegation involves the Child Protection Coordinator, you should contact a trustee with your concerns immediately; in the absence of a trustee you should contact Social Services directly.

4. Allegations of Previous Abuse

It is possible that allegations of abuse by a member of staff may be made some considerable time after the event. Where such a belated allegation is made the Child Protection Coordinator should report the matter to the social services or police. This is necessary because it is possible that other children/ young people may have been abused or may be at risk from the abused person.

5. Confidentiality

Only inform other people of the situation if it will help protect the child. Remember the accusation may be a misunderstanding or a fallacious allegation,

which may cause great harm to the accused, as he/ she may be innocent of the allegation. Confidentiality must be maintained until a case has been proven.

6. Responding to Medial Enquiries

Child abuse is an area of great interest to the media. When incidents occur it is important to have a strategy to manage any media enquires so to avoid generating any negative publicity.

The media can become involved in cases as a result of approaches made by a source linked to the victim and may already have significant information before approaching the organisation. If a journalist approaches you, the following guidance must be followed:

- Take a note of the journalist's name and whom they represent (i.e. Newspaper, TV Company etc.) and any contact details.
- Take a note of what the journalist is asking you and ask for clarification.
- Inform the Child Protection Coordinator who will referee the matter to social service or the police so that an appropriate response can be formulated.
- A copy of the response will be forwarded to the appropriate journalist.

The same procedures should be followed for any subsequent enquires.

It is important to recognise the harm that can be done to the work carried out by the Charity by negative media coverage. Do not be tempted to speak 'off the record' to journalists as this may result in damaging publicity but also do not pretend the situation is less serious, as this can often create equally detrimental press coverage.

This policy was adopted by the YoMo! Trustees on Wednesday, 12th October 2022 to be implemented from immediately.