



ACTIVITIES INVOLVING UNSUPERVISED CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & VULNERABLE ADULTS

Information for Volunteers and Contractors

It is the aim of the Friends of Selly Oak Park, in very limited circumstances, to offer activities organised by local schools that involve children, young people and vulnerable adults. These activities are conducted in a safe and secure environment in which the attendees can thrive and develop. These activities are carried out by FoSOP volunteers who have undertaken CRB checks and are monitored by the organising schools.

1. Introduction

- “ The purpose of this document is to provide volunteers and contractors with a basic framework when it comes to working with children, young people and vulnerable adults.
- “ It is intended to raise awareness of relevant legal requirements and offer advice on the basic do’s and don’ts of working with children, young people and vulnerable adults.
- “ It does not serve as a blueprint on children, young people and vulnerable adults’ rights or how to best provide for their social, intellectual, physical or emotional needs.
- “ FoSOP volunteers and contractors come into contact with children, young people and vulnerable adults only when they are supervised by a responsible adult at organised events.
- “ Unless you have substantial access to children, young people or vulnerable adults then you are not under a “legal duty of care”. However, it is still helpful to adhere to certain guidelines that are offered to those who are employed to work with children, young people and vulnerable adults.
- “ The advice offered is not set in stone and much of it is based on common sense, but it should provide a guideline in how to deal with certain situations if they should arise.
- “ This is a complicated and sensitive area – the aim of this document is to improve your confidence and create a support network of those who can help.

2. Promoting Positive Behaviour

- “ Children, young people and vulnerable adults have the right to be protected from all forms of abuse (these are not always obvious, refer to section 5).
- “ Our role in offering activities for supervised children, young people and vulnerable adults is to ensure this, and more positively to:
 - help children, young people and vulnerable adults to achieve their full potential
 - build their self confidence
 - help them to discover new talents and interests within a supportive non-intimidating environment
 - give them good experiences and good memories
- “ In achieving these aims, volunteers and contractors must:
 - treat children, young people and vulnerable adults with respect
 - not make racist or sexist remarks
 - take care to avoid showing favouritism
 - take responsibility for preventing abuse of younger or weaker children, young people and vulnerable adults by older or stronger children, young people and vulnerable adults. This abuse may take the form of the behaviour noted above as well as peer group bullying.

3. What if I suspect a children, young person or vulnerable adult Is being abused?

Forms of abuse or exploitation largely fall into four categories –

- “ neglect,
- “ physical injury,
- “ sexual abuse or
- “ emotional abuse.

The following are indicators that a child, young person or vulnerable adult may be being abused:

- A child, young person or vulnerable adult may make a direct allegation
- A child, young person or vulnerable adult may make a comment which suggests abuse
- A child, young person or vulnerable adult may have bruises or marks
- Something about the behaviour of a child, young person or vulnerable adult's behaviour may suggest the possibility of abuse
- Something about the behaviour of an adult may suggest that he/she is not a suitable person to care for children, young people and vulnerable adults

- **General Advice**

- “ If you have a genuine concern that a child, young person or vulnerable adult is being abused, then list the reasons for your concern and note names, addresses and dates of birth where possible. Remember it is better to record your concerns no matter how small than to remain silent. Keeping a record of any concerns is important as they may be useful for future reference.
- “ Share your feelings with someone who has regular contact with the child, young person or vulnerable adult and can observe them over a longer period.
- “ You should never ask the child, young person or vulnerable adult leading questions which could encourage them to change his or her version of events in any way. For example, you should say “Tell me what has happened” rather than “did they do X to you?”
- “ The chief task at this stage is to listen and only interrupt when necessary, remembering not to promise a child, young person or vulnerable adult absolute confidentiality whilst reassuring them that you will only tell people who really need to know, not all their neighbours or friends.
- “ It is imperative to record exactly what the child, young person or vulnerable adult has said not what you think he or she has meant.
- “ If you feel your concern is great enough, then talk to the adult supervising the child, young person or vulnerable adult at the event/activity.

- **A child, young person or vulnerable adult may make a direct allegation**

If a child, young person or vulnerable adult tells you directly that they are being abused, then you should be aware that:

- “ the way you talk to a child, young person or vulnerable adult can have an effect on the evidence which is put forward if there are subsequent proceedings.
- “ if there is a clear allegation about a specific person, staff must not try to question that person themselves
- “ If you feel your concern is great enough, then talk to the adult supervising the child, young person or vulnerable adult at the event/activity.

- **A child, young person or vulnerable adult may make a comment which suggests abuse**

- “ In this situation your best approach is to discuss it with someone who also knows the child, young person or vulnerable adult so that together you can monitor the situation.

- **A child, young person or vulnerable adult may have bruises or marks**

If you feel your concern is great enough, then contact an adult who has responsibility for the

child, young person or vulnerable adult – parent/guardian/teacher/youth worker.

- **Something about a child, young person or vulnerable adult's behaviour may suggest the possibility of abuse**

- “ Again in this situation your best approach is to discuss it with a colleague, preferably someone who also knows the child, young person or vulnerable adult so that together you can monitor the situation.

- **Something about the behaviour of an adult may suggest that he/she is not a suitable person to care for children, young people and vulnerable adults**

- “ Pointers may include:

- Failure to respond appropriately to the needs of children, young people and vulnerable adults
 - Neglecting some children, young people and vulnerable adults in favour of others
 - Failure to respect the wishes of parents
 - Ignoring or being dismissive of established policies and procedures
 - Establishing inappropriate relationships with children, young people and vulnerable adults

Extra things to be aware of

- “ You should never need to deal with this on your own.
 - “ If a child, young person or vulnerable adult makes a serious allegation about an adult or an older child – there is a reason and further enquiries should always be made.
 - “ You are not expected to be experts in identifying abuse.

4. And finally:

- “ It is unfortunate that we live in a society where guidelines such as those included in this pack are necessary to protect children, young people and vulnerable adults, but it is important to remember that whilst staff and workers need to be aware of relevant legal requirements, there is no reason for a child, young person or vulnerable adult to feel their freedom is being restricted. Such guidelines are the result of children, young people and vulnerable adults' rights being recognised and should be of great benefit to them.

- “ Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child, states that parties should promote the right of the child to “participate freely in cultural life and the arts”. Staff are in the privileged position of working amongst children, young people and vulnerable adults who have chosen to take part in something creative. The purpose of this advice pack is to help us make that experience as safe, secure and rewarding as possible.

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