



Hook Players

Child Protection Policy and Procedures

1. INTRODUCTION

We aim to safeguard the welfare of children and young people participating in Hook Players activities. In order to give young people protection from potential and actual child abuse it is important that all concerned have a basic understanding of the issues involved and that procedures are in place that are understandable and easy to implement by any member of Hook Players. Wherever parents trust us to look after their children, to care for them, to give encouragement and to keep them safe we need to ensure that we honour their trust.

2. BACKGROUND

Child abuse is a difficult issue and presents challenges to all that provide services for young people, many people feel uncomfortable with the subject. It is not easily recognisable and individuals often fear reading too much into a situation. Many young people experience minor accidents causing injuries, but there may be occasions where you are concerned over the nature and frequency of injury.

This document contains information on some of the signs that may give cause for concern. This document is based on the principle that:

“It is not your responsibility as members of Hook Players to decide whether or not child abuse is occurring, but it is your responsibility to act on those concerns and do something about it.”

3. WHAT IS CHILD ABUSE

Do not ever think that you could never be placed in the position of reporting child abuse.

The term ‘child abuse’ is used to describe ways in which young people are harmed by someone in a position of power. There are many different ways in which children can be harmed, all with a common factor that the child feels under-valued and worthless.

Abuse can happen anywhere, but research indicates that the predators of such abuse are likely to be known and trusted by the child.

4. TYPES OF ABUSE

• PHYSICAL ABUSE

Physical abuse includes hurting or injuring a child. It might also occur if a child is forced to do something beyond their capabilities. Bullying is likely to fall under this category.

• SEXUAL ABUSE

Sexual abuse is where children are encouraged or forced to observe or participate in any form of sexual activity. This could also occur through unnecessary or inappropriate physical contact or through suggestive comments or verbal innuendo.

• EMOTIONAL ABUSE

Emotional abuse occurs when a child is not given love, help, encouragement and attention and is constantly deprived or ridiculed or perhaps even worse, ignored. This can also occur when a child is over protected. The use of abusive language of any sort constitutes emotional abuse and it can be a feature of bullying.

• NEGLECT

Neglect usually means failing to meet children's basic needs such as food, warmth, adequate clothing, medical attention etc. It could also mean failing to ensure they are safe or exposing them to harm.

5. EFFECTS OF ABUSE

The effects of child abuse can be devastating, especially if children are left unprotected or do not have the support to cope with that abuse.

Indications that a child may be being abused include:

- Unexplained or suspicious injuries such as bruising, cuts or burns, particularly if situated on a part of the body not normally prone to such injuries.
- An injury for which the explanation seems inconsistent.
- The child describes what appears to be an abusive act involving him or her.
- Someone else (child or adult) expresses concern about the welfare of another child.
- Unexplained changes in behaviour such as becoming very quiet, withdrawn or displaying sudden outbursts of temper.
- Inappropriate sexual awareness.
- Engaging in sexual explicit behaviour.
- Distrust adults, particularly those with whom a close relationship would normally be expected.
- Difficulty in making friends.

6. PROCEDURE

WHAT SHOULD YOU DO IF YOU SUSPECT ABUSE IS TAKING PLACE?

If any member of Hook Players is concerned that abuse may or has occurred they must refer the matter immediately to the Children Service's Department Office at Basingstoke.

Sun Alliance House
37-41 Wote Street
Basingstoke
RG21 7LU

01256 362000

Or contact the Duty Social Worker on the Emergency Duty Service:-
0845 600 4555

It is very important that any concerns on a child's safety are logged. Within this document is a Child Protection logging form, which should be used if any doubt over a child's welfare exists.

Hook Players' Child Protection policy arises from the following principles:

- The child's welfare is first consideration.
- All children, regardless of age, disability, gender or ethnic origin have a right to be protected from all forms of harm, abuse, neglect and exploitation.

7. GOOD PRACTICE IN THE CARE OF CHILDREN

Situations where abuse may occur and be minimised by:

- Always being publicly open when working with children.
- Where possible parents should take responsibility for their own children.
- Where possible avoid taking children alone on car journeys, however short, unless there is no other option and the child's parents have given permission. This may be acceptable as a one-off, but very unwise to do on a regular basis.

Those working with children should never:

- Engage in rough, physical or sexually provocative games, including horseplay.
- Allow or engage in inappropriate touching of any form.
- Allow children to use inappropriate language unchallenged.
- Let allegations by a child go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon.

PROTECTING YOURSELF

We believe that the following 10 points of advice and guidance will minimise the risk of any false allegation being made against a member of Hook Players.

1. Do not rely upon good nature to protect you.
2. Do not, for one moment, believe "it could never happen to me".
3. Whilst respecting the need for privacy and confidentiality, try never to be alone with a young person. When one to one situations are unavoidable, ensure unlimited access by others is available.
4. Never engage in inappropriate physical or verbal contact with others.
5. If you suspect that a young person is developing a 'crush' on you, discuss it with others and explore constructive ways of dealing with it in a proper manner.
6. Similarly, if you notice one of your colleagues is at risk of false accusations, draw this to his/her attention and suggest they adhere to the guidelines.
7. Mixed groups should always have mixed leadership.
8. If you are feeling emotionally disturbed or you feel an abnormal affection for a young person, withdraw from the situation and discuss the matter with a trusted friend.
9. Never take a chance.
10. Be aware that young people can fabricate stories that can place you in a bad light. Do not allow circumstances to develop where a young person's false story can be given credence.

If a child or young person tells you that someone in Hook Players has caused them harm, this should be treated in the same way as any other disclosure a child may make. If you are unsure of what action to take, it would be appropriate to seek guidance of either the police or social work department (or both).

LOGGING CONCERNS ABOUT A CHILD'S SAFETY AND WELFARE

Name of young person	Date of birth
Date form completed	Time form completed
Your name (please print)	Signature
Your Organisation	Your position
Reasons for recording incident	
Please record the following as factually as possible	Who?
	What?
	Where?
	When?
Offer an opinion where relevant (how and why this may have happened)	
Substantiate the opinion. Please note the action taken, including the names of anyone to whom information was passed.	