

## Policy for

# Child Protection

### Policy Statement

Bods seeks to provide safe and supervised activities and support to fulfil the needs of young people and promote a sense of wholeness of life. In doing so, Bods takes seriously the welfare of all children and young people who come into our care and who are involved in our activities, regardless of age, ability or disability, gender, racial or ethnic origin, religious belief and sexual identity. Bods have a clear understanding that it is our duty to promote young people's rights, protect them from harm and injury, and safeguard their welfare. We wish to prevent any physical, sexual or emotional abuse of children and young people, and we recognise our responsibility to implement, maintain and review this policy and its procedures.

### Relationship to other documents

Procedures:                      Responsibilities & Definitions (att.)  
    In the event of... (att.)  
    Training  
    Recruitment & Vetting

Risk Assessments:

Guidelines:                      Disclosure of Abuse (att.)  
    Accusation or Suspicion of Abuse (att.)  
    Definitions of Abuse (att.)  
    Indicators of Abuse (att.)

Legal:                                Framework (att.)

Policy signed \_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_

Policy for review on \_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_

## **Definition of terms**

Children are taken to be up to twelve years old, and young people between thirteen and eighteen years. For ease of reference, the terms “child”, “children”, “young person” or “young people” used in this Policy and its Procedures should be taken to include any person under 18.

As all adults share responsibility for children and young people, the term ‘staff’ includes volunteers, visitors, workers from other organisations and anyone associated with bods.

Definitions of Abuse can be found in the Appendix “Definitions of Abuse”

## **Responsibilities**

The protection and safety of children is the responsible of all Bods staff. The project manager is responsible for ensuring that all staff understand this policy, comply with it's procedures, and complete all necessary training. It is the responsibility of the Bods trustees to ensure that this policy is successfully implemented and applied.

Bods will

- carefully select, vet, train and supervise staff and take all reasonable steps to ensure those who we do employ within our policies.
- provide staff with clear procedures for identifying and responding to suspicions or allegations of abuse
- gather relevant information about young people to help ensure we are sensitive to their individual needs.
- provide information, advice and support to young people to help them protect their own rights and lead a healthy lifestyle.
- provide high levels of supervision balanced by appropriate opportunities for privacy and security.
- provide plenty of opportunities for young people to express their feelings, wishes and fears.
- act swiftly if at any time we are suspicious that young people are being, or are likely to be subject to abuse or otherwise placed at risk.

Bods will not

- allow young people to place themselves at risk, and will take all reasonable steps to prevent them from harming themselves and others.
- continue to employ staff, or withhold relevant concerns from future employers of staff, who engage in abusive relationships with young people or who have a propensity to place them at risk of injury or harm.

## **In the event of Disclosure, Allegation or Suspicion of Abuse**

### **1. Listen**

- Follow the guidelines under Disclosure or Allegation guidelines.

### **2. Record**

- Make an immediate, accurate record of what the child has said, if possible using their own words

### **3. Report**

- Report concerns as soon as possible to the Project Manager, (please do not discuss the situation with anyone else)
- If the suspicions in anyway involve one of the staff members then the report should be to the Manager
- Suspicions will not be discussed with anyone other than those nominated above at this stage.
- If an allegation is made about the manager, then the staff member immediately reports this to the Bods Trustee responsible for Child Protection.

### **4. The Manager will then**

- Contact social services for advice in cases of deliberate injury or where concerned about the child's safety. The parents will not be informed in these circumstances.
- In other circumstances speak to the /person in charge of the group/parent and suggest help is sought for the child/family.

## Disclosure or Evidence of Abuse

Sometimes a young person will disclose abuse to an adult who they have come to feel that they can trust. If this happens, remember that they are doing so in the hope that you will act to stop it happening, even if they ask you not to do anything with the information. If a young person asks for confidentiality about their situation, reassure them that information will only be shared with as few people as possible to ensure that abuse is stopped, and that the young person will not be harmed for sharing. Confidentiality cannot be offered, however, as any abuse must be stopped.

They may feel that they are betraying someone they love; it is not unusual for a young person to love the abuser but want the abuse to stop, especially when the abuser is a parent or carer. The abuser may also be someone such as a member of staff who they feel may be able to influence decision about their future. Either way, it takes great courage to talk to an adult about abuse, and your response can be crucial.

In the case of a young person disclosing abuse, Bods staff should act as follows:

- Listen to the young person without interrupting. Do not stop them when they are recalling significant events
- Try not to question the young person directly or probe for more information
- Remain calm and receptive; do not over-react or allow shock or distaste to show
- Do not make assumptions or speculate, or make negative comments about the abuser
- Make it clear you take the child seriously and acknowledge their courage in telling you
- Offer reassurance without making promises or agreeing to keep the information secret
- Explain what you have to do and whom you have to tell

Remember that the young people we have contact with may have little reason to trust those they see as authority figures and may wonder whether you will be any different. It may be even more difficult for disabled children to disclose, since they may rely on the abuser for their daily care and have no knowledge of alternative sources. Children from ethnic minority cultures may experience particular difficulty because of differences in culture or language.

If a child tells you that they are being, or have been abused, you must then:

- Make an immediate, accurate record of what the child has said, if possible using their own words, and
- Follow the reporting procedures contained in this policy.

## **Accusation or Suspicion of Abuse**

This procedure is to be followed if you think a young person may be at risk of, is being, or has been abused by

- A Bods staff member or worker
- Another young person
- A member of their family
- Anyone else

The Project Manager must ensure that all staff are familiar with the definitions, signs and indicators of abuse as set out in the Guidelines. However, young people we come into contact with may, through the nature of their previous experiences, demonstrate behaviour that in other circumstances might be indicators of child abuse. This may make the identification of abuse more difficult than usual.

We know that adults who wish to abuse young people use many techniques, first to 'groom' and then to silence the young person. Young people using our services, for instance, find themselves in closer proximity to adults other than their own parents or carers than they would if they lived in the family home. These adults may take advantage, and some may attempt to gain work with Bods in order to get access to vulnerable young people.

Therefore, do not wait to see whether there is really a problem, and do not attempt to investigate, as this requires specialist skills and knowledge.

If you have a concern regarding the welfare of a young person, you must report this immediately to the Project Manager, who will manage the situation from there on. They will then follow the referral procedures set out below. Should the Project Manager not be available then make direct contact with a representative of the Trustees.

## **Definitions of Abuse**

### **Physical Abuse**

May involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning or suffocating. Also includes Munchausen Syndrome by proxy, whereby a parent feigns the symptoms of, or deliberately causes ill health or a child.

### **Emotional Abuse**

Persistent emotional ill treatment which is likely to cause serious harm to the child's emotional development. May involve conveying to children they are worthless, unloved, inadequate or causing children to feel frightened, in danger, be exploited or corrupted.

### **Sexual Abuse**

Forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, whether or not they are aware of what is happening. May involve physical contact, penetrative or non penetrative acts, also includes involving children in watching pornographic material or watching sexual acts.

### **Neglect**

The persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and psychological needs which is likely to result in serious impairment to their health and development.

## **Indicators of Abuse**

### **Indicators of Physical Abuse**

- Bruises on trunk
- Bruises on face, upper arm, shoulders and neck, consistent with gripping
- Cigarette burns
- Human bite marks
- Unusually fearful with adults
- Unnaturally compliant to parents
- Refusal to discuss injuries/fear of medical help
- Withdrawal from physical contact
- Aggression toward others
- Wears cover-up clothing

### **Indicators of Emotional Abuse**

- Over-reaction to mistakes
- Continual self-depreciation
- Fear of new situations
- Inappropriate emotional responses to painful situations
- Fear of parents being contacted
- Neurotic behaviour (such as rocking, hair twisting, thumb sucking)

### **Indicators of Sexual Abuse**

- Soreness in genital area, anus or mouth
- Sexual knowledge inappropriate for age
- Sexualised behaviour in young children
- Sexually provocation behaviour/promiscuity
- Hinting at sexual activity
- Sudden apparent changes in personality
- Lack of concentration, restlessness, aimlessness
- Socially withdrawn

### **Indicators of Neglect**

- Constant hunger
- Constant tiredness
- Destructive tendencies
- Low self esteem
- No social relationships
- Compulsive stealing or scavenging
- Poor state of clothing
- Poor skin tone and hair tone
- Untreated medical problems
- Poor personal hygiene

## **Staff code of conduct**

### Staff should not

- Spend excessive amounts of time alone with children, away from others.
- Do things of a personal nature for children that they can do themselves.
- Inappropriately cuddle children
- Take children alone in a car journey, however short.
- Meet with children outside the organised activities.
- Deliberately contact children outside of organised activities by phone, text, email, internet or the like.
- Engage in sexually provocative or rough physical games (except structured sports activities).
- Engage in or tolerate any bullying either by adults, young people or children.
- Make sexually suggestive remarks or discriminatory comments about or to children, even in fun.
- Allow children to use inappropriate language unchallenged.
- Show favouritism
- Permit abusive peer actions (e.g. bullying, initiation ceremonies)

### Should

- Listen to children.
- Value and respect children as individuals, regardless of their gender, ethnicity, disability or sexual identity.
- As appropriate, involve children in decision-making processes.
- As appropriate, encourage and praise children.

- **Legal Framework**

This policy was drawn up with close reference to the document “Safe from Harm”, which was prepared by the Home Office (1993) as a code of practice for safeguarding the welfare of children and young people (up to the age of 16) in voluntary organisations in England and Wales.

The policy supports and reinforces “The Children Act (1989)”, “The United Nations Convention on the Right of the Child”, “The Human Rights Act (1998)”, “The Protection of children Act (1999)” and “Working Together to Safeguard Children (DoH 1999).” They are applicable to all workers, staff and volunteers.

All situations that involve children and young people are exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974. This means that all convictions that relate to children and young people, however old, must be declared. Information about other criminal convictions must also be given, as these may be relevant to the suitability of the person.