

West Alness Residents Association (West End Community Centre)

Child Protection Policy

WARA recognises that child protection should not be treated in isolation. We will take on board guidance given by Highland Child Protection Committee and will address recruitment and selection of volunteers and paid employees by doing the following:

- We accept that it is our responsibility as the management committee that all adults with regular access to children have been appropriately vetted. We arrange through the CRBS for disclosure checks by the Scottish Criminal Records Office;
- We will make a request for previous addresses on job application forms;
- We will ask for the names of two referees who will be prepared to provide a written reference and who may be interviewed personally;
- We will interview prospective volunteers and staff;
- We will note at interview all previous relevant experience of volunteers and staff;
- We will carry out a probationary period of at least three months for all volunteers and staff.

WARA believes that every child regardless of age has at all times and in all situations a right to feel safe and protected from any situation or practice that results in a child being physically or psychologically damaged. In our Centre, if we have suspicions about a child's physical, sexual or emotional well being, we will take action.

In compliance with the Protection of Children (Scotland) Act 2003, we will refer any individual working in a child care position, whether paid or unpaid, to the Scottish Ministers for inclusion in the DWCL (Disqualified from Working with Children List) if they have harmed a child or put a child at risk of harm AND have been dismissed or moved away from contact with children as a consequence.

All volunteers or staff are encouraged to share concerns with the committee's Designated Officer(s). If the situation is clearly an urgent case, the child is too frightened to go home or you have serious doubts about the child's safety, contact Social Work Services or Police immediately. If your concerns are more general about a child's welfare, then discuss these with the committee's Designated Officer(s). This person should then make a referral to the Designated Officer at Social Work, who will make the necessary arrangements. It is important that all volunteers and staff will follow the procedures below:

1. Upon the receipt of any information from a child or suspicions about a child's safety, it is necessary to record what they have seen, heard or know accurately at the time the event occurs;
2. Share their concerns with the Designated Officers for the management committee and agree action to take;
3. NEVER DO YOUR OWN INVESTIGATING.

IF YOU HAVE CONCERNS YOU MUST ACT. IT MAY BE THE FINAL PIECE OF THE JIGSAW THAT IS NEEDED TO PROTECT THAT CHILD – OR YOU MAY PROTECT FURTHER CHILDREN FROM BEING HURT.

Telephone Numbers

Area Social Work Office 882609
Area Social Work Office Designated Officer Mrs Patricia Haigh 882609
Social Work Child Protection Officer Maureen Keough 868529
Out of hours Social Work Emergency Service – 08457 697284

Alness Police Station 882222 Designated Officer Inspector John Chisholm

WARA (West End Community Centre) Designated Officers, Elizabeth (Biff) Goulding 884137 and Eileen Rapson (883719)

This policy was adopted in September 2000 originally, revised each year and last updated in July 2007

Jennifer MacLeod Chairperson 883564

The Role of the Designated Officers (Eileen Rapson and Elizabeth Goulding)

As a Designated Officer for WARA (West End Community Centre Management Committee), you are responsible for ensuring that your policy is up to date, that it is clearly displayed, that the volunteers and staff are aware of the policy and have read and understood it and that new volunteers/staff are given a copy at their induction.

You must make sure that you are up to date with the current Designated Officer at Social Work and at the Police Station and have to hand the telephone numbers.

Do not be afraid to make contact with these people for advice and guidance – remember – you may not be the only one to have concerns. You must also remember that all referrals are discussed thoroughly by the statutory agencies prior to any action being taken. Your concerns will be genuine and treated as such by them.

Revised July 2007

WEST ALNESS RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION GOOD PRACTICE GUIDELINES FOR CHILD PROTECTION

Child Protection

The Children (Scotland) Act 1995 states that each child has the right to protection from all forms of abuse, neglect or exploitation. It also states that children should have the right to express their views on any issues or decisions affecting them.

As a Community Centre, we offer a very valuable service to children. They learn to take part in the activities we offer. They also learn to trust and respect the adults involved. This places volunteers in a unique position in that child's life.

The Committee has a duty to ensure that volunteers are equipped with the necessary information and knowledge to give that child the support, guidance and help needed at that time.

Highland Child Protection Committee recommends the following principles of good practice in child protection for all groups:

- Highland Child Protection Committee believes that all agencies working with vulnerable groups, particularly children, should have a child protection policy for all volunteers and staff;
- Highland Child Protection Committee believes that every child, regardless of age, has at all times, in all situations a right to feel safe and protected from any situation or practice which results in the child being physically or psychologically damaged;
- Above all, we should all remember that the welfare of the child is of paramount consideration and we must all work together to ensure the protection of children

What is Child Abuse?

The formal definition of Child Abuse is –

‘Children may be in need of protection where their basic needs are not being met, in a manner appropriate to their age and stage of development, and they will be at risk through avoidable acts of commission or omission on the part of their parent(s), brother(s) or sister(s) or other relative(s) or a carer (ie the person(s) while not a parent who has actual custody of the child).’

This is a very open definition which encourages us to be open minded and think about what child abuse is. For those who are working in the field of Child Protection the definition gets broken down further into Categories of Abuse, namely:

- Physical Injury
- Sexual Abuse
- Non-organic Failure to Thrive
- Emotional Abuse
- Physical Neglect.

How To React and Listen

Volunteers and staff must, at all times:

- Acknowledge the age group they work with;
- Never trivialise or exaggerate child abuse issues;
- Allow the child time to speak and not interrupt nor make suggestions to them which could imply making an investigation;
- Reassure the child that they are glad she or he has told what has happened and that it was right to tell;
- Not interrogate or question other than to clarify your understanding. If the matter is to be investigated further it will be so done by trained professionals. No matter how well you know the child, spare them having to repeat themselves over and over. Apart from anything else, the child may begin to think that you don't believe them;
- Be honest, tell the child that you cannot keep it a secret, you have to talk to someone else who can help;
- Remain calm, no matter how difficult it is to listen to the child – think of how hard it must be to say it. Some things are very difficult to talk about; you've been chosen because the child feels they can talk to you. If you show anger, disgust, disbelief then the child may stop talking for fear of upsetting you further or feel that your negative feelings are being directed towards them;
- Listen to the child – REALLY LISTEN – take what they say seriously. Tell them that they've done the right thing by telling you;
- As soon as practical write down everything the child told you, but remember that this is a confidential matter between you and the child. The only people you should be discussing it with are Eileen and Biff (Elizabeth), our own Designated Officers, Social Work and the Police.

Highland Child Protection Committee recommends the following policy statement

Every group should:

- Hold a register of every child involved with an event and have a contact name and number close to hand in case of emergencies;
- Treat everyone with respect;
- Remember that some issues are confidential;
- Provide an example you would wish others to follow;
- Where possible consider activities which involve more than one adult being present or at least within sight and hearing of others;
- Remember, someone else might misinterpret your actions even if they are well-intentioned;
- Respect a child's right to personal privacy;
- Provide time for children to talk to you;
- Encourage children to respect and care for others;
- Take action to stop any inappropriate verbal or physical behaviour;
- Have a group policy for the collection of children after meetings have finished;
- Remember to REFER not INVESTIGATE any suspicions or allegations about abuse;
- Only share concerns and seek support from those identified in the group's child protection policy.

Adopted 2000

Amended August 2006