

Fostering Compassion

Safeguarding Children and Child Protection Policy



INTRODUCTION

This document is the Child Protection Policy for Fostering Compassion which will be followed by all staff and volunteers of the organisation and followed and promoted by those in the position of leadership within the organisation.

The purpose of the organisation is to run animal and nature based workshops for looked after children who as a result of their own difficult experiences may be struggling with the world around them. Through the medium of animals and nature we help them learn compassion and empathy which in turn, we hope will help to improve their emotional intelligence and literacy. Through the workshops, the children learn to see animals as sentient beings who can share similar emotions to them. Through sharing the rescued animals' stories, the children gain a greater understanding of their own circumstances and the workshops help provide the children with healthier ways to express their emotions.

The organisation does not undertake activities with children in the absence of their parents/carers. Children are always accompanied by at least one adult who stays with them throughout the activity. The adult(s) attending the workshop with the child are known to the social worker or professional who referred the child to the project and have permission to accompany them. Parents/carers remain responsible for their child's welfare throughout all the workshops and activities undertaken by the organisation. The organisation carries out appropriate risk assessments for each activity.

OUR COMMITMENT TO AND CARE OF THE CHILDREN

Fostering Compassion is committed to the welfare and well-being of the children they come into contact with. The purpose of this policy is to make sure that the actions of any adult in the context of the work carried out by the organisation are transparent and promote the welfare and protection of all young people.

If any parent/carer or child/young person has any concerns about the conduct of any member of the organisation, this should be raised in the first instance with the Child Protection Officer and Designated Senior Person for child protection, Sheila Dales.

Our core child protection principles are:

- The welfare of a child and young people is paramount.
- The rights, wishes and feelings of children, young people and their families will be respected and listened to.
- Fostering Compassion will ensure that the welfare of children is at the centre when developing and delivering all activities and workshops.
- Those people in positions of responsibility within the organisation will work in accordance with the interests of children and young people.

- Those people in positions of responsibility within the organisation will ensure that the same opportunities are available to everyone and that all differences between individuals will be treated with respect.
- Policies will be reviewed annually, unless an incident or new legislation or guidance suggests the need for an earlier date of review.

National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2014 states that all agencies that work with children and their families have a responsibility to recognise and actively consider the potential risks to children. They are expected to identify a child's needs and share information and concerns to improve outcomes for children. Fostering Compassion recognise our responsibility to protect and promote the welfare of all children and we endeavour to provide a safe and welcoming environment where children are respected and valued.

GOOD PRACTICE GUIDELINES

In order to provide children with the best possible experience and opportunities all volunteers must operate within an accepted ethical framework. It is not always easy to distinguish poor practice from abuse. It is therefore NOT the responsibility of staff or volunteers to make judgements about whether or not abuse is taking place. It is however their responsibility to identify poor practice and possible abuse and act if they have concerns about the welfare of the child, to meet and maintain our responsibilities towards children, we agree to the following standards of good practice;

- treating all children with respect
- place the safety and welfare of children above all other considerations
- setting a good example by conducting ourselves appropriately
- involving children in decision-making which affects them
- encouraging positive and safe behaviour among children
- being a good listener
- being alert to changes in a child's behaviour
- recognising that challenging behaviour may be an indicator of abuse
- asking the child's and carer's permission before doing anything for them which is of a physical nature, such as assisting with dressing, lifting up to get a better view, helping with craft activities
- maintaining age appropriate standards of conversation and interaction with and between children and avoiding the use of sexualised or derogatory language
- children and parents are informed of the policy and procedures as appropriate

UNDERSTANDING CHILD ABUSE

There are four main types of abuse: **physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse and neglect**. Further information on these are available on page 11 of National Guidance for Child Protection Scotland 2014 <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2014/05/3052>

It commonly occurs within a relationship of trust or responsibility and is an abuse of power or a breach of trust. Abuse can happen to a child or young person regardless of their age, gender, race or ability.

The abuser may be a family member, someone the child encounters in the community, including at sports and leisure activities. Any individual may abuse or neglect a young person directly, or may be responsible for abuse because they fail to prevent another person from harming the child.

Children with disabilities may be at increased risk of abuse through stereotyping, prejudice, discrimination, isolation and a powerlessness to protect themselves or inability to adequately communicate that abuse has occurred.

Indicators of Abuse

It is not always easy to recognise a situation where abuse may occur or has already taken place.

indications that a child is being abused may include one or more of the following:

- 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 an explanation seems inconsistent
- The child describes what appears to be an abusive act involving them
- Another child or adult expresses concern about the welfare of a child
- Unexplained changes in a child's behaviour including becoming very upset, quiet, withdrawn or displaying sudden outbursts of temper
- Inappropriate sexual awareness
- Engaging in sexually explicit behaviour
- Distrust of adults, particularly those with whom a close relationship would normally be expected
- Difficulty in making friends
- Being prevented from socialising with others

Other forms of abuse that a child may experience include Bullying, Child Sexual Exploitation and Domestic Abuse, Fostering Compassion must be vigilant to this type of behaviour and notify the manager of the service should they have any concerns.

It must be recognised that the above list is not exhaustive. In addition the presence of one or more of the indicators is not proof that abuse is taking place. It is not the responsibility of those working in Fostering Compassion to decide that child abuse is occurring. It is their responsibility to act on any concerns.

RECEIVING EVIDENCE OF POSSIBLE ABUSE

Staff or volunteers may become aware of possible abuse in various ways. It may be witnessed, suspected or be reported to us by the child themselves.

If a child says or indicates that he/she is being abused the staff member or volunteer should:

- Stay calm so as not to frighten the child
- Reassure the child that they are not to blame and that it was right to tell
- Listen to the child, showing that he/she is taking them seriously
- Keep questions to a minimum so that there is a clear and accurate understanding of what has been said. Only ask questions to clarify.
- Inform the child that the volunteer or staff member must pass on the information and this is to help stop the abuse continuing.
- Report the incident to the designated Child Protection Officer/manager as soon as possible
- The manager will discuss the next steps with the Social worker allocated to the child/young person.

PHOTOGRAPHY AND IMAGES

No photographs or videos of the children will be taken at events and activities. We have a nominated photographer who is trained in capturing the essence of the activities without photographing the children or disclosing their identities. This is the only photography allowed at activities.

We understand that carers may wish to take photographs for the children's memory boxes, but we ask that they ensure they only photograph their own children.

We appreciate that volunteers may wish to take photographs while visiting the Five Sisters Zoo, but if doing so, they are instructed that they must only photograph the animals and wait until after the children have gone.

VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT

All Fostering Compassion volunteers go through an induction and training programme before helping at activities. They are fully briefed on the nature of the project and the sensitivity of the vulnerable children that we are working with. All volunteers are aware that the children referred to the Fostering Compassion project have been victims of abuse and/or neglect and have come from chaotic and traumatic backgrounds. Volunteers are advised that there are four categories of abuse: physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse and neglect and are instructed to be mindful of this at all times especially if the children's behaviour becomes challenging.

Safer recruitment

To ensure safe recruitment of volunteers to the Fostering Compassion Project all applicants will:

- complete an initial 'Registration of Interest' form as soon as they express an interest in volunteering for the project
- After this is received, they attend a training workshop
- They are then asked to fill in a second form which asks them to
 - a) provide the names of two referees, including at least one who can comment on the applicant's suitability to work with children
 - b) disclose if they have a criminal record or any convictions pending
 - c) provide their next of kin details in case of an emergency

After provision of all the required information, receipt of references, and completion of training, the volunteers will then begin helping out at workshops. During workshops, new volunteers will be supported and guided by senior volunteers and the Workshop Supervisor in attendance.

Volunteers will be asked to attend a briefing prior to commencement of any activity and stay for a short debriefing at the end of each activity where they can ask any questions or raise any concerns to ensure they feel valued and supported and enjoy their volunteering experience.

CONFIDENTIALITY AND DATA PROTECTION

The organisation ensures that any data and personal information received in relation to a referral is kept confidentially in encrypted files on a password protected computer kept in a secure place.

Data will only be used in connection with our core purpose and kept for no longer than necessary. It will be held in conjunction with the Information Commission's Data Protection Principles.

Information received in relation to the child/children referred to Fostering Compassion will only be shared with volunteers on a “need to know” basis.

All staff will understand that child protection issues warrant a high level of confidentiality and should only discuss concerns with the designated senior person. That person will then decide who else needs to have the information.

Volunteers must maintain confidentiality and not discuss any participant’s circumstances outwith the activities and workshops.