

## Child Protection Policy

Organisations working with children have a moral and legal responsibility to protect children within their care.

- Child protection policies and procedures help to create 'child-safe' organisations:
- That have an 'aware culture'
- That do everything possible to prevent intentional and unintentional harm coming to children
- Where children feel safe
- Where children can speak out
- Where children are listened to
- Where children & staff are respected and empowered.

COVEY is such an organisation.

COVEY (Community Volunteers Enabling You) has committed to creating a safe environment for children, young people and adults. COVEY recognises the moral and legal obligations to protect young people and will ensure that staff and volunteers will take all reasonable steps to promote safe practice and to protect young people from harm, abuse and exploitation.

This policy has been prepared with reference to South Lanarkshire Child Protection Committee and Protection of Children (Scotland) Act 2003 and the following principles:

- The welfare of young people is always the primary concern.
- All young people have the right to be protected from abuse regardless of their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, socio-economic status, religious belief and/or sexual identity.
- Protecting children and young people is everyone's responsibility.
- All young people have a right to express their views on matters affecting them.

COVEY will:

- Treat everyone with respect and promote the rights, wishes and feelings of young people.
- Provide time for young people to talk to them and listen to what they say.
- Encourage young people to respect and to care for others.
- Keep an up to date record of every young person involved with COVEY, current living arrangements together with relevant medical details and have a contact name and number close to hand in case of emergencies.
- Respect confidentiality and only share information/concerns with the people/bodies that need to know in order to protect the young person.
- Recruit train and supervise those who work in accordance with volunteer policy and staff handbook
- Ensure that all staff and volunteers working with children and young people are disclosed in accordance with COVEY's Protection of Vulnerable Groups policy.
- Take action to stop inappropriate verbal or physical behaviour including bullying.
- Take all concerns/allegations seriously and respond in line with these and South Lanarkshire Council's Child Protection Procedures. COVEY will refer any concerns and not investigate.
- Parents and carers are provided with two information sheets during initial contact with COVEY, 'Introduction to COVEY for Young People, Parents and Carers', and 'Working with COVEY for Young People, Parents and Carers'. Parents and carers can be provided with copies of COVEY's policies and procedures if they so wish.

All staff and volunteers receive information/training regarding types of abuse and will know how to respond to disclosures or concerns regarding the abuse of a child they are working with (Volunteer Training Session 3).

If COVEY has suspicions about a young person's physical, sexual or emotional well being, they will take appropriate action as set out below. COVEY volunteers are most likely to observe signs of abuse than for a young person to disclose any information about abuse. The Child Protection Register details those who are at risk from the following categories of abuse. The following are definitions pertaining to the different types of Abuse which staff/volunteers may observe or have disclosed to them.

- **Physical Abuse:** Actual or intended physical injury to a child, including the administration of toxic substances, where there is knowledge or reasonable suspicion that the injury was inflicted or knowingly not prevented.
- **Sexual Abuse:** When any person(s) by design or neglect exploits the child, directly or indirectly in any activity intended to lead to the sexual arousal or other forms of gratification for that person or any other persons or networks. This definition stands whether or not the child is said to have initiated or consented to the behaviour.
- **Emotional Abuse:** Failure to provide for the child's basic emotional needs, such as to have a severe effect on the behaviour and development of the child. This is most difficult to evidence.
- **Physical Neglect:** When a child's essential needs (food, clothing, cleanliness, shelter and warmth) are not met and this is likely to impair their physical health and development. A lack of appropriate care, including deprivation of access to health care, may lead to circumstances which endanger the child.

All volunteers or staff are encouraged to share concerns with either a Befriending Coordinator, Befriending Leader or Project Leader. If the situation is clearly an urgent case or the child is too frightened to go home a call will be made to the Befriending Co-ordinator. If COVEY has very serious doubts about the young person's safety, contact will be made immediately with Social Work Resource Standby or the Police.

If there is a general concern about a young person's welfare, this will be discussed with the Befriending/Project Leader and a referral will then be made to an appropriate professional for an assessment of the young person's needs. It is important that all volunteers and staff communicate concerns accurately and the following will be carried out:

1. Volunteers will immediately inform a Befriending Coordinator upon receipt of any information from a young person or suspicions of abuse towards a young person, and an accurate, detailed written account of what was seen, heard or known using the young person's own words about the event will be made, as soon as is practical after the event.
2. The Befriending Coordinator will share these concerns with the Befriending/Project Leader and agree what action to take.
3. COVEY will avoid asking any more questions than are necessary to clarify whether there is a concern. Statutory services may then undertake further in depth investigations of any suspicions or allegations of abuse.
4. If COVEY has any concerns regarding a young person, they will act; as it may be the final piece of a jigsaw that is needed to protect the young person and it may prevent further young people from being hurt.

## Review

This Policy will be regularly monitored and reviewed on an annual basis. In addition the policy may be reviewed if:

- There is a change in legislation or guidance on the protection of young people or changes within COVEY.
- Following any issues or concerns that are raised about the protection of a young person involved with COVEY.

## Code of Conduct

COVEY will:

- Always put the care, welfare and safety needs of a young person first.
- Respect a young person's culture (e.g. faith and religious beliefs) and right to privacy and personal space.
- Respond sensitively to young people who seem anxious about participating in certain activities.
- Speak to a higher authority immediately if they are worried about a young person.
- Be aware of and sensitive to the vulnerabilities of some children e.g. young people with a disability; young people from Travelling Communities; ethnic minority children.
- Listen carefully to any other child who tells you they are being harmed and report immediately to the Befriending Coordinator/Befriending Leader/Project Leader.
- Never dismiss what a young person tells you as lies or exaggeration.
- Always give constructive feedback and not negative criticism.
- Ensure where possible that first aid is administered by people that have relevant training and qualifications.

COVEY will not:

- Exaggerate or trivialise a volunteer or members of staff's concern about a young person or ignore allegations of suspicion or abuse.
- Discuss personal issues about a young person or their family with others except other Befriending Coordinators/Befriending Leader/Project Leader where they are concerned about the young person's well being.
- Make derogatory remarks, gestures or use inappropriate language in front of children.
- Allow a young person to be bullied or harmed by anyone within COVEY.
- Allow swearing or sexualised language to go unchallenged.

COVEY must never:

- Engage in any inappropriate physical contact e.g. holding the child's hand.
- Engage in provocative games including horseplay.
- Allow others or themselves to engage or touch a young person in a sexually provocative way.
- Make sexually suggestive comments to a young person, even in fun.
- Engage in rough physical contact with a young person unless it is permitted within the rules of the game, activity or conforms to guidance on appropriate physical restraint.
- Form intimate physical or emotional relationships with children.

- Harass or intimidate a young person or volunteer, particularly because of their age, 'race', gender, sexual orientation, religious belief, socio-economic class or disability.
- Invite or allow young people to stay with you at your home in the context of your role within COVEY.

#### COVEY Guidelines on Disclosures to Staff or Volunteers

When a child discloses any information that is of concern relating to potential abuse:

##### What to do

- tell the child the truth, you can't keep a secret, make no promises
- tell the child they were right to tell and it's OK that they've done so
- tell the child it is not their fault/offer reassurance
- listen carefully and note down later what they said in their own words

If the child is injured, or at immediate risk of harm, keep them with you and phone for support. For volunteers call a Befriending Coordinator (numbers of the rear of your young person's identification card) for Staff seek support from your Line Manager. If you cannot get support from the person/s specified you should contact Social Work Standby – 0800 678 3282

No volunteer or staff member should take on the responsibility of assessing the full situation.

##### What Not To Do:

- do not probe the child for further information or ask leading questions
- do not make false promises e.g. everything will be sorted out right away
- don't express shock
- don't make statements like "this is really serious" or "don't tell anyone" these could silence a child.

##### What should follow is:

- Full incident report completed within 24 hours by the person the disclosure was made to, with support, if required
- Notification of Concern (GIRFEC) completed and sent to Social Work office.