

# CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

(Reviewed January 2019)

## 1. Introduction

Everyone travelling with Osprey Coaches is entitled to do so in an enjoyable and safe environment. The Company has a moral and legal obligation to ensure that, when given responsibility for young people, drivers provide them with the highest possible standard of care.

The Company is committed to devising and implementing policies so that everyone in the Company accepts their responsibilities to safeguard children from harm and abuse. This means to follow procedures to protect children and report any concerns about their welfare to appropriate authorities.

The aim of the policy is to promote good practice, providing children and young people with appropriate safety/protection whilst in the care of the Company and to allow staff to make informed confident responses to specific child protection issues.

**A child/young person is defined as a person under the age of 18 (Children's Act 1989)**

## 2. Policy Statement

Osprey Coaches understand and commits to:

- The welfare of the child is paramount
- As children, whatever their age, culture, ability, gender, language, racial origin, religious belief and/or sexual identity should be able to participate in the coach journey in a safe environment
- Taking all reasonable steps to protect children from harm, discrimination and degrading treatment and to respect their rights, wishes and feelings
- All suspicions and allegations of poor practice or abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately
- All employees who work with children will be recruited with regard to their suitability for that responsibility, and will be provided with guidance in good practice and child protection procedures
- Working in partnership with parents and children is essential for the protection of children

## 3. Monitor and Review

The implementation of procedures are regularly monitored and reviewed. This policy is reviewed every 3 years or whenever there is a major change in the organisation or in relevant legislation.

## 2. Promoting Good Practice

### 2.1 Introduction

To provide children with the best possible experience during their travel in, everyone 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 the employees 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 a child, as explained in section 4.

## 2.2 Good Practice

All staff should adhere to the following principles and action:

- Always work in an open environment (e.g. avoiding private or unobserved situations and encouraging open communication with no secrets)
- Make the experience enjoyable and confront and deal with bullying
- Treat all young people equally and with respect and dignity
- Maintain a safe and appropriate distance with the children (e.g. it is not appropriate for staff to have an intimate relationship with a child)
- Avoid unnecessary physical contact with young people. Where any form of manual/physical support is required it should be provided openly and with the consent of the young person. Physical contact can be appropriate so long as it is neither intrusive nor disturbing and the young person's consent has been given
- Be an excellent role model,, this includes not smoking or drinking alcohol in the company of young people
- Keep a written record of any injury that occurs, along with details of any treatment given

## 2.3 Poor Practice

The following are regarded as poor practice and should be avoided by all staff:

- Unnecessarily spending excessive amounts of time alone with young people away from others
- Allow or engage in inappropriate touching of any form
- Allowing young people to use inappropriate language unchallenged
- Making sexually suggestive comments to a young person
- Reducing a young person to tears as a form of control
- Allow allegations made by a young person to go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon
- Do things of a personal nature that the young person can do for themselves

*If during your care you accidentally hurt a young person, the young person seems distressed in any manner, appears to be sexually aroused by your actions and/or if the young person misunderstands or misinterprets something you have done, report any such incidents as soon as possible to another colleague and make a written note of it. Parents should be informed of the incident.*

## 3. Defining Child Abuse

### 3.1 Introduction

Child abuse is any form of physical, emotional or sexual mistreatment or lack of care that leads to injury or harm, 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 young person regardless of their age, gender, race or ability.

There are four main types of abuse: **physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse and neglect**. The abuser may be a family member, someone the young person encounters in residential care or in the community. Any individual may abuse or neglect a young person directly, or may be responsible for abuse because they fail to prevent another person harming the young person.

Abuse in all of its forms can affect a young person at any age. The effects can be so damaging that if not treated may follow the individual into adulthood.

Young people with disabilities may be at increased risk of abuse through various factors such as stereotyping, prejudice, discrimination, isolation and a powerlessness to protect themselves or adequately communicate that abuse had occurred.

### 3.2 Types of Abuse

**Physical Abuse:** where adults physically hurt or injure a young person e.g. hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, biting, scalding, suffocating, and drowning. Giving young people alcohol or inappropriate drugs would also constitute child abuse. This category of abuse can also include when a parent/carer reports non-existent symptoms or illness deliberately causes ill health in a young person they are looking after. This is called Munchausen's syndrome by proxy.

**Emotional Abuse:** the persistent emotional ill treatment of a young person, likely to cause severe and lasting adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve telling a young person they are useless, worthless, unloved, inadequate or valued in terms of only meeting the needs of another person. It may feature expectations of young people that are not appropriate to their age or development. It may cause a young person to be frightened or in danger by being constantly shouted at, threatened or taunted which may make the young person frightened or withdrawn.

Ill treatment of children, whatever form it takes, will always feature a degree of emotional abuse.

**Bullying:** may come from another young person or an adult. Bullying is defined as deliberate hurtful behavior, usually repeated over a period of time, where it is difficult for those bullied to defend themselves. There are three main types of bullying – it may be physical (e.g. hitting, kicking, slapping), verbal (e.g. racist or homophobic remarks, name calling, graffiti, threats, abusive text messages), emotional (e.g. tormenting, ridiculing, humiliating, ignoring, isolating from a group) or sexual (e.g. unwanted physical contact or abusive comments).

**Neglect:** occurs when an adult fails to meet the young person's basic physical and/or psychological needs, to an extent that is likely to result in serious impairment of the child's health or development. For example, failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, failing to protect from physical harm or danger or failing to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. Refusal to give love, affection and attention can also be a form of neglect.

### 3.3 Indicators of Abuse

It is not always easy to recognise a situation where abuse may occur or has already taken place. Most people are not experts in such recognition, but 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 young person or adult expresses concern about the welfare of a young person
- Unexplained changes in a young person's behavior e.g. becoming very upset, quiet, withdrawn or displaying sudden outbursts of temper
- Inappropriate sexual awareness
- Engaging in sexually explicit behavior
- Distrust of adults, particularly those whom a close relationship would normally be expected
- Difficulty in making friends
- Being prevented from socialising with others
- Displaying variations in eating patterns including over eating or loss of appetite
- Losing weight for no apparent reason]becoming increasingly dirty or unkempt

Signs of bullying include:

- Behavioral changes such as reduced concentration and/or becoming withdrawn, clingy, depressed, tearful, emotionally up and down, reluctance to go to certain social environments e.g. school, sports training, youth clubs
- An unexplained drop in performance



- Physical signs such as stomach aches, headaches, difficulty in sleeping, bed wetting, scratching and bruising, damaged clothes, bingeing e.g. on food, alcohol or cigarettes
- A shortage of money or frequent loss of possessions

It must be recognised that the above list is not exhaustive but also that the presence of one or more of the indications is not proof that abuse is taking place. It is **NOT** the responsibility of employees working for the Company to decide that child abuse is occurring. It **IS** their responsibility to act on any concerns.

## **4. Responding to Suspicions and Allegations**

### **4.1 Introduction**

It is not the responsibility of anyone working in the Company (paid or unpaid) to decide whether or not child abuse has taken place. However there is a responsibility to act on any concerns through contact with the appropriate authorities so that they can then make inquiries and take necessary action to protect the young person. This applies to both allegations/suspicions of abuse occurring within the Company's presence and to allegations/suspicions that abuse is taking place elsewhere.

The following explains how to respond to allegations/suspicions

### **4.2 Receiving Evidence of Possible Abuse**

You may become aware of possible abuse in various ways. You may see it happening, you may suspect it happening because of those signs listed in section 3, it may be reported to us by someone else or directly by the young person affected.

It is particularly important to respond appropriately if a young person says or indicate that they are being abused. You should:

- **Stay calm** so as not to frighten the young person
- **Reassure** the child that they are you not blame and that it was right to tell you
- **Listen** to the child, showing that you are taking them seriously
- **Keep questions to a minimum** so that there is a clear and accurate understanding of what has been said. The law is very strict and child abuse cases have been dismissed where it is felt that the child has been led or words and ideas have been suggested during questioning. Only ask questions to clarify
- **Inform** the child that you have to inform other people about what they have told you. Tell the child this is to help stop the abuse continuing
- **Safety of the child** is paramount. If the child needs urgent medical attention call an ambulance, inform the doctors of the concern and ensure they are made aware that this is a child protection issue
- **Record** all information of the form provided in appendix 1
- **Report** the incident to either the General Manager or Managing Director

**In all cases if you are not sure what to do you can gain help from NSPCC UK 24 hour help line on 0800 800 500.**

### **4.3 Recording Information**

To ensure that information is as helpful as possible, a detailed record should always be made at the time of the disclosure/concern. In recording you should confine yourself to that facts and distinguish what is your personal knowledge and what others have told you. Do not include your own opinions.

Information should include the following:

- The child's name, age and date of birth
- The child's home address and telephone number whether or not the person making the report is expressing their concern or someone else's
- The nature of the allegation, including dates, times and any other relevant information

- A description of any visible bruising or injury, location, size etc. Also any indirect signs, such as behavioral changes
- Details of any witnessed to the incidents
- The child's account, if it can be given, of what has happened and how any bruising/injuries occurred
- Have the parents been contacted? If so what has been said?
- Has anyone else been contacted (e.g. police, social services, school)? If so record details
- Has anyone been alleged to the abuser? If so record details

#### 4.4 Reporting the Concern

**In the rare instances where a driver becomes aware of a potential concern, the concern must be raised with the adult i/c of the group who is responsible for the welfare of the children. It is NOT the driver's responsibility to respond. However, if this is not appropriate, the following courses of action are available.**

All suspicions and allegations MUST be reported appropriately. It is recognised that strong emotions can be aroused particularly in cases where sexual abuse is suspected or where there is misplaced loyalty to someone close. It is important to understand these feelings but not allow them to interfere with your judgement about action to take.

The Company expects its employees to discuss any concerns they may have about the welfare of a child **immediately with a member of the Osprey management team** and subsequently to check that appropriate action has been taken.

***If no one from the management team is available you should take responsibility and seek advice from the NSPCC helpline or the police.***

If there is any doubt, you must report the incident – it may be just one of a series of other incidents which together cause concern.

Any suspicion that a child has been abused by an employee should be reported to a member of the management team who will take appropriate steps to ensure the safety of the child in question and any other child who may be at risk. This will include the following:

- The company will refer the matter to social service department
- The parent/carer of the child will be contacted as soon as possible following advice from the social service department
- The Managing Director should be notified to decide who will deal with any media inquiries and implement any immediate disciplinary proceedings

Allegations of abuse are sometimes made sometime after the event. Where such allegation is made, you should follow the same procedures and have the matter reported to social services. This is because other children and/or any of their siblings may be at risk from the abuser. Anyone who has a previous conviction for offences related to abuse against children is automatically excluded from working with children

#### 4.5 Confidentiality

Every effort should be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned. Information should be handled and disseminated on a need to know basis only. This includes the following people:

- Managing Director or General Manager
- The parents/carers of the child
- The person making the allegation
- Social services/police
- The alleged abuser (an parents if the alleged abuser is a child)

Seek social service advice on who should approach the alleged abuser.



All information should be stored in a secure place with limited access to designated people, in line with data protection laws.

#### **4.6 Internal Inquiries and Suspension**

- The Company will make an immediate decision whether any individual accused of abuse should be temporarily suspended pending further police and social services inquiries (following the disciplinary procedure)
- Irrespective of the findings of social services or police inquiries, the management team will assess all individual cases to decide whether a member of staff can be reinstated and how this can be sensitively handled. The welfare of the child should remain of paramount importance throughout.

### **5. Recruiting and Selection Employees to Work with Children**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

It is important that all reasonable steps are taken to prevent unsuitable people from working with children. This applies equally to paid and unpaid staff both full and part time. To ensure unsuitable people are prevented from working with children the following steps will be taken when recruiting:

- All staff should complete an application form. The application form will elicit information about the applicants past and a self-disclosure about any criminal record.
- Consent should be obtained from the applicant to seek information from the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS).
- Two confidential references should be obtained. These reference **MUST** be taken up and confirmed through telephone contact
- Evidence of identity (passport or driving licence with photo)

All employees will be required to undertake an interview. All employees should receive formal or informal induction during which:

- A check should be made that the application form has been completed in full, including sections on criminal records and self-disclosures
- The qualifications should be verified
- Job requirements and responsibilities should be clarified
- Child protections procedures are explained

The Company requires:

- All staff who have access to children undergo a DBS check
- All staff and members of the management team to undertake relevant child protection training or undertake a form of home study, to ensure their practice is exemplary and to facilitate the development of positive culture towards good practice and child protection
- All employees to receive advisory information outlining good/bad practice and informing them what to do if they have concerns about the behavior of an adults towards a young person



## CHILD PROTECTION – INCIDENT REPORT (appendix 1)

<b>Company:</b>	
<b>Your Name:</b>	
<b>Your Position:</b>	
<b>Childs name:</b>	
<b>Childs Age and Date of Birth:</b>	
<b>Is the child expressing their concern or someone else's? If someone else's give details</b>	
<b>Details of allegation / incident:</b> <i>continue on separate sheet if necessary</i>	
<b>Description of any visible injuries:</b> <i>continue on separate sheet if necessary</i>	
<b>Description of any indirect signs:</b> <i>continue on separate sheet if necessary</i>	

<b>Details of any witnesses:</b>	
<b>Child's account of incident/s</b> <i>continue on separate sheet if necessary</i>	
<b>Have the child's parents been contacted? If so give details</b>	
<b>Has external agencies been contacted? If so give details</b>	
<b>Has anyone been alleged to be the abuser? If so give details</b>	

<b>SIGNATURES:</b>			
<b>Your Signature</b>		<b>Date:</b>	
<b>Management Signature</b>		<b>Date:</b>	
<b>Management Position Held:</b>		<b>Date:</b>	