

Rhyl Youth Action Group Limited

Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy (& Procedures)



Rhyl Youth Action Group Limited
Issued by: - RYAG Project Manger
Date: 10 October 2007
Issue No: Two

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1. Introduction

Rhyl Youth Action Group Limited believes that it is always unacceptable for a child or young person to experience abuse of any kind and recognises its responsibility to safeguard the welfare of all children and young people by a commitment to practice which protects them from harm.

A child is defined in law (Children Act 1989) as anyone below his or her 18th birthday. Child protection legislation and guidance therefore only applies to those users of Rhyl Youth Action Groups activities/services up to that time.

Rhyl Youth Action Group also works with those over the age of 18 and recognises its duty of care to all the young people with whom it works. Whilst the legal framework may differ, the spirit of these procedures should be applied in respect of all young people. There may also be occasions when the duty of care extends to the children of clients.

Rhyl Youth Action Groups approach to the protection of children and young people is based on the principles recognised in the Children Act 1989 and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of the Child.

We recognise:

- The welfare of the child/young person is paramount.
- All children and young people, regardless of age, disability, gender, racial heritage, religious belief and sexual orientation or identity have the right to protection from all types of harm and abuse.
- Working in partnership with children, young people, their parents, carers and other agencies is key in promoting young people's welfare.

2. The purpose of this policy and procedures:

- To provide protection for the children, young people and vulnerable adults who access Rhyl Youth Action Group services.
- To provide all staff and volunteers with guidance on procedures they should adopt in the event that they suspect that a child or young person may be experiencing, or be at risk from, some form of abuse.
- To guide staff on responding appropriately to and reporting child protection concerns.

3. To whom the policy applies

This policy applies to all staff. In this instance "staff" relates to all paid employees, seconded staff, volunteers, mentors, students, agency workers, contract/sessional and unpaid staff working on behalf of Rhyl Youth Action Group in any capacity and in any setting.

4. Safeguarding Advisers

Rhyl Youth Action Group shall have people with special responsibilities with regard to Safeguarding and Child Protection. These staff are to be trained to carry out their duties. If unavailable then external personal shall be consulted.

4.1 Lead Safeguarding Adviser

His/Her responsibilities include:

- Developing Rhyl Youth Action Groups approach to Safeguarding, reviewing the policy and procedures on a regular basis.
- Providing advice and support to junior Safeguarding Advisers.
- Management of referrals/cases reported and work with Senior Management.
- Auditing the operation of the policy and procedures.
- Implementing the training strategy.

5. Abuse

5.1 What is Abuse?

It is generally accepted that there are four main forms of abuse. The following definitions are taken from “Working Together to Safeguard Children” (1999, Department of Health, Home Office, Department for Education and Employment).

➤ **Physical Abuse**

Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, drowning or suffocating. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer feigns the symptoms of or deliberately causes ill health to a child they are looking after. Physical abuse, as well as being the result of a deliberate act, can also be caused through omission or the failure to act to protect.

➤ **Neglect**

The persistent failure to meet a child’s basic physical and psychological needs, which is likely to result in serious impairment to health and development. It may involve a carer failing to protect a child from exposure to any kind of danger, including cold or starvation, or extreme failure to carry out important aspects of care, resulting in a significant impairment of the child’s health or development.

➤ **Sexual Abuse**

Forcing or enticing a child/young person to take part in sexual activities, whether or not they are aware of what is happening. This includes rape, incest and all forms of sexual activity involving children, including pornography and prostitution.

➤ **Emotional Abuse**

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

Some children may be more vulnerable to abuse for example the available UK evidence on the extent of abuse among disabled children suggests that they are at increased risk of abuse and that the presence of multiple disabilities appears to increase the risk of both abuse and neglect.

Some studies suggest children and young people from minority ethnic groups may be at increased risk of abuse through factors such as stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination.

There is also extensive evidence that children and families from ethnic minority groups often fail to receive an appropriate service from the statutory authorities when concerns are raised about a child or young person's welfare. Over action and in action have both been shown to be based on misunderstandings and misinterpretations of different cultural patterns, which have led to failure to meet children's needs.

Whilst not categories of abuse, there may be sources of stress within families which have a negative impact on a child or young person's health, development and well being either directly or because they affect the capacity of parents to respond to their child's needs. Sources of stress may include domestic violence, social exclusion - for example poverty, the mental illness of a parent or carer, drug and alcohol misuse.

5.2 Recognising Abuse

Staff are not expected to be Child Protection experts. However, there are a number of circumstances under which staff might have concerns that a child or young person has been or is being abused:

- A child or young person may tell about abuse they have experienced
- A third party – a parent, relative, carer, another young person, other professionals, neighbour – sharing concerns

Staff may also become concerned through observing:

- A bruise or injury which is unusual for example on a part of the body which is not normally prone to such injuries for example on the cheeks
- Injuries which require but have not received medical attention
- Cigarette burns or bite marks
- Unexplained changes in behaviour either over time or suddenly for example becoming aggressive, quiet or withdrawn
- Running away from home

- None attendance at school, projects or activities
- Reluctance to get changed or for example wearing long sleeves in hot weather
- The young person appears not to trust certain adults for example parent, carer, staff member with whom you would usually expect them to have or once had a close relationship
- The young person being discouraged or unable to make friends or from socialising with others
- The young person becoming unusually dirty or unkempt
- Changes to eating patterns
- The young person developing a disturbed sleeping pattern
- The young person self harms or attempts to self harm
- Age inappropriate sexual knowledge
- Sexually inappropriate behaviour

The above list is not exhaustive

Many children and young people will exhibit some of these indicators at some time and the presence of one or more should not be taken as proof that abuse is occurring. There may be other reasons for changes in behaviour such as a death or crisis in the family the staff's knowledge of a young person over a period of time may help them to understand whether there is cause for concern.

5.3 What to do if someone discloses an abusive act or experience

If a child or young person confides to someone that they are being, or have been, abused they have placed that person in a position of trust.

Staff should:

- Be clear that they cannot keep secrets and that they have to pass on information if they think a child or young person has been or is being harmed in some way.
- React calmly. Panic may frighten or silence the person.
- Tell the person they were right to tell.
- Make it clear the child/young person is not to blame.
- Take what is said seriously recognising that there may be difficulties in interpreting what is said by a child.
- Keep questions to an absolute minimum to ensure a clear and accurate understanding of what is being said. Only ask questions if they need to clarify what they are being told –they should not ask about explicit details – it is up to Social Services/the Police to investigate fully.
- Make a full record of what is being said, heard and seen as soon as possible.
- Do not delay in passing the information onto a line manager and/or Social Services or the North Wales Police.

6 What to do if you have a concern

If you have concerns for the safety of a child or young person you should inform the Safeguarding Adviser.

6.1 Roles & responsibilities

Both recognising and responding to abuse can be a complex matter.

It is not the responsibility of Rhyl Youth Action Group to decide whether or not abuse has taken place. It is the responsibility of staff at Rhyl Youth Action Group to act if there is cause for concern, in order that the appropriate agencies can investigate and take any action necessary to protect a child or young person.

The legal framework differs depending on the age of young person. Where, your concerns relate to someone below their 18th Birthday, any suspicion, allegation or incident of abuse must be reported to the Safeguarding Adviser **in the same working day**.

If the member of staff is not happy with the response they receive, or cannot contact the Safeguarding Adviser, they should refer the matter to the North Wales Police or Social Services.

The member of staff should record the allegation/incident/suspicion. It is important that all concerns are properly recorded. Rhyl Youth Action Group has a standard Safeguarding & Child Protection Report form to help people record relevant information. These forms **must** be used if you have a concern.

Some of the information requested by the form may not be available. Staff should not pursue the questioning of the child or young person for this information if it is not given freely. There should be no delay in reporting the matter by waiting for all the information.

In completing the form it is important not to write speculative comments but to stick to the facts. Staff's opinion may be crucial but it should be recorded as an opinion and any evidence stated to support these opinions. Records pertaining to issues of child protection may be accessible to third parties such as Social Services, Police, the Courts and Solicitors.

The Safeguarding Adviser to whom the concerns are reported has responsibility for deciding whether to refer the matter onto the relevant Social Services Department and/or the Police. Referrals should preferably be made within the same working day and certainly within 24 hours. It is the responsibility of the Safeguarding Adviser to decide whether the parents/carers of the child or young person should be informed of the referral.

There may be instances where urgent medical attention is needed. In these circumstances, staff should always consult with someone else, but it may be

necessary to make immediate contact with the Police and/or Social Services or emergency health services.

On occasion, a child or young person may abuse another child. Child protection procedures should be followed in those situations.

If you have concerns about someone over 18 then you should discuss these with the Adviser to discuss any appropriate action.

6.2 What happens to reports?

If the Safeguarding Adviser decides to report the concern they will do so by telephone within 24 hours. They will follow up the phone call by putting the concern in writing within 3 days of making the telephone call.

If the child has a known Social Worker they or their manager or, in their absence, the Duty Social Worker will be informed immediately. If the child is not known to Social Services, the Duty Officer will be contacted.

The Country/Regional Safeguarding Adviser will ensure that in reporting any incident that a Social Worker or Social Work Manager is spoken to directly and will make a note of name of the Social Worker spoken to and the action proposed.

Section 7 notes the roles and responsibilities of delivery partners.

6.3 Barriers to reporting abuse

Some people have concerns about sharing confidential information. It would normally be considered good practice not to refer a child or young person to another agency without their knowledge and consent. However this principle of confidentiality can be overridden when there are child protection concerns.

There are many common myths about the child protection system. One of the most common is that reporting child abuse means that a child or young person will be removed from his/her parents. This is rarely true and, even when it is, most children are returned to parental care.

<p>You must report any concerns that you have. The Safeguarding Adviser is available to provide support and discuss staff concerns.</p>
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6.4 Responding to allegations of abuse or inappropriate or dangerous behaviour against a member of staff

Regardless of the age of the young person, if an allegation of abuse or inappropriate conduct is made against a member of staff, or person in a position of trust, then this **must** be reported to the Safeguarding Adviser **immediately**.

Concerns about staff must be treated with the same rigour as other concerns. If there are concerns that child abuse has taken place the Safeguarding Adviser will pass this information to the Social Services Department and/or the Police for investigation.

The Safeguarding Adviser and senior managers will also need to refer to any Disciplinary Policy and Procedure and decide whether the member of staff should be suspended pending a full investigation.

If the member of staff is not happy with the response they receive from the Safeguarding Adviser then they should refer to North Wales Police.

6.5 After an allegation

After an allegation or suspicion about a child protection concern has been investigated, there are likely to be strong feelings among staff, clients, parents and possibly among the wider community, which will need to be addressed. There are likely to be issues of:

- Communication – rumour or fact
- Guilt and blame – if suspicions have been around for sometime
- Impact – on individuals, of the nature of what occurred and to whom

The line manager or committee, in conjunction with the Safeguarding Adviser, will give careful thought to the provision of appropriate support.

7. Working with Partner Organisations

Rhyl Youth Action Group is committed to working in partnership with other agencies. When this involves an agreement for another organisation to provide services on its behalf, Rhyl Youth Action Group will ensure that the partner organisation has appropriate safeguarding policies in place which will include child protection policies and procedures, sound recruitment and selection practices and complaints procedures for users.

The written agreement or protocol detailing the services to be provided should include the procedure to be followed in the event of concerns about child abuse. The purpose of this is to ensure clarity as to which organisation is responsible for taking action in specific circumstances. If the delivery partner is responsible for taking action, the agreement should stipulate that Rhyl Youth Action Group must be informed of all incidents.

If a member of staff becomes aware of allegations of abuse relating to a partner organisation, this should be discussed in the first instance with the Safeguarding Adviser.

* The Safeguarding Adviser for Rhyl Youth Action Group shall be the Project Manger, should a Manger not be in post all issues should be taken to the Director tasked to lead on Safeguarding while no Manger is in post..