

Link Leisure seeks to promote the welfare, safety and protection of children at all times. Link Leisure will provide an environment that ensures children are safe from potential abuse, and will respond to any suspicion of potential abuse in a way which respects the child's dignity, and reinforces the adult's responsibility to the children. Link Leisure is also required to follow Surrey Safeguarding Children Board procedures and guidance.

In order to promote the welfare and safety of children Link Leisure needs to ensure that staff and volunteers are aware of the following:

- **Awareness of abuse**
- **Statement of principles**
- **Reporting and recording concerns**
- **Recruitment and selection of staff**
- **Supervision of children and supervision of staff**

Awareness of Abuse – Definitions of Abuse

All staff need to note the following definitions and pass on any concerns to the nominated officer.

Abuse may be described as:

An act, or failure to act, by the person responsible for the care of the child. It may involve cruelty, exploitation, or neglect.

Abuse takes many forms. Working Together to Safeguard Children (DoH 1999) provides key definitions.

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse involves hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces illness in a child.

Neglect

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food and clothing, shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment), failing to protect a child from physical or emotional harm or danger, failure to ensure adequate supervision including the use of inadequate care-takers, or the failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

Link Leisure
New Horizons
4a Board School Road
Woking
Surrey GU21 5HE

Telephone
01483 770037

Fax
01483 770032

Email
info@linkleisure.org.uk
www.linkleisure.org.uk

Our purpose

To support children and adults with a wide range of learning disabilities to build an enhanced quality of life through sport and social activities in the community

Our vision

To empower our members to make choices and develop independence. We enable social integration and alleviate social isolation

Registered Charity
No.1119596

Registered in England
and Wales as
Link Leisure Ltd.
No. 06056940

Registered office
as above



Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, including prostitution, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative (e.g. rape, buggery, oral sex) or non-penetrative acts.

They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in the looking at, or in the production of, pornographic materials, or watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless and unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond the child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

Enquiries (under S47 of the Children Act 1989) are likely to take place where the local authority has "reasonable cause to suspect that a child who lives, or is found, in their area is suffering, or is likely to suffer significant harm."

Statement of Principles

Principles of good practice ensure that all children are protected from harm. Such principles will help to ensure the promotion of children's health and welfare, including their physical, emotional, social and intellectual development.

These principles include:

- Treating children as individuals entitled to dignity and respect
- Promoting effective partnerships amongst all those involved with children, including children's parents/carers, to improve children's welfare
- Promoting the safety of children in all aspects of the organisation
- Raising awareness of best practice in how to protect children from harm of all kinds
- Running the organisation to minimise risks for children to suffer harm
- Making the safety the responsibility of all members of the organisation

- Establishing effective and opening procedures in responding to accidents, complaints or concerns so that they can be shared and dealt with promptly
- Adopting and applying safe recruitment practices for all staff
- Co-ordinating child protection policies with the Surrey Safeguarding Children Board in accordance with *Working Together to Safeguard Children* (1999)

The prime concern for Link Leisure must be the interests and safety of children. Where there is a conflict of interest between a child and a parent, the welfare of the child must be paramount.

Reporting and Recording Concerns

Each project or group operating with Link Leisure which is attended by children is required to nominate a member of staff who is responsible for child protection, to be referred to as the Evaluator. In most circumstances, this will be the group leader.

Staff members and volunteers involved with Link Leisure, projects or groups are required to promptly pass on any concerns about possible child abuse or concerns about the welfare and safety of a child to the designated staff member for Child Protection. If this designated person is not available the staff member/volunteer is required to contact at least one of the following: Kat Mack who is the designated Child Protection Liaison Officer, or Surrey Children's Service, Emergency Duty Team or Police.

If a child discloses abuse whilst the activity/group is still underway provision needs to be made for the designated staff member for Child Protection to be able to talk to the child and pass the information on, etc. At the same time the other children need to receive a suitable level of supervision.

The Evaluator staff member needs to make a judgement as to whether the allegations or concerns need to be passed on to the CPLO etc, or be discussed with the parents/carers first. If we have concerns about a child they will be shared with the parent. However, if sharing the information may put the child at risk of significant harm we will seek advice from the Duty Assessment Team via the Social Services Contact Centre. If we feel that the child will be at risk of significant harm if allowed to go home with a parent/carer we will seek advice from the Duty Assessment Team via the Contact Centre. It is important that NO assumptions are made that parents could not abuse their child because they appear pleasant or that an assumption is made that abuse has occurred. It is the opportunity to have an honest, open and frank conversation where the indicators are made clear and parents have an opportunity to respond/explain.

The Evaluator must pass on the concern to the CPLO who will assess the situation and liaise with the Social Services Contact Centre or Police.

Staff member/volunteer has a concern about the safety/welfare of a child

Promptly inform the Evaluator at the group (the group leader or scheme co-ordinator)

If Evaluator is not available contact one person/agency:

CPLO if available
Duty Assessment Team via the Social Services Contact Centre
Police in an emergency

Also, as soon as possible, inform the CPLO and the of the referral and the action taken, if unable to contact them first.

Evaluator decide whether to discuss concerns with the parents/carers or make a referral to:

- CPLO if available
- Duty Assessment Team via the Social Services Contact Centre if the concern is urgent or serious
- Police in an emergency

Also inform CPLO of the referral and the action taken if unable to contact them first ie. During out-of-hours clubs or in an emergency.

For contact numbers please see below.

N.B. It is essential that the staff member or volunteer records what they have seen or heard that had led them to believe that a child's welfare or safety is at risk. The designated person for child protection also needs to keep clear and concise records. There also needs to be a record of the action taken and why.

Staff/volunteers should bear in mind that it is not their job to investigate an allegation.

Records should include the following details:

- Name of the child
- Parent's/carer's details
- The child's address
- Relevant telephone numbers
- What is said to have happened or what was seen
- When it the allegation occurred/concern was raised
- Who else was there
- What was said by those involved
- Whether there is any actual evidence, e.g. bruises, bleeding, change in behaviour

- Whom has been told about the allegation/concern
- Who reported the allegation/raised the concern
- Was the child able to say what happened
- Whether the parents have been advised

The record must be signed and dated, legible and written in black ink. It must be stored in a locked filing cabinet. It is imperative that this information is recorded immediately and that the exact wordings are noted.

All information about concerns regarding the welfare of a child needs to be kept confidential and should only be passed on to other staff members/volunteers if it is essential for them to know.

Recruitment and Selection of Staff

The following measures need to be taken to reduce the risk of abuse by staff members and volunteers. If a staff member or volunteer receives the allegation of abuse against another member of staff/volunteer they should promptly inform the designated person for Child Protection. The designated person for Child Protection will advise the CPLO who will take appropriate action and inform the Social Services Contact Centre and the Chairman of Link Leisure Trustee Board. The CPLO will take advice from the Social Services Contact Centre as to whether the staff member should be suspended pending investigation.

Group Leaders need to:

- Ensure that all those working (voluntary or paid) in the group are aware of the fact that such work is exempt from the provision laid down in the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 and will therefore be subject to a Criminal Records Bureau check prior to starting work.
- Ensure all potential workers fill out an Application Form and return this, as soon as possible, to the Volunteer Co-ordinator, who will check references and arrange for a CRB disclosure. Original birth certificates or passports will be used to verify date of birth in order to cut down this major risk of evasion from detection.
- Arrange for the potential worker (voluntary or paid) to work for a set probationary period – usually three months.
- Liaise with the Volunteer Co-ordinator to arrange on-going training to all those involved with the care of children which will help them recognise and respond to suspected abuse of children whether physical, emotional, sexual or as a result of neglect.
- Never allow a non-CRB checked person to be alone with a child or children e.g. going to the toilet or supervising children in a separate room.

Supervision of Children and Supervision of Staff

Supervision of Children

Link Leisure activities should be run with an appropriate level of supervision and support at all times.

Children who attend Link Leisure activities will be kept safe. This will be achieved by ensuring:

- Those in charge are fully competent to do so
- That children are supervised at all times
- Workers know where children are at all times, indoors or out
- There are sufficient staff
- Staff are not left to work alone
- Activities are planned and appropriate
- Workers responsibilities are clearly defined
- Workers have completed a CRB check

The Children's Act guidance and National Day Care standards recommend one member of staff to every eight children when working with children under eight years in a full day-care setting. The standards change for older children and for other categories of care than the full day-care setting, and can be found on www.surestart.gov.uk. Link Leisure recognises, however, that it has to have higher staff ratios than other organisations because we work with children with learning disabilities who are more vulnerable than mainstream children.

Supervision of Staff

Because Link Leisure works with small children with disabilities, staff will have a lot of close physical contact with them. Small children thrive on such contact. However, it is important that staff do not engage in behaviour that could be misinterpreted. We need to ensure staff members are aware of boundaries that are open in the way they deal with children and are in an environment where any concerns are passed on. Staff should try to ensure they are not alone with children and that other staff members are present.

Link Leisure also works with older children with disabilities, many of whom have a reduced understanding of appropriate behaviour. Staff should remember that they are in charge of all situations, which includes conversation, physical contact, rough and tumble play and challenging behaviour. Whilst ensuring the young person or persons feel comfortable and at ease, staff should try to keep these activities age appropriate. If they are unsure how to deal with a situation, staff members should ask for help from other workers. Conversely, all workers should be looking out to help their colleagues if necessary. The rule of thumb when working with young people who might act inappropriately should be: "If you feel uncomfortable, then something is wrong. Do something about it or ask for help."

