

Masham Town Hall Community Charity

Child Protection Policy

Intention of this Policy

It is the intention of Masham Town Hall Community Charity (MTHCC) to safeguard the welfare of all young people involved in or attending activities at or organised by Masham Town Hall by protecting them from physical, sexual and emotional harm.

Child Protection Policy

MTHCC follows the Area Child Protection Committee Procedures for the North Yorkshire area. A copy of these procedures is kept in the office at all times for reference.

For activities taking place within the building, including performances by visiting companies and private hires, these procedures will be adhered to. Where MTHCC promotes activities outside the building, these policies, in addition to any held by a host organisation, will be adhered to.

It is the responsibility of the MTHCC Administrator to ensure the implementation of this policy, reporting to the Trustees, who will review the policy and update if necessary at least once every year.

Practice and Procedures

Induction

Any staff member or volunteer who will be working with young people will be given an induction into MTHCC's child protection policy and the procedures for dealing with a disclosure as part of their basic induction into the organisation. They will retain a copy of this document.

CRB Disclosure / Police Checks

Any member of staff or volunteer working with children will need a disclosure form / police check in accordance with current legislation. MTHCC may bear any costs incurred in obtaining such information, especially if the worker has never needed such information previously. Copies of the disclosure forms will be kept on site in the personnel file.

Working with Other Organisations

For the purposes of extended (more than two sessions) work on site with other organisations, the organisation will be asked to provide copies of their policy and practice, including child protection policy and disclosure procedures, and a named individual responsible for supervising the policy. The host organisation's policy will be followed while on site and also if a MTHCC representative is approached off site by someone taking part in that particular project with a query or disclosure relating to that project. For one-off sessions MTHCC's policy will be adhered to, although this can be altered by mutual agreement.

Working Practice

No MTHCC worker or volunteer will be alone when working with a group of young people; he or she will have support from at least one other worker or volunteer, from MTHCC or a representative from another organisation.

MTHCC staff and volunteers should not arrange to meet a project participant outside of project time without the knowledge and agreement of the Administrator.

Written records of all meetings and discussions with young people will be kept at the office, filed in project folders. Where issues of confidentiality are involved these records must be kept only in the Child Protection folder, which must be kept in a secure place only accessible to responsible staff.

Session evaluation forms and debriefs will include space for discussion of any child protection concerns that the workers and volunteers have. Staff should bear in mind that abuse or neglect includes not only inflicting harm but also knowingly not preventing harm (*Working Together to Safeguard Children*, DoH 1999)

The best practice guide for working with young people, (see page 4) is to be used as a guide for MTHCC staff and volunteers working with young people.

Dealing with Disclosure

If a young person tells you that they are being abused:

1. You must initially stress that you may not be able to keep the conversation confidential. Explain that if you feel that they are at significant risk of harm or of harming themselves that you will have to pass the information on to someone who can offer support and help.
2. Assure them that the information will not be passed on to their peers and will be shared on a strictly 'need to know' basis.
3. Allow the young person to speak without interruption. Accept what they say and do not directly question him or her. Do not ask leading questions as this may invalidate a case if it is later pursued. Instead ask open questions such as "Anything else to tell me?" or simply, "Yes?".
4. Try to alleviate any feelings of guilt and isolation but do not pass judgements.
5. Explain who you will have to pass the information onto and why. You should seek their support for this action but in child protection situation you are obliged to do it regardless of their wishes.
6. Follow the guidelines below.

MTHCC Staff

- Follow the guidelines outlined in the previous section "Dealing with Disclosure"
- For your own protection, it is necessary to report any disclosures (clearly informing the person of your action) to the Administrator or a Trustee. Under no circumstances should you withhold information that has been given that indicates that a child has / is being abused. It is the responsibility of the Administrator, representing and consulting with the Trustees, to decide what action (if any) needs to be taken.
- It may be necessary to share the disclosures with staff in any partner organisations. Consider this carefully and share information on a 'need to know' basis only.
- If necessary seek advice from the relevant Social Services Child Protection Unit about appropriate action.
- Keep written records of the timing, setting, personnel present and the discussion with the young person as well as decisions made actions taken and subsequent events. Be objective in your recording: include statements and observable things not opinion or assumptions.

MTHCC Volunteers

- Follow the guidelines outlined in the previous section “Dealing with Disclosure” .
- Do not under any circumstances attempt to provide counselling support or arrange to meet the young person outside of the peer education setting. Explain that you are not an expert in the area of need and that they will need to be put in touch with someone who can support them.
- For your own protection, it is necessary to report any disclosures (clearly informing the person of your action) to the member of MTHCC staff to whom you report.
- Under no circumstances should you withhold information that has been given that indicates that a child has / is being abused. It is the responsibility of the Administrator, representing and consulting with the Trustees, to decide what action (if any) needs to be taken.
- Inform the member of staff to whom you report that a disclosure has been made and that procedures have been followed.
- Keep written records of events including their timing, the setting, personnel present and the discussion with the young person. Be objective in your recording: include statements and observable things not opinion or assumptions. Give a copy to the member of staff to whom you report.
- The Administrator will follow up the case and act as a liaison on behalf of the volunteer, in case any further involvement is required.
- The Administrator will offer you the opportunity to discuss your feelings about events – with themselves or an appropriate Trustee – and will aim to provide any additional support you need as a result of events.

All Personnel

If you receive an allegation about any adult, or about yourself:

1. Immediately report the disclosures to the Administrator or a Trustee.
2. It is the responsibility of the Administrator to ensure that no one is placed in a position which could cause further compromise
3. If the allegation is about the Administrator, you should tell a Trustee.
4. The key point is that you must refer any suspicion or allegation of child abuse to others. You must not investigate.

Best Practice Guide for Working with Young People

Produced by the Community Development Fund/Community Education Development Centre Neighbourhood Support Fund Programme

- Treat everyone with respect
- Provide an example you would wish others to follow.
- Plan activities with young people which involve more than one adult being present, or which at least take place within sight and hearing of others.
- Always respect a young person's right to personal privacy.
- Provide opportunities for young people to talk about any concerns they may have with a range of adults.
- Encourage young people and adults to feel comfortable and caring enough to point out attitudes or behaviour they do not like.
- Avoid situations that compromise your relationship with young people and are unacceptable and illegal within a relationship of trust (such as a sexual relationship between a leader and a young person, whether or not they are above the age of consent)
- Remember that someone else might misinterpret your actions, no matter how well intentioned.
- Recognise that caution is required, even in sensitive moments when you are counselling a young person over issues such as bullying, bereavement or abuse.
- Do not permit abusive activities among young people (such as initiation ceremonies, ridiculing or bullying).
- Do not play physical contact games (such as wrestling, or rough and tumble games) with young people.
- Do not have any unnecessary or inappropriate physical or verbal contact with others.
- Do not jump to conclusions about others without checking facts (but remember not to 'investigate' (for example probing the young person for more information or corroboration or discussing the allegations with the alleged abuser) an allegation of abuse about an adult, especially if the issue is alleged sexual abuse).
- Do not allow yourself to be drawn into responding at an emotional level to any inappropriate attention-seeking behaviour from young people, such as tantrums or crushes.
- Do not show favouritism to any individual.
- Do not put yourself in a position where your version of events cannot be independently corroborated.
- Do not make suggestive remarks or gestures, even in fun.
- Do not let any suspicion, disclosure or allegation of abuse go unrecorded or unreported.
- Do not rely on just your good name to protect you.
- Do not believe 'it could never happen to me.'