

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is for Members to view the attached Child Protection Policy currently being used by the Leisure Section and to agree to adopt this document as a Corporate Policy.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 The Child Protection Policy was brought into use by the Council's Leisure Section when a successful bid was made to the County Council's Children's Fund. This extra funding has enabled the Council to implement a number of projects and activities for young people in the District. One of the conditions of the grant was that there had to be an effective and practical Child Protection Policy in place and hence the creation of the attached document (Appendix A).
- 2.2 This document has been broadly based on Essex County Council's Child Protection Policy and not only gives guidance in areas such as recruitment, training etc. but also provides extensive information on what signs to look out for that may suggest a child is the subject of abuse. It also provides details of the procedures to follow in such circumstances, and so not only provides effective policy but also is an informative operational manual, that can prove useful to the staff who are working directly with children.

3 WAY FORWARD

- 3.1 If Members agree to adopt this document as the Corporate Child Protection Policy, it is envisaged that over time it will be added to and adapted to ensure that it contains all the appropriate information required by each department or section that it applies to, in relation to the specific services they are providing.

4 RISK IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Operational Risk

The adoption of an effective and comprehensive Child Protection Policy can assist in protecting the Council against any adverse allegations that could

occur in the future and also put into place effective procedures in relation to management of child protection issues.

5 RECOMMENDATION

5.1 It is proposed that the Committee RESOLVES

To agree to adopt the attached Child Protection Policy currently used by the Council's Leisure Section as the Corporate Child Protection Policy for use by all relevant service areas.

Roger Crofts

Corporate (Finance & External Services)

Background Papers: None

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ROCHFORD DISTRICT COUNCIL

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Child Protection Policy

1. Introduction

It is a sad fact of life that abuse can occur within many situations for children and young people, including the home, school and the sporting and leisure environment.

It is known that some individuals will actively seek employment or voluntary work with children in order to harm them. People who work with children and young people in a voluntary capacity, as an employee of the Local Authority, or in any other capacity, have a role to play in protecting children/young people from harm and safeguarding their welfare as well as preventing their abuse. It is also important to remember that although the policy is called child protection, it covers vulnerable adults and people with disabilities.

This document is aimed at providing information and guidance for those involved in working with children and young people in a local authority setting.

2. Policy Statement

Rochford District Council Leisure Services Department wishes to make sure that all children attending activities/courses organised by the Council will be respected, valued and protected, whilst at the same time making every effort to promote their enjoyment.

This will be done by:-

- Making sure our staff and volunteers are carefully selected, trained and supervised.
- Giving parents, children, young people and workers information about what we do and what they can expect from us,
- Letting parents, children and young people know how to voice any concerns they may have.

3. Recognition and Forms of Abuse

Even for people experienced in working with child abuse, it is not always easy to recognise a situation where abuse may occur or have already taken place.

- 3.1** The following table (next page) outlines the four different types of abuse (physical, neglect, emotional and sexual) and the recognised physical and behavioural indicators associated with each. A section on bullying is also included as this is recognised as a form of abuse that young people may suffer from.

| Type of Abuse | Physical Indicator | Behaviour Indicator |
|-------------------------|---|---|
| <u>Physical</u> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unexplained bruising, marks or injuries • Bruises which reflect hand marks • Cigarette burns • Bite marks • Broken bones • Scalds | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fear of parent being contacted • Aggressive or angry outburst • Running away • Fear of going home • Flinching • Depression • Keeping arms/legs covered • Reluctance to change clothes • Withdrawn behaviour |
| <u>Neglect</u> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constant hunger, stealing food • Unkempt state • Weight loss/underweight • Inappropriate dress | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Missing doctor/hospital appointments • Truancy/late for school • Constantly tired • Few friends • Regularly alone and unsupervised |
| <u>Emotional</u> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developmentally delayed • Sudden speech disorders | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neurotic behaviour • Unable to play/take part • Fear of making mistakes • Sudden speech disorders • Self harm or mutilation • Fear of parents being contacted |
| <u>Sexual</u> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pain/itching in the genital area • Bruising/bleeding near genital area • Sexually transmitted disease • Vaginal discharge/infection • Stomach pains • Discomfort when walking/sitting • Pregnancy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sudden change in behaviour • Becoming aggressive/withdrawn • Apparent fear of one person • Running away • Nightmares • Unexplained sources of money • Sexual drawings/language • Bedwetting • Overeating or anorexia • Self mutilation, suicidal • Secrets which cannot be told to anyone • Substance/drug abuse |

| | | |
|--|--|---|
| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advanced sexual knowledge • Behaving beyond their age • Not allowed to have friends • Sexually explicit behaviour • Telling about the abuse |
|--|--|---|

3.2 Bullying

This is another form of abuse but is different from the other forms of abuse in that the abuser may be a young person. Bullying can be defined as:-

'Repeated, aggressive verbal, psychological or physical contact by an individual or group against another person or persons'

Bullying can include:-

- Physical: pushing, hitting, kicking and pinching etc
- Verbal: name-calling, spreading rumours, constant teasing and sarcasm.
- Emotional: tormenting, ridiculing, humiliating and ignoring. Racist: taunts, graffiti and gestures
- Sexual: unwanted physical contact or abusive comments.

Indications can include the following signs:

- Behavioural changes e.g. reduced concentration and/or becoming withdrawn, clingy, depressed, tearful, emotional up and down, reluctance to go to school etc
- A drop in performance at school
- Physical signs such as stomach aches, headaches, difficulty in sleeping, bed wetting, scratching and bruising, torn clothes and bingeing e.g., food or alcohol
- A shortage of money or frequent loss of possessions.

General comments

Bullies come from any background regardless of class, race or culture. For example, they may have experienced excessive physical punishment/little affection or been victims themselves. Some just bully because the opportunity presents itself.

Typically bullies have low self-esteem, are excitable, aggressive, jealous and often poor performers at school. They often target those who appear to have superiority in areas they feel inferior e.g., academically, sporting prowess. Bullies learn to achieve power over others and there is increasing evidence this can lead to crime.

Examples of bullies in sport:

- A parent who pushes too hard
- A coach who adopts a win-at-all costs philosophy

- A player who intimidates inappropriately
- An official who places unfair pressure on a person.

The above information on the types of abuse is not exhaustive and the presence of one or more of the indicators is not proof that abuse is actually taking place. It is not our responsibility to prove that abuse is taking place, but it is our responsibility to act upon any concerns and follow the Council's procedures accordingly.

4. Employment Issues

- 4.1 The aim of this section is to outline employment issues that Rochford District Council should consider when safeguarding children involved in activities. It is relevant to all staff and volunteers involved with the organisation.

4.2 Recruitment and Selection

It is important that Rochford District Council takes all reasonable steps to prevent unsuitable people working with children. These procedures must be deployed consistently for all staff - whether in full time, part time employment and whether paid or unpaid staff.

Guidelines which should be followed include:-

- All staff (or volunteers) working with children should complete a disclosure application form. Only when the result of the disclosure are received will a contract of employment be issued.
- At least two references should be taken up, including at least one assessing applicants
- All candidates should demonstrate a willingness to undertake training, relating specifically to child protection issues.
- Managers should have effective measures in place to ensure the confidentiality of information received in relation to applicants.

4.3 Policy and Procedures

It is important that Rochford District Council has a policy which ensures that children are protected and kept safe from harm. All staff involved in the care of children and young people should know what to do if there are any concerns about abuse and what procedures/guidelines they should follow.

4.4 Training

All staff who work with children and young people should receive training to raise their awareness of their role in recognising, understanding and procedures for providing child protection.

4.5 Supervision

Managers should be sensitive to any concerns about abuse and act on them in an appropriate way at an early stage. They should also offer appropriate support for those who report concerns. It is important to maintain a calm and professional manner and be aware of the extreme confidentiality of any issues and share them with the appropriate people.

4.6 Complaints

Rochford District Council complaints procedure should help encourage suspicions or allegations of abuse and allow it to be reported at an early stage.

5. Responding to accidents and complaints or to alleged or suspected incidents of child abuse**5.1 When to take action**

It is possible that you may have cause for concern and wish to take action. This may be by one or more of the following:-

- A child/young person may be telling you that something has happened.
- Observing physical or behavioural indication which cause you concern (refer to the physical and behavioural table).
- Someone else (adult/child or other young person) telling you their concerns.

5.2 Listening to the child

Children/young people who are being abused will only tell people whom they trust and with whom they feel safe. By telling someone, they want the abuse to stop and so by listening and taking seriously what they say, you will be helping them.

5.21 Listening to a child/young person who claims he or she has been abused:-

- React calmly so as not to frighten the child.
- Tell the child/young person they are not to blame and that they were right to tell.
- Take what the child/young person says seriously, recognising how difficult it was for them to confide in you.
- Keep questions to a minimum to ensure a clear and accurate understanding of what has been said.
- Always reassure the child but do not make promises of confidentiality
- Make a full record of what has been said, heard and/or seen as soon as possible.

5.3 The next steps -if there are concerns

5.31 All staff should report any incidents or allegations to the designated person in charge of the area of work, or in their absence to a direct line manager or nominated child protection officer.

5.32 The responsible person should contact Essex County Council Social Services Welfare Duty Officer without delay based on a discretionary decision as to the seriousness of the complaint. If in doubt do not hesitate to contact Social Services or the Police (details of all contacts in appendix 6). If you have difficulties, the NSPCC operate a free phone helpline on 0800 800500. All professionals have a duty to refer cases where abuse is known to have taken place or is suspected.

6. Recording Information

Recording information early and accurately is very important and should be done without delay.

Do not delay reporting by attempts to gain more information and remember to make a note of the person you report to in Social Services and follow up in writing within 24 hours (responsible person only). Remember your first point of call in all situations is your manager.

Key points to consider if you receive a report from a member of staff that a child has claimed that they have been/are being abused. The child may need to be spoken to and asked to repeat their claims.

- Listen to the child in an area comfortable for the child.
- Ensure a written report is made for the purpose of Social Services or the Police if you see informing them as a possibility.
- Inform your Manager of the incident and your intentions to report to the appropriate authorities. NSPCC freephone helpline 0800 800500, available 24 hours a day for guidance (phone this number if you are unsure at any stage about the actions you should take) or speak to the child protection unit at Rayleigh police station.

Information to be contained within a report for Social Services or the Police should include:

- The nature of the allegation.
- A description or name of child and alleged abuser's name .A description of any visible bruising or other injuries.
- The child's account, if he/she can give one, of what happened and how any bruising or other injuries occurred.
- Any times, dates, or other relevant information.
- A clear distinction between what is fact, opinion or hearsay.

Important:

- Reporting the matter to the Police or Social Services Department should not however be delayed by attempts to obtain more information.
- Wherever possible telephone referrals to Social Services Departments should be confirmed in writing within 24 hours. It is useful to keep a record of the name and designation of the person telephone messages were given to.
- Records should be securely maintained and only viewed by appropriate personnel, Social Services or the Police.

7. Allegations Against Staff/Volunteers

- 7.1** This may include anyone directly employed by Rochford District Council in a paid or voluntary capacity working with children and young people.

7.2 It is important for all staff to remember to be aware that child abuse can happen outside of the home within other settings, including sport and leisure activities. Allegations must therefore be taken seriously and appropriate action taken.

7.2 However, it may be difficult for the person in charge to distinguish whether an allegation against a member of staff is due to poor working practices or abuse. In this case seek help from senior management and gain advice from Social Services. It may be one of a series of instances, which put together can cause concern.

7.3 It should be acknowledged that the allegation against any member of staff will generate concern amongst other staff. There may be difficulties in reporting colleagues, but the way in which they are dealt with should be professional and fair and most importantly protect the welfare of the child.

7.4 Staff need the reassurance of their organisation that they would be supported for their action if they disclosed information about a colleague.

7.5 In the case of an investigation of abuse against a member of staff, there may be three types of investigation:

- Criminal
- Child protection
- Disciplinary or misconduct

8. What Happens Now?

8.1 An investigation will be led by Social Services, the Police and involve any relevant member of staff. Again the main concern would always be for the welfare of the child or young person involved.

8.2 Rochford District Council does have in place procedures to deal with the outcome of any investigation including:

- Advice and reassurance to the public
- Media attention
- Dealing with staff in the event of allegations being unfounded
- Dealing with staff should an allegation about a staff member be true

These situations may already be part of the discipline and operational procedures.

9. Conclusion

There are many difficult and sensitive issues that are inherent with this subject.

By following the guidelines both children and staff are protected and incidents should be minimised. Should incidents occur, staff involved will be better placed to deal with the subject.

Remember the basic principles in dealing with children in potential abuse situations are:

- Listening
- Believing
- Reassuring
- Explaining
- Acting immediately
- Recording
- Getting support.

One thing as a member of staff for Rochford District Council you must not do is **nothing**.

REFERENCE FORM FOR COACHES

..... has expressed an interest in becoming a volunteer, and has given your names as a referee. The post involves substantial access to young people. As a Local Authority committed to the welfare and protection of young people, we are keen to know if you have any reason at all to be concerned about this applicant being in contact with children/young people.

Yes

No

If you have answered 'Yes', we will contact you in confidence.

If you are happy to complete this reference, all the information contained on the form will remain absolutely confidential and will only be shared with the applicant's immediate supervisor should they be offered a position. We would appreciate you being honest in your evaluation of this person.

1. How long have you known this person?

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2. In what capacity?

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3. What attributes does this person have that would make them a suitable coach/employee?

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4. How would you describe their personality?

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5. Please rate this person on the following (tick one only)

| | Poor | Average | Good | Very Good | Excellent |
|---------------------|------|---------|------|-----------|-----------|
| Responsibility | | | | | |
| Commitment | | | | | |
| Maturity | | | | | |
| Self motivation | | | | | |
| Can motivate others | | | | | |
| Trustworthiness | | | | | |
| Reliability | | | | | |

APPENDIX 1

Children's right to self-protection

Do children in your organisation know that they have the right

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|-------------------------------------|--|
| To be safe: | Teach children that everyone has rights to be safe which should not be taken away. Tell children that no-one should take away their right to be safe. |
| To protect their own bodies: | Children need to know that their body belongs to them, particularly the private parts covered by their swimsuits. |
| To say NO: | Tell children its all right to say no to anyone if that person tries to do something to them that they feel is wrong. Most children are taught to listen to and obey adults and older people without question. |
| To get help against bullies: | <p>Bullies usually pick on younger children. Tell children to enlist the help of friends or say no without fighting - and to tell an adult. Bullies are cowards and a firm, loud 'no' from a group of children with the threat of adult intervention often puts them off.</p> <p>In cases of real physical danger, children often have no choice but to surrender to the bully's demands. Sometimes children will fight and get hurt to protect a possession because of the fear of what will happen when they arrive home without it. "My Mum will kill me for letting the bullies take my bike. It cost a lot of money." Tell children that keeping themselves safe is the most important consideration.</p> |
| To tell: | You must assure children that no matter what happens you will not be angry with them and that you want them to tell you of any incidents that frightens or confuses them or makes them unhappy. |
| To be believed: | When children are told to go to an adult for help they need to know they will be believed and supported. This is especially true in the case of sexual abuse which children very rarely lie about. If the child is not believed when he or she tells, the abuse may continue for years and result in suffering and guilty for the child. |
| Not to keep secrets: | Teach children that some secrets should never be kept, no matter if they promised not to tell. Child molesters know to the child often say that a kiss or touch is "our secret". This confuses the child who has been taught always to keep |

| | |
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| | secrets. |
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APPENDIX 2

Protecting children and workers

A. You can reduce likely situations for abuse of children and help protect your staff and volunteers from false accusations by making sure that everyone is aware that, as a general rule, *it doesn't make sense to...*

- Spend excessive amounts of time alone with children away from others;
- Take children alone in a car on journeys, however short;
- Take children to their home.

Where occasions arise where it is unavoidable that these things do happen, they should only occur with the full knowledge and consent of someone in charge of the organisation or the child's parents.

B. You should make it clear to all staff and volunteers in your organisation that they should *never...*

- Engage in rough physical games including horseplay - apart from structured sports activities;
- Engage in sexually provocative games;
- Allow or engage in inappropriate touching of any form;
- Allow children to use inappropriate language unchallenged;
- Make sexually suggestive comments about or to a child even in fun;
- Let allegations a child makes go unchallenged or unrecorded;
- Do things of a personal nature for children that they can do themselves.

C. It may sometimes be necessary for your staff and volunteers to do things of a personal nature for children, particularly if they are very young or are children with disabilities. These tasks should only be carried out with the full understanding and consent of parents. In an emergency situation which requires this type of help, parents should be fully informed.

In such situations, it is important that you ensure that all staff are sensitive to the child and undertake personal care tasks with the utmost discretion.

Adult/child ratios

Level of supervision must be adequate whether at the organisation's venue or on a journey/ visit. Therefore, when deciding how many adults are required to supervise, leaders must take into consideration a range of practical matters:- .

- The number of participants in the group
- The nature of the site/venue
- The activities to be undertaken -if the activity is one of a hazardous nature, e.g. mountain climbing, then there are specific ratios of adults to children, which must be adhered to. This can be verified by contacting relevant sporting bodies or the Education and Library Board - Youth Service.
- It is important that each individual supervisor knows the responsibilities he/she is expected to bear.
- It is recommended that no journey/visit should be undertaken without a minimum of two adults in attendance, one of whom must be a worker. Bus drivers should not be considered as supervisors.
- It is for the leader in charge to exercise his/her professional judgement in deciding the level of supervision taking into account the guidance as stated above.
- Where a party consists of children of both sexes, both male and female supervision should be provided unless otherwise agreed.
- The standard recommended ratios are:-

| | |
|-----------|---------------------------------|
| 0-2 years | 1 member of staff to 3 children |
| 2-3 years | 1 member of staff to 4 children |
| 3-7 years | 1 member of staff to 8 children |

| | |
|------------------|---|
| 8 years and over | 2 members of staff (preferably one of each gender) for up to 20 children. |
|------------------|---|

There should be one additional staff member for every 10 extra children and/or young people or part thereof.

- The ratio of staff and volunteers to children with disabilities is dependent on the needs of the individual child.

APPENDIX 3

Supervision of children

Making arrangements for the proper supervision of children is one of the most effective ways of minimising opportunities for children to suffer harm of any kind whilst in your care.

Our Duty To Care suggests that it is good practice when organising journeys/visits/trips that the following should be adhered to:-

Planned

- The organisers of journeys/visits should plan and prepare a detailed programme of activities for the children who are involved in the project.
- Organisers are responsible for the welfare and safety of the children for the whole time they are away from home.
- Young people should not be left to their own devices in, for example, a town for the evening or shopping expeditions.
- All children should be adequately supervised and engaged in suitable activities at all times.
- In circumstances when planned activities are disrupted, e.g. due to weather conditions, then organisers should have a number of alternative activities planned.
- Organisers should obtain, in writing, parental consent to children joining an organised trip.
- Parents should be given full information about a trip, including details of the programme of events and the activities in which the children will be engaged.

Supervision of children

- Leaders in charge must be satisfied that those workers and adults who accompany group parties are fully competent to do so.
- Children must be supervised at all times.
- Children must not be left unsupervised at any venue whether it be indoors or out of doors.
- Workers should know at all times where children are and what they are doing.

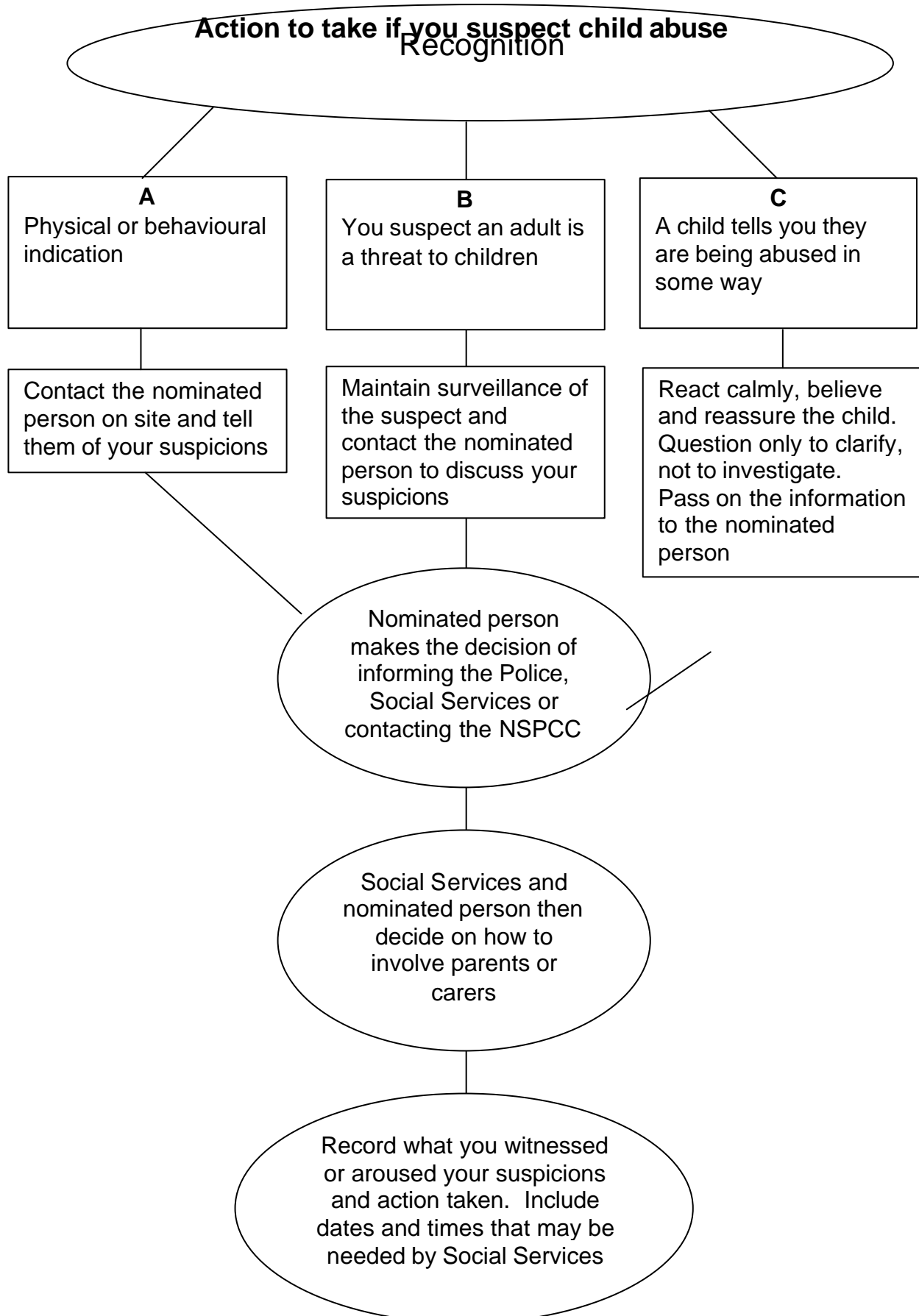
- Any activity using potentially dangerous equipment should have constant adult supervision.
- Children will be safer if supervised by two or more adults.
- Dangerous behaviour by children should not be allowed.

APPENDIX 4

Recording allegations or suspicions of abuse

In any case where an allegation is made, or someone in your organisation has concerns, a record should be made. It is good practice to draw up a checklist of details to note and questions you should ask yourself in making such a record which could include, for example:-

- Name of child
- Age
- Any special factors
- Parent's name(s)
- Home address (and phone number if available)
- Is the person making the report expressing their own concerns or passing on those of somebody else? If so, record details.
- What has prompted the concerns? Include dates, times etc of any specific incidents.
- Any physical signs? Behavioural signs? Indirect signs?
- Has the child been spoken to? If so, what was said and who was present? Where discussion took place is also important to note.
- Have the parents been contacted? If so, what was said?
- Has anybody been alleged to be the abuser? If so, record details
- Has anyone else been consulted? If so, record details.

APPENDIX 5

APPENDIX 6**EMERGENCY CONTACTS**

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|------------------------|------------------------|---------------------|
| NSPCC Helpline | | 0800 800500 |
| Rayleigh Police | | 01268 775533 |
| Social Services | Rayleigh Office | 01268 778282 |
| | Helpline | 01245 434090 |