



ACTION FOR SUSTAINABLE LIVING

***WORKING WITH CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE
AND VULNERABLE ADULTS***

INTRODUCTION:

By the nature of the day-to-day activities undertaken by Action for Sustainable Living, staff and volunteers will come into contact with children, young people and vulnerable adults*. Although the likelihood of witnessing, or being involved in, abuse* is extremely small, it is nevertheless important that everyone involved with Action for Sustainable Living is aware of the issues and their potential seriousness. This policy is intended to ensure that such situations are handled appropriately.

Action for Sustainable Living assumes that, if a sustainable future is to be achieved, *everyone* must be involved. It thus fosters an inclusive culture and one that emphasises the importance of relationships based on equality and mutuality. Those can be difficult ideals to achieve in practice, particularly in relation to children, young people and vulnerable adults, and we need to regularly review the way in which we, as individuals, relate to all the people that we encounter in the course of our work with Action for Sustainable Living.

As a general statement, Action for Sustainable Living believes that all people, whatever their racial origin, gender, sexual orientation, physical or mental ability, class or religious or cultural background have the right to be treated equally and to be protected from abuse*

* For definitions please see Appendix 3 - Definitions

POLICY STATEMENT:

The following principles are accepted nationally as forming the basis of a childrens', young persons' and vulnerable adults' protection policy –

- the welfare of the child, young person and vulnerable adult is paramount;
- all children, young people and vulnerable adults, without exception, have the right to protection from abuse;
- all suspicions and allegations of abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately; and
- all members, staff and volunteers working for Action for Sustainable Living have a responsibility to report any concerns

It is important that members, staff and volunteers are aware of the issues involved with working with children, young people and vulnerable adults, and Action for Sustainable Living will take every reasonable step to ensure that this happens (see Appendix 1 – Do's and Don'ts of Working with Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults).

Staff or volunteers involved with an activity that is specifically planned around involving children, young people or vulnerable adults (e.g. with schools or other institutions) will also be asked to sign a contract confirming that they understand Action for Sustainable Living's Policy with regard to working specifically with such groups and that they are willing to abide by it (see Appendix 2 – Code of Behaviour for Involvement with Planned Activities).

Partner organisations using Action for Sustainable Living's staff or volunteers will be made aware of our policy and required to offer all appropriate support to ensure it is carried through (schools and other institutions will receive this policy as part of the information pack provided before any activity is undertaken). The primary responsibility for the protection of children, young people and vulnerable adults lies with the school or other institution that Action for Sustainable Living is working with. In normal circumstances, staff or volunteers will abide by the child protection policies in place in those institutions.

Staff employed by Action for Sustainable Living are asked to disclose any Convictions for Offences on their initial Application Form. Failure to disclose any such Convictions constitutes Gross Misconduct and, if proven, will lead to dismissal

APPENDIX 1

DO'S AND DON'TS OF WORKING WITH CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND VULNERABLE ADULTS

DO –

- treat all children, young people and vulnerable adults (the participants) equally, and with respect and dignity at all times
- always put the welfare of each participant first and before the achievement of your goals
- build relationships based on equality and mutuality, thereby empowering the participants and engaging them in decision-making processes
- ensure that you consult, as far as possible, with participants in the planning, delivery and evaluation of activities, thereby building cooperation and shared ownership of the project
- give enthusiastic and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism
- be an role model in your dealings with other people
- recognise that disabled children or young people may be more vulnerable to abuse than other children and young people
- ensure that there is more than one adult present during activities with children, young people and vulnerable adults
- ensure that work takes place in an open, group environment, with lots of positive encouragement and support – encourage openness and honesty throughout
- listen and take account of what participants are saying
- if you are finding it difficult to effectively communicate with a participant, address the issue by discussing it with someone that individual knows and trusts. Try to find a way round the issue (i.e. by involving extra support, engaging an interpreter, going on training)
- ensure you introduce any visitors (including other workers) to participants and explain why they are there
- respect participants' rights to privacy
- maintain a safe and appropriate distance from participants
- only touch participants when it is absolutely necessary for the completion of the activity
- challenge unacceptable behaviour and report all allegations/suspicions of abuse
- keep a record of any concerns and discuss them with your worker/supervisor

DON'TS

- engage in conduct or contact that could be interpreted as having sexual connotations (including inappropriate jokes)
- take part in or accept behaviour that could impact negatively on a participant – this includes practical jokes, attempts to frighten, embarrass or demoralise someone, inappropriate behaviour or touching
- arrange to meet up, socialise or work alone with participants outside of activities
- give your personal contact details to a participant or invite them to your home
- offer or agree to give lifts to participants
- promote or take part in a secretive culture within activities
- let any allegations, disclosures or suspicions go unreported
- allow participation of individuals who are under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs, who smoke during an activity or who are carrying an offensive weapon
- take on a personal assistance role (e.g. changing, toileting)
- try to do something for someone that they can do for themselves

APPENDIX 2

CODE OF BEHAVIOUR FOR INVOLVEMENT WITH PLANNED ACTIVITIES

Action for Sustainable Living has a Policy with regard to working with children, young people and vulnerable adults. Part of that Policy relates to activities that are planned specifically with such groups in mind. It is important that activities you are engaged in are fun, creative and involve open and mutual relationships with participants. However, for your own protection and that of any vulnerable individuals you may be involved with we ask that you agree to the following code of behaviour

- you must not enter into any situation where you are alone with a child, young person or vulnerable adult (participant)
- you must only touch participants when it is absolutely necessary for the completion of the activity
- you must not take on any pastoral role with a participant (i.e. developing a relationship outside of the activity, giving advice, offering a lift, etc.)
- you must not share your contact details with a participant, nor must you be in possession of their contact details
- you must not allow the participation of individuals who are under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs, who smoke during an activity, or who are carrying an offensive weapon
- you must record any concerns you have and report them at the first available opportunity to the head teacher or senior manager of the school/institution you are working in. You must also inform your worker/supervisor

If any of the following occur

- if you accidentally hurt a participant
- if a participant injures themselves or someone else accidentally
- if a participant becomes distressed in any way
- if a participant seems to be sexually aroused by your actions
- if a participant seems to misinterpret your behaviour or actions

you must immediately notify someone from the school or organisation that the activity is being carried out on behalf of; you must also record the incident at the first available opportunity and report it to your worker/supervisor. In the case of an accident you must also complete the AfSL Accident Report form.

I have read and understood this Code of Behaviour and agree to abide by it

Signed

Date

APPENDIX 3

DEFINITIONS

1) Child:

The legal definition of a child is anyone up to the age of 18 (extended for disabled children and those in local authority care settings). This document refers to children and young people because many 'children' prefer the latter term. Vulnerable adults are defined as "a person who is, or may be, in need of community care services by reason of mental or other disability, age, illness and who is unable to take care of her/himself or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation" (from 'Who Decides?' – consultation paper, Lord Chancellor's Department, 1997).

2) Abuse:

Abuse is when a child, young person or vulnerable adult suffers harm or even death because of physical cruelty, emotional cruelty, sexual abuse or neglect by an adult. Often the adult is a parent or someone whom the individual knows and trusts. In many cases, the child may be subjected to a combination of different kinds of abuse: for example, neglect and physical abuse.

Bullying and racism are also forms of child abuse.

- a) Neglect; the persistent or severe neglect of a child, young person or vulnerable adult (for example by exposure to any kind of danger, including cold and starvation) that results in serious impairment of his/her health and development.
- b) Physical Abuse; any form of physical injury to a child, young person or vulnerable adult, including deliberate poisoning, where there is a definite knowledge, or reasonable suspicion, that the injury was inflicted, or not knowingly prevented.
- c) Sexual Abuse; the involvement of dependent, developmentally immature children, young people or vulnerable adults in sexual activities that they do not truly comprehend, to which they are unable to give informed consent, or that violate the social taboos of family life, or which are against the law.
- d) Emotional Abuse; the severe adverse effect upon behaviour and development caused by persistent coldness, hostility or rejection, or severe over-protection towards a child, young person or vulnerable adult on the part of a parent or carer.