

Happy Days Children's Charity - Safeguarding Children Policy

The Purpose and scope of this Policy

Happy Days Children's Charity ("Happy Days") values young people and children as being a vital part of the organisation and desires to see them grow, mature and be challenged in a healthy and safe environment.

The purpose:

- This policy is intended to protect children who receive any service from us, including those who are the children of adults who may receive services from us. Under this policy, the term children shall mean any person who is under eighteen years of age.
- The Charity believes that no child or young person should experience abuse or harm and is committed to the protection of children and young people. This policy is intended to provide guidance and overarching principles to those who represent us as volunteers or staff, to guide our approach to child protection and safeguarding.

This policy applies to anyone working on behalf of Happy Days, including senior managers and the board of trustees, paid staff, volunteers, sessional workers, agency staff and students.

The Safeguarding Officer is responsible for reviewing, maintaining and enforcing this policy.

We expect our user groups to have and follow their own safeguarding policy.

The Risks to Children

Children can be vulnerable to different forms of abuse and harm. It is important to recognise that abuse and harm of children can cover a wide range of circumstances and behaviours. For example, children can be at risk of:

- physical or emotional abuse
- neglect
- sexual abuse
- female genital mutilation (FGM)
- grooming and exploitation
- trafficking and modern slavery
- exposure to or infliction of domestic abuse
- bullying or cyber bullying
- exposure to other inappropriate content or behaviour, such as violence or criminal behaviour

- self-harm
- physical harm when engaging with activities without adequate supervision

The causal factors of any such harm and/or abuse can also be wide-ranging. For example, children can be placed at risk by family members or by members of the community.

Safeguarding Principles

Safeguarding children from harm and abuse is an essential responsibility for our Charity. We are committed to ensuring that any child who comes into contact with our services is properly safeguarded. As a result, we will ensure that every user group, whose activities are funded by our charity, have their own safeguarding policy. Every person under this policy and the safeguarding policies of our user groups must ensure that they play an active role in ensuring that children are properly safeguarded.

Safeguarding Officer

We will seek to keep children safe by appointing our own safeguarding officer to monitor and ensure that our safeguarding policy is followed. They will also ensure that the user groups have and enforce their own safeguarding policies.

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The Safeguarding Officer will review this policy on an annual basis and will make any necessary amendments.

Safeguarding Children at Events and Activities

Our aim is to provide respite break holidays, group activity holidays, day trips and visiting theatre performances for children and young people with special needs. We provide funding to user groups, who then organise and run the events and activities.

The Safeguarding Officer of the user group shall hold ultimate responsibility for the safety and appropriateness of the event. However, all individuals under this policy must also play an active role in ensuring the safety of children at all times.

Happy Days will ensure that its user groups have a safeguarding policy in place. We recommend that user groups apply the following policies:

Venues:

- The user groups should make sure that the area being used for activities is fit for the purpose, e.g. remove furniture, which could cause injury in energetic games.
- Fire and safety procedures and precautions should be made clear to all those involved.

First Aid:

Make sure that all user group workers and assistants know:

- Where the emergency phone is and how to operate it
- Where the first aid kit is
- Who is responsible for First Aid and how to record accidents or injuries in the incident book
- What to do in the event of a fire or other emergency

Any accident or injury concerning a child should be brought to the attention of the nearest first aider and should thereafter be formally reported to the user group's Safeguarding Officer.

Consent Forms

Happy Days is aware of the requirement to obtain parental consent before taking any child on a trip. Therefore, the user groups must obtain written consent from the parent/guardian of each child, who is attending the event without the supervision of a parent/guardian. Consent should be obtained via consent forms, which:

- Will include emergency contact details and will set out any specific safety needs/requirements for children.
- Will be kept secure and shall be stored in accordance with the data protection regulations.

Supervision:

Happy Days are aware of the following requirements and recommends this to each user group.

- A group of children or young people under sixteen should not be left unattended at any time.
- Always ensure adequate staffing levels. Children with high care needs may need to be 1 to 1.
- Avoid being alone with an individual child or young person for a long time. If there is a need to be alone with a child or young person (e.g. first aid or he/she is distressed) make sure that another worker knows where you are and why. If it is inappropriate to leave a door open, ask a colleague to check on you regularly and explain to the young person that this will happen.
- Ensure that a single sex group has at least one leader of the same gender. In mixed groups always ensure that there is a balance of male/female staff. At least one male and one female must always be present.
- Do not let children go home without an adult unless the parent has specifically said they may do so. Never let a child go with another adult unless the parent has informed you that this will happen.
- Teenage assistants should always be supervised.

Interactions with children:

Happy Days recommends the following policies regarding any interactions with children.

- At no time should a volunteer or worker from any external organisation arrange to meet a young person away from the activity without someone else being there.
- If required, always check rooms in pairs.
- Wear appropriate clothing at all times.
- When on public outings, etc. think of how you appear to the general public. Ensure that your actions / behaviour cannot be misinterpreted by members of the public.
- Never show favouritism to any individual young person.
- Do not make suggestive remarks/gestures to colleagues or young people.
- Avoid taking young people into your own home.
- Do not place yourself in a situation where you are spending excessive amounts of time alone with one young person.
- If a young person touches you in an inappropriate place, record what happened and tell another adult. As it could be a totally innocent gesture, do not over-react causing embarrassment to the young person.

Physical interactions with children:

Happy Days suggests that the user groups take the following approach with regards to physical interactions with children.

- Avoid physical “horseplay”, i.e. play fighting, tickling etc. with young people.
- Never do anything of a personal nature for a young person which they could do for themselves, i.e. do not apply suntan lotion etc.
- If you are in a “care situation” with a young person with special needs, try to have another person present when involved in personal care, i.e. assisting with the toilet etc.
- When physical contact between the workers and a young person is a necessary part of the activity, i.e. coaching or instructing a sport, dance etc., the worker must explain to the young person what physical contact will be required so that no action on their part can be misconstrued.
- Never keep suspicions of abuse by a colleague / young person to yourself.

Managing Behaviour of Children Generally:

Happy Days encourages the following approach to managing the behaviour of children.

Whenever any adult engaged by us is faced with challenging or inappropriate behaviour from a child or with conflict between children, they must:

- treat each child fairly and equally
- approach the situation in a calm and neutral manner
- only ever use physical restraint/intervention in order to protect the immediate safety of a person, for example to prevent an injury or harm either to the child or others
- wherever it is justified to physically restrain a child or to physically intervene, the amount of force used should be kept to the absolute minimum taking into account the risk posed
- make a written record of the incident and ensure this is reported appropriately to the user group's Safeguarding Officer

Transport:

Happy Days suggests that:

- If private cars are used for an outing, the drivers must be approved by the committee, be properly insured, have rested before driving, and should have clean licenses. There should always be at least one other responsible person (16 or over) in each vehicle. All vehicles should be fitted with full seatbelts, not just lap belts. Full seatbelts should always be used.
- Under normal circumstances, workers should only give a lift home to a young person from group activities if the parents of the young person have specifically asked for them to do so. (If workers are asked to give a young person or child a lift home, they are not obliged to do so, it is left to their discretion).

Managing Risks Posed by Other Children

It is important for all adults engaged by us to recognise that children can face harm from their peers. This can commonly take the form of bullying. Bullying can be defined as any behaviour which is:

- repeated; and
- has the intention of hurting somebody either physically or emotionally.

Bullying can sometimes be motivated by prejudices based on certain groups, for example gender, race, religion or sexual orientation. Bullying can often include:

- physical harm perpetrated against another child
- name calling and threats
- cyberbullying (threats and abusive comments made via technology)

Any instance of bullying or concern relating to possible bullying between children at any event or activities arranged by our user groups should be dealt with promptly and reasonably, in line with the user group's own safeguarding policy. All steps in relation to the prevention or management of bullying should be taken in consultation with the user group's Safeguarding Officer.

Happy Days has a zero tolerance approach towards bullying.

Reporting Concerns about Other Adults

Where any person has a concern regarding the conduct of an adult connected to the Charity, which poses or may pose a safeguarding risk to children such as:

- harming a child either physically or emotionally
- exposing a child to behaviour which may cause physical or emotional harm
- engaging in criminal activity concerning a child

This must be raised in the first instance with the appropriate Safeguarding Officer, so that the next appropriate steps may be agreed and actioned. Where this is not appropriate, the individual should consult a different senior member of the organisation. We recognise that there could be circumstances where a person may need to report a matter that has occurred at an event funded by Happy Days and run by a user group, in which case the individual should consult the user group's safeguarding officer.

Usually, any appropriate steps following a safeguarding referral in respect of an individual connected to the Charity will include either:

- further initial enquiries
- escalation to the applicable Local Authority Children's Services department for assessment and/or the police for investigation
- instigation of any appropriate disciplinary, formal investigation processes and suspension of any person concerned within the Charity or user group
- a referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service, or any other relevant regulatory bodies

Any person within the Charity or user group who has allegations made against them shall be informed properly in a formal meeting of the particulars of the allegations and the relevant next steps which shall be taken. Such a meeting should ordinarily be held by either Happy Days' Safeguarding Officer or the user group's safeguarding officer, depending on the circumstances. On certain occasions, such a meeting may not be convened until this has been approved by any authorities involved (such as the police or the relevant Local Authority).

Any person who has allegations made against them shall be treated fairly. All enquires, investigations and decisions taken shall be just and fair, with the safety of any child concerned at the heart of the process.

Responding to a Safeguarding Concern

Where a child is at immediate risk of serious harm, any adult present should call 999. Thereafter, the Safeguarding Officer of the user group should be contacted as soon as is reasonably practicable.

Where there is a safeguarding concern but no immediate risk of serious harm, the adult who has heard or witnessed this concern should consult with the appropriate Safeguarding Officer (either Happy Days' officer or the officer of the user group, depending on the circumstances), as soon as practicable and by no later than the end of that same day.

Where any child makes a disclosure relating to harm or abuse to an adult, it is important for that adult to:

- listen calmly and carefully, showing that their views are taken seriously
- provide an appropriate and honest level of reassurance
- avoid interrogating children and asking probing, intrusive and/or leading questions
- avoid making false promises regarding secrets and confidentiality with the child (because any concern of abuse/harm must be shared with the Safeguarding Officer and any subsequent safeguarding referral)
- make a confidential written record of the discussion either during the discussion or immediately afterwards. The record should include the key details of the disclosure together with any relevant times, dates, places and people concerned. Audio and video recordings of children making disclosures should be avoided
- It is not the role of the worker to investigate any allegations and the allegation should not be discussed with anyone except the correct people in authority
- refer all relevant information to the appropriate Safeguarding Officer as soon as practicable afterwards, and by no later than the end of the day

Upon receipt of any safeguarding concern, the Safeguarding Officer shall consult with any other relevant persons and will make any appropriate referrals to the relevant authorities, such as the applicable Local Authority Children's Services department.

Recording and Information Sharing

All organisations must comply with the Data Protection Act (DPA) and the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).

Information about concerns of abuse includes personal data. It is therefore important to be clear as to the grounds for processing and sharing information about concerns of abuse.

Processing information includes record keeping. Records relating to safeguarding concerns must be accurate and relevant. They must be stored confidentially with access only to those with a need to know.

Sharing information, with the right people, is central to good practice in safeguarding children. However, information sharing must only ever be with those with a 'need to know'.

This does NOT automatically include the child's parent, guardian, grandparent, siblings, unpaid or paid carer.

The purpose of Data Protection legislation is not to prevent information sharing but to ensure personal information is only shared appropriately. Data protection legislation allows information sharing within an organisation. For example:

- Anyone who has a concern about harm can make a report to an appropriate person within the same organisation

If you are in doubt as to whether to share information seek advice e.g. seek legal advice and/or contact the Local Authority and explain the situation without giving personal details about the person at risk or the person causing harm.

Any decision to share or not to share information with an external person or organisation must be recorded together with the reasons to share or not share information.

All workers/volunteers will receive a copy of this Safeguarding Policy.

Photography and sharing

Happy Days' Photographs

On some occasions, the user groups may take photographs featuring children and they may send them to the charity. We recognise that photography of children carries risks, such as:

- the potential for images to be re-used, shared or adapted in a damaging or inappropriate manner
- the general risk of sharing images and the impact this could have on child's public image as they grow older

In view of these risks, we will:

- always ask for written permission from the parent/guardian of a child or written permission from the user group before taking and sharing any image of them
- always ensure that the parent/guardian or user group are properly informed how an image will be used and shared
- always ensure that a child's identity is protected as far as is possible within any published material
- ask that parents, guardians or user group and any other person connected to them who may wish to share any of our published images which features other children to refrain from doing so unless they have the permission of the other children and their parent/guardian

- photos in accordance with our data protection policy.

Safer Recruitment

New Workers

In light of the work that Happy Days does and the user groups that it engages with, Happy Days conducts the following checks when recruiting paid workers and volunteers. This includes but is not limited to the following steps:

- An interview by the Chief Executive who will take the final decision;
- Identifying reasons for gaps in employment, and other inconsistencies in a persons employment history
- Checking of the applicants' identity (passport, driving license, etc);
- Taking up references
- Ensuring criminal record checks have been carried out through relevant local agencies approved by the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS);
- Taking appropriate advice before employing someone with a criminal record;
- Allowing no unaccompanied access to children until all of the above have been completed;
- A probationary period of 3 months for new paid workers and volunteers;
- On-going supervision of paid workers and volunteers;
- Ensuring good practice is followed in working with children and young people by providing appropriate training and guidance;

All new workers/volunteers will receive training on the contents and application of this Safeguarding Policy. Existing workers/volunteers will receive training to provide an update on any significant policy amendments.

This policy will be reviewed each year and was reviewed by Ryan Sinclair (Chief Executive) on 11th December 2024