

**BRIGHTON
UNEMPLOYED
CENTRE FAMILIES
PROJECT**

**CHILD
PROTECTION
POLICY**

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1. SUMMARY

The purpose of this policy is to provide an internal Child Protection policy.

Brighton Unemployed Centre Families Project is a user-led, grass roots charity, providing a range of services for unemployed and poorly housed people and their families: advice, daily hot meals, safe drop-in space, free high quality childcare, advice and support for people living in insecure housing, free clothes/food/equipment, events and education and computer courses.

The project has at its heart an ethos of self help, whereby unemployed Trustees, volunteers and service users work together to decide what services are required and then with the support of nine paid workers, get on with providing them.

People disadvantaged by unemployment, poverty, ill-health, lack of opportunity and poor housing can access our integrated, practical services, while at the same time coming together to improve both their own and others' quality of life. This policy provides guidance for workers, volunteers and Centre users.

Brighton Unemployed Centre Families Project is referred to hereafter as B.U.C.F.P

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1 The fundamental principle in the Children Acts of 1989 & 2004 is that the child's welfare must always be the paramount consideration. In practice this means that their need for protection comes before everything else.

The purpose of this policy and related procedures sets out a practical framework for B.U.C.F.P workers and volunteers offering clear guidelines on how to work within the Brighton & Hove Child Protection Procedures. This policy reiterates B.U.C.F.P's commitment to protecting children and adults and makes explicit the importance of the protection of children in our work.

B.U.C.F.P provides an environment that ensures children are safe at all times, and will respond to any suspicion of potential or actual abuse in line with the Brighton & Hove Council Child Protection Procedures. B.U.C.F.P respects the dignity of the child and reinforces the adult's responsibility to the children at all times.

2.2 All workers and volunteers will work to the procedures as laid down in the Brighton & Hove Child Protection Procedures working with other agencies to ensure the protection of children at all times. Staff and volunteers have a duty to protect children from harm wherever possible.

2.3 In any conflict between the needs of the child and those of the parents/carers, the needs of the child will be first.

3. THE ROLE OF THE SOCIAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT AND POLICE

3.1 It is the legal responsibility of the social services department to co-ordinate the assessment of a child or young person's needs, including the need for protection. Child Protection concerns, on most occasions, are jointly investigated by the Police Child Protection Team and a Social Worker who would usually undertake a joint visit. In Brighton & Hove Council, the Social Services department is located within the Directorate of Children, Families & Schools. The main referral point is the Duty & Assessment Team. Phone numbers for the different areas are:- East 295920, Central 294470, West 296527.

3.2 All B.U.C.F.P workers and volunteers must understand that it is not their role or responsibility to investigate allegations of child abuse or neglect. However, all staff and volunteers must follow these procedures to ensure that the child's safety is protected at all times. These guidelines must be followed in referring child protection cases to the Directorate of Children, Families & Schools or the Police.

3.3 All child protection concerns about the care of children and young people should be reported by telephone, followed by written referral to the Social Services Department (phone East 295920, Central 294470, and West 296527) who will decide what further action is necessary.

3.4 If the response from social services is unsatisfactory, the line manager should contact the Service Manager at the Duty & Assessment Team (DAT) and endeavour to resolve the concerns and agree an action plan. If this is not possible, consideration should be given to contacting the Head of Service for Children & Families.

3.5 All workers and volunteers must understand that keeping children safe from harm requires professionals and others to share information and concerns.

3.6 If a project, worker or volunteer is contacted by the Social Services Department, requesting information about a child or family in connection with an assessment of the needs for protection under Section 47 of the Children Act (1989), they must comply with that request for information. This is unless other relevant written agreements or protocols specifically state that this need not happen.

4. MAKING A REFERRAL

4.1 Within the B.U.C.F.P, there are three designated family workers to whom all Child Protection concerns are referred: playroom co-ordinators and the Temporary Housing Worker.

4.2 Signs of Child Protection concerns can be observed in the child, something the child says, or something which another adult calls attention to. Whatever the case, there is one important rule: you must do something.

4.3 All workers and volunteers should be able to recognise when they have information that indicates that a child or young person may be in need of services, including the need for protection. **This involves an awareness of the damaging effects on children of domestic violence as well as other forms of abuse and neglect.**

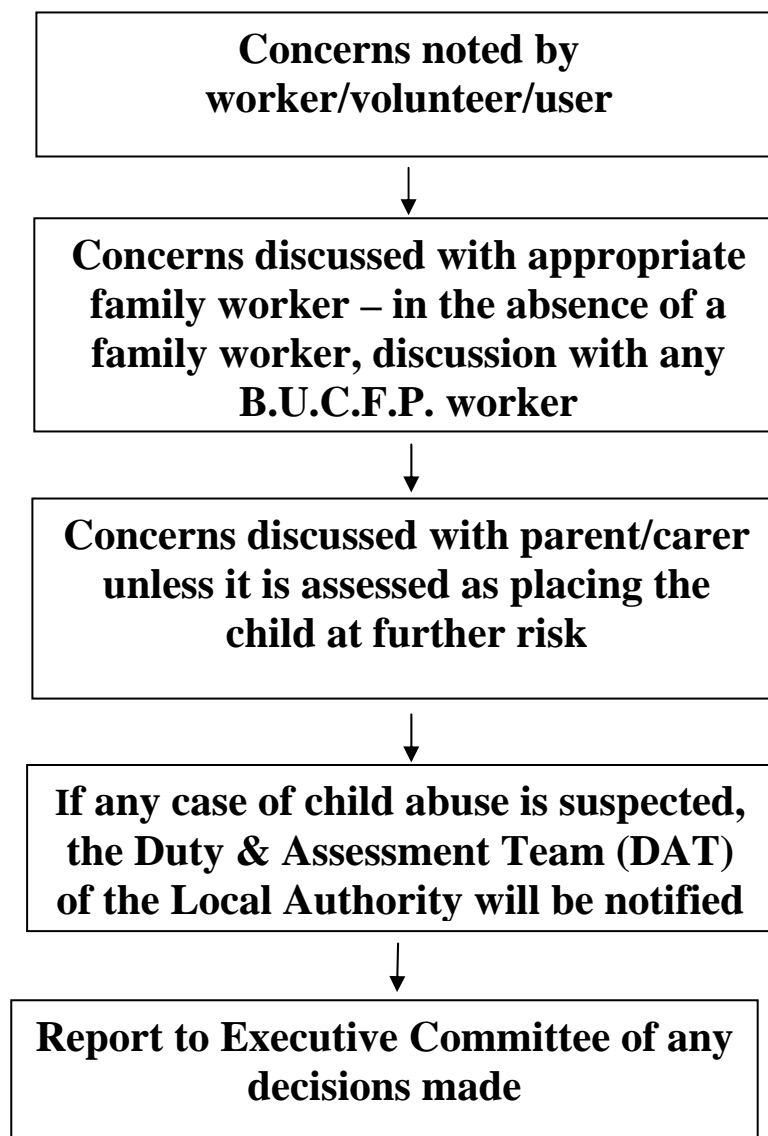
4.4 No worker or volunteer must ever delay taking emergency action (including seeking medical treatment) because of the unavailability of a person to consult with. Referral should be made to the Social Services Department immediately.

4.5 If they believe emergency action is necessary in order to protect a child they must take that action. In most cases this would be to contact the police. Any such action should be subsequently recorded and reported to the family workers and/or the Executive Committee.

4.6 The parent(s) or legal guardian(s) should be notified where possible before making a referral about them or their child to another agency, unless doing this might contribute to placing a child or young person at risk or significant harm, or jeopardising subsequent Social Services/Police investigations.

Flow Chart re: Child Protection concerns (within B.U.C.F.P)

This process can be used in most child protection cases:



5. AFTER THE INITIAL REFERRAL HAS BEEN MADE

5.1 If a B.U.C.F.P worker or volunteer is contacted by the local authority requesting information about a child who is known to them, they should give the information. The Children Acts (1989 & 2004) place a statutory duty on health, education and other services, to help Social Services Departments with their inquiries.

6. B.U.C.F.P WORKER RESPONSIBILITIES

6.1 Workers who are already working alongside other child welfare professionals to assess or implement a child protection plan will need to share information with those colleagues on a regular agreed basis and this should be made explicit to the child/young person (age appropriate) and their family.

6.2 B.U.C.F.P workers should always consult with children and young people involved in the child protection process helping to ensure that they understand this process and are enabled to contribute according to their age and understanding.

7. CONFIDENTIALITY

7.1 Information is shared within B.U.C.F.P on a 'need to know' basis and in the main is likely to be across workers for support and accountability in decision-making.

7.2 If a child gives information that indicates that they or others are a 'child in need of protection' through the action or inaction of others, this information cannot be kept confidential.

7.3 It is important that all workers in B.U.C.F.P are supported in developing a clear understanding of where the boundaries of confidentiality lie so that they in turn can be clear with children and young people. Staff should be careful not to give the impression that anything and everything a child tells them can be kept confidential.

8. WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

8.1 In all our work that might involve contact with children at risk of harm we need to remember that the people who know the child best and may be most able to help them are likely to be their own family. It is essential to take the views of parents and other main carers into account to achieve good long-term results for children. Workers have the responsibility of making every effort to do this. Parents in situations where there may be a child protection investigation are likely to be extremely worried and under a lot of stress and it is important that workers recognise that they may need to take additional care with communication to take account of this.

8.2 Those who work directly with children and young people will be aware of occasions when there are concerns that a family may not be coping because they are not receiving the help and support they need. There will also be times when concerns are very clearly in relation to suspected harm to a child. It is important that the need for families to receive support is taken seriously and procedures followed to facilitate this.

8.3 It is important all workers and volunteers recognise the importance of working co-operatively with other agencies in managing situations where children may be at risk. Many investigations when children have died or have been seriously injured have highlighted lack of communication between agencies as a significant factor.

9. ALLEGATIONS AGAINST B.U.C.F.P WORKERS, VOLUNTEERS OR CENTRE USERS

9.1 Children and young people have the right to have any allegations they or others make on their behalf against B.U.C.F.P workers, volunteers or Centre users investigated thoroughly and independently.

9.2 Where there are allegations that a B.U.C.F.P WORKER, volunteer or Centre user has caused harm to a child or young person the following must be adhered to in line with the over arching policy of the Directorate of Children, Families & Schools.

9.3 If this person has contact with children as part of their work with B.U.C.F.P, all contact should stop at once and their suspension should be implemented. Suspension should be seen as a neutral act which is designed both to protect children and/or the worker(s), volunteers and Centre users concerned.

9.4 Allegations must be reported as soon as possible to the Staffing Sub Committee.

9.5 Allegations against workers or volunteers or Centre users may also be raised through the Complaints Procedures. They may also arise in Disciplinary proceedings. If this is the case, Child Protection Procedures must take precedence and other procedures will be suspended whilst the child protection investigation takes place.

10. SAFE PRACTICE WITHIN B.U.C.F.P

10.1 In its recruitment and selection procedures, B.U.C.F.P will take all practical measures to ensure that people unsuitable for working with children are not to be recruited to positions where they will have contact with children during the course of their work.

10.2 We aim that all B.U.C.F.P workers and volunteers will receive training in child protection and awareness training of domestic violence, at a level appropriate to their responsibilities.

10.3 All B.U.C.F.P workers and volunteers will receive supervision and support in this difficult and stressful area of work and, where they work directly with children and young people, they will receive guidance on safe practice.

10.4 We aim to have a safe environment in all our work settings for and adults alike. Please see our Safe Centre Policy.

11. PRINCIPLES FOR GOOD PRACTICE

11.1 A child's welfare comes first

The fundamental principle in childcare law is that the child's welfare must always be the paramount consideration. In practice this means that their need for protection comes before everything else. Sustained abuse and neglect can affect children for the rest of their lives, deeply impacting on the development of self-esteem and self-image and on the acquisition of many of the life skills needed to be a successful adult. Putting a child's welfare first is not just a matter of common sense but also a principle of social justice.

11.2 Children are made aware of their rights and protected as individuals

Protecting children is not just about policing or investigating the possibility of harm, it is also about preventing harm and the sorts of circumstances in which it might occur.

11.3 We know that abuse takes place in situations where adults are able to misuse positions of trust and power they have over children. This can be reduced by making children aware of their rights, ensuring that they are involved as far as possible in decision making and taking their views and grievances seriously.

11.4 The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 19, states that every child should be protected from abuse.

11.5 All staff, volunteers and Centre users are responsible and accountable for creating a safe environment by the way in which they behave towards others.