

**LEISURE AND COMMUNITIES DEPARTMENT
POLICY AND GUIDANCE FOR THE CARE AND PROTECTION
OF CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULTS AT RISK**

1. Introduction

1.1 This policy document deals with the protection of children, young people and adults at risk involved in Leisure and Communities Department venues, activities and events. It contains guidelines over implementation by Leisure and Communities staff and volunteers.

2. About the Policy

2.1 It is the policy of the Leisure and Communities Department to;

- promote the highest standards of care and protection of children/young people and adults at risk in accordance with the National Standards Framework.
- respect the rights of children/young people to confidentiality within the context of the Department's confidentiality guidelines and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- keep children/young people at the heart of programmes and in accordance with the Children's Charter by helping them to be safe, by listening and speaking to them, involving them and thinking about their lives as a whole.
- advise on procedures for the reporting of any allegations or concerns.
- provide a guide to the classifications, signs and symptoms of abuse.
- identify the responsibilities of staff members should they be faced with a disclosure.
- ensure that staff and volunteers working with children/young people and adults at risk are aware of best practice so that they can be protected from wrongful allegations.
- ensure that Leisure and Communities Department staff are aware of their, and the Department's, responsibilities in ensuring the welfare of children/young people and adults at risk.
- establish a Departmental Care & Protection Committee to oversee implementation of policy/guidance. (See Appendix 2)
- maintain standards in confidentiality in line with national guidance. (Appendix 3)

2.2 Key Principles:

- the welfare of children/young people and adults at risk is paramount.
- all children/young people and adults at risk, whatever their age, culture, ability, gender, language, racial origin, religious belief and, or, sexual identity have the right to protection from abuse.
- all suspicions and allegations of abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately.
- parents, carers, voluntary bodies and the general public will be made aware of this policy as they are essential in the protection of children/young people and adults at risk.

3. Implementation

3.1 Definitions

3.1.1 What is Abuse?

Child abuse has been defined in Scotland for operational purposes as abuse of young persons under 16 years of age, except for indecent photographs which has been changed to under 18 years old by the Protection of Children and Prevention of Sexual Offences (Scotland) Act 2005.

The term adults at risk refers to persons aged 16 or over who, for the time being, are unable to safeguard their own welfare or properly manage their financial affairs and who are in one or more of the following categories;

- a person in need of care and attention by reason of either infirmity or the effects of aging
- a person suffering from an illness or mental disorder
- a person substantially handicapped by a disability

3.1.2 "Child"

- a person under 18 years of age.

3.1.3 "Child protection"

- is the general term given to the efforts of individuals, families, communities and professional agencies to care for children, to keep them safe and happy throughout their childhood and to help them maximise their potential.

3.1.4 "Right to be protected"

- "the child has the right to physical and personal integrity.... to protection from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parents or other carers" (Article 19, UN Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989).
- The child also has rights;
 - to be consulted
 - to obtain information
 - to express an opinion
 - to have his or her privacy respected
- Any actions taken in respect of a child should take account of the child's best interests (Article 3).
- We must always be aware that there is a balancing act to be achieved between the rights of the child, as outline above, and the rights of all citizens including children, as enshrined in the Human Rights Act, 2000. This has the potential to cause conflict when professionals are called upon to decide whose rights are most important. The Children (Scotland) Act, 1995 makes it clear that "the welfare of the child throughout his childhood shall be their.... paramount consideration." (Section 16).

3.1.5 "Child abuse"

- Often portrayed in a stereotypical manner - the evil perpetrator who commits inexcusable offences against helpless children. Regrettably, the vast majority of

child abuse is caused by people who have primary responsibility to care for the child (parents or carers).

- In many cases, however, situations and behaviour which reduce the chances of children to be safe and happy and to fulfil their potential can occur where there is no actual intent to harm but where the consequences are just as devastating for the children affected. We need to think about sources of risk, for instance;
 - > risks brought about by carers' acts of omission to commission (eg physical assault, neglect or the child's physical, emotional or psychological needs, sexual abuse, abandonment, failure to protect the child from harm or failure to give the child appropriate guidance and control etc).
 - > risks brought about because of a carer's temporary or permanent inability to provide good enough care (eg mental impairment, addiction, overwhelming stress etc).
 - > risks brought about by the actions of other people towards the child (eg physical, sexual, emotional or psychological abuse) or the actual or likely risk presented by a person who has abused another child coming into the child's household.

3.1.6 "Children at risk"

Includes children at risk as a result of the actions of others, but also children who by, what seems to be, their own choice of behaviour, place themselves and other young people in danger (eg by running away, consumption of harmful substances, self-injury to health, prostitution, harmful sexual activity, high-risk offending like taking and driving cars or fire-raising or the commission of offences against other children).

3.1.7 "Children in need"

are defined in the Children (Scotland) Act, 1995 as those children who are;

- unlikely to achieve or maintain (or have the opportunity of achieving or maintaining) a reasonable standard of health or development unless provided with services by a local authority or
- whose health or development are likely significantly to be impaired unless such services are provided or
- who are disabled or
- who are adversely affected by the disability of any other person in their family or
- who are being "looked after" by a local authority.

3.1.8 "Adult at Risk"

- a person 16 years or over who is, or may be, disadvantaged by physical or emotional frailty, old age, intellectual impairment caused by a disabling condition or illness, mental illness (including dementia) or other mental health problems, and who is, or may be, unable to take care of him or herself, or is unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation. ("Who Decides", Lord Chancellor, 1997).

"Signs of Potential Abuse, Mistreatment or Neglect"

Suspicious of adult abuse or neglect can come to light in a number of ways. The clearest indicator is a statement or comment by the adult themselves, by their regular carer or by others, disclosing or suggesting abuse or neglect. Such statements invariably warrant further action, whether they relate to a specific incident, a pattern of events or a more general situation. There are of course many other factors which may indicate abuse or neglect. These may include;

- unusual or suspicious injuries
- unusual or unexplained behaviour of carers including a delay in seeking advice, dubious or inconsistent explanations for injuries or bruises
- an allegation of abuse made by an adult at risk
- an adult at risk found alone at home or in a care setting in a situation of serious but avoidable risk
- over-frequent or inappropriate contact/referral to outside agencies
- a prolonged interval between illness/injury and presentation for medical care
- if the adult at risk lives with another member of the household who is known to the Police or welfare agencies in circumstances which suggest possible risk to the life/health or well-being of that person
- signs of misuse of medication;
 - (a) not administered as prescribed
 - (b) over-medication resulting in apathy, drowsiness, slurring of speech
 - (c) under-medication resulting in lack of sleep, continual pain, etc
- sudden increases in confusion (eg dehydration produces toxic confusion)
- unexplained physical deterioration in the adult at risk (eg loss of weight)
- demonstration of fear by the adult at risk to another person/also demonstration of fear of going home
- difficulty in interviewing the adult at risk (eg another adult unreasonably insists on being present)
- anxious or disturbed behaviour on the part of the adult at risk
- hostile or rejecting behaviour by the carer towards the adult at risk
- serious or persistent failure to meet the needs of the adult at risk
- signs of financial abuse (eg a change in the ability of the adult at risk to pay for services, unexplained debts, or reduction in assets)
- carer as well as dependents showing apathy, depression, withdrawal, hopelessness and suspicion
- unnecessary delay in staff responses to residents' requests
- important documents reported to be missing
- pressure exerted by family members or professionals to have someone committed to care
- a diagnosis of a sexually transmitted disease or infection, or a pregnancy, particularly where the adult at risk concerned is not known to be in an intimate or stable relationship

4. Responding to Allegations or Suspicions of Abuse - Questions and Answers

4.1 There are three ways in which an instance of possible abuse may come to your attention;

- a child or adult at risk may disclose information to you concerning themselves
- another person, including another child or adult at risk, may disclose information to you concerning someone else
- you may observe signs which give you concern.

4.2 **What do I do if I suspect abuse where no disclosure has been made by the child/young person?**

There is a network of care and protection support workers including the Care and Protection Officer (see Appendices 4 and 5). You **must** discuss your concern with your

line manager and/or your Care and Protection Support Worker. Where appropriate complete and return form CP1 (see Appendix 6), and record your actions (see Appendix 7).

4.3 What if I suspect abuse in a situation where there is no disclosure, or where the subject is a young child?

Try to obtain a second opinion from someone who can assist you to agree the position. Your local CP Support Worker will arrange to report your concerns to the investigating agencies who should arrange to discuss your concerns with you. This is where your observations and notes/recordings will be of assistance. Remember that parents have a legal right to be told the identity of whoever reports abuse of their child and the Social Work Department may be obliged to divulge this information. You need to be aware of this, even if the situation doesn't arise very often. The identity of the reporter will not be disclosed where it is in the best interest of the child not to do so.

Remember - all suspected abuse must be discussed with your line manager and CP Co-ordinator/Support Worker.

4.4 What is my role when a child/young person discloses abuse?

The Department's role is to support children/young people to help them make decisions/choices by keeping them informed and keeping them at the heart of the process. It is not our role to initiate investigation, interrogate for information or decide on prosecution.

The Department's responsibilities are to observe and record what we have been told or have seen, as we may be required at a later date to give evidence or account for our actions. These observations/recordings may be used as part of a legal process. Guidance about record-keeping is contained in Appendices 6 and 7.

4.5 What do I say to a child/young person who has been abused and asks for help?

It is important to recognise that the child/young person has probably approached you as a person he feels can be trusted and who will be sympathetic to his feelings.

It is vital that the child/young person is reassured that disclosure is not wrong, that abuse of children/young people is wrong, that abusers require help and others need to be protected.

Without prompting the child/young person by asking leading questions, it is helpful if you can establish the child/young person's identity, when the alleged abuse took place and whether or not there are young siblings within the immediate family circle.

In some situations the identity of the abuser may not be clear to you.

4.6 What do I need to know about Confidentiality, Consent and Information Sharing?

4.6.1 Confidentiality and Consent (Appendix 3)

In most circumstances service users can rely on confidentiality as their guiding principle. However, there are important exceptions to this.

Confidentiality is an important factor in enabling service users to engage confidently and honestly with agencies. Professionals should respect the need for other professionals and agencies to protect their relationship with their primary client and support the requirement to maintain confidentiality as far as possible. In most cases sharing information should be based on informed consent by the patient or client.

Where it is necessary to obtain informed consent, this should be obtained before sharing information.

Professionals should tell service users about the kinds of situation where they may have to share information. They should give some indication of why, and with whom, they may need to share information and ask for their clients' consent to sharing necessary information in advance. This will save time, misunderstandings and potential conflict later.

Information given to professionals by their patient, client, pupil, or service user should not be shared with others without the person's permission, unless the safety of the person or other vulnerable people may otherwise be put at risk.

4.6.2 **Sharing Information When Children/Young People May Be At Risk**

If there is reasonable professional concern that a child/young person may be at risk of harm this will always override a professional or agency requirement to keep information confidential. All service providers have a responsibility to act to make sure that a child/young person whose safety or welfare may be at risk is protected from harm.

Scottish Executive Guidance on Information Sharing (2000) states, "Personal information about children and families given to professionals is confidential and should be disclosed only for the purposes of protecting children. Nevertheless the need to ensure proper protection for children requires that agencies share information promptly and effectively when necessary, Ethical and statutory codes for each agency identify those circumstances in which information held by one professional group may be shared with others to protect the child".

All agencies should have in place a child/young person protection policy which makes clear how issues of confidentiality are to be managed.

All agencies must ensure that clients/patients/service users are;

- Informed of information sharing policies
- Asked what information they are willing to have shared freely
- Advised of the circumstances in which information will be shared without their consent, if necessary (where there is risk of death, serious harm or neglect).

When any professional or agency approaches another to ask for information they should be able to explain;

- What kind of information they need
- Why they need it
- What they will do with the information and
- Who else may need to be informed, if concerns about a child persist

If a professional or agency is asked to provide information they should never refuse solely on the basis that all the information held by the agency is confidential. In receiving answers to the above questions they should consider;

- Whether there is any perceived risk to a child/young person which would warrant breaking confidentiality
- What information the service user has already given permission to share with other professionals
- Whether they have relevant information to contribute - this is information which has or may have a bearing on the issue of risk to a child/young person or others, which enables another professional to offer appropriate help, assist access to other services, to take any other action necessary to reduce the risk to the child/young person.

- Whether information is confidential, already in the public domain or could be better provided by another professional or agency, or the parent directly.
- How much information needs to be shared to reduce the risk to the child/young person.

The professional should consider carefully all potential consequences for the child/young person's welfare before making a final decision about whether or not to provide information asked for. S/he should record the information which has been shared, with whom and the reasons for the decision carefully. The professional or agency may subsequently have to justify their disclosure, or refusal to share relevant information, to a court, children's hearing, professional body or other forum.

When concerns about a child/young person's safety or welfare require a professional or agency to share confidential information without a person's consent, they should tell the person that they intend to do so, unless this may place the child/young person, or others, at greater risk of harm. They should tell them what information and to whom that information will be disclosed.

4.7 What happens when a child/young person discloses abuse to an investigating agency?

It is important to recognise that both the child/young person and the abuser need help and that abuse must stop before help can be effective. In some circumstances a crime may have been committed and it is the responsibility of the Procurator Fiscal or the Children's Panel Reporter to decide on legal proceedings. The Social Work Department will have operational responsibilities for the child/young person and the immediate family, and will wish to ensure the safety of all concerned. This may result, in some circumstances, in a parent being removed from the house or, in very extreme cases, a child/young person being taken to a place of safety to ensure the child/young person's welfare. Care & Protection staff can assist in keeping you appropriately briefed should a formal investigation progress where you have no immediate supporting or advocacy role.

On all occasions, skilled Care & Protection staff will try to ensure the ongoing support and welfare of the child/young person and any young siblings.

4.8 Do all abuse situations result in criminal proceedings?

No. In the vast majority of reported cases of abuse family support is provided which ideally helps the abuser to recognise the misuse of trust, cease abusing and resume his contribution to family life.

Unfortunately, there will be some circumstances where this is not possible and the divided family will require to be supported in the interests of the child/young person(s).

For many abused children/young people, the misuse of trust takes a considerable time to overcome, and its restoration requires a high degree of ongoing support and reassurance.

4.9 What happens if a child/young person wishes ongoing support but does not want his confidentiality to be broken or external investigation agencies involved?

In some circumstances it may be possible for you to maintain confidentiality. If the child/young person has the degree of maturity to understand the implications of not investigating, and if no danger is present, no siblings involved and no professional worker identified or suspected as the abuser, the emphasis should be on maintaining support for the child/young person. This may, however, require to be negotiated, with the child/young person's consent, where it involves another agency or other colleagues.

This may lead in the future to the child/young person disclosing to an investigating agency and your notes and recordings may again be required. It is essential to retain all recordings under confidential storage and transfer these in confidence to your local Care & Protection Support Worker if you leave post.

You may wish to note that research shows that abused children/young people are usually happier, over time, to have disclosed abuse than to have kept silent.

A child/young person has, however, the right to confidentiality and some children/young people will decide to deal with the effect of abuse outwith the framework of investigation, prosecution or professional support. See Appendix 3 for the Department's confidentiality statement.

4.10 You mentioned the possibility that the alleged abuser is a member of staff. What do I do if I am faced with this situation?

The Department takes all possible steps, in staff recruitment, training and support, to ensure the safety and well-being of all children/young people and adults at risk under our care.

Care and Protection measures, however, can never be absolute and workers may be the subject of allegations of abuse or impropriety due to their position of trust with a child/young person and adults at risk. Any such allegations must be brought to the attention of your Care & Protection Support Worker, who will take the necessary steps to advise the designated HQ Manager. This may be complicated if a crime has been alleged and the Department's investigation may require to take a secondary role to the legal process.

It is very easy for workers to send out incorrect signals to children/young people and adults at risk, especially when they experience a degree of vulnerability or perceive rejection by a person in whom they have trust. Guidance for workers' personal protection is contained in Appendices 8 and 9.

4.11 Where can I get Care & Protection assistance, support, advice or training?

Contact your local Care & Protection Support Worker (see Appendix 4).

<p><u>or</u> Mrs Val Finlay Care & Protection Officer Staff Development & QA Team Arthurstone Community Library Arthurstone Terrace Dundee DD4 6RT Tel: 01382 438890 Fax: 01382 438885 Email: val.finlay@dundeecity.gov.uk</p>	<p><u>or</u> Kenny Lindsay Manager, Children and Young People Mitchell St. Centre Mitchell St. Dundee DD2 2LJ Tel: 01382 435840 Fax: 01382 435858 Email: kenny.lindsay@dundeecity.gov.uk</p>
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**Constitution of the Leisure and Communities Department
Care and Protection Committee**

Title

The Committee shall be called Dundee City Council Leisure and Communities Department Care and Protection Committee, hereinafter referred to as the 'Committee'

Membership

Membership shall be those nominated by Heads of Service to represent all relevant sections of the Department and in particular those sections with a remit to develop work with children, young people and vulnerable adults. In addition colleagues from the Department's Staff Development and Q.A. Team will join the Committee.

The Committee will be chaired by the Department's Children and Young People Manager.

Remit

The Committee shall oversee the implementation of the Department's Care and Protection Policy including ongoing self-evaluation.

The Committee shall assess the impact of changes in legislation and guidance and ensure that policy is amended accordingly.

The Committee shall implement changes in policy/guidance as a result of the findings from self-evaluation.

The Committee shall monitor staff development opportunities and ensure that all staff receive appropriate levels of training.

The Committee shall be the main forum for discussion about issues raised by Dundee's Committee for the Care and Protection of Children and Young People.

Meetings

The Committee shall normally meet 4 times per year.

CONFIDENTIALITY GUIDELINES

- In normal circumstances we will treat personal information, given to us by participants, as confidential.
- We should secure informed consent from participants to share information that they have given to us.
- We should be clear with participants about the circumstances under which we may need to share information about them and what level of information would fall into this category.
- Where there is ongoing potential risk to a child, young person or vulnerable adult we must share information about this with appropriate other professionals, even if consent to do so has not been granted.
- We must share concerns with appropriate other professionals, arising from a confidential conversation. It may not be necessary to disclose the identity of the participant about whom there are concerns. In many circumstances this will provide the support and assistance we need to help an individual decide what is in their best interests. All initial discussions with other professionals must be routed via the Care and Protection Officer.
- If a young person gives information about a crime, the decision whether or not to inform the Police remains at the worker's discretion. The exceptions - where the police must be informed - are where the crime involves either terrorism or a road traffic accident.
- It is important to remember that, when working with a young person, our primary responsibility is to the young person

**CONTACT NUMBERS FOR CARE & PROTECTION
SUPPORT WORKERS**

NAME	TITLE	AREA	CONTACT NO.
Kenny Lindsay	Manager (Children & Young People)	City Wide	ext.5840 kenny.lindsay@dundeecity.gov.uk
Val Finlay	C&P Officer	City Wide	ext.8890 val.finlay@dundeecity.gov.uk
Sharon Preston	Senior Youth Worker	Areas 1 & 2	ext.6380 sharon.preston@dundeecity.gov.uk
Pete Glen	Project Leader	The Corner	206060 pglen@nhs.net
Allan Howieson	Youth Worker	Areas 3 & 4	ext.8858 alan.howieson@dundeecity.gov.uk
Earle Wilson	Centre Manager	Outdoor Education	ext.5911 earle.wilson@dundeecity.gov.uk
Karen Gunn	Section Leader	Xplore	ext.5891 karen.gunn@dundeecity.gov.uk
John Hosie	Manager (Regeneration and Health Development)	City Wide	ext. 5856 john.hosie@dundeecity.gov.uk
Liz Kay	Manager	Community Safety	ext.6421 liz.kay@dundeecity.gov.uk
Gwen Bowles	Senior Youth Worker	Areas 5, 6 & 7	ext.6908 gwen.bowles@dundeecity.gov.uk

APPENDIX 5



ROLES & GUIDELINES FOR CARE & PROTECTION SUPPORT WORKERS

1. **Role: your role involves;**

- supporting colleagues in dealing with care and protection issues involving children, young people and vulnerable adults.
- disseminating data on Care and Protection practice and procedures within your areas of responsibility.
- reporting Care & Protection issues.
- assisting in the support of and advocacy for children, young people or vulnerable adults, to assist them in making decisions/choices.
- training and raising awareness of Care and Protection procedures and policy.
- attending support training where appropriate.
- ensuring appropriate confidentiality.
- briefing line management colleagues as required.
- attending the Department's Care & Protection Support Group.

1. **Procedures: You require to;**

- know how to access data from the Child Protection Register.
- understand the purpose and reasons for Form CP1 reporting.
- provide confidential briefings to key staff necessary to advance any Care and Protection enquiries.
- understand the roles and responsibilities of specialist agencies involved in Care and Protection work.
- be aware of the content of Dundee's Committee for Care & Protection of Children and Young People's Inter-Agency Guidelines.
- understand and communicate the Department's role in Care and Protection
- participate, where appropriate, in specialist Care and Protection meetings and case conferences.

REF /



CARE AND PROTECTION PROCEDURES - CONFIDENTIAL

PLEASE COMPLETE IF YOU ARE THE INITIATOR OF THIS ACTION

This information will assist the examination/review and evaluation of the important role of the Leisure and Communities Department in the care and protection of children, young people and vulnerable adults.

- 1. Name of child/young person/vulnerable adult
2. Address
3. Date of Birth Male/Female
4. Nature of report and reason for suspicion
5. Composition of child's/young person's/vulnerable adult's household, if known
6. Time and date reported
7. Action taken by Worker

8. Any further relevant information

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.....

9. Do you require further advice or support (please indicate nature)

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.....

Send to:

From:

Val Finlay
Care & Protection Officer
Staff Development & QA Team
Arthurstone Community Library
Arthurstone Terrace
Dundee
DD4 6RT

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

Tel: 01382 438890

Fax: 01382 438885

NB

1. DO NOT FAX THE ABOVE DATA UNLESS SPECIAL ARRANGEMENTS HAVE BEEN MADE WITH CARE & PROTECTION STAFF
2. TRANSFER OF ANY CARE & PROTECTION DATA MUST BE BY A SECURE METHOD MARKED "CONFIDENTIAL FA0....."
3. MARK ENVELOPE IN TOP LEFT-HAND CORNER "**CONFIDENTIAL - CP1**".

CONTENTS OF NOTES/RECORDINGS CONTINUED:

Signed:..... Date:.....

Time: hrs

**THE CARE & PROTECTION OF CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND VULNERABLE
ADULTS**

GUIDELINES FOR WORKERS

PERSONAL PROTECTION

CONTEXT

These notes are designed to offer guidelines to help all workers protect themselves from possible allegations of abuse from children, young people or vulnerable adults, or from their parents, guardians or carers.

The notes are not exhaustive and should be applied according to the operational nature of your role and the participant age group with whom you are working.

The notes are a starting point for discussion and reflection within care and protection staff development training.

You must;

- carry Department identification when working with children, young people or vulnerable adults outwith your base.
- discuss with your Care & Protection support worker any suspicions of inappropriate behaviour or abuse towards a child, young person or vulnerable adult by a colleague or if you feel a child, young person or vulnerable adult is becoming inappropriately attracted to you.
- not make suggestive or demeaning comments to or in the presence of children, young people or vulnerable adults.
- always monitor and record Care & Protection situations and/or suspicions in line with Question 4 of the Department's guidelines.
- avoid physical contact with a participant unless for the purposes of instruction, immediate care or protection. Any other physical contact should be the subject of planned necessary action.
- only use the minimum level of physical restraint to ensure a young person does not injure themselves or others by their actions. Where possible seek assistance from a colleague to witness or assist.

Where possible;

- avoid being alone with a participant. Where circumstances prevent this advise a colleague of your intentions and try and remain within vision of other workers or participants.
- take the opportunity to share your feelings with colleagues and seek advice early in developing situations where you perceive you may be at risk of any accusation of unprofessional behaviour.

Do not;

- rely solely on your position or good name to protect you.
- think it can never happen to you.
- ignore personal circumstances which from time to time adversely affect personal relationships eg bereavement, health.
- assume public opinion will be balanced or will be in possession of all or any of the relevant facts.

Remember

If in any doubt seek advice from your line manager or another colleague.

APPENDIX 9

Guidance for Staff on the Use of Internet Chatroom Sites

1.0. Introduction

1.1. This guidance has been deemed to be necessary in order to ensure that staff using internet chatrooms such as BEBO do so in ways which do not place either themselves and/or the City Council as their employers in an embarrassing position.

1.2. This guidance is not intended to stop colleagues from accessing online chatrooms.

1.3. This guidance note is for all staff but will be particularly relevant to Youth Workers and Sports Development staff as young people are more likely than others to access online chatrooms.

1.4. This guidance note should be read in conjunction with the Council's Internet Guidelines which relate in particular to use of the internet at work.

1.5. This guidance note concerns accessing online chatrooms via personal PCs and for admin PCs at work. Use of Public Access PCs is covered by the "Acceptable Use of Computers" policy.

2.0. Guidance

2.1. It is important that staff recognise and understand that their work places them in a position of responsibility to the public and their employer. Youth Workers and Sports Development staff are often seen by young people as positive role models and need to be careful about the image presented at any time and how that might be perceived by young people, parents and others.

Staff should ensure that material posted on a website is not such that may bring them or their employer into disrepute. This includes ensuring there is no specific reference to the City Council as their employer.

2.2. There are potentially serious implications for staff who are shown to be placing the Council in a compromising position. While each situation will be judged on its merit the Council will take disciplinary action against any member of staff found to be in breach of guidance.

Staff should protect themselves from possible difficulties by ensuring that any information posted by them on a website is acceptable in terms of the image it presents of them and the implications for their employer. If in doubt advice should be sought from their line manager.

2.3. The Council has clear guidance about the use of the internet during working hours.

Staff should ensure they have access to and understand the Council's policy governing personal use of the internet during working hours. Staff should refrain from accessing BEBO or other similar sites for anything other than professional purposes during working hours.

2.4. New staff should be advised of this guidance.

This guidance should be noted in induction and may also be discussed at Care and Protection training stage one.