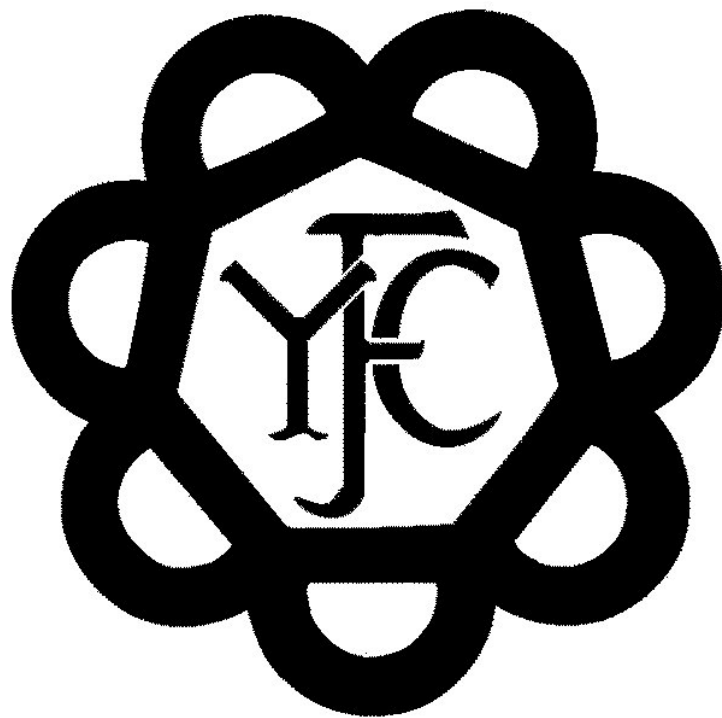


Worcestershire Federation of Young Farmers' Clubs [WFYFC]



Child Protection Policy

A policy for the protection of young people and the guidance of those working with them

INTRODUCTION

As a volunteer worker with responsibility for young members, you need to be aware of how to create a safe and enjoyable environment for the young people in your care and to recognise the importance of good practice. This is particularly important due to the increasing number of junior members under the age of 16 in WFYFC. It is essential that we take relevant precautions in order to protect these young people, as well as ourselves as volunteer workers and the good name of YFC.

AT COUNTY LEVEL

By the very nature of YFC, the vast majority of our leaders are 'home reared' and voted in by the members to undertake a role. However, you must be aware that occasionally volunteers come forward who may have ulterior motives for wanting to work with young people and we cannot afford to put our young people, or the good reputation of our Clubs and County at risk. Thus, in order to minimise the risk of potential abusers gaining access to the young people in Clubs, it is essential that the following procedures be applied.

NEW WORKERS

- It is recommended that all paid staff should be interviewed and provide at least two recent references, giving the opportunity for previous experience to be assessed. Potential staff should explain any gaps in employment or residency. The decision on whether or not to conduct police checks on paid staff will rest with the employer, but should be undertaken if it is possible that the member of staff may have unsupervised access to young people during his/her period of employment.
- All new paid staff should complete a three-month probationary period followed by an appraisal, after which they can either be dismissed, accepted, or the probationary period extended for a further three months.
- To comply with WFYFC's recommendations, we must ask all members over 16 to sign a Declaration Form (on the membership form) disclosing convictions (if any) against children and to provide at least 2 references (one could be a YFC member).
- For voluntary workers in a junior club setting, WFYFC recommends that all personal with unsupervised access to children should be subject to an enhanced level police check to be undertaken through the offices of the Worcestershire Council for the Voluntary Youth Services and WFYFC.

- All staff and volunteer workers are encouraged to attend County YFC training, highlighting staff and volunteer workers roles and responsibilities.
- For further advice, you should contact either your local authority or Police Child Protection Unit (procedural advice in relation to this policy may be obtained by telephone – ask to speak to THE Chief Executive at NFYFC)

AT CLUB LEVEL

RESPONSIBILITIES OF CLUB OFFICERS

Your duties as a Club Officer with under 16's recognises that parents have placed young people under 16 in your care and you have a duty to always act in the best interests of those young people.

In terms of YFC activities, Club Officers are expected to exercise such reasonable care as would be taken by a reasonable parent. Obvious dangers such as broken windows, damaged equipment etc. should be dealt with and reported promptly. Activities should be planned and equipment checked so as to reduce any risks to a minimum while retaining the sense of adventure and achievement that the activity sets out to provide. Equipped with good judgement and common sense, Club Officers will know the degree of reasonable care needed to keep the group's enthusiasm high and its accident record clean. If you are not sure about something, do ask – don't be afraid of looking silly.

It is important for Club Officers to know whom to turn to for help and advice in running their Club. Remember...SILLY QUESTIONS ARE BETTER THAN SILLY MISTAKES!

ROLE OF CLUB OFFICERS

The abuse of children is most easily concealed, and therefore perpetuated, where there is confusion amongst adults over roles, responsibilities and accountability. Risks are therefore minimised if all Club Officers have clear roles, outlining their tasks and responsibilities, thus allowing each adult to continually check on the actions of others. Openness and honesty in all dealings with young people are always to be encouraged.

Training

It is important that all Club Officers receive guidelines on the Child protection Policy and attend Club Officers training sessions organised by the County Federation. This will enable Club Officers to discuss any

events which have taken place and keep them up to date with current legislation.

PROTECTING CLUB OFFICERS

Club Officers are at risk of accusations of unacceptable behaviour towards young people. The following codes of behaviour offer advice and guidance that aim to minimise these risks.

1. Do treat everyone with respect.
2. Provide an example for others to follow.
3. Do plan activities, which involve more than one other person being present, or at least which are within sight or hearing of others.
4. Never engage in inappropriate physical or verbal contact with young people.
5. Do not jump to conclusions about others without checking the facts.
6. Encourage parents to know what their child will be taking part in YFC (copy of Club programme). Make them aware of Club start and finish times.
7. If you notice one of your colleagues is risking accusations, draw his or her attention and suggest that they adhere to the guidelines.
8. If you are feeling emotionally distressed or you feel an inappropriate affection for a young person, withdraw from the situation and discuss the matter with a trusted member.
9. Never take chances with your members safety. Do plan ahead to avoid risks.
10. Be aware that young people can and do fabricate stories that may place you in a bad light. Do not allow circumstances to develop where by a young persons story can be given additional credence.
11. Do not for one moment believe "It could never happen to me".

12. Do encourage young people and adults to feel comfortable and caring enough to point out attitudes or behaviour that is inappropriate.

CHILD ABUSE

Child abuse is a complex area for most adults. It requires both acceptance and understanding. Where there is any doubt about procedures, willingness to take professional advice should be taken before acting. Do not ever think that you could never be placed in the position of having to report child abuse. You may become suspicious of an injury on a child, a child may confide in you, or you may just realise that a child whom you have come to know quite well suddenly starts to act out of character. All of these may be the signs of child abuse and it is your legal responsibility to do something about it. Please refer to the procedural guidelines on page 6.

This document is designed to help anyone working with under 16's:

- To understand what is meant by the term child abuse, whether physical, emotional or sexual.
- To offer you guidance if you suspect child abuse, or if child abuse is disclosed to you or if an allegation is made.
- To understand their legal responsibility.
- To minimise situations that may lead to accusations of child abuse.
- To convince people that the consequences of doing nothing may be very serious, or even fatal.
- To provide guidance and protection for both the young person and you in carrying out your responsibilities.
- Remember you must refer, you must not investigate. If in doubt contact the Child Protection Officer at WFYFC.

WHAT IS CHILD ABUSE?

Physical	Where young people are made to suffer physical hurt or injury, even death.
Sexual	Where adults seek sexual gratification from children or young people.

Emotional Where young people are harmed by a chronic lack of love and affection or are in receipt of threats, taunts etc.

HOW TO RECOGNISE CHILD ABUSE

Noticeable injuries or changes in behaviour patterns may be the result of a number of things, abuse being only one. The following information is intended to make you stop and think, but not necessarily jump to conclusions.

PHYSICAL ABUSE

It can be very difficult to establish whether an injury has been caused by accident or abuse. Ask the child about the injury and if you are at all unhappy with the explanation given, then report your suspicions to the WFYFC County Child Protection Officer. He/She will then agree with you if the matter should be reported to the Local Child Protection Unit, who is responsible for such action.

WFYFC will make contact with the local Child Protection Unit and ensure that you know the correct procedure for future reference. Where physical injury is identified and the parents are not implicated, the parents should be informed and involved in the next steps. Parents have main duty and rights of care.

SEXUAL ABUSE

This is much more difficult to identify than physical abuse as there may not be any outwardly visible signs. Indications of sexual abuse may be:

- Emotional or behavioural changes, e.g. a normally quiet child may become loud and aggressive or a boisterous child may suddenly become quiet and passive.
- Sexually explicit talk and behaviour, inappropriate to the child's age.
- Uncharacteristic eating disorders.
- Depression and suicide attempts.

However it is much more likely to be discovered by means of disclosure, either accidental, deliberate, or through a third party. As with alleged physical abuse, where the parent is not implicated, the parent should be consulted and involved in the next steps.

EMOTIONAL ABUSE

Probably the most difficult type of abuse to recognise, where some indications may include:

- Low self-esteem and lack of confidence (always thinking their contribution is “rubbish” and needing constant reassurance).
- The child having extreme difficulty forming friendships, thus becoming a “loner”.
- The child frequently being used as a “scapegoat” by other children.
- The child being withdrawn, introverted and depressed.

With all of the above examples, one must make judgements about the maturity of the child or young person and consider his/her wishes at all times.

SUSPICION OF CHILD ABUSE

As a Club Officer, you may gain the trust of children and young people to such an extent that it is you they choose to talk to if they have something they wish to disclose. Many workers may not know how to deal with this disclosure but it is important to remember that it is your duty to both prevent abuse and report any abuse discovered or suspected to statutory child protection agencies.

IF A CHILD OR YOUNG PERSON WANTS TO TALK TO YOU IN CONFIDENCE

- Accept what they say, keeping calm and giving them your undivided attention.
- Let them know that depending upon what the problem is, you may need to tell someone else, so do not promise confidentiality.
- Reassure them that you will not be shocked or judgemental.
- Reassure them that even though they may feel that they have broken a rule, you will not hold them to blame.
- Recognise the child or young person’s fears and feelings – be aware that they may have been threatened and may not be telling you all they know.
- Reassure them that they were right to tell you.

- Discuss the options with the child or young person and agree a future action, recognising your legal responsibilities and the perceived maturity of the child.
- Make notes as soon as possible, writing down exactly what was said when he/she said it. Record dates and times of these events and keep a handwritten record.
- Never physically examine a child/young person except in an emergency such as an accident or to prevent worsening of a condition.
- Never push for information. It is advisable to question the child or young person closely. This must be left to a practitioner skilled in asking such questions and aware of the sensitivities required in evidence gathering.
- Always seek professional help with speed and in the best interests of the child. Where a parent is not implicated or the subject of an allegation, it is best to involve the parent as early as possible in the care of the young person. If you return the child to a parent's car and fear the allegations made by the child may go unreported, then do advise the WYFC Child Protection Officer [CPO] in the first place. The County CPO will work with you in seeking professional advice from Social Services at the earliest opportunity.
- In any location where youth activities are carried out, it is always valuable to display the 'Child line' number so that a worried child or young person who may not have the confidence to consult an adult has a telephone option.

PROCEDURE GUIDELINES IF ABUSE IS DISCLOSED OR SUSPECTED

- DO NOT DELAY.
- ADVISE YOUR COUNTY YFC CHILD PROTECTION OFFICER OF YOUR CONCERNS AT THE EARLIEST OPPORTUNITY - THEY WILL BE ABLE TO ASSIST YOU IN THESE DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES.
- CONTACT THE STATUTORY SERVICES RESPONSIBLE FOR CHILD PROTECTION IN YOUR AREA, i.e. Social Services, NSPCC or the Police Child Protection Unit.
- KEEP A WRITTEN RECORD OF ANY ACTION TAKEN.

Be aware that there are procedures for investigating when a child is at risk. Social Services may set up a Case Conference. If you are invited to attend to give information, or support the parent/family, you need

to clarify in what capacity you have been invited, i.e. as a member of the conference or as support. You may wish to seek legal advice if your role in the procedure has been questioned or criticised.

PROCEDURE GUIDELINES AT WFYFC

- The role of the Child Protection Officer at WFYFC is to offer a person guidance on either a suspected or disclosed child abuse or if an allegation is made. All incidents will be disclosed via the Board of Management, this will be treated in the strictest of confidence.