

Child Protection Policy

The Muslim Youthwork Foundation (“The Foundation”) is committed to safeguarding the welfare of all young people. It recognises its responsibility to take all reasonable steps to promote safe practice and to protect young people from emotional, physical and sexual abuse, harm and exploitation.

Introduction

1. Young people are at the heart of the work carried out by The Foundation. As an organisation that works predominantly for and also with young people, The Foundation aims to ensure the safety of every young person who plays a role in its work.
2. This policy sets out the procedures that workers will follow :
 - a. to ensure they are doing their utmost to protect the young people they work with; and,
 - b. to protect workers from potential false allegations of abuse.
3. The policy aims to comply with relevant legislation and Guidance found in ‘Working Together to Safeguard Children’ published by the Department for Health.

Scope of the Policy

4. The Foundation works with young people and wishes to ensure the safety of all young people with whom it comes into contact. This policy is directed primarily at those young people under the age of 18 and any person deemed to be vulnerable, due to their legal status and relevant legislation, but the principles should be adopted wherever there is contact with any young person.
5. For the purposes of this policy, the use of the word ‘worker’ refers to anyone working for and on behalf of The Foundation and includes staff, board members, volunteers and consultants.
6. The Foundation will:
 - 6.1. Adopt best practice in the recruitment of workers to ensure that they are suitable to work with young people;
 - 6.2. Provide appropriate training and induction arrangements which:
 - 6.2.1. ensure that workers understand their legal and moral obligations to protect young people from harm, abuse and exploitation;
 - 6.2.2. ensure that workers understand their responsibility to work to the standards and procedures detailed in The Foundation’s child protection procedures and guidelines;
 - 6.2.3. ensure that workers understand their obligations to report concerns about another worker’s conduct towards a young person;
 - 6.2.4. ensure that all procedures relating to the conduct of workers in relation to child protection are implemented in a consistent and equitable manner;

- 6.2.5. ensure that they understand their responsibility to refer any child protection concerns to the statutory child protection agencies (i.e. Police and/or Social Work);
- 6.2.6. provide opportunities for workers to develop their skills and knowledge particularly in relation to the protection of young people; and,
- 6.2.7. endeavour to keep up-to-date with national developments relating to the protection of children and young people.

6.3. Provide appropriately safe environments in which to work with young people.

7. Ensuring Suitability of Workers

7.1. Certain individuals may be disqualified from working with children and young people in specific 'regulated positions', as defined by the Criminal Justice and Court Services Act. We will adopt recruitment procedures to prevent disqualified persons from working in regulated positions.

7.2. The Foundation will not normally employ any person disqualified to work with young persons. The Directors have the discretion to decline an applicant currently or previously disqualified.

7.3. The Foundation may define some of its roles as 'regulated' where the activities required regularly bring some workers into contact with young people. This will be undertaken as part of the definition of the role. Recruitment information for regulated posts will indicate that these roles have been so designated and, hence, applicants disqualified from working with children and young people will be committing a criminal offence if they apply for such a post.

7.4. The Foundation will screen applicants to work for The Foundation for suitability:

7.4.1. Applicants called for interview will be required to provide details of any criminal convictions in a confidential letter to be sent to Human Resources (HR). Applicants with a record of crimes which disqualify them from working with young people will not be considered if the post they are applying for is regulated. When other convictions, spent or unspent, are shown on an applicant's return, the Directors, or their nominee, and HR will use their judgment and discretion as to the risk that this person poses to the safety of young people. It will be legitimate for the individual to be asked questions about the convictions or other information.

7.4.2. References will be obtained for candidates invited for interview prior to their interview unless specified otherwise.

7.4.3. Criminal record checks will be carried out on staff appointed to a regulated position. These will be repeated periodically. If there is a delay in obtaining the information required, the Directors under guidance from line management and HR may allow the individual to commence work but measures will be put into place to ensure that person is not allowed to work with or supervise young people alone.

7.5. Where The Foundation appoints a disqualified person and this only becomes evident through the criminal background check, the person will be dismissed immediately and the matter reported to the relevant authorities. Similarly, where a person has been offered a job but not yet taken up a position, the offer of employment will be withdrawn and the matter will be reported to the relevant authorities.

7.6. If, during the course of their employment, a member of staff is suspected of putting young people at inappropriate levels of risk through their actions or inaction, The Foundation's disciplinary procedure will be invoked, the member of staff may be suspended and, if the case is upheld, may be dismissed. Consultants, Board members or volunteers will be dismissed from duty. In all cases, the relevant authorities will be informed and The Foundation will co-operate fully in any resulting investigation. An investigation may be completed should the person resign prior to the conclusion and the findings included in their personnel records.

7.7. A worker will be dismissed if s/he becomes subsequently disqualified.

7.8. All workers have a responsibility to advise The Foundation if they become disqualified.

8. Providing a Safe Environment for Muslim Youthwork Foundation Organised Events

8.1. The Foundation will instigate procedures to seek to ensure that all young people who attend events or residentials are safe from harm. This includes travel to and from events for young people under the age of 18 and ensuring appropriate insurance cover is in place.

8.2. The main points in terms of keeping young people safe are listed below:

8.2.1. A risk assessment of venues and activities should be completed and appropriate steps taken to reduce the risks;

8.2.2. A member of staff will be nominated as the child protection co-ordinator for the event;

8.2.3. A qualified first-aider must be in attendance;

8.2.4. Venues must be equipped with first aid kits;

8.2.5. Emergency contact and medical details must be provided by participants and be readily available throughout the event;

8.2.6. A parental or carer's consent form to attend an event or residential must be obtained for young people aged between 13-18 years. This is not required for persons over 18 but should be obtained for vulnerable young persons;

8.2.7. Young people aged between 16–18 years will normally only be allowed to travel unaccompanied provided this is confirmed in writing, prior to the event, by their parent or carer. Transport must be provided for persons under 16 years of age;

8.2.8. Vehicles hired for use during events or residential must conform with safety guidelines particularly in terms of drivers, vehicle roadworthiness, insurance etc.;

8.2.9. Workers should not normally travel alone in vehicles with young people under 18 years, however short the journey may be, though this may be a necessity in certain circumstances;

8.2.10. Young people will undertake preparation sessions before and during an event which include safety rules and procedures.

9. Providing a Safe Environment for Events Organised by Others.

9.1. Muslim Youthwork Foundation staff attending events organised by others must:

- 9.1.1. Familiarise themselves with and abide by the policies and practices in place for child protection for the event. If no policy exists, workers should seek to introduce the Muslim Youthwork Foundation policy;
- 9.1.2. Identify the nominated child protection co-ordinator or other responsible official;
- 9.1.3. Raise any significant concerns they have with the arrangements prior to the event to either the child protection co-ordinator (or the event organiser);
- 9.1.4. Report any concern about a young person's welfare to the nominated child protection co-ordinator or other responsible official; and,
- 9.1.5. Reserve the right to report and follow-up concerns should the event organisers fail to act.

10. Reporting Concerns

10.1.1. A flowchart showing the processes to be followed when dealing with child protection issues is included in appendix 1 to this policy.

10.1.2. Where a worker has a concern about a young person's welfare, they must:

10.1.2.1 Discuss their concerns as soon as possible (and at least within 2 working days) with their line manager or other senior manager who will:

10.1.2.1.1 Give them guidance on how to handle the issue; or

10.1.2.1.2 Take over dealing with the issue if they feel this is an appropriate course of action (particularly if the worker is a volunteer or consultant).

10.1.3. report their concerns to the relevant Local Authority social services department (SSD) who will then take details so that they can decide on the appropriate course of action. The relevant SSD is usually the one where the child lives.

10.1.4. Further Guidance can be found in "Working Together to Safeguard Children"

10.1.5. In the event of a crisis situation, where it is felt immediate action must be taken, the worker may take action without discussing their concerns with their line manager or other senior manager if they are not contactable. They should immediately contact the relevant SSD – this may be the local SSD and not the one where the child lives. Examples of such a crisis would be where a young person was in apparent danger by leaving an event alone or making threats to their own life or that of another.

10.1.6. If a worker has difficulty contacting the SSD, they can contact the local police and ask for the duty social worker. Local police may also be able to take direct action if needed.

10.1.7. When reporting any concern, workers must ensure they provide clear and sufficient information in order for the case to be followed up appropriately. Information to be passed on should include:

10.1.7.1. Name, age and date of birth of child;

10.1.7.2. Their home address and telephone number;

- 10.1.7.3. Whether the person making the report is expressing their own concerns or the concerns of someone else;
- 10.1.7.4. The nature of the allegation including dates, times any special factors and other relevant information;
- 10.1.7.5. Provide a clear distinction between what is fact, opinion or hearsay;
- 10.1.7.6. Describe any visible bruising or other injuries, behavioural signs/indirect signs;
- 10.1.7.7. Details of witnesses to the incident, where applicable;
- 10.1.7.8. The young person's own account of what happened and how any bruising or other injuries occurred, if it can be given;
- 10.1.7.9. Whether the parents have been contacted and if so what was said;
- 10.1.7.10. Whether anyone else has been consulted; and,
- 10.1.7.11. Whether anyone is alleged to have been the abuser. The person reporting may be asked to confirm everything in writing using standard forms as applicable.

10.1.8. Under no circumstances should a worker attempt to deal with issues of concern with any further action other than reporting it to the authorities who are charged with investigating or taking action. Further action could jeopardise child protection cases or put a young person and/or the worker at more risk.

10.1.9. Any issues of child protection that workers deal with should be recorded in writing and forwarded to HR in a manner that respects confidentiality of the young person(s) involved.

10.1.10. Where a concern has been reported to the child protection co-ordinator of another organisation, the worker should follow-up with either the person to whom it was reported or the relevant authorities to ensure appropriate action has been taken.

11. Sharing Information and Confidentiality

11.1. A young person's right to confidentiality must be respected and maintained at all times. Only those people who need to be aware of a situation should be provided with details – this includes only the line manager (or senior manager), HR and the relevant authorities.

11.2. The best interests of the young person are paramount. Workers must consider the most appropriate course of action for each circumstance taking account of the nature of the concern, the potential for future incidents and the confidentiality of the subject matter. This may, at times, require contacting the relevant authorities immediately and directly.

11.3. Workers should normally inform a young person of the action they may need to take when information about abuse or neglect is disclosed. The worker must ensure that they advise the young person immediately that they have an obligation to protect their welfare and that they will be required to pass on information to the relevant authorities. It is important for a worker to take time to discuss with the young person the course of action they need to take, who needs to be informed and to ensure they understand the reasons for doing this.

11.4. Workers involved in reporting suspected cases of child abuse or neglect will be supported through line management supervision processes. It will be appropriate and necessary for individuals to share information with their line manager to ensure they receive the support to deal with an issue.

11.5. No information about the young person or concerns about their welfare should be shared with any other third party.

11.6. Failure to uphold and respect confidentiality may result in disciplinary action being instigated through The Foundation's disciplinary procedure.

12. Child Protection Training

12.1. The Foundation will provide all workers and line managers with appropriate information to highlight their responsibilities for the safety and protection of young persons.

12.2. Line managers will include child protection and its importance in their induction of newly appointed workers. They will refer to 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' as a document providing more complete guidance and highlight relevant sections. Staff will be asked to familiarise themselves with its contents. Workers will also be provided with a copy of The Foundation's child protection policy, together with other relevant policies for reading.

12.3. Line managers will ensure that relevant staff undertake child protection training during the course of their employment to enable staff to feel confident in recognising abuse and/or neglect, dealing with any suspicions they may have that a young person is being abused or neglected and what to expect if they are ever involved in reporting or being called to give evidence in a child protection case.

12.4. Line managers will ensure time is given for workers to discuss any concerns or identify and request any additional training needs they may have with regard to child protection.

13. Other matters

13.1. The Foundation will not allow its workers to generate, access or misuse inappropriate images of young people.

14. Key Documents

14.1. Several key documents have been used to inform the development of this policy and to provide a framework and further guidance to the responsibilities that The Foundation has to protect young people. These are listed below and are referred to throughout the body of this policy.

- Working Together to Safeguard Children. (1999) Department of Health, Department for Education and Employment, Home Office.
- Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000.
- Protection of Children Act 1999
- Children Act 1989

Appendix 1

PROCESS TO BE FOLLOWED WHEN DEALING WITH A CHILD PROTECTION INCIDENT.

Concern About Welfare or Safety of a Young Person	
Discuss concerns with line manager before taking action or ASAP if not possible at this stage. Line manager will advise on action and take over the process if you are a volunteer or consultant.	
Has the information leading to the concern come directly from the young person?	
YES	NO
Inform young person of your concern and that you will need to take action to protect them. Explain possible action and consequences.	Share concern with the young person and others if applicable and work together to take action
Is the young person in immediate danger of harm?	
YES	NO
Contact social services to report concern. Ring social services where young person lives or if not possible local social services where event taking place (ask for Duty Social Worker). If this is not possible, report to local police.	Report concern ASAP to social services covering area where young person lives. Follow guidance from social services or police. Record incident/concern, reporting and action for social services and Foundation records.