

# Safeguarding Children: A manual of Good Practice

## Summary

The aim of this manual is to provide a framework of good practice for A+ leaders. Every child & young person, i.e. anyone aged 0-19, participating in our activities has a right to feel safe from harm, either from leaders or other young people.

*This manual should also be read in conjunction with A+ policy on "Recruitment of Ex-Offenders"; A+ policy on "Disclosure and Handling Disclosure Information"; A+ policy on "Grounds for Refusing Campers and Leaders".*

The 13 statements listed below are based on 'Safe from Harm', the Home Office Code of Practice for safeguarding the Welfare of Children in Voluntary Organisations in England and Wales; *Working Together to Safeguard Children (2006) HM Government; Safeguarding Children (2007) Charity Commission Every Child Matters (2007) HM Government; Safeguarding Children (2008) Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board and Childcare (Disqualification) Regulations 2009 and Statutory Guidance (February 2015)*. They form the basis of the **A+** Code of good practice:

- Adopt a Policy statement on safeguarding the welfare of children.
- Organise the work so as to minimise situations where the abuse of children may occur.
- Introduce a system whereby children may talk with an independent person.
- Apply agreed procedures for protecting children, to all paid staff and volunteers.
- Give all paid staff and volunteers clear roles.
- Use supervision as a means of protecting children.
- Treat all would-be paid staff & volunteers as job applicants for positions involving contact with children.
- Apply safe recruitment, selection and vetting procedures which include checks on the eligibility and suitability of all trustees, staff and volunteers regardless of the amount of direct contact with children
- Gain at least two references from a person who has experience of the applicant's paid work or volunteering with children.
- Explore all applicants' experience of working or contact with children in an interview before appointment.
- Find out whether an applicant has any conviction for criminal offences against children or whether they have been refused to work with children by any other organisation.
- Make paid and voluntary appointments conditional on the successful completion of a) Enhanced Disclosure & Barring Service check with checks on the lists of

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people barred from working with children and b) a successful probationary period.

- Issue guidelines on how to deal with the disclosure or discovery of abuse.
- Train paid staff & volunteers, their line managers & policy makers in the prevention of child abuse, in accordance with their roles and responsibilities.
- Issue guidelines on Allegation Management for staff and volunteers.
- Appoint a named person (and deputy) with a clearly defined role and responsibility in relation to safeguarding children.

By following these guidelines A+ staff & volunteers also help protect themselves and A+ from possible allegations of misconduct. The above guidelines are used as the headings for the following code of Good Practice:

### 1. Adopt a Policy statement on safeguarding the welfare of children and young people i.e. under 18

By reading and following these guidelines, A+ aims to reduce to a minimum any opportunities for abuse, be it child:child or leader:child and to minimise the risk of unfounded allegations. It is hoped that the policy will enable all participants on A+ activities to feel safe from harm, either from other young people or from leaders. Throughout this document, the welfare of the child is paramount. Equally, it is understood that all children without exception have the right to protection from abuse regardless of gender, ethnicity, disability, sexuality or beliefs.

### 2. Organise the work so as to minimise situations where the abuse of children may occur.

- A+ courses are structured to keep participants occupied for most of the time. They are kept under supervision when A+ are the lead organisation (e.g. on A+ holidays such as Total Adventure, but not necessarily on youth weekends where groups come with their leaders and A+ are mainly providing activity instruction).
- All activities are supervised by at least two leaders, who are appropriately qualified as set out in the A+ code of practice for outdoor activities and have a Enhanced CRB Disclosure.
- 1 leader should never be out of sight of other people with 1 or 2 young people, for more than 5 minutes at a time.
- There must always be parental consent for a child/young person to be on A+ property, on an A+ activity or to any situation where a minor is in the care of A+.

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- Where leaders sleep in dorms or tents with young people, there should be at least two leaders, with at least two young people.
  - Dorm leaders working with A+ for the first time will, as far as is reasonably practicable, be placed with an experienced dorm leader already known to A+.
  - Appropriate dorm leaders will have a demonstrable commitment to working with young people, good references (see 8 below) and be deemed appropriate for the task by the course director.
  - Children or young people who contravene camp rules by leaving their dorm at night may be sent home (possibly following a warning).
  - Physical contact (e.g. hugs) is not allowed between leaders & campers or leaders with leaders.
  - Where leaders break course rules, the course director will take appropriate action.
  - Avoid situations where a single worker is alone in a room with a single young person. If, for example there is a meeting between leader and young person in a separate room, leave the door open or have a 3<sup>rd</sup> person present. This policy would also apply to either on or in vehicles and other situations of close physical proximity.
3. Introduce a system whereby children may talk with an independent person.
- If a child or young person needs to talk to someone during an A+ course, s/he can approach her/his dorm leader or any other leader on the course. Any issue which raises serious concerns should be reported to the course director.
  - In-depth conversations should not be encouraged between young people and leaders of the opposite sex. Leaders should refer them to their dorm leader or an appropriate person.
4. Apply agreed procedures for protecting children, to all paid staff and volunteers.
- Where young people are sharing any problems, A+ leaders should listen and ask clarifying questions, but leave in-depth questions to others. It is not our role to investigate.
  - Leaders must immediately report any hint of abuse (be it physical or emotional abuse, or neglect - an act of omission or commission) at home, camp or school to the course director. They should record factual details in writing as soon as possible (ideally within 4 hours of the conversation) in case it is needed as evidence at a later date.

Leaders should therefore **never promise confidentiality**.

The course director will take appropriate action on the information s/he is given. See further details in A+ office on OSCB's Allegation Management Procedures.

### 5. Give all paid staff and volunteers clear roles.

Leaders are given clear roles during A+ courses. They may cover one or a number of duties during a course. Whenever reasonably practicable, roles are described to leaders in advance of the course and training is given as required. See additional notes in leaders' Health & Safety folders regarding contact with the Local Authority Designated Officer and Oxfordshire's Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and Emergency Procedures document.

### 6. Use supervision as a means of protecting children.

Young people are supervised for all structured activities and wherever possible during 'free time'. At least 2 leaders or at least 3 young people with 1 leader should be present.

### 7. Treat all would-be paid staff & volunteers as job applicants for positions involving contact with children.

- All A+ leaders sign a Leaders' Reply Form agreeing to A+ requesting a Criminal Record Check through the Criminal Records Bureau at an Enhanced Level and declaring that they have never been refused a role working with children/young people by any other organisation..(See A+ policies on "*Handling DBS Disclosure Information*" and see "*Grounds for Refusing Campers and Leaders*" and "*Recruitment of Ex-Offenders*").
- Disclosure Information and Disclosure checks will be requested as a matter of course for all paid and voluntary leaders who are likely to have "*substantial*" contact with young people (e.g. dorm leaders and activity instructors).

### 8. Gain at least two references from persons who have experience of the applicant's paid work or volunteering with children.

- A+ requires 2 references from new leaders, and from leaders we have not seen for more than 12 months.
- Additional references may be requested every 5 years from any A+ leaders.
- Explore all applicants' experience of working or contact with children before appointment.
- All leaders are required to complete a leaders' reply form prior to starting work with A+
- Total Adventure leaders are required to attend a training day prior to the start of TA. This enables A+ staff to meet and assess any new leaders before the children arrive.
- A+ staff will, as a minimum, talk to any new leaders on the phone prior to the course and meet them prior to the arrival of the young people.

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- Visiting groups usually bring their own leaders. Responsibility for childcare rests with the visiting leaders except for during activity sessions provided by A+
  - A+ teams for group bookings are much smaller. Very few group bookings require A+ leaders to sleep in dorms with young people, however, when required to do so, the guidelines and requirements stated in this document apply.
9. Find out whether an applicant has any conviction for criminal offences against children.  
See 7 above and including DBS guidance for obtaining overseas police clearance

Make paid and voluntary appointments conditional on the successful completion an Enhanced Disclosure and of a specified probationary period.

- A+ staff contracts all stipulate a probationary period. Volunteers are assessed on their first course, and not invited to return if they are found unsuitable.

Issue guidelines on how to deal with the disclosure or discovery of abuse.  
See 4 above.

Train staff & volunteers & policy makers in the recognition of and prevention of child abuse.

- A+ staff will be provided with training in safeguarding children which includes Child Protection. Training in safeguarding children is also covered at TA leader training and in DisTIL training in line with these guidelines.
- All A+ volunteers are required to sign to say they have read these guidelines and the list of reportable offences, displayed with other H&S procedures in the staff room, before they start work with A+ and to follow these guidelines on all A+ courses.
- A+ staff (paid or voluntary) will **not** contact a young person outside of official A+ activities. Only in exceptional circumstances and with the agreement of the Executive Director and the permission of the young person's parents/guardian, would this be permitted. If a member of staff (whether paid or voluntary) were to make contact with a young person by any means outside of official A+, the staff member would face disciplinary action as the action would be deemed to be in contravention of A+ policy and would be seen to break agreed good practice in the relationship between teacher and young person.
- In the event of an accusation of impropriety made against A+ leaders and volunteers, the standard procedures from the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board (OSCB) will be implemented for the protection of everyone concerned (available in the A+ office).

Signed: .....**Jon Cox**..... Executive Director      Dated: July 2016