

CHAPTER 4

CHILD PROTECTION GUIDE¹

Introduction

1. For the purposes of this document, a “child” is a person under the age of 18 in accordance with Article 1 of the UN Convention on the Rights of a Child. The main burden of child protection within the Air Cadet Organisation (ACO) falls on those in direct contact with cadets under the age of 18. The welfare of the child is paramount². The aim of this booklet is therefore to provide guidance to all adult members of staff³ so that they may have a clear vision of the action to take should they become directly involved with child protection issues during the course of their duties.

Child protection policy

2. It is the primary responsibility of all adult members of the ACO to safeguard the moral, psychological and physical welfare of children regardless of gender, religion, race, ability, disability, sexuality and social background by protecting them from any form of physical, emotional and sexual abuse or neglect.

3. All children have the right to protection from all forms of abuse and harm when engaged in ACO activities and when in contact with members of the ACO. All adult members of staff have a duty of care, which makes them responsible both for safeguarding children in their care from abuse and harm and for responding swiftly and appropriately when suspicions or allegations of inappropriate behaviour arise; this applies to all cadets and not just cadets under their immediate control.

Adult duty to speak out (often described as “whistle blowing”)

4. Any form of child protection concern can be an exception to the normal ACO requirement on other issues to follow the routine chain of command. Every adult member of the ACO is required to report any suspicions or evidence of abuse or harm concerning a child whether it is within or outside the ACO and no-one should feel, or be made to feel uncomfortable, bullied or intimidated by doing so or being coerced into not reporting them.

Cadet freedom to speak out

5. Cadets should feel comfortable and free to report, at any time, any child protection concerns within or outside the ACO to any member of staff and all commanding officers are to endeavour to create a culture to ensure there is some means for cadets to do so. Cadets should know to whom they should report concerns and also what is likely to happen as a result – they must have confidence that they are being listened to. In addition

¹ This chapter is issued as a standalone A5 booklet (and “yellow card”) to all adult members of staff and includes some of the information found in the preceding chapters for ease of reference.

² Children Act 1989 (England and Wales), the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 and The Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995.

³ For the purposes of this guide, the phrases “adult member(s) of staff” and “adult member(s) of the ACO” also includes cadets who are over the age of 18

to support within the Sqn, contact details for the NSPCC ChildLine (0800-1111) (<http://www.childline.org.uk/Pages/default.aspx>) are to be prominently displayed.

Working safely with children and young people

6. It is the responsibility of each adult member of the ACO to ensure that:
- their behaviour is appropriate at all times
 - they observe the rules established for the safety and security of cadets
 - they follow the procedures following suspicion, disclosure or allegation of child abuse
 - they recognise the position of trust in which they have been placed, and
 - in every respect, the relationships they form with cadets in their care are appropriate
7. All adult members of the ACO must accept and understand this policy and they must also agree to put the organisation's policy on child protection into practice and adhere to the Codes of Behaviour detailed at the end of this chapter.

What if you suspect abuse or an allegation is made?

8. Child abuse occurs when a child has suffered from, or is at significant risk of suffering from, ill treatment or impairment of development, by any person who knowingly colludes with or fails to prevent the ill-treatment of the child by not ensuring reasonable standards of care and protection. You should be aware that abusers are not just strangers; they can include parents, carers, family members, friends, people in positions of trust and authority, other children or young people, anyone who has contact with children and young people. Children who are abused are often abused by an adult they know and trust. Children will and should see you as a person they can have faith in and from whom they can seek help - listen to them, take what you are told seriously and you will be helping to reassure and protect the child.

9. **You must do something if:**

- a child tells you, or shows signs that, he or she is being abused in any way
- you have reason to believe anyone within or outside the ACO is abusing or harming a child
- someone tells you that a child is being abused
- you become aware that someone who has contact with and access to children has offended against them or poses a risk to them

10. **When a cadet speaks to you about a child protection matter:** Make sure that you are out of hearing and sight of others and that you have a third person (who is acceptable both to you and the cadet) present to witness what is said:

- listen carefully to what they are saying
- show you take them seriously
- avoid asking them to repeat the information

- explain that you cannot keep what they tell you a secret, but any information will remain “in confidence”
- reassure them that they have done the right thing
- make no judgement about what you have heard and stay calm
- make an immediate, careful, record of what has been said. Use their actual words wherever possible.

The procedure to follow⁴

11. The responsibility for reporting concerns to the appropriate statutory authority normally lies with the individual who receives a complaint or who suspects abuse. However, where time and circumstances allow, which normally should be the case, the matter is to be discussed with a superior officer (if the officer is not implicated) and Wg Ex O (if applicable) who will consult with the Child Protection Officer or Personnel Staff Officer (PSO) at HQ Air Cadets. The role of the chain of command is not to judge but to pass on information for advice and to support the cadet.

12. In **urgent** cases, if you have an **immediate** concern about the welfare of a child who may be at risk, you must make direct contact with the police, social services or the NSPCC, reporting later to your chain of command. Ensure you write down times, facts, observations (verbatim speech if possible). Have the cadet’s name and address and the name and address of their parent/guardian/carer available.

13. If you suspect abuse, a cadet confides in you, or a complaint is made about any adult or about yourself, it is your duty to report the concern. However, it is not your responsibility to decide whether or not child abuse has taken place. No investigation or questioning is to be undertaken. The proper (statutory) authorities for dealing with cases of child abuse are the local authority social services department (children’s social care), the police or the NSPCC. Arrangements differ across the UK and appropriate local contacts should be readily available and advertised within your squadron and wing. Swift reporting will enable the correct authorities to give advice and take appropriate action.

14. The parents or guardians/carers of the cadet subject of the disclosure or allegation should normally be informed by the sqn CO as soon as possible that a report is being made to the police or social services, unless they themselves are implicated by the report.

15. In cases where you hear allegations about yourself or your colleagues, or hold suspicions or concerns in which your colleagues are implicated, you should consult your superior officer immediately who will, in turn, advise the Wg Ex O, where applicable. If your superior officer is implicated in any allegations or suspicions you should immediately consult your Wg Ex O. In these circumstances, the Wg Ex O is to ensure that the chain of command is informed and the matter reported to the PSO or DPSO at HQ Air Cadets without delay. In addition, when members of staff are implicated, the matter will normally be reported to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), who is the point of contact for all agencies when there are allegations made against individuals working with children, so that cases can be dealt with across county boundaries.

⁴ Because child protection legislation in Scotland and Northern Ireland Region may differ from the rest of the UK, personnel in that Region are to follow the referral procedures laid down by their local child protection committees and local authorities.

16. For reasons of confidentiality the number of people to be involved in alleged child abuse cases reported to the authorities are to be kept to a minimum (the ‘need to know’ principle).

Local information

17. Use this space for keeping your own contacts/telephone numbers:

	Contact Details
Wg Ex O	
HQ Air Cadets Child Protection Officer	01400-267088 email: cpo@atc.raf.mod.uk
HQ Air Cadets Personnel Staff Officer	01400-267638 or 267639
Local Authority Social Services	http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/DI1/Directories/Localcouncils/AToZOfLocalCouncils/index.htm
NSPCC Child Protection Helpline ⁵	0808 800 5000 http://www.nspcc.org.uk/helpandadvice/NSPCCHelpline/NSPCCHelplines_wda59025.html
Scottish National Child Protection Line ⁶	0800 022 3222 http://www.infoscotland.com/childprotection/index.jsp
Police (local number)	(or 999 in any emergency)

Contacting Social Services or the Police

- ask for the Duty Officer (or Emergency Duty Team) and say that you wish to discuss a matter of child protection
- ask for the name of the person with whom you are speaking
- discuss all the information you have (nothing is to be filtered or withheld)
- state your intention to advise your chain of command
- ask if anyone else should be informed
- keep a record of your conversation and of any advice given.

Government non-statutory guidance states that when social services receive a referral from a member of the public, rather than a professional, personal information about referrers, including anything that could identify them, should only be disclosed to third parties (including subject families and other agencies) with the consent of the referrer. If the police are involved, social services will discuss with them when to inform parents about referrals from third parties, as this will have a bearing on the conduct of police investigations. Consequently, adult members of staff who refer cases to social services should reiterate that they are doing so as a concerned “member of the public” and not part of a professional childcare agency and, if they do not wish to have their identity disclosed to a third party, they should inform the police or social services accordingly. Further information is available via the following link:
<http://publications.teachernet.gov.uk/default.aspx?PageFunction=productdetails&PageMode=publications&ProductId=DFES-04319-2006&>

⁵ The NSPCC Helpline advisers are all trained child protection officers. They can help with a range of child-care problems and can offer expert advice. A call to the helpline can help stop a difficult situation getting out of control and it's open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

⁶ The 24 hour Scottish Child Protection Line, operated by The Essentiagroup on behalf of the Scottish Government, is a gateway service which provides easy access to local child protection services.

CODE OF BEHAVIOUR

What you must do:

ALWAYS adhere to these guidelines

ALWAYS treat everyone with dignity and respect

ALWAYS set an example you would wish others to follow

ALWAYS treat all cadets equally – show no favouritism

ALWAYS plan training and activities that involve more than one other person being present, or at least are within sight and hearing of others (except when actually flying with VGSs and AEFs)

ALWAYS respect a cadet's right to personal privacy

ALWAYS avoid unacceptable situations relating to a position of trust, eg a sexual relationship with a cadet over the age of consent

ALWAYS plan separate sleeping arrangements for adult members of staff and cadets and, where possible, separate washing and toilet facilities for cadets under the age of 18

ALWAYS allow cadets to talk about any concerns they may have

ALWAYS encourage others to challenge any attitudes or behaviours they do not like

ALWAYS avoid being drawn into inappropriate attention seeking behaviour (eg tantrums, crushes and infatuations)

ALWAYS follow the ACO's 'no alcohol' policy when cadets are in your care

ALWAYS keep other members of staff informed of where you are and what you are doing

ALWAYS remember someone else might misinterpret your actions, no matter how well intentioned

ALWAYS take any allegations or concerns of abuse seriously and refer immediately

ALWAYS be aware that child protection issues can be complex and distressing. You are encouraged to seek help from specialist agencies if you have been affected by these matters

ALWAYS remember this code even at sensitive moments, eg when responding to bullying, bereavement or abuse

CODE OF BEHAVIOUR

What you must not do:

NEVER trivialise abuse

NEVER form a relationship with a cadet that is an abuse of a position of trust

NEVER condone overt sexual behaviour between cadets

NEVER permit abusive peer activities, eg initiation ceremonies, bullying, etc

NEVER engage in inappropriate behaviour or contact, physical, verbal or sexual

NEVER play physical contact games with cadets

NEVER touch cadets unless it is a necessary part of training, or for safety reasons

NEVER make suggestive remarks or threats to cadets, even in fun

NEVER use inappropriate language or display improper behaviour towards cadets (verbally, in writing, 'phoning, text messages, e-mail or via social network sites on the internet)

NEVER ignore an allegation because you personally find it unbelievable. Just because the person about whom the allegation is made is known to you, and may be a trusted colleague or friend, does not mean that the allegation is necessarily unfounded

NEVER attempt to contact a cadet or their parent/guardian/carer who you believe may have made an allegation against you

NEVER, under any circumstances, talk to the media, at the time or later

NEVER let allegations, suspicions or concerns about abuse go unreported

NEVER rely on your good name to protect you

Remember!

- **never do nothing**
- **don't assume someone else will do something**
- **never push a child for more information**
- **never discuss your worries with the suspected abuser.**