

Kent Muslim Welfare Association



CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

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EDUCATION AND CHILD PROTECTION FROM FAITH PERSPECTIVE

The Association is committed to the welfare and protection of children in its care to help them develop emotionally, spiritually and educationally.

AIM

The purpose of this document is to inform those working with children on behalf of Kent Muslim Welfare Association that some children do get abused, and to advise them of our procedures if abuse is ever disclosed to them, or if they suspect abuse and to highlight what is good practice when dealing with children. This will assist us in providing a secure environment to children in our care, to help them develop emotionally, spiritually and educationally.

EDUCATION AND CHILD PROTECTION FROM FAITH PROSPECTIVE

The Association aims to provide a secure environment to children in our care to help them develop emotionally, spiritually and educationally.

Brief Quotations from the *Al – Quran & *Al- Hadith

- ❖ “ Oh God! Enhance my knowledge” (Al - Quran)
- ❖ “Sayeth to them (people) ‘How can a scholar be an equal to an illiterate person’ ” (Al - Quran)
- ❖ “ Best amongst you are those who LEARN and the best who TEACH” (Al - Hadith)
- ❖ “ No father can give his child better than the good manners”. (Al -Hadith)
- ❖ The prophet said, “ He is not one of us who has no compassion for our little ones” (Al - Hadith)
- ❖ “ Be careful of your duty to Allah and be fair and just to your children” (Al - Hadith)

* Muslim believe the Quran as word of God & Al- Hadith as directives from the prophet Mohammad
' peace be upon him'

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INTRODUCTION

Each child has the right to protection from all forms of abuse, neglect or exploitation. children should have the right to express their views on any issues or decisions affecting them.

The Children Act (Scotland) 1995

Under the children's Act 1989 (UK), we all have a responsibility to promote and protect the welfare of all children, the Act states:

'The community as a whole has a responsibility for the well-being of children. This means that all citizens should remain alert to circumstances in which children may be harmed. Individuals can assist the statutory authorities by bringing cases to their attention. Relatives, friends and neighbours of children are particularly well placed to do so, but they must know what to do if they are concerned, in addition to providing support for the family and child, which may include help caring for the child. They must also be confident, because of the difficult and sensitive nature of the situation, that any information they provide will be treated in a confidential way and used only to protect the interests of the child. They should know too that early action on their part is often the best way of helping a family stay together as well as protecting their child'.

Under the Protection of children Act 1999 (UK) we have a responsibility for the well-being of children and preventing unsuitable people ever working with children.

In the society we live in today, increasing harm to children has become a reality, either by an actual increased occurrence or more open reporting of incidences. As part of the modern British society we are concerned with the trauma that results from abuse of any form and hopefully by this code of practice we will in some way pre-empt problems reaching our community and put safeguards in place to avoid them in line with local authority guidance. We also aim to recognize and support the care required to overcome such trauma.

This document encompasses the principles and procedures recommended by the charity commission after their consultations with the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) and 'Save the Children UK'.

DEFINITIONS

What is a child

- Any person under the age of 18 years.

What is abuse

- Physical Abuse

Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, squeezing, burning or scalding, biting, poisoning, suffocating, drowning, using excessive force or otherwise causing physical harm. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer deliberately causes ill health to a child whom they are looking after.

- Emotional abuse

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional ill treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of the other person. It may involve causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger through threats, verbal attacks, taunting or shouting, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill-treatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

- Sexual abuse

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative (e.g. rape or buggery) or non-penetrative acts. They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, pornographic material or watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or which violate the social taboos of family roles.

- Neglect

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. It may involve a parent or a carer failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, failing to protect a child from physical harm or danger, or the failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of,

unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs, or if a child is left unsupervised at a young age.

Note that a child may suffer or be at risk of suffering from one or more types of abuse and abuse may take place on a single occasion or may occur repeatedly over time.

Harm means ill-treatment or the impairment of health or development.

Development means physical, intellectual, emotional, social or behavioural development.

Health means physical or mental health.

Ill-treatment includes sexual abuse and forms of ill-treatment which are not physical.

Who abuses children

- very rarely a stranger
- often someone close to a child, e.g. parent, carer, baby-sitter, sibling, relative or friend of the family
- sometimes, someone in authority such as a teacher, youth leader, children's worker, or, surprisingly a religious leader or worker.
- sometimes, paedophiles and others who set out to join organisations to obtain access to children

PRINCIPLES

As Muslims we have a unique responsibility toward the care of children whether it is their welfare, sustenance or education. We will endeavour to create and maintain a safe and secure environment for children in our care to the best of our ability so that Allah (SWT) may be pleased with us.

We seek to safeguard all members of our community, of all ages. It is the responsibility of each one of us to prevent the neglect, physical, sexual or emotional abuse of children.

People working with children must take the appropriate action to prevent abuse and/or neglect and report any abuse discovered or suspected to the appropriate authority or designated child protection officer.

We will also attempt to protect those who work with children from unfounded accusations and provide training to those behaving in ways which may be well-intentioned but inadvisable.

- the welfare of the child is paramount and has the right to freedom from abuse
- Committed to good practice in work with children.
- All suspicions and allegations of abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately.
- Staff and volunteers will go through a rigorous selection process.
- We will appoint a Child Protection Officer who will take specific responsibility for child safety and act as the main point of contact for parents, children and outside agencies.
- Ensure access to confidential information is restricted to the Child Protection Officer or the appropriate external authorities.
- Review the effectiveness of our Child Protection Policy annually.

We believe that every child regardless of age has at all times and in all situations a right to feel safe and protected from any situation or practice that results in a child being physically or psychologically damaged.

PROCEDURES

What to do if abuse is suspected.

If you think that a child is being abused or neglected and/or at risk of being abused or neglected, involvement of the social services and the police are required.

1. Make a written note at your earliest opportunity of the conversation you had with the child and/or your own observations that lead you to be concerned. Include dates, times and names etc.
2. Inform and pass on your notes to the designated child protection officer, who should make a referral to the social services or the police. Illicit as much information as possible including contact details if a third party is made the observations
3. If you feel that the designated child protection officer may not deal with the matter satisfactorily, you should inform the Social Services Department or the police yourself.

Immediately contact social services and/or the police if:

- A child makes allegations of sexual abuse
- The child is too scared to go home for what is perceived to be risk of abuse
- You have serious doubts about the child's safety
- Informing a parent of about the child's safety may place the child at risk or compromise police evidence
- The child has suffered significant harm, or there is a risk of suffering significant harm

You should give details of the child, and family if known, the reason why immediate action may be necessary, where the child is and whether s/he should remain there or be moved to a safe place. Clarify whether the parents/carers have been made aware of the concerns and the referral. If there is any indication of a risk of violence or aggression towards the staff who will respond to the referral this should also be communicated. Referrals made by telephone must be followed up in writing within two working days using the standard referral format. (See the designated child protection officer or contact social services to see how to complete a standard referral)

Non-immediate contact with social services and /or police by writing if:

- There is no immediate risk to the child
- The child has a physical injury
- The child has a symptom of neglect
- Emotional abuse is suspected

You should give full details of the child and all other family members, information about the family's circumstances, composition and history, which other agencies are involved with the family and whether, if known, there have been previous referrals to Social

Services. It is important to clarify the reason for the child being referred, the exact nature of the concerns, why and how they have arisen and what assessment, support or services the referring professional considers may be required. Concerns about abuse or neglect should be clearly identified.

In most circumstances the agreement of the parents/carers of the child should be sought before a referral is made, providing this will not place the child at an increased risk of harm. So speak to the parents/carers.

Remember the role of the Mosque is not an investigative one. We carefully collect, clarify and report the facts to the social services, leave the investigations to the professionals, a lack of expertise may result in mistakes and misjudgements which could be disastrous with such delicate issues as child protection.

The telephone numbers of the Kent County Council and the Medway Council Social Services Department offices are:

- Ashford 01233 625 233
- Canterbury 01277 451 741
- Dartford 01322 277 744
- Dover 01304 204 915
- Gravesend 01474 328 664
- Sevenoaks & Swanley 01322 611 000
- Shepway 01303 253 476
- Swale 01795 473 333
- Thanet 01843 860 000
- Tonbridge & Malling 01732 362 442
- Medway Council 01634 331 640/1/2/3
- Tunbridge Wells 01892 515 045

These offices are open from Monday to Friday from 9.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m. Outside of office hours and at weekends and public holidays, the emergency service should be contacted by telephoning 08457 626 777.

Reacting to a child saying (s)he has been abused

Children form special relationships with teachers, carers and other mosque workers. This relationship may provide a child with the most comfortable way in which to talk to adults. Be prepared not to let them down, here is some guidance on how to react.

- Never trivialise or exaggerate child abuse issues
- The fact that you may feel the child's story is unlikely must not prevent appropriate action being taken. A child may say that (s)he has been abused by a

worker. In reality, the perpetrator could be a parent or close relative, but naming another person may be the only way in which this child can seek help.

- Keep calm, do not appear to be shocked, you have been trusted by the child, don't scare him/her off.
- Allow the child time to speak without interruptions, do not push for information
- Listen very carefully, make notes as soon as is practically possible without disturbing the flow of the child's comments
- Reassure the child that you are glad (s)he has told you what has happened, that you believed him/her and that it was right to tell
- Do not interrogate or question other than to clarify your understanding, no matter how well you know the child, spare them having to repeat themselves over and over.
- Be honest, tell the child that you cannot keep it a secret, you have to talk to someone else that can help
- Let the child know what you are going to do next, and that you will let them know what happens

Helpful things to say

- I believe you
- I am glad you have told me
- It's not your fault
- I will try to help you

Avoid saying

- Why didn't you tell anyone before
- I can't believe it
- Are you sure this is true
- Why? How? When? Who? Where?
- Never make false promises
- Never make statements such as "I'm shocked, don't tell anyone else"

Even if abuse is no longer happening it is still important to report the matter, as the adult may be abusing other children. Also it may be that the child will need guidance and help in overcoming the effects of the abuse, plus the police may wish to prosecute.

CONFIDENTIALITY

No children's worker is permitted to divulge any information concerning a child, or his/her family or anything a child may tell them to anyone other than the designated child protection officer. Information is shared on a need to know basis and should never be unnecessarily discussed with a colleague or any one else. This is in order to protect the interests of the child. This confidentiality is a continuing requirement at all times and is required when workers are "off duty" or no longer involved in the work.

MINIMISING RISK

Guidance for Protecting children and professionals.

- Those responsible for organising work with children should ensure, as far as possible, that one adult is not left alone with a child in a situation where there is little opportunity for observation by others. There should be no 'closed doors'.
- Where a group of children are meeting for an activity organized through the mosque, whether or not it takes place on the mosque grounds (e.g. outings, educational trips) at least two adults should be present with the group.
- Where children are being transported, it should be the practice, as far as possible, to have a second adult in the vehicle.
- Physical contact between adults and children can be quite healthy and to be encouraged in public places, discouraged in circumstances where an adult/child is on their own.
- Be wise with your relationship with the children - do not be over friendly with some at the expense of others. No favourites.
- Male helpers need to be particularly careful in what they say, and in being around forward young females. Female helpers similarly need to be careful with forward young male children.
- Never smack, hit or physically discipline a child except by "holding" which may be used if there is an immediate danger of personal injury to the child or another person.
- If you feel that a child may have a "crush" on you, talk to your line manager for advice and guidance.
- In order to help children, we need to develop healthy relationships by listening to them and respecting them – leading by example, show a good attitude, non-abusive language and kindness in all actions.
- We must be mindful of the safety of the children at all times, and in all circumstances.
- Where confidentiality is important (e.g. counselling of a child) ensure that others know that the interview is taking place and that someone else is around in the building.
- Anyone seeing another worker acting in a way which could be misinterpreted should be able to speak to the individual or the designated child protection officer about the concern.
- Regularly workers should review procedures to ensure a common approach, sharing concerns and identifying other matters which may need clarification and guidance.
- Hold a register of every child involved with the group including relevant medical details and have a contact name and number close to hand in case of emergencies.

Remember an allegation could also be made against you! You should be aware that someone could easily misinterpret actions even if they are well intentioned.

If an employee raises a legitimate concern about suspected child abuse, which proves to be unfounded on investigation, no action will be taken against the employee. Any employee who makes false and malicious accusations, however, will face disciplinary action.

Helping children to protect themselves by

- Teaching safety generally/strangers/good and bad secrets/touches
- Help children develop common sense rules
- Talk about suspicions or situations where they feel uncomfortable
- Examining the way in which we teach Islam, e.g. *children obeying parents*. This can be a real problem for a child who is being abused - are we telling the child to accept the abuse? Tell children that if they feel uncomfortable or if something is wrong, they can always go to other adults to talk

Children talking with an independent person

Children should know who they can turn to by name, contact details and should actually meet this person.

The telephone number of Childline or similar organisation will be displayed prominently on a notice board in the mosque.

Supervision of salaried staff and volunteers

- Each and every person working with children should have a named supervisor.
- If the supervisor is not "on site" (s)he should make frequent unannounced visits to the work place to observe and talk with the worker.
- There should be an agreed system of reporting to facilitate monitoring and appraisal.
- A statement posted in the mosque should give the name of a person to be approached if there is a complaint to be made about the competence, attitude or general standards of performance of any person working with children.
- All salaried staff and volunteers should have a working knowledge of the procedures agreed. These should always be explained to any newcomers to the organization.

Clear Roles - Job Descriptions

All positions, whether paid or voluntary, should be covered by a simple job description. This should comprise a description of the work to be undertaken, an identification of main duties and responsibilities and the designation of the person to whom the worker is accountable.

Recruitment and selection

- All persons wishing to work with children, whether newly established positions, paid or unpaid, whether permanent or temporary, whether full time or part time, will be subjected to the following rigorous recruitment and selection process as far as possible.
- Completion of an Application form
- Taking up of two references (from similar work with children if possible) followed by a phone call.
- Previous addresses will be requested
- A personal interview to establish complete education and employment history along with suitability of the candidate
- A full enhanced disclosure check with the criminal records bureau.
- Completion of a 6 month probationary period, during which the supervisor should hold regular meetings with the worker to discuss progress in the work being undertaken and to assess general attitudes.

If a person has committed offences, (s)he will still be considered as long as there is no risk to children. Considerations such as the following will be discussed prior to interviewing the candidate:

- Whether the conviction is relevant to the position being offered.
- The seriousness of the offence revealed.
- The length of time since the offence took place.
- Whether the applicant has a pattern of offending behaviour.
- Whether the applicant's circumstances have changed since offending took place

We will ensure our staff and volunteers are carefully selected, screened, trained and supervised.

Keeping Records

- A record must be held for each and every person that works with children in the mosque's care.
- Records should be in the safe custody of the designated child protection officer and their confidentiality must be safeguarded.
- Records should be factual in nature, and the individuals to whom they apply have a right of access to them.
- Documents collected through the recruitment and selection process described previously will form the basis of the permanent record.
- Where no adequate records exist for current workers, action must be taken to set up such records. In order to do this each person concerned should be asked to complete a form providing relevant information; a refusal to do so should be regarded as grounds to terminate the appointment.

It should be explained to workers that the emphasis on establishing and maintaining individual records is not only in accord with the responsibility to safeguard the interests of children but is also relevant to safeguarding the interests of workers who may be the subject of unfounded or irresponsible accusations.

- Outline the agreed principles of child protection
- What action to take when a child is at risk
- What action to take when a child is harmed or suspected to be harmed
- Overview of the organisation - its purpose, values, systems and structure
- Health and safety policy
- Annual review when each worker reports their own situation and the situation of the children in their care

There are many other aspects of child protection which are not covered by this policy. It is not intended as a comprehensive guide to child protection but as a guide to the principles which should underpin all child protection work.

How should we respond to a report?

What to do

There are only a few guidelines which should be followed. They should be as simple as possible and should be easy to remember. They should be based on the following principles:

- The child's safety is the priority. If there is any doubt, the child should be removed from the situation.
- The child's welfare is the priority.
- The child's right to be heard must be respected.
- The child's right to be protected must be respected.
- The child's right to be consulted must be respected.
- The child's right to be supported must be respected.
- The child's right to be protected must be respected.

What should be done if a child is at risk?

- Any report of a child at risk should be taken seriously.
- The child should be removed from the situation if there is any doubt.
- The child should be supported and protected.
- The child should be consulted and their views taken into account.
- The child should be supported and protected.
- The child should be supported and protected.

TRAINING STAFF

All workers with children whether salaried or volunteers shall agree to undertake training as preparation for the service applicable to the work they wish to do. Training would include such matters as

- Guidance on sound principles of child protection
- What constitutes child abuse and on how to recognise it
- What action to be taken if abuse is disclosed by a child or suspected by the worker
- Overview of the organization – its purposes, values, services and structure
- Health and Safety procedures
- Annual review where each workers performance skills, motivation and expectations will be discussed

There are some ideas regarding training found at the end of this policy, it is to be viewed as a minimum requirement for workers to be trained in these principles, and a good foundation on which to build.

How might we recognise abuse

Warning signs

These are only a guide, they are not necessarily proof of abuse, but may be an indication of it which can be easily be attributed to other explanations. They should make us stop and think, be aware, not jump to inappropriate conclusions.

- Changes or regression in mood or behaviour, particularly where a child withdraws or becomes clinging.
- Nervousness/watchfulness.
- Sudden under-achievement or lack of concentration.
- Changed or inappropriate relationships with peers and/or adults.
- Attention seeking behaviour.
- Persistent tiredness.
- Running away/stealing/lying.

Other areas where leaders should be vigilant

- Any injuries not consistent with the explanation given for them, or where differing explanations have been received.
- Injuries which occur to the body in places which are not normally exposed to falls or rough games.
- Injuries and illnesses which have not received medical attention.
- Instances where children are kept away from the group or school inappropriately.
- Reluctance to change for, or participate in, games or swimming.
- Any signs of neglect, undernourishment or inadequate care.

- Any allegations made by a child concerning sexual abuse.
- Child with excessive preoccupation with sexual matters, and detailed knowledge of adult sexual behaviour, or who regularly engages in age inappropriate sexual play.
- Sexual activity through words, play or drawing.
- Child who is sexually provocative or seductive with adults.
- Inappropriate bed sharing arrangements at home.
- Severe sleep disturbance with fears, phobias, vivid dreams or nightmares, sometimes with overt or veiled sexual connotation.

Disciplining children

Discipline is a very necessary part of Islam, it helps keep us on the straight path and develops an Islamic character. Discipline includes nurturing, training, instruction, chastisement, verbal rebuke, teaching and encouragement. Unfortunately it is here where many mosques and their teaching methods have received a bad reputation, in some cases quite rightly so. Be vigilant and careful how discipline is used, so that we may realize the real potential of many of our very able children, and not scare them away from the mosque.

- We need to be insistent, consistent and persistent.
- **NEVER** smack, or hit a child.
- Discipline out of love **NEVER** anger. (It is better to let a matter pass than discipline in anger - you may say something you regret, and that damage cannot be repaired).
- Do not shout in anger or put down a child.
- Lay down ground rules e.g., no swearing, racism, or calling each other names, a respect for property.
- Keep the ground rules simple and clear, and make sure the children understand what procedure will be taken if they are not kept.
- Talk to a child away from the 'group', not publicly. Explain what they have done wrong, encourage remorse and leave them on a positive note.
- Never reject a child, just the behaviour. (Encourage the child that you want them, but you are not willing to accept the behaviour).

Each child is unique, special and individual, and each child needs a different method of being dealt with. We therefore need to ask ourselves:-

- Why is the child behaving like that
- What is the best method for disciplining and encouraging that child
- What encourages and builds children up
- Work on each individual child's positive characteristics, do not compare them to each other.
- Work on relationships.

- Be a good role model and set a good example. (Don't expect children to do what you don't do and vice-versa)
- Take care to give quieter and well behaved children attention and don't allow some children to take all your time and energy.
- Don't say something you don't mean, and do stick to what you say, (otherwise we are implying negative teaching to the children). Think before you speak.

Some practical ideas for the classroom and bad-behaviour discipline

- Change voice tone
- Separate children who have a tendency to be disruptive when together. (These children are often friends, don't separate them straight away, give them a chance, perhaps warn them and only separate if they are disruptive)
- Have the child sit right in front of you
- Get a helper to sit next to the child
- Pay no attention to them
- Be proactive and encourage helpers to be proactive and not wait to be told to deal with a situation
- Take the child aside and talk to them, challenging them to change, whilst encouraging them on their strengths
- Warn a child that you will speak to their parents and do so if necessary. Be aware at the same time that a parent's wrath could be far worse than any discipline you may have intended, and ultimately may have a negative effect on the child's development. We only want positive outcomes to disciplining a child.
- If a child's behaviour is constantly disruptive, seek advice and guidance from your line manager
- Don't be afraid of discipline
- Warn them, send them outside the room (but still under your supervision), or ban them for short time, you need to follow this up by counselling the child back to joining the group and be better focussed.
- Always encourage good behaviour

Final Comment

Our religion was sent to us as a guidance and protection to all of mankind. Let us always seek to implement and elevate our standards of behaviour to those examples shown to us by the Prophet Muhammed (SAW). Not just the protection of our children but by showing love and compassion in all our dealings. We pray to Allah Always that He may guide us to the right path, the path of those that He has been pleased with, Allahuakbar.