

The Friends of Hillside Gardens

Policy for the Protection of Children and Young People

The Friends of Hillside Gardens are concerned to safeguard the well being of every person in our community, of whatever age. It is the responsibility of each member to prevent the physical, sexual, or emotional abuse of every member of our community, and in particular the abuse of those most vulnerable amongst us.

The Friends of Hillside Gardens will be rigorous and vigilant in protecting any children and young people taking part in their activities, from abuse, bullying and intimidation. This will be done by monitoring arrangements and by providing members with guidance on appropriate behaviour. Any member involved in activities that brings them into contact with children will be given advice, support and information regarding child protection, and in particular on how to respond effectively to any concern.

The Friends of Hillside Gardens recognise that it is an offence for a person who is known to be disqualified by court from working with children or who is on the Protection of Children Act (PoCA) list maintained by the Department of Health, to work with children, whether paid or unpaid, or to become a trustee of a children's charity. It is therefore the policy of The Friends of Hillside Gardens that no one shall take part in any activities with children and young people, within or on behalf of The Friends of Hillside Gardens, who:

1. has been convicted of or has received a formal police caution concerning an offence against children as listed in the Children's and Young Persons Act, or
2. has been convicted of or has received a formal police caution concerning sexual offences against children or young people.

It is the policy of The Friends of Hillside Gardens that those responsible for the organisation and running of activities have a duty of care to ensure the safety and well being of children and young people and therefore must take reasonable steps to this end. No unauthorised person shall have unsupervised contact with any child or young person under the auspices of The Friends of Hillside Gardens.

It is the policy of the Friends of Hillside Gardens that, in any of their activities, children and young people will not be allowed unsupervised Internet, text or telephone access.

It is the policy of the Friends of Hillside Gardens that, in any of their activities, children or young persons will be supervised by a group of two or more adults.

It is the policy of the Friends of Hillside Gardens that all members are made aware of the indicators of child abuse and neglect, and understand the mechanisms for reporting child abuse if it occurs. The Friends will provide all members with up to date information on these matters.

The Friends of Hillside Gardens has a responsibility to ensure that all members are aware of this policy relating to risk of harm to children and young people and any other policies and procedures related to the specific activities that they are involved in. The Friends of Hillside Gardens encourage children and adults to voice concerns about abusive or unethical behaviour without fear of recrimination.

Guidelines for the Members of the Friends of Hillside Gardens

Definitions

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 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, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to the child. In very rare cases physical harm is believed to be caused by a parent or carer fabricating or inducing symptoms of ill health in a child whom they are looking after. This condition is referred to as Munchausen's syndrome.

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, regardless of whether the child is aware or not of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative and 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.

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 involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on a child. It may involve causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger. It may involve the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill treatments of a child, though it may occur alone.

Dealing with Suspected abuse or neglect

It is very unlikely that members of the Friends of Hillside Gardens will be expected to deal with children and young people who have suffered abuse. However if this does occur the following advice should be followed.

In cases of suspected abuse or neglect the child should not be questioned and concerns should not be shared with parents. An accurate and detailed record should be made of the case and any action taken.

The concern should be reported to the local area social services staff, or if medical action is required, to an appropriate primary health-care centre.

If a child wishes to talk about abuse

1. Listen, but do not pass judgement on what is being said
2. Treat any allegations extremely seriously and act at all times towards the child as if you believe what they are saying.
3. Make it clear that you can offer support, and that you must pass on the information
4. Tell the child they are right to tell you
5. Reassure them that they are not to blame
6. Be honest about your own position, who you will have to tell and why
7. Tell the child what you are doing and when, and keep them up to date with what is happening

8. Take further action to contact social service or the police
9. Make an accurate record of everything that was said and any action taken. Keep a copy of your record.
10. Don't make promises you can not keep
11. Don't interrogate the child, just listen to what they want to tell you
12. Don't cast doubt on what the child has told you
13. Don't interrupt or change the subject
14. Don't say anything that makes the child feel responsible for the abuse
15. Don't do nothing, refer the matter to the social services or police.
16. Don't investigate yourself

Good practice in dealing with Children

1. Ensure that another adult is present when you are in the company of young people (ideally mixed genders)
2. Take care to ensure your use of language is appropriate
3. Comments and actions should also be appropriate, do not make suggestive remarks or gestures
4. Do not touch or make unnecessary physical contact with a child or young person
5. Be cautious in situations of high emotion or sensitivity
6. Do not rely on your good name or that of the Friends of Hillside Gardens to protect you.
7. Be aware at all times that your actions or comments could be misinterpreted however well intention
8. Respect a young persons right to personal privacy
9. Remember that some issues need to be treated confidentially

Most of the activities of the Friends of Hillside Gardens involve large groups and families and therefore it is unlikely that any member would be in the presence of an unaccompanied child or young person. However, if you are alone with a child or young person:

1. Tell some one else where you are going, what you are doing and why.
2. Ensure you are accessible to others
3. If possible move to an area where there are more people
4. Make sure that one to one contact is for as short a time as possible

These are only guidelines, it is important to use your own common sense and experience to protect yourself from misinterpretation or accusation and to safe guard the well being of those around you. If you are arranging an activity or if you think you may be in a situation that involves working with young people, it is good practice to carry out a simple risk assessment first.