

BRIDGWATER GUY FAWKES CARNIVAL COMMITTEE **CHILD PROTECTION POLICY DOCUMENT**

Safeguarding children is the responsibility of everyone affiliated with Bridgwater Guy Fawkes Carnival Committee.

Policy Statement

Bridgwater Guy Fawkes Carnival Committee (hereafter referred to as BGFCC) recognizes its responsibility and duty of care to safeguard and promote the welfare of children within the legal framework of the Children Acts 1989 and 2004. All children have the right to protection and BGFCC will ensure the safety of any young persons who are taking part in Bridgwater Guy Fawkes Carnival related activities and affiliates through adherence to these guidelines as adopted.

Under the terms of the Children Act 2004 anyone under the age of 19 is considered to be a child/young person.

The aim of BGFCC's Child Protection Policy is to promote good practice:

- Providing children and young people with appropriate safety and protection whilst in the care of BGFCC and
- Allow all members/helpers to make informed and confident responses to specific child protection issues.

These guidelines are for the use of all members, helpers and friends of the committee. We will make them available to the parents and carers of the children and young people affiliated with the committee. Through them, we will endeavour to ensure that:

- Children and young people are listened to, valued and respected
- Members and helpers are aware of the need to be alert to the signs of abuse and know what to do with their concerns.

All child protection concerns should be acted upon immediately. If you are concerned that a child might be at risk or is actually suffering abuse, you should tell the designated child protection officer within the committee.

Our designated child protection officer is: Anne Middleton (Secretary)

Telephone number: 07917 662218 or 01278 428220

If the designated officer is not available, speak to a senior member of the carnival committee, or ideally, an officer.

In an emergency situation, contact a social worker directly:

In office hours, either: The Duty Desk (Somerset Direct) **0845 3459122**

Out of office hours: The Emergency Duty Team **0845 3459122**

Promoting good practice

Child abuse, particularly sexual abuse, can arouse strong emotions in those facing such a situation. It is important to understand these feelings and not allow them to interfere with your judgement about the appropriate action to take.

Abuse can occur within many situations including the home, school and the carnival environment. Some individuals will actively seek employment or voluntary work with young people in order to harm them. A member or helper will have regular contact with young people and be an important link in identifying cases where they need protection. All suspicious cases of poor practice should be reported following the guidelines in this document.

When a child enters into a Bridgwater Carnival related activity having been subjected to child abuse outside the carnival environment, participating in carnival activities can play a crucial role in improving the child's self-esteem. In such instances the committee officers must work with the appropriate agencies to ensure the child receives the required support.

Good practice guidelines

All committee members/helpers should be encouraged to demonstrate exemplary behaviour in order to promote children's welfare and reduce the likelihood of allegations being made. The following are common sense examples of how to create a positive approach and attitude towards such issues;

Good practice means:

- Always working in an open environment (e.g. avoiding private or unobserved situations and encouraging open communication with no secrets).
- Treating all young people/disabled adults equally, and with respect and dignity.
- Always putting the welfare of each young person first, before bettering the committee's interests
- Maintaining an appropriate relationship with members/helpers (e.g. it is not appropriate for staff or volunteers to have an intimate relationship with a child).
- Building balanced relationships based on mutual trust which empowers children to share in the decision-making process;
- Making carnival fun, enjoyable, and promoting self-esteem, confidence and skill building
- Involving parents/carers wherever possible.
- Ensuring that if there are male and female children engaging in committee run activities, they should always be accompanied by a male and female adult member/helper. However, remember that same gender abuse can also occur.
- Giving enthusiastic and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism.
- Recognising the developmental needs and capacity of young people and disabled adults – avoiding pressure to participate in committee events, activities, rehearsals, fundraising and cart building

- Securing parental consent in writing to act *in loco parentis*, if the need arises to administer emergency first aid and/or other medical treatment.
- Keeping a written record of any injury that occurs, along with the details of any treatment given.
- Requesting written parental consent if committee members/helpers are required to transport children in their cars.

Practices to be avoided

The following should be **avoided** except in emergencies. If cases arise where these situations are unavoidable it should be with the full knowledge and consent of someone in charge in the committee or the child's parents. For example, a child sustains an injury and needs to go to hospital, or a parent fails to arrive to pick a child up at the end of a committee organised event.

- Avoid spending time alone with children away from others
- Avoid taking or dropping off a child to an event or activity

Practices never to be sanctioned

The following should **never** be sanctioned. You should never:

- Allow or engage in any form of inappropriate touching
- Allow children to use inappropriate language unchallenged
- Make sexually suggestive comments to a child, even in fun
- Reduce a child to tears as a form of control
- Fail to act upon and record any allegations made by a child
- Do things of a personal nature for children or disabled adults, that they can do for themselves

N.B. It may sometimes be necessary for members/helpers to do things of a personal nature for children, particularly if they are young or are disabled. These tasks should only be carried out with the full understanding and consent of parents.

Incidents that must be reported/recorded

If any of the following occur you should report this immediately to the appropriate officer and record the incident. You should also ensure the parents of the child are informed:

- If you accidentally hurt a /child
- If he/she seems distressed in any manner.
- If a child appears to be sexually aroused by your actions.
- If a /child misunderstands or misinterprets something you have done.

Use of photographic/filming equipment at carnival events

Some people may use carnival events as an opportunity to take inappropriate photographs or film footage of young persons. The carnival committee should be vigilant and any concerns should be reported to the committee's designated Child Protection Officer.

New members/helpers

BGFCC recognises that anyone may have the potential to abuse children in some way and that all reasonable steps are taken to ensure unsuitable people are prevented from working with children. Pre-selection checks must include the following:

- All members should complete an application form. The application form will elicit information about an applicant's past and a self-disclosure about any criminal record.
- Consent should be obtained from an applicant to seek information from the Criminal Records Bureau if felt by the designated officer to be necessary

Training

In addition to pre-selection checks, the safeguarding process includes the need for relevant personnel (committee officers) to receive advisory information outlining good practice and informing them about what to do if they have concerns about the behaviour of an adult affiliated with the club towards a young person-whether inside or outside of BGFCC.

Responding to allegations or suspicions

It is not the responsibility of anyone participating in BGFCC to decide whether or not child abuse has taken place. However there is a responsibility to act on any concerns by reporting these to the appropriate officer or the appropriate authorities. BGFCC will assure all members/helpers that it will fully support and protect anyone, who in good faith reports his or her concern that a fellow member/helper is, or may be, abusing a child.

Where there is a complaint against a member or helper there may be three types of investigation:

- A criminal investigation,
- A child protection investigation,
- A disciplinary or misconduct investigation.

The results of the police and child protection investigation may well influence and inform the disciplinary investigation, but all available information will be used to reach a decision.

Action if there are concerns

1. Concerns about poor practice:

- If, following consideration, the allegation is clearly about poor practice; the designated Child Protection Officer will deal with it as a misconduct issue.
- If the allegation is about poor practice by the Organisation/Club Child Protection Officer, or if the matter has been handled inadequately and concerns remain, it should be reported to the president or chairman who will decide how to deal with the allegation and whether or not to initiate disciplinary proceedings.

2. Concerns about suspected abuse:

- Any suspicion that a child has been abused by either a member or a helper should be reported to the designated Child Protection Officer, who will take such steps as considered necessary to ensure the safety of the child in question and any other child who may be at risk.
- The designated Child Protection Officer will refer the allegation to the social services department who may involve the police.
- The parents or carers of the child will be contacted as soon as possible following advice from the social services department.
- If the committee's designated Child Protection Officer is the subject of the suspicion/allegation, the report must be made to another BGFCC officer who will refer the allegation to Social Services.

Confidentiality

Every effort should be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned. Information should be handled and disseminated on a need to know basis only. This includes the following people:

- The designated Child Protection Officer.
- The parents of the person who is alleged to have been abused
- The person making the allegation.
- The directors of BGFCC
- Social services/police.
- Seek social services advice on who should approach the alleged abuser (or parents if the alleged abuser is a child).

Information should be stored in a secure place with limited access to designated people, in line with data protection laws (e.g. that information is accurate, regularly updated, relevant and secure).

Internal Enquiries and Suspension

- The BGFCC designated Child Protection Officer will make an immediate decision about whether any individual accused of abuse should be temporarily suspended from the carnival committee and from engaging in carnival related activities pending further police and social services inquiries.

- Irrespective of the findings of the social services or police inquiries the BGFCC's club officers will assess all individual cases to decide whether a member or helper can be reinstated and how this can be sensitively handled. This may be a difficult decision; particularly where there is insufficient evidence to uphold any action by the police. In such cases, BGFCC's officers must reach a decision based upon the available information which could suggest that on a balance of probability, it is more likely than not that the allegation is true. The welfare of the child should remain of paramount importance throughout.

Support to deal with the aftermath of abuse:

- Consideration should be given to the kind of support that children, parents and members or helpers may need. Use of helplines, support groups and open meetings will maintain an open culture and help the healing process. The British Association for Counselling Directory is available from The British Association for Counselling, 1 Regent Place, Rugby CV21 2PJ, Tel: 01788 550899, Fax: 01788 562189, E-mail: bac@bacp.co.uk, Internet: <http://www.bacp.co.uk>.
- Consideration should be given to what kind of support may be appropriate for the alleged perpetrator.

Allegations of previous abuse

Allegations of abuse may be made some time after the event (e.g. by an adult who was abused as a child or by a member or helper who is still currently working with children).

Where such an allegation is made, BGFCC should follow the procedures as detailed above and report the matter to the social services or the police. This is because other children, either within or outside carnival, may be at risk from this person. Anyone who has a previous criminal conviction for offences related to abuse is automatically excluded from working with children. This is reinforced by the details of the Protection of Children Act 1999.