

COMMUNITY RESOLVE CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

This policy has been developed to ensure that all staff (freelance or contracted), trainers and volunteers have a clear understanding of the action to take if they suspect, observe or have abuse reported to them. They are required by *Community Resolve* to make formal notification of any abuse or suspected abuse, which they may become aware of in pursuit of their work for *Community Resolve*. It is the responsibility of all those working with *Community Resolve* to read the procedures and become acquainted with them.

- 1.1 *Community Resolve* is aware of the widespread evidence of physical, sexual and emotional abuse of children by adults and other young people, and that any organisation which builds relationships between young people and adults is vulnerable to exploitation by those seeking to abuse children and young people.
- 1.2 *Community Resolve* is committed to protecting young people from such abuse, and expects all staff and volunteers to act to prevent the physical, sexual and emotional abuse of all children and young people with whom they come into contact through the organisation. *Community Resolve* accepts the responsibility to exercise due care and attention to ensure that young people are not exposed to risk through negligence or incompetence on our part.
- 1.3 *Community Resolve* is also committed to helping young people and adults overcome the effects of abuse and wishes to work in close co-operation with other agencies to ensure that policies and procedures deliver a safe and effective service.
- 1.4 This policy applies to all paid staff, free-lance or contracted, as well as all volunteers working for *Community Resolve*. In pursuit of this policy *Community Resolve* will maintain a regular review of policy and procedure in the following areas ; recruitment, employment, training, service provision, interagency working, management and reporting.

Procedures

These procedures been developed to ensure all staff, free-lance or contracted trainers and volunteers are clear regarding what action to take if they suspect, observe or have reported to them possible evidence of abuse.

1.5 Planning Community Resolve’s work in order to minimise situations where abuse may occur_

- a) Keeping parents informed/parental permission - Community Resolve is committed to minimise situations where abuse may occur and practices this by ensuring that all training is conducted by a team of at least two people so that young people can develop relationships with more than 1 adult. Community Resolve will seek parental permission for any extra activities e.g.: residential activities. Parents need to be aware that Community Resolve staff/trainers on the visit will be exercising the same care that a parent would.
- b) Health and safety policy and arrangements - Under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, employers are responsible for the health, safety and welfare at work of their employees. Employers are also under a duty to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health and safety of anyone else on the premises or anyone who may be affected by their activities. This includes participants in off-site visits. Health and safety arrangements within Community Resolve are up to date and relevant. Staff are offered training in health and safety. See separate Health & Safety Policy.
- c) Guidelines for residentials - Guidance on planning safe residential experiences are in development by Community Resolve. Staff are expected to plan residential activities for young people, including a consideration of the risks involved, ensuring the venue meets the health and safety standards and that there is an appropriate staff: child ratio.
- d) Residential activities for School Programmes (under 16 years) - For school residential programmes, Community Resolve will not have overall responsibility for the supervision and conduct of the participants. The school will appoint the group leader (Teacher). The group leader will be suitably competent to be able to control and lead pupils outside of the Community Resolve activities.

Community Resolve staff are expected to draw unsafe activities to the attention of the group leader.

- e) Residential activities for other programmes (16 years plus) - The aim of residential activities for older people is to encourage team building and independence, and some of the time activities may be unsupervised with groups in different rooms. The Community Resolve trainers/staff should establish during the planning stage whether participants are capable of undertaking the proposed activities. Any participants whose behaviour may be considered to be a dangerous or disruptive to themselves or to the group may be stopped from going on the residential.

1.6 Appointing the right staff and volunteers to undertake our work involving contact with children and young people (*See staff recruitment policy and volunteer policy*)

- a) Application Forms - Applicants for any post within Community Resolve will be required to complete an application form and criminal conviction disclosure form. The application form provides general information about the suitability of the applicant for the post applied. It details qualification, experience and work history and the capacity of the individual to do the job.
- b) The criminal conviction disclosure form provides information on past convictions and the relevance of those convictions to the post applied for. This gives Community Resolve an opportunity to assess the risk of employing that applicant. For example, a person with a conviction for fraud, may not be offered the post of accounts manager, but may be employed as an administrator where dealing with finances is not required. An explanation note about disclosure will be included in the application pack.
- c) The applicants are requested to return (with the application form) the completed criminal conviction disclosure form, which should be in the sealed envelope provided marked 'private and confidential'. This is to be retained by

the Project Manager and opened by the chair of the interview panel once shortlisting has taken place.

- d) If the past conviction relates too closely to the post applied for then the decision can be made as to whether it is worth calling that applicant for interview. If the past conviction is 'acceptable' then the conviction can be explored further with the applicant at interview.
- e) Exploration of contact with children in interview. Each applicant who is short-listed is offered an interview for the post. The aim of the interview is to assess the applicants' suitability for the job. The information contained on the application form provides an opportunity for the candidate to clarify and expand their understanding of the job and convince potential employers of their suitability for the job.
- f) Each applicant for work involving children and young people should be asked to describe their experience and previous work involving young people. Care must be taken to put the candidate at ease so that they can give their best, it is wise to ask open questions which will give the applicant the opportunity to talk about situations they have dealt with in the past e.g.
- g) "On the application form you say you worked in a residential setting, could you please tell us about how you dealt with a potential difficult situation and what was the outcome?"
- h) Exploration of criminal conviction at interview - Candidates at interview should be given the opportunity to talk about their previous convictions. This is a sensitive area and should be phrased in such a way to cause minimal embarrassment and without judgement. One way is to ask the candidate to tell the panel briefly, what led up the event, the outcome of the court case and what they have been doing since release/last offence. Every opportunity should be given for the candidate to end on a positive note.

- i) This in itself will not tell us if the applicant will abuse young people or has in the past. However Community Resolve is looking for staff, volunteers, trainers who are free from convictions relating to children/child offences.
- j) References - Community Resolve routinely asks applicants for references, particularly from previous employers. A good reference supports the decision to employ the candidate. Each applicant will provide two referees that Community Resolve can approach to get a fuller picture on the individual chosen. Community Resolve will make a job offer subject to references.
- k) One of the two referees must have direct knowledge of the applicants' work with young people. Any reference with ambiguous or unclear statements should be followed up with a phone call to the referee. Ambiguous or unclear statements may be there to inform the prospective employer of underlying issues or may be vindictiveness by the previous employer. A phone call should help clarify unanswered questions.
- l) An applicant with a conviction will be considered by Community Resolve if they can provide a reputable third party referee (other than recent employer if too much time has elapsed) such as a probation officer who knows the applicant well and can discuss the applicant and their criminal record with Community Resolve
- m) Criminal convictions checks - Currently only where a position is exempted under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act can the employers check official records for details of past convictions. However when the Criminal Record Bureau is established, employers will have the opportunity to request information by way of the certificates as introduced in the Police Act 1997. (See Appendix 1).
- n) Community Resolve currently assesses that all trainers, development workers and adult volunteers have substantial access to children and young people, and therefore, will be seeking enhanced disclosure certificates during the process

of criminal conviction checks. Project management, administration and finance staff do not currently have significant unsupervised access to children and young people.

- o) Completion of probationary period - The line manager of each role undertakes a probationary review at the end of six months, which would include an assessment of any issues of concern around a safeguarding and care of children and young people.
- p) The new staff member will not be confirmed in post until Community Resolve are totally satisfied about their ability to cope with child protection issues.

1.7 Allocation of clear roles, responsibilities and supervision

- a) Full and Part-time staff - Community Resolve Staff are appointed with job descriptions outlining their role and responsibility within the work. During their induction, staff are introduced to the code of conduct, which outlines Community Resolve's expectations of behaviour towards colleagues and participants in the work, and awareness of child protection issues for relevant staff. All staff receive monthly supervision with their line manager in which concerns about safety and welfare of young people are raised.
- b) One Community Resolve manager has responsibility for monitoring child protection policy and procedures, and for keeping other staff informed of new developments.
- c) Freelance Trainers undergo a similar recruitment process to paid staff. Trainers are expected to work closely to our code of practice for trainers, which outlines expectations and responsibilities. Trainers are offered regular supervision with the Head of Training, which includes any concerns with relationships with children and young people.

- d) Volunteers undergo a similar recruitment process to paid staff. All volunteers undertake a 40-hour training course with Community Resolve before commencing work. This includes an exploration of their experience of conflict and outlines Community Resolve's expectations in relation to behaviour towards colleges and other volunteers.

1.8 Dealing with abuse which has been disclosed or discovered

- a) Initial steps when a disclosure is made: If a young person discloses information of current or past abuse to a member of Community Resolve staff, they need to record accurately what they have been told and at the first opportunity report the allegation to a Senior Community Resolve manager and the appropriate statutory service i.e. social services, police. If an adult discloses such information they need to be encouraged to report it to the relevant organisation. (i.e. Police, social services).
- b) When talking to the young person, ask if they would like another person present. This may put them at ease and even the balance. Staff must not investigate the issue or ask leading questions. Their role is to ask limited and necessary questions for clarification purposes only. Inform the young person that they are making notes to pass onto the relevant person. Assure the young person that he/she is not responsible for the abuse or for the consequences of the disclosure
- c) The recipient of the information needs to ascertain whether the young person requires medical attention and reassure the young person that the matter will be dealt with. They should not pressure the young person in any way to justify their statement.
- d) The recipient cannot promise confidentiality in a situation of abuse as others will need to be told. The young person should be reassured that only those who need to be told, will be told.

- e) The appropriate statutory service will need to make the decision about involving the family/parents in the assessment of disclosure.

- 1.9 Where Community Resolve is the responsible organisation_ Follow initial steps
- 1.10 Where another organisation is responsible for child protection_ If a young person discloses such information to a member of Community Resolve staff, they need to record accurately what they have been told and at the first opportunity report the allegation to the senior member or liaison person for the host organisation and a Senior Community Resolve manager.
- 1.11 Where the abuse may be in the home, follow initial steps.
- 1.12 Where the individual to be investigated is a participant, volunteer or staff member with Community Resolve:
 - a) The recipient of the complaint must carefully record what they have been told
 - b) The recipient of the information must not pressure the young person in any way to justify their statements. If medical attention is needed the doctor involved must be informed of the allegation prior to giving medical attention so as to preserve any evidence.
 - c) The recipient must respect the young person's confidentiality as far as possible only informing whom they are required to tell and they will not inform other members of staff or the alleged abuser/perpetrator.
 - d) They must report immediately to a Community Resolve senior manager, who will report the matter to the host agency, police or social services department as soon as possible. (This would not apply if the alleged abuser were the most senior manager. The chair of Trustees would need to be informed.)
 - e) Once the senior manager is in receipt of the complaint they will advise the Board of Trustees of the serious allegation, the line manager take interim action (terminate, suspend, postpone) regarding the alleged abuser and work involving young people as a precautionary measure. The assumption needs to be made in favour of the young persons' complaint, which would normally mean preventing the alleged abuser having contact with the alleged, abused.
 - f) It may be appropriate for the senior manager and one other staff to see the young person to acknowledge the complaint and give reassurance of the

process and their safety. All conversations must be recorded in detail at the time.

- g) Seek legal advice if necessary.
 - h) Any internal disciplinary procedure may need to be put on hold pending the outcome of investigation by statutory services. However a normal disciplinary procedure may be followed. This would include, talk with alleged abuser to ascertain the facts. Consider factors related to his/her work performance, to following procedures, making proper records and reporting incidents. Keep in mind these factors are secondary in relation to the alleged abuse however they are vital in relation to good practice and previous character. Management should review the recruitment and supervision of the staff member and undertake any further checks that are appropriate.
 - i) Senior manager should decide on the need to inform other staff that an investigation is in process.
 - j) Discussions should be considered with the group of young people especially if staff believed that it was previously disclosed or discussed.
 - k) Based on the process a decision has to be made as to whether the allegation can be substantiated. If a member of staff's conduct is thought to be inappropriate then disciplinary action will be taken up and including dismissal following normal disciplinary procedure. If Community Resolve believes that he/she is a highly unsuitable person for work involving children and young people they should notify the Department of Health and or Department of Education.
- 1.13 The entire process should not be done in a rush, however every effort should be made to expedite matters. Every case is different and will need to be looked at individually; therefore a guide to appropriate time-scales for completion is not always useful.
- 1.14 This process is separate from any legal investigation of an allegation.

- 1.15 Supporting the abused child - If Community Resolve is unfortunate to experience or discover or have disclosed an incident of abuse then we can expect the events to be traumatic for all involved. The shock may impair judgement and the staff may not take the best course of action. Opportunities for reassuring and supporting the young person may be missed and this may lead to suspected collusion or cover up.
- 1.16 Following any allegation and investigation a Community Resolve member of staff will be allocated responsibility for keeping in touch with the child to offer an appropriate support. Expert advice should be sought from agencies such as social services, Child Line and other help groups to begin the healing process.
- 1.17 Supporting the abuser (known to Community Resolve)
Community Resolve will appoint a staff member to communicate with the alleged abuser on a regular basis, this person will be independent of any disciplinary procedure and not be able to communicate any information about the progress of the investigation/disciplinary process.
- 1.18 Training
 - a) Community Resolve is committed to training in theory and practice of child protection. In house training will be given to all staff, free-lance or contracted trainers and volunteers, however it is the individual's responsibility to read the procedures and become acquainted with them.
- 1.19 Independent person_
 - a) All participants on Community Resolve programmes and courses will be given information about the organisation, address and phone number and who to contact if they are unhappy about the service they received or the way they were treated.

- b) The named person is someone associated with Community Resolve but sufficiently removed from the delivery and face-to-face work with young people.

Reviewed by S. Hart 17.11.16

Next Review date: 17.11.16