

# QDU POLICY – CCYPCG DISCLOSURE OF HARM

## Preamble

The following policy and procedures will ensure that staff respond as quickly as possible and in the best interests of the child or young person under 18 years of age, when disclosures or suspicions of harm are received. The QDU recognises that children and young people are vulnerable members of the community and that extra measures must be taken to protect and support them.

## Policy and Procedures for Handling Disclosures or Suspicions of Harm

QDU Volunteers will be made aware through this document of what they are to look for in relation to harm and the handling of disclosures or suspicions of harm. In all cases this behaviour is to be reported to both the QDU OFFICE (via telephone immediately and followed up with an email within 48 hours) and IMMEDIATELY to the appointed venue coordinator (usually the host school's debating coordinator) at the location you are present at.

The QDU Office will assess the situation reported and document same to send via email to the school or schools responsible for representative the appropriate person at the location chosen as the host venue

## Definitions

**Harm** may be categorised in the following types:

- *physical abuse*, for example, beating, shaking, burning, biting, causing bruise or fractures by inappropriate discipline, giving children alcohol, drugs or inappropriate medication
- *emotional or psychological abuse*, for example, constant yelling, insults, swearing, criticism, bullying, not giving children positive support and encouragement
- *neglect* for example, not giving children sufficient food, clothing, enough sleep, hygiene, medical care, leaving children alone or children missing school, and
- *sexual abuse or exploitation*, for example, sexual jokes or touching, exposing children to sexual acts or pornography or having sexual intercourse with a child or young person under 16 years of age (even if the child appears to have consented).

## Suspicion of harm

You can suspect harm if you are concerned by significant changes in behaviour or the presence of new unexplained and suspicious injuries.

## Disclosure of harm

A disclosure of harm occurs when someone, including a child, tells you about harm that has happened or is likely to happen. Disclosures of harm may start with:

- "I think I saw..."
- "Somebody told me that..."
- "Just think you should know..."
- "I'm not sure what I want you to do, but..."

## Procedures to minimise harm to children and young people

The QDU minimises harm to children and young people by acting in a manner that supports their interests and wellbeing, by:

- making sure they are safe by monitoring their activities and ensuring their environment meets all safety requirements
- taking anything a child or young person says seriously and following up their concerns and if confronted with a situation by letting them know there is no secret too awful, no story too terrible, that they can't share with someone they trust
- listening to children and young people and letting them know that staff are available for them if they have any concerns.

## Procedures for receiving a disclosure of harm

When receiving a disclosure of harm:

- remain calm and find a private place to talk
- don't promise that you'll keep a secret; tell them they have done the right thing in telling you but that you'll need to tell someone who can help
- only ask enough questions to confirm the need to report the matter; probing questions could cause distress, confusion and interfere with any later enquiries, and
- do not attempt to conduct your own investigation or mediate an outcome between the parties involved.

## Reporting guidelines for disclosures or suspicions of harm

Immediately following a disclosure or suspicion of harm that is reported by one of our volunteers the QDU will endeavour to contact the QDU debating coordinator of the school as per the information we receive on the entry form to the competition.

The QDU will disclose all information given to them by the aggrieved person and ask for confirmation in writing that they have received this information. Any notes taken by the QDU volunteer will also be handed over on request to assist the school in their enquiries.

## Actions following a disclosure of harm

The QDU will offer support and counselling to the volunteer in all cases. The responsibility of support for the child or young person will always fall back to the school involved, who should offer the appropriate counselling and support.

The person who made the report Under Section 22 of the Child Protection Act 1999, a person who reports suspected child abuse is protected from civil or criminal legal actions and is not considered to have broken any code of conduct or ethics.

Details of the person who made the report are to be kept completely confidential and will not be made available to the family of the child or young person, or the person against whom the allegation has been made.

The person against whom the allegation has been made (in all cases where it involves a volunteer of the QDU) will have their duties QDU suitability reviewed. In extreme cases legal advice may be an option taken by the QDU to minimise any issues.

## Closing Statement

The policy and procedures for handling disclosures or suspicions of harm will be reviewed and assessed occasionally by the QDU Executive to ensure that the organisation is continuing to provide a safe and supportive service environment.