

The SoapBox Child Protection Policy

SAFE AND SOUND

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APPENDIX A

“SAFE & SOUND”

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“SAFE & SOUND”

Safe Practices and Sound Policy for those working with Young People within the SOAPBOX COMMUNICATIONS TRUST

A.1 Overview:

This document is designed to offer guidance to all those employed by the SoapBox Communications Trust as either paid full or part-time workers or as volunteer workers and leaders. Its purpose is to give clear, unambiguous procedures to be followed in the selection and recruitment of all staff and for dealing with young people involved in SoapBox activities both within the UK and abroad.

The policies and procedures included are based on sound professional advice and current best practices, and are in keeping with the guidelines set down by the Home Office for voluntary organisations working with young people. These guidelines are laid down in the Home Office publication *Safe from Harm* (Pub: London 1993, ISBN 0 862529 93-X). Significant parts of this document are based on the Baptist Union publication *Safe to Grow* (Pub: Baptist Union, 1994 2nd ed. 1998, ISBN 1 898077 86 X).

This document seeks to:

- Protect the young people we work with from abuse.
- Show how we can act responsibly if abuse is discovered or suspected.
- Protect our staff and volunteer workers from suspicion of inappropriate behaviour with regard to the young people we work with.

In accordance with the requirements for allowing participation in any activity in any way, all trustees, staff, volunteer workers and associates will be subject to disclosure checks by the Criminal Records Bureau.

A2 Clarification of Terms and Definitions:

The Trust - SoapBox Communications Trust or any part of its operation including SoapBox Short Term Projects, Creative Arts, Media or Missions departments.

The Charity - This refers to the charitable status of the SoapBox Communications Trust (registered charity no. 1088937). To all intents and purposes the Trust and the Charity are the same body.

Member of Staff - A member of staff is defined as any person employed in a paid capacity either full or part-time, by SoapBox Communications Trust in any of its departments.

Worker - This term applies to any person acting in the capacity of a Trustee of the Charity, as a member of the Charity Management Committee or retained in any consultancy capacity in regard to the day to day running of the charity. For the purposes of this text it also covers members of staff, volunteer workers and leaders working within the Trust.

Volunteer Worker - The term volunteer worker is applied to any person who works in any capacity for SoapBox Communications Trust or any of its departments, without pay or remuneration. This is particularly applicable to those people who serve as project leaders and those who are participants in SoapBox Short-Term Projects or those who work voluntarily in the setting up and running of other SoapBox events.

Leader - A leader is defined as any person who has a supervisory, organisational or decision making role. A leader may be a member of staff, a worker or a volunteer worker. It is particularly applicable to those who take responsibility for leading SoapBox Short Term Projects overseas projects or who are involved in leadership or first-aid training.

Young Person - For the purposes of this policy and all activities in relation to SoapBox Communications Trust, a young person is defined as any person under the age of 18 years. In regard to SoapBox Short Term Projects young people will be those aged 16 or 17 years. For other Trust activities, young people could be of any age as the Trust engages in a wide range of school's and young people's work. Where either children or young people are mentioned in the text, both are intended.

Abuse - The term defining ways in which children or young people may be harmed or at risk of being harmed. This term includes *physical, sexual and emotional abuse* as well as *neglect*. These are dealt with individually in the text.

Abuser - One who harms children or young people in any of the ways defined above.

A3 How Can Young People be Harmed?

When young people receive loving care and discipline in a safe environment, they have every chance to grow into healthy, stable adulthood. Our projects and activities provide great opportunities for young people to grow and develop as they explore both their own faith and the world around them. However, young people can be prevented from growing and developing normally by adults or other young people who do wrong things to them. Damage of this kind is termed “abuse”.

Young people who suffer abuse will behave in a variety of abnormal ways as they struggle to cope with a world that is going wrong for them. Workers with young people need to be able to detect the signs, because they are cries for help, which in most cases, cannot or dare not be articulated.

Our projects provide an emotionally intense environment in which young people can develop strong, trusting relationships with those around them. These relationships can provide the setting in which a young person may choose to reveal that they have been abused, or in the wrong situation provide opportunities for others to abuse them.

It is our responsibility to ensure appropriate support for the young people we work with protecting them from harm, and to ensure that correct action is taken when abuse is discovered or suspected. It is also our responsibility to protect those who work for us from any allegations or suspicions of inappropriate behaviour towards the young we work with.

However, there may be many reasons why a young person may act in a particular way, or say particular things. Therefore it is important that a worker must never be required to take a decision on his or her own as to whether abuse is taking place. This document therefore outlines the process of consultation and action to be followed if abuse is suspected.

A4 Types of Abuse

Physical Abuse - where young people's bodies are hurt or injured. Marks and bruises especially around the upper legs, forearms and face can be indications of this form of abuse, especially if observed repeatedly over a long period of time. Lack of medical attention to injuries is often another sign, as the abuser is often scared of having to explain how the young person received their injuries.

Emotional Abuse - where young people don't receive love and affection, where they may be frightened by threats or taunts, or are given responsibilities beyond their years. Reverting to younger behaviour, nervousness, sudden under achievement, attention seeking, running away, stealing and lying may all be signs of this form of abuse.

Sexual Abuse - where adults or other young people will use young people to satisfy their own sexual desires. Young people having suffered or who are suffering sexual abuse may display: a preoccupation with sexual matters evident in words, play, drawings; being sexually provocative with adults or other young people; disturbed sleep, nightmares, bedwetting; secretive relationships with adults or other young people; stomach pains with no apparent cause.

Neglect - where adults persistently and severely fail to care for young people and protect them from danger, leading to serious impairment of the child's health or development. Indications of young people suffering from neglect may be: looking ill-cared for and unhappy, being withdrawn or aggressive, having lingering injuries or health problems.

A variety of personal circumstances can cause adults to abuse young people physically or to neglect them. These kinds of abuse are easier to detect. Signs of emotional and sexual abuse are very difficult to spot. With sexual abuse in particular, secrecy imposed by the abuser is a part of the abuse pattern, so the young person will not readily disclose what is happening.

If abuse is disclosed or suspected:

- Do not delay.
- Do not act alone.
- Do not start to investigate.
- Consult with the person you are responsible to or with, or another person you trust.

In ALL cases report the disclosure or suspicion at the soonest opportunity to the SoapBox office.

A5 Protecting and Supporting Our Workers

Worker's Feelings - whilst most guidelines are concerned with the good practice required to care for young people, it is essential to remember that you too have feelings. When faced with a situation of abuse, it is difficult for many workers to handle their own emotions in response to what is often seen as being "repulsive".

We are often reluctant to admit that abuse is or could be taking place; especially to young people from Christian backgrounds or from families we know and trust. We have an unconscious defence mechanism that refuses to see abuse. This is natural, but it is important not to let this defence mechanism make us un-alert to the possibility.

Aftercare, Counselling and Support - any worker within the SoapBox Communications Trust who discovers or is involved in the handling of a case of suspected abuse may well want to talk through their feelings and experiences. Indeed, we would encourage you to do so.

If on a project, then it is important to talk to your co-leader or another person you trust. By discussing the situation, it will often help you to vent feelings of revulsion and prevent you making a reactive response.

On returning to the UK, or if already working in the UK you are encouraged to contact the SoapBox Office and discuss the situation with:

John Russell, Executive Director
Kathy Murphy, Projects Officer/Aftercare

Tel: 01483 268467
Tel: 01617 180104

In all cases of suspected abuse, our procedures require you to inform the office - either Kathy Murphy or John Russell. These procedures are given later in the document.

Kathy has a more specific role in aftercare for all our project participants. This includes leaders, so we would ask that you do use this service to gain the care and support you may need. If appropriate we will help refer you onwards to professional help specifically designed at supporting those involved in handling abuse cases.

A6 Home Office Guidelines

The guidelines as issued by the Home Office for voluntary organisations working with young people are summarised below. These guidelines are detailed in Home Office publication *Safe from Harm*, 1993. Our policy and procedures for working with young people are based on these guidelines.

Organising your group in order to protect young people

1. Adopt a policy statement on safeguarding the welfare of young people.
2. Plan your work so as to minimise situations where abuse of young people may occur.
3. Introduce a system whereby young people may talk to an independent person.

Supporting Staff in order to Protect Young People

4. Apply agreed procedures for protecting young people to all workers.
5. Give all workers clear roles.
6. Use supervision as a means of protecting young people.

Choosing Staff in Order to Protect Young People

7. Treat all would-be workers as job applicants for any position involving contact with young people.
8. Gain at least one reference from a person who has firsthand knowledge of the volunteer's work with young people.
9. Explore the applicant's experience of working or contact with young people in an extended conversation.
10. Ask whether the volunteer has any conviction for criminal offences.
11. Make appointments conditional on the successful completion of a probationary period.

What to do for Young Person and Worker if Abuse is Suspected or Disclosed

12. Agree and issue guidelines for procedure if abuse is suspected or disclosed.

Training Leaders and Workers to Protect Young People

13. Train volunteers, supervisors and leaders who make the policy decisions in the prevention of child abuse.

A7 Statement of Policy on Children and Young People in Relation to the Work of SOAPBOX COMMUNICATIONS TRUST

This statement has been agreed by the trustees of the charity.

It will be drawn to the attention of the attendees annually at the Annual General Meeting (SoapBox Vision Day) held in the month of February, where progress in carrying it out will be monitored.

- At SoapBox Communications Trust we commit ourselves to the nurturing, protection and safekeeping of all, especially children and young people.
- It is the responsibility of each one of us to prevent the physical, sexual and emotional abuse of children and young people, and to report any abuse discovered or suspected.
- We recognise that our work with children and young people is the responsibility of the whole organisation, both collectively and individually.
- SoapBox Communications Trust is committed to supporting, resourcing and training those who work with children and young people, and to providing supervision.
- SoapBox Communications Trust is committed to following the Home Office Code of Practice *Safe from Harm* and adopts the guidelines and procedures published in SoapBox document *Safe and Sound*.
- Each worker with young people must know the recommendations, and undertake to observe them. Each shall be given a copy of these agreed procedures and Good Practice guidelines.

A8 Good Practice Guidelines for the Prevention of Abuse to Children or Young People

A. Good Practice with children and young people

1. SoapBox should ensure that:

- As far as possible a worker is not alone with a child where their activity cannot be seen. In schools this may mean ensuring all work is in classrooms and assembly halls in full view of other people. Where this is unavoidable, leave doors open or ensure that when participating in group work, groups share the same room.
- On overseas projects, workers should not allow a situation to develop in which they are left alone unnecessarily with a young person.
- In a counselling situation with a young person, where privacy and confidentiality are important, try to make sure that another adult knows the interview is taking place and with whom. Ideally this adult should be your co-leader, the young person's Small Group Leader or one in the case of schools work be your co-worker. Counselling should only be carried out by a person of the same sex.
- If possible another adult should be in the building, and the young person should know they are there. If the young person will agree, get the other adult to sit in on the interview.
- Never promise to keep anything disclosed a secret - try and make sure the young person understands that you will only act in their best interest and will support them, but it may be necessary to involve experienced care professionals.
- Do not ask probing questions or lead the young person in any line of questioning. This could invalidate evidence that may later be required in court. Be prepared to just listen to what the young person has to say.
- Make written notes after any discussion if possible. Document the facts revealed, times and dates mentioned and the time and date of your conversation.
- Ensure that access to the building is safe and well lit.

2. You, the worker, should:

- Treat all children and young people with respect and dignity befitting their age; watch language, tone of voice, and where you put your body.
- Not engage in any of the following:
 - invading the privacy of young people when they are showering or toileting;
 - rough, physical or sexually provocative games;
 - making sexually suggestive comments about or to a young person, even in "fun".
 - inappropriate and intrusive touching of any form (this can include hugging or touching of the head or arms etc.)
 - any scapegoating, ridiculing or rejecting of any young person.

- Learn to control and discipline young people without using any physical means.
- Make sure another adult is present in the event that medical attention is needed by any young person. This could be your nominated first-aider.
- Not let young people involve you in any excessive attention seeking that is overtly sexual or physical in nature.
- Do not invite a young person to your home alone - even when setting up a project or any part of project work. Invite a group or ensure that another adult is in the house. Make sure that the young person's parents know where they are.
- Do not give lifts to children or young people on their own, other than for short journeys. If they are alone, ask them to sit in the rear of the car.
- Do not share sleeping accommodation with a young person when away on a project. This is difficult to implement due to the nature of SoapBox Short Term Projects. However, when same sex accommodations offer rooms for two people, try and ensure that a leader and a young person are not required to share.

B. Good Practice With Colleagues

If you see another member of staff, worker, volunteer worker or leader acting in ways, which might be misconstrued, be prepared to speak to them, or to the SoapBox Office, about your concerns. Leaders should encourage an atmosphere of mutual support and care which allows all workers to be comfortable enough to discuss inappropriate attitudes or behaviour.

A9 Good Practice in Supervision

In order to ensure the best working practices as previously described are working effectively, those involved in leading or supervising SoapBox activities should incorporate the following guidelines into their regular working routine.

- Meet your workers and Small Group Leaders regularly to review the plan of work and assess progress.
- Ask about working and personal relationships with team members, especially young people.
- Take or create opportunities for observing the worker or Small Group Leader working with their team, and especially with young people.
- Ideally, keep a brief written record of the facts of each meeting and anything of note, which you have observed.

If the supervisor has any doubts about a worker's relationships, he or she should explore further by talking with him or her, then confidentially with other workers or Small Group Leaders, and with the young person concerned. The issue should not be dropped until the leader is sure there is no possibility of abuse or accusations concerning inappropriate behaviour.

Watch out for any young person receiving exceptional treatment, being highly favoured or treated unduly harshly.

A10 Procedure if Abuse is Disclosed or Suspected

1. Inform your co-leader or other responsible adult who you feel you can trust. Discuss the situation in light of the facts you know - not what you assume.
2. Explain the course of action you are about to take with the young person concerned.
3. At the earliest opportunity contact the SoapBox Office (Tel: 01483 268467) and speak to John Russell (Executive Director). Report your concerns and the background behind your discovery or suspicion. If working in schools, please discuss your concerns in the first instance with the schools head teacher or nominated Child Protection Officer.
4. The SoapBox Office will contact either Social Services or the Child Protection office with the young persons local police force. If either of these believe an investigation is necessary, then they will ask for names and contact details of all persons concerned and will take things from there.
5. If a young person discloses abuse which has happened in the past it is still very important to report it. The young person concerned may be in need of professional care and counselling. The abuser may also still be abusing others and it is important that the police are given every bit of assistance in order to prevent this from happening.
6. If you discover or suspect abuse of ANY kind then:

DO NOT DO NOTHING

Guidance when a young person discloses abuse:

- Look at the young person directly - accept what they say
- Be aware that the young person may have been threatened
- Do not press for information
- Reassure the young person that they are right to tell you and take what they say very seriously.
- Let them know what you are going to do next, who you are going to tell and roughly what will happen
- Finish on a positive note
- As soon as possible afterwards, make hand written notes of exactly what the child said and the date and time.

What will happen next?

The process of professional involvement in cases of child abuse will usually follow this course:

1. A strategy discussion involving Social Services, Police Child Protection Team, other significant professionals (such as teachers, doctors) and the person suspecting abuse or to whom the young person had talked.
2. A decision will be taken as to whether an investigation is warranted; if so, it will then be planned.

3. The investigation may include:
 - An informal talk with the young person.
 - A formal police (+/- social services) video recorded interview.
 - Medical examination of the young person.
 - Preliminary family assessment.

4. If there is sufficient concern, a child protection conference will be held to decide the best course of action to protect the young person and help the family. There may be a criminal prosecution of the abuser.

If the young person is aged 16 or over then the provisions of the Children Act, 1989 are not legally binding. However, Social Services and the Courts have various powers to protect these young people.

A11 Organising Your Project Team to Protect Young People

These guidelines are specifically designed as guidance for organising project teams travelling overseas with SoapBox Short Term Projects. All Short Term Projects teams should be organised in this manner.

Team Structure:

Project Leaders

Each project team will have 2 project leaders, one male and one female. One of these will be nominated as the principal leader, the other as their co-leader. Usual practice will be to appoint the most experienced person as the principal leader. No leaders can be appointed unless they have been through the appointment procedure described in this document.

Project leaders will be responsible for all aspects of their project and team from the time they meet in the airport for departure, until the time they return at the end of the project. In addition to this they will also have contact with team members before the project departs as they build their team. More detailed guidelines are given in the Project Leaders Role Description. It is the Project Leader's responsibility to ensure that protection of young people as detailed in this document is ensured whilst on SoapBox Short Term Projects.

Small Group Leaders

Each team will be further broken down into smaller groups of 4 or 5. The function of these groups is to provide a more manageable unit for daily devotions, to keep track of people during travel and to maintain a pastoral oversight of group members. Small Group Leaders are drawn from the members making up a project team and so it is impractical to follow the full vetting procedure. However, we will discuss our child protection policy with all prospective Small Group Leaders and ask them to read "*Safe and Sound*"

Small Group Leaders will form the first line of supervision for young people on projects. It will be part of their duty to try and "keep track" of the young people in their groups and observe their interaction with others.

Project leaders must try and maintain an overview of all young people in their teams. As part of this, it is important to ensure that any counselling of young people be done in accordance with the **guidelines given in this document**.

A12 Procedure for Appointment of any Employee, Worker, Volunteer Worker or Leader by SoapBox Communications Trust

1. All existing workers of SoapBox Communications Trust are required to be treated as though they are newly appointed for the inception of this policy and procedure.
2. Once a potential worker is identified whether through a full recruitment process or as a volunteer, they are required to complete and submit a Workers Personal Information Form together with the Declaration This form includes details of 2 personal referees who may be contacted by the Trust.
3. A detailed discussion/interview should take place with the potential worker discussing all aspects of their role. The discussion should highlight this policy and the Duty of Care that a worker has towards children and young people. A clear role description should be provided in writing.
4. A letter and reference will be sent to each referee. In the case of existing workers, the Trust may provide the reference internally for persons with a long history of work in support of the Trust.
5. All workers will be required to complete a Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) Disclosure Form issued to them from SoapBox. The form must be completed according to the instructions included with it and returned to the SoapBox CRB Officer with the required documentation. The disclosure will be claimed at the appropriate level, standard or enhanced and checked by the appointed SoapBox lead and counter-signatories. When the disclosure is sent by CRB, a copy will be sent to the applicant. In accordance with the CRB policy for use of disclosures, the applicant will then be informed of the decision SoapBox has made regarding their suitability for working in the organisation. The CRB disclosure will be updated annually.
6. Upon receipt of the CRB disclosure and the personal references, a decision will be made as to whether to proceed with appointing an individual.
7. Upon appointment in whatever capacity, a contract of employment (provided by the Trust specific to role) or volunteers agreement must be completed by the individual to be appointed. This must be returned and stored with their personnel file in the SoapBox office. This contract will stipulate a probationary period to be observed before any appointment may be made permanent.
8. All appointed workers in whatever capacity are required to sign the declaration stating that they have read, understand and agree to follow the policy and procedures for the protection of children and young people.

NO PERSONNEL MAY BE APPOINTED IN ANY CAPACITY INVOLVING WORK WITH CHILDREN OR YOUNG PEOPLE UNLESS THE ABOVE PROCEDURE IS FOLLOWED