

## **Liss Woodcraft Folk**

In line with today's concern about the widespread abuse of children by adults, both physical, sexual, verbal and through neglect the Liss Woodcraft Folk have drawn up a child protection policy. This statement clearly sets out a code of practice for relationships between leaders and young people within the groups.

### **Liss Woodcraft Folk District -**

#### **Child Protection Policy**

##### **Who is this for?**

This should be read, and re-read regularly, by all adult members, group leaders and volunteers working with young people within the groups of the district. It should also be made available to parents/guardians on request at any time.

The Child Protection Officer (currently Rod Edwards 01730 267642) and his deputy (currently Pam Gruber 01730 301270) and group leaders must ensure that all adult members and volunteers are aware of and understand their obligations under the Woodcraft Folk Child Protection Policy. It is their responsibility to ensure that every new adult having contact with the children receives a copy of the Leader Training Guide & Play Policies.

The Child Protection Officer will issue reminders through the district newsletter for all adult members, group leaders and volunteers to refresh themselves of the contents of this policy and others of the organisation.

Child Protection requires good childcare and good group-work practice. It is a requirement in the Woodcraft Folk that all adults involved with children should create a safe and open environment wherein social relationships can be confidently discussed and in which all members of the organisation may grow.

It is the Child Protection Officer's responsibility to ensure that this policy be reviewed annually.

##### **What does it cover?**

1. Groups and Co-operation
2. Aims and Principles
3. Vetting of adults working with children
4. Rights, Equality and Inclusion
5. Protection
6. Bullying
7. Touch
8. Discipline, Supervision and Termination of Membership
9. Camping and Residential Activities
10. Complaints
11. Agreement
12. Definitions

It covers those areas usually known as Child Protection. Readers should also make sure they are familiar with three other documents:

- The Woodcraft Folk. *Aims and Principles*.
- Liss Woodcraft Folk. *Health and Safety Policy*.
- Liss Woodcraft Folk. *Responding to Concerns about Child Abuse*.

The Woodcraft Folk has recognised the need to demonstrate to parents and to the wider community the importance we give to the child protection issues. We are committed to procedures and philosophies which

have been developed to protect children themselves, but which also protect adult members from misunderstandings, misinterpretation of their actions and false accusations of abuse and which promote the reputation of the Woodcraft Folk.

## **1.Groups and Co-operation**

Within the Liss District there are at present six Woodcraft Folk Groups: -

- Liss District Woodcraft Folk
- Allsorts Elfins and East Hampshire Woodchips
- Kestrel Pioneers
- Powerzone Venturers
- The 3<sup>rd</sup> Place including District Fellows

A group consists of a gathering of Woodcraft member's young and adult, female and male, for the purpose of Co-operative educational work as set out in our aims and principles (see section 2). For a group to operate a minimum of two paid up adult members of the National Woodcraft Organisation must be present. All aspects of our Folk activities should be carried out in the spirit of co-operation with the leaders and adult volunteers working at a ratio of approximately one adult to six children depending upon the age of the children.

Personal contact on a one to one basis is inappropriate within the group and should be avoided except where a child is unwell or needs reassurance. Where adults do find themselves in a one to one situation they must inform another member of staff immediately and seek their support. Every effort should be made for young people and adults to get to know and care for each other. Woodcraft leaders and helper volunteers should not meet individually with a child or young person outside Woodcraft Events.

## **2. Aims and Principles**

The districts main aim is to provide a safe environment in which the young people can meet, ensuring the Folks philosophy and traditions are carried on. The main principles being:

- Co-operation,
- Equality,
- Friendship,
- Peace and
- Protection of the young people's rights.

The district also aims to deliver the outcomes for children and young people, desired by the Government's document '*Every Child Matters*': these being: -

- Be Healthy
- Stay Safe
- Enjoy and Achieve
- Make a positive contribution
- Achieve economic well-being

## **3. Vetting of Adults working with Children**

All volunteers who wish to work in supervisory positions within groups or within Folk activities and regular helpers (people volunteering more than once a month) are required to complete an adult membership form which requires the name of a referee, and be vetted through the Criminal Records Bureau and registered with the Independent Safeguarding Authority. The National Woodcraft Head Office is instrumental in processing Criminal Record Bureau/ISA applications and as such the local group and/or District will be informed by the General Secretary of any reasons why this volunteer should not be allowed to work with children or young

persons. It is important that a written reference be sought from people who know the volunteer before they start working with children. If these cause any doubts, the Woodcraft Folk will reserve the right to make further verbal or written contact with the referee before the volunteer can work with children in the organisation.

Occasional parent/carer volunteers will complete a Non-Members declaration. Volunteers will be told that the work and contact they will have with children requires the Folk to ask them to declare any criminal convictions they may have which involve abuse against children, however old these convictions may be. This is an exemption from the provisions of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974.

All adults who have responsibilities for children must abide by the local Child Protection Policy.

Adult Members of the Woodcraft Folk will have access to an Appeal through the Procedure on Suspension and Expulsion of Members of the Woodcraft Folk.

#### **4.Rights, Equality and Inclusion**

All young people's records, including personal information and health forms to be kept in the strictest confidence by the groups leader and should not be available for casual perusal.

All adults in the district agree to protect the rights of the young people at all times, whether it is at the weekly meeting, camping or any other Folk activity. The district must respect all backgrounds, appearances, personalities, abilities, disabilities and opinions and not seek to issue verbal insults, destructive criticism or show any disrespect. The district has a duty to set a good moral and social standpoint at all times. The principles of equality must prevail between leaders and young people with all leaders having equal commitment to working within the group and no leader having greater distinction than the next. The district must ensure that equal opportunities extend to all aspects of the group work to combat oppression, discrimination whether on grounds of race, gender, sexual orientation or disability. No young person or group of young people should be marginalized. Most importantly young people should be listened to at all times. (See Responding to Concerns about Child Abuse.) Adults should also be aware that children have the right to (and may) disclose abuse to another young person.

#### **5. Protection**

It is the duty of all adult leaders within the district to protect the young people from potential hazards, especially those arising from their immaturity. We will not countenance any form of sexual, physical or verbal abuse, nor will we countenance violence be it on the part of the young person or adult. It is also our duty to protect the young people from exploitation by adults whether or not they are Woodcraft members.

Leaders must also be aware of the dangers of exploitation through the Internet and especially the vulnerability of young girls using 'Chat rooms'. (See Internet Guidelines)

Leaders should not enter into any inappropriate sexual, physical or verbal contact.

Woodcraft Folk groups should organise all their activities to reduce to a minimum those situations within which it may be possible for children to be abused. It is essential that the vetting procedure is implemented and health and safety regulations followed. 'Keeping Young People Safe' is the health and safety regulations for Liss District Woodcraft Folk and gives guidance on safe working practices.

Liss Woodcraft Folk leaders and helpers have a duty of care for the young people we work with and this extends to their use of and misuse of drugs. That is a young person that is abusing illegal drugs, prescription drugs, and proprietary drugs or indulging in volatile substance abuse. The rights of the child and their freedom of choice are over-riden by the United Nation's Declaration on the Rights of the Child which clearly states that **THE SAFETY OF THE YOUNG PERSON IS PARAMOUNT**. Substance abuse is a dangerous practice which puts the safety of the young person at risk so adults attending a Woodcraft meeting are duty bound to do something about it.

## **6. Bullying**

All incidents of bullying be they name-calling, threats, violence, exclusion, racial or religious harassment must be taken seriously and the culprits spoken to about the effect of their actions; where necessary parents and other relevant organisations will be included in these discussions. The child being bullied should be re-assured and given guidance about how to cope with bullies. Group leaders should always be informed of bullying incidents so that they can increase supervision if required. Remember bullying may take place via mobile phones or e-mail.

## **7. Touch**

Within the bounds of Woodcraft, touching is a necessary activity to indicate caring and friendship. Every effort must be made to ensure that this touching is not abused. Obviously, a distressed, injured or insecure young person will need to be touched but this should be done within the group and not on a one to one basis. In the case of an emergency or injury, it may be necessary to touch and view intimate parts of a child. Support should be sought from a colleague before this examination takes place and wherever possible in the presence of the child's parent. Opportunities should be made available at group meetings for both young people and adults to discuss this subject.

## **8. Discipline, Supervision and Termination of Membership.**

Whilst it is hoped that the need for discipline within the group is small, there may be occasions when both adult and young person falls foul of the Woodcraft principles.

Where necessary the young person or adult will be spoken to by leaders of the group. If this does not have the desired effect it may then be reasonable to seek the co-operation of the young person's parents or guardian. If both the above measures have failed the child can then be banned for a period of time or asked to leave the group. This decision should only be taken after group discussions between all adult leaders working within the young persons group. A serious incident report should be written, accepted by three appropriate adult members and kept by the Child Protection Officer or deputy for a minimum period of 3years past the child's 18<sup>th</sup> birthday.

Time should be made at group for young people and adults to discuss all aspects of discipline including self-discipline.

Where the conduct of an adult member is deemed to be unsuitable and incompatible with the Woodcraft Folk group it will be the District management committee's responsibility to suspend the member. The member will then be unable to participate in any Woodcraft activity. National Council will then be requested to investigate and either reinstate or terminate the membership of the adult concerned.

Liss District will regard as grounds for suspension of membership any repeated serious failure to comply with all aspects of this statement and any prima facie evidence of physical, emotional, sexual abuse or neglect.

The young people should be supervised at all times and on no account should they be left unattended.

Supervision should be by at least two adult members, to ensure protection (see section 5). Ideally all adults taking part in Woodcraft activities should be fully paid up members although the role of occasional volunteers is recognised here. Adults should avoid being alone in private with a child, if this is really necessary other leaders must be made aware of and support the situation.

At group meetings leaders' responsibility continues until the child is collected or if of senior school age leaves the premises at the close of the session. Children and young people are not permitted to leave during a session unless a prior request has been received from their parent/guardian. Every care should be taken to ensure the safety of the young people going home.

## **9. Camping and Residential Activities**

All aspects of this statement relate to outside activities including camping and residential activities. If all guidelines are followed no situation should occur where abuse or improper conduct towards a young person can take place.

Camping and residential activities differ from normal Woodcraft pursuits in that children are

1. Separated from their parents
2. Feel vulnerable and insecure
3. Living in close and intimate conditions with other young people and leaders.

It may be necessary for leaders to supervise toileting, washing, dressing and undressing, and also to comfort a homesick young person (see Touch, section 5). In these circumstances the codes of supervision, protection and touch should be strictly adhered to. Leaders and young people should be encouraged to deal with problems co-operatively and not on a one to one basis.

### **10. Complaints**

All complaints must be referred to the Child Protection Officer (currently Rod Edwards 01730 267642) or his deputy (Pam Gruber 01730 301270). Complaints must be handled with the strictest confidence and in accordance with the guidelines set down in Responding to Concerns about Child Abuse.

Where a complaint is received, a serious incident report form must be completed and kept. It must include the following: -

- The name and address of child.
- Parents/Guardian or Carers details.
- Any relevant telephone number.
- Date and location of incident.
- Details of incident, spoken or witnessed.
- Any evidence of incident (physical injury, change of behaviour or appearance).
- People informed of incident or concerned about.
- Was the child able to say what had happened?
- Whether parents or social services have been informed.

Forms can be obtained from the deputy officer (Currently Pam Gruber 01730 301270)

### **11. Agreement**

I have read the above statement and agree to follow the codes of practice at all times.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Print Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

### **12. Definitions of Abuse**

#### **Physical**

Can involve hitting, scalding, burning, poisoning, shaking, suffocating and throwing.  
It may also be when a parent/carer feigns the symptoms of or deliberately causes ill health of a child.

#### **Emotional**

Conveying or causing feelings of danger, fright, worthlessness, inadequacy or loss of value.

## **Sexual**

Enticing or forcing a child to take part in or observe sexual acts of a penetrative or non-penetrative nature or to participate in pornography whether or not the child is aware of what is happening.

## **Neglect**

Lack of provision of food, shelter, clothing. Lack of medical care or protection from harm both physical and psychological.

Advice outside of Liss Woodcraft Folk on Child Protection matters can be obtained from: -

Bob Coleman  
Community Project Officer (Youth)  
East Hants District Council  
Penns Place  
Petersfield  
Hants, GU31 4EX  
(Tel 01730 234107)  
Woodcraft Folk/Word/woodcraft policies/child protection policy

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