

## **The BHARAT SCOUTS AND GUIDES CHILD PROTECTION POLICY**

Children are 'Supremely important National assets' and the future well being of the Nation depends on how its children grow and develop. Children need special protection in their tender age and are incapable to look after themselves that is why there is growing realization in every part of the globe that children must be brought up, in an atmosphere of love and affection and under the tender care and attention of parents so that they may be able to attain full emotional, intellectual and spiritual stability. They can acquire self confidence and self respect and a balanced view of life with full appreciation and realization of the role which they have to play in the Nation building.

### **THIS CHILD PROTECTION POLICY AIMS TO:**

- Adopt the highest possible standards and takes all reasonable steps in relation to the safety and welfare of the children who come under the umbrella of the Bharat Scouts and Guides.
- Bharat Scouts and Guides extended its commitment to support and protect the child even in their personal spaces.
- Implementing this policy and following the guidelines will enable leaders to be confident that they have taken all reasonable precautions to prevent any kind of harm to the child. They are also prepared to deal with an incident, if need be.
- The Bharat Scouts and Guides expects all those working with children and young people under the age of 18 years in any capacity – paid or voluntary – to apply this policy.
- The policy therefore applies to all staff, trustees, volunteers and contractors.
- All those covered by the policy have an individual duty and responsibility to do everything that is reasonably within their power to ensure the safety and welfare of children whilst they are in contact with the Bharat Scouts and Guides.

This policy has three elements:

1. Guidelines
2. Child Policy Representatives
3. Procedural guidance
  - Awareness
  - Prevention
  - Reporting and Referring
  - Responding
  - Recruitment and Selection
  - Code of conduct and behaviour

## ***Guidelines***

### **A child is:**

1. A human being under the age of eighteen years;
2. Childhood is an integral part of life with a value of its own;
3. Children are not a homogenous group and they have different needs and different responses, especially because of the multi-dimensional vulnerabilities experienced by them.

### **Role of Bharat Scouts and Guides:**

- Any child coming under the umbrella of BS&G shall enjoy special protection, and shall be given opportunities and facilities, by law and by other means, to enable him/her to develop physically, mentally, morally, spiritually and socially in a healthy and free environment. For the ratification of law for the above purpose, the best interest of the child shall be of paramount importance.
- The child shall be protected against all forms of neglect, cruelty and exploitation.
- All children will be provided appropriate safety and protection by the Bharat Scouts and Guides.
- Staff/volunteers are educated to make responses specific to child protection issues.

### **Child Protection Standards:**

All BS&G staff and volunteers should strictly adhere to the child protection standards, so that children are not exposed to exploitation or abuse at any level at any time. They feel safe, protected and empowered.

- All children, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious beliefs, sexual identity, have the right to be protected from abuse of any kind.
- All staff and volunteer personnel should be encouraged to demonstrate exemplary behaviour in order to protect themselves from false allegations. They should make an effort to make children feel safe and empowered.
- The BS&G will ensure that all communication about children will portray them as dignified citizens of the country.
- Always work in open environment, avoid private or unobserved situations.
- Treat all children, young people, differently-able children equally with respect and dignity.
- Being an excellent role model includes no smoking or consuming alcohol in the presence of children, young people and when on duty or in office premises.
- Provide enthusiastic and constructive feedback to children rather than negative criticism.
- Recognizing the talents and capacity of all children

- The welfare of the child is of paramount importance. All children without exception have the right to protect from abuse regardless of gender, ethnicity, disability, sexuality or beliefs.

The following are common sense examples of how to create a positive culture and climate. The well being of all girls and boys is a foundational commitment in all BSG activities. Our engagement and involvement with children is governed by BSG child protection policy.

The policy applies to all (ie: council, executive, committee, staff, volunteers and all members).

Children and parents are informed of the policy and procedures as appropriate: all concerns and allegations of abuse will be dealt seriously by the concerned authority.

### ***Child Protection Representatives***

The Bharat Scouts and Guides has designated senior members of staff to take specific responsibility for child protection matters.

**The Director, Joint director, Deputy Director and the Assistant Directors State Chief Commissioners and District Chief Commissioners.**

All cases of alleged or suspected abuse should be immediately reported to your designated Child Protection Representative or in their absence to the Director. In the absence of any of the above Representatives, you should contact the relevant Social Services or statutory body.

## ***PROCEDURAL GUIDANCE***

### ***Awareness***

***The Bharat Scouts and Guides will ensure that all staff, volunteers and others are aware of the problem of child abuse and the risks to children.***

Concerns may relate to physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect or emotional abuse of a child.

**Physical abuse** is defined as actual or likely physical injury to a child, or failure to prevent physical injury to a child.

**Sexual abuse** occurs when there is actual or likely exposure of a child to inappropriate sexual activity.

This could include activities ranging from inappropriate touching to sexual intercourse, and from exposure to pornographic material to sexual exploitation.

**Neglect** is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of their health or development. It may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food, shelter or clothing, failing to protect a child from physical harm or danger or failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.

**Emotional abuse** is the persistent emotional ill treatment such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development.

Collectively these terms are referred to as Child Protection issues. Concern may be felt after one incident or emerge over a period of time following an escalation of events or concerns. Information leading to the concern may come from various sources – observation, statements made by a child, by another member of the family, friend or by a staff member or volunteer.

## **Prevention**

**The Bharat Scouts and Guides will ensure that through awareness and good practice, staff, volunteers and others minimize the risks to children.**

It is important for all staff, volunteers and others in contact with children to:

- Be aware of situations which may present risks and manage it.
- Plan and organise the work and the workplace so as to minimise risks
- As far as possible, be visible in working with children
- Ensure that a culture of openness exists to enable any issues or concerns to be raised and discussed
- Ensure that a sense of accountability exists between staff so that poor practice or potentially abusive behaviour does not go unchallenged
- Talk to children about their contact with staff or others and encourage them to raise any concerns
- Empower children – discuss with them their rights, what is acceptable and unacceptable, and what they can do if there is a problem.
- No attempt will be made to portray them as victims' unwarrantedly, neither any communication should be exaggerated.

## **Reporting and Referring**

The Bharat Scouts and Guides *will ensure that staff, volunteers and others are clear about what steps to take where concerns arise regarding the safety of children.* Child Protection Representatives within the organisation are

The Director, The Joint director; The Deputy Director and the Assistant Directors, State Chief Commissioners and District Chief Commissioners.

For immediate reach for children will be State Secretary, SOG (S/G)/STC/Group Leader/ Leader of the event/Camp Head.

- The Child Protection Representatives will be a contact point for external agencies needing to contact The Bharat Scouts and Guides about child protection matters.
- All concerns and allegations, whatever their origin, must be taken seriously and considered with an open mind which does not pre-judge the situation.
- In circumstances where a child discloses information about abuse, it is important to listen to the child.
- Do not question her/him. Never stop a child who is freely recalling significant events and do not ask them to repeat their story to a colleague or to write it down.

- Acknowledge the feelings of whoever is disclosing, let the person explain in their own way and at their own pace.
- In circumstances where a child has an injury but no explanation is volunteered, it is acceptable to enquire as to how the injury was sustained. If there are concerns about the explanation given, these must be referred to the designated BSG Child Protection Representative who will take responsibility for any further action.
- All information shared must be documented as soon as possible. The written record needs to include the name of the author, the date and time it was written, the setting, the personnel present as well as what was said. Any subsequent events should continue to be recorded up to the time of Social Services or statutory body intervention.
- The staff member, volunteer or other should make it clear to whoever disclosed that this is what they are doing and they should be kept informed of any action taken.
- Do not promise confidentiality and where possible seek their agreement for the referral. If a child does not want to disclose to their parents, the referral should still be made and the Social Services or statutory body will decide the appropriate action.
- If the disclosure is around past abuse, with no assessed risk of that abuse recurring to the child, discussions should be held with the main carer as to whether further action needs to be taken.
- The BS&G representatives have a duty to report the matter to the relevant statutory body. i.e. the Local Police station & the women and child welfare association.
- When you are making a referral regarding child protection concerns, it is important to have the following information readily available:
- ✓ Name, date of birth, nationality, gender of child, address and telephone numbers, the reasons for your concerns, Injuries and or/other indicators observed, Child's first language, Details of any specific needs of the child e.g. disability, Details of family members if known, Family doctor.

The information is likely to be shared with other agencies or the police on the basis of the information gathered, they will then make an initial assessment on what further action is necessary or appropriate.

A verbal referral must be confirmed in writing within 24 hours.

When abuse by The Bharat Scouts and Guides staff, volunteers or other is disclosed or suspected or there are suspicions about their behaviour, which may meet the criteria for abuse then the following procedure will take place:

The matter will be immediately referred to the Director, who will inform other representatives.

In all instances, the police will be informed.

The procedures to be followed for the protection of the child are those outlined above.

The staff member or volunteer who is alleged to have abused or suspected of abuse will be suspended immediately from work.

Such action does not assume that the allegations are true but is designed to protect any child/children allegedly involved and also to protect the alleged perpetrator from any further allegations or harassment/intimidation of the children or witnesses.

Any internal investigation according to disciplinary procedures will be held in abeyance until the police, social services or statutory body have indicated that they have no further involvement.

## **Responding/ Process**

**The Bharat Scouts and Guides will ensure that action is taken to support and protect children where concerns arise regarding possible abuse.**

No member of staff or volunteer should investigate reports of physical or sexual abuse by him/herself.

Alleged victims, perpetrators, those reporting abuse and others involved should not be interviewed beyond the point at which it is clear that there is an allegation.

Medical attention should be sought immediately for the child if required. Any individual to whom an allegation of child abuse is made should then:

**Step 1:** Limit any questioning to the minimum necessary to seek clarification only, strictly avoid leading the child by making suggestions or asking questions that introduce their own ideas about what may have happened.

**Step 2:** Stop asking any more questions as soon as the child has disclosed that she/he believes that something abusive has happened to him/her or to someone else.

**Step 3:** Tell the child that relevant designated Child Protection Representative or Authority will now be made aware of the issue, without threatening the child.

**Step 4:** Depending on the age of the child, ask the child what steps she/he would like taken to protect her/him now that an allegation has been made and assure her/him that The Bharat Scouts and Guides will try to follow those wishes.

**Step 5:** Report the information immediately to the designated Child Protection Representative. If the allegation or suspicion is about the designated person, the report should be made to the Director and if it is about the Director a written grievance letter to be addressed to the chairman of the National Executive committee.

## **Recruitment and Selection**

All staff members, including temporary, fixed term or casual workers, must be subject to The Bharat Scouts and Guides' selection and recruitment procedures as follows:

1. All candidates must complete an application form.
2. The HR department should verify the person's identity by his/her birth certificate, passport or other formal document, preferably something bearing a photograph.
3. The HR department should verify any qualifications stated on the application form.
4. All shortlisted candidates must have an interview (face-to-face or telephone) with the two members of the recruiting team.
5. Any gaps in employment or inconsistencies in the candidate's history must be identified and reasons given.
6. Written references (two minimum) should be taken up prior to the employment of the successful candidate – no staff member may begin employment until all reference checks are through.

Advice should be sought prior to recruiting someone with a criminal record or record of other offences.

New members of staff must undergo a supervised probationary period including a comprehensive induction (*which must cover Child Protection Policy and Procedures*).

***All successful candidates, including volunteers who may come into contact with children and young people must be informed that they are subject to enhanced disclosure by the designated representatives and the statutory bodies.***

The appointment will only proceed if the pre-employment checks prove satisfactory and the disclosure provides no cause for concern as to the suitability of an individual to work with children.

## **Code of conduct and behaviour**

All **The Bharat Scouts and Guides** staff and volunteers have an individual duty and responsibility to comply with the policy and to abide by the Code of Conduct:

### **Staff and others must never:**

1. Hit or otherwise physically assault or physically abuse children.
2. Develop physical or sexual relationships with children.
3. Develop relationships with children that could in any way be deemed exploitative or abusive.
4. Act in ways that may be abusive or may place a child at risk of abuse.
5. Use language, make suggestions or offer advice which is inappropriate, offensive or abusive.
6. Behave physically in a manner which is inappropriate or sexually provocative.
7. Have child/children with whom they are working to stay alone overnight at their home or any other place unsupervised.
8. Stay /sleep alone in the same room or bed with the Child.
9. Do things for children of a personal nature that they can do for themselves.



10. Condone or participate in behaviours with children that are illegal, unsafe or abusive.
11. Act in ways intended to shame, humiliate, belittle or degrade children or otherwise perpetrate any form of emotional abuse.
12. Discriminate against, show differential treatment, or favour particular children to the exclusion of others.
13. This is not an exhaustive or exclusive list. The principle is that staff should avoid actions or behaviour which may constitute poor practice or potentially abusive behaviour.

**It is important for all staff and others in contact with children to:**

1. Be aware of situations which may present risks and manage these.
2. Plan and organise the work and the workplace so as to minimise risks.
3. As far as possible, be visible in working with children.
4. Ensure that a culture of openness exists to enable any issues or concerns to be raised and discussed.
5. Ensure that a sense of accountability exists between staff so that poor practice or potentially abusive behaviour does not go unchallenged.
6. Talk to children about their contact with staff or others and encourage them to raise any concerns.
7. Empower children – discuss with them their rights, what is acceptable and unacceptable, and what they can do if there is a problem.

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