

AIR CADET ORGANISATION CHILD PROTECTION GUIDE



CADETS FIRST

(The welfare of the child is paramount (Children Act 1989))

An aide-mémoire for adult members of staff in the Air Cadet Organisation (ACO)

It is designed for you to keep with you – carry it!
(for further details, refer to the Child Protection Guide)

It is the primary responsibility of all adult members of the ACO to safeguard the moral, psychological and physical welfare of children regardless of gender, religion, race, ability, disability, sexuality and social background by protecting them from any form of physical, emotional and sexual abuse or neglect.

All children have the right to protection from all forms of abuse and harm when engaged in ACO activities and when in contact with members of the ACO. All adult members of staff have a duty of care, which makes them responsible both for safeguarding children in their care from abuse and harm and for responding swiftly and appropriately when suspicions or allegations of inappropriate behaviour arise; this applies to all cadets and not just cadets under their immediate control.

What happens if?

You suspect a cadet is being abused:

- Stop and listen immediately if someone wants to tell you about an incident, or you suspect abuse. Ensure a suitable witness is present if possible
- Give sympathetic consideration to the person talking to you
- Make a note of what is said while the conversation is taking place
- Where time and circumstances permit, report the allegation/suspicion to the officer in charge
- If you have an immediate concern, report the matter to the statutory authority (local authority social services, the police or the NSPCC (0808 800 5000))
- If the officer or instructor in charge is implicated in any way, report to Wg Ad O or HQ Air Cadets

A cadet tells you about abuse by someone else:

- Allow the cadet to speak without interruption; accept what is said
- Alleviate feelings of guilt and isolation, while passing no judgement
- Ensure the cadet has access to an independent adult
- Offer support but make no undertaking to keep the matter secret
- Take the same action as in suspecting a cadet is being abused above

You receive an allegation about any adult, including yourself:

- You must report the matter, through the chain of command, where possible, to the statutory authority
- Do not attempt to question the person or investigate yourself
- Never ask questions which might put words into a person's mouth
- Never ignore an allegation, even if the person concerned is trusted and known to you
- Never contact a cadet or his/her parents who you believe has made an allegation against you

YOU MUST REFER – YOU MUST NOT INVESTIGATE

Question	What To Do	Key Points
What should I do if a cadet asks to speak to me in confidence about what could be a child protection matter?	Arrange for a third person (who is acceptable both to you and the cadet) to be present and make sure you are out of hearing and sight of others. Reassure them and listen carefully to what they are saying – do not ask questions. Make no judgement about what you've heard and stay calm.	You cannot keep what they tell you a secret, but reassure them that anything they tell you will remain "in confidence". Ensure you write down times, facts, observations (verbatim speech if possible).
Who is responsible for reporting concerns to the appropriate authorities?	YOU ARE. However, where time and circumstances allow (which normally should be the case), the matter is to be discussed with your CO or other superior officer.	Talk to your CO and/or WgAd O (if applicable) who will normally consult with HQ Air Cadets (Personnel Staff Officer or Child Protection Officer).
What do I do if I think a child is in immediate danger?	In urgent cases, where you have an immediate concern about the welfare of a child who may be at risk, you must make direct contact with the one of the statutory authorities (social services, the police or the NSPCC (see contact details below)), reporting later to your chain of command	Have the cadet's name and address and the name and address of their parent/guardian/carer available. Refer to your notes – don't filter or withhold any information. You have no right to detain a cadet but you should provide a "place of safety", if possible, until the authority assumes responsibility.
Should I contact parents/guardians/carers?	The parents or guardians/carers of the cadet subject of the disclosure or allegation should normally be informed by the Sqn CO as soon as possible that a report is being made to the police or social services	If parents or guardians/carers are implicated, do not inform them but request advice from the statutory authority.
What should I do if I hear allegations/have suspicions/get a report about potential abuse, and members of the ACO are implicated?	In cases where you hear allegations about yourself or your colleagues, or hold suspicions or concerns in which your colleagues are implicated, you should consult your superior officer without delay. If your superior officer is implicated in any allegations or suspicions you should immediately consult your WgAd O.	The WgAd O will ensure that the chain of command (including HQ Air Cadets) is informed.
How many people should be informed?	Only discuss child protection issues with the individuals mentioned in the Child Protection Guide.	For reasons of confidentiality, the number of people to be informed of alleged child abuse cases reported to the authorities are to be kept to a minimum ('need to know').

Local Information	Telephone Number		Telephone Number
Wing Admin Officer		Local Authority Social Services	
HQ Air Cadets (Child Protection Officer)	01400-267088	NSPCC Child Protection Helpline	0808 800 5000
HQ Air Cadets(Personnel Staff Officer)	01400-267638 or 267639	Police (local number) (or 999 in any emergency)	

Contacting Social Services or the Police: ask for the Duty Officer (or Emergency Duty Team) and say that you wish to discuss a child protection matter:

- ask for the name of the person with whom you are speaking
- discuss all the information you have (nothing is to be filtered or withheld)
- state your intention to advise your chain of command
- ask if anyone else should be informed
- keep a record of your conversation and of any advice given

REMEMBER:

- **never do nothing**
- **don't assume someone else will do something**
- **never push a child for more information**
- **never discuss your worries with the suspected abuser**