



HEART START

(CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Introduction

It's the responsibility of all adults to safeguard the welfare of children and young people by protecting them from physical, emotional and sexual abuse or harm.

The British Heart Foundation (BHF) is committed to providing the best safeguards for children and other young or vulnerable people who are involved in Heartstart activities. The BHF also seeks to protect Heartstart and our schemes against false allegations.

Heartstart wants to make sure that children and young people are kept safe while attending a Heartstart course, and that instructors and volunteers are protected against false allegations.

Please remember that most of these guidelines are common sense and aim to help you as well as the young people you work with.

The Declaration of criminal record form (Appendix B) should be filled in by all prospective instructors, as the post involves potential unsupervised contact with children or vulnerable adults.

Your scheme must comply with this policy, whether or not you currently teach children or vulnerable adults, or may want to teach them in the future.

This policy forms part of the Heartstart conditions of affiliation which are adopted by all schemes on affiliation to Heartstart and on each annual reaffiliation.

Child Protection Officer

If your scheme has instructors who work with children more than once a year, you must appoint a Child Protection Officer.

This role would normally be taken by the Scheme Director, Training Supervisor or Scheme Coordinator.

The Child Protection Officer is responsible for ensuring that the Heartstart child protection policy (and as varied from time to time) is implemented within the scheme. They are also the main contact person with the BHF on child protection issues.

Instructor vetting

Your scheme must take reasonable steps to vet prospective instructors.

References

Your scheme is strongly advised to obtain a reference for every prospective instructor.

The reference should ideally be from a person of standing, eg, a solicitor, teacher, police officer (and not a relative) who has known the applicant for at least five years. You'll find a sample reference request letter and questionnaire in Appendix A on the next page.

Declaration of criminal record form

Your scheme should ask all instructors who are working with or who are likely to work with children, young people (under 18 years of age) or vulnerable people to fill in a Declaration of criminal record form.

Please ask all prospective instructors to fill in the form (see Appendix B).

Criminal record checks

Your scheme should ask all instructors who are working with or who are likely to work with children, young people (under 18 years of age) or vulnerable people to obtain clearance from the relevant organisation responsible for issuing these checks:

England and Wales Criminal Records Bureau (CRB)
www.crb.homeoffice.gov.uk

Scotland Disclosure Scotland
www.disclosurescotland.co.uk

Northern Ireland Access NI
www.accessni.gov.uk

Clearance must be at 'standard' disclosure level or above.

Verifying identification

Your scheme must verify the prospective instructor's identification.

Ask to see a birth certificate or valid passport and a formal document which includes the applicant's National Insurance Number.

Heartstart code of good practice for working with children

Every Heartstart instructor must be aware of, and have access to, the *Heartstart code of good practice for working with children* (see Appendix C).

To order copies of the pocket-sized *Heartstart code of good practice for working with children* please contact your Heartstart office.

Appendix C – Heartstart code of good practice for working with children

Taking measures to avoid potentially compromising situations or opportunities for allegations/misunderstandings is an important aspect of child protection.

Remember that child protection is also about adult protection.

Supervision

When you're working with children you should:

- never run a Heartstart course or session single-handed
- try to ensure an appropriate balance of male and female instructors
- ensure a female parent or instructor is present where one or more male instructors run a course
- ensure that a teacher is always present whenever an instructor is working in a school
- always try to ensure suitable ratios of instructors to children and young people, ie, one instructor to every six children
- never drive or walk a child or young person home alone unless there are the most exceptional circumstances or without prior written parental agreement. Never take a child or young person to your own home. In any one-to-one situation you may put yourself at risk of false accusations
- plan the children's arrival and departure. Ensure that a responsible adult is at the premises before young people are expected to arrive. Don't leave the premises until all parents/carers have collected their children or young people.

Behaviour and attitudes

You should:

- be aware of individual needs and personalities, and never make any derogatory or discouraging remarks
- never dismiss or trivialise bullying
- avoid inappropriate language and subject matter
- be aware of the potential impact of the behaviour and opinions of others (helpers, other volunteers/staff, parents etc). The opinions, prejudices, actions and comments of adults, particularly those in authority, can easily influence children and young people
- be careful not to do or say something that could create a false impression or be misunderstood or interpreted as an 'innuendo'
- avoid showing favouritism or singling individuals out in any way.

Safety procedures

You should:

- ensure that all your instructors have signed the Declaration of offences form, are aware of their child protection responsibilities and, if required by the Heartstart scheme, have undergone a satisfactory CRB, Disclosure Scotland or Access NI check
- make sure they know who your scheme's Child Protection Officer is and how to contact them
- ensure that everyone in your Heartstart team and any volunteers know about this Child protection policy and have an up-to-date copy.

Instructor protection

You should:

- avoid all one-to-one situations with a child or young person. Where this is unavoidable, always keep a door open or ensure someone else is close by
- ensure that all helpers are aware of the do's and don'ts of physical contact (see below)
- remember that if a young person discloses information to you, or if you suspect any form of abuse or inappropriate behaviour, it is your legal duty to report your concerns.

Allegations

You should never let allegations by a child or young person go unchallenged or unrecorded.

However, if a child does disclose to you, it's important to reassure them and to tell them that what they've said will be taken very seriously and everything possible done to help.

For further advice or in the event of an allegation/disclosure/concern, contact your scheme's Child Protection Officer. In an emergency, ie, where there is an imminent risk of significant harm, contact the authorities immediately.

Physical contact

You should be aware that:

- where physical contact is necessary, eg, with ELS skills demonstrations and practice, be sensitive and always avoid touching the children and young people yourself. Demonstrate on a colleague or teacher with his or her pre-arranged permission. Alternatively, ask an experienced young person to demonstrate on another student
- when a child is upset, try to seek ways to provide comfort and support without unnecessary or excessive physical contact
- where physical contact is unavoidable, ensure that another adult is present
- horseplay and potentially violent games should be avoided.

You should also be aware of children's and young people's sensitivity during ELS practical work. Before the session, make sure you advise them to wear suitable clothing.

