



Ascension Island Government

Policy for Mandatory Criminal Records Check and requirement for Child Protection Policy for those undertaking work or volunteer roles with children on Ascension.

1. Introduction.

The Ascension Island Government, with the support of the Island Council and the Child Safety Board, is committed to protecting and safeguarding all children on Ascension. We want to see a focused and effective safeguarding system, where harm or risk of harm is identified and ultimately prevented.

We feel strongly that this is a responsibility shared by government on one hand and organisations on the other. Clear, well managed arrangements for safeguarding children are important whether in the school, hospital or a small local voluntary organisation. This includes ensuring that all staff and volunteers (including those recruited between the ages of 16-18 years) are appropriately recruited and trained in child safeguarding.

2. Scope

This policy is for organisations (employers, voluntary organisations and the self-employed) set out in the Schedule who engage staff, or themselves work unsupervised with children.

3. Requirement for Scheduled Organisations to have a Child Protection Policy

Whilst a mandatory policy on Criminal record checks can provide organisations and parents with a degree of reassurance that all staff and volunteers are suitable to work with children, it is important to remember that the check is only as good as the information against which they are being checked. Some people who pose a risk to children might never have come to the attention of the Police. With this in mind we believe it is crucial that all scheduled organisations have robust policies and procedures in place to ensure that children are not put at any risk from those who may seek to harm them. To that end we believe it is reasonable to require all Scheduled Organisation to have a Child Protection Policy, (an example is provided at Schedule 3), a copy of this policy must be registered with the Criminal Records Check Office.

4. Requirement for Criminal record Checks.

Scheduled Organisations must ensure that all persons who work or volunteer to work unsupervised with children on Ascension have had a criminal record check in accordance with this policy and have been registered with the Criminal Records Check Office as suitable to work unsupervised with children.

5. The Criminal Record Check Office.

Ascension Island Government has set up a new office; the Criminal Records Check Office (CRCO). This office will provide, free of charge, a service that will allow individuals to access, in line with this policy, criminal record information held by the police on Ascension, St Helena, the UK and other declared Jurisdictions. All scheduled organisations must provide to the CRCO an up to date list of all employees and volunteers who work unsupervised with children.

6. The Vetting and Barring Register.

The CRCO will keep a vetting and barring register of everyone currently working or volunteering with children. The vetting and barring register will record the names of everyone who has had a criminal records check and whether or not they are unsuitable to work or volunteer with children.

7. Applications in person and in confidence.

Organisations cannot make the application on behalf of a staff or volunteer, this must be done in person. Criminal Records Check application forms will be available from the Administrator's office. Where the applicant is not self-employed the application must be accompanied by a letter of support from the organisation confirming the applicant's role and duties. The details of the application will be classified confidential and held in accordance with this policy.

8. Extent of Criminal records check.

The CRCO will determine which jurisdiction to conduct the criminal records check in. This will be based upon the applicant's residential history over the last 5 years. A police check will be necessary for every country the applicant has lived in for a period of more than 3 months in the preceding 5 year period. Examples of suitable checks commonly required on Ascension include an enhanced St Helena Police check, covering both St Helena and Ascension.

9. Criminal record and other relevant information disclosed to CRCO.

Where the criminal records check confirms the applicant has convictions or other information relevant to them working with children unsupervised, this information will be vetted by the CRCO who will determine whether or not the applicant is none-the-less suitable or alternatively if they must be entered on the register as unsuitable from working or volunteering with children on Ascension. The CRCO will apply the guidance set out in Schedule 2 when making their determination. If the applicant wishes to appeal this decision they may, within 14 days of receiving the decision ask that the Ascension Island Safeguarding Children Board to review the decision. The Board will review the decision and respond within 5 days of the appeal being made. The Board's decision will be final.

10. Updating of entry in the Register.

To ensure that the vetting and barring entry in the register is kept up to date, after **3 years** of being entered on the register, all applicants will be required to make a further application to the CRCO should they still wish to work or volunteer with children.

11. New Offences.

Where a resident of Ascension commits an offence on Ascension, the Police Inspector shall notify the CRCO of the name of the person. Where that person is on the register as suitable to work unsupervised with children, the CRCO will request the details of the conviction and sentence and review the applicants status in light of the new offence. Where the new offence affects the suitability of the person to work unsupervised with children, the person (and where relevant the scheduled organisation) will be advised that they have been removed from the register as being suitable.

12. Confidentiality.

The information that is obtained by the CRCO will only be used to determine the suitability of any individual to work or volunteer with children. Once the application has been through the vetting process, the applicant's details will be entered on the vetting and barred register and all information relating to the application will be destroyed. Third parties (such as employers and voluntary organisations) can only make a disclosure request of the CRCO with signed authority from the applicant. The CRCO will only disclose to third parties whether or not the person is recorded on the "suitable" register. No other information will be passed to third parties. An updated copy of the vetting and barred register will be held by the Police.

13. Breach of Policy.

We are confident that the scheduled organisations will work closely with government and the CRCO to ensure that this safeguarding policy is a success.

Where a Scheduled Organisation does not have the required Child Protection Policy, the CRCO will offer support to develop a policy with them and we will ask the Scheduled Organisation to suspend its activities until the policy is in place.

Where a Scheduled Organisation employs someone who is not on the vetting and barring register, we will write notifying them of the vetting requirement and requesting that the employee or volunteer is suspended from duties until the vetting process is completed. Should someone self-employed not on the vetting and barring register work with children, we will ask them to suspend their activity until they have complied with this policy.

Where a Scheduled Organisation employs a person who is registered as unsuitable we will work with the organisation to ensure that child safety measures are being adhered to and that the person is removed from any role that gives unsupervised access with children.

14. Update of policy

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Ascension Island Safeguarding Children Board.

The Administrator
Ascension Island Government

SCHEDULE 1

SCHEDULED ORGANISATIONS

This policy applies to the following organisations and individuals:

A) All staff and Volunteers

1. Two Boats School;
2. Police;
3. Georgetown Hospital;
4. Beavers;
5. Cubs;
6. Scouts and Explorers;
7. Rainbows;
8. Brownies;
9. Guides;
10. Saturday Club;
11. Ascension Island Music and Community Centre Club;
12. St Mary's Church including Sunday School and choir leaders.

B) Individuals

13. Child-minders (those who are paid to care for children at the child-minder's home);
14. Scuba Diving instructors working independent of any Dive club;
15. Any other individuals over 16 years of age working with children unsupervised; for example music lessons, language lessons, swimming lessons etc.

C) Organisations with Staff identified as working from time to time with unsupervised access to children

16. AIG: for Conservation staff who have unsupervised access to children i.e. Ascension Explorers and AIG public bus drivers;
17. AIG Operations, Babcock and Sure Ltd: for staff who undertake unsupervised maintenance operations at Two Boats School or Georgetown Hospital during operational hours;
17. Dive Clubs for members who are authorised by the Club to train children.

Schedule 2

Determining Suitability

Guidance for the Criminal Records Check Officer

The checks undertaken in accordance with this policy will provide the Criminal Records Check Officer (The Officer) with access to a greater level of information enabling fully informed risk based decisions to be made in relation to a person's suitability to work unsupervised with Children.

Automatic Unsuitable

The Officer will automatically determine a person whose criminal record check discloses the following information as unsuitable to work with children:

- Any disclosure from a Jurisdiction that confirms the person is barred in that jurisdiction from working with children;
- Any conviction for a Relevant Offence, regardless of sentence imposed, committed within the last 15 years whether "Spent" or "Unspent" (as defined by the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974);
- Any conviction for a Relevant Offence older than 15 years where the person received a term of imprisonment whether "Spent" or "Unspent" ;
- Any caution warning or reprimand for a Relevant Offence in the last 10 years whether "Spent" or "Unspent" as defined by the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974;
- Any impending prosecution for a Relevant Offence;
- Any conviction for a violent offence where the person received a term of imprisonment of 12 months or more whether "Spent" or "Unspent";

A **Relevant Offence** is: (i) any sexual offence against a child or adult and (ii) any other offence against a child.

Conditionally unsuitable

The Officer may consider other relevant information disclosed by the Criminal record check including Arrests, 'not guilty' outcomes, 'no further action' outcomes where the information relates to any Sex Offence. Where there are such matters recorded the Officer may determine a person unsuitable to work with children on condition that the person also has:

- Any conviction for a violent offence (regardless of sentence imposed) committed within the last 5 years whether "Spent" or "Unspent" as defined by the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974.
- Any conviction for any offence for which the person received a custodial sentence for 12 months or more whether "Spent" or "Unspent" as defined by the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974.

Consulting the independent FCO appointed LADO(Local Authority Disclosure Officer)

Where the Officer is in doubt as to the relevance of any offence disclosed they may consult with the FCO appointed LADO for the South Atlantic region for advice relating to the application and its categorization. The current FCO LADO is Sue Herbert BA Hons, DipSW, CQSW, PQCP, PQSW, AASW.

Schedule 3

Sample Child Protection Policy

INTRODUCTION

We in ***name of group*** are committed to a practice which protects children from harm.

Volunteers in this organisation accept and recognise our responsibilities to develop awareness of issues, which cause children and young people harm.

We will endeavour to safeguard children and young people by:

- Sharing information about child protection and good practice with children, parents and volunteers.
- Sharing information about concerns with agencies who need to know, and involving parents and children appropriately.
- Following carefully the procedures for selection of volunteers and ensuring they are appropriately checked
- Providing effective training and support for volunteers
- We are also committed to reviewing our policy and good practice at regular intervals.
- Appointing and training one of our members to be a “designated child protection person”

CODE OF BEHAVIOUR

Statement of Intent

It is the policy of ***name of group*** to safeguard the welfare of all children and young people by protecting them from all forms of abuse including neglect, physical, emotional and sexual harm.

This organisation is committed to creating a safe environment in which young people can feel comfortable and secure while engaged in any of our activities.

Volunteers should at all times, show respect and understanding for an individual’s rights, safety and welfare, and conduct themselves in a way that reflects the ethos and principles of ***our organisation***.

GUIDELINES FOR ALL VOLUNTEERS

Attitudes

Volunteers should be committed to

- Treating children and young people with respect and dignity.
- Always listening to what a child or young person is saying
- Valuing each child and young person
- Recognising the unique contribution each individual can make
- Encouraging and praising each child or young person

By example

Volunteers should endeavour to

- Provide an example, which we would wish others to follow
- Use appropriate language with children and young people and challenge any inappropriate language used by a young person or child or an adult working with young people.
- Respect a young person’s right to privacy

One to one contact

Staff and volunteers should

- Not spend excessive amounts of time alone with children, away from others
- In the unlikely event of having to meet with an individual child or young person make every effort to keep this meeting as open as possible.
- If privacy is needed, ensure that other volunteers are informed of the meeting and its whereabouts

Physical contact

Staff and volunteers should never

- Engage in sexually provocative or rough physical games, including horseplay
- Do things of a personal nature for a child or a young person that they can do for themselves.
- Allow, or engage in, inappropriate touching of any kind

General

Volunteers should

- Be aware that someone might misinterpret our actions no matter how well intentioned
- Never draw any conclusions about others without checking the facts
- Never allow ourselves to be drawn into inappropriate attention seeking situations such as tantrums or crushes
- Never exaggerate or trivialise child abuse issues or make suggestive remarks or gestures about, or to a child or young person, even in fun

SHARING INFORMATION ABOUT CHILD PROTECTION AND GOOD PRACTICE WITH CHILDREN AND VOLUNTEERS

Good Communication

Good communication is essential in any organisation. In **this organisation** every effort will be made to assure that, should individuals have concerns they will be listened to and taken seriously.

It is the responsibility of the volunteers to ensure that information is available to, and exchanged between all those involved in this organisation and its activities. Some information is confidential and should only be shared on a strictly need-to-know basis.

Children and young people

Children and young people have a right to information, especially any information that could make life better and safer for them. **This organisation** will act to ensure they have information about how, and with whom, they can share their concerns, complaints and anxieties.

When sharing information, volunteers will be sensitive to the level of understanding and maturity, as well as to the level of responsibility, of the people with whom they are sharing.

Parents

Parents / persons with parental responsibility are ultimately responsible for their children's welfare at all times, and they should be assured that their children are involved with a credible organisation.

We achieve this by keeping parents appropriately informed of who the Designated Child Protection Person(s) is and how to raise concerns or make a complaint.

Volunteers

As an organisation, which offers support and guidance to children and young people, it is imperative that each volunteer is aware of their responsibilities under the Child Protection legislation and has a working knowledge of appropriate procedures.

Each member of staff will receive updated training in Child Protection.

Other Bodies

A copy of our Child Protection Policy will be made available to any other appropriate body.

RECRUITMENT & SELECTION OF VOLUNTEERS

This organisation ensures that when recruiting staff or volunteers the highest priority is given to issues relating to child protection.

From April 2015 each new volunteer will be required to undergo a criminal records check before working unsupervised with children.

Each new volunteer is made familiar with this Child Protection Policy and Code of Behaviour

Volunteers will undertake appropriate child safeguarding training when this is available.

PROCEDURE FOR REPORTING ALLEGATIONS OR SUSPICIONS OF ABUSE

In any case where an allegation is made, or someone in *this organisation* has concerns, a record should be made. Details must include, as far as practical:

- o Name of child or young person
- o Age
- o Home Address (if known)
- o Date of Birth (if known)
- o Name/s and Address of parent/s or person/s with parental responsibility
- o Telephone numbers if available
- o Is the person making the report expressing their own concerns, or passing on those of somebody else? If so, record details
- o What has prompted the concerns? Include dates and times of any specific incidents
- o Has the child or young person been spoken to? If so, what was said?
- o Has anybody been alleged to be the abuser? If so, record details
- o Who has this been passed on to, in order that appropriate action is taken? e.g. school, designated officer, social services, police etc
- o Has anyone else been consulted? If so, record details
- o A record should be kept of any action taken

DESIGNATED CHILD PROTECTION PERSON

For reasons of confidentiality the only person who need to know this information are the following Designated Child Protection Person:

The Designated Person will inform the relevant outside organisation of the incident and take advice from them.

RELEVANT ORGANISATIONS

Consultant Social Worker

Alison Blunt. Tel: 4524 Email: social.worker@ascension.gov.ac

Police Inspector

Emergencies: 999

Tel: 6225 Email: police.inspector@ascension.gov.ac

Senior Medical Officer

Dr Hardy. Tel: 6303 Email: smo.hospital@ascension.gov.ac

Headteacher

David Blunt. Tel: 6155 Email: david.blunt@tbschool.edu.ac

RECORD-KEEPING

All records, information and confidential notes should be kept in separate files in a locked drawer or filing cabinet.

Only the Designated Persons will have access to these files.

DISCLOSURE BY A CHILD

- Never guarantee absolute confidentiality to the child making the disclosure, as Child Protection will always have precedence over any other issues.
- Listen to the child, rather than question him or her directly.
- Offer him / her reassurance without making promises, and take what the child says seriously.
- Allow the child to speak without interruption,
- Accept what is said – it is not your role to investigate or question.
- Do not overreact.
- Alleviate feelings of guilt and isolation, while passing no judgement
- Advise that you will try to offer support, but that you must pass the information on.
- Explain what you have to do and whom you have to tell.
- Record the discussion accurately, as soon as possible after the event,
- Use the child's words or explanations – do not translate into your own words, in case you have misconstrued what the child was trying to say.
- Contact one of the Designated Persons for advice / guidance.

The Designated Person may then discuss the concern / suspicion with the relevant organisation, and, if appropriate, make a direct referral.

- If either Designated Person is not available, or it is inappropriate to approach them, the volunteer / member of staff with the concern should make direct contact with the relevant organisation themselves
- Record any discussions or actions taken within 24 hours.