



**air  
cadets**  
*the next generation*

*air cadet publication*  
*ACP 4 Chapter 4*

*Child Protection Guide*



# CHILD PROTECTION GUIDE

## Introduction

1. For the purposes of this document, a “child” is a person under the age of 18 in accordance with Article 1 of the UN Convention on the Rights of a Child. The main burden of child protection within the Air Cadet Organisation (ACO) falls on those in direct contact with cadets under the age of 18. The welfare of the child is paramount<sup>1</sup>. The aim of this booklet is therefore to provide guidance to all adult members of staff<sup>2</sup> so that they may have a clear vision of the action to take should they become directly involved with child protection issues during the course of their duties.

## Child protection policy

2. 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.

3. 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.

## Adult duty to speak out (often described as “whistle blowing”)

4. Any form of child protection concern can be an exception to the normal ACO requirement on other issues to follow the routine chain of command. Every adult member of the ACO is required to report any suspicions or evidence of abuse or harm concerning a child whether it is inside or outside the Corps and no-one should feel, or be made to feel uncomfortable, bullied or intimidated by doing so or being coerced into not reporting them.

## Cadet freedom to speak out

5. Cadets should feel comfortable and free to report, at any time, any child protection concerns within or outside the ACO to any member of staff and all commanding officers are to endeavour to create a culture to ensure there is some means for cadets to do so. Cadets should know to whom they should report concerns and also what is likely to happen as a result – they must have confidence that they are being listened to. In addition to support within the Sqn, contact details for the NSPCC ChildLine (0800-1111) (<http://www.childline.org.uk/Pages/default.aspx>) are to be prominently displayed.

<sup>1</sup> Children Act 1989

<sup>2</sup> For the purposes of this policy and guidance, the phrases “adult members of staff” and “adult members of the ACO” also includes Instructor Cadets (who are over the age of 18)

## Working safely with children and young people

6. It is the responsibility of each adult member of the ACO to ensure that:

- their behaviour is appropriate at all times
- they observe the rules established for the safety and security of cadets
- they follow the procedures following suspicion, disclosure or allegation of child abuse
- they recognise the position of trust in which they have been placed, and
- in every respect, the relationships they form with cadets in their care are appropriate

7. All adult members of the ACO must accept and understand this policy and they must also agree to put the organisation's policy on child protection into practice and adhere to the Codes of Behaviour detailed at the end of this chapter.

## What if you suspect abuse or an allegation is made?

8. Child abuse occurs when a child has suffered from, or is at significant risk of suffering from, ill treatment or impairment of development, by any person who knowingly colludes with or fails to prevent the ill-treatment of the child by not ensuring reasonable standards of care and protection. You should be aware that abusers are not just strangers; they can include parents, carers, family members, friends, people in positions of trust and authority, other children or young people, anyone who has contact with children and young people. Children who are abused are often abused by an adult they know and trust. Children will and should see you as a person they can have faith in and from whom they can seek help - listen to them, take what you are told seriously and you will be helping to reassure and protect the child.

9. You must do something if:

- a child tells you, or shows signs that, he or she is being abused in any way
- you have reason to believe anyone within or outside the ACO is abusing or harming a child
- someone tells you that a child is being abused
- you become aware that someone who has contact with and access to children has offended against them or poses a risk to them

10. When a cadet speaks to you about a child protection matter:

Make sure that you are out of hearing and sight of others and that you have a third person (who is acceptable both to you and the cadet) present to witness what is said:

- listen carefully to what they are saying
- show you take them seriously
- avoid asking them to repeat the information
- explain that you cannot keep what they tell you a secret, but any information will remain “in confidence”
- reassure them that they have done the right thing
- make no judgement about what you have heard and stay calm
- make an immediate, careful, record of what has been said. Use their actual words wherever possible.

## The procedure to follow

11. If you suspect abuse, a cadet confides in you, or a complaint is made about any adult or about yourself, it is your duty to report the concern. However, it is not your responsibility to decide whether or not child abuse has taken place. No investigation or questioning is to be undertaken. The proper (statutory) authorities for dealing with cases of child abuse are the police and the Local Authority Children’s Social Care Department (safeguarding team) or the NSPCC. Arrangements differ across the UK and appropriate local contacts should be readily available within your squadron and wing. Swift reporting will enable the correct authorities to give advice and take appropriate action.

12. The responsibility for reporting concerns to the appropriate statutory authority normally lies with the individual who receives a complaint or who suspects abuse. However, where time and circumstances allow (which normally should be the case), the matter is to be discussed with the Sqn CO and Wing Administrative Officer (Wg Ad O) (if applicable) who will consult with the Child Protection Officer or Personnel Staff Officer (PSO) at HQ Air Cadets. The role of the chain of command is not to judge but to pass on information for advice and to support the cadet.

13. In **urgent** cases, if you have an **immediate** concern about the welfare of a child who may be at risk, you must make direct contact with the police, children’s social care/safeguarding team or the NSPCC, reporting later to your chain of command. Ensure you write down times, facts, observations (verbatim speech if possible). Have the cadet’s name and address and the name and address of their parent/guardian/carer available.

14. 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, unless they themselves are implicated by the report.

15. 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 immediately who will, in turn, advise the Wg Ad O, where applicable. If your superior officer is implicated in any allegations or suspicions you should immediately consult your Wg Ad O. In these circumstances, the Wg Ad O is to ensure that the chain of command is informed and report the matter to the Personnel Staff Officer or Deputy Personnel Staff Officer, at HQ Air Cadets without delay.

16. For reasons of confidentiality the number of people to be involved in alleged child abuse cases reported to the authorities are to be kept to a minimum (the 'need to know' principle).

## Local information

17. Use this space for keeping your own contacts/telephone numbers:

Wg Ad O	
HQ Air Cadets Child Protection Officer	01400-267088 <a href="mailto:cpo@atc.raf.mod.uk">cpo@atc.raf.mod.uk</a>
HQ Air Cadets Personnel Staff Officer	01400-267638 or 267639
Local Authority Children's Social Care / Safeguarding Team	
NSPCC Child Protection Helpline <sup>1</sup>	0808 800 5000
Police (local number)	<b>(or 999 in any emergency)</b>

<sup>1</sup> The NSPCC Helpline advisers are all trained child protection officers. They can help with a range of child-care problems and can offer expert advice. A call to the helpline can help stop a difficult situation getting out of control and it's open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

## Contacting Local Authority Children's Social Care or Police

- ask for the Duty Officer (or Emergency Duty Team) and say that you wish to discuss a matter of child protection
- 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.

# CODE OF BEHAVIOUR

## What you must do:

**ALWAYS** adhere to these guidelines

**ALWAYS** treat everyone with dignity and respect

**ALWAYS** set an example you would wish others to follow

**ALWAYS** treat all cadets equally – show no favouritism

**ALWAYS** plan training and activities that involve more than one other person being present, or at least are within sight and hearing of others and that there is adequate supervision for female cadets

**ALWAYS** respect a cadets right to personal privacy

**ALWAYS** avoid unacceptable situations within a relationship of trust, eg a sexual relationship with a cadet over the age of consent

**ALWAYS** have separate sleeping, washing and toilet facilities for cadets under the age of 18

**ALWAYS** allow cadets to talk about any concerns they may have

**ALWAYS** encourage others to challenge any attitudes or behaviours they do not like

**ALWAYS** avoid being drawn into inappropriate attention seeking behaviour (eg tantrums, crushes and infatuations)

**ALWAYS** follow the ACOs 'no alcohol policy' when cadets are in your care

**ALWAYS** keep other members of staff informed of where you are and what you are doing

**ALWAYS** remember someone else might misinterpret your actions, no matter how well intentioned

**ALWAYS** take any allegations or concerns of abuse seriously and refer immediately

**ALWAYS** be aware that child protection issues can be complex and distressing. You are encouraged to seek help from specialist agencies if you have been affected by these matters

**ALWAYS** remember this code even at sensitive moments, eg when responding to bullying, bereavement or abuse

## What you must not do:

**NEVER** trivialise abuse

**NEVER** form a relationship with a cadet that is an abuse of trust

**NEVER** condone overt sexual behaviour between cadets

**NEVER** permit abusive peer activities, eg initiation ceremonies, bullying, etc

**NEVER** engage in inappropriate behaviour or contact, physical, verbal or sexual

**NEVER** play physical contact games with cadets

**NEVER** touch cadets unless it is a necessary part of training, or for safety reasons, and only in the presence of others

**NEVER** make suggestive remarks or threats to cadets, even in fun

**NEVER** use inappropriate language or display improper behaviour towards cadets (verbally, in writing, 'phoning, text messages, e-mail or via social network sites on the internet)

**NEVER** ignore an allegation because you personally find it unbelievable. Just because the person about whom the allegation is made is known to you, and may be a trusted colleague or friend, does not mean that the allegation is necessarily unfounded

**NEVER** attempt to contact a cadet or their parent/guardian/carer who you believe may have made an allegation against you

**NEVER**, under any circumstances, talk to the media, at the time or later

**NEVER** let allegations, suspicions or concerns about abuse go unreported

**NEVER** rely on your good name to protect you

## 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.

# Don't keep it to yourself

**NSPCC**

**CHILD PROTECTION**

**HELPLINE**

**0808 800 5000**



The NSPCC Child Protection Helpline is a free 24-hour service that provides counselling, information and advice to anyone concerned about a child at risk of abuse.

Please call us any time on **0808 800 5000**

or textphone for people who are deaf or hard of hearing on **0800 056 0566**

or email [help@nspcc.org.uk](mailto:help@nspcc.org.uk)

**alternatively call**

**NSPCC Asian Child Protection Helpline  
(Mon-Fri 10am-6pm) 0800 096 7719**

**NSPCC Cymru/Wales Child Protection  
Helpline  
(Mon-Fri 10am-6pm) 0808 100 2524**