

# Thurso Players - Child Protection Policy and Procedures



## Child Protection Policy Statement

**Thurso Players is fully committed to promoting children's rights, notably their right to be protected from harm, abuse and exploitation and to be involved in any decisions that directly affect them. Thurso Players has a duty of care to implement effective policies and procedures for safeguarding the welfare of children and young people. In order to achieve this we will ensure our staff and members are carefully screened, trained and supervised. Furthermore we will endeavour to keep up to date with national developments relating to the care and protection of children and young people.**

Thurso Players will:

- Ensure that all members understand their legal and moral obligations to protect children and young people from harm, abuse and exploitation
- Develop best practice in relation to the recruitment of all members (paid staff and volunteers)
- Provide opportunities for all new members through the provision of induction training for both adults and children, which gives an overview of Thurso Players' purpose, values, structure, activities and opportunities
- Ensure that all adult members understand their responsibility to work to the standards and procedures detailed in the organisations Code of Conduct and Child Protection procedures
- Ensure that all adult members understand their obligations to report care or protection concerns about a child/young person, or a member's conduct towards a child/young person, to the Thurso Players' Child Protection Officer
- Ensure that all procedures relating to the conduct of workers are implemented in a consistent and equitable manner
- Ensure that the Child Protection Officer understands their responsibility to refer any child protection concerns to the statutory child protection agencies (i.e. police and/or social work)
- Ensure that Thurso Players meets all its responsibilities in adhering to the requirements of the Protection of Vulnerable Groups (PVG) Act 2007
- Provide opportunities for all members to develop their skills and knowledge particularly in relation to the care and protection of children and young people
- Ensure that children and young people are enabled to express their ideas and views on a wide range of issues and will have access to the organisation's complaints procedures
- Endeavour to keep up to date with national developments relating to the care and protection of children and young people

## CHILD PROTECTION PROCEDURES

### Introduction

- Thurso Players' Child Protection Policy and Procedures reflects this commitment and aims to ensure that all concerns about the care and protection of children and young people are effectively managed. The appointed Child Protection Officers are responsible for developing

and reviewing the organisation's Child Protection Policy statement and other care and protection policies and guidelines. However, all members of Thurso Players are required to implement the child protection procedures.

- The Children (Scotland) Act 1995, at section 5, states that "it shall be the responsibility of a person who is 16 or over and who has care and control of a child under 16, to do what is reasonable to safeguard the child's health, development and welfare". This places on Thurso Players a Duty of Care for the children and young people we work with. Thurso Players also recognizes that all children and young people have the right to freedom from abuse as outlined in the UN Convention of Rights of the Child. Thurso Players will constantly strive to provide a safe environment, free from any forms of abuse, for all the young people in its care. Thurso Players understanding of abuse can be found in Appendix 2.
- Thurso Players has a commitment to children's rights, notably their right to be protected from harm, abuse and exploitation and to be involved in any decisions which directly affect them.

## **Membership**

Thurso Players recognizes that appropriate membership recruitment procedures are a vital part in developing and maintaining a safe environment for children and young people.

Thurso Players has an active youth section and at any time, its members may be involved in activities in which children are also taking part. Our activities are classed as regulated work (Child) and all members are required to have an acceptable Disclosure Record.

The following procedures are in place to ensure that only suitable applicants for membership are accepted as members of Thurso Players.:

- All applicants for membership will be asked to complete an application form
- All applicants will be asked to complete the appropriate Disclosure Record, including proof of identify and address.
- All applicants will be asked to confirm that they are not barred from the relevant regulated work group.
- Membership and the opportunities to take part in Thurso Players' activities will not be confirmed until an acceptable Disclosure Record has been reviewed by the Lead Signatory and Child Protection Officer(s).
- Any applicant for Membership, found to be fully listed on the Children's List, will not be appointed as a member.
- All Members will be require to complete an update to their Disclosure Record at least every three years or earlier on the recommendation of the Child Protection Officer.
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## **Training**

All newly joined adult members at Thurso Players will receive training, support, information and guidance to ensure they understand their role and responsibilities with regard to Child Protection. This will include:

- Details of the structure of the organisation will be provided, including the details of overall responsibility for child protection within the organisation
- Details of the organisations aims and objectives will be provided

- An assessment of the member’s training and development requirements will be completed, especially if they intend to volunteer for the Junior Workshops.
- The roles and responsibilities of the Thurso Players Committee will be clarified
- Clear details of the expectations, roles and responsibilities of all newly admitted or returning members will be provided
- All members must agree and sign up to the organisations Child Protection Policy and procedures
- All members must agree and sign the Thurso Players Code of Conduct When Working with Children and Young People
- Training, information and a copy of the organisations General Code of Conduct will be provided
- The contact details of the organisations Child Protection Officer will be provided, along with a copy of the Child Protection Quick Reference Card

## Responding to suspicion or allegation of abuse

Members of Thurso Players have a duty to report any suspicions, allegations or disclosures to the Child Protection Officers. However, the first concern must be the reassurance of the child or young person and their protection from any potential risk. During the reporting process the young person should be protected from further contact with the individual involved in the allegation.

As a member of Thurso Players your role in child protection is not to investigate or decide if abuse has taken place. Your role is to observe, record and report. The following steps should be followed in response to suspicion or allegation of abuse:

<b>Are You concerned about the safety of a child or young person</b>
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<p><b>Examples:</b></p> <p>A child or young person has alleged they are being abused</p> <p>You see or suspect abuse</p> <p>Thurso Players has received a third-part report that a child/young person is being abused/neglected</p>
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<p><b>Act Immediately</b></p> <p>Discuss your concerns with Wendy Newton and/or Andrew Crawford, the Child Protection Officers as soon as possible. If the allegation is about a Child Protection Officer then John Firth, the Chairperson, should be contacted instead. These steps should be taken as soon as possible.</p> <p><b>Discussions should focus on:</b></p> <p>Nature of concerns, Risks to the child or young person, Actions taken and next steps to be taken.</p>



**In following the procedures below please bear in mind:**

**DO NOT INVESTIGATE** - Members should not attempt to investigate the situation any further or interview the child or young person regarding the situation.

**CONFIDENTIALITY** - Details of suspicion, allegations or disclosures should only be passed on to Wendy Newton or Andrew Crawford the Child Protection Officers. If responding to an allegation from a young person you must not promise to keep the information, they disclose, confidential.



**RECORD INFORMATION**

Detailed written records should be made of all events and what the young person or other individuals have said (where this applies). A form is supplied in Appendix 1 and on our website as CPP 001 Reporting Concerns, to help structure this. It can also be used to inform Social Work/Police of the events that have occurred. Above and beyond the facts, any opinions or personal interpretations of the facts presented can be recorded but it should be clear they are opinions, rather than facts. Records should be signed and stored in a secure place



**SEEK ADVICE and REFER TO APPROPRIATE AGENCY**

The Child Protection Officer should contact the Social Work Department and/or the Police and ask to speak to the Duty Officer about a child protection issue. If the report is received during an evening then the Social Work department Emergency Duty team and/or the Police should be contacted. Any further action should only be taken in line with the advice given by the Social Work Department. This includes whether the parent or carer of the young person should be informed of the child protection concerns.

A referral will be made to Disclosure Scotland if an individual harms a child or puts a child at risk of harm and as a result of this, we take the decision to remove them or they leave of their own accord. The form for referral to Disclosure Scotland is available on the Government website [www.scotland.gov.uk](http://www.scotland.gov.uk)

## **Responding when a child or young person discloses abuse**

It is likely that a child or young person who has been abused will have given a lot of thought as to whether they should disclose the abuse. It is highly likely that they will be nervous and afraid that they might be rejected, blamed or not believed. It is important that members follow the steps outlined below:

### **Stay calm**

Remain calm and natural. You have been approached because you are trusted, not because you are an expert counsellor. Do not promise to keep the information secret; you may have to inform an appropriate person. You must take any disclosure seriously and reassure the young person that you believe them.

### **Listen and take the allegation seriously**

Listen to what the child or young person is saying. Give them the time and opportunity to tell you as much as they are able and willing to. Do not pressurise them and allow them to disclose information at their own pace. You should not investigate, ask leading questions or ask specific or explicit questions. You should only clarify what they are willing to tell you in their own words. Try to do this in an appropriate place, such as a room where other people can see in through an open

door or window. Whilst it's important to respect the young person's privacy it should not be at the expense of other child protection measures.

## **Reassure**

Reassure them that you believe what they are saying and that you know it is not their fault. You should also give them some indication of what you will do next with the information that they have given you.

## **Confidentiality**

Reiterate that you cannot promise to keep the information secret. You must take any disclosure seriously. Details of the disclosure should only be passed on to the Child Protection Officer, who should refer the case to the appropriate authorities

Wherever possible you should try not to discuss any concerns that you have about a child or young person in a way that may lead others to suspect that they are being abused.

## **Record**

If you are able to, make brief notes during the initial disclosure, explaining to the young person why you are doing it. If it's not possible to do so at the time, record the details as soon as possible after the disclosure with as many facts as possible (dates, times, actual words used).

## **Look after yourself**

Being trusted with a disclosure of abuse directly from a young person can be emotionally draining, worrying and very stressful. Whilst it's essential that confidentiality is maintained at all times, it's important that you consider your own emotional feelings and discuss any anxieties you have with the Child Protection Officer. If appropriate, the Child Protection Officer will arrange additional support for you.

## **Protection of members who report care and protection concerns**

Deciding to report a fellow member or even a friend you suspect of abusing or otherwise harming a child can be stressful and difficult and you may be worried about the person concerned taking action against you. The law does give you protection if you raise concerns or report a person as long as the report was not malicious or vexatious.

## **Data Protection and management of confidential information**

Thurso Players is committed to the safe and secure management of confidential information. All personnel information, including volunteer information, is kept locked and can only be accessed by those that require it to carry out their role. Only relevant information is kept and this is regularly reviewed and outdated information destroyed appropriately. Disclosure Scotland is informed when a member decides not to renew their membership and our interest is removed from their disclosure record.

Thurso Players is also committed to the rights of children and young people to confidentiality and this will be respected by all members. However, where a the Child Protection Officer feels that the information disclosed by a child or young people should be referred to for investigation by an appropriate agency, the young person should be told that confidentiality cannot be kept.

## **Review of Child Protection policy and procedures**

This policy and procedures document will be reviewed annually by the Child Protection Officer and all members will be notified of any changes.

This policy has been approved by: John Firth - Chairperson

On behalf of: Thurso Players

Date:

Signed:

# APPENDIX 1

## CPP 002 Thurso Players Child Welfare Report Form

### Thurso Players – Child Protection Procedures

#### Child Welfare Concern Form

A report should be made by the person who has had the initial concerns about a child's welfare using this pro forma.

The report should be handed to the Thurso Players' Child Protection Officer (CPO) in order that they can add any follow-up action taken. The form will be stored in a secure location by the CPO.

The CPO should contact the appropriate Social Work Department and or the Police, giving them a copy of this form if requested.

**Please complete all the sections below.**

1. Name of Person recording the Concern:	2. Date:	3. Who is putting the child at risk? eg Staff member, family member.
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4a. Name of child or children your concern relates to:
4b. Contact details of child or children.

5. Outline your reasons for concern (key points):
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6. Brief outline of any actions you have already taken to protect the child or children:
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7. Signature	8. Role in Thurso Players. Member, Committee, Child Protection Officer, Chaperone.
9. Date	

## Follow up actions taken by the Child Protection Officer

To be completed by the Child Protection Officer

10. Actions undertaken by Child Protection Officer.

11. Signature

12. Role in Thurso Players.

13. Date



## APPENDIX 2

### Thurso Players - Understanding of Abuse

Abuse to children or vulnerable young people is described under the following headings:

#### Neglect

The persistent or severe neglect of a child or young person, whether wilful or unintentional, which results in serious impairment to physical health and development. For example:

- exposing a child to extreme weather conditions e.g. heat and cold.
- failing to seek medical attention for injuries.
- exposing a child to risk of injury through the use of unsafe equipment.
- exposing a child to a hazardous environment without a proper risk assessment of the activity.
- failing to provide adequate nutrition and water.
- Signs which **may** raise concerns about physical neglect include:
  - constant hunger
  - poor personal hygiene and/or poor state of clothing
  - constant tiredness
  - frequent lateness or unexplained non-attendance (particularly at school)
  - untreated medical problems
  - low self-esteem
  - poor peer relationships
  - stealing

#### Physical Injury

Actual or attempted physical injury to a child or young person where there is definite knowledge or reasonable suspicion that the injury was inflicted or knowingly not prevented. For example:

- Deliberately hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise harming a child.
- Signs which **may** raise concerns about physical abuse include:
  - refusal to discuss injuries
  - aggression towards others
  - improbable excuses given to explain injuries
  - fear of parents being approached for an explanation
  - running away
  - untreated injuries

- excessive physical punishment
- avoiding activities due to injuries or possibility of injuries being discovered
- unexplained injuries, particularly if recurrent

## Emotional Abuse

The adverse effect on the behaviour and emotional development of a child or young person, caused by failure to provide for their basic emotional needs. For example:

- Persistent failure to show any respect to a child (e.g. continually ignoring a child)
- Constantly humiliating a child by telling them they are useless.
- Continually being aggressive towards a child, making them feel frightened.
- Acting in a way which is detrimental to the child's self-esteem (e.g name calling, sarcasm, constant criticism)
- Signs which **may** raise concerns about emotional abuse include:
  - low self-esteem
  - significant decline in concentration
  - running away
  - indiscriminate friendliness and neediness
  - extremes of passivity or aggression
  - self-harm or mutilation

## Sexual Abuse

Any child or young person below the age of 18 may be deemed to have been sexually abused when any person, by design or neglect, exploits the child or young person directly or indirectly, in any activity intended to lead to the sexual arousal or other forms of gratification of that person or any other person including organised networks. This includes forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities whether or not they are aware of or consent to what is happening. Sexual abuse may involve physical contact, and non-contact acts such as forcing children to look at or be involved in the production of pornographic material, to watch sexual activities or encouraging them to behave in sexually inappropriate ways. For example:

- exposure to sexually explicit inappropriate language or jokes.
- showing a child pornographic material or using a child to produce such material.
- inappropriate touching.

The following signs **may** raise concerns about sexual abuse:

- lack of trust in adults or over familiarity with adults, fear of a particular adult
- social isolation - being withdrawn or introverted, poor peer relationship
- sleep disturbance (nightmares, bedwetting, fear of sleeping alone)
- running away from home
- drug, alcohol or solvent abuse

- display of sexual knowledge beyond the child's age

### **Other abusive behaviour towards children and young people**

Members should also be aware of other, perhaps less obvious, forms of abuse. These may be dismissed by perpetrators as 'just fun' or 'having a laugh' with young people but can have a serious impact and cannot be allowed or go unchallenged:

- Bullying of any form, including name calling or constant criticism
- 'Picking on' a young person because of their family background, manner of dress or physical characteristic
- Racism or sectarianism in any form
- Favouritism and exclusion - all young people should be equally supported and encouraged
- Abusive language or gestures