

NORTHERN REFUGEE CENTRE

CHILDCARE POLICY

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Northern Refugee Centre (NRC) has a mission to improve services and opportunities for refugees in order to make possible their integration into the wider community. The NRC recognises that lack of childcare is a major barrier to refugees and asylum seekers accessing services and opportunities. The NRC also recognizes that it is women in refugee and asylum seeker communities, as well as in society at large, who generally have primary childcare responsibilities, and so it is primarily women refugees and asylum seekers who face these barriers. As such, provision of childcare for refugees and asylum seekers is therefore an issue of effective service delivery and equal opportunities.
- 1.2 The NRC recognises that there are multiple barriers to refugees and asylum seekers accessing childcare provision. These include a lack of information, affordability, absence of informal support networks, and language. The NRC therefore seeks to provide childcare alongside all of the services it delivers. The NRC aims to provide childcare that is easily accessible, appropriate, and of a high quality.
- 1.3 The NRC recognises it does not deliver services in isolation and that it is only one of many organisations in Yorkshire and Humberside providing services and opportunities for refugees and asylum seekers. Refugees and asylum seekers that access NRC services likely additionally access services from multiple organisations in the sector. In order to contribute to the holistic development and integration of our service users the NRC will work with partner organisations in the region to improve childcare provision within the sector as a whole. Furthermore, research in other areas of the country has indicated that lack of childcare provision for refugees and asylum seekers is a national issue. As such, NRC will seek to raise and lobby on the issue of childcare in all of the local, regional, and national forums that it operates within.
- 1.4 The NRC Childcare Policy is a public declaration of the importance of childcare to equality of opportunity for refugees and asylum seekers and their integration into wider society. This policy also identifies what methods of childcare the NRC will employ alongside service delivery, how they will be administered, and how provision will be monitored.

2. SCOPE

- 2.1 This policy applies to all aspects of service delivery, including volunteering opportunities, and to the Board of Directors.
- 2.2 Every member of staff has an individual responsibility to ensure that this policy is implemented and updated so it most effectively meets the needs of the organisation and of its service users.

3. PURPOSE

- 3.1 This policy document is a guide to why and how childcare provision should be provided alongside NRC service delivery. Implementation of this policy is necessary in order that all refugees and asylum seekers have equal access to the services provided by the NRC, thereby upholding the NRC Equal Opportunities Policy.

4. PRINCIPLES

- 4.1 The NRC recognises that service users with childcare responsibilities come from a range of circumstances. These include two-parent families, single-parent families, extended family/friend networks, and no-parent families – where an elder sibling has childcare responsibilities.
- 4.2 The NRC recognises that women are currently the primary carers of children, both within refugee and asylum seeker communities and society at large. NRC supports the principle of equal sharing of childcare responsibilities. However, this policy aims to encompass the current reality of unequal distribution of caring.
- 4.3 Provision of affordable and quality childcare is a major issue predominantly impacting on women in both newly arrived and ‘host’ communities. However, NRC acknowledges that there are specific factors mediating the impact of childcare provision on refugees and asylum seekers. These include immigration status, language, absence of family/friendship networks, and benefits/income.
- 4.4 The NRC recognises that the ability of refugees and asylum seekers to access services and opportunities is mediated by whether or not they have children/ childcare responsibilities, and whether or not the service provider effectively meets these needs. The NRC is committed to upholding its Equal Opportunities Policy, and is thereby committed to providing effective and appropriate childcare for its service users, volunteers, and Board members.
- 4.5 The NRC recognises that affordability of childcare is a key barrier to refugees and asylum seekers accessing childcare services. The NRC is therefore committed to providing childcare that is free at the point of delivery for service users, volunteers and Board members.
- 4.6 This policy recommends particular methods of childcare provision to be used alongside service delivery. These methods include both on- and off-site childcare. The NRC will only provide on-site crèche facilities using registered workers, and will only reimburse the cost of childcare provided off-site by registered childminders/crèche workers. However, the NRC recognises that there is a lack of diverse and culturally sensitive crèche providers. Therefore, the NRC is committed to supporting refugees and asylum seekers who wish to train/be registered as child carers and to employing the services of refugee and asylum seeker crèche workers/childminders who are presently registered.
- 4.7 The NRC recognises that there are specific barriers to refugees and asylum seekers arranging their own childcare. These include language difficulties and lack of information on childcare options in their locality. The NRC is therefore committed to taking proactive steps in the provision of childcare for service users, beyond just paying for it. This will include ensuring service users have all relevant information, and

taking full responsibility – if so desired by the service user – for arranging childcare for that individual.

- 4.8 The NRC will strongly consider the issue of timing when organising activities for service users and volunteers. It is generally more difficult to arrange for childcare during the evening, and children's bedtimes may impact on how late the parent can stay out/how late the child can remain at the childcare establishment.
- 4.9 The NRC is committed to responding to the diversity of the 'refugee experience'. This policy aims therefore to be flexible and responsive to the differing needs of individual refugees and asylum seekers. For example, how best to meet childcare needs may differ according to what part of South Yorkshire our service users reside in, and where the service is being delivered.
- 4.10 The NRC will ensure that service users, volunteers, and Board members are fully aware of the NRC Childcare Policy and will produce appropriate briefing materials to ensure this.
- 4.11 The NRC is committed to ensuring that this policy continues to effectively meet the needs of service users, volunteers, and Board members. Ongoing feedback from these stakeholders, members of staff, and partner organisations will be actively encouraged and used to review the policy at pre-specified review dates.
- 4.12 The NRC will seek to promote good practice in childcare provision with other organisations and agencies working with refugees and asylum seekers at a local, regional and national level.

5. DEFINITIONS

- 5.1 **Registered Childcare** refers to childcare services which are registered with the government's regulatory body Ofsted. All services for children under the age of eight provided within a group setting or in the carer's own home have to be registered with Ofsted. In becoming registered, these services have to meet the required National Standards. The NRC will only use registered childcare services.

6. REFERENCES

- 6.1 This policy should be read in conjunction with other NRC policies and documents including:

Equal Opportunities and Managing Diversity Policy
Volunteer Policy

Care Standards Act 2000

7. CODE OF PRACTICE

7.1 DEVELOPMENT SERVICES TEAM

- 7.1.1 A free, on-site crèche lasting the full duration of the session will be provided at all Women's Conversation Clubs directly supported by the NRC. The existing Women's

Conversation Clubs are located in the city centre, Gleadless Valley, Lowedges, Tinsley, and Firth Park. All volunteers at the Women's Conversation Clubs will have access to the on-site crèche.

- 7.1.2 Childcare will be provided alongside South Yorkshire Refugee Communities' Forum meetings and any associated group meetings/training sessions.
- 7.1.3 A limited and pre-specified budget for childcare will be available for refugees and asylum seekers taking part in the Befriending Scheme as befriendedees. Childcare costs incurred by volunteer befrienders will be reimbursed.
- 7.1.4 A limited and pre-specified budget for childcare will be available for refugees taking part in the Time Together Scheme as mentees. Childcare costs incurred by volunteer mentors will be reimbursed.
- 7.1.5 Staff members will work to encourage Refugee Community Organisations and initiatives they are working with to provide childcare wherever possible. This may include working with the respective groups to develop their capacity to provide childcare.
- 7.1.6 Childcare will be provided alongside all training delivered to refugees and asylum seekers as part of the Refugee Awareness Project. Childcare will also be provided when participants of the project deliver presentations to external bodies.
- 7.1.7 Activities delivered as part of the Somali Link Action project will be accompanied by childcare.
- 7.1.8 Childcare will be provided alongside all training and group meetings involving service users and/or volunteers that are arranged by the Development Services Team.

7.2 ADVICE SERVICE

- 7.2.1 At present no on-site crèche services are provided alongside the advice sessions that the NRC provides. The reasons for this are that the current venues for the advice sessions have no separate space suitable for a crèche. Furthermore, there is currently no budget for childcare provision.
- 7.2.2 The NRC is committed to improving the current situation relating to lack of childcare provision at NRC advice service sessions. Possible options for remedying the situation include: running a weekly, women-only advice session in a venue that could accommodate an on-site crèche; applying for additional funding to pay for childcare provision for advice sessions; and exploring options for alternative venues for advice sessions.
- 7.2.3 Childcare costs incurred by volunteers at NRC Advice Service sessions will be reimbursed.
- 7.2.4 Childcare will be provided alongside training sessions for advice service volunteers.

7.3 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- 7.3.1 The NRC is committed to increasing the number of refugees and asylum seekers that are members of the NRC Board of Directors, thereby ensuring the Board is more representative. The NRC is committed to ensuring that all refugees and asylum

seekers have an equal opportunity to become a Board member. To support this aim childcare will be provided to any Board member requiring it.

7.3.2 The NRC will remain sensitive to the caring responsibilities of Board members when arranging the times of Board meetings.

7.4 RECOMMENDED METHOD OF CHILDCARE PROVISION

7.4.1 The recommended method of childcare to be employed in association with NRC service delivery will depend upon a number of factors, including: the type of service, the number of volunteers or service users accessing the service at one time, and where the volunteer or service user resides.

7.4.2 Group activities involving service users and/or volunteers which are held in Sheffield using a crèche room not Ofsted registered and lasting less than two hours:

7.4.2.1 The NRC will provide a free, on-site crèche for volunteers and/or service users.

7.4.2.2 Staff members should make every effort to satisfy the above recommendation. If significant difficulties are encountered staff should refer the matter to their line manager.

7.4.2.3 Those service users and volunteers who do not reside in Sheffield will be offered the option of using the on-site crèche, or having registered, off-site childcare provision closer to their place of residence paid for. If the volunteer or service user chooses this option, the NRC will offer as much assistance in arranging the off-site provision as required (see below for method of reimbursing the cost of off-site provision).

7.4.3 Group activities involving service users and/or volunteers which are held in Sheffield using a crèche room not Ofsted registered and lasting more than two hours

7.4.3.1 The NRC will seek to source places in a crèche located as close to the venue of the activity as possible. If this is not possible/suitable the staff member should refer the matter to their line manager.

7.4.3.2 Those service users and volunteers who do not reside in Sheffield will be offered the option of using the locally sourced crèche, or having registered, off-site childcare provision closer to their place of residence paid for. If the volunteer or service user chooses this option, the NRC will offer as much assistance in arranging the off-site provision as required (see below for method of reimbursing the cost of off-site provision).

7.4.4 Group activities involving service users and/or volunteers which are held in Sheffield using a crèche room that is Ofsted registered for any duration:

7.4.4.1 The NRC will provide a free, on-site crèche for volunteers or service users.

7.4.4.2 Staff members should make every effort to satisfy the above recommendation. If significant difficulties are encountered staff should refer the matter to their line manager.

7.4.4.3 Those service users and volunteers who do not reside in Sheffield will be offered the option of using the on-site crèche, or having registered, off-site childcare provision closer to their place of residence paid for. If the volunteer or service user chooses this option, the NRC will offer as much assistance in arranging the off-site provision as required (see below for method of reimbursing the cost of off-site provision).

7.4.5 One-to-one activities involving service users and/or volunteers (regardless of location of meeting/where individual resides) (Please note this does not currently apply to the NRC advice service):

7.4.5.1 The NRC will reimburse the cost of off-site childcare services for the service user/volunteer for the duration of the activity and the time taken to travel to and from the meeting/childcare provider.

7.4.5.2 The amount of childcare provision that will be reimbursed for service users on the Befriending and Time Together scheme for meetings with their allocated volunteer will currently be subject to pre-determined constraints.

7.4.5.3 NRC staff members will offer service users and refugee and asylum seeker volunteers as much assistance as required in arranging the off-site, registered, childcare provision.

7.4.6 If the activity involving service users and/or volunteers is taking place outside of school hours (after 3.00pm, on weekends, or during school holidays) the staff member will need to liaise with the childcare provider to ensure school age children will be able to access the childcare provision. If any difficulties with this arise the staff member should consult their line manager.

7.4.7 If the activity is taking place outside of Sheffield staff members should follow the guidelines outlined above. However, the location may bring additional constraints with regards to providing childcare. In this case staff members should consult their line manager.

7.4.8 The NRC is committed to providing culturally sensitive and appropriate childcare alongside its services. Staff members will therefore make efforts to utilize childcare providers that offer culturally sensitive services. In particular, staff members should try and employ the services of, whenever possible, refugees who are registered as child-minders/crèche workers.

7.5 PAYMENT METHOD

7.5.1 Payment for an on-site crèche will be made by the NRC directly to the childcare provider.

7.5.2 Payment for off-site childcare services will be made directly to the childcare provider. The childcare provider will be required to invoice the NRC directly. Service users or volunteers will not be employed as a 'third party' to pass on payment to the childcare provider.

7.5.3 The NRC does not set an upper limit to the amount that can be spent on off-site childcare per service user per activity. However, it is the responsibility of individual staff members to ensure as far as is possible that the childcare provider utilized is cost

effective/charges appropriate rates. As a guideline, the Children's Information Service recommends £3.50 per hour per child as a standard rate for childcare.

- 7.5.4 Although the NRC does not set a strict upper limit for childcare costs, variations in expenditure between individuals and individual projects will be monitored and reviewed regularly. Furthermore, if the childcare costs associated with a particular project are deemed too high the project as a whole will need to be reviewed in order that the associated cost of childcare is affordable. However, those service users requiring childcare will continue to receive the same service/opportunities as fellow service users participating in the project who do not require childcare.

8. IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING

- 8.1 The NRC Childcare Policy will be presented as part of the induction material for all new staff and members of the Board of Directors.
- 8.2 All line managers will be responsible for ensuring the Childcare Policy is implemented within their particular team and for ensuring that all members of staff fully understand the policy and how it relates to their work. It is also the line manager's responsibility to ensure that changes in service delivery projects are communicated to the Quality Task Team so the Childcare Policy can be kept up to date to reflect the full range of services delivered by the NRC.
- 8.3 The specific Childcare Policy procedures implemented will vary across the organisation according to the type of service delivery project. It is the responsibility of all service delivery project coordinators to feed back their experiences of implementing the Childcare Policy to their line manager.
- 8.4 The Quality Task Team will take responsibility for reviewing this policy and updating it to include any new legislation or good practice initiatives on a bi-annual basis.

9. APPENDICES

9.1 Directory

Children's Information Service (CIS)

The CIS is a one-stop source of information on childcare. The CIS provide up to date, accurate information and guidance about childcare, playcare, early years education and other children and young people's services as well as training and working in the childcare sector. Contact details:

Sheffield Children's Information Service

Address: 11 Leopold Street, Sheffield S1 2GY
Tel: 0114 275 6699 (Monday, Tuesday, Thursday 9.30am - 5.30pm;
Wednesday 8.30am - 6.00pm; Friday 9.30am - 4.00pm - out of hours
answerphone).
Email: info@sheffieldcis.f9.co.uk
Web: www.sheffieldchildrenfirst.org.uk

Doncaster Children's Information Service

Address: Early Years Development & Childcare Service, Directorate of Education
& Culture, Richmond Hill, Melton Road, Spotbrough, Doncaster, DN5
7SB
Tel: 0800 1384568
Email: cis@doncaster.gov.uk
Web: www.doncasterchildrenandfamilies.info

Rotherham Children's Information Service

Address: Norfolk House, Walker Place, Rotherham
Tel: 0800 073 0230
Email: earlyyears@rotherham.gov.uk
Web:
[http://www.rotherham.gov.uk/graphics/Learning/Early+Years/Childrens+Information+S
ervice+new.htm](http://www.rotherham.gov.uk/graphics/Learning/Early+Years/Childrens+Information+S
ervice+new.htm)

Barnsley Children's Information Service

Tel: 08000 345340
Web: <http://www.childcarelink.gov.uk/whitebox/cis.asp?cisid=5175>

Mobile Crèche Services

If you are providing an on-site crèche alongside your activity the following agencies provide crèche workers who will travel to a pre-specified venue to provide a crèche (one-off and on-going):

Sheffield Crèche Services Ltd

Address: 8 Hallyburton Road, Sheffield, S2 3LF
Tel: 0114 254 4840 / 07977 343175
Contact: Val

Capita Education Resourcing

Address: Walsh Court, 10 Bells Square, Trippet Lane, Sheffield, S1 2FY
Tel: 0114 241 2800

Ladybirds Crèche

Tel: 0114 2659419
Contact: Lietta Bamford

9.2 Guidelines for NRC staff: how to provide childcare alongside NRC activities

Please see attached information sheet.