

# WALDRIDGE PARISH COUNCIL

## Safeguarding Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults Policy

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### Introduction

We believe that children, young people and vulnerable adults have the right to have fun and be safe in the services provided for them and the activities they choose to participate in.

We believe all children, young people and vulnerable adults have the right to live their lives to the fullest potential, to be protected, to have the opportunity to participate in and enjoy any activity and to be treated with dignity and respect.

We believe that all children, young people and vulnerable adults irrespective of their age, class, religion, culture, disability, gender, ethnicity or sexual preference have the right to protection.

### Child Protection Statement

This Council is committed to ensuring that all children, young people and vulnerable adults are protected and kept safe from harm whilst engaged in services organised and provided by the Council. This Council will also safeguard the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults who use the Council's services or who attend activities within its venues, by protecting them from abuse.

This Council recognises its responsibilities under the terms of the Children Act 2004, earlier Children's Acts and other relevant legislation to make arrangements for ensuring that its functions are discharged having regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people.

This policy applies to all situations within the Council's operation, which could potentially involve children, young people or vulnerable adults. Good practice guidelines are provided in this policy to guide staff in the protection of children and young people and to protect staff and Councillors from allegations of abuse and reassure parents.

The policy applies to:

- Every elected member, staff member, volunteer and anyone working on behalf of and/or representing the Council.
- Any individual or organisation hiring the Parish Council facilities for the purpose of delivering any service to children, young people or vulnerable adults.

Waldridge Parish Council has no specific person, either staff members or elected members who are directly involved in the care of children, young people or vulnerable adults, but will ensure that, should a concern arise, the correct procedures related to this policy are followed.

### **Definitions**

- The term children or young person is used to refer to anyone under the age of 18 years.
- The vulnerable adult is used to refer to anyone over the age of 18 who is: unable to care for themselves; unable to protect themselves from significant harm or exploitation; or may be in need of community care services.
- The term parent is used as a generic term to represent anyone with legal parental responsibility.
- The terms elected members, staff and volunteers is used to refer to employees, councillors, volunteers and anyone working on behalf of and/or representing the Council, including temporary and agency staff and contractors.

### **Abuse**

Abuse takes many forms, the main types are:

- Physical (e.g. Hitting and kicking)
- Verbal (e.g. name calling, constant teasing, sarcasm, racist or homophobic taunts, threats, graffiti and gestures)
- Emotional (e.g. tormenting, ridiculing, humiliating and ignoring)
- Sexual (e.g. unwanted physical contact or abusive comments)

### **Effects of Abuse**

- Children, young people and vulnerable adults at any age can be subjected to abuse in all of the above forms. The effects of abuse can be so damaging that if not treated, they may follow an individual into adulthood. For example, adults who may have been abused as children may find it difficult to maintain a stable, trusting relationship, they may become involved in anti-social activities such as drug taking, prostitution, be emotionally unstable and there is a possibility they may abuse a child themselves in the future.
- A number of studies have suggested that children with various forms of disabilities are at increased risk of abuse to various factors such as stereo typing, prejudice, discrimination, isolation and an inability to protect themselves, this situation can be further aggravated by the child's inability to communicate the problem. Children from ethnic minorities that experience racial discrimination and bullying may be equally powerless to protect themselves.
- The misery caused by child abuse has a dramatic and often long-term effect on the lives of the victims, it is in our power to reduce the possibility of such events within our facilities through vigilance, responsible actions and a commitment to protect the children we come into contact with.

**Indications that a child, young person or vulnerable adult may have been abused include:-**

- Unexplained or suspicious injuries such as bruising, cuts and burns, particularly on parts of the body not normally prone to injury.
- Inconsistent explanation for an injury.
- Someone else - a child or adult expresses concern about the welfare of a child.
- A child describes what appears to be an abusive act against them.
- Inappropriate sexual awareness.
- Unexplained changes in behaviour e.g. becoming very quiet, withdrawn or sudden outbursts of temper.
- A child engages in sexually explicit behaviour in games.
- A child is distrustful of adults particularly those with whom a close relationship would normally be expected.
- Becomes increasingly dirty and unkempt.
- Has difficulty in making friends.
- Displays variations in eating patterns, including overeating or loss of appetite.
- Weight loss for no apparent reason.
- Is prevented from socialising with other children.

This list is not exhaustive and the presence of one or more of the above signs is not proof that abuse has taken or is taking place. It is not the responsibility of council staff to decide that abuse is taking place but is their responsibility to act on any concerns. However, it is important to remember that many children, young people and vulnerable adults will exhibit some of these indicators at some time and the presence of one or more should not be taken as proof that abuse is occurring. There may be other reasons for changes in behaviour, such as a death in the family or the birth of a new baby.

**Aims of the Policy**

This Council accepts the moral and legal responsibility to implement procedures, provide a duty of care for children, young people and vulnerable adults, safeguard their wellbeing and protect them when they are engaged in services organised and provided by the Council or when they come into contact with Council staff, those on work experience, elected members and volunteers.

The Council aims to do this by:

- Raising an awareness throughout the Council and beyond of the statutory “duty of care” relating to children, young people and vulnerable adults, and actively encourage good practice amongst all staff, elected members and volunteers.
- Creating a safe and healthy environment within all its services, avoiding situations where abuse or allegations of abuse may occur.
- Respecting and promoting the rights, wishes and feelings of children, young people and vulnerable adults. Listening to children, young people and vulnerable adults, minimising dangers and working closely with other agencies.
- Recruiting, training, supervising and supporting staff, elected members and volunteers who work with children, young people and vulnerable adults to adopt best practice to safeguard and protect children and young people from abuse, and themselves against false allegations. Staff and volunteers who work with children and young people will be subject to the appropriate level Criminal Records Bureau check.
- Responding to any allegations appropriately and implementing the appropriate disciplinary and appeals procedures.
- Requiring staff, elected members and volunteers to adopt and abide by this policy and guidelines.

## **Use of Contractors**

This Council and its staff, elected members and volunteers should take care that contractors doing work on behalf of the Council are monitored appropriately. Any contractor or sub-contractor, engaged by the Council in areas where workers are likely to come into contact with children, young people and vulnerable adults, should have a similarly robust Child Protection Policy, or failing this, must comply with the terms of this policy. Contractors will be monitored by the member of staff or elected member responsible for the contract.

## **Hire of facilities to groups for use with Children, Young People or Vulnerable Adults**

Waldridge Parish Council will require any group hiring its facilities to:

- Have public liability insurance.
- Have a suitable safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults policy and/or agree to comply with the terms of the Parish Council's policy.
- Ensure that leaders make their members aware of the Parish Council Policy and ensure that it is followed whilst using Parish facilities.

## **Safe Working Practices**

All users of Parish Council facilities must follow the safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults policy and procedures at all times. For example they should:

- Never leave children, young people or vulnerable adults unattended with adults who have not been subject to a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check.
- Plan activities to involve more than one person being present or at least in sight or hearing of others. Alternatively, record, or inform others of their whereabouts and intended action.
- Where possible, have male and female leaders working with a mixed group.
- Ensure they have access to a first aid kit and telephone and know fire procedures.
- Ensure that where a child, young person or vulnerable adult needs assistance with toilet trips and when first aid is required, that this is carried out in pairs or in the latter case, that it is carried out where they can be seen.
- When working outside, ensure activities, breaks and clothing are suitable for the weather conditions and that shelter is available where possible.

## **Protecting Yourself**

Child abuse has carried a high profile over recent years, so much so that many people feel uneasy when dealing with children, young people and vulnerable adults, feeling that innocent gestures and behaviour may be seen in some people's eyes as inappropriate. Common sense must prevail; in order to prevent such accusations, the following suggestions should be observed:

- Restrict physical contact with children, young people and vulnerable adults to only that which is necessary.
- When dealing with children, young people and vulnerable adults in emergency situation i.e. administering first aid, ensure where possible there is another responsible adult with you whether that be parent, carer or another member of staff.
- Report directly to the Clerk any behaviour by staff, elected members or public that you feel is inappropriate or suspicious. Do not discuss the subject with any other staff member, elected member or member of the public.
- Never take children, young people or vulnerable adults alone in your car.

- Never take children, young people or vulnerable adults to your home or where they will be alone with you.
- Never allow children, young people or vulnerable adults to use inappropriate language unchallenged.
- Always be publicly open when working with children, young people and vulnerable adults. Avoid situations where as a carer you are left completely unobserved.
- Never let allegations a child, young person or vulnerable adult makes go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon.
- Never do things for a child, young person or vulnerable adult of a personal nature that the child, young person or vulnerable adult is capable of doing themselves.
- Never make suggestive remarks or gestures, even in fun.
- If during the care of a child, young person or vulnerable adult you accidentally hurt them, the child, young person or vulnerable adult seems distressed in any manner, appears to be sexually aroused by your actions or misunderstands or misinterprets something you have done, report the incident as soon as possible to another colleague and make a brief written note of the incident. Parents or carer should be informed of the incident.
- Don't believe it could not happen to you.

## **Procedures**

These procedures inform staff, elected members and volunteers of what actions they should take if they have concerns or encounter a case of alleged or suspected abuse.

## **Responding to Concerns and Allegations**

The Council recognises the difficulty of assessing a potential abuse situation. Even experts have difficulty at times in recognising a situation where abuse may occur or has already taken place. It is accepted that council staff, elected members and volunteers are not experts in this field. However, all suspicions and or allegations of abuse must be taken seriously and responded to in a speedy and appropriate manner. Staff and elected members are, therefore, expected to discuss any concerns they have regarding the welfare of a child, young person or vulnerable adult with the Clerk. The Clerk will then decide on the most appropriate course of action.

It is important that all staff, elected members and volunteers are aware that the first person that has concerns or encounters a case of alleged or suspected abuse is not responsible for deciding whether or not abuse has occurred. It is not the place of any staff member or elected member of the Council to investigate allegations. However, staff, elected members and volunteers do have a duty of care to the child, young person or vulnerable adult which means they must report any suspicions they may have.

It is the duty of any member, or council employee or volunteer to report any concerns about a child, young person or vulnerable adult being subject to abuse, receive a disclosure or are aware of Members, or colleagues behaving in an inappropriate manner. All reports should be treated as confidential and with respect to the person raising the concern regardless of the outcome.

In general there are three situations that staff, elected members and volunteers may need to respond to a concern or case of alleged or suspected abuse:

1. Responding to a child, young person or vulnerable adult disclosing abuse, i.e. they make an allegation of abuse.
2. Responding to allegations or concerns about a member of staff, elected member or volunteer from your own observation or due to a complaint.
3. Responding to allegations or concerns about any other person, i.e. parent, carer, other service user.

*In the case of an emergency where a child is in danger phone 999 immediately.*

Record in writing all the details that you are aware of and what was said using the child, young person or vulnerable adult's own words, immediately. In your record you should include the following:

- a) The date and time
- b) The child, young person or vulnerable adult's name, address and date of birth
- c) The nature of the allegation
- d) Your observations – a description of the child, young person or vulnerable adult's behaviour, physical and emotional state and any visible injuries.
- e) Exactly what the child, young person or vulnerable adult said and what you said. Record the child, young person or vulnerable adult's account of what has happened as closely as possible.
- f) Sign and date what you have recorded.

Do not ask questions, other than the child, young person or vulnerable adult's name, address and date of birth. Reassure the child, young person or vulnerable adult that they have done the right thing in telling you.

Contact local Social Services or the Police without delay and follow their guidance.

Every effort should be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned. Information should be handled and disseminated on a need to know basis only - usually to Social Services or the Police. It is extremely important that allegations or concerns are not discussed, as any breach of confidentiality could be damaging to the child, young person or vulnerable adult, their family, those who are the subject of allegations and any child protection investigations that may follow.

Informing the parents of a child, young person or vulnerable adult of concerns you may have should be dealt with by Social Services. Parents will not be informed if they are the subject of the allegation. Any individual against whom an allegation has been made has the right to be notified about the cause for concern. This should be done by Social Services and the Police. It is important that the timing of this does not prejudice the investigation; therefore, confidentiality is of the utmost importance.

Recorded information should be handed over to Social Services or the Police and any copies stored in a secure place with limited access in line with data protection laws (e.g. that information is accurate, regularly updated, relevant and secure). If enquiries arise from the public or any branch of the media, it is vital that all staff, elected members and volunteers are briefed to not make any comments regarding the situation.

## Photography

Staff, elected members and volunteers should be vigilant at all times regarding people using cameras or videos within Council services and at events or activities which involve children, young people and vulnerable adults. Consent must be sought from parents when cameras and other image recorders are used to take images of children and young people.

- Do not allow unsupervised access to children, young people or vulnerable adults for one to one photographic sessions.
- The child, young person or vulnerable adult should be happy with having their picture taken
- Parents must be informed that photographs of their child, young person or vulnerable adult may be taken during Council services, activities or events, and signed parental consent needs to be obtained agreeing to this. This must include information about how and where these photographs will be used.
- The names of children, young people or vulnerable adults should not be used in photographs or video footage, unless with the express permission of the child, young person or vulnerable adult's parent/carer.

## Sources of Information / Support

Contact	Telephone
<b>Safeguarding Children</b> Durham County Council – First Contact/Social Care Direct	03000 267 979 (24 hours) 0191 383 5752
<b>Safeguarding Adults</b> Durham County Council – Social Care Direct	03000 267 979 (24 hours)
<b>NPSCC 24 Hour Helpline</b>	0808 800 5000
<b>ChildLine</b>	0800 1111

If you think a child, young person or vulnerable adult is in immediate danger – don't delay call the police on 999.