

Spixworth Parish Council Child Protection Policy

1. Introduction

The primary responsibility for children's welfare rests with the supervising adult. Spixworth Parish Council wishes to ensure that children and young people are safe and protected from harm whilst visiting our premises.

The definition of a child or young person is someone who has not yet reached their 16th birthday.

The following Child Protection Policy outlines the systems and procedures in place at Spixworth Parish Council in order to achieve this aim. Its successful achievement requires of course, co-operation and partnership between Spixworth Parish Council and its many users; all staff and volunteers are responsible for supporting this policy.

This document serves a dual purpose as it sets out the principles underlying the policy and provides definitions to help contextualise child abuse. The document also seeks to provide practical guidance to members of Spixworth Parish Council staff and volunteers working with children and young people.

Section 1: Principles and definitions

- Child Protection Policy Statement

The key principles underlying the policy

- Definitions of child abuse
- Bullying
- Identifying abuse
- Policy review

Section 2 Practical guidance for Parish Council staff and volunteers with children and young people

- General conduct when working with children and young people
- Practices never to be sanctioned
- Responding to complaints and alleged or suspected incidents

Section 1: Principles and Definitions

1.1 Child Protection Policy Statement

We want to ensure that children and young people are protected from harm while they visit the premises of Spixworth Parish Council. We do this by;

- Following the appropriate guidelines to select appropriate staff and to carry out CRB checks as per these guidelines;
- Giving staff, teachers, group leaders, service providers and any other interested parties information about Spixworth Parish Council's procedures regarding the safety of children and young people whilst at the Parish Council's premises when requested;
- When requested, providing information to teachers, group leaders, service providers and any other interested parties about Spixworth Parish Council's expectations regarding child protection responsibilities while visiting Parish Council premises.

1.2 Key principles

The key principles that underlie this policy are:

- To ensure that children and young people in the care of Parish Council staff and volunteers can be protected by setting standards of best practice. This will also ensure that Parish Council staff and volunteers are protected and do not place themselves in an unnecessary vulnerable position.

1.3 Definitions

Definitions of Child Abuse

The following definitions are drawn from the National Safeguarding Children Programme

Child abuse occurs when a child is neglected, harmed or not provided with proper care. Children and young people may be abused in many settings - in a family, in an institutional or community setting, by those who know them, or more rarely, by a stranger. There are different types of abuse and a child may suffer more than one of them. These types of abuse include:

Physical:

Where a child's body is hurt or deliberately injured

Sexual:

Where adults use children to satisfy sexual desires; other children can also be abusers

Emotional:

Where children are deprived of love, may be continually shamed and taunted. Given responsibility beyond their years

Neglect:

A persistent failure to meet a child's physical and/or psychological needs

1.4 Bullying

In addition to the definitions given above it is important to recognise the impact and extent of bullying in the lives of children and young people. Some people may not regard bullying and discrimination as child abuse because of the settings in which this often takes place and also because it is often children and young people who are responsible for the behaviour. But Spixworth Parish Council would wish to make clear that bullying behaviour is unacceptable.

1.5 Identifying Abuse

The following list outlines ways in which abuse may be identified. It is not intended that this is an exhaustive list and it is not the Parish Council staff member or volunteer's responsibility to determine if abuse is occurring but to report their concerns:

- Changes in behaviour; immediate or over a length of time
- Bruises and injuries that do not reflect the activity the child is involved in and where the explanation does not conform with the injuries
- Fear of certain adults
- Use of sexually explicit language and actions
- The child is reluctant to take part (including changing and showering) or to go home
- The child tells you that they are being abused
- A third party tells you that they are being abused
- A child who seems to be a 'loner' and does not integrate with the group
- A child whose appearance deteriorates hygienically and/or physically

Some disabled children and young people may feel more vulnerable in making others aware of abuse due to them relying on the abuser.

Whilst it is important that a partnership approach is adopted to ensure that safety and welfare of children, it is of equal importance that all concerned are confident that the information they provide will only be disclosed where it is in the best interests of the child or young person to do so. Spixworth Parish Council's procedures have been carefully constructed to ensure such confidentiality.

1.6 Policy Review

The Parish Council's Child Protection Policy will be kept under review on at least an annual basis, and amended where and when applicable.

Section 2:

Practical Guidance for Parish Council Staff and Volunteers working with children and young people

This section seeks to offer practical guidance to those engaged in Spixworth Parish Council events that involve contact with children and young people to ensure that they and the children and young people with whom they are working are protected.

2.1 General Conduct when working with Children and young people

Parish Council staff and volunteers should be encouraged to demonstrate exemplary behaviour in order to protect themselves from allegations of abuse. Stated below are the standards of behaviour required of Parish Council staff and volunteers in order to fulfil their roles within the Parish Council to ensure that a positive culture and climate is created during all Parish Council activities involving contact with children and young people:

- Always work in an open environment (e.g. avoiding private or unobserved situations and encouraging an open environment i.e. no secrets)
- Treating all children and young people equally and with respect and dignity
- Maintain a safe and appropriate distance from the children and young people
- Build balanced relationships based on mutual trust which empowers children and young people to share in the decision-making process
- Involve teachers, parents/carers and other key influences wherever possible
- Be an excellent role model - this includes not smoking or drinking alcohol in the company of children and young people or using inappropriate language
- Give enthusiastic and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism
- Secure parental consent in writing to act *in loco parentis* if the need arises to give permission for the administrations of emergency first aid and/or other medical treatment
- Request written parental consent if staff members are required to transport children and young people in their cars
- Obtain written consent prior to any photographs, videoing or audio recording.

2.2 Unacceptable Practices

The following should never be sanctioned:

- Spending excessive amounts of time alone with children and young people away from others
- Taking children and young people to your home where they will be alone with you
- Allowing children and young people to travel on their own with you in a vehicle
- Engaging in rough, physical or sexually provocative games, including horseplay
- Entering a toilet with children and young people unless another adult is present or gives permission (this may include parent, teacher or group leader). Parish Council staff should avoid using toilets when they are being used by a group of children or young people.

- Allowing or engaging in any form of inappropriate contact
- Allowing or encouraging abusive peer activities (e.g. any game/activity where an individual may be held up to ridicule)
- Allowing children and young people to use inappropriate language unchallenged
- Making sexually suggestive comments to, or within the hearing of a young person, even in fun
- Reducing a young person to tears as a form of control
- Allowing allegations made by a child or young person to go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon
- Doing things of a personal nature for children and young people that they can do for themselves

2.3 Responding to complaints and alleged or suspected incidents

The following guidelines should be used when an allegation is disclosed by a child or young person to a member of Parish Council staff and/or volunteer:

i) Listen and reassure

- Maintain confidentiality but do not make promises you cannot keep, and explain that the information will have to be passed on and what action you will be taking in this regard
- Be calm
- Be reassuring and make it clear that you are glad that they have told you
- Show that you are taking the child seriously and that you understand and believe them
- Keep questions to a minimum; if you have to ask questions keep them open and not leading

Important points to remember when dealing with a disclosure:

- Try not to display any sign of shock or disapproval when the child or young person is making a disclosure
 - Do not jump to conclusions
 - The child or young person may not regard the experience as either bad or painful, they may not feel guilty or angry
 - Be aware of your own feelings which may be different to those of the child or young person
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- Report and record any concerns you may have immediately
 - Do not destroy any evidence as it may be useful in a court of law
 - Initial disclosure, even if retracted, must still be referred
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- Take care of yourself by making sure that you have an opportunity to discuss your feelings with someone from an appropriate agency at a later stage
 - Observe confidentiality with colleagues, family and friends

ii) Informing the appropriate authorities

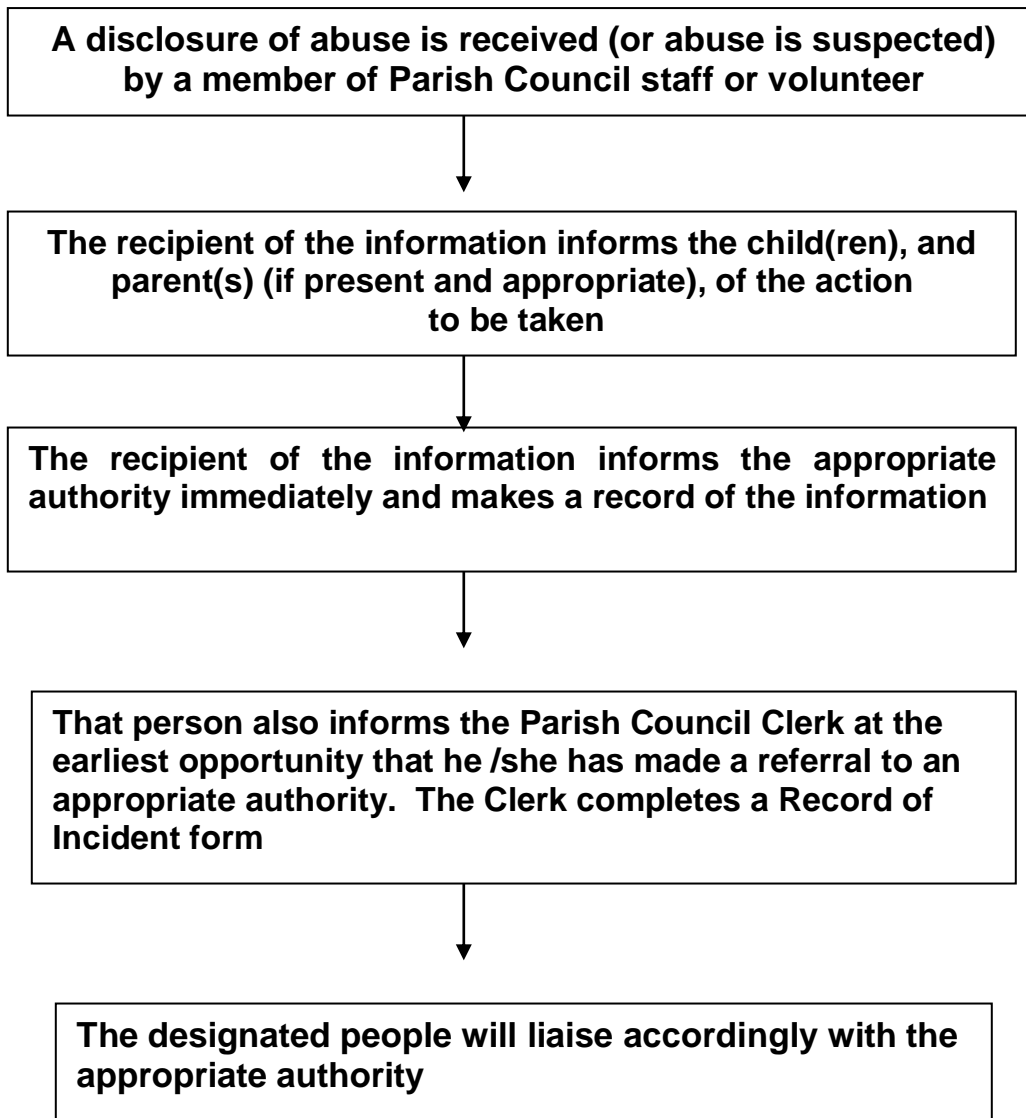
If abuse has been disclosed to you, or you suspect that it is happening, you must inform the appropriate authority immediately. Contact telephone numbers for the appropriate agencies are attached.

A report should also be made to the Parish Council as soon as possible after the above action has been taken.

iii) Recording information

A record of the incident and any actions taken will be made, and will be kept in a confidential manner by the Parish Clerk until such time as the matter has been fully resolved. The information will then be destroyed or passed on to the appropriate authority.

Procedure for members of Parish Council staff and/or volunteers dealing with allegations of abuse



Important points to note:

- i) For the purposes of this procedure the term 'Parish Council staff' encompasses both staff working within the Parish Council and also those who represent the Parish Council in relation to any event involving contact with children.
- ii) It is not the Parish Council staff member and/or volunteer's responsibility to determine if abuse is occurring but to report their concerns.
- iii) If an allegation of abuse is made against a member of Parish Council staff or a volunteer these will be fully investigated in accordance with the Child Protection procedures of the authority to which the matter is referred and the Parish Council Disciplinary Policy.

**Please sign and date to show that you have received
and read a copy of this Policy**

Name.....

Date.....

Event