

Blundeston & Flixton Parish Council

Safeguarding Policy

Introduction

The purpose of this policy is to make clear to all councillors, staff, volunteers and contractors what is required in relation to the protection of children, young people and vulnerable adults.

Children, young people and vulnerable adults have the right to participate, have fun and be safe in the services provided for them and the activities they choose, or their parents / carers choose for them.

This policy will help to maintain a safe and positive environment for children and vulnerable adults.

Policy Principles

The Council recognises that all children and vulnerable adults have an equal right to protection from abuse. It is committed to safeguarding children and vulnerable adults and protecting them from abuse when they are engaged in services organised and provided by, or on behalf of, the Council.

Referrals of suspicions of abuse cannot be anonymous and should be made in the knowledge that, during the course of enquiries, the agency that made that referral will be made clear.

The Council will not tolerate the harassment of any councillor, employee, volunteer, contracted service provider or child/vulnerable adult who raises concerns of abuse.

Policy Coverage

This policy applies to all councillors, employees, volunteers and contractors working in partnership with Blundeston & Flixton Parish Council ("the Council").

The Council has a duty to co-operate with other agencies and authorities to promote the well-being of children, young people and vulnerable adults.

The phrase 'children, young people and vulnerable adults' refers to:

- anyone under the age of 18 years.
- someone who is over the age of 18 who is receiving, or may be in need of, community care services by reasons of mental health or other disability, age or illness and who is, or may be, unable to take care of him or herself, or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation.

When the term 'parents' is used, it is used in the broadest sense to include parents, carers and guardians.

It is not the role of the Parish Council to investigate allegations of abuse. However, all members, employees, volunteers and contracted services providers have a responsibility to take action when they suspect or recognise that a child or vulnerable adult may be a victim of significant harm or abuse.

This policy is to be used in conjunction with the following policies of the Council:-

- Risk Management Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Equality and Diversity Policy
- Complaints Procedure
- Grievance Policy

These guidelines have been devised to protect children and vulnerable adults from abuse, as well as to protect members, staff and volunteers from situations where false allegations may occur.

The guidelines apply to those working with children or vulnerable persons involved in activities organised by or on behalf of the Council or at services provided by the Parish Council.

Policy Statement

The Council is committed to taking all reasonable precautions to safeguard the welfare of children and vulnerable persons that use its services and will promote a safeguarding culture and environment:-

- It will endeavour to keep children and vulnerable adults safe from abuse
- Suspicion of abuse will be responded to promptly and appropriately
- It will act in the best interests of the child or vulnerable adult at all times
- It will proactively seek to promote the welfare and protection of all children and vulnerable adults living in the local community
- DBS checks will be required for any councillor, volunteer or paid member of staff who is required to teach, train, instruct, care for or supervise children or vulnerable adults

- It will take any concern made by a councillor, employee, volunteer or contracted service provider or child / vulnerable adult seriously, and treat it with sensitivity

It is important to recognise that disabled children may be particularly vulnerable to abuse and may have added difficulties in communicating what is happening to them. Dependency on others for primary needs, e.g. feeding and clothing may make a person feel powerless to report abusive treatment.

This policy is inclusive of all children, young people and vulnerable adults, irrespective of their age, gender, race or ethnicity, religion, disability or sexual preference.

Definitions of Abuse:

- **Neglect** is where people fail to meet a child's or vulnerable person's basic physical / psychological needs and is likely to result in the serious impairment of their health or development, e.g. failure to ensure that a child is protected from unnecessary risk of injury, or exposing them to undue cold. It is important to note that self-neglect falls within this definition.
- **Physical Abuse** is where physical pain or injury is caused, e.g. hitting, shaking, biting, etc.
- **Sexual Abuse** is where children or vulnerable adults knowingly or unknowingly take part in an activity that meets the sexual needs of the other person or persons involved. This includes inappropriate photography or videoing.
- **Emotional / Mental Abuse** is where there is persistent emotional ill treatment that causes severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's or vulnerable person's emotional status e.g. bullying (including cyber and text bullying), constant criticism and unrealistic pressure to perform.

Recognising signs of abuse

Recognising abuse is not always easy. The list below provides some indicators of abuse; however, the list is not exhaustive and contains only indicators, not confirmation, of abuse:

- unexplained bruising, marks or injuries on any part of the body e.g. cigarette burns, bite marks
- bruises which reflect hand marks or fingertips (from slapping or pinching)
- an injury for which the explanation seems inconsistent or which has not been treated adequately

- sudden changes in behaviour, including becoming withdrawn or aggressive, severe temper outbursts
- neglected in appearance, dirty or 'smelly' or inappropriate dress for the conditions
- constant hunger, sometimes stealing food from others
- fear of parents or carers being approached for an explanation
- flinching when approached or touched
- neurotic behaviour e.g. hair twisting, rocking
- being unable to play
- fear of making mistakes
- self-harm
- fear of being left with a specific person or group of people, lack of trust in adults
- sexual knowledge which is beyond their age or development age
- sexual drawings or language
- saying they have secrets they cannot tell anyone about
- not allowed to have friends

Special Events - Use of Video and Photography

It is an unfortunate fact that people sometimes use children and young people's events as opportunities to take inappropriate photographs or footage of children, and every attempt should be made to ensure that this does not happen.

Anyone using cameras or film recorders for or on behalf of the Council should obtain consent from the parents of children being photographed or filmed before the activity commences.

When commissioning professional photographers or inviting the press to cover Council services, events and activities the Council's expectations must be made clear in relation to child protection by checking the credentials of any photographers, ensuring identification is worn and by not allowing unsupervised access to children or one to one photographic session.

Responding to allegations

If a person discloses abuse by someone else:

- Stay calm, take the allegation seriously.
- Allow the person to speak without interruption, accepting what is said, but DO NOT investigate.
- Only ask questions for clarification, do not ask leading questions.
- Alleviate feelings of guilt and isolation, while passing no judgement. Reassure them that they did the right thing by talking to you.
- Advise that you will try to offer support, but that you MUST pass the information on, do not offer to keep secrets.
- Record the facts as you know them.
- Refer the allegation immediately and directly to the Parish Clerk. If the Parish Clerk is implicated, refer to the Chairman of the Parish Council. All allegations must be referred, no matter how insignificant they seem to be, or when they occur.
- Try to ensure that no-one is placed in a position which could cause further compromise.

Referral Procedures

If appropriate:-

- Make a careful note of the injuries or behaviours that have caused concern. Include dates, times, facts and observations.
- Ensure the correct details are available, the young person's / vulnerable adult's name and address, and the name and address of their parent or guardian.
- Make a referral using the contact details below. Ask for the name of the person with whom you are speaking. Do not filter out or withhold any information. Ask if there is anyone else who should be informed.
- Prepare a confidential file. Record all notes, conversations and advice from Social Services. Every effort should be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned.
- Store information in a secure place with limited access to designated people, in line with data protection legislation.
- Follow the advice from Social Services; take no other action unless advised to do so by Social Services.
- If in doubt about the advice you have received at any stage refer to Social Services for guidance.

Contact Details for referrals

- Please dial 999 if the person is in immediate danger
- Contact the Multi-agency Safeguarding Unit on 0345 606 1499 for advice about whether a situation requires a safeguarding referral. This unit operates Mon-Fri between the hours of 9am and 5pm. Alternatively you can use their portal to report concerns [Contact the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub \(MASH\) - Suffolk County Council](#)
- If you are unable to use the portal then you can telephone Customer First on 0808 800 4005

Confidentiality

Members, employees, volunteers and contracted service providers must not discuss allegations of abuse, substantiated or not, with anyone other than in connection with the formal investigation.

Where it is necessary to put in place procedures to prevent continuing abuse the matter should be shared with the Parish Clerk so that appropriate risk assessments may be undertaken.

Prevention

Recruitment

- Prospective employees will be interviewed, and previous, relevant experience will be noted. Two appropriate references will be taken up for all employees. All employees will undergo a probationary period.

Training

- The council will make the Safeguarding policy available to all members, staff and volunteers.
- All members and employees will be expected to read this policy

Reporting

The Council is committed to maintaining an open culture where councillors, employees, volunteers, children, vulnerable persons, parents, guardians and carers feel able to express concerns both about child protection and issues of poor practice.

In addition to the procedures outlined in this policy, the Council's Complaints Policy is available to all members, staff, volunteers, and the general public.

Councillors, staff, and volunteers must:

- Treat everyone with respect, regardless of their age, ethnicity, social background, ability, sexual orientation, culture or religious beliefs
- Provide an example of good conduct they wish others to follow
- Plan activities which involve more than one other person being present, or at least which are within sight or hearing of others
- Respect a person's right to personal privacy
- Provide access for young people to talk to others about any concerns they may have
- Encourage young people and adults to feel comfortable and caring enough to point out attitudes or behaviours they do not like
- Remember that someone else might misinterpret their actions, no matter how well- intentioned
- Recognise that special caution is required when discussing sensitive issues, such as bullying, bereavement, abuse or personal development
- Recognise that some children or vulnerable adults will be more vulnerable to abuse than others, and may face extra barriers in getting help because of their race, gender, age, religion, disability, sexual orientation, social background or culture
- Challenge unacceptable behaviour and report all allegations/suspicions of abuse.

Councillors, staff and volunteers must not:

- Engage in physical horseplay, such as wrestling or tickling
- Have any inappropriate verbal or physical contact with children or vulnerable people, or make suggestive remarks or gestures
- Permit abusive youth peer activities (e.g. initiation ceremonies, ridiculing, bullying etc.)
- Play physical contact games with children or vulnerable adults
- Jump to conclusions about others without checking the facts
- Ask children or vulnerable adults to do things that are potentially dangerous, illegal or otherwise unreasonable
- Exaggerate or trivialise abuse issues
- Show favouritism to any individual
- Rely on just their good name to protect them
- Believe it could "never happen to me"
- Take chances when common sense, policy or practice suggest a more prudent approach

- Allow allegations made to go unchallenged, unrecorded and not acted upon

The Council takes its responsibility very seriously. Those in breach of this policy will be dealt with as follows:-

- Employees will face investigation and may face disciplinary action, which could lead to a dismissal
- Volunteers will have their services terminated with immediate effect and their parent organisation (if appropriate) will be informed
- Parish Councillors will have their behaviour reported to the Chairman, who may require an investigation under the Code of Conduct

Where there is evidence of illegal activity, the councillor, employee or volunteer will be reported to the relevant authorities and may face a criminal investigation.

Procedure in Relation to Specific Services

Hall hire

Independent sports clubs and private individuals who regularly use the facilities operated by the Council should have appropriate child protection and vulnerable adult policies in place, commensurate with the level of contact they have.

Use of Contractors

The Council will take reasonable 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 regular contact with children, young people or vulnerable adults, should have its own equivalent child protection and vulnerable adult policies, or failing this, must comply with the terms of this policy.

Internet and e-mail Policy

Please refer to the Council's Data Protection policy.

First Aid

The administration of first aid to children, young people and vulnerable adults can present risks. Under ordinary circumstances, a child or young person can be administered with first aid only if their parent or guardian expressly permits this course of action.

Wherever possible, the person administering first aid should ensure that another adult is present, or is aware of the action being taken. Parents/carers should

always be informed when first aid is administered.

Child welfare is of paramount importance. In certain circumstances councillors, employees, volunteers and contracted service providers may undertake first aid as a last resort, notifying parents / carers as soon as possible, to minimise a child's or vulnerable adult's distress.

This policy was adopted by the council at its meeting held on 21 July 2025

Date of next review – July 2026