

BOURTON PARISH COUNCIL

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Child Protection Policy Statement

All children have a right to protection, and the needs of disabled children and others who may be particularly vulnerable must be taken into account. The Parish Council has a duty of care to safeguard all children involved any of its activities from harm.

This will be done through adherence to these Child Protection guidelines adopted by the Parish Council on the 25th June 2013.

A child is defined as a person under the age of 18 (The Children Act 1989).

The nominated Child Protection Officer is the Parish Clerk.

Policy Aims

- To provide children with appropriate safety and protection whilst in the care of the Parish Council.
- To allow all staff/volunteers to make informed and confident responses to specific child protection issues.

Promoting Good Practice

All Parish Councillors' have a responsibility to promote these good practice guidelines and report any suspicious cases of poor practice they may come across during any parish council activity in accordance with the guidelines in this document.

Good Practice Guidelines

All personnel involved in any Parish Council activity should be encouraged to demonstrate exemplary behaviour. The following are common sense examples of good practice.

Good practice when children are involved means:

- Always working in an open environment avoiding private or unobserved situations and encouraging open communication.
- Treating all young people/disabled adults equally with respect and dignity.
- Always putting the welfare of each young person first.
- Being an excellent role model – this includes not smoking or drinking alcohol in the company of young people.

Practices to be Avoided when Children are Involved

The following should be avoided except in emergencies. If a case arises where these situations are unavoidable (e.g. the child sustains an injury and needs to go to hospital, or a parent fails to arrive to pick a child up at the end of a session), it should be with the full knowledge and consent of the activity leader or the child's parents.

- Spending excessive amounts of time alone with children away from others.
- Taking or dropping off a child to an event.

Practices Never to be Sanctioned when Children are Involved

Engage in rough physical or sexually provocative games, including horseplay.

Share a room with a child.

Allow or engage in any form of inappropriate touching.

Allow children to use inappropriate language unchallenged.

Make sexually suggestive comments to a child, even in fun.

Reduce a child to tears as a form of control.

Allow allegations made by a child to go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon.

Do things of a personal nature for children or disabled adults that they can do for themselves.

Invite or allow children to stay with you at your home unsupervised.

Incidents that must be Reported/Recorded

If any of the following occur you should report this immediately to another colleague and record the incident. You should also ensure the parents of the child are informed:

- if you accidentally hurt a child
- if he/she seems distressed in any manner

Responding to Allegations or Suspicions

It is not the responsibility of anyone working in the Parish Council, in a paid or unpaid capacity, to decide whether or not child abuse has taken place. However, there is a responsibility to act on any concerns through contact with the appropriate authorities.

The Parish Council will assure all staff/volunteers that it will fully support and protect anyone who in good faith reports his/her concern that a colleague is, or may be, abusing a child.

Where there is a complaint against an individual there may be three types of investigation:

- a criminal investigation
- a child protection investigation
- a disciplinary or misconduct investigation.

The results of the police and child protection investigation may well influence the disciplinary investigation, but not necessarily.

Action

Concerns about poor practice:

If, following consideration, the allegation is clearly about poor practice, the Child Protection Officer will deal with it as a misconduct issue.

If the allegation is about poor practice by the Child Protection Officer, or if the matter has been handled inadequately and concerns remain, it should be reported to the chair of the parish council who will decide how to deal with the allegation and whether or not to initiate disciplinary proceedings.

Concerns about suspected abuse:

Any suspicion that a child has been abused by either by a Parish Councillor a member of staff or a volunteer should be reported to the Child Protection Officer, who will take such steps as considered necessary to ensure the safety of the child in question and any other child who may be at risk.

The Child Protection Officer will refer the allegation to the social services department, which may involve the police, or go directly to the police if out-of-hours.

The parents or carers of the child will be contacted as soon as possible following advice from the social services department.

The Child Protection Officer should also notify the Chair of the Parish Council who will deal with any media enquiries.

If the Child Protection Officer is the subject of the suspicion/allegation, the report must be made to the Chair of the Parish Council who will refer the allegation to social services.

Confidentiality

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.

This includes the following people:

- the Child Protection Officer
- the parents of the person who is alleged to have been abused
- the person making the allegation
- social services/police
- Parish Council Chair
- the alleged abuser (and parents if the alleged abuser is a child).

Social services advice should be sought regarding who should approach the alleged abuser.

Information should be stored in a secure place with limited access to designated people, in line with data protection laws (e.g. that information is accurate, regularly updated, relevant and secure).

Information for social services or the police about suspected abuse

To ensure that this information is as helpful as possible, a detailed record should always be made at the time of the disclosure/concern, which should include the following:

- The child's name, age and date of birth of the child.
- The child's home address and telephone number.
- Whether or not the person making the report is expressing their own concerns or those of someone else.
- The nature of the allegation. Include dates, times, any special factors and other relevant information.
- Make a clear distinction between what is fact, opinion or hearsay.
- A description of any visible bruising or other injuries. Also any indirect signs, such as behavioural changes.
- Details of witnesses to the incidents.
- The child's account, if it can be given, of what has happened and how any bruising or other injuries occurred.
- Have the parents been contacted?
- If so, what has been said?
- Has anyone else been consulted? If so, record details.
- If the child was not the person who reported the incident, has the child been spoken to? If so, what was said?
- Has anyone been alleged to be the abuser? Record details.
- Where possible referral to the police or social services should be confirmed in writing within 24 hours and the name of the contact who took the referral should be recorded.

If you are worried about sharing concerns about abuse with a senior colleague, you can contact social services or the police direct, or the NSPCC Child Protection Helpline on 0808 800 5000, or Childline on 0800 1111.

Allegations of Previous Abuse

Allegations of abuse may be made some time after the event (e.g. by an adult who was abused as a child or by a individual who is still currently working with children).

Where such an allegation is made, the Parish Council should follow the procedures as detailed above and report the matter to the social services or the police. This is because other children may be at risk from this person. Anyone who has a previous criminal conviction for offences related to abuse is automatically excluded from working with children. This is reinforced by the details of the Protection of Children Act 1999.

Adopted by Bourton Parish Council.

25th June 2013

Reviewed by Bourton Parish Council

18th May 2015