



**FOREST ROW PARISH COUNCIL  
CHILD PROTECTION POLICY:  
Appendix: GUIDELINES FOR EMPLOYEES/ VOLUNTEERS**

These guidelines are for paid and volunteer staff employed by Forest Row Parish Council who work with children.

## **00. BACKGROUND**

There are a number of recent Acts of Parliament relevant to the area of child protection. The Acts mentioned below provide the legal framework in which child protection takes place. As such, any child protection policy should explicitly refer to these Acts to show how the policy fits in this legal framework.

- **The Children Act 1989**

This Act sets out how the welfare and developmental needs of children are of paramount importance and over-ride other considerations. Two key sections of the Act are; Section 17, which sets out the rights of children to have an assessment of their needs and the role of statutory bodies in ensuring these rights are met. Section 47 which sets out a local authority's responsibility to investigate if it believes that a child is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm.

- **The Protection of Children Act 1999**

This Act sets out the framework to enable employers to check on the suitability of employees seeking to work with children. Groups defined specifically as 'childcare organisations' must apply the provision of the Act, whilst other organisations working with children are encouraged to do so. The Act builds on the Police Act (1997) which set up the Criminal Records Bureau. A child care organisation is defined as an organisation 'which is concerned with the provision of accommodation, social services, or health care services to children or the supervision of children'.

- **The Human Rights Act 1998**

This Act sets out the rights of children and families and reflects principles in international agreements. The Act gives the public the right to challenge what they perceive as an infringement of their human rights.

- **Sexual Offences (Amendments) Act 2000**

This Act introduced the concept of abuse of trust, whereby adults could commit an offence in engaging in sexual activity with someone younger than them if they are seen to be in a position of trust, even if the younger person is above the age of consent (e.g., teachers and pupils)

- **The UN Convention of the Rights of the Child**

This includes a young people's charter, setting out how all children should have access to basic human rights. The Convention on the Rights of the Child outlines in 41 articles the human rights to be respected and protected for every child under the age of 18 years and requires that these rights are implemented in the light of the Convention's guiding principles.

## **1. EXPLAINING WHAT CHILD ABUSE IS**

Child abuse is a term used to describe ways in which children are harmed, usually by adults and often by people they know and trust. It refers to the damage done to a child's physical or mental health. Children can be abused within or outside their family, at school and in leisure environments. Child abuse can take many forms:

### **PHYSICAL ABUSE, where adults:**

- physically hurt or injure children (eg by hitting, shaking, squeezing, biting or burning)
- give children alcohol, inappropriate drugs or poison
- attempt to suffocate or drown children

In leisure situations, physical abuse might also occur when the nature and intensity of an exercise/activity exceeds the capacity of the child's immature and growing body.

### **NEGLECT, includes situations where adults:**

- fail to meet a child's basic physical needs (eg for food, warm clothing)
- consistently leave children alone and unsupervised
- fail or refuse to give children love, affection or attention

Neglect in a leisure situation might also occur if a leader fails to ensure children are safe or exposes them to undue cold or risk of injury.

**SEXUAL ABUSE**. Boys and girls are sexually abused when adults (male and female) use them to meet their own sexual needs. This could include:

- full sexual intercourse, masturbation, oral sex, fondling
- showing children pornographic books, photographs or videos, or taking pictures for pornographic purposes

Leisure situations which involve physical contact (eg supporting or guiding children) could potentially create situations where sexual abuse may go unnoticed. Abusive situations may also occur if adults misuse their power over young people.

**EMOTIONAL ABUSE** can occur in a number of ways. For example, where:

- there is a persistent lack of love or affection
- there is constant overprotection which prevents children from socialising
- children are frequently being shouted at or taunted
- there is neglect, physical or sexual abuse

Emotional abuse in leisure might also include situations where parents or leaders subject children to constant criticism, bullying or unrealistic pressure to perform to high expectations.

## 2. HOW TO RECOGNISE CHILD ABUSE

There are **signs** which could alert you to the fact that a child might be being abused. These would include

- unexplained bruising or injuries
- sexually explicit language or actions
- sudden changes in behaviour
- something a child has said
- a change observed over a long period of time (eg the child losing weight or becoming increasingly dirty or unkempt)

However, it is important to note that a child could be displaying some or all of these signs, or behaving in a way which is worrying – this does not necessarily mean the child is being abused, Similarly, there may not be any signs, you just feel something is wrong. If you are worried, it is not your responsibility to decide if it is abuse but it is your responsibility to act on your concerns and do something about it.

## 3. WHAT TO DO IF YOU HAVE CONCERNS

### 3.1 CONCERNS BASED ON YOUR SUSPICIONS ONLY

- If you have noticed a change in the child's behaviour, first talk to the parents or carers. It may be that something has happened, like a bereavement, which has caused the child to be unhappy. However, if your concerns are about sexual abuse or violence, talking to the parents or carers might put the child at greater risk.
- If your concerns remain or you cannot talk to the parents/carers, consult your Safeguarding Officer or if they are not available the Community Development Officer. It is the responsibility of these people to make the decision to contact Social Services.

### 3.2 CONCERNS BASED ON THE DISCLOSURE OF THE CHILD

It is important that you control your reaction to any disclosure a child may make to you and follow some simple procedures:

#### **ALWAYS:**

- Stay calm – ensure that the child is safe and feels safe
- Show and tell the child that you are taking what s/he says seriously
- Reassure the child and stress that s/he is not to blame
- Be honest, explain you will have to tell someone else to help stop the abuse
- Make a note of what the child has said as soon as possible after the event
- Be prepared to ask open questions
- Maintain confidentiality – only tell others if it helps protect the child

#### **NEVER:**

- Rush into actions that may be inappropriate
- Make promises you cannot keep
- Ask leading questions

- Take sole responsibility – consult someone else (the person in charge or someone you can trust) so you can protect the child and gain support for yourself.

Inform your immediate Manager or the Parish Council’s Safeguarding Officer (see Part 6 – ‘Key Contacts and Resources’) of the disclosure the child has made to you. It is the responsibility of these people to make the decision to contact Social Services.

### **3.3 CONCERNS REGARDING THE BEHAVIOUR OF OTHER STAFF**

If you have any concerns regarding the behaviour of other staff members towards children directly and immediately inform the Parish Clerk (see Part 6 – ‘Key Contacts and Resources’).

If you feel your concerns, however they have arisen, have not been dealt with properly by the Parish Clerk Chairman of the Parish Council to express your views

## **4. CODE OF PRACTICE FOR CHILDREN’S ACTIVITY LEADERS**

DO treat everyone with respect

DO provide an example you wish others to follow

DO plan activities so that they involve more than one person being present, or at least in sight or hearing of others

DO respect a young person’s right to personal privacy

DO provide access for young people and adults to feel comfortable enough to point out attitudes or behaviour they do not like and provide a caring atmosphere

DO maintain a healthy adult lifestyle

DO use common sense in selecting subjects to demonstrate skills on

DO remember that someone may misinterpret your actions, no matter how well intentioned

DO recognise that caution is required especially in sensitive moments of counselling, such as when dealing with bullying, bereavement or abuse

DO have separate sleeping accommodation for children and leaders (eg on outward bound courses)

DO NOT permit abusive peer activities (eg bullying, ridiculing)

DO NOT play physical contact games with young people

DO NOT have inappropriate physical or verbal contact with others

DO NOT jump to conclusions about others without checking facts

DO NOT allow yourself to be drawn into inappropriate attention seeking behaviour such as tantrums or crushes but deal firmly and fairly with such behaviour at all times

DO NOT exaggerate or trivialise child abuse issues

DO NOT show favouritism to any individual

DO NOT make suggestive remarks or gestures or tell jokes or stories of a ‘smutty’ nature

DO NOT rely on your good name to protect you – it may not be enough!

DO NOT believe “it can never happen to me” – it can!

DO NOT get close to or have physical contact with a child without clearly explaining and asking permission to do so (eg correcting a technique, showing a skill in the water etc)

This list is not meant to cover every aspect of good leadership practice. If you have doubts how to adopt good practice in a specific situation contact the Parish Council’s Safeguarding Officer (The Clerk) (see Part 6 – ‘Key Contacts and Resources’) for further guidance. Alternatively the S/O (above) has more comprehensive good practice guidelines available that you can access on request.

## 5. WHAT TO DO IF CHILDREN ARE NOT PICKED UP ON TIME BY THEIR PARENTS / CARERS

Activity booking systems should emphasize that it is important for children to be picked up promptly at the end of activity sessions by their parents / carers or by a designated third party (eg a family friend).

Activity leaders should ensure that all children involved in their session have all been picked up before departing from the venue

In the rare instances where children are not picked up promptly leaders should go through the following procedures:

- Ring the child's parents or carer (obtain number from the session register or the child itself).
- Casual and volunteer staff who are not successful with (1) above should ring their contact officer within Forest Row Parish Council (ie the person that initially contracted them to do the activity session) or alternatively the immediate Manager of the section that is contracting them. Full or part-time staff should contact their immediate Manager if they are unsure of what to do next.

## 6. KEY CONTACTS AND RESOURCES

### Parish Clerk/ Safeguarding Officer

David O'Driscoll                      Work: 01342 822661      Mob: 07595 679042

NSPCC Free Helpline:              0800 800 500

NHS Direct:                              0845-4647              [www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk](http://www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk)

Social Services                              Duty and Assessment Team- 01323 747373

Local Minor Injury Unit Queen Victoria Hospital, East Grinstead

A&E    Crawley Hospital 01293-600300

Policy due for review May 2021
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