Woodbury Parish Council

(serving Exton, Woodbury and Woodbury Salterton)

Safeguarding Policy

Adopted: 13th May 2024
Reviewed: Annually

Introduction

The purpose of this policy is to make clear to all members, 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.

1 Policy Coverage

1.1 This policy applies to all members, employees, volunteers, and contractors working in partnership with Woodbury Parish Council. Under the Children Act 2004, Woodbury Parish Council has a duty to co-operate with other agencies and authorities to promote the well-being of children and young people. Devon County Council is the lead agency for the protection of vulnerable adults.

1.2 It is not the role of Woodbury 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 Council's Risk Management Policy, Health and Safety Policy Equality & Diversity Policy, Complaints Procedure, Disciplinary and Grievance Policy.

1.3 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 or may be in need of community care services by reasons of mental health or other disability, age or illness and 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.

2 Policy Principles

2.1 Woodbury Parish 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.

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

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

3 Policy Statement

Woodbury Parish 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.

- We will endeavour to keep children and vulnerable adults safe from abuse.
- Suspicion of abuse will be responded to promptly and appropriately.
- We will always act in the best interests of the child or vulnerable adult.
- We will proactively seek to promote the welfare and protection of all children and vulnerable adults living in the local community.
- We will endeavour to ensure that unsuitable people are prevented from working with children and vulnerable adults through, as appropriate, its recruitment and selection policy and by reminding hirers of their safeguarding responsibilities.
- We will take any concern made by a member, employee, volunteer or contracted service provider or child / vulnerable adult seriously and treat it with sensitivity.

4 Procedure and Systems

4.1 Definitions of Abuse

- **Abuse** covers any form of physical, emotional, mental and sexual abuse including bullying, including lack of care that leads to injury or harm. For vulnerable adults abuse may also be financial.
- **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 too undue cold.

- **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.

4.2 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.

4.3 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.

4.4 The use of photographs and images of young people will be controlled to prevent possible misuse. In general, agreement will be sought from parents or guardians that images can be used as appropriate.

5 Responding to Allegations

5.1 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 and do not attempt to investigate.
- 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 appropriate person. If an employee or volunteer is implicated, refer to the Parish Clerk. If the Parish Clerk is implicated, refer to the Chairman of the 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.

5.2 As soon as possible after the incident or disclosure has occurred:

- Write down notes, dates, times, facts, observations, and verbatim speech.
- 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.
- Immediately contact the Social Services Department at Devon County Council. Ask for a duty officer and indicate that you wish to discuss a matter of child/vulnerable person protection. 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. Do not attempt to investigate any matters – this is not the role of the Parish Council.
- If in doubt about the advice you have received at any stage refer to Social Services for guidance.

5.3 Responding to concerns about a child's welfare where there has been no specific disclosure or allegation.

All members, employees, volunteers, and organisations contracted to provide services on behalf of the Council are encouraged to share concerns with the Parish Clerk. The Parish Clerk will, if appropriate, make a referral to Social Services.

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) or self-harm
- an injury for which the explanation seems inconsistent, or which has not been treated adequately
- sudden changes in behaviour, including becoming withdrawn or becoming aggressive, severe temper outbursts
- reluctance to get changed e.g., for swimming
- neglected in appearance, dirty or 'smelly'
- constant hunger, sometimes stealing food from others
- inappropriate dress for the conditions
- 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
- 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

5.4 Contact Details for Social Services, the Police and NSPCC:

Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) – Devon County Council:
Telephone: 0345 155 1071

Adult Safeguarding – Torbay and Devon Safeguarding Adults Partnership
Telephone: 0345 155 1007 (out of hours 0345 6000 388)

Devon & Cornwall Police:
Telephone: 101 or in an emergency 999

NSPCC Child Protection Helpline:
Telephone: 0808 800 5000

Childline:
Telephone: 0800 1111

5.5 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 procedures to prevent continuing abuse the matter should be shared with the Parish Clerk so that appropriate risk assessments may be undertaken.

6 Prevention

6.1 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.

6.2 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 and sign the Declaration at the end of the document.
- Members / employees will be offered appropriate training on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults.

6.3 Reporting

The Council is committed to maintaining an open culture where members, 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.

7 Codes of Practice and Behaviour

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 Woodbury Parish Council or at services provided by Woodbury Parish Council.

7.1 Members, 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.
- Be identifiable and always wear a name badge.

7.2 Members, 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

Woodbury Parish Council takes its responsibility very seriously. Employees who breach these guidelines will face investigation and may face disciplinary action, which could lead to a dismissal.

Volunteers in breach of the above Code of Conduct will have their services terminated with immediate effect and their parent organisation (as appropriate) will be informed.

If a member does not adhere to the policy, there may be grounds for reporting their behaviour to the Monitoring Officer, who may require an investigation under the Member Code of Conduct. Where there is evidence of illegal activity, the member, employee, or volunteer will be reported to the relevant authorities and may face a criminal investigation.

8 Procedure in Relation to Specific Services

8.1 Work Experience

Woodbury Parish Council may offer work experience placements. The Council will ensure that employees working with children or vulnerable adults are aware of the Child Protection & Vulnerable Adults Safeguarding Policy. The Parish Clerk is responsible for the health, safety and welfare of work experience students who under law are regarded as employees.

8.2 Employees aged under 18

Woodbury Parish Council may employ workers aged under 18. The Council will ensure that all employees are aware of the Child Protection and Vulnerable Adults Safeguarding Policy. The Parish Clerk is responsible for the health, safety and welfare of all employees.

8.3 Use of Contractors

Woodbury Parish 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. This requirement will be written into the contract. If this is not met, the contractor will be deemed to be in breach of their contract.

8.4 Internet and e-mails

Please refer to Woodbury Parish Council GDPR Policy and IT Polciy.

8.5 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.

When administering first aid, wherever possible, employees 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 members, 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.

8.6 Special Events - Photography

It is an unfortunate fact that some people have used children and young people's events as opportunities to take inappropriate photographs or footage of children, every attempt should be made to ensure that this does not happen. Members, employees, volunteers, and contracted service providers should be vigilant at all times. Anyone using cameras or film recorders for or on behalf of the Council should obtain consent from the parents of children being photographed/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 photographer's, ensuring identification is worn and by not allowing unsupervised access to children or one to one photographic session.

8.7 Misuse of Procedure

Malicious complaints about a member or an employee(s) and/or serious and/or persistent abuse of these safeguarding policies and procedures will not be tolerated and will be dealt with through Woodbury Parish Council's disciplinary process.

9 Policy Monitoring and Review

All incidents and allegations of abuse and complaints will be recorded and monitored.