

Swaffham Town Council**CHILD PROTECTION POLICY****1. Introduction**

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

The following Child Protection Policy outlines the systems and procedures in place at Swaffham Town Council in order to achieve this aim. Its successful achievement requires of course, co-operation and partnership between Swaffham Town 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 Swaffham Town Council staff and volunteers working with 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

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- Practices never to be sanctioned
- Responding to complaints and alleged or suspected incidents
- Guidelines for those planning or wishing to attend a Town Council event
- Guidelines for staff when dealing with work experience students

Section 1: Principles and Definitions**1.1 Child Protection Policy Statement**

We want to ensure that children are protected from harm while they visit the premises of Swaffham Town Council. We do this by;

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

1.2 Key principles

The key principles that underlie this policy are:

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

1.3 Definitions

Child Abuse

The following definitions are drawn from the Department of Health and Social Services document entitled 'Co-operating to Safeguard Children' (2003):

"Child abuse occurs when a child is neglected, harmed or not provided with proper care. Children 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 Abuse

Physical abuse is the deliberate physical injury to a child, or the wilful or neglectful failure to prevent injury or suffering. This may include hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, confinement to a room or cot, or inappropriately giving drugs to control behaviour.

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional ill-treatment of a child as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may involve causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill-treatment of a child, though it may occur alone. Domestic violence, adult mental health problems and parental substance misuse may expose children to emotional abuse.

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative and non-penetrative acts. They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at or the production of pornographic material or watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to act in sexually inappropriate ways.

Bullying

In addition to the definitions given above it is important to recognise the impact and extent of bullying in the lives of children. 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 who are responsible for the behaviour. But this Council would wish to make clear that bullying behaviour is unacceptable.

1.4 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 Town 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 and young children 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 to do so. Swaffham Town Council's procedures have been carefully constructed to ensure such confidentiality.

1.5 Policy Review

The Town Council's Child Protection Policy will be kept under review and amended where applicable on a yearly basis.

Section 2

Practical Guidance for Town Council Staff and Volunteers working with young people

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

2.1 General Conduct when working with Young People

Town 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 Town Council staff and volunteers in order to fulfil their roles within the Town Council to ensure that a positive culture and climate is created during all Town Council activities involving contact with 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 young people equally and with respect and dignity;
- Maintain a safe and appropriate distance from the young people;
- Build balanced relationships based on mutual trust which empowers young people to share in the decisions- making process;
- Involve teachers, parents/carers and other key influences wherever possible;
- Ensure that during residential events adults do not enter young people rooms or invite young people into their rooms unless there are exceptional reasons for doing so;
- Be an excellent role model- this includes not smoking or drinking alcohol in the company of 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 young people in their cars;
- To obtain written consent prior to any photographs, videoing or audio recording;
- To be aware of young people whilst they are using the Museum.

2.2 Unacceptable Practices

The following should never be sanctioned:

- Spending excessive amounts of time alone with young people away from others;
- Taking young people to your home where they will be alone with you;

- Allowing young people to travel on their own with you in a vehicle;
- Engaging in rough, physical or sexually provocative games, including horseplay;
- Sharing a room with a young person;
- Entering a toilet with young people unless another adult is present or gives permission (this may include parent, teacher or group leader). Town Council staff should avoid using toilets when they are being used by a visiting school group;
- 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 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 young person to go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon;
- Doing things of a personal nature for young people or disabled adults 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 young person to a member of Town 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 young person is making a disclosure;
- Do not jump to conclusions;
- The 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 young person;
- Take care of yourself by making sure that you have an opportunity to discuss your feelings with someone at a later stage;
- Do not destroy any evidence as it may be useful in a court of law;
- Initial disclosure, even if retracted, must still be referred.

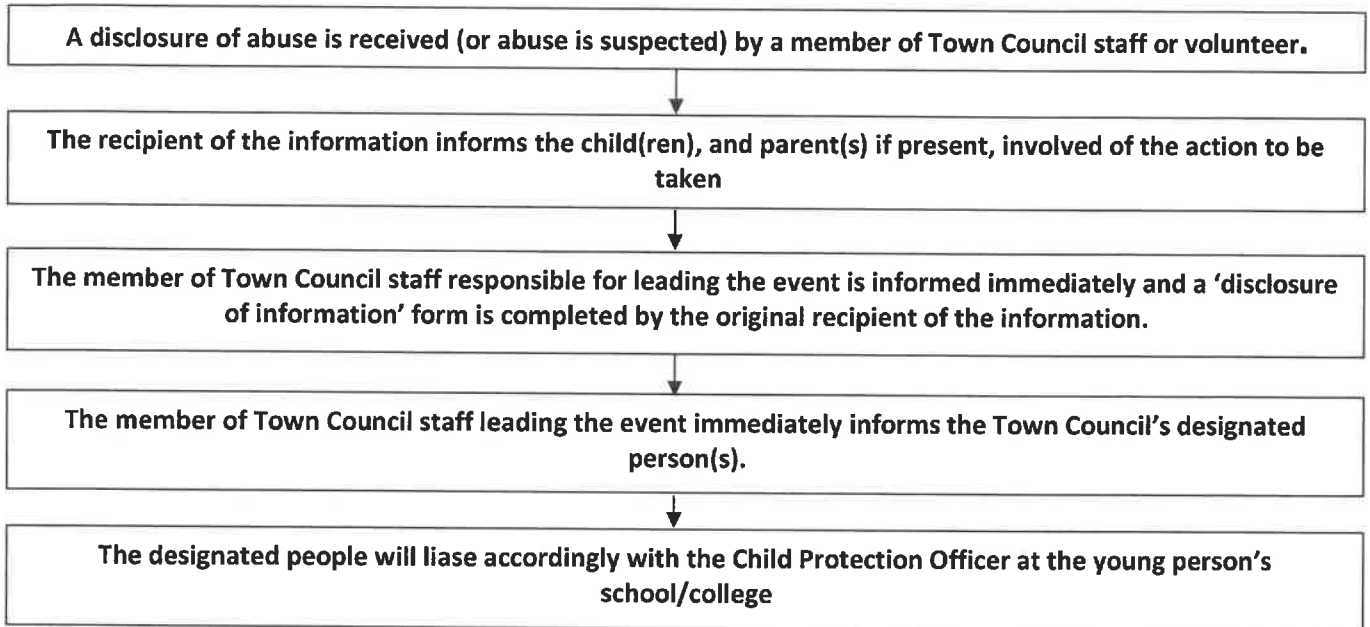
ii) Recording information

A book specifically for child protection issues that will be used and updated when it is necessary. The book will be kept in the Town Council office and can be accessed through the Town Clerk or Deputy Town Clerk.

iii) Informing the appropriate authorities

If abuse has been disclosed to you or you suspect that it is happening you must inform the member of Town Council staff leading the event as soon as possible. You must then complete a disclosure form and ensure that the procedure set out overleaf is followed.

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



important points to note:

- i) For the purposes of this procedure the term 'Town Council staff' encompasses both staff working within the Town Council and also those who represent the Town Council in relation to any event involving contact with children.
- ii) It is not the Town 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 Town Council staff or a volunteer these will be fully investigated in accordance with the appropriate procedures.

