



CHILD AND VULNERABLE PERSONS PROTECTION POLICY

1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this policy is to make clear to all what is required in relation to the protection of children and vulnerable people. The policy will help to maintain a safe and positive environment for children and vulnerable people.

2. POLICY COVERAGE

This policy applies to all employees, volunteers and Members of Marlow Town Council.

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

A vulnerable person is defined as someone who is or maybe in need of community care services by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness and who is or may be unable to take care of him/herself or unable to protect him/herself against significant harm or exploitation.'

This policy is to be used in conjunction with the Council's Risk Management Plan, Health and Safety Policies, Equal Opportunities Policy, Complaints Policy and Procedure, and Grievance Procedure.

3. POLICY PRINCIPLES

- Marlow Town Council is a statutory organisation committed to providing a safe environment for all.
- The welfare of children and vulnerable people is paramount.
- All children and vulnerable adults have an equal right to protection from abuse.
- Everybody at the Council has a responsibility to support the care and protection of children and vulnerable persons.

4. POLICY STATEMENT

Marlow Town Council is committed to taking all reasonable precautions to safeguard the welfare of children and vulnerable persons that use its services and promotes a safeguarding culture and environment.

5. PROCEDURES AND SYSTEMS

5.1 Definitions of Abuse:

Abuse is any form of physical, emotion or sexual mistreatment or lack of care that leads to injury or harm.

Neglect – where adults fail to meet a child’s or vulnerable person’s basic physical/psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of their health or development. For example, failure to ensure that a child is protected from unnecessary risk of injury, or exposing them to undue cold.

Physical Abuse – where physical pain or injury is caused, e.g. hitting, shaking, biting, etc.

Sexual Abuse – 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 Abuse – where there is persistent emotional ill treatment that causes severe and persistent adverse effects on the child’s or vulnerable person’s emotional status. Examples of emotional abuse include bullying (including cyber and text bullying), constant criticism and unrealistic pressure to perform.

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.

5.2 Use of Video and Photography

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.

The use of camera phones that also have video recording capabilities are also required to have a consent form. Failure to comply with this policy will result in removal from the premises.

5.3 Responding to a child or vulnerable person who reports that either they or another child or vulnerable person is/are being abused and responding to allegations against an employee/volunteer/Member or another young person:

If a person discloses to you abuse by someone else:

- (a) Allow the person to speak without interruption, accepting what is said, but DO NOT investigate.
- (b) Alleviate feelings of guilt and isolation, while passing no judgement. Reassure them that they did the right thing by talking to you.
- (c) Advise that you will try to offer support, but that you MUST pass the information on.
- (d) Record the facts as you know them.
- (e) Refer the allegation immediately and directly to the appropriate person. If an employee or volunteer is implicated, refer to their Line Manager. If a Section Head, Member or another young person is implicated, refer directly to the Town Clerk. If the Town Clerk is implicated, refer to the Town Mayor. All allegations must be referred, no matter how insignificant they seem to be, or when they occur.
- (f) Try to ensure that no-one is placed in a position which could cause further compromise.

Action to be taken by the person receiving the referral as soon as possible, in any event within 24 hours:

- (a) Write down notes, dates, times, facts, observations, verbatim speech, if possible, as soon as possible after the incident or disclosure has occurred.
- (b) Ensure correct details are available: young/vulnerable person's name and address, and the name and address of their parent or guardian.
- (c) Immediately contact the Social Care Department at Buckinghamshire 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.
- (d) Inform the District Council's Monitoring Officer (Head of Legal Services, Wycombe District Council).
- (e) Prepare a confidential file. Record all notes, conversations and advice from Social Care. Every effort should be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned.
- (f) Information should be stored in a secure place with limited access to designated people, in line with data protection legislation.
- (g) Follow advice from Social Care. Take no other action unless advised to do so by Social Care.

If in doubt about the advice you have received at any stage refer to Social Care for guidance.

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

All employees, volunteers and Members are encouraged to share concerns with the Town Clerk. The Town Clerk will, if appropriate, make a referral to Social Care.

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

- (a) Having unexplained or suspicious injuries, e.g. bites or bruising.
- (b) Having an injury for which the explanation seems inconsistent or which has not been treated adequately.
- (c) Change in behaviour, including becoming withdrawn, or becoming aggressive.
- (d) Displaying inappropriate sexual awareness for their age.
- (e) Refusal to remove clothing for normal activities, e.g. swimming.
- (f) Looking neglected in appearance.
- (g) Losing or putting on weight for no apparent reason.
- (h) Lack of trust in adults.

5.5 Contact Details for Social Care, Monitoring Officer, the Police and NSPCC:

Social Care – Buckinghamshire County Council:

Monday to Thursday, 9 am to 5.30 pm. Friday, 9 am to 5 pm.

Telephone: 01494 475037 or 01494 475211

Free Phone Care-line: 0800 137915

Fax: 01494 475252

For serious emergencies in the evenings, weekends or public holidays: 01494 675802.

Wycombe District Council – Monitoring Officer:

Monday to Thursday 8.30 am to 5.30 pm. Friday 8.30 am to 5 pm.

Telephone: 01494 461000

Thames Valley Police:

Non-emergency telephone: 0845 8 505 505

Emergency telephone: 999

NSPCC Child Protection Helpline:

Telephone: 0808 800 5000

Textphone: 0800 056 0566

6. PREVENTION

6.1 Recruitment and Training

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

All employees, volunteers and Members required to carry out duties that involve working with children or vulnerable adults or whose roles mean they come directly into contact with children or vulnerable adults shall be checked by the Criminal Records Bureau. In line with best practice, these checks will be repeated every three years.

The Council will make the Child Protection and Vulnerable Persons policy available to all staff, volunteers and Members, and line managers will encourage good practice and identify any training needs required.

6.2 Reporting

Marlow Town Council is committed to maintaining an open culture where employees, Members, volunteers, children, vulnerable persons, parents and guardians 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 Whistleblowing Policy and Complaints Policy and Procedure are available to all staff, volunteers, Members and the general public.

7. CODES OF PRACTICE AND BEHAVIOUR

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

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

You 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 you 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 your actions, no matter how well-intentioned.
- Recognise that special caution is required when you are discussing sensitive issues, such as bullying, bereavement, abuse or personal development.
- Recognise that some children or vulnerable people 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 by having a staff ID card.

You 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 people.
- 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 your good name to protect you.
- 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.

8. POLICY MONITORING AND REVISION

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

This policy will be reviewed every four years, and will also be revised in the light of changing needs, changes in legislation and guidance, or in the light of experience.