

# Tring Town Council

## Current Procedures for Child Protection.

### ***Introduction***

*The protection of children and young people from all abuse, particularly sexual abuse is one of the highest priorities for all of us. Thus, these procedures enshrine the paramountcy principal, namely, that the welfare and interests of the child and young person take precedence in all our pastoral dealings with them.*

*Members of the Council, staff and volunteers should be mindful of their duty of care and the need to protect the vulnerable at all times. This procedure most direct application is in connection with the Youth Town Council.*

### **The Paramountcy Principal**

“The Paramountcy Principal is that the welfare of the child is the paramount consideration in proceedings concerning children”. (*Working Together Under The Children Act 1989*).

The following represent the spirit of the Children Act 1989:

1. The child's welfare is paramount and the statements or accusations made by children must always be taken seriously.
2. There must be collaboration between those working in relevant disciplines both statutory and voluntary.
3. A responsibility to investigate reports of children suffering, or likely to suffer significant harm and to take appropriate action to safeguard or promote the child's welfare.

### **Guidelines for Good Practice in Work with Young People**

Ensure that a minimum of one worker is always present for groups up to 10 age 13-18 year olds. In groups of more than 10 there should be one additional worker or volunteer for every 10 (or part of 10) young people maintaining the balance of gender.

With activities away from the normal meeting place, the ratio should be 1:7.

Workers of the same gender as the young people need to be present, especially with older young people.

All persons who have contact with young people must complete the necessary personal details, declaration forms and must have undergone a police DBS check.

Workers need to think and act carefully to avoid situations that could lead to difficulties of embarrassment, accusations or temptations. An example of “danger” is one where a worker and a young person being together “in private” whether that be in counselling, or on a residential weekend, or driving someone home in a car.

Ensure workers know what to do in the case of suspected or alleged abuse.

For any activities away from the normal meeting place, ensure that a parent or guardian have signed a consent form.

Ensure that any premises or places where activities take place are safe and well maintained. Ensure that sufficient “risk assessment” has been carried out before

taking young people into an environment that is different from that which is normally used.

Ensure that all necessary health and safety issues are addressed where young people meet or are taken by you.

Ensure that where minibuses and/or private cars are used there is adequate insurance and any necessary permits.

All new volunteers and workers should have a probationary period of 3 months at the end of which both parties should review the situation.

### **Tring Town Council Policy Statement**

*It is the policy of Tring Town Council to protect young people from physical, emotional or sexual abuse and to provide a safe environment for them.*

*This commitment flows from our common belief in the dignity and the uniqueness of every human life. It is our policy to respect that dignity and uniqueness.*

*We start from the principal that each young person has a right to expect the highest level of care and protection, love, encouragement and respect that we can give.*

*It is our aim to provide an environment that supports and nurtures young people so that they may develop and mature as safe from harm as possible.*

*While we aim to protect our young people from all kind of harm, we accept that some element of risk is unavoidable. Child Protection Procedures are intended to minimise those risks.*

*Child Protection Procedures are also intended to assist Councillors and Town Council employees and volunteers in identifying ways in which they can safeguard the best interests of the young people in their care, and their own best interests.*

### **Definitions of Abuse**

An abused child is a boy or girl under the age of 18 years of age who has suffered from, or is believed to be at significant risk of neglect, physical injury, emotional abuse or sexual abuse.

Child abuse may be perpetrated by an adult who has a position of trust or authority with respect to a child. These adults may be parents or carers of the child or any person known or unknown to the child or family who may have contact with the child. A child may also be the victim of abuse where the abuser is another child.

Child abuse may be the result of direct acts towards the child by any one of those mentioned above, or by the failure those who have responsibility for the child to provide reasonable care and protection from harm.

### **Categories of Abuse**

“Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused in a family or in an institution or community setting; by those known to them or, more rarely by a stranger.

#### *Physical Abuse*

Physical Abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocation, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer feigns the symptoms of, or deliberately causes ill health to a child whom they are looking after. This situation is commonly described using terms such as factitious illness by proxy, or Munchausen’s syndrome by proxy.

#### *Emotional Abuse*

Emotional Abuse is the persistent emotional ill-treatment of a child such 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 the other person. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations imposed on children. 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.

#### *Sexual Abuse*

Sexual abuse involves the forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative (e.g. rape or buggery) or non-penetrative acts. They include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, pornographic material or watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

#### *Neglect*

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child’s basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in serious impairment of the child’s health or development. It may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food, sleep, shelter and clothing, failure to protect a child from physical harm or

danger, or the failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs”

*(From Working Together to Safeguard Children, Department of Health 1999)*

### **What is Sexual Abuse?**

There are many forms of sexual abuse ranging from looking, exposing, touching and fondling, to full genital penetration. Sexual abuse of a child includes revealing material such as pornography to the child or using the child as a subject of indecent productions. Sexual abuse includes obscene language or terminology, or the misguiding of a child by suggestion and indecent provocation of any kind. This can all be taken in the context of the Internet and Social media.

Children naturally seek warmth and affection from adults they trust, and as they develop they become conscious of their own identity and sexuality. Behaviour perceived as provocative may be a normal part of growing up, whereas highly sexualised behaviour is indicative of learnt behaviour acquired through earlier abuse.

### **Abuse by an adult can never be justified by the behaviour of the victim**

It should be noted that abuse, including sexual abuse, can be perpetrated on young people by other people. There is a serious obligation resting on those responsible for young people, whether it be within the family or elsewhere, to detect such forms of abuse and provide the appropriate control and therapy.

Whilst most cases of child abuse occur within the family setting (involving members of the family, close carers and relatives), there are cases of organised abuse which implicate groups of abusers. The NSPCC has defined organised abuse as “the exploitation of children involving systematic sexual, physical or emotional abuse by groups of abusers, who manipulate, coerce or use threats, to control children for personal gratification or gain.

### **Organised or Multiple Abuse**

Organised or multiple abuse may be defined as abuse involving one or more abuser and a number of related or non-related abused children and young people. The abusers concerned may be acting in concert to abuse children, sometimes acting in isolation, or may be using an institutional framework or position of authority to recruit children for abuse.

## **Historical Abuse**

People who have been abused do not always immediately report the abuse. It may be months or years before the disclosure occurs with the inevitable problems of possible forgetfulness on key details. However, whatever the lapse of time such allegations need to be pursued as vigorously as if the abuse had just happened.

The reasons for this are based on the need to acknowledge the hurt done to the victims, to ensure also that the victim is safe from further abuse from the perpetrator, and finally so that steps may be taken to ensure the safety of children in the present from the perpetrator.

The approach should be as with listening and reacting to children as in the above procedures.

If the person is still under 18 years of age, then the reporting of the incident(s) will be as in these procedures.

If the person is over 18 then they need to be advised of their rights to report the abuse to the police. With adult victims they may not wish to do this and are revealing the past abuse because they need to unburden generally or to seek professional counselling. As the victim is an adult it is reasonable for the person being told about the abuse to suggest that the abuser may be abusing other children and that there is therefore a responsibility for the adult victim to go to the police.

# Child Protection Procedures

## **The Protection of Young People**

Tring Town Council accepts that, under the terms of The Children Act 2004, it has a duty of care toward all young people who attend Tring Youth Council meetings and events and any young person who comes into contact with Town Council staff, councillors and services.

This duty of care is interpreted as meaning that the services that Tring Youth Council provides in its young person's projects/schemes/activities must be delivered in a "child safe environment".

Therefore the following procedures have been put in place and should be known to all staff, volunteers and councillors.

## **Who the policy affects**

For the purpose of this policy, the term "child" or "children" are considered as young persons under the age of 18 years of age.

## **Definition**

In accordance with Hertfordshire County Council's child protection policy, abuse is defined when:

- A person or persons have caused harm, or may be likely to do so, to the physical, sexual, emotional, financial or material well being of a vulnerable person.
- Harm may be caused by direct acts or by failure to provide adequate care. It may be systematic and repeated or may consist of a single incident.

## **Staff Member's Responsibility**

To fulfil its duty of care to young people, Tring Town Council demands a high level of professionalism and integrity from its staff, councillors & volunteers.

Where there are concerns about the behaviour or attitude of a member of staff or any other adult towards a young person, this must always be brought to the attention of the Council Leader and Clerk to the Council as soon as possible, regardless of how trivial the issue may appear.

## **Process**

If any member of Tring Town Council staff or Council has any knowledge or suspicion that a child or young person attending the Youth Council or that they have contact with or have knowledge of within a work environment, is at risk of significant harm, they MUST report the matter immediately.

Reports can be made initially to the Clerk to the Council and the Leader of the Council. If a member of staff feels it is appropriate, they can also report directly to Social Services. In accordance with the principles of the “Whistle Blowing Policy”, members of staff will be protected if they report matters in “good faith”.

In all cases where the concern relates to a young person under the age of 18 years of age, and the matter has been reported to the Clerk to the Council the Clerk will be responsible for reporting the matter in accordance with Hertfordshire County Council’s child protection procedure.

The member of staff receiving the report MUST bring the matter to the Leader of the Council immediately.

## **Hertfordshire County Council “ Child Protection Procedure”**

The Clerk  
should contact the following:-

- The emergency services if the person is at great risk of harm or in need of immediate medical attention. Call 999
- Local Social Services team (out of hours contact Hertfordshire Social Services 0300 123 4043)
- Contact the Hertfordshire Safeguarding Children Board 01992 588757 or email [admin.hscb@hertfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:admin.hscb@hertfordshire.gov.uk)
- In all cases where a criminal offence is thought to have taken place, contact must be made with the Police – (Detective Inspector CID). If the allegation concerns a member of staff, they should not be informed of the allegation until such time as the Police have agreed a course of action.
- Counselling or questioning the alleged victim or alleged perpetrator must not be undertaken by staff unless instructed to do so by the Police. Care must be taken not to disturb anything, which may be used as evidence of an alleged crime.

**Abuse or failure to follow this policy may result in investigation under the Disciplinary Procedure and ultimately, disciplinary action taken if appropriate.**

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