

Reed Parish Council Child Safeguarding Policy

Introduction

Everyone has a responsibility to help prevent the physical, sexual and emotional abuse or neglect of children and young persons. It will report to the appropriate authorities any abuse of children that it discovers or reasonably suspects. The Parish Council will fully support and protect anyone, who in good faith (without malicious intent), reports his or her concern about a colleague's practice or the possibility that abuse or bullying is taking place. This policy outlines good practice to promote the safety of those using the Council's services (notably the play area on Reed Green) and to protect employees, volunteers and elected councillors from false allegations.

The Council has a separate safeguarding policy relating to adults at risk.

References

This policy should be used in conjunction with the procedures provided by the Herts Safeguarding Children Partnership (HSCP), as the relevant local authority.

<https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/childrens-social-care/child-protection/hertfordshire-safeguarding-children-partnership/hscp.aspx>

Call HSCP anytime on **0300 123 4043**

- if you're a child or young person being abused or mistreated, or
- if you're an adult worried about a young person.

Always call 999 if you or somebody else is in immediate danger or a crime is being committed.

See also the Department for Children, Schools and Families document 'What to do if you are worried a child is being abused' (www.dcsf.gov.uk).

All employees, volunteers and councillors are covered by this Safeguarding Policy.

Aim and application of this Policy

The aim of this Policy is to protect children and young persons who receive any service from us, including those who are the children of adults who may receive services from us.

As a Council we believe that no child or young person should experience abuse or harm and are committed to the protection of children and young persons, and this policy is intended to provide guidance and overarching principles to those who represent us as volunteers or staff, to guide our approach to safeguarding.

This Policy applies to everyone involved with the Parish Council. This includes Councillors, employees, contractors and volunteers. All have a duty to act in accordance with this Policy.

Definitions

Children and young person: Anyone under the age of 18 years

Background

The Children's Act 2004, Childcare Act 2006, and the Government's 'Working Together to Safeguard Children 2010' place a duty on key statutory agencies to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young persons. The 2004 Act embodies five principles that are key to the wellbeing of children, young persons and Adults at risk. and are known as the 5 Every Child Matters outcomes:

- Be healthy;
- Stay safe;
- Enjoy and achieve;
- Make a positive contribution;
- Achieve economic wellbeing.

In practical terms this means that the Parish Council has a responsibility to provide a safe environment for children and young persons. in which their welfare is of paramount importance and in which they can achieve their potential.

The risks to children

Nearly every child grows up in a safe and happy environment and it is important not to exaggerate or overestimate the dangers. Nevertheless, there are situations where children need protection including:

- Sexual abuse
- Grooming
- Physical and emotional abuse and neglect
- Domestic violence
- Inappropriate supervision by staff or volunteers
- Bullying, cyber bullying, acts of violence and aggression within our schools and campuses
- Victimisation
- Self-harm
- Unsafe environments and activities
- Crime
- Exploitation

Universality of Protection

We recognise that:

- the welfare of the child is paramount

- all children regardless of race, gender, religious belief, disability, age, sexual orientation or identity have a right to equal protection from harm
- some children are more vulnerable to harm as a result of their circumstances, prior experiences, communication needs or level of dependency
- working with children, young persons, their parents and/or guardians, carers or other agencies is essential to their wellbeing.

Responsibilities

Parents or an appropriate adult are responsible for

- the safe supervision of children using the playground on the Green or attending an event arranged by or on behalf of Reed Parish Council
- for authorising the unsupervised use of the playground when children are of an appropriate age to play unsupervised.

Parents should satisfy themselves with the arrangements for their children travelling to and from the play area or to and from any event or activity organised by or on behalf of the Parish Council.

Disclosure and Barring

Reed Parish Council does not in general organise activities involving unsupervised access to children with any degree or frequency.

Where events or services involving or attended by children are organised by or on behalf of Reed Parish Council, the organisers must consider whether any form of DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) check is necessary. This decision should be taken in line with current Government guidelines.

Duty of care

The Parish Council has a duty of care to everyone who uses the Playground on Reed Green.

Accordingly, it will carry out a risk assessment and take all reasonable steps to minimise risks to health and safety at events. It will conduct regular risk assessments in relation to the playground.

Preventing abuse

Anything the Parish Council does involving children will be organised to promote a safe environment and healthy relationships, whilst minimising opportunities for harm, misunderstanding or false accusation.

Everyone associated with the Parish Council will:

- Take all reasonable steps to ensure the health, safety and welfare of any child using a facility or service provided by the Parish Council (specifically the Playground on The Green)
- Prevent anyone from putting any child in a situation in which there is a significant risk to their health and safety

- Take appropriate action if they become aware of anyone physically, emotionally, or sexually abusing a child
- Respect the wishes of a child as they would an adult
- Respect a child's privacy
- Remember that children regard adults as role models and ensure behaviour, language and gestures are appropriate
- Be aware of Child Protection issues, not become complacent and believe 'it could never happen to me'

Guidelines for working with children

Allegations of abuse made by children about adults do occasionally happen. Some prove mistaken or, very rarely, malicious. These Guidelines aim to help avoid situations in which well-intentioned actions could be misinterpreted. Everyone associated with Reed Parish Council will **not**:

- Use language or behaviour with sexual connotations (such as flirting or innuendo)
- Use physical contact which could be misconstrued; any physical contact should be in public, appropriate to the situation and to the age, gender, and culture of the child and in response to the needs of the child, not the adult
- Spend time alone with a child out of sight of other persons
- Discriminate or leave discrimination or bullying unchallenged
- Ridicule a child (even in "fun")
- Have any electronic communication with a child except with parental consent

Safety in numbers

So far as is reasonably practicable, the aim should always be to ensure that no adult is put in a one-to-one situation with a child without the consent of the child's parents. Safety in numbers should be the golden rule, whether the numbers are other children or adults. If for any reason a one-to-one situation is unavoidable additional safeguards, such as leaving doors open, should be put in place.

Photographing children

No photos will be taken or published of any child attending an event or activity or using Reed Parish Council facilities, specifically the playground, unless prior written permission is sought from a person with parental responsibility. If any person has any concerns regarding any person taking photos at an event or activity, that person should contact the designated safeguarding officer (see below).

Allegations of abuse

Open discussion of child protection should be encouraged since this helps to make persons more comfortable with the issues involved. It should not be kept "under wraps" for fear of upsetting or embarrassing persons. It is to be hoped that nobody will ever have to deal with an alleged incident of child abuse. But it is sensible to be prepared to do so if necessary.

There are four potential scenarios:

- There is reasonable suspicion or evidence that a child is being abused by a person associated with the Parish Council
- A child accuses a person associated with the Parish Council of abusing them
- Abuse takes place or is suspected at a Parish Council event or at the playground by an individual unrelated to the Parish Council
- A child discloses abuse happening elsewhere e.g. at home

In all cases:

- Be prompt, calm, assured and professional
- Seek medical help where necessary
- Do not ask leading questions; record what is said using the child's own words
- Keep details strictly confidential and share only on a "need to know" basis
- Do not confront the accused person
- Where an allegation suggests that a criminal offence may have been committed, report the issues as soon as possible to the local Police and to the Parish Council
- Do not promise to keep something secret if a child is being harmed or is at risk of harm
- Immediately refer the complaint to the designated safeguarding officer
- In circumstances where you believe the individual is in immediate danger of harm you should make contact with the Police ensuring that the Clerk or the Chairman is made aware.

Designated Safeguarding Officer

The Designated Safeguarding Officer for Reed Parish Council, who will oversee this policy and be the first point of contact for any concerns from either a child or an adult, is the Chair of the Parish Council.

The Chair is Ken Langley, contactable on 07930 254207, or ken.langley@reedparishcouncil.gov.uk

In his absence, please contact the clerk, Catharine Toms, on 07763 167116, or clerk@reedparishcouncil.gov.uk.

Logging a concern or incident

Any concern or incident relating to a child or young person should be logged using the form set out at Annex A.

Reed Parish Council - August 2024

This policy will be reviewed no later than x September 2025

REED PARISH COUNCIL

LOGGING A CONCERN ABOUT A CHILD OR YOUNG PERSON'S SAFETY & WELFARE

Name and address of setting:		
Child's/Adult's Name:	Date of Birth:	Male / Female:
Today's Date;	Time:	
Your Name (BLOCK CAPITALS):	Your Signature:	
Your Role:		
Date of Concern/Incident:	Time of Concern/Incident:	

Description of Concern/incident

(continue on separate sheet if necessary)

(Check to make sure your report is clear now and will also be clear to someone reading it next year)

Action taken:

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Received by: Role.....

Date: Time:
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Proposed action by the Chair of the Council (or Clerk)

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