Safeguarding Children, Young People & Vulnerable Adults Policy

Introduction

Everyone has a duty to safeguard children, young people, and vulnerable adults. This policy outlines practices that will promote the safety of children, young people and vulnerable adults involved in activities organised or promoted by Hurstbourne Priors Parish Council and associated working groups and subcommittees.

Definitions

• Children and young people - anyone under the age of 18 years

• Vulnerable Adult - anyone over 18 who is unable to care for themselves, protect themselves from significant harm or exploitation or may need community care services

• Employees and Councillors - anyone working for, or on behalf of the Parish Council, whether paid or voluntary

• Substantial Access - where an individual is regularly caring for, training or supervising a child, young person, or vulnerable adult, or where an individual has sole charge of children, young people or vulnerable adults

• Designated Person - an employee of Hurstbourne Priors Parish Council with an awareness of the procedure for making referrals in relation to disclosures

Promoting a Safe Environment

- To promote a safe environment for children, young people and vulnerable adults, the Parish Council wishes to promote a safeguarding culture. To achieve this, the Parish Council will:

- ensure that employees, Councillors, and leaders of activities in parish facilities are aware of the safeguarding culture

- ensure employees and Councillors who come into regular unsupervised contact with children, young people, or vulnerable adults during their duties to undergo appropriate 'Disclosure and Barring Service' checks. These checks to be repeated every three years. The Clerk will keep a record of employees and Councillors who have undergone Disclosure and Baring Service checking.

- maintain channels of communication with leaders of groups involving children, young people, and vulnerable adults through the Parish Council's representatives on working groups and management subcommittees

- make available to employees and Councillors, the contact details of the Designated Person, Social Services Duty Officer, NSPCC and Childline. Employees and Councillors have a duty to protect children, young people and vulnerable adults but are not responsible for deciding whether abuse is taking place. If they have concerns, these should be passed on to the Designated Person who will then be responsible for contacting the Social Services Duty Officer

Setting the Right Context for Safe Working

Where activities are undertaken by the Parish Council, working groups and other affiliated organisations involving children, young people or vulnerable adults when the group leader has substantial access and parents/carers are not present, the group leader will need to have a suitable safeguarding policy, or work to that of the Parish Council, and follow this context for safe working. This is designed to protect participants and to protect those running or assisting with groups from allegations of poor practice or abuse.

Safe Context

The Parish Council will implement the 'Safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults' policy and procedures always. Children, young people, or vulnerable adults will not be left unattended with adults who have not been subject to a Disclosure and Baring Service check. Any allegations will not be allowed to go unchallenged, unrecorded, and unreported. It should be remembered that physical and emotional bullying and abuse may take place through direct contact or by means of social media.

Practical Guidance for Parish Council Staff and Volunteers

This section offers practical guidance to those working at Council facilities or engaged in Council events that involve contact with children, young people, and vulnerable adults to ensure that all parties are protected.

General Conduct Council staff, Councillors and Volunteers should be encouraged to demonstrate exemplary behaviour to protect themselves from allegations of abuse. Stated below are the standards of behaviour required of Council staff, Councillors, and Volunteers to ensure that a positive culture and climate is created during all Council activities involving contact with children, young people, and vulnerable adults:

a. always work in an open environment (e.g. avoiding private or unobserved situations and encouraging an open environment (i.e. No secrets)). • treat all children equally and with respect and dignity. • maintain safe and appropriate contact with children, young people, and vulnerable adults. • be an excellent role model, including not smoking in the company of children and young people or using inappropriate language, and the responsible drinking of alcohol should only take place in appropriate circumstances. • give enthusiastic and constructive feedback, rather than negative criticism. • obtain parental/carer consent if staff members, Councillors and Volunteers are required to transport children, young people, and vulnerable adults in their vehicles. • obtain parental/carer consent prior to any photographs, videoing, or audio recording. • ensure appropriate clothing is worn by yourself and those participating at all times. • when working outside, ensure activities, breaks and clothing are suitable for the weather conditions and that shelter is available where possible.

b. Unacceptable Practices The following should never be sanctioned: • spending excessive amounts of time alone with children, young people, and vulnerable adults away from others. • taking children, young people, and vulnerable adults to your home where they will be alone with you. • allowing children, young people, and vulnerable adults to travel on their own with you in a vehicle even if parental consent has been given. • engaging in rough, physical, or sexually provocative games, including horseplay. • entering a toilet with children, young people, and vulnerable adults unless another responsible adult is present or gives permission (this may include parent, teacher or group leader). • 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 children and young people to use inappropriate language unchallenged. • making sexually suggestive comments to, or within the hearing of a child or young person, even in fun. • bullying a child or young person as a form of control. • allowing allegations made by a child, young person, or vulnerable adult to go unchallenged unrecorded or not acted upon. • doing things of a personal nature for child, young person, or vulnerable adult that they can do for themselves. • giving out your personal communication and media contact details to a child, young person, or

vulnerable adult; and • communicating by phone, email, or other social media without the knowledge of parents/carers.

c. **Responding to Complaints and Alleged or Suspected Incidents**

The following guidelines should be used when an allegation is disclosed by a child, young person or vulnerable adult to a member of council staff and/or volunteer: 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. • stay calm, be reassuring and make it clear that they have done the right thing in disclosing to you. • show that you are taking the person seriously and that you understand and believe them. • keep questions to a minimum, confined to the facts and ensure they are not leading.

d. **Important Points to Remember when Dealing with a Disclosure**

• try not to display any sign of shock or disapproval when the person is making a disclosure. • do not jump to conclusions. • the 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 person. • report any disclosures to the Designated Person (see below) and ensure that it is recorded in writing. • make written notes as soon as possible, note the time and date of both the disclosure and the note and ensure that you know the child's name. Write down exactly what the child said, do not paraphrase or interpret. • do not destroy any evidence as it may be useful in a court of law. • initial disclosure, even if retracted, must still be referred. • always act on a disclosure immediately and do not let the person return to a potentially unsafe environment that is the subject of the disclosure.

e. **Recording Information**

Information will be stored securely by the Designated Person in line with data protection laws (e.g. that information is accurate, regularly updated, relevant and secure).

f. **Designated Person**

The Designated Person will handle the safeguarding issues and oversee the policy's implementation. The Designated Person will always be the initial point of contact for all staff and volunteers with concerns, or if abuse has been disclosed. Necessary steps can then be taken to ensure the safety of the child, young person, or vulnerable adult.

g. **Informing the Appropriate Authorities**

Whilst it is not the responsibility of any Council staff member and/or Volunteer to determine if abuse is taking place, it is their responsibility to report concerns to the Designated Person (or to local social care services or the police) in order that appropriate agencies can then make enquiries and take any necessary action to protect the child, young person or vulnerable adult.

Contacts Information

Designated Person

Steven Marshall, Clerk & Proper Officer to Hurstbourne Priors Parish Council
Registered Office address: 24, Hill Farm Court, Chinnor, OX39 4NX
Telephone: 07714 001778 Email: clerk@hurstbournepriorsparishcouncil.gov.uk

Hampshire County Council - Social Care Services
http://www3.hants.gov.uk/childrens-services.htm

In an emergency contact the Police by ringing 101

National Contacts

The NSPCC National Centre, 42 Curtain Road, London EC2A 3NH
Telephone: (020) 7825 2500

Childline Helpline: 0808 800 5000

Clerk & Responsible Financial Officer

Adopted by the Parish Council September 2026

Review date: September 2027