

Fairlight Parish Council

CHILDREN AND VULNERABLE ADULTS PROTECTION POLICY

1. Introduction

1.1 All organisations have a duty of care for the children and vulnerable adults for whom they provide activities or services. Fairlight Parish Council is committed to practices that protect children and vulnerable adults from harm and treat them with dignity and respect. At the same time the Council will protect its staff from the risk of unfounded allegations.

1.2 The Council will seek to implement its policy for children and vulnerable adult's protection by:

- Recognising that the welfare of children and vulnerable adults is paramount and that, regardless of gender, ethnicity, disability, sexuality or religion they have the right to protection from abuse;
- Ensuring that all allegations of abuse are taken seriously and investigated swiftly;
- Arranging for all allegations to be dealt with independently and not by staff or members of the Council, and sharing information about concerns with appropriate agencies;
- Ensuring that there is a clear complaint procedure in place that can be used if there are any concerns;
- Undertaking regular inspections of children's facilities to ensure that they are safe to use;
- Ensuring that all staff and Members are aware of this policy and promote good practice.

2. Definitions

2.1 For the purpose of this policy a child is anyone under the age of 18 (as defined in the Children's Act 1989). The main forms of abuse covered by the policy and defined in the Act can be categorised as Physical Abuse, Emotional Abuse, Sexual Abuse and Neglect.

3. Policy Statement

3.1 The Council is committed to ensuring that children and vulnerable adults are protected and kept safe from harm whilst they are engaged in any activity associated with the council.

The Council will achieve this by:

- Ensuring that its staff and volunteers are carefully selected, trained and supervised.
- Ensuring that any staff and volunteers, that work directly with children or vulnerable adults, undergo a Disclosure and Barring Service check, where permitted by law.

- Ensuring processes are in place to ensure the safety and protection of children and vulnerable adults by groups or organisations the Council works with or enter into a lease agreement with.

4. Procedure

- 4.1 Where there are mixed groups of children and vulnerable adults, supervision, where possible, should be by male and female members of staff or volunteers.
- 4.2 Permission shall be sought from the child's parent/guardian before the publication of any photograph or video where a child can be identified.
- 4.3 Data protection guidelines must be adhered to regarding any forms or information of a child or vulnerable adult details or that of parents and guardians when taken in association with any activity associated with the Parish Council staff of volunteers.
- 4.4 Where, during the course of normal work, a Council Member or a member of staff is approached by a child seeking help, do:
- Treat any allegations seriously and reassure the child;
 - Act in a way which clearly indicates that you believe what is being said and do not make the child feel responsible for the abuse;
 - Explain who you are and that you will have to tell other people about what has happened;
 - Write everything down – dates, times, facts, observations, verbatim speech if possible. Ensure the child's name, address and parent/guardian details are taken.
 - Seek medical attention if that seems required.
 - Many reports will be minor in nature – it is important to treat them with due seriousness in case there may already be existing information concerning a child. Don't make any promises you can't keep.

5. Follow-up action

- 5.1 Once the Parish Clerk or Chairman has received information regarding possible abuse for a vulnerable adult, they should pass this immediately to: East Sussex County Council hotline 0345 6080191 or ring 999 if a crime has been committed.
- 5.2 If a child 18 years or under, the ESCC SPOA Team should also be contacted on 01323 464222. The police should also be contacted if required.

6. Allegations against staff or members of Council

- 6.1 The Council will protect its staff from risk of unfounded allegations. However, if an allegation is made then;
- The person receiving the complaint will contact the Parish Clerk, who will immediately inform the Chairman.
 - The Parish Clerk will contact Social Services. If there is a criminal allegation, the police will also be informed.
 - The Parish Clerk will inform the person whom an allegation has been made against, as soon as possible, but only after consultation with the police, so as to avoid prejudicing any criminal investigation.

- If the matter is not a criminal allegation, the Council will conduct an investigation. The person who has had the allegation made against shall be afforded ample opportunity to answer such allegation at an interview conducted by the Parish Clerk and Chairman, who will either recommend:

- To treat the matter as a disciplinary issue (misconduct or gross misconduct) with associated rights of appeal, or

- To dismiss the allegations as unfounded, or to make a non-disciplinary recommendation as appropriate.

Reviewed: 10th November 2020

Adopted: 24th November 2020