

Messingham Parish Council Child Protection/Safeguarding Children Policy

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Every child has the right to grow up and develop to their full potential in a secure, safe environment, free from exploitation.
- 1.2 Section 17 of the Children Act 1989 places a general duty on every local authority:
- To safeguard and promote the welfare of children within their area who are in need; and
 - So far as is consistent with that duty, to promote the upbringing of such children by their families, by providing a range and level of services appropriate to those children's needs.
- 1.3 The Parish Council works hard to provide a safe environment for children and families to enjoy our facilities. As part of our commitment to that safe environment the Parish Council acknowledges that we have a duty of care to the children using our services and facilities.
- 1.4 The definition of children for the purpose of this document will be deemed as anyone under the age of 19 years. Such children regardless of age, disability, culture, gender, language, racial origin or religious belief have the right to protection from abuse.

2.0 Objectives

- 2.1 To seek to safeguard and promote the interests, feelings and well being of children and vulnerable adults with whom it works.
- 2.2 To take all reasonable steps to protect children from harm, degrading treatment or discrimination and in doing so respect their rights, wishes and feelings.
- 2.3 To require staff/volunteers and Members to adopt and abide by the Child Protection/Safeguarding Children Policy.

3.0 Responsibility

- 3.1 This policy applies to all other staff, councillors and volunteers.
- 3.2 The Council is committed to a sound recruitment policy, provision of support, appropriate training and adequate supervision to all staff to enable them to work with parents, carers and other organisations to ensure that the needs and welfare of children remains paramount.
- 3.3 Any group, organisation or agency working with the Council will be expected to have their own Child Protection Policy and must be willing to work within the guidelines of this Council's Child Protection/Safeguarding Children Policy.

4.0 Child Abuse

- 4.1 Child abuse takes many forms, the main types are:
- Physical (e.g. Hitting and kicking);
 - Verbal (e.g. name calling, constant teasing, sarcasm, racist or homophobic taunts, threats, graffiti and gestures);
 - Emotional (e.g. tormenting, ridiculing, humiliating and ignoring);
 - Sexual (e.g. unwanted physical contact or abusive comments);

and it can include:

- An adult who pushes too hard;
- A coach who adopts a win at all costs philosophy;
- A player who intimidates inappropriately;
- An official who places unfair pressure on a person

4.2 The damage inflicted by child abuse and bullying can frequently be underestimated. It can cause considerable distress to children and young people to the extent that it affects their health and development or, at the extreme, causes them significant harm (including self-harm). There are a number of signs that may indicate that a child or young person is being abused or bullied:

- Behaviour changes such as reduced concentration and/or becoming withdrawn, clingy, depressed, tearful, emotional up and down, a reluctance to go to school, training or sports club;
- A drop off in participation in activities;
- Physical signs such as stomach aches, headaches, difficulty in sleeping, bedwetting, scratching and bruising, damaged clothes and bingeing for example on food, cigarettes or alcohol;
- A shortage of money or frequent loss of possessions.

5.2 Effects of Abuse

5.1 Children at any age can be subjected to abuse of all the above forms. The effects of abuse can be so damaging that if not treated, they may follow an individual into adulthood. For example adults who may have been abused as children may find it difficult to maintain a stable, trusting relationship, they may become involved in anti-social activities such as drug taking, prostitution, be emotionally unstable and there is a possibility they may abuse a child themselves in the future.

5.2 A number of studies have suggested that children with various forms of disabilities are at increased risk of abuse to various factors such as stereo typing, prejudice, discrimination, isolation and an inability to protect themselves, this situation can be further aggravated by the child's inability to communicate the problem. Children from ethnic minorities that experience racial discrimination and bullying may be equally powerless to protect themselves.

5.3 The misery caused by child abuse has a dramatic and often long term effect on the lives of the victims; it is in our power to reduce the possibility of such events within our facilities through vigilance, responsible actions and a commitment to protect the children we come into contact with.

6.0 Indications that a child may have been abused include

- Unexplained or suspicious injuries such as bruising, cuts and burns, particularly on parts of the body not normally prone to injury;
- Inconsistent explanation for an injury;
- Someone else - a child or adult expresses concern about the welfare of a child;
- A child describes what appears to be an abusive act against them;
- Inappropriate sexual awareness;
- Unexplained changes in behaviour e.g. becoming very quiet, withdrawn or sudden outbursts of temper;

- A child engages in sexually explicit behaviour in games;
- A child is distrustful of adults particularly those with whom a close relationship would normally be expected;
- Becomes increasingly dirty and unkempt;
- Has difficulty in making friends;
- Displays variations in eating patterns, including overeating or loss of appetite;
- Weight loss for no apparent reason;
- Is prevented from socialising with other children.

6.1 This list is not exhaustive and the presence of one or more of the above signs is not proof that abuse has taken or is taking place. It is not the responsibility of council staff to decide that abuse is taking place but is their responsibility to act on any concerns. However it is important to remember that many children and young people will exhibit some of these indicators at some time and the presence of one or more should not be taken as proof that abuse is occurring. There may be other reasons for changes in behaviour, such as a death in the family or the birth of a new baby.

GUIDELINES FOR STAFF

- 1 The Council recognises the difficulty of assessing a potential abuse situation. Even experts have difficulty at times in recognising a situation where abuse may occur or has already taken place. It is accepted that council staff are not experts in this field. However, all suspicions and or allegations of abuse must be taken seriously and responded to in a speedy and appropriate manner. Staff are, therefore, expected to discuss any concerns they have regarding the welfare of a child with the Parish Clerk. The Clerk will refer to the Parish Council Safeguarding officer and decide on the most appropriate course of action.
- 2 It is not your responsibility to decide if child abuse has occurred, however it is your responsibility to take action regardless of how small your concern.
- 3 You must:-
 - Avoid situations that compromise your relationship with children or that may be unacceptable in a relationship of trust; and
 - Remember that someone else might misinterpret your action, no matter how well intentioned.
- 4 What to do if a child tells you s/he is being abused:
 - REMEMBER – a child’s welfare is paramount and this must be the most important consideration;
 - Stay calm, ensure the child is safe and feels safe;
 - Listen carefully, tell and show the child that you are taking what they say seriously;
 - Reassure the child and alleviate feelings of guilt and isolation, do not pass any judgements;
 - Do not probe further once the child has made the initial disclosure to you. Any suggestion that your questioning have put ideas into the child’s head could be damaging to any subsequent prosecution;
 - Be honest, and explain that you may have to tell someone else to stop the abuse;
 - Do not make false promises to the child, i.e. promising confidentiality when you may have to disclose all that has been said to other authorities at a later stage;
 - Make a written statement note of what the child has said as soon as possible after the event;
 - If the child suggests that the abuser is on the premises or a member of staff, do not approach the individual - JUST OBSERVE;
 - Maintain confidentiality - only inform the Parish Clerk. At this stage the Clerk will decide on the next course of action.
- 5 It is crucial to note that this is only a process of observation and that at no point in time should any person working on behalf of the Council feel that they should be actively seeking out abuse or an abuser. The responsibility of all people working on behalf of the Council is to ensure that if they have concerns about the welfare of a child or young person, they must report it and must never assume that others will do it.

EMERGENCY ACTION

In some cases it may be important or an absolute necessity to protect a child. In these cases you should:

- Wherever possible take immediate action to protect the child from the immediate harm or possible immediate harm;
- Inform the Parish Clerk immediately; and
- Contact the Social Services or Police as soon as possible. If necessary dial 999 and report the incident or your concerns to the Police.

N.B. The Police are the only agency with statutory powers for the immediate protection of children. In urgent cases do not delay making a referral – make it straight away and make it direct.

PROTECTING YOURSELF

Child abuse has carried quite a high profile over recent years, so much so that many people feel uneasy when dealing with children, feeling that innocent gesture and behaviour may be seen in some people's eyes as inappropriate. Common sense must prevail; in order to prevent such accusations the following suggestions should be observed.

- Restrict physical contact with children to only that which is necessary;
- When dealing with children in emergency situation i.e. administering first aid, ensure where possible there is another responsible adult with you whether that be parent, carer or another member of staff;
- Report directly to the Parish Clerk any behaviour by staff or public that you feel is inappropriate or suspicious. Do not discuss the subject with any other staff or member of the public;
- Never take children alone in your car;
- Never take children to your home or where they will be alone with you;
- Never allow children to use inappropriate language unchallenged;
- Always be publicly open when working with children. Avoid situations where as a coach or carer you are left completely unobserved;
- Never let allegations a child makes go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon;
- Never do things for a child of a personal nature that the child is capable of doing themselves;
- Never make suggestive remarks or gestures, even in fun;
- If during the care of a child you accidentally hurt them, the child seems distressed in any manner, appears to be sexually aroused by your actions or misunderstands or misinterprets something you have done, report the incident as soon as possible to another colleague and make a brief written note of the incident. Parents or carer should be informed of the incident;
- Don't believe it could not happen to you.

Should you suspect or be informed that child abuse has taken place you should:-

- Inform the Parish Clerk immediately. The Parish Clerk will decide on the next course of action to be taken;
- If the Parish Clerk is not available contact the Local Safeguarding Children's Board on 01724 296500 or Out of Hours 01724 296555, and speak to the Duty Officer. The Duty Officer will offer advice and guidance on any given situation and if necessary inform any other relevant parties;
- Keep evidence of everything you have observed/heard;
- Contact Police if needed;
- There is also a NSPCC Help Line Tel: 0808 8005000 for experienced advice about possible abuse situations;
- If you feel unsure as to whether parents are involved in a suspected abuse you should not approach the parents on the subject as this could place the child at further risk. This is a very difficult situation to assess therefore advice should be sought from any of the above under such circumstances.

Codes of Practice and Behaviour

Defining what is and is not acceptable behaviour, good practice can be promoted and opportunities for abuse minimised.

- Sexual exploitation and abuse by any employee, or person working on behalf of the Town Council constitutes acts of gross misconduct and will therefore be grounds for termination of employment;
- Sexual activity with children or vulnerable adults is prohibited; a mistaken belief about a child's age or vulnerable adult's ability is not a defence;
- Exchanging money, goods or services for sex, including sexual favours or other forms of humiliating, degrading or exploitative behaviour are prohibited;
- Grooming children or vulnerable adults to take part in sexual activities of any nature is prohibited.

Allegations of Abuse against Members of Staff

Child abuse does occur outside the family setting. It has been suggested that when child abuse takes place in a public setting it is very rarely a one - off event. It is essential that all staff involved with children are aware of this fact and that all allegations are taken seriously and appropriate action taken.

Seek Advice

It may be that the person is unclear whether allegations that are made constitute abuse or poor practice and are therefore unsure of the action to be taken. It is essential for this reason that the person informs the Parish Clerk of the situation and where necessary obtain advice from Social Services. It is possible that this may be just one of a series of instances of which you are unaware that could constitute something more serious.

It is acknowledged that any suggestion that a member of staff is or may be abusing a child will raise concerns amongst other staff, including the inherent difficulties in reporting such matters. However, it is important that any concerns for the welfare of a child/children arising from abuse or harassment by a member of staff should be reported immediately.

This Council will fully support and protect anyone who, in good faith, reports his or her concern that a colleague is or may be abusing a child.

Any concerns must be discussed with the Clerk where the best course of action will be decided. It is crucial that allegations are taken seriously and any appropriate action taken to protect the welfare of the child.

Where there is a complaint of abuse against a member of staff, there are three types of investigation possible:

- A disciplinary or misconduct investigation;
- A criminal investigation;
- A child protection investigation.

If, following consideration by the person in charge, the allegation is clearly one about poor practice then the person in charge will deal with this situation as a misconduct issue.

If the allegation is one of poor practice against the person in charge, then the Clerk will decide how the matter will be dealt with and whether or not to initiate disciplinary proceedings.

If the allegation is one of abuse and/or one against the person in charge then the Clerk must contact the Local Safeguarding Children's Board and act upon their advice.

The Clerk must be informed immediately of any allegations of abuse made against a member of staff. They will then make an immediate decision as to whether the individual should be temporarily suspended from duty pending further investigations.

If the Clerk cannot be contacted for whatever reason the Chair of the Council will authorise that the individual concerned go home on full pay and ask them to contact the Clerk by 12 noon the following day by which time a decision will have been reached as to the length of suspension if one is deemed necessary.

Irrespective of a social services or Police Investigation the Clerk and Council will assess all individual cases under the appropriate misconduct and disciplinary procedure to decide whether a member of staff can be reinstated and if so how it can be handled with sensitivity.

In circumstances where there is insufficient evidence to uphold any action by the Police or Social Services the management may reach a decision based on the information that is available which could suggest that on the balance of probability is more likely than not that the allegation is true. The welfare of children will always remain paramount.

Consideration will always be given to what support can be given to the child, parents and members of staff.

Taking Photographs

Today's technology such a camera phones, digital cameras and video create the opportunity for misuse. Therefore parental consent must be obtained before any child is photographed or filmed by the Council.

Any member of staff wishing to record images at a Council event must:-

- Obtain written permission from the Clerk;
- The Clerk will determine if any additional parental permissions are needed;
- The member of staff taking photos should wear an ID badge or uniform which identifies them as part of the official event.

If in doubt do not take the photo or ensure that all participants are facing away from the camera.

Taking or recording images in the following areas will not be allowed under any circumstances and will be classed as gross misconduct and lead to instant dismissal:

- Showers;
- Toilets; and
- Changing rooms.

Confidentiality

Every effort should be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned. Information should be handled and disseminated according to Data Protection requirements. Information will be stored securely in locked storage with limited access to designated people only. Any electronic data concerning the case will be password protected.

THE MAIN FORMS OF CHILD ABUSE

Physical Abuse

Where an adult physically hurts or injures a child by hitting, shaking, squeezing, burning, and biting. Including fabricating the symptoms of, or deliberately causing ill health to a child. The administering of alcohol, inappropriate drugs and poison can also be considered as physical abuse. In a sports situation physical abuse might occur when the nature and intensity of the training disregards the limitations of the child's immature and developing body.

Sexual Abuse

Children, girls and boys alike are abused by adults, male and female, who use children to meet their own sexual needs. It may involve forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. Sexual abuse could take the form of full intercourse, masturbation, oral sex, anal intercourse or fondling. Showing children pornographic material is also a form of sexual abuse.

Swimming or related activities involving physical contact with children could potentially create situations where sexual abuse may occur and go unnoticed. Also the power of the coach over young athletes, if misused may lead to abusive situations developing.

Emotional Abuse

Persistent lack of love and affection that adversely affects a child's development. A child may be constantly shouted at threatened or taunted which may make the child very nervous and withdrawn. Emotional abuse may also occur when there is constant over protection, which prevents a child from socialising. Emotional abuse in sport might include situations where a child is subject to unrealistic pressure by the parent or coach, or bullied in order to consistently perform to high expectations.

Neglect

Where adults fail to meet a child's basic needs, like food or warm clothing. Children may also be constantly left alone or unsupervised, being deprived of love, affection or attention.

Bullying

Bullying is deliberately hurtful behaviour, usually repeated over a period of time, where it is difficult for those being bullied to defend themselves. Bullies come from all walks of life, they bully for a variety of reasons and may even have been abused. Typically, bullies can have low self-esteem, be excitable, aggressive and jealous. Crucially they can have learned how to gain power over others and there is increasing evidence to suggest that this abuse of power can lead to crime.

Vulnerable children are particularly open to abuse and any Council action must represent the best interests of the child.

CHILD PROTECTION INCIDENT REPORT FORM

Your Name:

Position:

Name of Child:	Age:
Date of birth:	
Any special; factors (e.g. disability/non-English speaker):	
Parents/Guardian/Carers Names:	
Home address:	
Telephone number:	
Date of incident:	Time of incident
Your observations:	
Exactly what the child said and what you said (remember, do not lead the child and record the actual details. Continue on a separate sheet if necessary):	
Details of any actual evidence (e.g. bruising, bleeding, changes in behaviour of child or parent if present. Continue on separate sheet if necessary)	
Action taken so far, if any:	

If you have spoken to the parents/guardian/carer, what was said:	
Have there been allegations against anyone? If yes, provide details:	YES/NO
Have you consulted anyone else about this? If yes, provide details:	YES/NO
Are you reporting your own concerns or passing on those of somebody else. If the latter, please provide details:	
Name and position of the person you are handing this report to:	Date you are handing over this report:

Signature of Clerk

Name of Clerk

Date of signature

Once both parties have signed the report the person submitting the form should retain a copy for future reference. All forms, correspondence and reports relating to this matter should be held in strictest confidence and stored/filed in a secure cabinet with restricted access.

Photographic Consent Form

(This form may not always be necessary or appropriate as some council events are, by their nature, public and can be reported on. However where the Council might wish to indentify a child by name, parental or guardianship permission should be sought).

This permission applies to photographs, films, or videos

By signing this form, you are giving consent for you, or the child or young person for whom you are responsible, to appear in photographs, films or videos which illustrate the work of MESSINGHAM Parish Council.

Uses for photo's may include: displays and exhibitions; our website; annual reviews; leaflets and posters produced for fundraising; leaflets and posters produced to illustrate our work; press releases in the Council news letter or for promotion of council activities in the local newspaper.

Children who are in special circumstances, e.g., in the care of the local authority, under any kind of court of care order, on Child Protection registers or in open adoption should not be photographed.

This policy has been agreed in order to protect the interests of the child or young person. By signing the form parents/carers will be confirming that the child is not in any of the special circumstances outlined above.

Name of Child: _____

Date of Birth: _____

Name of parent/guardian: _____

Address: _____

Telephone Number: _____

Signature: _____

Relationship to Child: _____

MESSINGHAM Parish Council recognises that you may wish to withdraw your consent. You can do this at any time by writing to us.

USEFUL CONTACT INFORMATION

Remember in an emergency always dial 999

Messingham Parish Clerk – 07397 571469

Chairman Messingham Parish Council – Cllr Neil Poole 01724 764016 mobile 07860 799178

Safe Guarding Councillor– Cllr Mrs Patricia Hunt – Tel 01724 763173 mobile 07555 139561

Local Safeguarding Children’s Board – 01724 296500 out of hours 01724 296555

NSPCC 24 Hour HELPLINE - 0808 800 5000

Police Domestic Violence - 01724 240314

Humberstone Police non-emergency - 101

Hospitals – 01724 282282

National Drugs Help Line 0800 7766 00

Domestic Violence & sexual abuse support 0808 2000247 or 0800 197 47 87

Victim Support 0300 303 1971

Samaritans – 01724 860000

Childline – 0800 1111 24