

UPTON & NORTH ELMSALL PARISH COUNCIL

SAFEGUARDING POLICY

1. Purpose of this Policy

Upton and North Elmsall Parish Council is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people and adults at risk.

The Council recognises that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and that all individuals have the right to live safely, free from abuse, neglect, exploitation and harm.

This policy sets out the Council's approach to safeguarding and explains what staff, councillors, volunteers and others acting on behalf of the Council should do if they have a concern.

2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- Parish Councillors;
- employees of the Parish Council;
- volunteers acting on behalf of the Parish Council;
- contractors, where relevant to their work for the Council;
- anyone delivering activities, services or events on behalf of the Parish Council.

This policy applies to Parish Council activities, services, facilities, events and land where safeguarding concerns may arise.

The Council is not a specialist safeguarding body. However, it has a responsibility to act appropriately where safeguarding concerns are identified or disclosed.

3. Definitions

3.1 Child or young person

For the purposes of this policy, a child or young person means anyone under the age of 18.

3.2 Adult at risk

For the purposes of this policy, an adult at risk is a person aged 18 or over who:

- has needs for care and support;
- is experiencing, or is at risk of, abuse or neglect; and
- because of their care and support needs, is unable to protect themselves from abuse or neglect.

This reflects the adult safeguarding framework under the Care Act statutory guidance.

3.3 Safeguarding

Safeguarding means protecting a person's right to live safely, free from abuse, neglect, exploitation and harm.

4. Policy Statement

The Parish Council will:

- take safeguarding concerns seriously;
- act promptly and appropriately where concerns are raised;
- ensure that staff, councillors and volunteers know how to report safeguarding concerns;

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- consider safeguarding risks when organising activities, events or services;
- ensure appropriate checks, supervision and risk assessments are in place where required;
- work with relevant safeguarding partners and statutory agencies where necessary;
- maintain appropriate records of safeguarding concerns;
- respect confidentiality, while recognising that safeguarding concerns may need to be shared with appropriate agencies.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

5.1 The Council

The Council is responsible for adopting this policy and ensuring that safeguarding is considered in relevant Council activities, services and decisions.

5.2 The Clerk

The Clerk is the Council's lead officer for safeguarding matters.

The Clerk is responsible for:

- receiving safeguarding concerns;
- ensuring concerns are recorded appropriately;
- making referrals to the appropriate agency where required;
- seeking advice from relevant safeguarding bodies where necessary;
- ensuring safeguarding is considered in Council activities, events and volunteer arrangements;
- reporting safeguarding matters to the Council where appropriate, while maintaining confidentiality.

5.3 Councillors, staff and volunteers

Councillors, staff and volunteers must:

- be alert to possible signs of abuse, neglect or harm;
- listen carefully where a concern is disclosed;
- report safeguarding concerns promptly;
- avoid investigating concerns themselves;
- maintain appropriate confidentiality;
- follow this policy and any related procedures.

6. Recognising Safeguarding Concerns

Safeguarding concerns may involve, but are not limited to:

- physical abuse;
- emotional or psychological abuse;
- sexual abuse;
- neglect;
- domestic abuse;
- financial or material abuse;
- discriminatory abuse;
- organisational abuse;
- modern slavery;
- self-neglect;
- exploitation;
- bullying, harassment or intimidation;

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- online abuse or grooming;
- radicalisation.

Concerns may arise from something seen, heard, disclosed directly, reported by another person, or noticed through changes in behaviour or circumstances.

A person does not need to use the word “abuse” for a safeguarding concern to exist.

7. Responding to a Disclosure or Concern

If a child, young person or adult at risk discloses abuse or harm, or if a safeguarding concern is identified, the person receiving the information should:

- listen carefully and remain calm;
- take the concern seriously;
- reassure the person that they have done the right thing by speaking up;
- avoid asking leading questions;
- avoid promising complete confidentiality;
- explain that the information may need to be shared with people who can help;
- record the concern as soon as possible;
- report the concern to the Clerk immediately.

Where the concern relates to the Clerk, the matter should be reported to the Chair of the Council.

No councillor, staff member or volunteer should attempt to investigate safeguarding concerns themselves.

8. Immediate Danger or Emergency Situations

If someone is in immediate danger, or a crime is taking place, the police should be contacted immediately by calling 999.

Where urgent safeguarding advice is needed but there is no immediate danger, the concern should be reported to the relevant local safeguarding contact as soon as possible.

9. Reporting Concerns in Wakefield

9.1 Concerns about a child or young person

If there is a concern about a child or young person in the Wakefield District, contact Wakefield’s Integrated Front Door/Social Care Direct.

Telephone: 0345 8503 503

Emergency: 999 where there is immediate danger.

Wakefield Safeguarding Children Partnership advises that urgent concerns where there is no immediate danger should be reported by calling 0345 8503 503.

9.2 Concerns about an adult at risk

If there is a concern about an adult at risk in the Wakefield District, contact Social Care Direct.

Telephone: 0345 8 503 503

Email: social_care_direct@wakefield.gov.uk

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Wakefield Council states that adult safeguarding concerns can be reported anonymously, but asks that as much information as possible is provided so the concern can be followed up.

9.3 Concerns about someone who works or volunteers with children

Where a concern relates to the conduct of a person who works or volunteers with children, the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) process may apply.

The Council will seek advice from the Wakefield LADO where appropriate, particularly where there is a concern that a person may have harmed a child, may pose a risk of harm to children, or may not be suitable to work or volunteer with children.

The Wakefield LADO can be contacted Monday to Friday on 01977 727032 or by email at lado.referrals@wakefield.gov.uk.

10. Recording Safeguarding Concerns

A written record should be made as soon as possible after a safeguarding concern arises.

The record should include:

- the date and time of the concern;
- the name of the person making the record;
- the name of the person the concern relates to, where known;
- the nature of the concern;
- the exact words used by the person disclosing, where possible;
- any visible signs, injuries or behaviours observed;
- any action taken;
- who the concern was reported to;
- whether any external referral was made;
- the date and time of any referral.

Records should be factual and should avoid opinion, assumption or speculation.

Safeguarding records must be stored securely and handled in accordance with the Council's data protection and retention policies.

11. Confidentiality and Information Sharing

Safeguarding information must be treated carefully and shared only with those who need to know.

However, confidentiality must not prevent a safeguarding concern from being reported to appropriate agencies where a child, young person or adult at risk may be at risk of harm.

Where possible, the person affected should be informed about what information will be shared and why. However, consent is not required where sharing information is necessary to protect someone from harm, prevent a crime, or comply with legal obligations.

12. Safer Recruitment and Volunteer Arrangements

The Council will consider safeguarding as part of recruitment, appointment and volunteer arrangements.

Depending on the role, this may include:

- considering the nature of the activity;
- assessing whether the person will have contact with children, young people or adults at risk;
- requiring references;
- providing safeguarding information or training;
- ensuring appropriate supervision;
- completing a risk assessment;
- considering whether a DBS check is required.

The Council will only request DBS checks where the role is eligible. DBS guidance explains that regulated activity can apply to paid or unpaid roles and that different rules apply for children and adults.

13. DBS Checks and Regulated Activity

Some roles may require a Disclosure and Barring Service check. This will depend on the nature, frequency and circumstances of the activity.

The Council will assess each relevant role before deciding whether a DBS check is appropriate.

A DBS check does not remove the need for proper supervision, risk assessment, safeguarding awareness and safe working practices.

Where the Council is responsible for a person undertaking regulated activity, it will follow relevant DBS requirements, including referral duties where applicable.

14. Activities, Events and Facilities

When organising activities or events, the Council will consider whether safeguarding arrangements are required.

This may include:

- ensuring activities are properly risk assessed;
- considering supervision levels;
- avoiding situations where one adult is alone with a child, young person or adult at risk;
- ensuring clear responsibility for the activity;
- ensuring emergency contact arrangements are in place where appropriate;
- ensuring volunteers and helpers understand their role;
- considering whether photographs or publicity require consent.

Where external organisations hire or use Council facilities, they remain responsible for their own safeguarding arrangements unless the Council has formally agreed otherwise.

15. Use of Council Premises by External Groups

The Council may allow external groups, hirers, tenants or community organisations to use Council premises or land.

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Where those groups provide activities involving children, young people or adults at risk, they are responsible for ensuring that appropriate safeguarding arrangements are in place.

The Council may require external groups to provide evidence of:

- their safeguarding policy;
- insurance;
- risk assessments;
- DBS checks, where relevant;
- appropriate supervision arrangements.

The Council may refuse, suspend or cancel use of Council premises or land where safeguarding concerns arise.

This requirement may be reflected in the Council's hire terms and conditions.

16. Photography, Filming and Social Media

Photographs or videos of children, young people or adults at risk must not be taken or published on behalf of the Council unless appropriate consent has been obtained.

The Council will consider safeguarding risks before publishing images or personal information.

Staff, councillors and volunteers must not publish photographs, videos or personal information from Council activities on personal social media accounts where this could create a safeguarding, privacy or reputational risk.

17. Online Safety

Where Council activities involve online communication, digital content or social media, safeguarding risks must be considered.

Staff, councillors and volunteers must not use personal accounts to communicate with children or young people on behalf of the Council unless specifically authorised and risk assessed.

Any online safeguarding concern should be reported in the same way as any other safeguarding concern.

18. Allegations Against Staff, Councillors or Volunteers

Any allegation or concern about the conduct of a staff member, councillor, volunteer or contractor towards a child, young person or adult at risk must be taken seriously.

The concern should be reported to the Clerk immediately.

Where the allegation relates to the Clerk, it should be reported to the Chair of the Council.

Where appropriate, the Council will seek advice from the relevant safeguarding agency, including the Local Authority Designated Officer where the concern relates to someone who works or volunteers with children.

The Council may take immediate steps to manage risk while advice is sought. This may include suspending an activity, changing duties, restricting access to Council facilities, or pausing volunteer involvement.

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19. Training and Awareness

The Council will ensure that staff, councillors and volunteers are given safeguarding information appropriate to their role.

This may include:

- awareness of this policy;
- how to identify possible safeguarding concerns;
- how to respond to a disclosure;
- how to report concerns;
- role-specific safeguarding training where required.

The level of training required will depend on the nature of the role and the level of contact with children, young people or adults at risk.

20. Whistleblowing and Raising Concerns

Staff, councillors and volunteers should feel able to raise safeguarding concerns without fear of victimisation or unfair treatment.

Concerns should be raised promptly, even where the person is unsure whether the matter meets the threshold for safeguarding.

It is better to report a concern and allow the appropriate agency to assess it than to ignore a possible risk.

21. Review of Safeguarding Incidents

Where a safeguarding concern arises in connection with Council activities, the Council may review its arrangements to consider whether any changes are needed.

This may include reviewing:

- risk assessments;
- volunteer arrangements;
- supervision levels;
- hire arrangements;
- training;
- policies and procedures;
- communication with external groups.

Any review should be proportionate and should not interfere with any external safeguarding investigation.

22. Related Policies and Documents

This policy should be read alongside the Council's relevant policies and procedures, including:

- Volunteer Policy and Procedure;
- Health and Safety Policy;
- Risk Management Policy;
- Equality and Diversity Policy;
- Complaints Procedure;
- Social Media and Communications Policy;
- Press and Media Protocol;

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- Information and Data Protection Policy;
- Data Retention and Disposal Policy;
- Code of Conduct;
- Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures, where applicable;
- Hiring or Lettings Terms and Conditions, where applicable.

23. Review

This policy will be reviewed annually at the May Annual Meeting of the Parish Council, or sooner if required due to changes in legislation, statutory guidance, local safeguarding arrangements, Council services, or identified risk.