



## **Ruckinge Parish Council.**

### **Child Protection Policy.**

#### **1. Introduction**

The primary responsibility for children's welfare rests with the adult supervising the child (parent/carer)

Ruckinge Parish Council wishes to ensure that children are safe and protected from harm whilst visiting its premises and using its facilities.

The following Child Protection Policy outlines the system and procedures Ruckinge Parish Council have put in place in order to achieve this aim. Its successful achievement requires co-operation and partnership between Ruckinge Parish Council and the users of its facilities; all staff and volunteers are responsible for supporting this policy.

This document sets out the principles underlying the policy. The document also seeks to provide practical guidance to members of Ruckinge Parish Council staff and volunteers working with young people.

### **Section 1: Principles and Definitions**

#### **1.1 Child Protection Policy Statement**

The council wants to ensure that children are protected from harm while they visit the premises of Ruckinge parish Council. This will be done by –

- Following the appropriate guidelines to select appropriate staff and to carry out enhanced CRB checks as per these guidelines.
- Giving group leaders, service providers and any other interested parties information about Ruckinge Parish Council's procedures regarding the safety of children whilst at the council's premises when requested.
- When requested, providing information to group leaders, service providers and any other interested parties about Ruckinge parish Council's expectations regarding child protection responsibilities while visiting council premises.

#### **1.2 Key principles**

The key principles of this policy are:

To ensure that children visiting the council's premises can be protected by setting standards of best practice. This will also ensure that council staff and volunteers are protected and do not place themselves in an unnecessarily vulnerable position.

### 1.3 Definition of Child Abuse

The following definition is drawn from the Department of Health and Social Services document entitled 'Co-operating to Safeguard Children' (2003).

"Child abuse occurs when a child is neglected, harmed or not provided with proper care. Children may be abused in many settings, in a family, in an institutional or community setting, by those who know them or more rarely, by a stranger. There are different types of abuse and a child may suffer more than one of them."

#### **Section 2:**

#### **Practical Guidance for Council Staff and Volunteers working with Young People.**

This section seeks to offer practical guidance to those working at council premises or engaged in council events that involve contact with young people to ensure that they and the young people with whom they are working are protected.

### 2.1 General Conduct when working with Young People.

Council staff and volunteers should be encouraged to demonstrate exemplary behaviour in order to protect themselves from allegations of abuse. Stated below are the standards of behaviour required of council staff and volunteers to ensure that a positive culture and climate is created during all council activities involving contact with young people:-

- To always work in an open environment (e.g. avoiding private or unobserved situations and encouraging an open environment i.e. no secrets)
- To treat all young people equally and with respect and dignity.
- To maintain a safe and appropriate distance from the young people
- To build balanced relationships based on mutual trust which empowers young people to share in the decisions-making process
- To be an excellent role model – this includes not smoking or drinking alcohol in the company of young people or using inappropriate language
- To give enthusiastic and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism
- To secure parental consent in writing to act in loco parentis, if the need arises to give permission for the administrations of emergency first aid and/or other medical treatment

- To obtain written parental consent if staff members are required to transport young people in their cars
- To obtain written consent prior to any photographs, videoing or audio recording

## 2.2 Unacceptable Practices

The following should never be sanctioned:

- Spending excessive amounts of time alone with young people away from others
- Taking young people to your home where they will be alone with you
- Allowing young people to travel on their own with you in a vehicle
- Engaging in rough, physical or sexually provocative games, including horseplay
- Sharing a room with a young person
- Entering a toilet with young people unless another 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 young people to use inappropriate language unchallenged
- Make sexually suggestive comments to, or within the hearing of a young person, even in fun
- Reducing a young person to tears as a form of control
- Allowing allegations made by a young person to go unchallenged , unrecorded or not acted upon
- Doing things of a personal nature for young people or disabled adults that they can do for themselves

## 2.3 Responding to complaints and alleged or suspected incidents

The following guidelines should be used when an allegation is disclosed by a young person to a member of council staff and/or volunteer.

### i) 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
- Be calm
- Be reassuring and make it clear that you are glad that they have told you
- Shown that you are taking the child seriously and that you understand and believe them
- Keep questions to a minimum; if you have to ask questions keep them open and not leading.

**Important points to remember when dealing with a disclosure:**

- Try not to display any sign of shock or disapproval when the young person is making a disclosure
- Do not jump to conclusions
- The young 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 young person
- Take care of yourself by making sure that you have an opportunity to discuss your feelings with someone at a later stage
- Do not destroy any evidence as it may be useful in a court of law
- Initial disclosure, even if retracted, must still be referred.

ii) **Recording information**

Information will be stored securely by the Clerk with limited access to designated people, in line with data protection laws (e.g. that information is accurate, regularly updated, relevant and secure).

iii) **Designated Officer – Clerk to the Council**

The designated officer handles the child protection issues and oversees the policy's implementation. The designated officer 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 young person.

iv) **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 Officer (or to local social services or the police) in order that appropriate agencies can then take any necessary action to protect the young person.**

v) **Allegations against Staff or Volunteers**

In the case of the allegation being against a staff member or volunteer it is of equal importance to act immediately on the allegation. If activity/contact is on-going when the incident is reported then it is the responsibility of the Designated Officer to ensure the immediate safety to ensure the immediate safety of that young person by taking the necessary steps, including the removal of alleged individuals.

Any individual accused of abuse will be suspended in line with the local disciplinary procedure pending further police and social services inquiries.

Irrespective of the findings of social services or police enquiries, all individual cases must be assessed under the appropriate misconduct/disciplinary procedure to completion, to decide whether a member of staff or volunteer should be reinstated and how this can be sensitively handled with other staff or volunteers. This may be a

difficult decision, particularly where there is insufficient evidence to uphold any action by the police. In such cases, a decision must be based on the balance of probabilities in relation to continued risk, and all available information. ***The welfare of children will always remain paramount.***