



Safeguarding Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults, Policy and Procedures

Introduction

1. **Bicester Town Council fully accepts its role and responsibility in safeguarding children and vulnerable people. This policy is for all staff, elected members, volunteers and contractors. This Policy is vital to the Council's role as owner, provider and operator of children's play areas, open spaces and sporting facilities including any facility that the Council provides. However, any outside agency working with children and vulnerable people on Bicester Town Council provided facilities has full responsibility to ensure that the users are safeguarded.**
2. Bicester Town Council (BTC) aims to work in a way that helps, as far as possible, to safeguard the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults.
3. BTC will ensure that:
 - all employees involved in working in close proximity to children, young people and vulnerable adults implement good working practices to ensure a safe and healthy environment;
 - all employees are aware of welfare protection issues both in the context of organised activities and within the home and community;
 - all staff, elected members, volunteers and contractors are aware of child protection and shall know the procedure to follow if there is a protection issue.
 - All staff, elected members, volunteers and contractors are in receipt of this policy.
 - All staff, elected members, volunteers and contractors are aware of and alert to the main types of abuse and the procedure in reporting any concerns. *(See Appendix 1: Categories and Signs of Abuse).*
4. BTC recognises that in providing facilities for children, young people and vulnerable adults there is a need to provide and maintain a high degree of physical and emotional wellbeing. Therefore the following procedures will be implemented:
 - ensure employees are aware of the safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults policy and procedures;
 - ensure employees and members of the public can effectively report concerns about children, young people and vulnerable adults at risk;
 - operate sound recruitment and selection procedures for employees to ensure suitability for working with children, young people and vulnerable adults;

- identify and enable appropriate welfare protection training to take place for employees who work with children, young people and vulnerable adults;
- maintain appropriate records of training, risk assessments, referrals and escalation of concerns
- demonstrate best practice in ensuring the safety of children, young people and vulnerable adults.

For all levels of training the implementation of a 'refresher' programme will ensure the maintenance of levels of awareness and provide details of any change.

In addition, safer recruitment training will be provided for staff involved with recruitment of these groups.

See Appendix 2: Promoting Good Practice when working with children, young people and vulnerable adults

Responding to Disclosure, Suspicions and Allegations of Abuse

5. It is not the responsibility of BTC employees to decide whether or not abuse is taking place. False allegations of abuse do occur, although they are extremely rare. If a person says or indicates that they are being abused or information is obtained which gives concern that a person may be being abused, immediate action should be taken.
6. BTC will inform the appropriate authority of any suspected cases of abuse reported to them.

Confidentiality

7. Confidentiality is a key issue in safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults. Whilst information generally should not be shared, it must be shared with appropriate agencies to ensure that a person is not left unprotected.

Data Protection

8. Occasionally there will be a need or requirement to collect and use certain types of information on children, young people and vulnerable adults. This personal information must be dealt with properly however it is collected, recorded and used – whether on paper, in a computer, or recorded on other material - and there are safeguards to ensure this in the Data Protection Act 1998. (Personal information is data that relates to a living individual who can be identified from the data).
9. The lawful and correct treatment of personal information is very important and wherever such information is kept there is a need to comply and adhere to the principles of data protection, as enumerated in the Data Protection Act 1998. BTC's Data Protection Policy is available on the website.

Reporting Concerns

10. If you have any concerns you should write down what you have seen or heard that gives you concern, keep that document safe and confidential. Complete a reporting form and contact BTC's Chief officer as soon as possible. (See *Appendix C*)
11. If there is an imminent risk of harm then you should phone 999; otherwise you may phone 101. A form will also need to be completed and submitted to the Chief Officer as soon as possible.

Nominated Officer (Chief Officer)

12. This person is available to advise employees and elected members and are required to:
 - be familiar with protection procedures;
 - ensure there are effective internal procedures to handle concerns;
 - be the link person with relevant agencies;
 - attend appropriate training.

Suspected Abuse or Bullying by Council Employees

13. If an allegation of abuse is made against a Council employee, the Council's Grievance and/or Disciplinary Procedures will be followed and appropriate action taken.
14. All allegations of abuse against an employee must be reported to the Chief Officer. In cases involving employees in an allegation of sexual abuse, including the observing, handling or distributing of materials in any media that involve the sexual abuse of children, young people and vulnerable adults, the matter will be immediately referred to the police by the Chief Officer.
15. BTC assures all employees that it will fully support and protect anyone who, in good faith (without malicious intent), reports his or her concerns about a colleague's practise or the possibility that a person may be being abused or bullied.

Acceptable and Unacceptable Behaviour

16. BTC has a duty to have a designated officer to be involved in the management and oversight of individual cases. This person has responsibility for:
 - Ensuring that BTC operates procedures for dealing with allegations in accordance to Oxfordshire Safeguarding Boards' guidance resolving inter-agency issues;
 - Liaison with the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Boards on any issues.

Child Death Review Process

17. All members of the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Board are required to provide a senior officer contact to the Board. This person will act as a first point of contact for any deaths of children, young people and vulnerable adults that the organisation may be the first to be aware of and to ensure that there is an effective response.
18. If you become aware of the death of a child, young person or vulnerable adult in the course of your professional duties you should immediately contact the Chief Officer

Appendix 1

Categories and signs of abuse

Physical abuse

May involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer feigns the symptoms of, or deliberately causes, ill health to a person for whom they are caring.

Emotional abuse

Is the persistent emotional ill-treatment such as to cause severe adverse effects.. For example, it may involve conveying to children, young people and vulnerable adults that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only in so far as they meet the needs of another person. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed. It may involve causing children, young people and vulnerable adults to frequently feel frightened or in danger, or their exploitation or corruption. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill-treatment, though it may occur alone.

Sexual abuse

Involves forcing or enticing a person to become involved in any way in sexual activities, whether or not they are aware of what is happening.

Sexual Exploitation

Sexual exploitation of children and young people under 18 involves exploitative situations, contexts and relationships where young people (or a third person or persons) receive 'something' (e.g. food, accommodation, drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, affection, gifts, money) as a result of them performing, and/or another or others performing on them, sexual activities.

Child sexual exploitation can occur through the use of technology without the child's or young person's immediate recognition; for example being persuaded to post sexual images on the Internet/mobile phones without immediate payment or gain.

In all cases, those exploiting the child/young person have power over them by virtue of their age, gender, intellect, physical strength and/or economic or other resources.

Violence, coercion and intimidation are common, involvement in exploitative relationships being characterised in the main by the child or young person's limited availability of choice resulting from their social/economic and/or emotional vulnerability.

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet basic physical and/or psychological needs, and is likely to result in the serious impairment of health or development.

Financial or material abuse, including theft, fraud, exploitation, pressure in connection with wills, property or inheritance or financial transactions or the misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits of vulnerable adults.

The Signs of Abuse

The following factors should act as indicators in situations of potential or actual abuse:

- unexplained or suspicious marks, bruises, fractures, burns/scalds or injuries to the mouth and eyes;
- poor physical condition or delayed speech and language development in children
- a change in behaviour or appearance;
- inappropriate sexual awareness in children
- a statement by a child or person that he or she has been victimised;
- distrust of others, particularly those with whom a close relationship would normally be expected;
- difficulty making friends or socialising;
- prevention from socialising with other children, young people or adults.

It should be recognised that this list is not exhaustive and the presence of one or more of these indicators is not proof that abuse is actually taking place.

Promoting Good Practice when working with children, young people and vulnerable adults

It is possible to reduce situations in which abuse can occur and help protect employees by promoting good practice. The following guidelines should be used to ensure this can be achieved:

- Always ensure that you follow safer recruitment practices always work in an open environment, avoiding private or unobserved situations;
- Treat all children, young people and vulnerable adults with equal dignity and respect
- always put the welfare of the person first;
- maintain a safe, appropriate and professional distance with children, young people and vulnerable adults
- build balanced relationships based on mutual trust which empowers children, young people and vulnerable adults to share in the decision making process;
- make activities fun, enjoyable and promote fair play;
- ensure that if any form of manual / physical support is required, it should be provided openly and with due care;
- keep up to date with the appropriate technical skills and qualifications; ensure that if children are supervised that they are accompanied by at least two employees;
- be an excellent role model - this includes not smoking or drinking alcohol in the company of children, young people and vulnerable adults give enthusiastic and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism;
- recognise the developmental needs and capacity of children, young people and vulnerable adults;
- ensure that equipment and facilities are safe and appropriate to the age and ability of the person
- ensure that high standards are maintained at all times.

Practice to be avoided

The following should be avoided except in emergencies. If cases arise where these situations are unavoidable they should only occur with the full knowledge and consent of a senior officer, guardian or carer or the child's parent, for example:

- spending excessive amounts of time alone with children, young people and vulnerable adults away from others oversight;
- taking unaccompanied children, young people or vulnerable adults on car journeys, however short, on your own
- taking children, young people and vulnerable adults to your home.

Employees should never:

- engage in rough, physical or sexually provocative games, including horseplay;

- allow or engage in any form of inappropriate touching;
- allow children to use inappropriate language unchallenged;
- make sexually suggestive comments to a person, even in fun;
- allow allegations made by a person to go unrecorded or not acted upon;
- do things of a personal nature for children, young people and vulnerable adults that they can do for themselves;
- invite or allow children, young people and vulnerable adults to stay at their home;
- constantly shout at and/or taunt a person.

Appendix C

Safeguarding Incident Reporting Form

Guidance Notes: in all cases of a safeguarding incident or concern, this form should be completed and submitted as soon as possible after the incident. At the time of the incident, a handwritten note may be made by the employee to include date, time, signature and printed name. But this information must be transferred onto this form and submitted, ideally within 24 hours of the incident.

Is this report for information only, or does it require action? Please tick

Information only		Requires action	
------------------	--	-----------------	--

Person reporting the incident or concern

Name	
Job Title (if internal)	
Address (if external)	
Contact number	
Relationship	
Method of referral (Phone/in person)	

Time and date of record being made	Time	Date

Is the person a (please tick):

Child	Young Person	Vulnerable Adult	Other (please state)

Perceived gender	
Name of child/vulnerable adult if known	

Details of the individuals to whom the concern relates eg:

- Family details
- Address
- Age(s)
- Are there any other children in the house (give details)
- Details of other occupants (if Known)

Time and date of the incident	Time	Date

Describe the incident or reason for the concern. Please give a factual account and specify the location where the incident took place. Include the person's own words where possible. Please add any other useful information.

Please specify the action taken by you and others so far (as applicable)

--

Please specify any other agencies informed, including names, dates and times of anyone spoken to.

--

Declaration and Signature

I confirm that I have completed this form giving factual information and it is a record of what I saw and /or heard.

Signature	
-----------	--

Print name	
------------	--

Date	
------	--

Privacy Statement

The information collected on this form is strictly private and confidential and should only be shared on a need to know basis.