

Safeguarding Policy

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1. Objective / purpose of policy:

- To provide employees and appointed members with guidance and instruction to follow in relation to responding to safeguarding concerns and incidents across Woodley Town Council.
- To help protect children, young people and vulnerable persons who make use of Woodley Town Council services and facilities.
- To raise awareness of the varying forms of abuse and to promote the importance of responding to and reporting suspicions appropriately.

2. Commitments and responsibilities:

- Woodley Town Council is committed to taking all reasonable precautions to safeguard the welfare of all children, young people and vulnerable persons that use its services and facilities.
- All Woodley Town Council employees and appointed members are expected to accept and to recognise their responsibilities in relation to safeguarding. These include but are not limited to:
 - Being able to always act in good faith and to be able to recognise and challenge inappropriate behaviour in others.
 - Being able to recognise the varying forms of abuse and to know how to report these promptly and appropriately.
 - Being able to take all allegations and concerns seriously and to handle concerns with sensitivity and confidentiality in mind.
 - Being able to understand the importance of reporting all concerns.
- Woodley Town Council's services do not generally require the direct supervision of children, young people or vulnerable persons by employees or appointed members. Despite this, Woodley Town Council is committed to promoting an effective safeguarding culture throughout all its services.

3. Good practice and behaviours:

- Promoting good practice and positive behaviours can help to reduce the possibility of potentially abusive situations developing and help to protect both employees and appointed members whilst at work.
- The following are examples of good practice that employees and appointed members are expected to implement whilst carrying out their duties:
 - Always be publicly identifiable through use of Woodley Town Council branded uniform or official name badges.
 - Always endeavour to treat children, young people and vulnerable persons with equal value, dignity and respect.
 - Avoid situations where it is possible to be left alone and working unobserved with children, young people or vulnerable persons.
 - Avoid becoming directly involved in supervising children, young people or vulnerable persons; except in emergency situations.
 - Avoid offering physical manual support to children, young people or vulnerable adults; except in emergency situations.
 - Never allow allegations or concerns raised by a child or vulnerable person to be ignored, go unrecorded or not acted upon.
- Where there is an unavoidable need for employees or appointed members to offer physical support to a child, young person or vulnerable individual this must only be done in full view of another non vulnerable adult.

4. Recognition of abuse, neglect and bullying:

- Recognising abuse is not always easy and it is not the responsibility of Woodley Town Council or its officials to decide if abuse has taken place.
- There is however a responsibility for employees and appointed members to act if there is a suspicion that abuse may be happening or is likely to happen.
- For this reason, it is important that employees and appointed members understand the different forms of abuse and can recognise them:

- **Physical abuse:** actual or likely physical injury to a child or vulnerable person. This includes hitting, shaking, burning, scalding and any other variation of physical harm; including failure to prevent injury.
 - **Emotional abuse:** the persistent emotional ill treatment of a child or vulnerable person. This includes conveying to the victim that they are worthless and inadequate and any other variation of emotional harm.
 - **Neglect:** the persistent failure to meet a child or vulnerable persons basic needs. This may include the failure to provide food, clothing, medical care and a general lack or protection from harm or danger.
 - **Sexual abuse:** actual or likely sexual exploitation of a child or vulnerable person. This includes forcing or enticing an individual to take part in sexual activities without consent or understanding, encouraging a victim to behave in sexually inappropriate ways and the grooming of a child or vulnerable person in preparation for abuse.
 - **Bullying:** can include a variety of behaviours from one individual or group to another, such as name calling, offensive language, coercion, hitting, pushing, theft and intentional damage to personal belongings.
- An online safeguarding children training module is available for all employees and appointed members to complete. The module educates in further detail on how to recognise the different forms of abuse.

5. Safeguarding officer roles and responsibilities:

- The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) for Woodley Town Council is the Town Clerk. This person's responsibilities are to monitor, record and report actual or alleged incidents of abuse to the Local Authority or police:
 - **DSL:** K Murray, 0118 9690356, kevin.murray@woodley.gov.uk.
- The Designated Safeguarding Officers (DSO's) for Woodley Town Council are the Deputy Town Clerk and the Leisure Services Manager, who are responsible for acting as the DSL in the absence of the Town Clerk or if the Town Clerk is implicated in an allegation:
 - **DSO:** M Filmore, 0118 9690356, matthew.filmore@woodley.gov.uk.

- **DSO:** E Whitesmith, 0118 9216969, ed.whitesmith@woodley.gov.uk.

6. Safeguarding incident reporting procedure:

- Where a Woodley Town Council employee or appointed member identifies suspicions of abuse the following step-by-step procedure is implemented:
 - **Step one (where a person discloses suspicions of abuse):**
 - Stay calm and handle the allegations and suspicions seriously.
 - Listen without interruption, accepting what is being said, whilst only asking questions for clarification and not to investigate further.
 - Alleviate feelings of guilt and isolation, whilst passing no judgement.
 - Reassure the individual that they did the right thing by reporting their concerns and be supportive.
 - Advise that the suspicions must be recorded, acted upon and that it is not possible to keep the suspicions and concerns a secret.
 - Should there be any belief that the individual to whom the suspicion of abuse relates may be in immediate danger, then you must contact the police and any other relevant emergency service immediately, before continuing with the below process.
 - **Step two (record the facts):**
 - Record all the facts as reported and witnessed in as much detail as possible using an **incident and accident report form**.
 - Record the details of the alleged victim if possible, including their name, address and contact information if obtainable.
 - Record the details of any person who may have witnessed the suspected abuse, including their name and contact information.
 - Record dates, times, observations and any other information that could be relevant to a future investigation into the suspected abuse.
 - **Step three (pass the report to the Designated Safeguarding Lead - DSL):**
 - The report must be referred to the DSL as soon as possible, but within twenty-four (24) hours of the suspicions being reported at the latest.
 - The DSL will review the report and decide whether the report should be passed onto either the Local Authority or the Police (or both).

- In the absence of the Designated Safeguarding Lead, safeguarding incident reports should be passed onto one of the Designated Safeguarding Officers.

7. Promoting a safeguarding culture and training:

- Woodley Town Council encourages open conversations about safeguarding and is committed through its employees and appointed members to being well placed to prevent and respond to safeguarding incidents effectively.
- This Safeguarding Policy is available to all employees and appointed members, who are expected to follow the procedures outlined within.
- An online safeguarding children training module is available for all employees and appointed members to complete. The module reinforces elements of good practice and behaviour in relating to safeguarding.

8. Support for employees or appointed members:

- Where an employee or appointed member finds a disclosure or safeguarding incident particularly distressing they may need some support.
- Where this is the case, employees and appointed members are encouraged to speak to any member of the Woodley Town Council management team whom they feel comfortable speaking to.
- Woodley Town Council has an open door policy for any employees or appointed members who wish to discuss their concerns.
- Woodley Town Council also provides an independent and confidential support service to all employees at no cost. The service offers both counselling and advice on a variety of personal, family or workplace issues.

9. Confidentiality:

- Employees and appointed members must not discuss allegations of abuse, substantiated or not, with anyone other than the official officers leading the formal investigation process.
- Safeguarding incident reports and all details within are considered confidential and are only stored on the limited access management portal on the cloud server.
- Where confidentiality is broken, employees and appointed members will face formal investigation and may face disciplinary action in line with Woodley Town Council's disciplinary procedures.