

Hartley Wintney Parish Council – Child Protection Policy

Hartley Wintney Parish Council (HWPC) believes that it is always unacceptable for a child or young person to experience abuse of any kind and recognises its responsibility and duty of care to safeguard the welfare of all children and young people, by a commitment to practice which protects them. Abuse is defined as neglect, physical, verbal, emotional or sexual abuse or any combination of these.

HWPC recognises that:

- The welfare of the child/young person is paramount.
- All children/young people, regardless of age, disability, gender, racial heritage, religious belief, sexual orientation, or identity, have the right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse.
- Working in partnership with children, young people, their parents, carers and other agencies is essential in promoting young people's welfare.

The purpose of the policy is:

- To provide protection for and demonstrate a duty of care towards the children and young people who receive HWPC services, including the children of adult members, users of HWPC services or staff.
- To provide councillors, staff and volunteers with guidance on procedures they should adopt in the event that they suspect a child or young person may be experiencing, or be at risk of, harm or abuse.

This policy applies to councillors and all staff, including paid employees, volunteers or anyone working on behalf of HWPC and will be reviewed annually by the Policy Committee.

HWPC will seek to safeguard children and young people by:

- Valuing them, listening to and respecting them.
- Adopting child protection guidelines as set out by the NSPCC 'Child Protection in England – Legislation, Policy and Guidance', and adopting procedures and a code of conduct for staff and volunteers.
- Recruiting staff and volunteers safely. HWPC are committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all councillors, staff and volunteers to share this commitment. We ensure that all our recruitment and selection practices reflect this commitment. All staff and volunteers are subject to Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks along with other relevant employment checks where appropriate.
- Sharing information about concerns with the Chairman of HWPC or agencies who need to know and involving parents/carers and children appropriately.
- Providing effective management for councillors, staff and volunteers through supervision, support and training.

Procedures

If you have any concerns about an adult's behaviour towards children or young people:

- Do not ignore it – share your concerns initially with the Chairman of HWPC and then if appropriate with child protection services who will take any concerns very seriously.
- Do not confront the adult but seek the advice of the Chairman of HWPC and then, if appropriate, child protection services.

Responding to a Disclosure

If someone tells you that they, or someone they know, is being abused:

- Accept what the person is saying and take it seriously.
- Reassure the person who has made the disclosure to you that they have done the right thing.
- Give the child or young person time to talk and do not probe or ask leading questions. Investigation is not your responsibility.
- Do not promise to keep secrets.
- All allegations of harm or potential harm must be acted upon immediately.
- Explain to the child/young person that you will share this information with the Chairman of HWPC who will ensure the appropriate procedures will be followed.
- E-mails, text messages or social media notifications received giving details of suspected abuse should be immediately responded to within 24 hours by contacting the sender by phone or face-to-face to obtain further information.
- Record the event in writing as soon as practicable.
- All matters relating to child protection must be treated as confidential and only shared with the Chairman of the HWPC and relevant agencies as necessary.
- Any written reports to be stored securely.

Unaccompanied Children in Public Places

There will be situations when young children visit public settings unaccompanied by their parent/carer. Whilst not wishing to discourage children from visiting places such as play areas, HWPC councillors, staff and volunteers need to take reasonable steps to ensure the safety of the child and to inform parents/carers of their responsibilities. The way in which councillors, staff and volunteers deal with unaccompanied children must be based on awareness of the responsibility of the parent or the loco parentis carer. (i.e. the one taking the responsibility of parent), and the duty of care of HWPC staff to all children whether on the premises or an outside area. In no instance would staff be expected to take on parental responsibilities for children in these settings.

A good practice response on discovering an unaccompanied child in, for example, a play area is to:

- Try to avoid being left alone with the child.
- Try to establish whether the child is allowed by the parent/carer to come and go alone.

If you are satisfied that the child is allowed to come and go alone, then allow the child to leave. If you gather this information only from the child then you will need to use your judgment to ascertain whether the child is competent to be left alone.

Relevant factors may be:

- Whether the child exhibits signs of nervousness.
- Whether the child appears to clearly understand your questions.
- Whether the child seems physically capable.
- Whether the child appears to know clearly and readily where he or she lives.
- How far the journey is.
- Whether you know of any particular hazards on the journey.
- The child's age and vulnerability.

If you are in doubt, encourage the child to remain in situ until you have been able to contact a parent or carer. Children under 10 years of age should not normally be allowed to leave alone unless you know that in the particular case the parent/carer allows it.

Ask the child if he/she is expecting to be collected by an adult. Even if the child is expecting to be collected soon, do not wait before taking the next step. Try to contact the parent or carer. Ask the child for an address or telephone number.

Useful Telephone Numbers

HCC Children's Services	0300 555 1384 or 0800 555 1373 (out of hours)
Hampshire Police	101 or in the case of injury 999
NSPCC Child Protection Helpline:	0808 800 5000
Child-Line:	0800 1111

Additional Information

For further information, please contact the Executive Clerk or the Chairman of the Policy Committee.

Amendment Record

Version 1:	Initial Issue as Interim Policy – 9 th April 2013
Version 2:	Initial Issue as Interim Policy – 22 nd January 2018
	Adopted by Full Council – 5 th March 2018