

Heckington Parish Council

SAFEGUARDING POLICY

Introduction

Everyone has a duty to safeguard children, young people and vulnerable adults.

This policy promotes good practice in safeguarding for those who interact with the Parish Council and its employees, volunteers and contractors (whether in a paid, voluntary or commissioned capacity) and those using Heckington Parish Council's facilities and attending events hosted by Heckington Parish Council.

Heckington Parish Council recognizes the need to look out for children and adults at risk who are in danger of being taken advantage of or harmed and take the necessary step to ensure their safety.

Definitions

Child

Anyone under the age of 18 years is considered a child in the eyes of the law.

Adult at Risk

An adult at risk is anyone other than a child who:

- Needs to be cared for or supported.
- Is experiencing, or is at risk of, abuse or neglect; and
- Is unable to protect themselves against abuse and neglect.

This might be because of mental or physical illness or disability, or because of their age.

Providing a safe environment

In order to promote a safe environment for children and adults at risk, the Parish Council will:

- Provide facilities that are safe and carry out regular, routine safety assessments.
- Ensure that Councillors, employees, volunteers and anyone else acting on behalf of the Parish Council are aware of the safeguarding expectations.
- Ensure DBS checks are carried out as appropriate on Councillors, employees and volunteers.
- Ensure that the policy for users of Parish Council facilities includes a requirement that they are safe to work with children, young people and vulnerable adults (e.g. any adults who have regular unsupervised contact with children, young people or vulnerable adults during the course of their duties should undergo appropriate Disclosure and Barring Service checks).
- Ensure that attendees at functions are aware that parents are responsible for their children's safety, and the location of a dedicated safe place for lost children is clear.
- Display on the website, via the Safeguarding Policy, the relevant safeguarding contacts for advice and help.

Use of facilities by groups with children, young people or vulnerable adults including the Parish Council Chambers and Pavilion.

The Parish Council (or its appointed representatives or tenants) will require the leaders to

- Have in place valid public liability insurance.
- Have a suitable safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adult policy and/or agree to work to the Parish Council's policy and relevant guidance.
- Ensure leaders make their members aware of the Parish Council's Policy and ensure that it is followed whilst using Parish Council facilities.
- Ensure leaders have valid enhanced DBS checks as appropriate and know where the first aid box is.
- Complete risk assessments for individual activities.

Safe working practice

All users of Parish Council facilities must follow safeguarding procedures at all times. They should:

- Never leave children or adults at risk unattended with adults who have not been subject to a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check.
- Plan activities to involve more than one person being present or at least in sight or hearing of others. Alternatively, record, or inform others of their whereabouts and intended action.
- Where possible, have male and female leaders working with a mixed group.
- Ensure registers are complete and attendees are marked in and signed out (under 8's must be collected by a parent/carer).
- Ensure that photos or videos of individuals are not taken without written permission from parents/carers.
- Ensure that any photos that do have permission to be taken, have separate permission for use on social media/websites.
- Ensure they have access to a first aid kit and telephone and know fire procedures.
- Ensure that where a child, young person or vulnerable adult needs assistance with toilet trips and when first aid is required, that this is carried out in pairs or in the latter case that it is carried out where they can be seen.
- When working outside, ensure activities, breaks and clothing are suitable for the weather conditions and that shelter is available where possible.

Expectations of behaviour

All users of Parish Council facilities should:

- Ensure that communications, behaviour and interaction with users should be appropriate and professional.
- Treat each other with respect and show consideration for other groups using the facilities.

- Refrain from any behaviour that involves racism, sexism and bullying, and in addition to report any instances of such behaviour to group leaders, parish councillors, the parish clerk or parents and carers, as appropriate.

Types of Abuse

Abuse or neglect can take many forms:

- Physical abuse means hurting a child or adult at risk, or causing them bodily harm. This might be by hitting, burning, shaking, poisoning, attempted drowning, smothering or anything else that causes physical harm. Children and adults at risk can be particularly vulnerable to domestic violence within the home.
- Neglect is the persistent failure to meet the basic physical or psychological needs of a child or adult at risk. This could include, among other things, failing to provide adequate shelter, clothing, nutrition, medication, health care, or other essential support or services. It can also mean leaving a child alone and at risk. Other people aren't always involved; self-neglect.
- Domestic Abuse – any incident of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. The abuse can encompass, but is not limited to: Psychological, Physical, Sexual, Financial, Emotional.
- Emotional or psychological abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child or adult at risk, by making them feel worthless, for example by allowing them to witness drug misuse or violence; children living in a home environment where there is domestic abuse. Although this form of abuse is non-physical, it can still do immense damage to a person's health and wellbeing.
- Sexual abuse involves forcing or persuading a child or young person to take part in any kind of sexual activity. It can include taking inappropriate photographs, touching, kissing or sexual intercourse. It can also involve causing a child to look at or being involved in pornographic material or videos. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology'.
- Financial Abuse is the theft, unlawful acquisition of malicious control of a child or adult at risk's money, income, property, inheritance or other form of asset. The abuser may be taking money from a bank account or misusing someone's benefits or allowances. Children and adults at risk can be particularly vulnerable to scam phone calls, mail and doorstep.
- Online abuse includes cyber-bullying in which victims are bullied via social media, messaging apps and online forums. Even though it is non-physical, cyber-bullying can be particularly damaging to mental health because victims often feel unable to escape the abuser. Online abuse also includes more exploitative behaviour, such as grooming or enticing child or adult at risk to share intimate photographs or financial information. Under the UK Online Safety Act, many online services must

use effective age-assurance to keep children away from harmful content. Staff should stay alert to online harms, record concerns and escalate where appropriate.

- Socio-Cultural – Across the world there are a few societies or cultures that perpetuate customs and practices, that under our laws, are considered abusive and unlawful including forced marriage, female genital mutilation, honour based violence and witchcraft based child abuse.
- Radicalisation is the process through which someone is encouraged or persuaded to adopt an ideology that supports terrorism.
- Modern Slavery isn't confined to history, it is a very real issue today. Modern slavery can take many forms including forced labour, human trafficking, domestic servitude, and forced sexual exploitation. Victims are typically coerced, deceived or threatened into slavery, and children and adults at risk can be particularly vulnerable.
- Criminal exploitation – Children or adults at risk are coerced, manipulated, intimidated or deceived into taking part in criminal activity.

Signs

Staff and volunteers should be concerned by any action or inaction, which significantly harms the physical and/or emotional development of a child or adult at risk.

- Unexplained bruising, bites
- Self-harm marks
- Burns
- Weight loss or gaunt appearance
- Sudden introverted behaviour
- Inappropriate sexualized or risky behaviour
- Offensive behaviour towards others or uncharacteristic mood swings
- Inadequate or dirty clothing.

None of these signs indicate abuse but they are red flags that might point towards abuse.

Dealing with disclosures

DO's

- Try to remain calm and receptive when someone is disclosing to you that they are being abused.
- Listen and ask questions that help to clarify the facts.
- Make it clear that they were right to tell you.
- Reassure them that they are not responsible for the abuse.
- Finally, let them know that you will do what you can to help.

DON'TS

- As far as possible don't allow your shock or distaste to show.
- Avoid asking leading questions, making assumptions or probing for further information.
- Don't down play the significance of what you are being told.
- Avoid making negative comments about the abuser.
- Don't make promises you can't keep, like agreeing to intervene or keeping the information secret.

Responding to Abuse or an Allegation

If a child, adult at risk or concerned party makes an allegation then the individual receiving this should treat the person's safety as the highest priority and if you feel that they are injured or in danger, call the emergency services on 999 or 102.

If no one is in danger discreetly raise your concerns with the person responsible for safeguarding or your line Manager.

If a person responsible for safeguarding is not available call the non-emergency number on 101.

In other cases where there is a concern these can be reported to the relevant Safeguarding Teams:

Children's safeguarding – 01522 782111 (Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm)

Adults safeguarding – 01522 782155 (Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm)

Or 01522 782333 (outside office hours)

Support with daily living: Call Adult Social Care on 01522 782155.

Self-Neglect. Call Adult Social Care on 01522 782155.

Poor Practice Concerns: If you have concerns about repeated poor quality or service delivery in residential or nursing care homes, homecare, day care, supported living or other contact services, please contact Adult Social Care on 01522 782155.

If you have concerns about domestic abuse, call EDAN Lincs on 01522 510041.

If you have a hearing or speech impairment and have pre-registered with the Relay UK emergency SMS service. You can use the Police textphone service 18000 or text them on 999. If you are a British Sign Language User, you can call 999 BSL to use a remote BSL interpreter.

Visit lincolnshire.gov.uk/safeguarding for further details.

Receiving and Recording an Allegation

- Reassure the person concerned.
- Listen to what they are saying.
- Remain calm and do not show shock or disbelief.
- Tell them that the information will be treated seriously.

- Ask questions to ensure that the full facts are gathered but do not start to investigate or ask detailed probing questions.
- Don't promise to keep it a secret.
- Tell the child or adult at risk what will be done next to get help to keep him/her safe.
- Ensure that they comply with the Parish Council's Data Protection Policy.
- Don't try to investigate or sort the problems yourself.

Disclosures and allegations should be recorded in a timely manner:

- Your name and contact details
- The name and contact details of the child or adult at risk
- An accurate account of what you have been told (Use the individual's words where possible) or what you may have witnessed.
- Any actions you have taken.
- The details of anyone you have discussed the case with (be mindful of confidentiality and data protection). You can pass on someone's personal data if it is necessary to protect someone's vital interest. Vital interests are defined as 'a life or death issue'.

All allegations will be reported to the relevant professional agency or service.

Allegations against staff and volunteers

All staff and volunteers should take care not to place themselves in a vulnerable position with a child or vulnerable adult.

If an allegation is made against a member of staff or volunteer, the person receiving the allegation will immediately inform the Clerk of the Parish Council. An internal investigation may be appropriate. The allegation will be reported to the relevant professional agency or service.

Whistleblowing

All staff and volunteers should be aware of their duty to raise the alarm if they suspect abuse or receive a disclosure of abuse.

Version control and amendment history

| Date approved | Version Number | Revision / amendments made | Review date |
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| 23 March 2026 | V1.0 | New policy | May 2026 |
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