



# **BOGNOR REGIS TOWN COUNCIL PROTECTION OF CHILDREN AND VULNERABLE ADULT POLICY**

**Adopted by the Council at its Meeting held on 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2017**

## **1. PROTECTION POLICY STATEMENT**

Bognor Regis Town Council's duties and services do not often require supervision of children or vulnerable adults, however these groups do use its facilities and at times its staff and members may be in a position where direct assistance is given. The Council is committed to protect children and vulnerable adults from harm. Staff and Members will accept and recognise their responsibilities to develop awareness of the issues which may cause harm to children or vulnerable adults.

For the purposes of the policy, a **child** is anyone under the age of 18 years.

A **vulnerable adult** is someone who by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness is unable to take care of themselves or unable to protect themselves against significant harm or exploitation. An adult for the purposes of this policy is anyone over 18 years of age.

It is acknowledged as a sensitive and difficult issue but one which must be addressed. For this reason, the Council will ensure there is a proportionate balance between civil liberties and safeguarding vulnerable groups, including children.

### **It will endeavour to safeguard children and vulnerable adults by:**

- Stating that the welfare of children/vulnerable adults is paramount
- Adopting child protection/vulnerable adult guidelines through an operational procedure for staff and members
- Sharing information about child protection and good practice with children/vulnerable adults, and parents/guardians
- Sharing information about concerns with agencies that need to know, and involving parents/guardians and children/vulnerable adults where appropriate
- Investigating and responding to all suspicions and allegations of abuse
- Following carefully the procedures for recruitment and selection of staff and volunteers
- Providing effective management for staff throughout supervision, support and training
- Provide suitable training for relevant staff and councillors

The Council's child/vulnerable adult protection policies and guidelines are there to be acted upon to protect staff and Members as well as children and vulnerable adults. Child/vulnerable adult abuse can and does occur outside the family setting and it is important to understand what to look for and how to react.

The Council is committed to regularly reviewing its policy and good practice guidelines.

## **2. OPERATING PROCEDURES**

The Council will maintain an operating procedure which includes sections on:

- The definition of abuse, including the four main areas of abuse-emotional, neglect, physical and sexual (see section 5 of this policy for further explanation)
- Advice on how to recognise the symptoms of abuse
- Understanding the consequences of abuse

- How to react if a child/vulnerable adult says or indicates he/she is being abused
- How to react to suspicions or allegations
- What staff should do if they have concerns
- A nominated officer to be responsible for dealing with issues of abuse or potential abuse
- Undertaking DBS (formerly CRB) checks where appropriate. If staff, members or volunteers are to work in a regulated activity within the Council, the Council will carry out enhanced DBS (formerly CRB) checks and ensure they are not on the Barred list with the Disclosure and Barring Service
- How to keep essential records
- How the Complaints Procedure and/or Disciplinary Procedure will be used to deal with complaints against staff or Members
- How the potential to abuse children/vulnerable adults will be considered during recruitment and selection.

### **3. BOGNOR REGIS TOWN COUNCIL'S STANDARDS**

1. All staff, including trainees, casual and work experience placements, members and volunteers must be DBS (formerly CRB) checked as appropriate and if working within a regulated activity, and ensure they are not on the Barred list with the Disclosure and Barring Service.
2. On initial appointment all volunteers must submit two references (including phone numbers) by reputable individuals (who cannot be family members), which the Town Clerk will check.
3. If the Council becomes aware or is informed of information from a reputable source (e.g. Police, NSPCC, Social Services etc.) that an individual is not suitable to be involved with a Council project, it has the right to stop the individual from having any further involvement in any Council projects or services.
4. A copy of the Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy will be available for inspection at any of the Council's premises by parents, carers, etc.
5. The Town Clerk is appointed as the responsible officer for implementing the Council's Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy.
6. The Town Clerk will report all incidents to the Council's insurers, where the project or service is covered by the Council's insurance policy.

### **4. GOOD PRACTICE**

The Council's activities and services do not generally require the direct supervision of children/vulnerable adults; however areas which may become a regulated activity under current legislation are administration of events and possibly some concessions. The following good practice will however be brought to the attention of all staff. Promoting good practice can reduce the possibility of potentially abusive situations and help to protect staff, councillors and volunteers. The following are more specific examples of care which should be taken when working within a Council context:

- Always be publicly open when working with children/vulnerable adults. Avoid situations where a single member of staff and an individual child/vulnerable adult are working unobserved
- If any form of physical manual support is required, there should always be a second member of staff present or another responsible adult. Care is needed, as it is difficult to maintain hand positions when the child/vulnerable adult is constantly moving. Some parents/guardians are becoming increasingly sensitive

about physical manual support and their views should always be carefully considered

- Council staff should not get directly involved in supervising children/vulnerable adults except in an emergency situation. This should otherwise be left to parents, guardians or siblings or to the leaders of organisations
- As a general rule it makes sense for staff/volunteers not to spend excessive amounts of time alone with children/vulnerable adults
- Always ensure adequate first aid provision is made, particularly at outside events
- Treat all children and people with dignity and respect
- Always be observant and report any concerns to a senior manager
- Always operate within Bognor Regis Town Council's Code of Conduct, principles, guidance, policies and procedures

You should never:

- Engage in rough, physical or sexually provocative games, including horseplay
- Allow or engage in any form of inappropriate touching
- Allow children/vulnerable adults to use inappropriate language
- Make sexually suggestive comments to a child/vulnerable adult, even in fun
- Allow allegations made by a child/vulnerable adult to go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon
- Do things of a personal nature for children/vulnerable adults they can do for themselves

It may in the case of an emergency be necessary for staff to do things of a personal nature for children/vulnerable adults, particularly if they are young or have impairments. These tasks should only be carried out with the full consent of parents or person in charge and the children/vulnerable adults involved. You need to be responsive to the child's/vulnerable adult's reactions - if a child is fully dependent upon you, talk with him/her about what you are doing, give choices where possible, particularly, if you are involved in any dressing or undressing, or where there is physical contact or lifting or assisting a child to carry out a particular activity.

If you accidentally hurt a child/vulnerable adult; he/she seems distressed in any manner; appears to be sexually aroused by your actions; or misunderstands or misinterprets something you have done, report any such incident as soon as possible to the Town Clerk or another colleague and make a brief written note of it. Parents/guardians or carers should be informed of the incident.

## **5. MAIN FORMS OF ABUSE**

### **a. Physical Abuse**

This may involve actions such as hitting, shaking and burning as well as the use of inappropriate restraint. Physical abuse, as well as being a deliberate act, can be caused by an omission or failure to act to protect. In the case of children, it includes the giving of alcohol, inappropriate drugs or poison to them.

### **b. Emotional Abuse**

Emotional abuse is a persistent lack of love and affection. A child may be constantly verbally abused, threatened, ignored or taunted. Other forms of emotional abuse include excessive overprotection and unrealistic pressure to succeed. In addition it

may include intimidation, humiliation, verbal abuse, harassment or discriminatory harassment to adults.

**c. Sexual Abuse**

Involves forcing or enticing a child or vulnerable adult to take part in sexual activities whether or not the child or vulnerable adult is aware of or consents to what is happening. It may also involve non-contact activities such as showing pornographic material, sexual innuendo or encouraging someone to behave in a sexually inappropriate way.

**d. Neglect**

The persistent failure to meet a child's or vulnerable adult's basic physical and/or psychological needs. These needs include adequate food and warm clothing and also medical care, social care and educational services. Neglect may include simply being left alone or excluded.