



WINSFORD TOWN COUNCIL SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE POLICY

PURPOSE OF THIS POLICY

This policy is intended to protect children who receive any service from us, including those who are the children of adults who may receive services from us.

Under this policy, the term 'child/ren' or 'young person' shall mean any person who is under eighteen years of age.

We believe that no child or young person should experience abuse or harm, and we are committed to the protection of children and young people.

This policy is intended to provide guidance and overarching principles to those who represent us as volunteers or staff, to guide our approach to child protection and safeguarding.

We all have a responsibility to promote the welfare of all children and young people and to keep them safe whilst in our care and we recognise that the welfare of the child is paramount, as set out in the Children Act 1989.

Children can be vulnerable to different forms of abuse and harm. It is important to recognise that abuse and harm to children can cover a wide range of circumstances and behaviours.

POLICY APPROVED – 20TH JANUARY 2025

DATE OF REVIEW - TBD (12 MONTHS FROM THE ABOVE DATE)

SAFEGUARDING PRINCIPLES

Safeguarding children from harm and abuse is an important responsibility. We are committed to ensuring that any child who comes into contact with our services is properly safeguarded. Every person under this policy must ensure that they play an active role in ensuring that children are properly safeguarded

THE RISKS TO CHILDREN

Working Together 2023 recognises 4 main categories of abuse.

- Physical
- Emotional
- Sexual
- Neglect

NB. It is important to remember that emotional abuse exists with all of the other types of abuse, although (rarely) it can exist on its own.

It is vital that all staff and volunteers understand the categories of abuse and are able to recognise the signs and symptoms associated with them.

There is an expectation that all staff and volunteers who may have contact with children and young people, access training to help them identify and respond to signs of abuse. This training should be refreshed at least every three years.

IDENTIFYING CONCERNS

Disclosure

Disclosure is the process by which children and young people start to share their experiences of abuse with others. This can take place over a long period of time – it is a journey, not one act or action.

Children may disclose directly or indirectly and sometimes they may start sharing details of abuse before they are ready to put their thoughts and feelings in order.

Not all disclosures will lead to a formal report of abuse, or a case being made or a case being taken to court, but all disclosures should be taken seriously.

It takes extraordinary courage for a child to go through the journey of disclosing abuse.

It is vital that anyone who works with children and young people undertaking this journey is able to provide them with the support they need.

HOW DISCLOSURE HAPPENS

Children and young people may disclose abuse in a variety of ways, including:

- Directly– making specific verbal statements about what's happened to them
- Indirectly – making ambiguous verbal statements which suggest something is wrong

- Behaviourally – displaying behaviour that signals something is wrong (this may or may not be deliberate)
- Non-verbally – writing letters, drawing pictures or trying to communicate in other ways.

Children and young people may not always be aware that they are disclosing abuse through their actions and behaviour.

Sometimes children and young people make partial disclosures of abuse. This means they give some details about what they've experienced, but not the whole picture. They may withhold some information because they:

- Are afraid they will get in trouble with or upset their family
- want to deflect blame in case of family difficulties as a result of the disclosure
- Feel ashamed and/or guilty
- Need to protect themselves from having to relive traumatic events.

When children do speak out it is often many years after the abuse has taken place.

BARRIERS TO DISCLOSURE

There are many reasons why children and young people might find it hard to talk about their experiences of abuse or neglect. They might be reluctant to seek help because they feel they do not have anyone to turn to for support. They may have sought help in the past and had a negative experience, which makes them unlikely to do so again or they may not have the knowledge or words to describe their experience.

Some children and young people may also:

- Blame themselves for the abuse or feel shame or guilt - feelings which can be made worse using 'victim-blaming' language or labelling
- Experience feelings of isolation
- Be afraid of negative reactions from parents, caregivers, peers and professionals
- Worry they will be causing trouble and making the situation worse
- Be concerned about confidentiality
- Feel too embarrassed to talk to an adult about a private or personal problem
- Feel that they will not be taken seriously
- Lack trust in the people around them (including parents) and in the services provided to help them
- Find formal procedures overwhelming
- Not know about the support services available to them, or be unable to access these services

Not all children and young people realise they have experienced abuse, for example if they have been groomed.

SPOTTING THE SIGNS OF ABUSE

Children and young people who have been abused may want to tell someone but not have the exact words to do so. They may attempt to disclose abuse by giving adults clues, through their actions and by using indirect words.

Adults need to be able to notice the signs that a child or young person might be distressed and ask them appropriate questions about what might have caused this.

Examples of additional risks to children include:

- Female genital mutilation (FGM)
- Grooming and exploitation
- Trafficking and modern slavery
- Exposure to or infliction of domestic abuse
- Bullying or cyberbullying
- Exposure to other inappropriate content or behaviour, such as violence or criminal behaviour
- Self-harm
- Physical harm when engaging in activities without adequate supervision

The causal factors of any such harm and/or abuse can also be wide-ranging. For example, children can be placed at risk by family members or by members of the community.

Some children and young people may be particularly vulnerable because of past experiences.

We may need to put in place extra measures to safeguard children and young people who are disabled or from minority ethnic groups.

Every person under this policy holds responsibility for:

- Remaining alert and aware of possible safeguarding risks to children
- Guarding children against harmful environments with appropriate actions (for example, adequate supervision or ensuring safe environments)
- Taking positive steps to maintain the safety and wellbeing of children engaging with us
- Reporting concerns expeditiously and appropriately, in line with the local child protection procedures
- Understanding the duty to report specific concerns (and understanding how this interplays with confidentiality)
- Challenging any inappropriate or harmful behaviour of any other adult and reporting this accordingly
- Acting appropriately in the presence of children
- Not taking any inappropriate risks
- Not smoking, drinking or taking any form of illicit substances in the presence of children.

Everyone has the right to equal protection regardless of age, gender, disability, racial heritage, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, or identity.

To keep children safe whilst visiting our organisation we will:

- Recruit employees that have been vetted and have in place a valid up to date DBS certificate, which will be checked annually.
- Ensure that employees are informed about safeguarding arrangements and procedures.
- Ensure that we have whistleblowing procedures in place
- Check with parents/carers that we can take photos and videos of their children and young people
- Ensure that, where possible, no employee is left alone with a child or young person
- Provide a safe physical environment for children and young people to be in
- We will listen to and respect children and young people always.

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility if you are worried about a child or young person report your concerns to Cheshire West and Chester's Childrens Services via the integrated Access and Referral Team (iART) on 0300 123 7047 (Mon-Thurs 0830-1700hrs Fri 0830-1630hrs). Out of hours (Evenings, weekends, Bank Holidays etc.) Please call the Emergency Duty Team (EDT) on 01244 977 277

Doing nothing is NOT an option.

If you believe that someone is in immediate danger, call the police (999).

The Designated Officer for Safeguarding at Winsford Town Council is Mark Bailey, Town Clerk.

Their contact details are:

Tel: 01606 593582

Email: mbailey@winsford.gov.uk

The Deputy Designated Officer for Safeguarding at Winsford Town Council is Denise French, Deputy Clerk

Their contact details are:

Tel: 01606 593582

Email: dfrench@winsford.gov.uk

BECOMING AWARE OF SAFEGUARDING CONCERNS

Staff may become aware of safeguarding concerns for a child or young person, e.g. anonymous report, third party information, direct report from a child/young person, concerns about a child's appearance, a report about a worker's behaviour towards a child (e.g. LADO) and it is imperative that they are aware of what to do if this event occurs.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU ARE CONCERNED ABOUT A CHILD

It is crucial that staff take all concerns allegations and disclosures seriously.

There is an expectation all staff take action and do not assume someone else is dealing with it.

STAGE 1

- Initially talk to the child about what you are observing. It's okay to ask questions but avoid leading questions.
- Listen carefully and gather as much information as possible.
- Remember it is not Winsford Town Council's responsibility to investigate the concern, but to act on it.
- Explain to the child or young person your responsibility to take action if what they tell you suggests they or another child are at risk of harm.
- Notify the Named person for Safeguarding
- Record the information you have as soon as possible. The person receiving the allegation or who has the concern should be the individual who completes the record and ensure this is signed and dated.
- Remember confidentiality and safe storage of information

STAGE 2

- The Designated Safeguarding Lead should take immediate action if there is any indication that a child has been abused or likely to be abused.
- In such circumstances, the Named person should contact police/ Integrated Access and Referral Team (i-ART). IF a referral is made direct to i-ART this should be followed up in 24 hours to ascertain the outcome.

NB. Parents and Carer's need to be told about any referral to Children's Social Care unless to do so would put the child at greater risk.

SAFER RECRUITMENT

It is important that there are clear processes in place for recruiting staff and volunteers to reduce the risk from individuals who pose a risk to children and young people.

Winsford Town Council have a commitment to safeguarding and protecting children

When recruiting new staff, Winsford Town Council will ensure that we;

- Have a face-to-face interview with prepared questions
- Ensure there is a written question about any criminal convictions, cautions or other legal restrictions on their working with children or any pending cases that could affect their suitability to work with children.
- Check identity by asking them to bring along photographic ID
- Seek explanation for any gaps in employment or educational history.
- Check that the candidate holds the relevant qualifications that they say they have.
- Apply for a DBS check (this should be for all staff/volunteers who have unsupervised contact with children)
- Always check the references provided and ask specifically about their skills and suitability to work with children.

- You should ensure that if recruiting from abroad additional references are taken up and if DBS is not available, a “fit persons” should be sought.

ALLEGATIONS AGAINST STAFF/VOLUNTEERS

Any allegations made against a member of staff/volunteer should be referred to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) – including when the allegation is against the Named person for Safeguarding.

The individual receiving the allegation must ensure the safety and wellbeing of the child and that they are away from the individual against whom the allegation has been made.

Detail for contacting the LADO are on the Safeguarding Children Partnership website for Cheshire West and Chester (www.cheshirewestscp.co.uk)

Regardless of any action taken by the LADO an internal investigation should take place, but this should be done following discussion with the LADO so as not to jeopardise any tandem processes.

MANAGEMENT AND SUPERVISION OF STAFF/VOLUNTEERS

The supervision of staff/volunteers will be co-ordinated by Mark Bailey (see details above).

RECORDING AND MANAGING CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION

All allegations and concerns should be recorded on an incident form and given to the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

A pro-forma for recording concerns/allegations of abuse, harm or neglect will be attached to the policy. This should include details of the child, the person receiving the allegation/noting the concern, date of incident and action taken.

Winsford Town Council are committed to the safe storage and processing of data and comply with GDPR and Data Protection regulations as appropriate.

Children and young people to have a right to confidentiality unless the DSL considers them to be at risk of harm, where this right will be overridden and the appropriate authorities informed.

REVIEWING AND DISSEMINATING POLICIES

This policy should be reviewed annually and signed by the Town Mayor. Policies and Procedures should be displayed in a prominent place e.g. website, information boards. They should be accessible to staff and members of the public. It is a good idea to list where the policies can be accessed and how you will ensure staff and parents are aware.

THE ROLE OF THE COUNCIL

Winsford Town Council should have all policies and procedures approved via the Council. Consequently, the Council must understand they are ultimately accountable for all that happens in their organisation including the implementation of policies and procedures.