



Highwood Parish Council Combined Safeguarding Policy for Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults

Introduction

Children, young people, and vulnerable adults have the right to participate and be safe in the services provided for them, regardless of age, race, disability, culture, or gender. This includes a right to protection from abuse.

Under the Children Act 2004 and the Apprenticeships Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009, Chelmsford City Council has a duty to co-operate with Essex County Council in discharging its duties as a Children's Services Authority and to promote the well-being of children and young people.

Highwood Parish Council carries out its responsibilities by ensuring that the needs and interests of children, young people, and vulnerable adults are considered by all Councillors, employees, volunteers, and contracted services when taking decisions in relation to service provision.

Policy Statement

Highwood Parish Council provides a wide range of services and facilities. This policy aims to ensure that an overarching approach to safeguarding covers all services. Highwood Parish Council will promote the welfare and protection of children, young people, and vulnerable adults within all services by:

- Respecting the rights, wishes, feelings, and privacy of children, young people, and vulnerable adults.
- Preventing abuse by promoting good practice, creating a safe and healthy environment, and avoiding situations where abuse or allegations of abuse occur.
- Taking seriously and responding appropriately and promptly to all concerns, incidents, and allegations.
- Providing training appropriate to the level of involvement with children, young people, and vulnerable adults to ensure that employees understand the different forms of abuse, as well as their roles and responsibilities under the Council's Codes of Conduct and the Combined Safeguarding Policy.
- Requiring organisations that the Council contracts with or that provide the Council with services to have appropriate safeguarding policies and procedures in place.
- Not tolerating harassment of any Councillors, employees, volunteers, contracted service providers, or children/vulnerable adults who raise concerns of abuse.
- Ensuring that unsuitable people are prevented from working with children, young people, and vulnerable adults through the Council's 'Safe Recruitment Procedure'.
- Maintaining at least two emergency contacts per child/vulnerable adult where applicable.
- Providing clear guidance on mandatory reporting duties, in compliance with the latest legislation (see section 3.1).

In order to stay at the forefront of safeguarding, Highwood Parish Council is committed to reviewing its safeguarding policies and procedures at least on an annual basis.

This policy applies to all services within the scope of Highwood Parish Council. In addition to employees and Councillors, it also applies to volunteers, outside hirers, outside organisations delivering services on behalf of contractors, and grant-funded organisations.

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1. Definitions

1.1 Abuse - Is a violation of an individual's human and civil rights by any other person or persons. Abuse may consist of a single act or repeated acts. It may be physical, verbal, or psychological; it may be an act of neglect or an omission to act, or it may occur when a vulnerable person is persuaded to enter into a financial or sexual transaction to which they have not consented or cannot consent. Abuse can occur in any relationship and may result in significant harm to, or exploitation of, the person subjected to it. (No Secrets DH 2000)

1.2 Domestic abuse - Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, or 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. This can encompass, but is not limited to, the following types of abuse:

- Psychological
- Physical
- Sexual
- Financial
- Emotional
- Discriminatory
- Institutional

1.3 Controlling behaviour is: a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance, and escape, and regulating their everyday behaviour.

1.4 Coercive behaviour is: an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation, and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim." This definition includes so-called 'honour' based violence, female genital mutilation (FGM), and forced marriage (definitions below), and it is clear that victims are not confined to one gender or ethnic group.

1.5 Children and young people – Anyone under the age of 18 years.

1.6 Parents – This term is used in its broadest sense to include parents, carers, and guardians.

1.7 Vulnerable adult – A person over the age of 18 is considered to be 'vulnerable' when (for reasons of mental health, learning disability or other disability, age, or illness) they require community care services to take care of themselves, or are unable to protect themselves against significant harm or exploitation. A vulnerable person is at a risk of abuse: physical, sexual, emotional, discriminatory, institutional, financial, neglect, and acts of omission. This includes having property/money stolen or misused; being defrauded; being put under pressure in relation to money/property.

1.8 Safeguarding – Includes all forms of activity that aim to protect or promote the welfare of a group of people. This generally includes: prevention, raising awareness, activities designed to promote inclusion, providing personalised benefit and risk management, and specialist safeguarding services. The first three examples in the above list are the most relevant to Highwood Parish Council.

2. Safeguarding Responsibilities

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In Essex, safeguarding children, young people, and vulnerable adults is an inter-agency responsibility involving the city/borough/district councils, Essex County Council, the Essex Safeguarding Children Board, and the Essex Safeguarding Adults Board.

2.1 The role of Highwood Parish Council

It is the responsibility of all employees and Councillors to adhere to best practices, participate in relevant training (as detailed in Annex C), and report any concerns, incidents, or allegations to a designated person in accordance with the relevant procedure set out below. Safeguarding reports cannot be anonymous and should be made in the knowledge that, during the course of inquiries, they may be required as a prosecution witness.

3. Reporting and Responding to Concerns

3.1 Mandatory Reporting of Child Sexual Abuse

3.1.1 New Legal Duty: Anyone working in regulated activity with children must report to the police or local authority if they become aware that a child is being sexually abused, either by direct disclosure or by witnessing abuse.

3.1.2 Reporting Process: Reports must be made as soon as reasonably practicable. If there is a risk to the child's life, reporting may be delayed by up to seven days to manage that risk.

3.1.3 Delegation: Staff may refer concerns to the designated safeguarding lead, who is then responsible for notifying authorities.

3.1.4 Sanctions: Failure to report can result in referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service and professional regulators, potentially barring individuals from working with children. There is also a new criminal offence for deterring someone from reporting, punishable by up to seven years' imprisonment.

3.2 Reporting Procedure

If anyone has any cause for concern:

1. Immediately report the concern to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)
2. If the DSL is unavailable, report to:

Clerk of the Council

clerk@highwoodparishcouncil.gov.uk

3.3 Information Sharing

The Parish Council will share information with other agencies as required by law, and in accordance with data protection legislation. This includes sharing information with:

- Local Authorities
- Police
- Health Services
- Other relevant agencies

We will adhere to the principles of the Essex Safeguarding Children Board and Essex Safeguarding Adults Board when sharing information.

4. Safer Recruitment

Highwood Parish Council is committed to safer recruitment practices. All staff and volunteers who work with children, young people, or vulnerable adults will undergo appropriate background checks, including:

- DBS checks
- Reference checks
- Interviews
- Risk assessments

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5. Training and Awareness

All Councillors, employees, and volunteers will receive appropriate safeguarding training.

6. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed annually, or more frequently if required due to changes in legislation or guidance.

7. Children Not in School Register

The Parish Council will co-operate with the Local Authority with regard to the Children Not in School Register.

8. Unique Identifier

The Parish Council will co-operate with the Local Authority with regard to any unique identifier program.

If anyone has any cause for concern please contact:

Clerk of the Council

clerk@highwoodparishcouncil.gov.uk