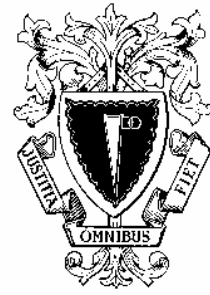


Dunstable Town Council Child Protection Guidelines

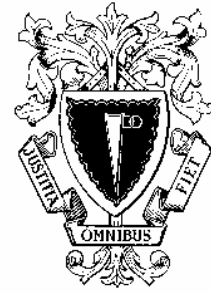


It is possible to reduce situations for the abuse of children by promoting good practice

RESPONDING TO CHILD ABUSE.

- Child Abuse can be interpreted as not taking action to protect a child you believe to be at risk of significant harm
- It is not your responsibility to decide if child abuse has occurred, however it is your responsibility to take action regardless of how small your concern.
- Inform an officer who will take responsibility for seeking any additional advice for contacting Social Services Department, and the Police. The agency receiving the referral will take responsibility for ensuring that the appropriate investigation is undertaken and the child protected. Dunstable Town Council is a referral agency not an investigating agency.
- Don't take sole responsibility; consult an officer so that together you can begin to protect the child and also so that you can get support for yourself in what could be a difficult and distressing situation.
- Always be publicly open when working with children. Avoid any situation where you and an individual child are completely unobserved.
- If a child requires first aid this should be administered in an open environment if this is not possible then inform parents/carers or have another worker/volunteer present with you.
- Where appropriate parents should take responsibility for their children when using changing rooms.
- Respect a Child's right to privacy
- Avoid situations that compromise your relationship with children and that are unacceptable in a relationship of trust.
- Remember that someone else might misinterpret your action, no matter how well intentioned.

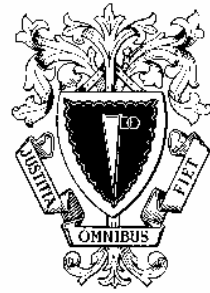
Dunstable Town Council Child Protection Guidelines



DO NOT:

- Permit abusive activities (ridiculing bullying etc)
- Spend excessive amounts of time alone with children away from others.
- Take children alone on car journeys, however short or Invite or allow children to stay at your home unsupervised.
- Take children to your home where they will be alone with you.
- Have inappropriate physical or verbal contact with others.
- Share a room with a child
- If a case arises where the above situations are unavoidable they should only occur with the full knowledge and consent of an Officer or child's parent/carer.
- Make suggestive remarks or gestures, even in fun
- Let suspicion, disclosure or allegations of abuse go unrecorded or reported.
- Rely on just your good name to protect you.
- Believe it could not happen to me.

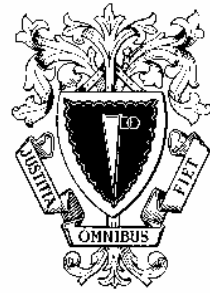
Dunstable Town Council Child Protection Guidelines



LISTENING TO THE CHILD.

- Remember a child's welfare is paramount and this must be the most important consideration.
- Do advise a child that you are willing to listen but that you may have to pass the information on. You can not keep secrets
- Listen carefully to any complaint or allegation by the child, tell and show the child that you are taking them seriously.
- If a child's behaviour or your observations give rise to concern, then talk to the child sensitively to find out if anything is worrying them. Do not make suggestions or lead the conversation.
- If a child makes a disclosure do not ask questions
- Write down as soon as possible what the child has said using his/her terminology. Do not interrupt.
- Alleviate feelings of guilt and isolation, whilst passing no judgement.
- Stay calm; do not take hasty or inappropriate action.

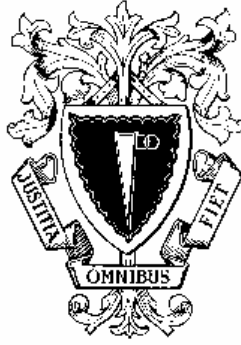
Dunstable Town Council Child Protection Guidelines



ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE AGAINST A COUNCIL EMPLOYEE/VOLUNTEER OR EMPLOYEE/VOLUNTEER OF AN ORGANISATION WORKING WITHIN THE TOWN COUNCILS REMIT.

- Remember it is the child's welfare, which is of paramount importance.
- Follow the sections dealing with 'listening to a child'
- Refer the matter to an officer so that the appropriate procedure can be followed.
- If your concern is about an officer, then seek advice of another officer who will then ensure that the appropriate procedure is followed.
- When there is an allegation of abuse by an employee/volunteer of the Town Council, the Town Council will operate their disciplinary procedures.
- The Police and Social Services will be informed at the first stage of any investigation.
- If an allegation of abuse is made against an employee/volunteer who works for an organisation, sub-contractor, and hirer or is an agent of the Town Council or using the facilities of the Town Council. Then that employee/volunteer will be denied access to that forum, and any other under the Town Councils remit, until a full and appropriate investigation is completed and the Town Council is assured that a reoccurrence of events are no longer possible. The Town Council reserves the right to continue to deny access until it is fully satisfied that all appropriate action has been taken.
- If a referrer first contacts their line manager, then it is the responsibility of that manager or Officer of that organisation to inform the Town Council immediately. The Town Council will treat it as a breach of discipline if they are not informed and it subsequently brought to their attention.

- The Children Act 1989 includes all children and young people up to the age of 18yrs



Dunstable Town Council
Child Protection Policy
Statement of Intent

Dunstable Town Council believes that every child, regardless of age, has the right, at all times and in all situations, to feel safe and protected from any practice or situation that results in the child being at risk from significant harm.

(Above statement to be displayed in all centres)

This policy is aimed at collaborative working between agencies, groups and individual staff to better protect the children with whom we work. The Town Council understands that working together positively requires knowledge, understanding and respect for the professional roles of individuals, groups and agencies. It does however recognise that the well being of the child is paramount and therefore the failure to share information and follow the appropriate sequence for reporting incidents of abuse or allegations of abuse could result in a child suffering.

The Children Act 1989, includes all children and young people up to the age of 18yrs

Definition of significant Harm

Dunstable Town Council uses the definition for Significant Harm as taken from the Children Act 1989, PART IV (10)

“Where the question of whether harm suffered by a child is significant turns on the child's health and development, his health or development shall be compared with that which could reasonably be expected of a similar child?”

Child abuse is divided into 4 categories which are:

Emotional abuse - is when a child is made to feel unloved, inadequate, stupid, frightened, threatened, or blamed deliberately by an adult or another young person. Another form of emotional abuse is when a child is put at risk of danger by an adult or another young person. A child may have higher expectations put upon him/her than is appropriate to his/her age. All other forms of abuse involve an element of emotional ill treatment.

Physical abuse - is when a child is hit, shaken, thrown, poisoned, scalded, burnt, drowned, suffocated or such like by an adult or another young person which causes physical harm to the child. Physical abuse is also the failure to prevent actual or likely physical harm to a child by failing to report actual or likely abuse. A worker suspecting actual or likely abuse does have a **duty of care** to report any suspicions by following the appropriate sequence for referral.

Neglect - is when a child's basic needs are not met. That is, the child is not given the right food, drink, shelter, clothing, warmth, or hygiene, which results in the child's health and development being impaired. Neglect is also the failure to protect a child from danger. Neglect is also psychological, when a child's basic emotional and educational needs are not met.

Sexual abuse - Which can include non-contact activities, when a child is shown photographs or other images depicting sexual content inappropriate to the child's age and understanding by an adult or another young person? Sexual abuse is when child is forced to watch pornography or sexual activity. Sexual abuse can be when sexual suggestions or gestures are made to a child inappropriate to the child's age or understanding by an adult or another young person. Physical sexual abuse is when a child is forced or enticed into sexual behaviour by an adult or another young person. This includes touching and non-penetrative contact as well as penetrative sexual acts.

When the term '**significant harm**' is referred to within this policy, it pertains to The Children's Act 1989, PART IV (10)

Dunstable Town Council accepts that it is the responsibility of the Council to ensure that all adults, either employees or volunteers, with access to children, be properly vetted via the Criminal Records Bureau.

For the purpose of this document, the remit of the Town Council is defined as any work with children within buildings, parks, gardens, and play schemes. It also includes any work with children facilitated in the name of the Town Council or by the Town Council acting as agents for other organisations.

Any group, organisation or agency working within the Town Councils remit will be expected to have their own Child Protection Policy and must be willing to work within the guidelines of Dunstable Town Council's Child Protection Policy.

Any individual wanting to work with children will have to undergo a Criminal Records Bureau check and be willing to work within the guidelines of the Town Council's Child Protection Policy.

All groups, individuals, or organisations working within the Town Council's remit will be given a copy of the Town Council's Child Protection Policy.

All volunteers will undergo the same recruitment process in line with the Town Council's recruitment, training and induction process including an application form, references and checks via the Criminal Records Bureau. Volunteers will also be given a role description outlining their duties.

Child Protection training will be made available to the Town Council's staff and volunteers.

Periodically the Town Council will make available child protection training to organisations and agencies working within the remit of the Town Council

Confidentiality

Children's confidentiality will be respected at all time unless he/she is deemed to be at risk of significant harm or discloses that a sibling or similar may be at risk from significant harm, from an adult or another young person.

If during a conversation a child begins to disclose information of a sensitive nature, that suggests they have been abused, the worker must explain to the child that they (the worker/volunteer) "cannot keep this information secret". However, the child should be told that the information would only be passed to professionals who need to know about the incident and who can support the child. Please refer to the section on appropriate listening.

All organisations or agencies will be required to have a confidentiality policy in line with The Town Council's Child Protection Policy, whilst working within the remit of the Town Council.

Working with under fives

Working with babies or small children in nappies, care should be taken when attending to the child if the nappy needs changing. ALWAYS inform a colleague of what you are doing and if possible, a second worker should be present or in view of both you and the child. However, the child's dignity should be respected at all times. Do not spend longer than necessary alone with the child. This is to protect the worker/volunteer from allegations of abuse. Although, if whilst attending to the child's needs you suspect the child has been the victim of abuse follow the procedure for referral.

Younger children may require help with going to the toilet and it is good practice to inform a colleague of what you are doing and if possible a second worker should be present or in view of both you and the child at all times. However, the child's dignity should be respected at all times and the child's right to privacy should be respected too. Do not spend any longer than necessary alone with the child. This is to protect the worker/volunteer from allegations. Although, if whilst attending to the child's needs if you suspect abuse follow the sequence for referral.

Working with disabled children.

Similar procedures apply when working with children with disabilities. Disabled children may require help with intimate tasks but the dignity of the child is paramount and the child should not be made to feel like that his/her personal privacy is being compromised. Disabled children may be more at risk of abuse for a number of reasons. They may require more help than children without disabilities to perform intimate tasks; restricted speech or the lack of vocabulary may make it difficult for a child with disabilities to communicate the abuse suffered. When working with a child with disabilities, if any abuse is suspected follow the sequence for referrals.

Duty of care

All adults working within the remit of the Town Council, either as paid or volunteer workers, have a duty of care to the children with whom they work. This means that the failure to report any suspicions of abuse could result in a child being harmed. The guiding principle is the welfare of the child and the sequence for referral must be followed. The worker's/volunteer's suspicion of abuse should be passed to the named person at Dunstable Town Council, (*current designated officers listed at page 9*) who will then inform the police or/and social services. Whilst it is the responsibility of a worker/volunteer to refer his/her suspicions to the named person, the worker/volunteer's responsibility ends once information has been passed onto the named person. In some cases a worker may have to give a statement to a Town Council official, the police or social services.

Reporting incidents

If a worker/volunteer suspects that a child has been abused, or if a child has informed the worker/volunteer of abuse, the worker/volunteer must report this to the named person on the sequence for referral immediately. Once his/her suspicions have been passed to the named person, (*current designated officers listed at page 9*) along with any written notes of the conversation had with the child making the allegation, the responsibility of the worker/volunteer ends. Although as previously stated, a worker/volunteer may have to make a statement to the police or social services. Any worker reporting an incidence of suspected abuse is entitled to additional supervision or counseling. **NB** notes of a conversation with a child should be made as soon as possible after the conversation and not during the conversation. Please refer to the appropriate listening section of this document for further guidance.

If the referrer is not a Town Council employee and he/she first contacts his/her line manager, then it is the responsibility of that manager or officer of that organisation to inform the Town Council immediately. The manager/officer of the organisation or agency will be expected to refer suspicions of abuse to the police and /or social services and the named person at the Town Council. (*Current designated officers listed at page 9*) The Town Council will treat it as breach of contract if it is not informed and the referral is subsequently brought to the attention of the Town Council.

Employment/action taken

If an allegation of abuse is made against a worker, either paid or voluntary, working directly for the Town Council, that person will be suspended from duties working with children until a full and appropriate investigation has taken place. This is for the protection of the child and the worker. Once the Town Council is satisfied that the accusation was unfounded or a reoccurrence of events is no longer possible, the worker will be re-instated, but will be expected to have regular supervision with a line manager.

If an allegation of abuse is made against an employee/volunteer who works for an organisation, sub-contractor, and hirer or is an agent of the Town Council or using the facilities of the Town Council. Then that employee/volunteer will be denied access to that forum, and any other under the Town Councils remit, until a full and appropriate investigation is completed and the Town Council is assured that a reoccurrence of events are no longer possible. The Town Council reserves the right to continue to deny access until it is fully satisfied that all appropriate action has been taken.

Named Person:
Richard Walden
Town Clerk

Helen Hupton
Deputy Town Clerk

Rosemary Smith
Finance and Administration Manager

Michele Alexander
Culture and Regeneration Manager

Kay Winton
Performance and Environment Manager

Michael McGann
Youth and Community Manager