

Coleford Parish Council

Safeguarding and Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy

*This policy was adopted by the Council 12th July 2017
Reviewed and approved May 2020
Reviewed and approved August 2021
REVIEWED MAY 2023
Reviewed July 2025*

1. Policy coverage

1.1 Coleford Parish Council is responsible for the oversight, administration and maintenance of public facilities in Coleford, including Highbury Playing Field and Changing Rooms, Coleford Playing Field, and several play areas. These facilities are used by a number of local organisations, societies, clubs and groups, some of which may include children and / or vulnerable adults.

1.2 This policy sets out the conditions and procedures to be followed by the Parish Council itself and which the Council expects all users of its facilities to follow. Each user group which involves or comes into contact with children and / or vulnerable adults is expected to have its own policy to cover its situation and activities.

2. Purpose

2.1 Coleford Parish Council aims to ensure that all children and adults using its facilities are safe, protected and adequately supervised as appropriate to the activities in which they are engaged.

2.2 Coleford Parish Council will ensure that this policy is understood and followed by all of its members, staff and volunteers and by the users of its facilities.

3. Definitions of abuse

3.1 Abuse is any form of physical, emotional or sexual mistreatment, neglect or lack of care that leads to injury or harm.

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, cyber and text bullying or discriminatory harassment towards children or 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.

3.2 Disabled adults and children may be particularly vulnerable to abuse and may have added difficulties in communicating what is happening to them. Dependency on others for primary needs, e.g. feeding and clothing, may make a person feel powerless to report abusive treatment.

4. Nominated person

4.1 The Parish Council's nominated person, with overall responsibility for maintaining and monitoring the effectiveness of this policy and its procedures, is Philip Ham, Chairman of the Parish Council, 01373 812152,

4.2 Each user group is expected to have its own nominated person, whose name and contact details must be displayed where the group meets for members and relatives to access easily.

5. Recruitment

5.1 All Parish Councillors, staff, volunteers and officials of user groups who regularly deliver activities for children and or vulnerable adults will be checked through the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS).

5.2 From 12th July 2017 all employees and volunteers who will work with children and / or vulnerable adults must possess up to date certificates issued by the DBS before they can be legally employed. This will also apply to the users of Parish Council facilities.

5.3 Volunteers and members of user groups in a non-supervisory position must have, as a minimum, two references that have been followed up and are satisfactory.

5.4 Those who have not been checked through the DBS must never be left alone with vulnerable adults or children and must not be placed in any supervisory position.

6. Training

6.1 The Parish Council's nominated person will attend certified Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults, Child Protection, Risk Assessment and Health & Safety training, the cost to be covered by Coleford Parish Council.

6.2 Safeguarding vulnerable adult and child protection issues and procedures will be presented and understood during induction of all Parish Councillors, staff, volunteers and officials of user groups. This will include awareness of the signs and indicators of abuse, and the action to take if abuse is suspected.

7. Procedures

7.1 When engaged in activities involving vulnerable adults and/or children, **all Parish Councillors, staff, volunteers and officials of user groups must be fully aware of**

the Guidelines for Working with Children and Vulnerable Adults at Appendix A to this policy.

7.2 The procedure for responding to a child or vulnerable adult who says that they or another person are being abused and for responding to allegations against members, staff, volunteers, officials of user groups or other persons is:

- 1) Allow the person to speak without interruption, accepting what is said, but **do not** investigate.
- 2) Alleviate feelings of guilt and isolation, while passing no judgement. Reassure them that they did the right thing by talking to you.
- 3) Advise that you will try to offer support, but that you **MUST** pass the information on.
- 4) Record the facts as you know them.
- 5) Refer the allegation immediately and directly to:
 - i. for user group activities, the group's own nominated person (if the group's nominated person is not available or is implicated, refer to the Parish Council's nominated person)
 - ii. for Parish Council activities, the Parish Council's nominated person (if the nominated person is not available or is implicated, refer to the vice chairperson of the Parish Council).
- 6) Refer all allegations, no matter how insignificant they seem or when they occur.
- 7) Try to ensure that no one is placed in a position which could cause further compromise.

7.3 Action to be taken by the nominated person as soon as possible and in any event within 24 hours:

- 1) Record dates, times, facts, observations, verbatim speech, if possible, as soon as possible after the incident or disclosure has occurred.
- 2) Ensure correct details are available for young person's/vulnerable adult's name and address, and the name and address of their parent or carer.
- 3) Immediately contact Social Services through Somerset Direct (0300 123224). Ask for a duty officer and indicate that you wish to discuss a matter of child/vulnerable person protection. Ask for the name of the person to whom you are speaking.
- 4) Do not filter out or withhold any information.
- 5) Ask if there is anyone else who should be informed.
- 6) Prepare a confidential file. Record all notes, conversations and advice from Social Services. Every effort should be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned. Information should be stored in a secure place with limited access to designated people, in line with data protection legislation.
- 7) Follow the advice from Social Services. Take no other action unless advised

7.4 Responding to concerns about a vulnerable adult's or child's welfare where there has been no specific disclosure or allegation:

- 1) All Parish Councillors, staff, volunteers and members of user groups are encouraged to share concerns with the Parish Council's nominated person. The

Parish Council's nominated person will, if appropriate, make a referral to Social Services.

- 2) Recognising abuse is not easy. The list below provides some indicators. However, it is not exhaustive and these indicators do not, on their own, provide confirmation:
 - Unexplained or suspicious injuries, e.g. bites or bruising.
 - An injury for which the explanation seems inconsistent or which has not been treated adequately.
 - Change in behaviour, including becoming withdrawn or aggressive.
 - Displaying inappropriate sexual awareness for their age.
 - Refusal to remove clothing for normal activities, e.g. swimming.
 - Looking neglected in appearance.
 - Losing or putting on weight for no apparent reason.
 - Lack of trust in adults.

7.5 Dealing with allegations of abuse against Parish Councillors, staff, volunteers or officials of user groups:

- 1) All allegations against Parish Councillors, staff, volunteers or officials of user groups should be referred to the Parish Council's nominated person:
- 2) The Parish Council's nominated person will immediately notify Social Services of the allegation. The allegation must not be discussed with the accused person at any stage, as an external enquiry will be made.
- 3) The person accused will be suspended immediately in accordance with their contract or terms of membership, pending the results of the external investigation or assessment.

7.6 Use of video and photography:

- 1) The use of photographs and images of children and vulnerable adults will be controlled to prevent possible misuse. In general, agreement must be sought from parents or carers that images can be used as appropriate.
- 2) This applies to all user groups.

8. Review

8.1 This policy will be reviewed and renewed annually, as part of the Parish Council's key policies and procedures during April / May.

Appendix A

Coleford Parish Council Guidelines for Working with Vulnerable Adults and Children

These guidelines apply to all those involved in activities organised by Coleford Parish Council or by the users of its facilities.

You must:

- ☐ **Prepare risk assessments** of proposed activities as required, taking advice as necessary from the Parish Council's nominated person.
 - ☐ Carry out and sign off **risk minimisation actions** identified.
 - ☐ **Maintain adequate adult to child ratios:**
 - 1/8 for under 8 year olds;
 - 1/10 for over 8 year olds.
- (Note: These ratios may be further reduced if necessary for a particular activity or to meet access requirements).
- ☐ **Exercise your right to refuse** to lead activities, in any setting, if these ratios are not maintained and adequate support is not provided. (In such cases, the Parish Council's nominated person should be notified immediately).
 - ☐ **Treat everyone with respect**, regardless of their age, ethnicity, social background, ability, sexual orientation, culture or religious beliefs.
 - ☐ **Provide an example of good conduct** you wish others to follow.
 - ☐ **Plan activities** which involve more than one other person being present, or at least which are within sight or hearing of others.
 - ☐ **Always ask a vulnerable adult's or child's permission** if they need help of a personal nature, e.g. going to the toilet.
 - ☐ **Respect** a person's right to personal privacy.
 - ☐ **Provide access** for young people to talk to others about any concerns they may have.
 - ☐ **Encourage** young people and adults to feel comfortable and caring enough to point out attitudes or behaviours they do not like.
 - ☐ **Recognise** that special caution is required when you are discussing sensitive issues, such as bullying, bereavement, abuse or personal development.
 - ☐ **Recognise that some adults or children will be more vulnerable** to abuse than others, and may face extra barriers in getting help because of their race, gender, age, religion, disability, sexual orientation, social background or culture.
 - ☐ **Challenge** unacceptable behaviour and report all allegations/suspensions of abuse.
 - ☐ **Take every precaution** to ensure that your actions cannot be misconstrued, e.g. physical contact.
 - ☐ **Wear appropriate clothing** and be identifiable at all times.

You must not:

- ☐ **Be alone** in a secluded place with a vulnerable adult or child at any time.
- ☐ **Engage in physical horseplay**, such as wrestling or tickling.
- ☐ **Have any inappropriate verbal or physical contact** with vulnerable adults or children, or make suggestive remarks or gestures.
- ☐ **Permit abusive youth peer activities** (e.g. initiation ceremonies, ridiculing, bullying, etc.).

Participate in physical contact games with vulnerable adults or children other than as a supervisor, umpire or referee.

- ☐ **Ask vulnerable adults or children or to do things that are potentially dangerous**, illegal or otherwise unreasonable.
- ☐ **Smoke or be under the influence of drink or drugs** in the presence of vulnerable adults or children.
- ☐ **Engage in swearing** or any other kind of verbal abuse, e.g. teasing, sarcasm, belittling.
- ☐ **Engage in hitting**, smacking or any other kind of physical abuse.
- ☐ **Take unaccompanied vulnerable adults or children in your car**, unless you have the written consent of the parent or carer for that specific journey .
- ☐ **Give out their personal details**, or arrange to meet vulnerable adults or children outside of formal group activities.
- ☐ **Jump to conclusions** about others without checking the facts.
- ☐ **Exaggerate or trivialise** abuse issues.
- ☐ **Show favouritism** to any individual.
- ☐ **Rely on just your good name** to protect you.
- ☐ **Believe it could “never happen to me”**.
- ☐ **Take chances** when common sense, policy or practice suggest a more prudent approach.
- ☐ **Allow allegations made to go unchallenged**, unrecorded or not acted upon.

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