

CROWBOROUGH TOWN COUNCIL
Caring for Crowborough

CHILD PROTECTION AND VULNERABLE PERSONS POLICY

Crowborough Town Council is committed to creating and maintaining the safest possible environment for children, young people and vulnerable adults.

The Town Council will endeavour to safeguard children and vulnerable persons, in that:

- The welfare of the child and vulnerable adult is paramount;
- All children and vulnerable adults have the right to protection from abuse;
- All suspicions and allegations of abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately;
- All staff, volunteers and elected Members of the Council have a responsibility to report concerns to the appropriate officer;
- All staff, volunteers and elected Members are not to deal with situations of abuse or to decide if abuse has occurred.

As part of the overall Child Protection and Vulnerable Persons policy the Council has adopted Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) checks on all staff and Members of the Council. In line with best practice, these checks will be repeated every four years. Whilst the information provided by the CRB is important in terms of staff employment the Council recognises that this is only part of the overall policy to create and sustain a safe environment for children and vulnerable persons that use our services and engage with staff, elected Members and volunteers.

Policy Statement

"Crowborough Town Council is committed to taking all reasonable precautions to safeguard the welfare of children and vulnerable persons that use its services and promotes a safeguarding culture and environment."

A child is defined as a person under the age of 18 (The Children Act 1989).

Policy Aims

The aim of the Council's policy is to promote good practice:

- Providing children and vulnerable persons with appropriate safety and protection whilst using a Council service or engaging with staff, volunteers and elected Members. This means ensuring that all places where activities take place have had appropriate risk assessments and that any persons supervising or helping in the activity has the appropriate training, vetting and/or qualification.

- Allow all staff, volunteers and elected Members to make informed and confidential responses to specific child protection and vulnerable person issues.

This policy is to be used in conjunction with the Council's Risk Management Policy, Health and Safety Policy, Equal Opportunities Policy, Complaints Policy and Grievance Procedure.

Promoting Good Practice

Good practice protects not only children and vulnerable adults but also staff, volunteers and elected Members. In addition, promoting good practice also protects the Council which is responsible for the provision of services children and vulnerable people may use.

By following good practice and the guidelines laid out in this policy, Crowborough Town Council can reassure the community it serves that it is taking all reasonable precautions to safeguard the welfare of children and vulnerable adults.

Code of Conduct and Good Practice Guidelines

These guidelines have been devised to protect children and vulnerable adults as well as to protect staff, volunteers and Members from positions where false allegations may occur.

The following guidelines apply to those working with vulnerable persons, children or young people involved in activities by or on behalf of Crowborough Town Council or at services provided by Crowborough Town Council.

DO:

- Treat everyone with respect and take notice of their reactions to your tone of voice and manner
- 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
- Respect a person's right to personal privacy
- Encourage young people and adults to feel comfortable and caring enough to point out attitudes or behaviour they do not like
- Avoid physical horseplay such as wrestling or tickling
- Remember that someone else might misinterpret your actions, no matter how well-intentioned
- Recognise that special caution is required in moments when you are discussing sensitive issues, such as bullying, bereavement, abuse or personal development

- Challenge unacceptable behaviour and report all allegations/suspensions of abuse
- Be identifiable and wear a name badge at all times

DO NOT:

- Have any inappropriate verbal or physical contact with children, young people or vulnerable persons or make suggestive remarks or gestures
- Permit abusive youth peer activities (.e.g. initiation ceremonies, ridiculing, bullying)
- Play physical contact games with vulnerable or young people
- Jump to conclusions about others without checking facts
- Ask young people to do things that are potentially dangerous, illegal or otherwise unreasonable
- 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 suggests a more prudent approach
- Allow allegations made by a child or vulnerable person to go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon

AVOID

- Spending too much time alone with a child
- Giving a child a lift in your car
- Taking a child to your home

If some of these situations are unavoidable, try to get parental permission first. If this is not possible make sure you let parents know what has happened as soon as you can.

Complaints Procedure

It is important that the Council maintains an open culture where employees, elected Members, volunteers, children, vulnerable persons and parents feel able to express concerns both about child protection issues and issues of poor practice.

The Council's Complaints Policy is available at the Town Hall or to download from the Council's website (www.crowboroughtowncouncil.gov.uk)

Responding to Allegations or Suspensions

If you suspect a vulnerable person, child or young person is being abused, emotionally, physically or sexually:

1. Tell your line manager
2. Record any facts, which support your suspicions
3. Agree with other adults involved what action, if any, to be taken.

If a person discloses to you abuse by someone else:

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
3. Advise that you will try to offer support, but that you must pass the information on
4. Same steps as 1-2 as in suspecting a person is being abused.

If you receive an allegation about any adult or about yourself:

1. Immediately tell your line manager
2. Record the facts as you know them
3. Try to ensure no one is placed in a position which could cause further compromise

You must refer; you must not investigate

Procedure following allegation or suspicion of child abuse

- a) All allegations/suspicions are to be referred immediately and directly to your Line Manager or Town Clerk
- b) No investigation or questioning is to be undertaken. If a Line Manager excluding the Town Clerk is implicated, refer direct to the Town Clerk. If the Town Clerk is implicated, refer directly to Town Mayor of the Council. If a Member (i.e. a Town Councillor) is implicated refer directly to the Town Clerk. All allegations/suspicions are to be referred, no matter how insignificant they seem to be, or when they occur.
- c) Action to be taken by the person receiving the referral as soon as possible and, in any event, within 24 hours.
 - i. Write down notes, dates, times, facts, observations, verbatim speech and, if possible, as soon as possible/as soon as is practicable after the incident or disclosure has occurred.
 - ii. Ensure correct details available: young person's name and address, and name and address of parent/guardian.
 - iii. Immediately contact Social Services, East Sussex County Council

Ask for duty officer and indicate that you wish to discuss a matter of child/vulnerable person protection. Ask for the name of the person

with whom you are speaking. Discuss (no information is to be filtered or withheld). Await advice. Ask if there is anyone else who should be informed.

iv. Inform the District Council's Monitoring Officer (Head of Legal Services, Wealden District Council).

v. Prepare a confidential file. Record all notes, all conversations, advice from Social Services. Every effort should be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned.

vi. Information should be stored in a secure place with limited access to designated people, in line with data protection laws.

vii. Follow advice from Social Services – take no other action unless advised to do so by Social Services.

If in doubt about the advice you have received at any stage refer to Social Services for guidance.

Incidents of serious abuse are likely to be rare, but it is important that all involved in Crowborough Town Council conduct themselves at all times in ways which will not lead to their actions being misconstrued or misinterpreted.