

Youth Council Safeguarding Policy

Position Statement

West Horsley Parish Council established a Youth Council in April 2021 with a Safeguarding Policy to underpin its function. The Council recognises the importance of applying both its Safeguarding Policy and Child Protection Policy to any work the Youth Council undertakes which involves children and young people, for example the running of events such as Family Fun Runs and Youth Movie Nights.

This policy should therefore be read in conjunction with the Council's Child Protection Policy which applies to all activities where children and young people are involved.

Policy Statement

It is the policy of West Horsley Parish Council to safeguard the welfare of all members of West Horsley Youth Council and any child or young person that participates in its activities.

The Parish Council will:

- take the interests and well-being of young people into account in all its considerations and activities;
- respect the rights, wishes and feelings of the young people with whom we work;
- take all reasonably practicable steps to understand the symptoms of neglect and abuse; and
- promote the welfare of young people and their protection within a position of trust.

Members of the Council and its staff will be responsible for:

- ensuring that two designated councillors/officers are present at any formal Youth Council meetings, and that at least two designated councillors/officers/parents are present at any other Youth Council activities such as events;
- always putting this policy into practice; and
- ensuring that young people are protected from harm.

Each adult should ensure that:

- their behaviour is appropriate at all times;
- they follow the procedures following suspicion, disclosure or allegation of child abuse;
- they recognise the position of trust in which they have been placed; and
- in every respect, the relationships they form with the young people under their care are appropriate.

Councillor Members working with the Youth Council will:

- have enhanced DBS checks every three years; and
- complete the Surrey County Council Safeguarding Training every three years.

Other relevant policies:

- Code of Conduct
- Data Protection Policy
- Child Protection Policy
- Social Media Policy

Good Practice Principles for Working with the Youth Council

- Adults should not behave in a manner which would lead any reasonable person to question their suitability to work with children, or act as a role model.
- Adults must not work on their own with children. If a situation occurs when this arises, due to sickness or an emergency, always inform colleagues or parents/carers to ensure that someone can be present or nearby.
- Adults should ensure that at least one DBS-checked and one other adult are present sufficiently early before a meeting of the Youth Council to greet any early arrivals.
- Electronic communications to a young person will be copied to another Councillor Member of the Youth Council.
- It is inappropriate to offer lifts to a child or young person. There may be occasions where the child or young person requires transport in an emergency or where not to do so may place the child at risk. If circumstances permit, the parent/carer or another Councillor Member should be informed before the lift is provided. The event must always be recorded and reported to the Proper Officer and parents/carers.
- Physical contact is discouraged and should only take place when it is absolutely necessary and in a safe and open environment i.e. one easily observed by others.
- Always report any accidents / incidents where a child becomes distressed or angry to the Chairman of the Council.

What to do if a child or third party makes an allegation

If a child or third party makes an allegation or discloses information which raises concern about significant harm:

- The initial response should be to listen carefully to what the child or third party says without interruption.
- Offer reassurance about how the child will be kept safe.
- Be understanding but do not give your opinion.
- Explain that what they say cannot be kept in confidence and will be passed to Children's Services and/or the Police. If the allegation is raised by a child, the child must not be pressed for information, led or cross examined or given false assurances of absolute confidentiality. Such well-intentioned actions could prejudice police investigations, especially in cases of sexual abuse. An interpreter should be used if necessary. If the child can understand the significance and consequences of making a referral to Children's Services, he or she should be asked his or her view by the referring professional. Although the child's view should be considered, it remains the responsibility of the professional to take whatever action is required to ensure the safety of that child and any other children.
- Do not undertake your own investigation.
- Make careful notes of what has been said to you or you have seen. Use the actual words said. Sign and date your notes.
- Pass the matter on to Surrey Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) within 24 hours.

What is MASH?

The Surrey Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) is the single point of contact for reporting concerns about the safety of a child, young person or adult. It aims to improve the safeguarding response for children and adults at risk of abuse or neglect through better information sharing and high-quality and timely responses.

The Surrey MASH achieves this by co-locating agencies. It brings together Surrey County Council social care workers for children and adults. Early help services, health workers and police as well as other partners across Surrey. Its aim is to identify need, risk and harm accurately and to facilitate the most appropriate and timely intervention.

The Surrey MASH comprises representatives from Adult Social care, Children's Services, the NHS and Surrey Police. There is also a virtual team of partners who support the MASH via information sharing. This includes Education Workers, Independent Domestic Violence Advisers, Youth Support Services, Probation Service, Ambulance, Hospitals, Surrey Fire & Rescue Service, Trading Standards, schools and colleges, a Data Analysis team as well as for Early Help Coordination Hubs. Because of closer partnership working, there is clearer accountability and less duplication.

To ensure timely response to safeguarding concerns, alerts should be made by telephone to MASH:

- The team of MASH staff are based at Guildford Police Station. Working hours 9am – 5pm Monday to Friday.
- MASH phone number **0300 470 9100**
- MASH email: mash@surreycc.gov.uk
- MASH secure email: mash@surreycc.gcsx.gov.uk
- MASH team: Surrey Police, PO Box 101, Guildford GU1 9PE

What is Abuse? Safeguarding Children from Abuse

Physical Abuse

This is a form of significant harm which may include hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child. The following are often regarded as indications of concern:

- An explanation which is inconsistent with an injury;
- Several different explanations provided for an injury;
- Unexplained delay in seeking treatment;
- The parents/carers are uninterested or undisturbed by an accident or injury;
- Reluctance to give information or mention previous injuries.

If you notice that a child or young person has injuries such as bruising, bite marks, burns and scalds, or scars and are concerned about the cause, it should be reported using the procedures set out in this policy.

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is a form of significant harm which involves the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate or not valued. It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or "making fun" of what they say or how they communicate. It may also feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond the child's developmental capabilities, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another, serious bullying (including cyber bullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children.

It is important to be aware and report concerns relating to domestic abuse. The definition of domestic abuse was changed by the Government in September 2012 and is now defined as:
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 member regardless of gender or sexuality.

This can encompass, but is not limited to the following types of abuse:

- Psychological
- Physical
- Sexual
- Financial
- Emotional

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse is a form of significant harm which involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside clothing. They may also include non-contact activities such as involving children looking at, or in the production of, sexual activities encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

It is important to be aware of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) as an emerging, high priority concern. CSE is defined as:

...involving exploitative situations, contexts and relationships where young people (or a third person or persons) receive 'something' (e.g. food, accommodation, drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, affection, gifts, money) as a result of them performing, and/or another or others performing on them, sexual activities. It can occur through the use of technology without the child's immediate recognition; e.g. being persuaded to post sexual images on the internet/mobile phones without immediate payment or gain. In all cases, those exploiting the child have power over them by virtue of their age, gender, intellect, physical strength and/or economic or other resources. Violence, coercion and intimidation are common, involvement in exploitative relationships being characterised in the main by the child's limited availability of choice resulting from their social/economic and/or emotional vulnerability.

Sexual exploitation can have a serious long term impact upon every aspect of a child or young person's life, health and education. It also damages the lives of families and carers and can lead to families breaking up. It is a multi-agency responsibility of partner agencies to identify those children and young people at risk of exploitation, to protect them and safeguard them from further risk of harm and to prevent children from becoming victims of this form of abuse.

County Lines

County Lines refers to urban gangs supplying drugs to suburban areas and market & coastal towns using dedicated mobile phone lines or deal lines. This criminal activity often involves child criminal exploitation (CCE) as gangs use children and vulnerable people to move drugs and money.

New guidance has been developed by the Home Office to support frontline staff – particularly those who work with children, young people and potentially vulnerable adults – in identifying potential victims of this type of criminal exploitation. It sets out the signs to look for in potential victims and what action people should take so that potential victims get the support and help needed. The document supplements an organisation’s existing safeguarding policies. The guidance is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/criminal-exploitation-of-children-andvulnerable-adults-county-lines>

Any practitioner working with a vulnerable person who they think may be at risk of county lines exploitation should follow their local safeguarding guidance and share this information with local authority social care services. If you believe a person is in immediate risk of harm, you should contact the police.

Neglect

Neglect is a form of significant harm which involves the persistent failure to meet a child’s basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child’s health or development. Neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to:

- Provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (Including exclusion from home or abandonment);
- Protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger;
- Ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-givers);
- Ensure access to appropriate medical care and treatment;
- It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child’s basic emotional needs.

Actions

If physical, emotional, sexual or neglect significant harm is suspected, or you have any other concerns regarding significant harm, it is important to report them immediately using the referral method outlined above. A piece of information, no matter how small, could mean that a child at risk is identified. Several small pieces of information from different agencies have, in the past, identified horrific cases of abuse that would not have been identified by one single agency.

Acknowledgement

This policy was originally modelled on that developed by Cranleigh Parish Council for its Youth Council. West Horsley Parish Council acknowledges with appreciation the work and guidance Cranleigh Parish Council has given to West Horsley in this respect.

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