

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this policy is to make clear what is required in relation to the protection of children and vulnerable person. The policy will help to maintain a safe and positive environment for children and vulnerable adults.

## **2. POLICY COVERAGE**

This policy applies to all members, employees and volunteers of Arlesey Town Council. A child is defined as a person under the age of 18 (The Children Act, 1989). This policy is to be used in conjunction with the Council's Risk Register and Review, Health and Safety Policies, Equal Opportunities Policy, Complaints Policy and Procedure, and Grievance Procedure.

## **4. POLICY STATEMENT**

Arlesey 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.

Arlesey Town Council believes that it is always unacceptable for a child or young person to experience abuse of any kind and recognises its responsibility to safeguard the welfare of all children and young people, by a commitment to a practice which protects them.

### **We recognise that:**

- the welfare of the child/young person is paramount
- all children, regardless of age, disability, gender, racial heritage, religious belief, sexual orientation or identity, have the right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse
- working in partnership with children, young people, their parents, carers and their agencies is essential in promoting young people's welfare.
- Everybody at the Council has a responsibility to support the care and protection of children and vulnerable person.

### **The purpose of the policy:**

- To provide protection for the children and young people who receive Arlesey Town Councils services, including the children of adult members or users.
- To provide staff and volunteers with guidance on procedures they should adopt in the event that they suspect a child, or young person may be experiencing or be at risk of harm.

This policy applies to all staff, including senior managers and members of the council, paid staff, volunteers and sessional workers, agency staff, students or anyone working on behalf of Arlesey Town Council.

### **We will seek to safeguard children and young people by:**

- valuing them, listening to and respecting them
- adopting child protection guidelines through procedures and a code of conduct for staff and volunteers
- recruiting staff and volunteers safely, ensuring all necessary checks are made
- sharing information about child protection and good practice with children, parents, staff and volunteers
- sharing information about concerns with agencies who need to know, and involving parents and children appropriately

- providing effective management for staff and volunteers through supervision, support and training.

We are also committed to reviewing our policy and good practice regularly.

## 5. DEFINITIONS OF ABUSE

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

**Neglect**– where adults fail to meet a child's or vulnerable person's basic physical/psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of their health or development. For example, failure to ensure that a child is protected from unnecessary risk of injury or exposing them to undue cold.

**Physical Abuse**– where physical pain or injury is caused, e.g. hitting, shaking, biting, etc.

**Sexual Abuse**– where children or vulnerable persons knowingly or unknowingly take part in an activity that meets the sexual needs of the other person or persons involved. This includes inappropriate photography or videoing.

**Emotional Abuse**– where there is persistent emotional ill treatment that causes severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's or vulnerable person's emotional status. Examples of emotional abuse include bullying (including cyber and text bullying), constant criticism and unrealistic pressure to perform.

Disabled 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.

## 6. RECOGNISING ABUSE

Recognising abuse is not always easy. The below list provides some indicators of abuse however, the list is not exhaustive and contains only indicators, not confirmation, of abuse:

- (a) Having unexplained or suspicious injuries, e.g. bites or bruising.
- (b) Having an injury for which the explanation seems inconsistent or which has not been treated adequately.
- (c) Change in behaviour, including becoming withdrawn, or becoming aggressive.
- (d) Displaying inappropriate sexual awareness for their age.
- (e) Looking neglected in appearance.
- (f) Losing or putting on weight for no apparent reason.
- (g) Lack of trust in adults.

## 7. PROCEDURES AND SYSTEMS

**Use of Video and Photography** The use of photographs and images of young people will be controlled to prevent possible misuse. In general, agreement will be sought from parents or guardians that images can be used as appropriate.

### 7.1 Responding to concerns and allegations

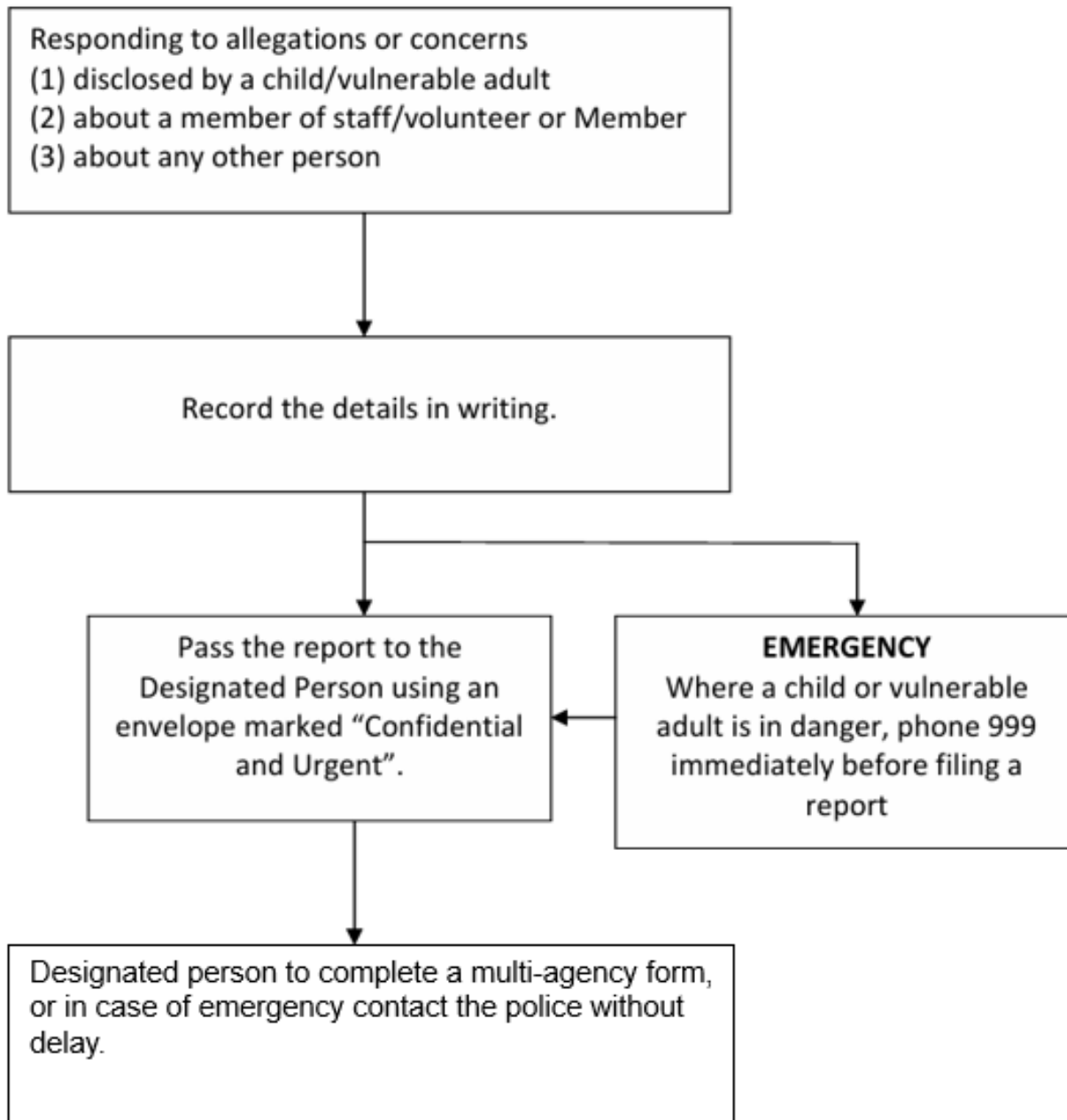
There are three situations in which employees, volunteers and Members may need to respond to a concern or case of alleged or suspected abuse:

- (1) A child or vulnerable person disclosing abuse

- (2) Allegations or concerns about a member of staff, volunteer or Member due to a complaint or from your own/ third party observations
- (3) Allegations or concerns about any other person, i.e. a parent, carer or other service user

The procedures outlined overleaf should be used:

**Response procedure:**



The Designated Person is the Town Clerk or in the absence of the Town Clerk, the Assistant Clerk. If the Town Clerk is implicated, refer to the Town Mayor.

It is not the place of any officer, volunteer or Member of the Town Council to investigate allegations. All allegations must involve investigating authorities as soon as possible.

## 7.2 Reporting Incidents

It is the duty of any officer, volunteer or Member to report and concerns about a child or vulnerable person being subject to abuse; receive a disclosure from a child or vulnerable

person; and report if they are aware of Members, officers or volunteers behaving inappropriately with children or vulnerable person.

All reports made will be confidential.

Immediately record all the details that you are aware of and if taking a disclosure from a child or vulnerable person, use their own words. Include in your record:

- Date and time.
- The name, address and date of birth of the child/vulnerable person.
- If the allegation relates to a child: the name and contact details of parent or guardian.
- The nature of the allegation.
- Your own observations, e.g. the child/vulnerable person's emotional state or any visible injuries.
- If taking a disclosure: exactly what the child/vulnerable person said and what you said in response.
- Sign and date the record.

If a person discloses to you abuse by someone else:

- (a) Allow the person to speak without interruption, accepting what is said, but DO NOT investigate.
- (b) Do not ask leading questions, but you can ask if there is anything else they want to tell you.
- (c) Alleviate feelings of guilt and isolation, while passing no judgement. Reassure them that they did the right thing by talking to you.
- (d) Advise that you will try to offer support, but that you MUST pass the information on.
- (e) Record the facts as you know them.

### **7.3 The Role of the Designated Person**

Where information is reported that a person has reasonable cause to suspect that a child or vulnerable person is suffering, or is at risk of suffering, significant harm, the Designated Person will refer the concerns to Central Bedfordshire Council by completing a multi-agency form. The Designated Person is responsible for keeping records of reports securely in accordance with UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018.

### **7.4 Confidentiality and Record Retention**

Every effort should be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned. Information should be handled and disseminated on a strictly need to know basis only.

Any individual against whom an allegation has been made has the right to be notified about the cause for concern. This should be facilitated through Central Bedfordshire Council Social Care, and if appropriate, the Police. It is important that the timing of this does not prejudice any investigation.

Recorded information will be stored securely using password access to limit access to Designated Persons only. The records must be adequate, relevant and not excessive for the purposes for which they are held. They must be accurate and kept up to date and they must not be kept for longer than is necessary. When the records relate to an officer a clear and comprehensive summary of any allegations made, details of how the allegations were followed up and resolved, and any action taken and decisions reached must be kept in the person's confidential personnel file.

## 7.5 Retention Periods:

### Type of record retention

#### ***Child/Vulnerable persons welfare concerns that the Designated Person refers on to Social Care or the Police.***

The referral should be acknowledged in writing by Social Care. The Town Council will keep this on file for 6 years after the last contact with the service user, unless exceptions apply\*

#### ***Child/Vulnerable persons welfare concerns that do not necessitate a referral as they are unrelated to abuse***, e.g. overly pushy parents or a child in distress unrelated to abuse.

Destroy the record one year after the child/vulnerable person concerned ceases to use the service.

#### ***Concerns about officers, volunteers or Members in their behaviour towards children or vulnerable persons.***

Records to be retained at least until the officer or volunteer reaches normal retirement age, or for 10 years if that is longer.

\*Exceptions to the 6year period will occur when records:

- Need to be retained because the information in them is relevant to legal action that has been started.
- Are required to be kept longer by law.
- Are archived for historical purposes (e.g. where the organisation was party to legal proceedings). In this case, legal advice about the retention period will be sought. If being kept for longer than 6 years, the files need to be clearly marked and the reason for the extension period clearly identified in line with UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018 requirement as lawful basis upon which record is being kept.

## 8. CONTACT DETAILS

Town Clerk

Telephone: 01462 733722

Email: [clerk@arlesey-tc.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@arlesey-tc.gov.uk)

Central Bedfordshire Council Safeguarding Children Board:

Email: [cbscb@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:cbscb@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)

Telephone number: 0300 300 6455

Central Bedfordshire Council child sexual exploitation:

Telephone: 0300 300 8585 (office hours)

Bedfordshire Police: [cibintel@bedfordshire.pnn.police.uk](mailto:cibintel@bedfordshire.pnn.police.uk)

Non-emergency telephone: 101

Emergency telephone: 999

NSPCC Child Protection Helpline:

Telephone: 0808 800 5000

## 9. PREVENTION

## **9.1 Recruitment and Training**

Prospective employees will be interviewed and previous, relevant experience will be noted. Two appropriate references are taken up for employees. All employees will undergo a probationary period.

All employees, volunteers and Members aged 16 or over and carrying out roles that make them eligible for checking by the Disclosure and Barring Service (formally Criminal Records Bureau), will undergo this checking process.

The council will make the Child Protection and Vulnerable Persons policy available to all staff, volunteers and Members, and line managers will encourage good practice and identify any training needs required.

## **9.2 Use of Contractors**

Any contractor, or sub-contractor engaged by Arlesey Town Council in areas where workers are likely to come into contact with children or vulnerable adults, should have a robust Child Protection and Vulnerable Persons policy or, failing this, must comply with the terms of this policy.

## **9.3 Reporting**

The Council is committed to maintaining an open culture where employees, Members, volunteers, children, vulnerable persons, parents and guardians feel able to express concerns both about child protection/safeguarding and issues of poor practice.

In addition to the procedures outlined in this policy, the Council's Whistleblowing Policy and Complaints Policy and Procedure are available to all staff, volunteers, Members and the general public.

## **10 CODES OF PRACTICE AND BEHAVIOUR**

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

The guidelines apply to those working with vulnerable persons or children involved in activities organised by or on behalf of Arlesey Town Council or at services provided by Arlesey Town Council.

### **You must:**

- 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.
- Respect a person's right to personal privacy.
- Provide access for young people/vulnerable persons to talk to others about any concerns they may have.
- Encourage young people and vulnerable persons to feel comfortable and caring enough to point out attitudes or behaviours they do not like.
- Remember that someone else might misinterpret your actions, no matter how well-intentioned.

- Recognise that special caution is required when you are discussing sensitive issues, such as bullying, bereavement, abuse or personal development.
- Recognise that some children or vulnerable adults 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.
- Be identifiable and wear a name badge at all times.

**You must not:**

- Engage in physical horseplay, such as wrestling or tickling.
- Have any inappropriate verbal or physical contact with children or vulnerable people or make suggestive remarks or gestures.
- Permit abusive youth peer activities (e.g. initiation ceremonies, ridiculing, bullying, etc.)
- Play physical contact games with children or vulnerable adults.
- Jump to conclusions about others without checking the facts.
- Ask children or vulnerable adults 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 suggest a more prudent approach.
- Allow allegations made to go unchallenged, unrecorded and not acted upon.

## **11. POLICY MONITORING AND REVISION**

This policy will be reviewed every two years and sooner if required due to changing: needs; legislation; guidance, or eventuality.

**Version Four Adopted:** 24th March 2026

**Policy Due for Review:** March 2028.