

WALPOLE CROSS KEYS PARISH COUNCIL SAFEGUARDING POLICY

1. Introduction

The Parish Council is committed to ensuring the safety and well-being of children, young people, and vulnerable adults who come into contact with the Council's services and activities. This policy outlines the Council's approach to safeguarding and promoting welfare. The designated safeguarding lead is the Clerk of the Parish Council.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all Parish Councillors, employees, volunteers, and anyone working on behalf of the Parish Council.

3. Legal Framework

This policy is based on relevant UK legislation and guidance, including:

- The Children Act 1989 & 2004
- The Care Act 2014
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (latest edition)
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006
- Protection of Freedoms Act 2012
- The Equality Act 2010

4. Responsibilities

- The Parish Council has a duty to promote the welfare of children and vulnerable adults.
- All councillors, staff, and volunteers must be aware of safeguarding responsibilities and report concerns appropriately.
- A designated Safeguarding Lead will be appointed to oversee implementation and act as a point of contact.

5. Recognising and Reporting Abuse

Abuse can take many forms, including physical, emotional, sexual, neglect, financial, and discriminatory abuse. Any concerns should be reported to the Safeguarding Lead or, in urgent cases, directly to the appropriate authorities:

- Children: Local Authority Children's Services or NSPCC helpline
- Adults: Local Authority Adult Safeguarding Team

- Police: 999 (if immediate danger)

6. Safe Recruitment and Training

- The Parish Council will take appropriate steps to ensure safe recruitment, including DBS checks where necessary.
- Training will be provided to councillors, staff, and volunteers to ensure awareness of safeguarding responsibilities.

Advertisements for job roles at the Council will specify clearly whether the work involves regulated activity/work together with the basis of that work.

Offers of employment will be made conditional on the receipt of a satisfactory disclosure checks. These will be conducted by the Disclosure and Barring Service in England and Wales and Disclosure Scotland in Scotland.

The check will confirm that the applicant is suitable to carry out the role and has not been barred from performing this work.

If the background check reveals that an applicant is not suitable, the offer of employment will be withdrawn by the Council and the applicant will not be employed.

7 Existing employees

Existing employees may be required to provide a satisfactory disclosure check where their work becomes a regulated activity/work or the Council requires them to start carrying out regulated activity/work. Existing employees cannot conduct any regulated activity/work until they have undertaken a satisfactory disclosure check.

The disclosure check will be conducted by the Disclosure and Barring Service in England and Wales and Disclosure Scotland in Scotland.

The check will confirm that the employee is suitable to carry out the work and has not been barred from performing this.

If employees are unable to provide a satisfactory disclosure check, or refuse to undertake a disclosure check, the Council will consider the options for redeployment into any available job roles that do not involve regulated activity/work.

If existing employees become added to the children and adults barred lists by either disclosure body, the Council will consider the options for redeployment into any available job roles that do not involve regulated activity/work. All employees who are added to the barred lists are required to inform their line manager of their inclusion on the list at the earliest opportunity. A failure to do so may be deemed a disciplinary matter to be dealt with under the disciplinary procedure.

In both cases, if this is not possible, the Council may need to consider dismissal of the employee on the basis of the statutory ban imposed by the disclosure. The Council may be unable to continue to employ the employee in any capacity if the continued association with the employee cannot be maintained, causes reputational damage to the employer or other reasons that harm its position in the marketplace.

8 What is abuse?

Given the risk of abuse to children and service users, all employees are required to be alert at all times to the possibility of abuse towards children or service users.

Abuse may be a single incident or something that occurs over a long period of time. It can take many forms including, but not limited to:

- financial or material abuse
- physical abuse
- mental abuse
- neglect and failures to act
- sexual abuse
- threats of abuse or harm
- controlling or intimidating conduct
- self-neglect
- domestic abuse
- poor practices within an organisation providing care
- modern slavery.

The abuse may come from employees, personal assistants, service users, relatives, neighbours, social workers, providers of support services etc.

9 Reporting and investigating abuse

The Council will treat all complaints, allegations or suspicions of abuse with the utmost seriousness. Training will be provided, as appropriate, to ensure that staff are aware of the warning signs of abuse and the correct reporting procedure to follow if they suspect abuse is, or has, taken place.

Employees that suspect abuse is occurring should refer the matter to their line manager immediately, with as much detail as possible. The line manager will need to be informed of the names of the people involved (if known), what type of abuse is or may be occurring, and the dates and times this occurred (if known). An official written report of the alleged act may be requested at this stage as part of the evidence gathering procedure.

Employees may be asked to refrain from discussing alleged abuse with fellow colleagues, other than those specified by their line manager, to avoid the spread of potentially harmful misinformation and to protect the validity of any investigation.

The allegations will be investigated fully and all such reports are taken seriously. The investigation will be conducted in a discrete and timely manner, and will involve the collation of evidence typically derived from witness statements and surveillance footage where possible.

If it is suspected that a criminal act may have been committed, the Council will report the situation to the police.

Employees suspected of abuse will be suspended on full pay pending a full investigation of the complaints. It should be noted that this suspension is not an indication of the employee's guilt, but rather a necessity given the circumstances. The Council appreciates the impact prolonged suspension can have on an employee's reputation, even when allegations are later found to be incorrect, and does not take the decision to suspend lightly.

The Council may be under a duty to disclose allegations of abuse to the Disclosure and Barring Service or Disclosure Scotland as appropriate. The organisation may also consider it necessary to inform the police of allegations under investigation.

10 Maintaining records

The Council will ensure that all details associated with allegation of abuse are recorded clearly and accurately. The records will be maintained securely in line with the Council's confidential record keeping procedure.

11 Disciplinary action

If the investigation reveals that abuse has happened, or is happening, the Council will set up a disciplinary hearing for the employee concerned. Abuse of service users is regarded by the Council as an act of gross misconduct and the allegation could result in summary dismissal, in line with the Council's disciplinary procedure.

Employees will have the chance to appeal any disciplinary action that is taken against them.

12 Duty of disclosure

The Council is legally required to send information to the Disclosure and Barring Service or Disclosure Scotland if a decision is taken to dismiss an employee or remove them from working in regulated activity/work.

The Council may also be required to inform the Disclosure and Barring Service or Disclosure Scotland if the Council suspends an employee, or an employee resigns in suspicious circumstances, as the referral duty criteria may already be met at that stage.

13. Use of Council Facilities

Any organisations or individuals using Parish Council facilities must comply with safeguarding requirements and have their own policies in place if working with children or vulnerable adults.

14. Confidentiality and Data Protection

All safeguarding concerns will be handled sensitively and in accordance with data protection laws, ensuring information is shared appropriately.

15. Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed annually or following any significant changes in legislation or best practice guidance.

16. Contact Details

Norfolk County Council Children's Services

Phone: 0344 800 8020

Website: Norfolk Safeguarding Partnership

Norfolk Safeguarding Children Partnership (NSCP)

General Enquiries: 01603 223409

Email: nscb@norfolk.gov.uk

Website: Norfolk Safeguarding Partnership

Norfolk Safeguarding Adults Board

Phone: 0344 800 8020

Email: nsabchair@norfolk.gov.uk

Website: Norfolk Safeguarding Adults Board

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