

# CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Child abuse is a global phenomenon. It occurs in all countries and in all societies. It involves the physical, sexual, emotional abuse and neglect of children. It is nearly always preventable.

## **Nelson Community Council believes that:**

- Children have the right to a happy, healthy and secure childhood
- The abuse of children is an abuse of their rights as set out in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
- Child abuse is *never* acceptable.

This policy is intended for Nelson Community Council Play scheme staff and volunteers. It describes the Council's commitment to prevention of abuse and protection of children with whom it comes into contact. The aim is to help raise awareness of child abuse and of what is expected of the Council's employees, volunteers and Members. The Community Council will not tolerate child abuse.

## **For the purposes of this Policy:**

A child means every human being below the age of eighteen years.

Child abuse means sexual abuse or other physical or mental harm deliberately caused to a child.

## **Children's rights and child abuse**

Our vision is of a world where the lives of all children reflect the international standards set out in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. This includes the right to freedom from abuse and exploitation.

This child protection policy aims to translate that commitment to children's rights into a practical reality through our work with children during the annual summer play scheme.

## **Safeguarding children**

Through its emphasis on prevention, the policy aims to minimise the risks of children being abused.

The Community Council will also endeavour to ensure that children who are being abused, or who are at risk of abuse, are supported and given protection by appropriate agencies.

It is possible that, on occasions, staff and others engaged by the Council or its partners to work with children, may pose a risk to children and abuse their position of trust.

The policy demands the highest standards of professional practice in work with children and describes the values and principles that must underpin our approach to children.

## **The Council's commitment**

Nelson Community Council's child protection policy primarily covers contact with children on its annual summer play scheme, but extends to any contact with children by any employee in connection with that employment. Employees will ensure that they:

- are aware of the problem of child abuse
- safeguard children from abuse through good practice
- report all concerns about possible abuse
- respond appropriately when abuse is discovered or suspected.

## **The policy document includes:**

- A Statement of Commitment to safeguard children from abuse and to ensure that action is taken to support and protect children wherever and whenever abuse is suspected.
- Procedures for raising and reporting concerns - there is a mandatory requirement to raise any concerns with the Community Council.

## **Responsibilities under the policy:**

All staff, volunteers and other representatives of Nelson Community Council must be familiar with the policy and be aware of the problem of abuse and the risks to children.

Everyone's prime responsibility is to prevent child abuse.

This means raising any concerns you may have about the safety of children and/or the behaviour of adults.

## **Seeing or suspecting possible abuse:**

Concerns for the safety and well being of children can arise in a variety of ways. For example, a child may tell you or display signs that they are being abused; someone may hint that a child is at risk or that a colleague is an abuser; you may witness or hear about abuse in another organisation.

If you have any suspicions or concerns regarding possible child abuse, or if there is anything with which you feel uncomfortable, you should raise these in the first instance with the Clerk to the Council. If this is not possible, seek out a Council Member.

***It is vital that you should act on your concerns!***

**Policy:**

The Community Council is committed to actively preventing child abuse.

The Community Council will take positive action to prevent child abusers becoming involved with children in its care in any way and will take measures (through appropriate Agencies) against anyone who commits abuse against a child whilst in its care.

**Procedures:**

**Community Council employees, volunteers and Members must:**

- familiarise themselves with situations which may present risks and learn how to deal with those situations
- contribute to an environment where children are able to recognise unacceptable behaviour and feel able to discuss their rights and concerns

**Community Council play scheme employees, volunteers and Members must not:**

- investigate any allegation of child abuse, simply refer the matter to the Clerk.
- disclose information that identifies families or children to unauthorised persons or make it available to the public without the informed consent of the family and when appropriate, the child.

**Dealing with alleged child abuse:**

The Community Council believes that every child regardless of age must have at all times and in all situations a right to feel safe and protected from any situation or practice that results in that child being physically or psychologically damaged. If we have suspicions about a child's physical, sexual or emotional well being, we will take action.

Employees, volunteers and Member should report any concerns either to the Clerk or to the Chairman of the Community Council. If a situation is clearly an urgent case, the child is too frightened to go home or there are serious doubts about the child's safety, CCBC Social Services or the Police should be contacted immediately.

It is important that all employees, volunteers and Members communicate any concerns accurately. Upon the receipt of any information from a child or any suspicions, it is necessary to record accurately in writing what they have seen, heard or know at the time the event occurs.

They should then report their concerns to the Clerk or Chairman and agree any action to take.

Alleged cases of child abuse should be reported to the Clerk in the first instance. He will refer the matter to the relevant authorities and decide on other appropriate steps, including informing the Chairman of the Community Council.

If an employee raises a legitimate concern about suspected child abuse, which proves to be unfounded on investigation, no action will be taken against the employee.

Any employee who makes false and malicious accusations, however, will face disciplinary action. The Community Council will take appropriate legal or other action against anyone who makes false and malicious accusations of child abuse.

An alleged perpetrator of child abuse will normally be suspended from their normal relationship with the Community Council during investigation of allegations. The Community Council will sever all relations with anyone proven to have committed child abuse.

**Confidentiality:**

An allegation of child abuse is a serious issue. In following this policy it is essential that all parties maintain confidentiality. Sharing of information, which could identify a child or an alleged perpetrator, should be on a 'need to know' basis only.

Unless abuse has been proven, it must be referred to as "alleged abuse".

**Further information:**

Speak to the Clerk to the Council in the first instance.

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Tony White

*Clerk to the Council*