

Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and Procedures

1. Purpose & Contents of this document

Hatfield Peverel Parish Council believe that a child or young person should never experience abuse of any kind. We have a responsibility to promote the welfare of all children and young people and to keep them safe. We are committed to practice in a way that protects them.

The purpose of Hatfield Peverel Parish Council's Child Protection and Safeguarding policy is:

- to protect children and young people working with, or taking part in activities organised by Hatfield Peverel Parish Council or the Hatfield Peverel Youth Council
- to provide Councillor or Officers with the overarching principles that guide our approach to child protection
- to reassure parents/carers that Hatfield Peverel Parish Council will protect children to the best of their ability whilst they are involved in Hatfield Peverel Parish Council activities.

This document contains the following sections:

- Policy Statement
- Procedures for the implementation and maintenance of that policy
- Supporting Information to guide Councillors and Officers of Hatfield Peverel Parish Council

2. Definitions

2.1. In accordance with the Children Act 1989 and 2004, a child is any person who has not yet reached their 18th birthday. For the purpose of Hatfield Peverel Parish Council's Policy and Procedures the reference to children or young people is inter-changeable.

2.2. "Councillor or Officers" in this context shall be taken to mean any elected Hatfield Peverel Parish Councillor, Officers employed by Hatfield Peverel Parish Council or any volunteer working for or on behalf of the Hatfield Peverel Parish Council on activities involving Youth Parish Council members.

2.3. In this context activities organised by Hatfield Peverel Parish Council includes activities organised by the Hatfield Peverel Youth Council

2.4. Designated Safeguarding Person. This is the first point of contact for Hatfield Peverel Parish Councillors and Officers to go to for advice if they are concerned about a child.

2.5. Named Senior Officer. This is a senior individual within Hatfield Peverel Parish Council to whom allegations against Hatfield Peverel Parish Councillors or Officers should be immediately notified.

2.6. Safeguarding vs. Child Protection. Child protection refers to activities undertaken to prevent children suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm. Safeguarding is a broader term, of which child protection is a subset. Safeguarding and the promotion of children's welfare encompasses protecting children from maltreatment, preventing impairment of children's health or development and ensures that children grow up in safe circumstances.

2.7. This policy has been drawn up on the basis of law and guidance that seeks to protect children, namely:

- Children Act 1989
- United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child 1991
- UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018
- Sexual Offences Act 2003
- Children Act 2004
- Protection of Freedoms Act 2012
- Relevant government guidance on safeguarding children.

3. Policy Statement.

3.1. This policy applies to all Councillors and Officers of Hatfield Peverel Parish Council as defined above.

3.2. Hatfield Peverel Parish Council is committed to protecting the welfare of Youth Councillors as they participate in Hatfield Peverel Parish Council activities. Hatfield Peverel Parish Council understands its responsibility to comply with legislation, particularly to ensure that the welfare of children and young people is paramount. Hatfield Peverel Parish Council recognises that the best protection for children participating in our activities is the vigilance and forethought of Councillors and Officers in preventing circumstances where abuse of trust could occur. To that end, Hatfield Peverel Parish Council will strive to create a safe and secure environment where Councillors, Officers and children can work together confidently in mutual respect.

3.3. Hatfield Peverel Parish Council also recognises its responsibility to take appropriate action when a child discloses that they are experiencing abuse or neglect, or if a Councillor or Officer has a concern about the welfare of a child, and to ensure that Councillors or Officers have an understanding of what might indicate this and what action to take.

3.4. Councillors and Officers of Hatfield Peverel Parish Council are required to abide by the Council's Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children (see Appendix 1). As part of that Code of Conduct Councillors and Officers are required to notify Hatfield Peverel Parish Council of any police record or other factor which may make that person unsuitable to work with children

3.5. Hatfield Peverel Parish Council will ensure that the Code of Conduct, and procedures for safeguarding children are continually monitored, developed and maintained and are appropriately communicated to all relevant individuals. Councillors and Officers are responsible for ensuring that they are familiar with the codes, guidelines and procedures.

3.6. Hatfield Peverel Parish Council have appointed a Designated Safeguarding Person who will be responsible for the above, and will also be the person to whom any safeguarding children concerns will, in the first instance, be reported to. The Designated Safeguarding Person who will then discuss and agree with the Named Senior Officer or Deputy the appropriate action to take.

The Hatfield Peverel Parish Council Designated Safeguarding Person is the Parish Clerk.

3.7. Training on specific areas such as safeguarding children, identifying and reporting abuse and the confidentiality of personal information will be given as a priority to new Councillors or Officers working with the Youth Council

4. Procedures

4.1. Action to be taken if a child or young person discloses abuse by someone else

4.1.1. If a member of the Youth Council approaches you about an issue of abuse, you must proceed with caution. Note that the child may drip-feed information or indications over a period of time

4.1.2. The Code of Conduct specifies that a Councillor or Officer should not place themselves in a situation where they are alone with a child. However, it is possible that a child will be unwilling to make disclosures of this nature in anything but a one-to-one situation. ***The child's needs must take priority in this situation.*** Ask the child if they would like someone else to be present - an adult or a friend - but if he/she declines proceed with the interview, taking extra care with your behaviour or body language. Do not ask leading questions nor promise confidentiality.

4.1.3. Keep calm and listen to the child. Do not have physical contact at any time. Allow the child to speak without interruption, accepting what is said.

4.1.4. Do not make judgements. Do not offer opinion. Do not make any promises. As soon as is practically possible make an accurate written record of what the child has said, being careful to use their own words as accurately as possible.

4.1.5. If the complaint concerns a Hatfield Peverel Parish Council Councillor or Officer where the contact between that individual is a direct result of Hatfield Peverel Parish Council activity, immediately inform the Designated Safeguarding Person as identified in section 4.2 who will then initiate the appropriate procedure.

4.1.6. Concerns about the welfare of a child, including the possibility of abuse or neglect, may also be raised by behaviour or other indicators noticed by a Hatfield Peverel Parish Councillor or Officer, but not disclosed by the child (See Appendices 2 and 3). In these instances, it is equally important to take action, and those concerns should be raised and discussed with the Designated Safeguarding Person.

4.1.7. Try to avoid touching the child but if a child is obviously distraught use common sense. If you need to touch or hug a child, do so but document it.

4.2. Procedures for dealing with suspected abuse by a Hatfield Peverel Parish Councillor or Officer

4.2.1. When dealing with issues concerning abuse by an adult in a position of trust it is important to remember that the welfare of the children participating in Hatfield Peverel Parish Council activities are paramount, but we also have a responsibility to ensure that Councillors or Officers are treated fairly and with respect. This procedure is designed to meet both those objectives. The Parish Clerk should ensure that every Councillor or Officers is fully aware of these procedures.

4.2.2. Issues concerning abuse be reported in the first instance to the Named Senior Officer. Wherever possible, this should be a different person to the Designated Safeguarding Person.

The Named Senior Officer is: The Chairman of Hatfield Peverel Parish Council
If this person is unavailable or is the subject of the allegation, then the alternative person to contact is The Vice-Chairman of Hatfield Peverel Parish Council.

4.3. On receipt of a concern

When an individual may have:

- behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child

- possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child
- behaved in a way that indicates he/she may not be suitable to work with children

then the Designated Safeguarding Person will contact one of the following for further advice and assistance:

- Local Authority Designated Officer - LADO Carole Fuller carole.fuller@essex.gov.uk 01245 436744. The LADO's responsibility is specifically to advise people working in positions of trust.
- Essex County Council - Children's Social Care 0845 603 7627 (Out of office hours 0845 606 1212)
- The Police using the 999 Emergency Number, stating this is an "Emergency Child Protection Referral". This is the Highest Grade Response.
- Braintree District Council's safeguarding leads on 01376 552525, currently Cherie Root and Tracey Parry

Additionally, for the protection of all parties this will result in the:

- Immediate suspension of the individual concerned from any activity involving those aged under 18

It is important to remember that nothing is done to investigate the concern before escalating to the trained professionals above as this can contaminate evidence if a police investigation is deemed appropriate.

The child's needs MUST always come first. If the situation is urgent and you need help immediately, phone the person who can get to you quickest - usually the Police. If the concern does not meet the above criteria, but involves other inappropriate behaviour by a Councillor or Officer then this will be dealt with through the Hatfield Peverel Parish Council Code of Conduct procedures.

4.4 Action to be taken if you receive an allegation about yourself

4.4.1. Keep calm. Do not get involved in an argument which is likely to make the situation worse.

4.4.2. Immediately inform the Named Senior Officer. The quicker that action is taken to investigate the allegations, the sooner the situation will be resolved.

4.4.3. Record the facts as you understand them

4.4.4. Ensure that no-one is placed in a position which could cause further compromise. Do not contact another agency involved with the child involved.

4.5 Policy & Procedure Review process

4.5.1 As per Standing Orders, this document will be formally reviewed annually and presented at the Full Council meeting for approval.

4.6 DBS Check and Child Protection Training

Any Councillor or Officer of Hatfield Peverel Parish Council who works with the Youth Council will be registered for a Government DBS Check on appointment.

Any Councillor or Officer working with the Youth Council will be offered relevant training in Child Protection.

Any Councillor joining the Youth Council or newly employed Officer will be provided with a copy of this document.

5. Confidentiality

5.1. Whatever the nature of the complaint, it must be kept confidential. You must not discuss the disclosure with any individual or party other than those identified in the above procedure.

5.2. Information will only be shared with those who need to know, in line with safeguarding and data protection law.

Signed:

Position:

Date: 5th October 2020

Reviewed: 12th May 2025

Appendix 1 Code of Conduct when dealing with Children

It is important that both children and Councillors and Officers can participate in Hatfield Peverel Parish Council activities in a safe and secure environment.

This Code of Conduct has been developed for the protection of both children and Councillors and Officers. To this end, Hatfield Peverel Parish Council expects all Councillors, Officers and volunteers to abide by this Code of Conduct.

Each Councillor or Officer:

A. Will abide by the guiding principles and rules of Hatfield Peverel Parish Council in all activities.

B. Will inform Hatfield Peverel Parish Council of any relevant police record or other factor, or any change in his/her circumstances, which may make him/her unsuitable to take part in a particular Hatfield Peverel Parish Council activity.

C. Recognises that the role of a Hatfield Peverel Parish Councillor or Officer places him/her in a position of trust with regard to all children who are participating in Hatfield Peverel Parish Council programmes and undertakes to uphold that trust at all times.

D. Undertakes to maintain, within Hatfield Peverel Parish Council's procedures, the confidentiality of any information relating to other Councillors or Officers or children made available to him/her as a Hatfield Peverel Parish Council Councillor or Officer.

E. Will not knowingly place him/herself in a situation where they are alone with a child or young person and will endeavour to ensure, as far as possible, that there is another adult in attendance at any meetings.

F. Will ensure that any Hatfield Peverel Parish Council activities involving children are agreed with and approved by Hatfield Peverel Parish Council in advance.

G. Will not behave in any way, physically or verbally, that could be offensive.

H. Remembers at all times that interactions between him/herself and children must be such that no reasonable person observing that interaction could construe its nature as abusive.

If you follow these simple guidelines, Hatfield Peverel Parish Councillors, Officers and children will work confidently together in mutual respect.

Appendix 2 What is Abuse and Neglect?

Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018, updated 2023) provides the following definitions:

Physical Abuse may involve 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.

Emotional Abuse is 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 valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. 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 feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond the child's development capability, 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. It may involve serious bullying (including cyber-bullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill-treatment to a child, though it may occur alone.

Sexual Abuse 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 penetrative (e.g. rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images or watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming of 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.

Neglect is 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 & 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 or treatment

It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to a child's basic emotional needs. Child abuse is wrong and should always be stopped.

Appendix 3 Recognising Abuse

Child abuse occurs to children of both sexes and all ages, in all cultures, religions, and social classes and to children with and without disabilities.

There is no clear dividing line between one type of abuse and another. Children may show symptoms from one or all of the categories given below. The following is not a comprehensive or definitive list, but gives an indication of situations, which should alert you to possible cause for concern.

Physical abuse

- Bruises in places not normally harmed during play, for example, back of the legs, abdomen
- Bruising in or around the mouth area
- Grasp marks on legs and arms
- Finger marks (for example, you may see three or four small bruises on one side of the face and none on the other)
- Symmetrical bruising, i.e. the same pattern of bruising on both sides of the body/head/legs/arms etc. (especially on the ears or around the eyes)
- Outline bruising (for example, belt marks, hand prints)
- Old and new bruising (especially in the same area)
- Unexplained injuries, bruises or marks
- Fear, watchfulness, over-anxiety to please
- Bites – these can leave clear impressions of teeth. Human bite marks are oval or crescent shaped. If the distance is more than 3cm across, it indicates that they have been caused by an adult or older child.
- Fractures. As fractures also cause pain it is difficult for a parent or carer to be unaware that a child has been hurt.
- Burns/scalds – it can be very difficult to distinguish between accidental and non-accidental burns, but as a general rule, burns or scalds with clear outlines are suspicious, as are burns of uniform depth over a larger area.

Neglect

Warning signs include:

- Child frequently appears hungry, asks for food
- Consistently unkempt, dirty appearance, smelly, poor hygiene
- The child's clothes are often dirty, scruffy or unsuitable for the weather
- Repeated failure by parents/carers to prevent accidental injury
- Medical needs of child unmet – for example, failure to seek medical advice for illness
- Developmental delay
- Behaviours such as head banging or rocking.
- The child is exposed to risks and dangers, such as the home being unsafe or drugs or needles being left around

- The child is left alone with unsuitable carers
- The child has lots of accidents
- No one seeks medical help when the child is ill or hurt.

Sexual abuse

Some possible signs:

- Explicit or frequent sexual pre-occupation in talk and play
- Hinting at sexual activity or secrets through words, play or drawing
- Sexualised behaviour – for example, pretend sexual intercourse during play
- Sexually provocative relationships with adults

Emotional abuse

This might include:

- The parent/carer giving the repeated message to the child that he/she is worthless, unloved or inadequate
- The parent/carer having wildly unrealistic expectations of their child's abilities, taking into account the child's age and stage of development
- The child showing serious difficulties in his/her emotional, social or behavioural development
- The parent/carer frequently causing the child to feel frightened or in danger.

Some possible signs:

- Very low self-esteem, often with an inability to accept praise or to trust adults
- Excessively clinging, withdrawn anxious behaviour
- Demanding or attention-seeking behaviour
- Over-anxious – either watchful, constantly checking or over-anxious to please
- Withdrawn and socially isolated
- Unwillingness to communicate
- Sudden speech disorders
- Repetitive, nervous behaviour such as rocking, hair twisting.