Rother District Council

Child & Vulnerable Groups Protection Policy

Policy Statement - Our Promise

1. Rother District Council works to ensure that all children, young people and vulnerable groups coming into contact with the Council and its employees are protected and treated with respect. At the same time Rother District Council works to protect its employees from the risk of unfounded allegations.

How we uphold our promise – We Will:

a. Make sure our staff and volunteers are carefully selected, trained and supervised;
b. Ensure that our Contractors who have regular and direct contact with children, young people and vulnerable groups have appropriate policies and procedures in place and require them to comply with the Sussex Child Protection and Safeguarding Procedures and the Sussex multi-agency Policy and Procedures for Safeguarding Vulnerable groups;
c. Give parents, children, young people, vulnerable groups and workers information about what they can expect from us;
d. Let parents, children, young people and vulnerable groups know how to voice any concerns they may have;
e. Ensure that all organisations that apply for support for programmes which involve children, young people or vulnerable groups (funding or premises etc.) have an effective policy and procedures in place on child and vulnerable adult protection.
f. This includes all those managing any of our buildings or with a licence to run services from any of our buildings.

It is essential that all staff working with and coming into contact with children, young people and vulnerable groups read, understand and adhere to this policy.

Context

2. There are a minority of children, young people and vulnerable groups in our community who experience abuse of a physical, emotional/psychological, sexual, or financial nature or as a result of neglect.

3. It is known that some individuals will actively seek employment or voluntary work with vulnerable people, particularly with children and young people, in order to harm and “control” them.

4. People who work with or have access to children, young people and vulnerable groups in a voluntary capacity or as an employee, Contractor or other partner of the local authority have a role to play in protecting them from harm and safeguarding their welfare.

This policy covers all children, young people and vulnerable groups.
5. The definition of vulnerable adult refers to any person of 18 years or over who is or may be in need of community care by reason of mental, physical or learning disability, age or illness and who is or may be unable to take care of him/herself or unable to protect him/herself against significant harm or serious exploitation which may be occasioned by actions or inactions of other people.

6. It is also important to recognise additional vulnerability in terms of race, disability, religion, ethnicity or 1st language. Specific reference is made to these issues in Volume 2 of the “Sussex child protection and safeguarding procedures” and in Chapter 6 of the “Sussex multi-agency policy and procedures for safeguarding vulnerable adults”, and should be included in all training.

Recognition of Abuse

7. Abuse may be described as physical, emotional/psychological, sexual, or financial in nature or arise as a result of neglect. Examples of physical and behavioural indicators associated with each type of abuse are not included within this policy but can be found in "Sussex Child Protection and Safeguarding Procedures" and “Sussex multi-agency policies and procedures for safeguarding vulnerable groups.”

8. It is not the policy of Rother District Council to encourage staff to fully investigate suspicions or allegations but to make the appropriate staff aware of the issues surrounding child and vulnerable adult protection and to have clear procedures in place to ensure that staff are aware of how and to whom any concerns should be reported.

Employment Issues

Recruitment and selection:

9. Rother District Council takes all reasonable steps to prevent unsuitable people working with children, young people and Sussex Multi-agency Policy and Procedures for Safeguarding (Sussex Multi-agency Policy and Procedures for Safeguarding Vulnerable groups, June 2007).

10. These procedures are deployed consistently for all staff – whether in full time, part time employment and whether paid or voluntary staff.

11. All staff (or volunteers) working with children, young people or vulnerable groups complete an application form. These forms provide information about applicants’ pasts, including any gaps in employment history.

12. At least two references should be taken up (in writing), including at least one assessing applicants’ previous work with children, young people and/or vulnerable groups and their suitability for working with them. References should cover at least the past three years. For student leavers, appropriate references from Principal, Head Teacher, Head of PE would be acceptable.

13. Consent should be obtained from applicants for appropriate levels of Criminal Records Bureau (CRB), or its replacement (subject to change in October 2009), disclosure to be sought, using the appropriate form provided. Where
disclosure is needed for a specific role with children, young people and/or vulnerable groups it must be obtained prior to commencement of work with them.

Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006

14. The Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 provided the foundation for a new scheme which aims to help avoid harm, or risk of harm, to children and vulnerable groups. Rother will work to the new scheme which aims to prevent those who are deemed unsuitable to work with children and vulnerable adults from gaining access to them through their work, the new scheme becomes law in October 2009. This will be done by:

a. Providing Rother with a more effective and streamlined vetting service for potential employees.

b. Barring unsuitable individuals from working, or seeking to work, with children and vulnerable adults in Rother at the earliest opportunity.

What employers need to know

15. Rother District Council adopts these strong safeguards to protect children and vulnerable adults set out in the Government ahead of the launch of the Vetting and Barring Scheme (VBS) in 2009.

16. Rother District Council will ensure the introduction of barring from ‘regulated activities’ and people included on the new barred lists by the ISA will be barred from a range of jobs and activities; Rother will cooperate with the new duty to share information – between employers, social services and professional regulators and will notify the ISA of relevant information so individuals who pose a threat to vulnerable groups can be identified and barred from working with these groups. Rother supports the new criminal offences e.g. it is a crime for a barred individual to seek or undertake work with vulnerable groups; and for employers to knowingly take them on.

17. From 26 July 2010 all new entrants to roles working regularly with vulnerable groups and those switching jobs to a new provider within these sectors, will be required to register with the ISA and be checked. Rother will subscribe or register an interest in an individual’s ISA-registration status to be continuously informed of changes in an employee’s registration status. Rother will ensure it uses this process to check their staff status, when this is in force (November 2010).

18. Rother District Council will not employ anyone to carry out regulated activity who is not ISA-registered. Rother will always need to check a persons ISA status before employing them – you cannot have them in post before you know the outcome of that check. Once registered your interest in an individual as their employer, you’ll be contacted if there ISA registration ceases.

19. Employers retain their responsibilities for ensuring safe recruitment and employment practices. All candidates should demonstrate a willingness to undertake training relating specifically to protection issues relating to children, young people and vulnerable groups.
20. Managers must comply with corporate policies on the security of records to ensure the confidentiality of information received in relation to applicants.

Policy and Procedures

21. Rother District Council works to ensure that children, young people and vulnerable groups are protected and kept safe from harm. All staff involved in the provision of services to children, young people and vulnerable groups should know what to do if there are any concerns about abuse and what procedures / guidelines they should follow.

Training

22. All staff who regularly have direct contact with children, young people and/or vulnerable groups should receive training to raise their awareness of children, young people and vulnerable adult protection issues. They should also receive clear instructions on how to report concerns or suspicions, and training in Good Practice methods of working to ensure children, young people and vulnerable groups’ welfare, safety and protection and minimise the risk of unfounded allegations being made.

Supervision

23. Managers should be sensitive to any concerns about child and/or vulnerable adult protection and act on them in an appropriate and timely way within 24 hours. They should also offer appropriate support for those who report concerns. To assist managers in this role training will be undertaken consistent with the recommendations of the Local Safeguarding Children Board and the Safeguarding Adults Board.

The responsibility of staff to report accidents and alleged or suspected incidents of child, young person and/or vulnerable adult abuse

When to take action:

24. It is possible that staff may have cause for concern and wish to take action as a result of:
   a. A child / young person / vulnerable adult telling them something has happened;
   b. Observing physical or behavioural indicators which cause you concern;
   c. Someone else (adult, young person or child) telling you their concern.

Listening to the child / young / vulnerable person:

25. Staff are not expected to investigate suspected incidents but to act promptly and effectively in communicating the issues to child and adult protection professionals. However, there may be instances when children, young people or vulnerable groups who are being abused will approach staff whom they trust and with whom they feel safe. By listening and taking serious what they say, staff will be helping them.

Guidelines for listening to a child, young person or vulnerable adult who claims he or she has been abused:
26. React calmly so as not to frighten the child, young person or vulnerable adult; Tell the child, young person or vulnerable adult they are not to blame and that they were right to tell; Take what the child, young person or vulnerable adult says seriously, recognising how difficult it was for them to confide in you; Always reassure the child, young person or vulnerable adult but do not make promises of confidentiality.

27. Make a full, detailed record of what has been said, heard and/or seen immediately afterwards.

The next steps – if there are concerns:

28. All staff should report any incidents or allegations to the designated person in charge of the area of work, or in their absence to a direct line manager. The person to report such incidents to will be identified to the member of staff at the start of their employment, this officer will then inform the Council’s designated safeguarding officer as set out in the Councils internal framework and procedures.

29. The designated safeguarding officer will contact the Rother Division of the East Sussex County Council Safeguarding Unit OR Social Services out of office hours (emergencies only) OR the Police OR Child Protection Register OR Child Protection Register out of office hours OR Social Service Information Line OR in their absence move directly to the following step. (Note: if preferred the concerns can be referred to the Head of Personnel or Head of Audit as a whistleblowing matter in order to protect confidentiality.) All contact details are available at:

www.eastsussex.gov.uk/childrenandfamilies/childprotection and
www.eastsussex.gov.uk/socialcare/policiesandplans/adultservices/adultprotection/default.htm

30. The Children’s Welfare Duty Officer at East Sussex County Council Social Services can be contacted without delay – contact should be based on an assessment of the seriousness of the complaint.

Recording Information

31. Recording information early and accurately is very important and should be done without delay. Record security and management procedures are in place and must be followed.

32. Do not delay reporting by attempts to gain more information and remember to make a note of the person you report to in Social Services and follow up in writing within 24 hours (responsible person only). Remember your first port of call in all situations is your manager.

Information to be contained within a report for Social Services or the Police should include the following. However, it is not expected that staff will attempt to get this information from any child or vulnerable adult other than that which is volunteered:

a. The nature of the allegation;
b. A description or name of child and alleged abuser’s name;
c. A description of any visible bruising or other injuries;
d. The child or vulnerable adult’s account, if he/she can give one, of what happened and how any bruising or other injuries occurred;
e. Any times, dates, or other relevant information;
f. A clear distinction between what is fact, opinion or hearsay.

**Important, Reporting & Records:**

33. Reporting the matter to the Police or Social Services Department should NOT be delayed by attempts to obtain more information.

34. Wherever possible telephone referrals to Social Services Departments should be confirmed in writing within 24 hours.

35. It is useful to keep a record of the name and designation of the person telephone messages were given to.

36. Records must be securely maintained and only viewed by appropriate personnel, Social Services or the Police.

37. These records will be kept securely by the Head of Housing Services and reported to the Director of Services. Record security and management procedures are in place and must be followed.

**Allegations Against Staff/ Volunteers**

38. This may include anyone directly employed by Rother District Council in a paid or voluntary capacity working with children and young people or vulnerable groups.

39. However, it may be difficult for the person in charge to distinguish whether an allegation against a member of staff is due to poor working practices or abuse. In this case, seek help from senior management. It may be one of a series of instances which, when put together, can cause concern.

40. It should be acknowledged that an allegation against any member of staff will generate concern amongst other staff. There may be difficulties in reporting colleagues but the way in which they are dealt with should be professional and fair and, above all, protect the welfare of the child, young person or vulnerable adult.

41. Staff need reassurance that they will be supported if they disclose information about a colleague.

42. In the case of an investigation of abuse against a member of staff, there may be three types of investigation:

   a. Criminal
   b. Child/ adult protection
   c. Disciplinary or misconduct

**What Happens Now?**

43. In the case of a child or vulnerable adult protection / criminal event an investigation will be led by Social Services, the Police and involve any
relevant member of staff. Again, the main concern would always be for the welfare of the child, young person or vulnerable adult involved.

**The Council will implement procedures to deal with the outcome of any investigation including:**

a. Advice and reassurance to the public;
b. Media attention;
c. Dealing with staff in the event of allegations being unfounded;
d. Dealing with staff should an allegation about a staff member be proven.

**Conclusion**

44. There are many difficult and sensitive issues involved. By following these guidelines, both children and vulnerable adult and staff are protected and incidents should be minimised. Should incidents occur, staff involved will be better placed to deal with events more competently and sensitively.

45. Remember the basic principles in dealing with children and vulnerable groups in potential abuse situation are:

a. Listening
b. Believing
c. Reassuring
d. Explaining
e. Acting immediately
f. Recording
g. Getting support.

**Appendices**

46. The following appendices give further guidance on the application of the Child Protection Policy and the Safeguarding Vulnerable groups Policy in practice:

APPENDIX 1 – Children’s Right to self-protection.
APPENDIX 2 – Guidance for Managers Protecting children and Workers.
APPENDIX 4 – Guidance for Managers Recording allegations or suspicious of abuse.
APPENDIX 5 – Roles and Responsibilities.
APPENDIX 6 – Risk Assessment.
APPENDIX 7 – Vetting & Barring Procedures.
APPENDIX 8 - Record Security & Management Procedures.