



Safeguarding Children/Child Protection Policy.

At Stirchley and Brookside Parish Council, we work closely with children, young people, parents, external agencies and the community to ensure the welfare and safety of children and young people and to give them the best start in life. Children have the right to be treated with respect, be helped to thrive and to be safe from any abuse in whatever form.

Safeguarding is a much wider subject than the elements covered within this single policy, therefore this document should be used in conjunction with Stirchley and Brookside Parish Council's other policies and procedures.

Legal Framework and definition of safeguarding.

- Children's Act 1989 and 2004
- Childcare Act 2006
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006
- Working together to safeguard children 2023
- Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015.

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in relation to this policy is defined as:

- Providing help and support to meet the needs of children as soon as problems emerge
- Protecting children from maltreatment, whether that is within or outside the home, including online
- Preventing the impairment of children's mental and physical health or development
- Ensuring that children can grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care
- Promoting the upbringing of children with their birth parents, or otherwise their family network through a kinship care arrangement, wherever possible and where this is in the best interests of the children
- Taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes.

(Definition taken from the HM Government document 'Working together to safeguard children 2023').

Policy Intention.

To safeguard children and promote their welfare we will:

- Create an environment to encourage children to develop a positive self-image
- Provide positive role models and develop a safe culture where staff are confident to raise concerns about professional conduct
- Support staff to notice the softer signs of abuse and know what action to take
- Encourage children to develop a sense of independence and autonomy in a way that is appropriate to their age and stage of development

- Provide a safe and secure environment for all children
- Promote tolerance and acceptance of different beliefs, cultures and communities
- Help children to understand how they can influence and participate in decision-making and how to promote British values through play, discussion and role modelling
- Always listen to children and young people
- Provide an environment where practitioners are confident to identify where children and families may need intervention and seek the help they need
- Share information with other agencies as appropriate.

Stirchley and Brookside Parish Council is aware that abuse does occur in our society, and we are vigilant in identifying signs of abuse and reporting concerns. Staff have a duty to protect and promote the welfare of children. Staff may be the first people to identify that there may be a problem. They may be the first people in whom children confide information that may suggest abuse or to spot changes in a child's behaviour which may indicate abuse.

Our prime responsibility is the welfare and well-being of each child in our care. As such we believe we have a duty to the children, parents and staff to act quickly and responsibly in any instance that may come to our attention. This includes sharing information with any relevant agencies such as local authority services for children's social care, health professionals or the police. All staff will work with other agencies in the best interest of the child, including as part of a multi-agency team, where needed.

Stirchley and Brookside Parish Council aims are:

- Keep the child at the centre of all we do
- Ensure staff are trained right from induction to understand the child protection and safeguarding policy and procedures, are alert to identify possible signs of abuse (including the signs known as softer signs of abuse), understand what is meant by child protection and are aware of the different ways in which children can be harmed, including by other children through bullying or discriminatory behaviour
- Be aware of the increased vulnerability of children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and other vulnerable or isolated families and children
- Ensure staff understand how to recognise early indicators of potential radicalisation and terrorism threats and act on them appropriately in line with national and local procedures
- Ensure that all staff feel confident and supported to act in the best interest of the child, share information and seek the help that the child may need
- Ensure that all staff are familiar and updated regularly with child protection training and procedures and kept informed of changes to local/national procedures
- Make any child protection referrals in a timely way, sharing relevant information as necessary in line with procedures set out by the Local Safeguarding Children Board
- Make any referrals relating to extremism to the police (or the Government helpline) in a timely way, sharing relevant information as appropriate
- Ensure that information is shared only with those people who need to know to protect the child and act in their best interest
- Keep the setting safe online using appropriate filters, checks and safeguards, always monitoring access
- Ensure that children are never placed at risk while in the charge of Stirchley and Brookside Parish Council staff or volunteers

- Identify changes in staff behaviour and act on these as per Whistleblowing Policy
- Take any appropriate action relating to allegations of serious harm or abuse against any person working or living with children from Stirchley and Brookside Parish Council including reporting such allegations to relevant authorities.
- Ensure parents have access to policies and procedures if requested
- Regularly review and update this policy where appropriate and make sure it complies with any legal requirements and any guidance or procedures issued by the Local Safeguarding Children Board.

Contact Telephone Numbers.

- Local authority Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub Family Connect 01952 385385
- Local authority Designated Officer (LADO) 01952 385728
- Telford and Wrekin Safeguarding Partnership 01952 385385
- Non-emergency police 101 Emergency 999

Types of abuse and procedures to follow.

Abuse and neglect are forms of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by harming them or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused within a family, institution or community setting by those known to them or a stranger. This could be an adult or adults, another child or children. The signs and indicators listed below may not necessarily indicate that a child has been abused but will help us to recognise that something may be wrong, especially if a child shows a number of these symptoms or any of them to a marked degree.

Indicators of child abuse.

- Failure to thrive and meet developmental milestones
- Fearful or withdrawn tendencies
- Unexplained injuries to a child or young person or conflicting reports from parents or staff
- Repeated injuries
- Unaddressed illnesses or injuries
- Significant changes to behaviour patterns.

Softer signs of abuse as defined by National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) include:

- Low self esteem
- Wetting or soiling
- Recurrent nightmares
- Aggressive behaviour
- Withdrawn communication
- Habitual body rocking
- Indiscriminate contact or affection seeking
- Over-friendliness towards strangers
- Excessive clinginess
- Persistently seeking attention

We are aware that peer on peer abuse does take place, so we include children in our policies when we talk about potential abusers. This may take the form of bullying, physically hurting another child, emotional abuse, or sexual abuse. We will report this in the same way as we do for adults abusing children and will take advice from the appropriate bodies on this area.

<p>Physical Abuse</p> <p>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 feigns the symptoms of, or deliberately causes, illness in a child. This is known as fabricated or induced illness.</p>		
<p>Common sites for non-accidental injuries</p>		
Eyes, ears, mouth, cheek, side of face	Skull and neck, upper and inner arm, chest, and shoulders, back	Inner thighs, backs of knees, genitals, buttocks
<p>Signs of non-accidental injuries</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Burns and scalds • Cigarette burns • Swelling and lack of normal use of limbs • Human bite marks • Untreated injuries • Any serious injury with no explanation or conflicting explanations • Ligature marks 	<p>Behavioural Observations may include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unusually fearful with adults • Unnaturally compliant to parents • Refusal to discuss injuries or a fear of medial help • Withdrawal from physical contact • Aggression towards others • Wearing cover up clothing • Behaviour that you would not expect to see in a child, at their age or stage in development 	
<p>Common sites for accidental injuries</p> <p>Nose, forehead, chin, elbows, knees, forearm, bony spine, hip</p>		

<p>Neglect</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance misuse, maternal mental ill health or learning difficulties or a cluster of such issues.</p> <p>Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent failing to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide adequate food, clothing, and 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 caregivers) • ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. <p>It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional, social, and educational needs.</p>

<p>Physical Observations may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor personal hygiene • Poor state of clothing • Poor growth pattern • Untreated medical problems • Non-organic 'failure to thrive' 	<p>Behavioural Observations include.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constant hunger or tiredness • Frequent lateness or non-attendance at school • Arrive early or leaving late from school. • Destructive tendencies • Low self esteem • Neurotic behaviour • No social relationships • Running away • Compulsive stealing or scavenging
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Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent effects on the child's emotional development, and may involve:

- conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only if they meet the needs of another person
- imposing age or developmentally inappropriate expectations on children. These may include interactions that are beyond the child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction
- seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another e.g., where there is domestic violence and abuse
- serious bullying (including online bullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger.
- exploiting and corrupting children.

Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

Behavioural Observations include

- physical, mental, and emotional developmental delays
- Acceptance of punishment which seems excessive
- Over reaction to mistakes
- Continual self-deprecation
- Sudden speech disorders/language delay
- Fear of new situations
- Inappropriate emotional responses to painful situations
- Neurotic behaviour (hair twisting, thumb sucking, rocking)
- Self-mutilation
- Fear of parents being contacted
- Extremes of passivity or aggression
- Being the scapegoat in the family
- Coldness/hostility/constant criticism

Sexual Abuse

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 assault by

penetration (e.g., rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing, and touching outside of clothing.

Sexual abuse includes non-contact activities, such as: involving children in looking at or producing pornographic materials, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming 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.

Sexual abuse also includes abuse of children through sexual exploitation. Penetrative sex where one of the partners is under the age of 16 is illegal, although prosecution of similar age, consenting partners is not usual. However, where a child is under the age of 13 it is classified as rape.

<p>Physical Observations may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Damage/soreness in genital area, anus, or mouth • Sexually transmitted infections • Unexpected pregnancy especially in young girls • Bruising giving the impression of sexual assault • Unexplained recurrent urinary tract infections and discharges or abdominal pain 	<p>Behavioural Observations include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sexual knowledge inappropriate for age • Sexualised behaviour in young children • Sexually provocative behaviour/promiscuity • Hinting at sexual activity, and about secrets they cannot tell • Unexplained falling off in school performance • Sudden apparent changes in personality • Lack of concentration, restlessness, aimlessness • Low self-image /low self esteem • Socially withdrawn • Poor trust in significant adults • Regressive behaviour, onset of wetting (day or night) • Onset of insecure, clinging behaviour • Running away from home • Suicide attempts, self-mutilation, self-disgust • Eating disorders, hysteria attacks in adolescents • Substance, alcohol misuse • Severe sleep disturbance
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Children and young people are also at risk from other types of abuse these can include:

- Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)
- Forced Marriage
- Domestic Abuse
- Child trafficking and modern slavery
- Child sexual exploitation
- Harmful sexual behaviour (including viewing pornography and sexting)
- Online abuse
- Radicalisation

If a child starts to talk openly to an adult about abuse, they may be experiencing the procedure below will be followed:

- The adult should reassure the child and listen without interrupting if the child wishes to talk
- The observed instances will be detailed in a confidential report
- The observed instances will be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Leads
- The matter will be referred to the local authority children's social care team

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015 (2017 updated version) defines CSE as "...a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology."

We will be aware of the possibility of CSE and the signs and symptoms this may manifest as. If we have concerns, we will follow the same procedures as for other concerns and we will record and refer as appropriate.

Reporting Procedures

All staff have a responsibility to report safeguarding concerns and suspicions of abuse. These concerns will be discussed with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) as soon as possible.

- Staff will report their concerns to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) at the earliest opportunity. The council has 2 named DSL's so 1 is always available.
- If appropriate, the incident will be discussed with the parent/carer, such discussions will be recorded, and the parent will have access to these records on request
- Contact the local authority children's social care team to report concerns and seek advice (if it is believed a child is in immediate danger we will contact the police)
- Record the information and action taken relating to the concern raised

Keeping children safe is our highest priority and if, for whatever reason, staff do not feel able to report concerns to the DSL or deputy DSL they should call the Local Authority Children's social care team or the NSPCC and report their concerns anonymously.

Recording suspicions of abuse and disclosures

Staff should make an objective record of any observation or disclosure. This record should include:

- Child's name
- Child's address
- Age of child and date of birth
- Date and time of observation or the disclosure
- Accurate words spoken by the child
- Accurate position and type of mark or injury seen

- Accurate observation of any incident including any concern was reported, with date and time; and the names of any other person present at the time
- Any discussion held with the parent(s) (where deemed appropriate).

These records should be signed by the person reporting this and the DSL. They should be dated and kept in a separate confidential file.

If a child starts to talk to an adult about potential abuse, it is important not to promise the child complete confidentiality. This promise cannot be kept. It is vital that the child is allowed to talk openly, and disclosure is not forced, or words put into the child's mouth. As soon as possible after the disclosure details must be logged accurately.

It may be thought necessary that through discussion with all concerned the matter needs to be raised with family connect. Staff involved may be asked to supply details of any information/concerns they have about a child. Stirchley and Brookside Parish Council expects all members of staff to co-operate with the local authority children's social care and police, in any way necessary to ensure the safety of the children.

Staff must not make any comments either publicly or in private about the alleged or actual behaviour of a parent or member of staff.

Informing Parents

Parents are normally the first point of contact. If a suspicion of abuse is recorded, parents are informed at the same time as the report is made, except where the guidance of local safeguarding partnership board/family connect/police does not allow this. This will usually be the case where the parent or family member is the likely abuser or where a child may be endangered by this disclosure. In these cases, the investigating officers will inform parents.

Confidentiality

All suspicions, enquiries and external investigations are kept confidential and shared only with those who need to know. Any information is shared in line with guidance from the local safeguarding partnership board.

Support to families

Stirchley and Brookside Parish Council take every step in its power to build trusting and supportive relationships among families, staff and volunteers.

Stirchley and Brookside Parish Council continues to welcome the child/ren and their families whilst enquiries are made. Parents and families will be treated with respect in a non-judgemental manner whilst any external investigations are carried out in the best interest of the child.

Confidential records kept on a child are shared with the child's parents or those who have parental responsibility for the child, only if appropriate in line with guidance of the local safeguarding partnership board with the proviso that the care and safety of the child is paramount. We will do all in our power to support and work with the child's family.

Allegations against adults working or volunteering with children and young people.

If an allegation is made against a member of staff or volunteer or any other person who works for Stirchley and Brookside Parish Council regardless of whether the allegation relates to Stirchley and Brookside Parish Council premises or elsewhere, we will follow the procedure below.

The allegation should be reported to the DSL. If this person is the subject of the allegation, then this should be reported to the Chair of Stirchley and Brookside Parish Council.

The Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) and the local safeguarding partnership board will then be informed immediately for this to be investigated by the appropriate bodies promptly:

- The LADO will be informed immediately for advice and guidance
- If as an individual, you feel this will not be taken seriously or are worried about the allegation getting back to the person in question then it is your duty to inform the LADO yourself directly
- A full investigation will be carried out by the appropriate professionals (LADO, local safeguarding partnership board) to determine how this will be handled
- Stirchley and Brookside Parish Council will follow all instructions from the LADO and the local safeguarding partnership board and ask all staff members to do the same and cooperate where required
- Support will be provided to all those involved in an allegation throughout the external investigation in line with LADO support and advice
- Stirchley and Brookside Parish Council reserves the right to suspend any member of staff during an investigation
- All enquiries/external investigations/interviews will be documented and kept in a locked file for access by the relevant authorities
- Unfounded allegations will result in all rights being reinstated
- Founded allegations will be passed on to the relevant organisations including the local authority children's social care team and where an offence is believed to have been committed, the police, and will result in the termination of employment. Stirchley and Brookside Parish Council will also notify the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) to ensure their records are updated
- All records will be kept until the person reaches normal retirement age or for 21 years and 3 months years if that is longer. This will ensure accurate information is available for references and future DBS checks and avoids any unnecessary reinvestigation
- Stirchley and Brookside Parish Council retains the right to dismiss any member of staff in connection with founded allegations following an inquiry
- Counselling will be available for any member of Stirchley and Brookside Parish Council who is affected by an allegation, their colleagues at Stirchley and Brookside Parish Council.

Staffing and Volunteering

Our policy is to provide a secure and safe environment for all children. We only allow an adult who is employed by Stirchley and Brookside Parish Council to have contact with children who have clearance from the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) to be left alone with children. We will obtain criminal records checks (DBS) for all volunteers and do not allow any volunteers to be unsupervised with children.

All staff will attend child protection training and receive initial basic child protection training during their induction period. This will include the procedures for spotting signs and behaviours of abuse and abusers/potential abusers, recording and reporting concerns and creating a safe and secure environment for the children.

We have named persons within Stirchley and Brookside Parish Council who take lead responsibility for safeguarding and co-ordinate child protection and welfare issues, known as the Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSL). These designated persons will receive comprehensive training at least every two years and update their knowledge on an ongoing basis, but at least once a year.

Stirchley and Brookside Parish Council DSL's liaise with the local safeguarding partnership board and the local authority children's social care team, undertakes specific training, including a child protection training course, and receives regular updates to developments within this field. They in turn support the ongoing development and knowledge update of all staff on the team.

Although we are not required to have a Designated Lead for safeguarding, for best practice Stirchley and Brookside Parish Council will have two. This always enables safeguarding to stay high on our priorities. Designated Leads will be contactable by mobile phone.

The Designated Safeguarding Leads for Stirchley and Brookside Parish Council are:

- Nikki Boronski, Youth Engagement Officer
- Andrea Warrington, FunZone Team Officer

At Stirchley and Brookside Parish Council:

- We provide adequate and appropriate staffing resources to meet the needs of all children
- Applicants for posts within Stirchley and Brookside Parish Council informed of the need to carry out checks before posts can be confirmed. Where applications are rejected because of information that has been disclosed, applicants have the right to know and to challenge incorrect information
- We give staff members, volunteers and students regular opportunities to declare changes that may affect their suitability to care for the children. This includes information about their health, medication or about changes in their home life such as whether anyone they live with in a household has committed an offence or been involved in an incident that means they are disqualified from working with children
- Volunteers do not work unsupervised
- Visitors or contractors are not permitted to use the building whilst FunZone is open.
- All staff have access to and comply with the Whistleblowing Policy which will enable them to share any concerns that may arise about their colleagues in an appropriate manner
- Signs of inappropriate staff behaviour may include inappropriate sexual comments; excessive one-to-one attention beyond the requirements of their usual role and responsibilities; or inappropriate sharing of images. This is not an exhaustive list, any changes in behaviour must be reported and acted upon immediately
- Any concerns are raised with the designated lead and dealt with in an appropriate and timely manner

Staff and volunteers are made aware of the need to disclose any changes to circumstances and to use the whistleblowing policy where required.

Extremism-The Prevent Duty

Under the Counterterrorism and Security Act 2015 we have a duty to refer any concerns of extremism to the police (In Prevent priority areas the local authority will have a Prevent lead who can also provide support).

This may be a cause for concern relating to a change in behaviour of a child or family member, comments causing concern made to a member of the team (or other persons in the setting) or actions that lead staff to be worried about the safety of a child in their care.

Alongside this we will be alert to any early signs in children and families who may be at risk of radicalisation, on which we will act, and document all concerns when reporting further.

E-Safety

Stirchley and Brookside Parish Council are aware of the growth of internet use and the advantages this can bring. However, it is also aware of the dangers and strives to support children, staff and families in using the internet safely.

Within Stirchley and Brookside Parish Council, we do this by:

- Ensuring we have appropriate antivirus and anti-spyware software on all devices and updating them regularly
- Ensuring content blockers and filters are on our computers, laptops and any mobile devices
- Ensure management monitor all internet activities in the setting
- Never emailing personal or financial information
- Reporting emails with inappropriate content to the internet watch foundation (IWF www.iwf.org.uk)
- Photos are only taken of children and young people if consent has been given by a parent/guardian. Photos are only taken by appropriate adults such as FunZone staff.

Stirchley and Brookside Parish Council has a clear commitment to protecting children and promoting welfare. Should anyone believe that this policy is not being upheld, it is their duty to report the matter to the attention of the DSL.