

# **HYTHE TOWN COUNCIL**

## **CHILD PROTECTION POLICY**

### **Introduction**

Hythe Town Council believes that children and young people have the right:

- To have fun.
- To be safe.
- To live their lives to the fullest potential.
- To have the opportunity to participate in and enjoy any activity.
- To be treated with dignity and respect and to be protected.

The Council, as represented by its Members, Officers, Contractors and Volunteers, will take all reasonable steps to preserve the rights of young people as stated above while engaged in Council activities or attending Council venues.

The Council aims to do this by:

- Raising awareness throughout the Council and beyond of Council's beliefs.
- Requiring all working on behalf of the council to adhere to these beliefs.
- Creating a safe and healthy environment within all its services, avoiding situation where abuse or allegations of abuse may occur.
- Requiring Staff and Volunteers who work with children and young people to be subject to the appropriate level Criminal Records Bureau check.
- Implementing the appropriate disciplinary and appeals procedures where allegations of breaches are made by its staff or members.

### **Promoting Good practice**

Child abuse, particularly sexual abuse can arouse strong emotions in those facing such a situation. It is important to understand these feelings and not allow them to interfere with your judgment about the appropriate action taken.

### **Good Practice Guidelines**

All personnel should be encouraged to demonstrate behaviour in order to promote children's welfare and reduce the likelihood of allegations being made.

### **Responding to Allegations or Suspicions**

It is not the responsibility of anyone working in the Council in a paid or unpaid capacity to decide whether or not child abuse has taken place. However there is a responsibility to act on any concerns by reporting these to the appropriate Officer or the appropriate authorities.

The Council will assure all staff that it will fully support and protect anyone, who may in good faith report his/her concerns by reporting that a colleague is or may be abusing a child.

Where there is a complaint against a member of staff there may be three types of investigation:

- A criminal investigation
- A child protection investigation
- A disciplinary or misconduct investigation

The results of the police and child protection investigation may well influence and inform the disciplinary investigation but all available information will be used to reach a decision.

#### Actions if there are Concerns

##### Poor Practice:

- The designated Child Protection Officer will deal with it as a misconduct issue.
- If the matter has been handled inadequately and the concerns remain it should be reported first to the Council.

##### Suspected abuse:

- Any suspicion should be reported to the Child Protection Officer who will take steps as considered necessary to ensure the safety of the child in question and any other child at risk.
- The Child Protection Officer will refer the allegation to social services department who may refer it to the Police.
- The parents/carers will be contacted as soon as possible following advice from social services.
- The Child Protection Officer should notify a welfare officer.
- If the Child Protection Officer is the subject of the suspicion/allegation the report must be made to a Council Member who will refer the allegation to Social Services.

#### Confidentiality

Every effort should be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned. Information should be handled and disseminated on a need to know basis.

#### Action if Bullying is Suspected

If bullying is suspected, the same procedure should be followed as set out in responding to allegations.

- Take all signs of bullying seriously.
- Encourage all children to speak and share their concerns.
- Create an open environment.
- Investigate all allegations and take action to ensure victim is safe.
- Keep records of what is said
- Report any concerns to the Council.
- Keep a written record of action taken.

If you are worried about sharing concerns about abuse you can contact social services or the police or the NSPCC Child protection helpline on 0808 800 5000 or Childline on 0800 1111.