



BARNSTAPLE TOWN COUNCIL

PROTECTION OF CHILDREN POLICY

Policy Statement

The Council recognises that the services it provides are used by children. The Council believes that children have the right to be secure from abuse, and we are committed to protecting all the children in our care from harm.

The Council will appoint a member of staff as the Safeguarding Children/Child Protection Officer. This Officer will have suitable experience, training and expertise, and will be responsible for liaising with appropriate outside agencies in any child protection matter.

The Council has a duty to ensure the welfare of its clients who may be at risk. This duty involves reporting the risk to an appropriate agency and by promoting a safe environment within the organisation.

The Council believes that its clients must be safeguarded from all forms of abuse. It recognises that it must at all times protect its clients from the risk of abuse and identify and deal with specific instances of abuse if they occur.

The Council will take every possible action to prevent abuse and to deal with it as promptly and effectively as possible if it occurs.

Aim of the Policy

The central aim of the Council's safeguarding policy is to set out to staff the:

- the Council's approach to the safeguarding of its clients
- ways in which the Council does this
- the steps taken to avoid abuse taking place
- the actions that will be taken by the Council to deal with abuse if it occurs

Definition of Abuse

Abuse of children may take any of the following forms:

- physical abuse
- sexual abuse
- emotional abuse
- neglect

Responsibility

The Council has a duty to ensure that staff working with children adopt safe practices.

The Council will undertake DBS checks on all new and existing staff as appropriate and will undertake regular supervision of staff to minimise the risks to clients posed by staff.

The Council has a duty to report serious concerns relating to abuse to appropriate agencies including the Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS).

The Council will –

- Set out and inform staff of the procedures for responding to suspicions or evidence of abuse.
- Operate policies which ensure that all new staff are rigorously checked, by the taking up of references and appropriate DBS checks.
- Ensure that all staff are given a copy of the Safeguarding Children Policy during their induction, and have its implications explained to them.
- Incorporate material relevant to issues of abuse into staff training at all levels.
- Maintain vigilance concerning the possibility of abuse of clients from whatever source.
- Encourage a climate of openness which enables staff to pass on concerns about behaviour that might be abusive.
- Produce and regularly revise policies and procedures to minimise the risk of abuse.

- Provide training and supervision for staff in all aspects of abuse and protection and provide them with any relevant information and guidance.
- Ensure that all staff are aware of the main indicators of child abuse.
- Ensure that all staff are aware of their statutory requirements in respect of the disclosure or discovery of child abuse and the procedure for doing so.
- Investigate any allegations of abuse quickly and thoroughly.
- Implement improvements to procedures if an investigation reveals deficiencies in the way in which the Council operates.
- Collaborate with other relevant agencies in combating abuse and improving the protection of clients.

If a member of staff who works with children in a regulated activity has been cautioned or convicted for a “relevant offence” the Council must make a referral to the DBS and the member of staff will be removed from working in the regulated activity.

The Council expects its staff to:

- Refrain from any abusive action in relation to clients,
- Report to the Council anything they witness which is or might be abusive,
- Co-operate in any investigation into alleged abuse,
- Participate in training activities relating to abuse and protection.

Staff should be aware of who they may turn to for advice if they become aware or suspect that abuse is occurring.

Failure by staff to report incidents or suspicions of abuse may lead to disciplinary action.

Recruitment

The Council will carry out all relevant checks on recruits to ensure that they are of a high standard.

The Council will ensure that new employees working with children are checked as appropriate through the DBS; obtaining a standard or enhanced certificate as appropriate.

For particular posts identified by the Council, applicants will be required to undergo an enhanced DBS disclosure. In all cases enhanced disclosure will apply applicants for posts where job involves “regulated activity”.

Regulated Activity involving children includes –

- Regularly undertaking unsupervised activities with children,
- Regularly working in certain establishments (eg. children’s homes, schools etc) where there is an opportunity for contact with children,
- Providing relevant personal care such as washing and dressing and health care by or supervised by a professional (whether undertaken regularly or otherwise).

Procedures for Reporting Abuse

If you suspect abuse may be occurring you should discuss your concerns with your line manager or another manager. Concerns should be documented. If you still have concerns, then these should be reported to the most appropriate agency as agreed with your line manager. This includes any information which may be given to you by a child or vulnerable adult.

If your concerns are about a colleague, these should be reported to your line manager immediately.

If the alleged abuse is by a professional from another Council or agency, the report should be made to a senior manager in the organisation who employs the person.

You should record your concerns, who you reported them to and if you spoke to the person about the concerns. If you do not hear back from this person, contact them again.

If the alleged abuser is a member of staff and there is sufficient evidence that abuse has or might have occurred, the Council will suspend that person from duty pending the outcome of a disciplinary investigation.

The alleged abuse will be investigated.

The investigation will include interviewing the member of staff involved in the incident, hearing and assessing evidence from any others who might have knowledge of the incident and considering any other possible source of evidence.

Following the Investigation

If it seems from the investigation that abuse has taken place, and the alleged abuser is a member of staff, the Council will take action under the Council’s disciplinary policy.

If the alleged abuser is not a member of staff the Council will involve other appropriate responsible bodies.

If abuse is proved against a staff member, the Council will take appropriate steps to inform the DBS that the staff member is possibly someone who is unsuitable to work again with children.

Review : annually. Next review September 2015.

