



Child Protection Policy

Safeguarding Children & Young People

Child Protection Policy

1. Policy Statement

Tendring District Youth Council has a duty of care to safeguard all children involved in Tendring District Youth Council from harm. All children have a right to protection, and the needs of disabled children and others who may be particularly vulnerable must be taken into account. Tendring District Youth Council will ensure the safety and protection of all children involved in Tendring District Youth Council through adherence to the Child Protection guidelines adopted by Tendring District Youth Council.

A child is defined as a person under the age of 18 (The Children Act 1989).

Tendring District Youth Council is a unique organisation because it is run by young people for other young people aged 8 – 16, therefore every person over the age of 18 will adhere to the Child Protection guidelines adopted by Tendring District Youth Council.

All Volunteers and Board Members over 18 **will** have undertaken Child Protection Training and had CRB clearance before working with any young people under the name Tendring District Youth Council.

2. Policy Aims

The aim of the Tendring District Youth Council Child Protection Policy is to promote good practice:

- Providing children and young people with appropriate insurance, safety and protection whilst in the care of Tendring District Youth Council.
- Allow all Youth Council members / Volunteers / Board members to make informed and confident responses to specific child protection issues.

3. 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 judgement about the appropriate action to take.

Abuse can occur within many situations including the home, school, out of school and out of home environments. Some individuals will actively seek employment or voluntary work with young people in order to harm them. A coach, instructor, teacher, official or volunteer will have regular contact with young people and be an important link in identifying cases where they need protection. All suspicious cases of poor practice should be reported following the guidelines in this document.

When a child enters the youth council having been subjected to child abuse outside the youth council environment, the youth council can play a crucial role in improving the child's self-esteem. In such instances the youth council must

work with the appropriate agencies to ensure the child receives the required support.

4. Good practice means

- Always working in an open environment (e.g. avoiding private or unobserved situations and encouraging open communication with no secrets).
- Treating all young people/disabled adults equally, and with respect and dignity.
- Always putting the welfare of each young person first, before winning or achieving goals.
- Maintaining a safe and appropriate distance with young people (e.g. it is not appropriate for staff or volunteers to have an intimate relationship with a child or to share a room with them).
- Building balanced relationships based on mutual trust which empowers children to share in the decision-making process.
- Making meetings fun, enjoyable and promoting fair involvement.
- Keeping up to date with in-house training skills and professional qualifications.
- Involving parents/carers wherever possible. For example, encouraging them to take responsibility for their child's transport to and from meetings.
- Ensuring that if youth councillors are taken away to events, they should always be accompanied by a male and female member over 18. However, remember that same gender abuse can also occur.
- Ensuring that at residential events, adults should not enter children's rooms or invite children into their rooms.
- Being an excellent role model – this includes not smoking or drinking alcohol in the company of young people.
- Giving enthusiastic and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism.
- Recognising the developmental needs and capacity of young people and disabled adults – avoiding excessive training or competition and not pushing them against their will.
- Securing parental consent in writing to act in loco parentis, if the need arises to administer emergency first aid and/or other medical treatment.
- Keeping a written record of any injury that occurs, along with the details of any treatment given.
- Requesting written parental consent if youth council officials are required to transport young people in their cars.

5. Practices to be avoided

The following should be **avoided** except in emergencies. If cases arise where these situations are unavoidable it should be with the full knowledge and consent of someone in charge in the council or the child's parents. For example, a child sustains an injury and needs to go to hospital, or a parent fails to arrive to pick a child up at the end of a meeting:

- Avoid spending excessive amounts of time alone with children away from others
- Avoid taking or dropping off a child to an event

6. Practices never to be sanctioned

The following should **never** be sanctioned. You should never:

- Engage in rough, physical or sexually provocative games, including horseplay
- Share a room with a child
- Allow or engage in any form of inappropriate touching
- Allow children to use inappropriate language unchallenged
- Make sexually suggestive comments to a child, even in fun
- Reduce a child to tears as a form of control
- Allow allegations made by a child to go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon
- Do things of a personal nature for children or disabled adults, that they can do for themselves
- Invite or allow children to stay with you at your home unsupervised
- Hold meetings at your home with individual children

7. Incidents that must be reported/recorded

If any of the following occur you should report this immediately to another senior member and record the incident. You should also ensure the parents of the child are informed:

- If you accidentally hurt a member.
- If he/she seems distressed in any manner.
- If a member appears to be sexually aroused by your actions.
- If a member misunderstands or misinterprets something you have done.

8. Recruitment and training of staff and volunteers

Recruitment

- Tendring District Youth Council recognises that anyone may have the potential to abuse children in some way and that all reasonable steps are taken to ensure unsuitable people are prevented from working with children. Pre-selection checks must include the following:
- All Volunteers and Board members over 18 should complete an application form. The application form will elicit information about an applicant's past and a self disclosure about any criminal record.
- Consent should be obtained from an applicant to seek information from the Criminal Records Bureau.
- Two confidential references, including one regarding previous work with children. These references must be taken up and confirmed through telephone contact.
- Evidence of identity (passport or driving licence with photo).

Training

In addition to pre-selection checks, the safeguarding process includes training after recruitment to help members and volunteers to:

- Analyse their own practice against established good practice, and to ensure their practice is likely to protect them from false allegations.
- Recognise their responsibilities and report any concerns about suspected poor practice or possible abuse.
- Respond to concerns expressed by a child or young person.
- Work safely effectively with children.

Tendring District Youth Council requires:

- All persons over 18 to attend an in-house training session by someone with an recognised 3-hour good practice and child protection awareness training certificate, to ensure their practice is exemplary and to facilitate the development of a positive culture towards good practice and child protection.
- Relevant personnel to receive advisory information outlining good practice and informing them about what to do if they have concerns about the behaviour of an adult towards a young person.
- Relevant personnel to gain national first aid training.

9. Responding to allegations or suspicions

- It is not the responsibility of anyone in Tendring District Youth 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 through contact with the appropriate authorities.
- Tendring District Youth Council will assure all members/volunteers that it will fully support and protect anyone, who in good faith reports his or her concern that a colleague is, or may be, abusing a child.
- Where there is a complaint against a member or volunteer 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 the disciplinary investigation, but not necessarily.

10. Action if there are concerns

Concerns about poor practice:

- If, following consideration, the allegation is clearly about poor practice; the Councils Child Protection Officer will deal with it as a misconduct issue.
- If the allegation is about poor practice by the Councils Child Protection Officer, or if the matter has been handled inadequately and concerns remain, it should be reported to the Chairman of the Board who will decide how to deal with the

allegation and whether or not to initiate disciplinary proceedings.

- Concerns about suspected abuse
- Any suspicion that a child has been abused by either a member of or a volunteer should be reported to the Councils Child Protection Officer, who will take such steps as considered necessary to ensure the safety of the child in question and any other child who may be at risk.
- The Councils Child Protection Officer will refer the allegation to the social services department who may involve the police, or go directly to the police if out-of-hours.
- The parents or carers of the child will be contacted as soon as possible following advice from the social services department.
- The Councils Child Protection Officer should also notify the Chairman of the Board who in turn will inform the Leader of the Council who will deal with any media enquiries.
- If the Councils Child Protection Officer is the subject of the suspicion/allegation, the report must be made to the Chairman of the Board or in his/her absence the British Youth Councils who will refer the allegation to Social Services.

11. 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 only. This includes the following people:

- The Chairman of the Board / Leader of the Council
- The Councils Child Protection Officer
- The parents of the person who is alleged to have been abused
- The person making the allegation.
- Social services/police.
- The alleged abuser (and parents if the alleged abuser is a child).
- Seek social services advice on who should approach the alleged abuser.
- Information should be stored in a secure place with limited access to designated people, in line with data protection laws (e.g. that information is accurate, regularly updated, relevant, secure and never used to intimidate, humiliate, or embarrass any such person(s)).

12. Internal Enquiries and Suspension

- The Tendring District Youth Council Child Protection Officer will make an immediate decision about whether any individual accused of abuse should be temporarily suspended pending further police and social services inquiries.
- Irrespective of the findings of the social services or police inquiries the Tendring District Youth Council Board will assess all individual cases to decide whether a member or volunteer can be reinstated and how this can be sensitively handled. This may be a difficult decision; particularly where there is insufficient evidence to uphold any action by the police. In such cases, the Tendring District Youth Council Board must reach a decision based upon the available information which could suggest that on a balance of probability; it is more likely than not

that the allegation is true. The welfare of the child should remain of paramount importance throughout.

- Support to deal with the aftermath of abuse:
- Consideration should be given to the kind of support that children, parents, members and volunteers may need. Use of helplines, support groups and open meetings will maintain an open culture and help the healing process. Consideration should be given to what kind of support may be appropriate for the alleged perpetrator.

13. Allegations of previous abuse

- Allegations of abuse may be made some time after the event (e.g. by an adult who was abused as a child or by a member or volunteer who is still currently working with children).
- Where such an allegation is made, the council should follow the procedures as detailed above and report the matter to the social services or the police. This is because other children, either within or outside the youth council, may be at risk from this person. Anyone who has a previous criminal conviction for offences related to abuse is automatically excluded from working with children. This is reinforced by the details of the Protection of Children Act 1999.

14. Action if bullying is suspected

- If bullying is suspected, the same procedure should be followed as set out in 'Responding to suspicions or allegations' above.
- Action to help the victim and prevent bullying in the youth council:
- Take all signs of bullying very seriously.
- Encourage all children to speak and share their concerns (It is believed that up to 12 children per year commit suicide as a result of bullying, so if anyone talks about or threatens suicide, seek professional help immediately). Help the victim to speak out and tell the person in charge or someone in authority. Create an open environment.
- Investigate all allegations and take action to ensure the victim is safe. Speak with the victim and the bully(ies) separately.
- Reassure the victim that you can be trusted and will help them, although you cannot promise to tell no one else.
- Keep records of what is said (what happened, by whom, when and where).
- Report any concerns to the Councils Child Protection Officer or the school (wherever the bullying is occurring).

Action towards the bully(ies):

- Talk with the bully(ies), explain the situation, and try to get the bully(ies) to understand the consequences of their behaviour. Seek an apology to the victim(s).
- Inform the bully's parents.
- Insist on the return of 'borrowed' items and that the bully(ies) compensate the victim.

- Impose sanctions as necessary.
- Encourage and support the bully(ies) to change behaviour.
- Hold meetings with the families to report on progress.
- Inform all organisation members of action taken.

Concerns outside the immediate youth council environment (e.g. a parent or carer)

- Report your concerns to the Councils Child Protection Officer, who should contact social services or the police as soon as possible.
- If the Councils Child Protection Officer is not available, the person being told of or discovering the abuse should contact social services or the police immediately.
- Social Services and the Councils Child Protection Officer will decide how to involve the parents/carers.
- The Councils Child Protection Officer should also report the incident to the British Youth Council. The Governing Body should ascertain whether or not the person/s involved in the incident play a role in Tendring District Youth Council and act accordingly.
- Maintain confidentiality on a **need to know** basis only.
- Information for social services or the police about suspected abuse:
- To ensure that this information is as helpful as possible, a detailed record should always be made at the time of the disclosure/concern, which should include the following:
 - The child's name, age and date of birth of the child.
 - The child's home address and telephone number.
 - Whether or not the person making the report is expressing their own concerns or those of someone else.
 - The nature of the allegation. Include dates, times, any special factors and other relevant information.
 - Make a clear distinction between what is fact, opinion or hearsay.
 - A description of any visible bruising or other injuries. Also any indirect signs, such as behavioural changes.
 - Details of witnesses to the incidents.
 - The child's account, if it can be given, of what has happened and how any bruising or other injuries occurred.
 - Have the parents been contacted?
 - If so what has been said?
 - Has anyone else been consulted? If so record details.
 - If the child was not the person who reported the incident, has the child been spoken to? If so what was said?
 - Has anyone been alleged to be the abuser? Record details.
- Where possible referral to the police or social services should be confirmed in writing within 24 hours and the name of the contact who took the referral should be recorded.

15. Plus+ Policies – ‘good practice in action’

The plus policies are additional to the main policy to ensure best practice. The effectiveness of any child protection policy should be based on its operational activities which involve children to ensure their safety and wellbeing at all times.

Camping / Residential Trips

Whilst children are on any camping or residential trip which involves one or more nights away from home the council is essentially acting on behalf of parents / carers to ensure their child/ren is/are in the best possible care, protected from any kind of abuse.

The council understands that some adults will use camping/residential trips to get to children for inappropriate purposes. Therefore the council shall select its volunteers for these kinds of trips based upon experience, qualifications and the necessary enhanced CRB clearance. Adults shall adhere to the follow guidelines set out below:

15.1 At no time shall an adult enter a child’s room/tent alone and in any case an adult should only enter a child’s room/tent in exceptional circumstances i.e. medical emergency and should be accompanied by another adult.

15.2 When a child tries to engage in any physical activities i.e. climbing, caving, assault course it is advisable for the adult supervising to encourage the child by verbal communications and for physical support to be used only if a child request it or in an emergency. We understand that children will ask for support on certain activities to help them overcome obstacles.

15.3 Whilst as much as we can try to be friends with children in order to establish a trusting relationship we still have to remember this is a professional friendship and that we have a duty to always remain impartial and professional and should use judgement to the best of are abilities whilst in the presence of children and for them not to get the wrong impression by the way we act physically or verbally.

Swimming Trips

When taking children on swimming trips adults should follow the below guidance:

15.4 At no time shall an adult enter a child’s changing cubical alone and in any case an adult should only enter a child’s changing cubical in exceptional circumstances i.e. medical emergency and should be accompanied by another adult.

15.5 When an adult is in the swimming pool supervising children it is not a substitute to the role of a lifeguard but to supervise behaviour. A lifeguard’s role is to ensure the safety of the children by enforcing the rules of the swimming pool.

15.6 Sometimes children do tend to cling on or want a piggy back whilst in the water. Whilst there is nothing wrong with this it should not be encouraged and in any case not for long periods as the adult should be encouraging the child to play with other children.

Photography

15.7 On many trips adults will have cameras to take pictures of the children in action whilst on the activities. Whilst this is appropriate, with parental permission, we feel it is not best practice. To overcome the problem, it shall be practice to have an official council camera which shall be used to take pictures but for those pictures to be stored safely and used appropriately.

15.8 Pictures should only be used for training, publications, media and on the council's website. There is no need for adults to have individual pictures of children as this is only open to allegations.

Communication with Children

15.9 It is essential for adults to talk to children in a way in which they can understand clearly without any interpretations that could mislead the child/ren. Adults should not use any foul or inappropriate language whilst in the presence of children and should always act in a professional manner.

15.10 When e-mailing children you also need to be aware of the message you send and how they might interpret it when reading it.

Meetings

15.11 Whilst children are at meetings it is important to have clear boundaries and code of conduct. All members are issued with a code of conduct when they start and an introduction to the youth council which includes boundary setting.

15.12 All meetings have an adult ratio of 1:8 to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the children. Adults should never work alone with individual children whilst at meetings; however working in small groups in an open space is acceptable.

Role of the Child Protection & Welfare Advisor

15.13 The role of the above advisor is to ensure that the council is actively ensuring the safety and wellbeing of the children. They shall advise the executive board on its child protection policy and will review the policy so it is up to date with national standards and best practice.

16. Declaration

Tendring District Youth Council hereby adopts and accepts this Child Protection Policy as a current operating guide and good code of practice.

Signed:

Name: Cllr. Stephen Mayzes

**Executive
Leader of the Council
Chairman of the Board**

Signed:

Name: Cllr. Danny Mayzes

Deputy Leader of the Council

Signed:

Name: William Harragan

Executive Youth Councillor

Signed:

Name: Tracey Barrett

Child Protection Officer / Advisor

Adopted:
Date: 4 October 2004

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