



Fermanagh & Omagh
District Council

Comhairle Ceantair
Fhear Manach agus na hÓmaí

Child Safeguarding Policy



September 2015

1. Introduction.

Fermanagh and Omagh District Council believes that it is always unacceptable for a child to experience abuse or harm of any kind and recognises its responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children by a commitment to a practice that protects them as far as is reasonably practicable.

2. Definitions.

- 2.1 A child, or children, is any young person under the age of 18.
- 2.2 Safeguarding means putting in place arrangements to take all reasonable measures to minimise the risks of harm to the welfare of children and vulnerable adults.

3. Aim.

The aim of the Child Safeguarding Policy is to demonstrate how the Council will meet its legal obligations and reassure members of the public, service users, councillors, employees and people working on behalf of the Council of what they can expect Fermanagh and Omagh District Council to do to safeguard children.

4. Objectives.

By working in accordance with this Policy, Fermanagh and Omagh District Council will:

- 4.1 Ensure that training appropriate to the level of involvement with children is available for councillors, employees, and volunteers;
- 4.2 Implement robust recruitment, selection and management procedures;
- 4.3 Respond appropriately to concerns reported;
- 4.4 Develop and implement effective procedures for recording and responding to incidents, ensuring confidentiality is maintained where appropriate;
- 4.5 Develop and implement effective procedures for recording and reporting any allegations or suspicions of harm or abuse;
- 4.6 Promote the welfare and wellbeing of children during and within Council services, including in the planning of services;
- 4.7 Maintain a good level of safe working practice at all times to minimise risk to children that come into contact with councillors, employees, volunteers and Agency Workers.

5. Definitions of abuse.

There are several different categories of abuse officially defined in government guidance and these are central to the statutory child protection system. Child abuse occurs when a child is neglected, harmed or not provided with proper care. Because children can be abused in a number of ways the harm caused cannot always be easily categorised. The Children (NI) Order 1995 defines 4 categories of abuse:

5.1 Neglect - the persistent failure to meet a child's physical, emotional or psychological needs, likely to result in significant harm.

5.2 **Physical** - the deliberate physical injury to a child, or the wilful or neglectful failure to prevent physical injury or suffering.

5.3 **Sexual** - involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities.

5.4 **Emotional** - the persistent emotional ill-treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development.

5.5 **Bullying** - Although bullying has not been defined as abuse within the Children (NI) Order 1995, a child who is bullied may be suffering any type of abuse as defined. Bullying is defined as deliberately hurtful behaviour, repeated over a period of time, where it is difficult for those bullied to defend themselves.

It may take many forms but the main types are:

- physical (for example, hitting, kicking, theft),
- verbal (for example, sectarian or racist remarks, name calling), and
- indirect (for example, spreading rumours)
- cyber bullying (for example the use of e-mail, instant messaging, chat rooms, pagers, mobile phones)

It is not always easy to recognise a situation where abuse may occur or where it has already taken place. It is unlikely that staff will be experts and it should be stressed that in accordance with the Children (N.I.) Order 1995, the Health and Social Services have a statutory duty to ensure the welfare of a child. (The Code of Practice for Safeguarding of Children gives more details of the indicators and effects of abuse.)

6. Implementation.

6.1 The policy will be supported by a Child Safeguarding Code of Practice.

6.2 The Code of Practice gives further guidance in relation to Awareness of abuse, Reporting procedures, Supervision of Children, Code of Conduct and Code of Behaviour, Support and Training, Recruitment and Selection Guidelines, Use of photography.

6.3 Information leaflets will be available for the public and for employees with relevant contact details.

7. Resourcing.

7.1 All necessary human, financial and material resources will be made available to implement the Policy, whilst being mindful of budgetary constraints.

7.2 Training will be provided to raise awareness of the Policy and Procedure among staff and to ensure its effective implementation.

8. Responsibilities.

To ensure the successful implementation of the Child Safeguarding Policy and Procedure, clear roles and responsibilities have been established.

Group or Individual	Role and Responsibilities
Councillors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Approve the Safeguarding Policy and subsequent amendments. ➤ Attend any relevant training or awareness raising sessions. ➤ Act in accordance with the Policy and Code of Practice at all times.
Chief Executive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The Chief Executive has ultimate officer responsibility for embedding safeguarding principles throughout the Council.
Senior Management Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Allocate resources to enable the Council to meet its responsibilities. ➤ Promote the integration of safeguarding principles into the culture of the Council. ➤ Consider safeguarding issues at SMT meetings.
Heads of Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Ensure employees are aware of this policy. ➤ Notify the Designated Safeguarding Officers in strict confidence of any safeguarding issues that are brought to their attention. ➤ Ensure that employees who have substantial contact with children attend the relevant training.
Head of Policy and Strategic Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Raise the profile of Safeguarding within the Council, and develop initiatives to ensure the protection of children within the Council area. ➤ Develop the Safeguarding Policy and Procedure with arrangements for periodic review ➤ Provide advice and support as required ➤ Continually improve and update safeguarding procedures based on current best practice and benchmarking results ➤ Co-ordinate audits as required by the Safeguarding Board. ➤ Ensure there are effective internal procedures to handle concerns. ➤ Ensure that the Council is represented at Safeguarding Network meetings.
Designated Safeguarding and Deputy Safeguarding Officers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Establish contacts and liaise with Social Services, PSNI and other agencies in relation to safeguarding issues within the Council ➤ Provide information and advice on safeguarding issues. ➤ Ensure that appropriate information is available at the time of the referral and that the referral is confirmed in writing under confidential cover. ➤ Ensure that relevant people within the Council are informed on a timely basis about any issues, concerns, action taken and any further action required, whilst ensuring that all records are maintained in a secure and confidential manner. ➤ Ensure that an individual case record is maintained of the action taken by the Council, the liaison with other agencies and the outcome. ➤ Advise on suitable training content.

Group or Individual	Role and Responsibilities
All Employees/Volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Take due care to ensure compliance with and to promote the Safeguarding Policy and Procedure. ➤ Act in a way that protects them from wrongful allegations of abuse as far as possible. ➤ Bring matters of concern about the welfare of children to the attention of a Safeguarding or Deputy Safeguarding Officer.

9. Monitoring.

The Council will monitor the implementation of the Policy at regular intervals and will respond in a positive fashion to both regional and local changes in circumstance or new initiatives.

10. Linkages.

10.1 This Policy provides the framework to guide the Council's practice in relation to the Safeguarding of Children.

10.2 The Policy operates in accord with the Council's Child Safeguarding Code of Practice.

11. Review.

11.1 The Child Safeguarding Policy will, under normal circumstances, be formally reviewed every three years.

11.2 The Policy will also be subject to routine scrutiny and, from time to time, updates and re-issues will be circulated.

11.3 The policy will be reviewed sooner in the event of any one or more of the following:

- A failure or weakness in the policy is highlighted.
- Changes in legislative requirements.
- Changes in Government/Council or other directives and requirements.