



Fermanagh & Omagh  
District Council

Comhairle Ceantair  
Fhear Manach agus na hÓmaí

# **Child Safeguarding Policy**

Reviewed: June 2022

## **Introduction**

Fermanagh and Omagh District Council (Council) believes that it is unacceptable for a child to experience abuse or harm of any kind and is committed to working in partnership with others to safeguard children from all forms of abuse, neglect or exploitation.

The Council, through this policy, aims to ensure that a holistic approach to safeguarding is embedded within all Council services.

The Council recognises its responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children by making a commitment to protect them as far as is reasonably practicable.

## **Definition of Key Terms**

A **child** is any young person under the age of 18.

### **Safeguarding**

Within the policy, the term 'safeguarding' includes activities which prevents harm occurring in the first place (Safeguarding Procedures) as well as any activity which protects children where abuse or harm has taken place, or is likely to occur (Reporting Procedures).

### **Abuse**

Abuse can be a single, or repeated, act. It can take place within many situations including: the home, school, communities, public places, clubs, societies, etc.

There are different types of abuse and a child can be abused in more than one way and by one or more perpetrators.

### **Significant Harm**

Being mistreated or abused (sometimes called 'Significant Harm') is defined as sexual abuse, physical abuse, neglect or emotional abuse.

### **Preventative Safeguarding**

This includes a range of actions and measures. Council personnel may come into contact with children and adults who may be at risk and so must recognise the potential for harm and put in measures to prevent it. In practice Council supports elected members, employees, casual workers, agency workers and volunteers by providing safeguarding procedures e.g.

- Recruitment, selection and vetting
- Code of Conduct for Councillors

- Employee Code of Conduct
- Block booking or extended lets of council facilities
- Photographic guidance
- Role of Designated Safeguarding Champion, Designated Safeguarding Officers and Safeguarding Co-ordinator
- Membership of Leisurewatch
- Supervision levels at activities
- Guidance for Work Placements
- Guidance/Protocols for contractors
- Managing Challenging Behaviour/Anti-Bullying

### **Protective Safeguarding**

Protective Safeguarding is targeted at children and adults at risk when harm is suspected, has occurred or is likely to occur. The protection service is led by the Health and Social Care Trusts and the PSNI. In practice the council has internal reporting concerns regarding children and adults which may lead to referrals to these statutory agencies.

### **Aim**

The aim of the Child Safeguarding Policy is to demonstrate how the Council will meet its legal, and moral, responsibilities. It will inform members of the public, service users, Elected Members, employees as well as individuals working on our behalf of what Fermanagh and Omagh District Council can do to safeguard children.

### **Objectives**

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

1. Ensure that appropriate training is available for Elected Members, employees, and volunteers;
2. Implement robust recruitment, selection and management procedures;
3. Respond appropriately, sensitively and seriously to **all** concerns reported;
4. Develop, implement and continuously monitor procedures for recording, responding and reporting any incidents, allegations and suspicions of harm or abuse.
5. Promote the welfare and wellbeing of children within Council services and facilities, including in the planning of services;
6. Maintain a good level of safe working practice at all times to minimise risk to children who encounter Elected Members, employees, volunteers and agency workers.
7. Promote a continuous learning approach to safeguarding.
8. Promote zero-tolerance of harm to all children.
9. Ensure effective and co-ordinated multi-agency responses are provided.

10. Influence the way the organisation thinks about harm to children and adults at risk by embedding a culture which recognises every person's right to respect and dignity, honesty, humanity and compassion in every aspect of their life

## **Safeguarding Principles**

Safeguarding is the responsibility of every individual in Northern Ireland across all disciplines and sectors.

**Paramountcy:** The welfare, and best interests, of the child is paramount.

**Parental Responsibility:** Parental responsibility means all the rights, duties, powers, responsibilities and authority, which by law a person, with the parental responsibility of a child, has in relation to the child and their property.

**Prevention:** It is better to take action before harm occurs.

**Proportionality:** The least intrusive response appropriate to the risk presented.

**Protection:** Support and representation for those in greatest need.

**Partnership:** Local solutions through services working with their communities. Communities have a part to play in preventing, detecting and reporting neglect and abuse.

Child protection is the process of protecting individual children identified as either suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm as a result of abuse or neglect. Safeguarding, and promoting the welfare of children, is a broader term than child protection. It encompasses protecting children from maltreatment, preventing impairment of children's health or development, and ensures children grow up in safe and nurturing circumstances.

All children have a right to protection against abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence and the Council has a statutory duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people.

A successful approach to the safeguarding of children and adults at risk requires multi agency collaboration and the recognition of individual's wellbeing and welfare at the heart of the organisation.

The diagram below outlines good practice in relation to safeguarding:



## Forms 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:

- **Neglect** - the persistent failure to meet a child's physical, emotional or psychological needs, likely to result in significant harm.
- **Physical** - the deliberate physical injury to a child, or the wilful or neglectful failure to prevent physical injury or suffering. This may include hitting, shaking, throwing, burning/scalding, confinement to a room/cot or inappropriately giving drugs to control their behaviour.
- **Sexual** - involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities. Activities may include physical contact or non-physical contact (such as: involving children in looking at, or the production of, inappropriate materials).
- **Emotional** - the persistent emotional ill-treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. This may include conveying to a child that they are worthless, unloved, inadequate or valued only when they meet the needs of another person. Due to this type of behaviour children may feel frightened or in danger, or it may also result in the exploitation and corruption of children.
- **Bullying and Cyberbullying** - 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)

Cyberbullying is intentional and repeated cruel or hurtful behaviour that is carried out using technology, such as: the use of e-mail, instant messaging, chat rooms, mobile phones, social networking sites).

- **Sexting** – when someone sends or receives a sexually explicit text, image or video on their mobile phone, computer or tablet. It can include sexual chat, or requests for pictures/images of a sexual nature. Whether this is illegal or not depends on the nature of the image or chat, as well as who it is sent between. It is a crime to possess, take, make, distribute or show anyone an indecent or abuse image of anyone under the age of 18 years.

Although the age of consent is 16 years, the relevant age in relation to indecent images is 18 years. More information on '[Sexting and the Law](#)' can be found online [here](#).

It is not always easy to recognise a situation where abuse may occur or where it has already taken place. It is unlikely that employees 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).

Please note, the abovementioned forms of abuse do not represent all forms of abuse. More information on the abovementioned forms, as well as others are contained within the Guidance Notes.

## **Implementation**

- This policy will be supported by a Child Safeguarding Guidance Notes.
- The Guidance Notes give further information 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, Photography.
- Information leaflets with relevant contact details will be available for the public, employees, Elected Members and contractors, where appropriate.

## Resourcing

- All necessary human, financial and material resources will be made available to implement the Policy, whilst being mindful of budgetary constraints.
- Training will be provided to raise awareness of the Policy and Procedure among employees and to ensure its effective implementation. All training is outlined within the Guidance Notes.

## 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   |
|--|---|
| Elected Members                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Approve the Safeguarding Policy and subsequent amendments.</li> <li>➤ Attend any relevant training or awareness raising sessions.</li> <li>➤ Act in accordance with the Policy and Code of Practice at all times.</li> </ul>   |
| Chief Executive                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The Chief Executive has ultimate officer responsibility for embedding safeguarding principles throughout the Council.</li> </ul>   |
| Senior Management Team                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Allocate resources to enable the Council to meet its responsibilities.</li> <li>➤ Promote the integration of safeguarding principles into the culture of the Council.</li> <li>➤ Consider safeguarding issues at SMT meetings.</li> </ul>  |
| Heads of Service                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Ensure employees are aware of this policy.</li> <li>➤ Notify the Designated Safeguarding Officers in strict confidence of any safeguarding issues that are brought to their attention.</li> <li>➤ Ensure that employees who have substantial contact with children attend the relevant training.</li> </ul>  |
| Head of Corporate and Strategic Services | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Chair the internal meetings of the Safeguarding Working Group..</li> <li>➤ Raise the profile of Safeguarding within the Council, and develop initiatives to ensure the protection of children participating in, or affected by Council services.</li> <li>➤ Periodically review the Safeguarding Policy and Procedures.</li> <li>➤ Provide advice and support as required</li> <li>➤ Continually improve and update safeguarding procedures based on current best practice and benchmarking results</li> </ul> |

| Group or Individual  | Role and Responsibilities   |
|--|---|
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Co-ordinate audits as required by the Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland.</li> <li>➤ Ensure there are effective internal procedures to handle concerns.</li> <li>➤ Ensure that the Council is represented at Local Government Safeguarding Network meetings.</li> </ul>   |
| Designated Safeguarding Officer and Deputy Safeguarding Officers | <p>These roles are key to the Council's ability to safeguard children in its care, as well as enabling Elected Members and employees to provide a safe environment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Establish contacts and liaise with Social Services, PSNI and other agencies in relation to safeguarding issues within the Council</li> <li>➤ Provide information and advice on safeguarding issues.</li> <li>➤ Ensure that appropriate information is available at the time of the referral and that the referral is confirmed in writing under confidential cover.</li> <li>➤ 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.</li> <li>➤ Ensure that an individual case record is maintained of the action taken by the Council, the liaison with other agencies and the outcome.</li> <li>➤ Advise on suitable training content.</li> <li>➤ Liaise with other Safeguarding Officers to determine the course of action and referral required.</li> </ul> |
| All Employees/Volunteers   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Take due care to ensure compliance with and to promote the Safeguarding Policy and Procedure.</li> <li>➤ Act in a way that protects them from wrongful allegations of abuse as far as possible.</li> <li>➤ Bring matters of concern about the welfare of children to the attention of a Safeguarding or Deputy Safeguarding Officer.</li> <li>➤ Inform their Line Manager, or Head of Service, whenever a safeguarding referral has been made.</li> </ul>  |

## Safeguarding Working Group

The Safeguarding Working Group (SWG) is an internal, cross-directorate, group set up to oversee the practical implementation of this policy and to develop, monitor and review safeguarding procedures.



The SWG consists of 14 Officers and is chaired by the Head of Corporate Services and Governance. The role of this Group includes:

- Identifying safeguarding training needs within services
- Developing supplementary safeguarding procedures as they are required
- Promoting good practice within council services – to include procurement of services
- Discussing incidents and concerns raised in services to facilitate a council-wide response if necessary

## **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.

The Council's Designated Safeguarding Officers formally meet at least bi-annually, discussing any changes in circumstance and any procedural changes that are required.

## **Linkages**

This Policy provides the framework to guide the Council's practice in relation to the Safeguarding of Children and operates in accord with the Council's Child Safeguarding Guidance Notes.

## **Review**

- The Child Safeguarding Policy will, under normal circumstances, be formally reviewed every three years.
- The Policy will also be subject to routine scrutiny and, from time to time, updates and re-issues will be circulated.  
The Policy will also be subjected to routine scrutiny at meetings of the Designated Safeguarding Officers which take place bi-annually.
- 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.