

Creech St Michael Parish Council

Policy Title	Safeguarding Policy
Applies to	All Parish Council Employees, Members, Volunteers, Contractors and Service Users
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1.0 Introduction

Creech St Michael Parish Council acknowledges the duty of care to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and vulnerable adults using or receiving services provided or commissioned by the Parish Council. The purpose of this Policy is to protect and promote the welfare of the children and adults using or receiving services provided or commissioned by Creech St Michael Parish Council and support the Council, its officers, elected and co-opted members and volunteers in fulfilling their statutory responsibilities.

Creech St Michael Parish Council is not a Children's Services Authority and it is not the role of the Parish Council to investigate allegations of abuse. However, all members, employees, volunteers, contractors and contracted service providers have a clear responsibility to act when they suspect or recognise that a child or vulnerable adult may be a victim of harm or abuse.

If there are concerns that a child or vulnerable adult may be at risk of immediate harm, call 999 and report this to the Police.

This policy has been developed using guidance from the NSPCC and the Local Government Association.

2.0 Definitions

2.1 Children and Vulnerable Adults

A child is anyone under the age of 18 years.

A vulnerable Adult is anyone over 18 who is:

- Unable to care for themselves.
- Unable to protect themselves from significant harm or exploitation.
- May need or be receiving community care services.

2.2 Types of Abuse

Everybody should be aware of the different types of abuse, everybody should be concerned by any action or inaction, which significantly harms the physical and/or emotional development of a child or vulnerable adult. Abuse falls into four main categories and can include child sexual exploitation and female genital mutilation:

- Physical abuse (for example hitting, pushing, shaking, misusing medication).
- Sexual abuse (for example rape, sexual assault).
- Emotional or psychological abuse (for example threats of harm or abandonment humiliation, controlling, intimidation).
- Neglectful abuse (for example ignoring medical or physical care needs).

Abuse can also be:

- Mistreatment that violates a person's human and civil rights.
- Treating someone with disrespect in a way which significantly affects the person's quality of life, to causing actual physical suffering.
- Domestic (for example controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, 'honour' based violence, female genital mutilation, forced marriage).
- Self-neglectful (for example neglecting to care for one's personal hygiene or health).
- Discriminatory (for example abuse based on race, sexuality or a person's disability).
- Modern slavery (for example forced labour, debt bondage, sexual exploitation) organisational abuse.

3.0 Application of this Policy

Safeguarding is about protecting the safety, independence, and wellbeing of people at risk of abuse, and is everybody's responsibility. This policy applies to anyone working for or on behalf of Creech St Michael Parish Council whether in a paid, voluntary or commissioned capacity, for example contracted to do a piece of work. This policy also applies to any individual or group hiring, leasing or using the Parish Council's facilities for the purpose of delivering any service to children or vulnerable adults.

This policy should also be read in conjunction with other Parish Council policies and procedures, in particular the Equal Opportunities, Grievance Policy and Procedure and Whistleblowing policies, Health and Safety Policy and the Freedom of Information Policy.

Assessing whether children or adults are experiencing abuse is the responsibility of professionals within the local authority. Creech St Michael Parish Council's role is therefore not to assess whether or not abuse has taken place, but to safeguard by informing the local authority if information becomes known to the Parish Council that could indicate that abuse may have taken place, or that a child or vulnerable adult is at risk of abuse.

4.0. Good Practice Guidelines

Everybody working in direct or indirect contact with young people and vulnerable adults must abide by the guidelines noted below.

It is possible to reduce situations where abuse may occur and below are specific examples of the care which should be taken when working with children or vulnerable adults.

- Treat all children and people with dignity and respect.
- Provide an example for good conduct that others can follow.
- Challenge unacceptable behaviour e.g., bullying and report allegations/suspicions of abuse.
- Ensure that, when possible there is more than one adult present during activities with children and or vulnerable adults, or at least be within sight or hearing of others.

- Respect the right of children and vulnerable adults to personal privacy.
- Encourage children and vulnerable adults to feel comfortable enough to point out attitudes or behaviours they do not like.
- Remember that someone else might misinterpret certain actions, no matter how well intentioned.
- Be aware that any physical contact with a child or vulnerable adult may be misinterpreted.
- Recognise that special caution is required when discussing sensitive issues with children or vulnerable people.
- Always operate within Creech St Michael Parish Council's Code of Conduct, principles, guidance, policies, and procedures.
- Avoid inappropriate or unwarranted physical or verbal contact with children or vulnerable adults.
- Do not either exaggerate or trivialise any abuse issues or concerns.
- Do not rely on your good name or that of Creech St Michael Parish Council to protect you.
- Ever believe 'it could never happen here'.
- Never take a chance when common sense, policy or practice suggests another more prudent approach.

5.0 Responsibilities

Safeguarding Officer

- Creech St Michael Parish Council delegates overall responsibility for safeguarding to the Clerk and RFO who fulfils the role of Safeguarding Officer.
- The Safeguarding Officer should ensure that necessary reports on safeguarding issues are reported to Somerset Council.
- The Safeguarding Officer is responsible for implementing arrangements for safeguarding the welfare of children and vulnerable adults at risk throughout the Parish Council.
- The Safeguarding Officer is responsible for dealing with all instances relating to safeguarding children or vulnerable adults at risk that arise within the Parish Council.

Employees, Councillors, Volunteers, Contractors and Contracted Service Providers

All Employees, Councillors, Volunteers, Contractors and Contracted Service Providers have a duty to promote the welfare of children and vulnerable adults. It is everybody's responsibility to recognise the signs of, and to report abuse wherever it is seen, suspected, or disclosed. Employees and Councillors must also respond appropriately to any disclosure and take any immediate action necessary to protect children and adults at risk.

6.0 Confidentiality and Information Sharing

Creech St Michael Parish Council employees and members have a responsibility to share information about children and vulnerable adults if that information may indicate that the child or vulnerable adult is experiencing abuse.

If a disclosure is made to an employee, or an employee has a concern about the welfare of a child or vulnerable adult, the employee should follow the procedure in the event of a disclosure or safeguarding concern, as set out in appendix 1. This includes ensuring that the person making a disclosure is aware that the employee may need to share the information and cannot promise confidentiality.

Information should only be shared on a strictly need-to-know basis. This means:

- The employee who receives the information should inform the Safeguarding Officer on the same working day. If the member of staff who receives the information is the Safeguarding Officer, they should inform the Chair of Parish Council or in their absence the Vice Chair of Parish Council.
- The Safeguarding Officer and the member of staff will discuss the concern and decide whether to inform the relevant Safeguarding Team at Somerset Council. The decision about whether to make a referral should be based on:
 - The welfare of the child or vulnerable adult is paramount. Protecting the welfare of the person who may be experiencing abuse should be the only consideration when deciding whether a referral is needed.
 - If the Safeguarding Officer and/or the other member of staff is in any doubt as to whether a referral is needed, a referral should be made.
 - It is not the role of Creech St Michael Parish Council employees to assess whether abuse has taken place. A referral should be made if information is known that indicates that abuse may have taken place.
- In the event of a disclosure, efforts should be made to get informed consent from the person making the disclosure before a referral is made to the Local Safeguarding Team. However, a referral may be made without consent if the person does not give consent and there are concerns about the welfare of a child or vulnerable adult.
- Information should not be shared with other Creech St Michael Parish Council employees or Councillors as a matter of course. Any information that is shared should be on a strictly need-to-know basis and kept to a minimum.
- In the event of a disclosure, the person who made the disclosure should be kept informed about what information has been shared and with whom.

7.0 Record Keeping

In the event of a disclosure or safeguarding concern, a detailed written record must be made by the person who receives the information, as soon as possible, and always on the same day. These records must be stored securely, in a locked drawer or password protected file, indefinitely. Access to this record must only be granted on a need-to-know basis.

8.0 Use of Video and Photography

The use of photographs and video images of vulnerable adults and children will be controlled to prevent possible misuse. Written validation of consent from the subject(s) and their parent(s), guardian(s) or carer(s) before any images can be used must be obtained prior to publication or use.

9.0 Reporting a Concern

Concerns should be reported by the Safeguarding Officer to Somerset Council on 0300 123 2224. In an emergency contact the Police by calling 999.

Appendix 1.

Procedure in the event of a disclosure or safeguarding concern.

It is important that children, young people and vulnerable adults are protected from abuse. All complaints, allegations or suspicions must be taken seriously, including those received anonymously. This procedure must be followed by employees and parish council members whenever a disclosure of abuse is made or when there is a suspicion of abuse.

1. In the event of a disclosure:

- Reassure the person concerned.
- Listen to what they are saying.
- Record what you have been told/witnessed as soon as possible.
- Remain calm and do not show shock or disbelief.
- Tell them that the information will be treated seriously.
- Do not start to investigate or ask detailed or probing questions. Only ask questions to clarify the basic facts of what they are already telling you.
- Do not promise to keep it a secret.

2. Make Sure the individual is safe.

If the person is in immediate danger, the police or ambulance must be called straight away on 999. Ensure prompt action is taken to minimise the risk of harm from any further abuse, maltreatment, or neglect. This is particularly important if:

- The person remains in or is about to return to the place where the alleged abuse occurred.
- The alleged abuser is likely to have access to the person or others who might be at risk.

3. Record the information

Make a full record of the disclosure, allegation, or incident as soon as possible, within one working day.

4. Report to Safeguarding Officer

Report the disclosure or concern to the Safeguarding Officer immediately or as soon as possible within one working day. In the first instance this may need to be done verbally. If the Safeguarding Officer is unavailable, report to the Parish Council Chair or Vice Chair. Do not report the information to other employees or members.

5. Support the individual

Keep in contact with the person who made the disclosure, or you have the concern about, and ensure they know they can contact you again. Ask for their permission before sharing information, but make sure they know you may have to share it without permission. Keep them informed about who the information has been shared with.