

Sheepscombe Village Hall Safeguarding Policy

Approved by Sheepscombe Village Hall Trustees on 1 March 2017



Paul Woollam
Chair of Trustees

Reviewed: 18 February 2022
Next review date: 1 March 2026

Sheepscombe Village Hall

Safeguarding Policy

Safeguarding is the action that is taken to promote the welfare of children and vulnerable adults and protect them from harm.

We start with a presumption of trust and confidence in all those who work with children and vulnerable adults, and the good sense and judgment of everyone involved with Sheepscombe Village Hall.

Introduction

This Policy is approved by the Trustees of Sheepscombe Village Hall, who are committed to the safeguarding of children, and to ensuring their well-being. We believe that everyone has a responsibility to help prevent the physical, sexual and emotional abuse or neglect of children. We will report to the appropriate authorities any abuse of children that we discover or reasonably suspect.

Through this Policy, we aim to take all reasonable steps in relation to the safety and welfare of the children who come to the Village Hall and to the activities that take place within it. It is impossible to ensure that no child will ever come to harm at the Village Hall. However, implementing this Policy and following these guidelines will allow confidence that all reasonable precautions have been taken to prevent harm.

All references within this Policy to safeguarding children should be taken to include safeguarding vulnerable adults. The term "children" refers to those under the age of 18 years¹, and "Village Hall" refers to the grounds as well as to the building.

Aim and application of this Policy

The aim of this Policy is to provide guidelines and procedures for promoting safeguarding, preventing abuse and protecting children. This includes procedures for taking appropriate action when safeguarding concerns are raised involving children who attend our activities and events.

This Policy applies to everyone involved with the Village Hall. This includes Trustees and volunteers, together with individuals, User Groups and other organisations who hire the Hall. Everyone has a duty to do everything reasonable in their power to ensure the safety and welfare of children while they are at the Village Hall and to act in accordance with this Policy.

Responsibilities

- It must always be clear which adult has primary responsibility for children at Village Hall activities or events when they are not accompanied by their parents

Taking account of factors such as the nature of the activity or event and particularly the age and maturity of the children involved:

- An appropriate adult/child ratio must be agreed for any events or activities primarily involving children

¹The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child defines a child as anyone under 18. The UK has ratified this convention.

- During events and activities, child must not be left in any part of the premises (indoors or outdoors, including the playground area) without proper supervision from an appropriate and responsible adult
- Parents should satisfy themselves with the arrangements for their children travelling to and from Village Hall events or activities

In addition:

- The Trustees will inspect the condition of the playground equipment monthly and will have it checked annually by a competent inspector approved by RoSPA; however, parents should report any damage to the equipment to a Trustee immediately on discovery
- Parents should be aware that the Painswick Stream running through the Hall's grounds is unfenced

Disclosure and Barring

Individuals, User Groups and other organisations (including the Trustees) using the Hall for any activities involving children are themselves responsible for deciding whether any form of Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check is necessary. This decision should be taken in line with current Government advice.

The Trustees will require evidence that a Safeguarding Policy is in place and that appropriate DBS checks have been carried out before hiring the Village Hall to any organisation, User Group or individual for activities primarily involving children, including Trustee managed events. However, evidence will not be required:

- When the hiring organisation might reasonably be expected to have fulfilled DBS requirements (such as schools and national associations like scouting)
- For personal, non-commercial events like birthday parties where the parents of children are present (for such events, hirers should themselves be satisfied with safeguarding arrangements for anyone supplying, for example, entertainment or transport)
- For unpaid arrangements like looking after a friend's child (such as a mother and baby group)
- Where the activity is not being provided primarily for children, or where it is reasonable to assume that any children will be accompanied by a responsible adult

Example: Before consenting to a proposal by an organisation to run a children's cinema club, Trustees would require the organisation to agree that a named person with current DBS clearance would be present at each event. That person would supervise further volunteers following the guidelines in the organisation's own Safeguarding Policy.

Use of information relating to children

Information about children, like names and addresses, obtained during activities at the Village Hall will be treated confidentially. It will be kept securely by the activity leader, stored only as long as necessary and disposed of in a way that maintains confidentiality.

Children's names will not be used in photograph captions for publications, websites and social networking sites without the consent of the child (and/or the child's parents, depending on age). Event or activity leaders will take all reasonable steps to ensure that no inappropriate photographs or video recordings are taken at the Village Hall.

Duty of care and confidentiality

The Trustees have a duty of care to everyone who uses the Village Hall, whether adults or children. They will maintain confidentiality at all times, except in circumstances where to do so would place someone at risk of harm.

Licensing

Sheepscombe Village Hall is licensed by Stroud District Council to sell alcohol and to show films. No person who appears to be under the age of 18 years shall be permitted to buy or consume alcohol at the Hall. Where films have been classified as 12A, 15 or 18, no person appearing to be under the relevant age shall be admitted.

Preventing abuse

Activities involving children will be organised so as to promote a safe environment and healthy relationships, whilst minimising opportunities for harm, misunderstanding or false accusation. For each event, risk assessments will be carried out, records will be kept and adequate insurance will be in place. Everyone associated with Sheepscombe Village Hall will:

- Take all reasonable steps to ensure the health, safety and welfare of any child at the Hall
- Prevent anyone from putting any child in a situation where there is a significant risk to their health and safety
- Take appropriate action if they become aware of anyone physically, emotionally or sexually abusing a child
- Respect the wishes of a child as they would an adult
- Respect a child's privacy
- Remember that children regard adults as role models and ensure behaviour, language and gestures are appropriate
- Be aware of Child Protection issues, not become complacent and believe 'it could never happen to me'

Guidelines for working with children

Allegations of abuse made by children about adults do occasionally happen. Some prove mistaken or, very rarely, malicious. These Guidelines aim to help avoid situations in which well-intentioned actions could be misinterpreted.

Everyone associated with Sheepscombe Village Hall will not:

- Use language or behaviour with sexual connotations (such as flirting or innuendo)
- Use physical contact which could be misconstrued; any physical contact should be in public, appropriate to the situation and to the age, gender and culture of the child and in response to the needs of the child, not the adult
- Spend time alone with a child out of sight of other people
- Discriminate or leave discrimination or bullying unchallenged
- Ridicule a child (even in "fun")
- Have any electronic communication with a child except with parental consent

Safety in numbers

So far as is reasonably practicable, the aim should always be to ensure that no adult is put in a one to one situation with a child without the consent of the child's parents. Safety in numbers should be the golden rule, whether the numbers are other children or adults. If for any reason a one to one situation is unavoidable additional safeguards, such as leaving doors open, should be put in place.

Allegations of abuse

Open discussion of child protection should be encouraged since this helps to make people more comfortable with the issues involved. It should not be kept "under wraps" for fear of upsetting or embarrassing people.

It is to be hoped that nobody will ever have to deal with an alleged incident of child abuse. But it is sensible to be prepared to do so if necessary. There are four potential scenarios:

- There is reasonable suspicion or evidence that a child is being abused by a person associated with the Village Hall
- A child accuses a person associated with the Village Hall of abusing them
- Abuse takes place or is suspected at a Village Hall event or in the Village Hall grounds by an individual unrelated to the Village Hall
- A child discloses abuse happening elsewhere e.g., at home

In all cases:

- Be prompt, calm and confident
- Seek medical help where necessary
- Do not ask leading questions; record what is said using the child's own words
- Keep details strictly confidential and share only on a "need to know" basis
- Do not confront the accused person
- Where an allegation suggests that a criminal offence may have been committed, report the issues as soon as possible to the local Police and to the Chair of the Trustees
- Do not promise to keep something secret if a child is being harmed or is at risk of harm

Nominated Child Protection Officer

The nominated Child Protection Officer for Sheepscombe Village Hall, who will oversee this policy and be the first point of contact for any concerns from either a child or an adult, is the Chair of the Trustees. Contact details will be maintained on the Village Hall notice board.

Paul Woollam

February 2017