

Child Protection Policy

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| Date of policy | 18/03/2026 |
| Date to be reviewed | 17/03/2027 |
| Chairperson 's signature | <i>David Hutchinson</i> |

This policy is to be read in conjunction with:

MVHA Health and Safety Policy
MVHA Safeguarding Policy
MVHA Adults at Risk Policy

Introduction:

Mickleton Village Hall Association (MVHA), which incorporates our trustees, committee members and our volunteers is committed to ensuring that all those associated with the hall have positive enjoyable experiences. Consequently, we are committed to ensuring to that all children and young people who take part in our activities are kept free from harm. We will ensure that:

- Everyone is treated with respect
- Activities take place in a safe and secure environment
- Adults who work with children and young people are checked and cleared through the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)
- Opportunities exist for young people and parents/primary carers to talk to us about any concerns they may have
- Children, young people and parents/primary carers feel comfortable and confident enough to discuss attitudes and behaviours they do not like
- No adult is left alone with individual children and young people
- All committee members, trustees and volunteers will have read and understood the Safeguarding Children, Young People and Adults who are vulnerable Policy, and are familiar with what to do if there is a suspicion, or allegation of abuse towards a child or young person.

What is Child abuse?

Child abuse means harming a child. Child abuse is not a new problem and, although it still occurs, there is evidence to suggest that its occurrence can be significantly reduced by learning more about the problem, by giving young people self- protection strategies, by knowing how to listen to young people carefully, and by knowing what action to take when allegations of child abuse are made.

There are four types of child abuse, namely:

Physical abuse:

The intentional, non-accidental use of physical force on the part of a parent/primary carer or care giver that aims to hurt, injure or destroy that child.

Emotional abuse:

The persistent emotional ill treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to the child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may involve causing children to frequently to feel frightened or in danger,

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or the exploitation or corruption of children.

Sexual abuse:

The involvement of dependent, developmentally immature children or adolescents in sexual activities they do not truly comprehend, or to which they are unable to give informed consent, or that violate the social taboos of family roles.

Neglect:

When chronic inattention is given to the child by their parents/primary carers or care givers in the areas of medical, educational, stimulative, environmental, nutritional, physical or emotional needs.

Possible signs of Child abuse

Adults associated with MVHA will look out for the following possible signs of child abuse. However, it is understood that not all children and young people manifesting these symptoms will necessarily be suffering abuse. Caution, sensitivity and common sense will shape precisely how adults respond to these symptoms.

If a child or young person:

- Becomes withdrawn or isolated
- Becomes aggressive or starts seeking attention
- Becomes afraid of certain people
- Develops chronic medical problems such as stomach pains or headaches
- Acts in sexually inappropriate ways toward adults or peers
- Becomes anorexic or bulimic
- Fails to thrive
- Is often hungry
- Has regular accidents
- Has poor personal hygiene
- Is regularly tired
- Is reluctant to go home
- Wears inappropriate clothing
- Develops poor social relationships
- Exhibits inappropriate emotional responses
- Exhibits dramatic changes in mood or behaviour
- Engages in drug or alcohol abuse
- Runs away
- Feels depressed
- Has bumps, bruises or wounds
- Has unconvincing explanations for bumps, bruises or wounds
- Tells of a friend with a problem of abuse

Actioning concerns

If anyone has concerns about the behaviour or actions of anyone associated with the hall they should immediately inform the named safeguarding person, **Tessa Evans** or hall committee chairperson, **David Hutchinson**. Failure to share information could result in a ban from the hall. Anyone acting in an unsafe or unwise manner will be subject to referral to the relevant authorities, and a similar ban according to a decision made by at least 3 Committee Members.

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If a disclosure is made to a hall user, it will be recorded. Leading questions should not be asked but a clear factual record made of what has been disclosed. If a concern is noticed, (such as evidence of physical abuse, severe neglect or distress), this should be reported in the same way as for disclosures. All referrers should follow the summary guidance:

- Record the time and date
- Write down exactly what you are told, at the time, even if it is on a scrap of paper. Do not rewrite your notes, keep original notes.
- Do not promise to keep what you are told a secret
- Tell the child or young person what you will do next
- Do not make promises you cannot keep

All disclosures should be immediately reported to the named safeguarding person for the relevant group who will in turn inform relevant authorities. Where appropriate, responsible adults (i.e. parents, guardians, and carers), will be informed unless such a disclosure causes significant distress or threat to the individual making it. This decision will be made by the relevant safeguarding named person.

Referrals are made to Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership **First Contact phone line 03000 267 979** or email firstcontact@durham.gov.uk for concerns regarding Children and Young People.

Confidentiality cannot be promised in any case where an individual may be in danger of any form of abuse. Abuse can include physical, sexual, emotional or neglect. Event organisers and leaders and volunteers are expected to record and report any concerns. Referral is made to the relevant authorities, with the adults responsible for the individual who has made a disclosure being notified if appropriate.

Once the matter has been referred to the named person they will take the necessary action. It is not usually appropriate to feed back to the individual making the disclosure. The person who made the disclosure should check that the information has been passed on.

Any individual making a referral will be protected by the Committee under whistle blowing procedures. Similarly, if the individual making the referral feels that insufficient action/follow up has taken place they should inform the Committee without fear of repercussions.

Adults will not:

- Promise confidentiality to the young person, otherwise nothing can be done about the allegation and the problem of abuse will persist
- Be judgemental or show anger, disgust or disbelief
- Ask direct questions of the young person
- Minimise the effects of the alleged abuse
- Become unnecessarily involved
- Over dramatise or criticise
- Confront the young person with the abuser or abusers
- Tell off the young person for not confiding earlier
- Try to force the young person to forget

When recording allegations of, or suspicions about, child abuse adults will try to provide the following information:

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- Name of the young person
- Age
- Address
- Any special factors (e.g. the young person has a disability. Lives apart from the biological mother/father, has alleged abuse in the past, etc.)
- Are you reporting your concerns or someone else's?
- Brief description of what has prompted your concerns, including dates, times and specific incidents if possible
- Are there any physical or behavioural signs that prompted, or support, your concerns?
- Have you spoken to the young person who is said to suffer the abuse? If yes, what was said?
- Is anyone alleged to be the abuser?
- Have you consulted anyone else?

Receiving an allegation

On receiving an allegation, the Safeguarding Lead will proceed in line with recognised procedures - consulting immediately with LA officers (LADO, Local Authority Designated Officer) and/or informing the First Contact Service. If the LADO is unavailable there should be no delay in discussing with First Contact. The Safeguarding Lead must not start to investigate.

Allegations regarding the Safeguarding Lead should be passed to the Chairperson, or Deputy Chairperson to contact the LADO for advice. The decision as to whether to notify the young person's parents/primary carers will be made in consultation with the relevant authority through Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership First Contact phone line 03000 267 979 or email firstcontact@durham.gov.uk.

Where it is suspected that a crime has been committed, then the matter should be reported to the police with immediate effect.

If allegations are made by a young person or parent/primary carer against another young person in Mickleton Village Hall, the local authority safeguarding officer (LADO) will be notified immediately and action taken on their advice. The decision as to whether to notify the young person's parents/primary carers will be made in consultation with the relevant authority through Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership First Contact phone line 03000 267 979 or email firstcontact@durham.gov.uk.

Monitoring and Evaluation:

Once a year adults/officers associated with Mickleton Village Hall Association will meet to discuss the extent to which practice conforms with the content of the policy. Three years following adoption of the policy, adults/officers associated with Mickleton Village Hall will meet to discuss whether the policy needs revising in the light of new child protection legislation and best practice advice.

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