

Child and Vulnerable Person Protection Policy and Guidance

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This is a statement of intent that demonstrates a commitment to safeguard children and vulnerable people from harm in Town Council premises. The essential inclusions for a Child and Vulnerable Person Protection Policy are outlined below:
- The welfare of the child or vulnerable person is paramount. Crewkerne Town Council recognises its duty of care under the Children Act 1989, the Children Act 2004, the Care Act 2014, and the Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023 guidance. This policy also aligns with the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006.
 - All children and vulnerable people without exception have the right to protection from abuse regardless of gender, ethnicity, disability, sexuality or beliefs.
- 1.2 All groups and organisations using Town Council owned and managed property shall conform to an appropriate policy. If they do not have their own safeguarding policy, they must adopt one using the template provided in Appendix A before any booking, grant or licence is approved.
- 1.3 As an organisation, the Town Council are committed to:
- Demonstrating a commitment to the importance of safeguarding and promoting children and vulnerable person's welfare.
 - Demonstrating a clear line of accountability within the organisation for work on safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and vulnerable people.
 - Provide training on safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children/vulnerable people for all staff and councillors working with, or in contact with, children, vulnerable people and their families.
 - Operate safe recruitment, selection and vetting procedures. Ensure all staff, councillors, and volunteers undertaking regulated activity have an up-to-date Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check appropriate to their role.
 - Possess effective inter-agency working and effective information sharing, to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and vulnerable people.
 - Ensure children, vulnerable people and their families are informed of the policy and procedures as appropriate.
 - Demonstrate that all concerns, and allegations of abuse will be taken seriously by the organisation and responded to appropriately.
 - Ensuring that the council will never unnecessarily create a risk environment for children or vulnerable people.
 - Abiding by the council's code of conduct on Child and Vulnerable Person Protection issues (see below).

2. Code of Conduct

- 2.1 All staff and councillors have read this code of conduct and agree to abide with its content.
- Everyone is expected to conform to socially acceptable standards, these standards being of a moral, ethical, personal and professional nature.

- Everyone must respect the rights of every human being without exception or prejudice of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, ethnic origin or political affiliation.
 - Everyone will be concerned primarily with the wellbeing, safety and protection of the individual.
 - Everyone is responsible for setting and monitoring the boundaries between a working relationship and friendship with customers, especially when a young/vulnerable person is involved.
 - Everyone must realise that certain situations or friendly words and actions could be misinterpreted, not only by the individual but also by outsiders and could lead to allegations of misconduct or impropriety.
 - Where physical contact between councillors or staff and members of the public is necessary, everyone must ensure that no action on their part could be misconstrued.
- 2.2 Any concerns about the conduct of staff, councillors, or volunteers in relation to children or vulnerable people should be reported immediately to the Town Clerk, who will follow the safeguarding reporting procedures.

3. Confidentiality

- 3.1 The management of confidentiality is an essential factor in all issues relating to vulnerable person protection. Staff and councillors should never give children or adults an absolute guarantee of confidentiality but must ensure that the information is disclosed only to the people who need to know. It should be explained to the children and young people that secrets cannot and should not be kept if keeping it means that they, or others, will continue to be harmed.
- 3.2 Major concerns and fears should not be discussed with parents, anyone else involved with the care of the child or young person, or anyone named in any allegation before a discussion with the Clerk.

4. Reporting Abuse

- 4.1 If a member of staff or councillor is informed by someone of abuse they should apply the following basic principles:
- Keep an open mind and do not jump to conclusions.
 - Listen to the person rather than directly question him or her.
 - Never stop someone who is freely recalling significant events.
 - Make a note of the discussion, taking care to record the timing, setting and who was present, as well as what was said.
- 4.2 If a vulnerable person tells you that he or she is being abused:
- React calmly so as not to frighten or deter them.
 - Reassure them that you are glad that they told you.
 - Don't promise to keep it to yourself.
 - Explain that you need to make sure that they will be safe and may have to pass on the information to someone trusted to deal with it appropriately.
 - Listen to what the vulnerable person says and take it seriously.
 - Only ask questions if you need to clarify what the vulnerable person is telling you - don't ask the vulnerable person about explicit details.
 - Don't ask leading questions, ie. one that pre-supposes the answer e.g. "Did Jim hit you?"

- Make a detailed note of what the vulnerable person has told you but do not delay passing on the information.
- 4.3 It is never easy to respond to a young/vulnerable person who tells you that they are being abused, and you may feel upset and worried yourself. Make sure that you are offered adequate support and an opportunity for de-briefing, bearing in mind confidentiality.
- 4.4 Action to take following concerns of abuse:
- Report concern immediately to the Town Clerk (Designated Safeguarding Lead).
 - The Town Clerk will assess and decide whether to refer to Somerset Council Children's Social Care or Adult Social Care.
 - If the concern is urgent and the Town Clerk is unavailable, contact Somerset Council's Safeguarding Team directly or the Police if a child/vulnerable person is at immediate risk.
- 4.5 The Town Clerk will be the liaison with the council in all vulnerable person protection issues.

5. Protecting Staff

- 5.1 These guidelines protect both the individual and the organisation from potential allegations. Staff and councillors should always aim to work in an open environment where actions and behaviour are transparent.
- 5.2 Outlined below is some general guidance to protect yourself from allegations of abuse.
- DO NOT:**
- Spend excessive amounts of time alone with a vulnerable person away from others.
 - Take a vulnerable person alone in a car on journeys, however short.
 - Take a vulnerable person to your home.
 - Engage in rough physical games including horseplay.
 - Engage in sexually provocative games.
 - Allow or engage in inappropriate touching of any form.
 - Allow a vulnerable person to use inappropriate language unchallenged.
 - Make sexually suggestive comments about or to a vulnerable person even in fun.
 - Let allegations a vulnerable person makes go unchallenged or unrecorded.
 - Do things of a personal nature for a vulnerable person that they can do themselves.

Version Control:

Adopted at Full Council: 10th August 2009, Min. No. 60.

Updated at Policy and Resources Committee 12 June 2017 Min No 17/18 08 a)

Updated at Policy & Resources Committee: 13th October 2025 Minute 016 25/26 f

This policy will be reviewed every four years, or sooner if required by changes in legislation or council practice.

Review Date: October 2029

Appendix A

Child and Vulnerable Person Protection Policy Pro Forma

Organisation / group:

Designated Person:

Definition of “Appropriate People”: The group of people who need to read and understand this document eg. staff, volunteers, trustees.

This is a statement of intent that demonstrates a commitment to safeguard children and vulnerable people from harm.

As an organisation, we are committed to:

- Demonstrating a commitment to the importance of safeguarding and promoting children and vulnerable person's welfare.
- Demonstrating a clear line of accountability within the organisation for work on safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and vulnerable people.
- Provide training on safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children/vulnerable people for all staff working with, or in contact with, children, vulnerable people and their families.
- Operate safe recruitment, selection and vetting procedures. Ensure all staff, councillors, and volunteers undertaking regulated activity have an up-to-date Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check appropriate to their role.
- Possess effective inter-agency working and effective information sharing, to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and vulnerable people.
- Ensure children, vulnerable people and their families are informed of the policy and procedures as appropriate.
- Demonstrate that all concerns and allegations of abuse will be taken seriously by the organisation and responded to appropriately.
- Abiding by our code of conduct on Child and Vulnerable Person Protection issues (see below).

Code of Conduct

All Appropriate People have read this code of conduct and agreed to abide with its content.

- Everyone is expected to conform to socially acceptable standards. These standards being of a moral, ethical, personal and professional nature.
- Everyone must respect the rights of every human being without exception or prejudice of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, ethnic origin or political affiliation.
- Everyone will be concerned primarily with the wellbeing, safety and protection of the individual.
- Everyone is responsible for setting and monitoring the boundaries between a working relationship and friendship with customers, especially when a young/vulnerable person is involved.
- Everyone must realise that certain situations or friendly words and actions could be misinterpreted, not only by the individual but also by outsiders and could lead to allegations of misconduct or impropriety.
- Where physical contact between anyone and members of the public is necessary, everyone must ensure that no action on their part could be misconstrued.

Any concerns about the conduct of staff, councillors, or volunteers in relation to children or vulnerable people should be reported immediately to the Town Clerk, who will follow the safeguarding reporting procedures.

Confidentiality

The management of confidentiality is an essential factor in all issues relating to vulnerable person protection. Appropriate People should never give children or adults an absolute guarantee of confidentiality but must ensure that the information is disclosed only to the people who need to know. It should be explained to the children and young people that secrets cannot and should not be kept if keeping it means that they, or others, will continue to be harmed.

Major concerns and fears should not be discussed with parents, anyone else involved with the care of the child or young person, or anyone named in any allegation before a discussion with the designated person.

Reporting Abuse

Suspicion of abuse

If the appropriate people are informed by someone of abuse they should follow the following basic principles:

- Keep an open mind and do not jump to conclusions.
- Listen to the person rather than directly question him or her
- Never stop someone who is freely recalling significant events
- Make a note of the discussion, taking care to record the timing, setting and who was present, as well as what was said.

If a vulnerable person tells you that he or she is being abused

- React calmly so as not to frighten or deter them.
- Reassure them that you are glad that they told you
- Don't promise to keep it to yourself.
- Explain that you need to make sure that they will be safe and may have to pass on the information to someone trusted to deal with it appropriately
- Listen to what the vulnerable person says and, please, take it seriously.
- Only ask questions if you need to clarify what the vulnerable person is telling you - don't ask the vulnerable person about explicit details.
- Don't ask leading questions - a leading question is one that pre-supposes the answer e.g. 'Did Jim hit you?'
- Make a detailed note of what the vulnerable person has told you but as advised in the previous section, please don't delay passing on the information.

It is never easy to respond to a young person who tells you that they are being abused, and you may feel upset and worried yourself. Make sure that you are offered adequate support and an opportunity for de-briefing, bearing in mind confidentiality.

Action to take following concerns of abuse:

- Report concern immediately to the Town Clerk (Designated Safeguarding Lead).
- The Town Clerk will assess and decide whether to refer to Somerset Council Children's Social Care or Adult Social Care.
- If the concern is urgent and the Town Clerk is unavailable, contact Somerset Council's Safeguarding Team directly or the Police if a child/vulnerable person is at immediate risk.

Designated person

The Town Clerk will be the liaison with the organisation/group in all vulnerable person protection issues.

Protecting Appropriate People

These guidelines protect both the individual and the organisation from potential allegations. Staff and councillors should always aim to work in an open environment where actions and behaviour are transparent.

Outlined below is some general guidance to protect yourself from allegations of abuse.

DO NOT:

- Spend excessive amounts of time alone with a vulnerable person away from others.
- Take a vulnerable person alone in a car on journeys, however short.
- Take a vulnerable person to your home.
- Engage in rough physical games including horseplay.
- Engage in sexually provocative games.
- Allow or engage in inappropriate touching of any form.
- Allow a vulnerable person to use inappropriate language unchallenged.
- Make sexually suggestive comments about or to a vulnerable person even in fun.
- Let allegations a vulnerable person makes go unchallenged or unrecorded.
- Do things of a personal nature for a vulnerable person that they can do themselves.