



WELLINGTON TOWN COUNCIL

Safeguarding Policy

Children & Adults

Whilst it is not the responsibility of an individual to decide whether a child or vulnerable adult has or is suffering harm as a result of abuse or neglect, any concerns should be reported as soon as possible.

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1. Background

Wellington Town Council delivers services which can bring employees, Councillors and volunteers into contact with children or vulnerable adults. This could be either as the main part of their role or indirectly when engaged in activities, working outdoors in a public place or seeing customers in a reception area.

This policy is based on our responsibilities under the Children Act 2004, specifically Section 11 which places a duty on key people and public bodies, including councils, to make arrangements to ensure that their functions are discharged with regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

With regard to safeguarding vulnerable adults, this policy has been developed in accordance with guidelines produced by the Department of Health 'No Secrets' guidance and The Vulnerable Groups Act 2006. There are different issues to consider when dealing with cases of abuse of vulnerable adults.

This policy, procedure and guidance has been adopted by Wellington Town Council and is consistent with policies in place within other agencies in Somerset providing services to children and young people or their families. The child protection standards in this procedure are consistent with Government publications:

- Working Together to Safeguard Children' (2010) and
- What To Do If You're Worried a Child is Being Abused' (2006).

This document is designed to complement, and provide a context for, the more detailed Child Protection Procedures and does not replace them.

All references to children in this document should be taken to apply also to young people and vulnerable adults.

2. Policy

Wellington Town Council believes that it is never acceptable for a child, young person or vulnerable adult to experience abuse of any kind. The Council recognises its responsibility to safeguard the welfare of all children, young people and vulnerable adults, through a commitment to practices which protects them.

The Council, its staff and volunteers recognise that:

- the welfare of the child, young person or vulnerable adult is paramount.
- all children, young people or vulnerable adults have the right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse, regardless of age, disability, gender, racial heritage, religious belief, sexual orientation, or identity.
- working in partnership with children, young people, their parents, vulnerable adults, carers and other agencies is essential in promoting young people's and vulnerable adults' welfare.

The policy seeks to:

- provide protection for the children and young people receiving services from Wellington Town Council services, including the children of adult members or users.
- provide staff and volunteers with guidance on procedures to adopt should they suspect a child, young person or adult may be experiencing, or be at risk of, harm.

This policy applies to all staff, Council Members or anyone working on behalf of Wellington Town Council.

Wellington Town Council will seek to safeguard children, young people and vulnerable adults by:

- valuing them, listening to them and respecting them.
- adopting child, young people and vulnerable adult protection guidelines through procedures and a code of conduct for staff and volunteers.
- recruiting staff and volunteers safely, ensuring all necessary checks are made.
- sharing information about child protection and good practice with children, parents, staff and volunteers
- sharing information about concerns with agencies who need to know, involving children and parents or carers appropriately.
- providing effective management for staff and volunteers through supervision, support and training.
- regularly reviewing its safeguarding policy.

Scope of the Policy

The policy is in respect of the Council's responsibility towards:

- Children and young people - legally defined as any person under the age of 18. From this point the terms child or children will be used to refer to this group. (Children Act 2004).
- Vulnerable adults, defined for the purposes of this policy as anyone over the age of 18 who is or may be in need of care services by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness, and who is or may be unable to take care of him or herself, or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation. (No Secrets Department of Health 2000).
- The employees of the Council who will come into contact with children or vulnerable adults during the course of their work
- Members of the Town Council when on Council business
- Volunteers who are performing a task or duty at the request of, or on behalf of, Wellington Town Council
- Contractors when carrying out work on behalf of Wellington Town Council

The term 'parent/carer' is used throughout as a generic term to represent parents, carers and guardians for both children and vulnerable adults.

The policy covers all functions and services of the Town Council.

Child Protection is defined as:

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 and vulnerable adults is defined as:

- Protecting children and vulnerable adults from maltreatment.
- Preventing impairment of children's or vulnerable adults' health or development
- Ensuring that children and vulnerable adults are growing up and living in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care
- Undertaking that role so as to enable those children and vulnerable adults to have optimum life chances

2.1 Related policies:

Equality Policy

Complaints procedure

Disciplinary procedure

Data Protection Policy

Standing Orders

Members Code of Conduct

3. Procedures

Everybody shares responsibility for safeguarding children who may be in need of child protection services by identifying children or young people who may be at risk and alerting the appropriate service(s).

All staff & volunteers must ensure that they are familiar with relevant child protection procedures and who is responsible for child protection issues. Advice should initially be sought from the designated or named person responsible for child protection support within any given setting. This may be a designated teacher at school or the designated lead for child protection within other services. It might also be a health visitor or doctor. However, this should never discourage a direct referral to Children's Social Care particularly where there is an immediate risk.

Referrals

A referral must be made to Somerset County Council's Children's Social Care team, (telephone **0300 123 2224**) where there are signs that a child under the age of 18 years, or an unborn baby:

- is suffering or has suffered abuse and/or neglect
- is likely to suffer abuse and/or neglect

- would be likely to benefit from family support services (with agreement of the person with parental responsibility)

The designated professional will provide support in the case of a referral to Children's Social Care team as they will be familiar with the procedure. Speed of referral must reflect the perceived risk, and will usually be within one working day of recognition. If, for any reason, you cannot contact the designated or named person in your setting you should go ahead and contact Children's Social Care.

When making a referral to Children's Social Care you must agree with them what the child speak to someone. Verbal or telephone referrals must be confirmed in writing, within 48 hours. Any Common Assessment Framework (CAF) that has been undertaken should be attached to the referral.

Children's Social Care should acknowledge your written referral within one working day of receipt. If no response is received within 3 working days, contact them again.

Under no circumstances should you speak to, or confront a suspected abuser. Do not share suspicions or information with any other person other than your line manager, Children's Social Care and the Police. Information given to Children's Social Care or the Police will be taken seriously, handled sensitively and shared only on a 'need to know' basis, wholly to protect the child. However, in order to ensure that children are safeguarded on the basis of proper evidence, the source of the referral cannot be kept anonymous.

If during the provision of any council services or activities you have any concerns about an individual's behaviour towards children or young people do not ignore it - professionals will take any concerns very seriously. You should discuss your concerns with the designated person at the Town Council, speaking to the Town Clerk in the first instance. Council staff will support you in liaising with the statutory agencies should any child protection matter arise.

Do not confront the 'offending' adult but seek the advice of the designated or named person. If they are not available seek advice from Children's Social Care.

3.1 Dealing with Allegations or concerns against any employee, Member or volunteer Working for The Town Council.

Concerns for the safety and well-being of a child or vulnerable adult could arise at any time and in any setting. It is essential to act quickly and effectively if an allegation is made. Careful observation should be made if there is suspicion or concern that a professional or volunteer has:

- an apparently untoward relationship with a child, young person or vulnerable adult
- behaved in a way that has harmed, or may have harmed, a child
- possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to, a child

- behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates she/he is unsuitable to work with children.

If an allegation is made, or a concern arises, about a member of staff, a Councillor or volunteer, ensure that an appropriate professional is informed immediately. You may need to contact Somerset County Council's Social Care team direct (telephone **0300 123 2224**) to make the report and seek advice. The County Council's safeguarding team will provide advice or support in any allegations process, including advising whether or not any suspension of the alleged perpetrator should be considered.

The Town Clerk must ensure that the Members of the Staffing and Resources Committee are made aware of concerns and that professional advice (including from the Monitoring Officer and Human Resources advisor) is sought at the earliest opportunity.

If a concern needs to be reported out of hours, you should contact Somerset County Council out of hours service or, in an emergency, the police. Records should be kept securely, and information shared should be restricted to relevant staff/Councillors and external professionals on a need to know basis.

The member of staff or volunteer about whom a concern has been raised should be treated fairly and honestly. They should be advised of the concerns expressed, the process being followed and any timeframes and outcomes of the process. Senior managers should seek advice from the Social Care team and Police before informing the person who is subject to an allegation.

4. Guidance

4.1 Responding to a Disclosure

If a child tells you that they, or someone they know, is being abused you should:

- listen to what the child is saying and take it seriously.
- reassure the child who has made the disclosure that they have done the right thing.
- give the child time to talk and do not probe or ask leading questions.

Always remember that investigation is not your responsibility and you must not promise to keep secrets. All allegations of harm or potential harm must be acted upon. You should explain to the child that you will share this information with a senior member of staff who will ensure the information given is followed up.

E-mails or text messages received detailing details of suspected abuse should be responded to as soon as possible or within 24 hours by contacting the child by phone or face-to-face to obtain further information.

Record the event simply and keep records confidential. All allegations against staff, however serious need to be followed up and examined objectively by someone independent of the organisation concerned.

All allegations will be considered by the County Council's Designated Officer for monitoring allegations who will ensure that the actions in response to the allegation are in accordance with the County Council's Procedures.

Advice on the storage of all documentation must be sought from the Town Clerk who will ensure that access is strictly limited to relevant staff and external professionals on a need to know basis.

4.2 Staff Conduct - Safe Working Practice

It is essential that all staff, Councillors and volunteers are aware of appropriate conduct with children and vulnerable adults. All staff and members should understand the following summaries:

“Do”

- read and follow the child protection procedures.
- report immediately to an appropriate professional any concerns about child welfare/safety.
- report to an appropriate professional any concerns about the conduct of staff, Councillors, volunteers or contractors.
- record in writing all relevant incidents whilst memory is fresh.
- work in an open and transparent way
- discuss and report any incidents of concern that may lead others to be concerned about your conduct towards a child.
- report to an appropriate professional any incidents that suggest a child may be infatuated with you or taking abnormal normal interest in you.
- dress appropriately for your role
- only use e-mail contact with children via any authorised system.
- avoid all unnecessary physical contact with children.
- ensure you understand the rules concerning physical restraint.
- where physical contact is essential for educational or safety reasons, gain the child's permission for that contact wherever possible •
- allow children to change clothes with levels of respect and privacy appropriate to their age, gender, culture and circumstances.
- avoid working in one-to-one situations with children where possible.
- ensure you have written permission from a responsible parent if taking photographs
- take care that only appropriate images of children and vulnerable adults are produced

- contact your professional association or trade union if you are the subject of concerns or allegations of a child protection nature.
- fully co-operate with any safeguarding investigations into Council-related activities.
- listen to children if they tell you things about adults which have caused them concern

"Don't"

- take any action that would lead a reasonable person to question your motivation and/or intentions.
- misuse in any way your position of power and influence over children.
- use any confidential information about a child to intimidate, humiliate or embarrass a child or vulnerable adult.
- engage in activities out of the workplace/setting that might compromise your position with children or young people.
- establish or seek to establish social contact with children outside of the setting.
- accept regular gifts from children.
- give personal gifts to children.
- communicate with children in inappropriate ways, including social networking and mobile telephones.
- give your home address, phone number, e-mail address or other personal details to children.
- have any secretive or inappropriate physical contact
- meet with children in closed rooms without other staff being aware
- invite children meet with you outside the professional activity, or to stay overnight.
- use physical punishment of any kind.
- confer special attention on one child unless this is part of an approved plan or policy
- transport children in your own vehicle without prior management approval.
- take, publish or share images of children or other children without their parents' permission. abuse your position of trust with children
- allow unsafe boundaries in informal settings such as outings.

5. Unaccompanied Children in Public Settings

There will be situations when children or vulnerable adults visit public settings unaccompanied by their parent or carer. Whilst not wishing to discourage children from visiting places such as libraries, information centres and play or educational facilities, staff, Councillors and volunteers need to take reasonable steps to ensure the safety of the child and to inform parents or carers of their responsibilities.

The way in which staff, Councillors or volunteers deal with unaccompanied children must be based on awareness of the responsibility of the parent and the duty of care of relevant lead Officers to all children on the premises. Under no circumstances should a service provider take on parental responsibility.

A suitable notice should be clearly displayed at any premises being used and activity leaders should appropriately advise parents or carers leaving their children at an activity.

For example:

INFORMATION FOR PARENTS AND CARERS

Welcome.

We hope you enjoy your visit. Please remember, this is a community space, open to all. Keep your child safe & please don't leave them unaccompanied unless this has been agreed with activity co-ordinators.

Children under 10 must never be left unaccompanied. Parents and carers remain responsible for their children at all times.

A good practice response on discovering an unaccompanied child on the premises is to:-

- try to avoid being left alone with the child.
- try to ensure colleagues are present when you engage with the child.
- seek to establish whether the child is allowed by the parent or carer to come and go alone.

If you are satisfied that the child seeking to leave a premises is allowed to come and go alone then allow the child to leave. If it is the child or vulnerable adult telling you this, you will need to use your judgment as to whether the child is competent to leave alone.

Relevant factors may be:

- whether the child exhibits signs of nervousness.
- whether the child appears to clearly understand your questions.
- if the child appears physically capable.
- if the child appears to know clearly and readily where he or she lives.
- how far the journey is.
- If there are any particular hazards on the journey.
- the child's age and vulnerability.

If you are in any doubt, encourage the child to remain on the premises until you have contacted a parent or carer. Children under 10 years of age should not normally be allowed to leave alone unless you know that in that particular case the parent or carer allows it.

Ask the child if s/he is expecting to be collected by an adult. Even if the child is expecting to be collected soon, do not wait until closing time before taking the next step. Try to contact the parent or carer. Ask the child for an address or telephone number.

6. Training

Appropriate training will be given, where necessary, and all staff must ensure that they attend safeguarding training in accordance with Wellington Town Council's requirements.

The Town Clerk will record attendance at relevant training to ensure all staff, Councillors and Volunteers are aware of the procedures and have received relevant training.

7. Safer Workforce Recruitment and Selection

Where there will be working with children, recruitment processes should make explicit reference to the Council's commitment to Safeguarding including compliance with vetting & barring regulations where appropriate.

Recruitment panels should check for any gaps in employment history and explore these gaps during interview.

Prior to a permanent offer of employment references should be taken up, including one from the most recent previous employer. If the role requires specifically working with children and vulnerable adults reference requests should enquire if there have been any concerns or allegations about the applicant behaviour towards children. Verification should also be sought on any disciplinary action involving the applicant.

Information provided should be compared between referee and applicant. Inconsistencies or concerns regarding the information provided in a personal reference must be followed up directly with the referee, and satisfactorily resolved prior to confirmation in post.

7.1 Data and Barring Services (DBS)

Where any postholder will be working with children or vulnerable adults, they will be required to completed a DBS application, which must be received before work with children commences. If the DBS certificate raises any cause for concern, this must be discussed with the newly-appointed staff member. The offer of employment is dependent on a satisfactory

Councillors who have direct contact with children or vulnerable adults through any activities should may also be required to undergo DBS-checking to protect against allegations.

8. Monitoring Arrangements

This policy and procedure will be reviewed regularly and re-adopted no less than every two years.