



# **Corfe Mullen Town Council**

## **Safeguarding Policy**

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1. Corfe Mullen Town Council (the 'Council') delivers a wide variety of services and functions which can bring employees, councillors and volunteers into contact with a wide variety of people. This could be either as the main part of their role or indirectly when they are carrying out their work such as during home visits, working outdoors in a public space or seeing members of the public in Council buildings.
- 1.2. Everyone who is vulnerable has the right to be safe, happy and healthy and deserve protection from abuse. A person's ability to keep themselves safe is partly determined by their individual circumstances and it is recognised that this may change at different stages in a person's life. The Council is committed to safeguarding all vulnerable people using any of its services and being involved in any of its activities and to treat them with respect.
- 1.3. The Council recognises that we all have a responsibility to protect vulnerable people and has developed this policy to ensure that effective practices are in place for all the Council's activities.
- 1.4. The Council has a duty to co-operate with other agencies and authorities to promote the well-being of children and young people. Dorset Council is the lead agency for the protection of vulnerable people.

## 2. Aim

- 2.1. The aim of this policy is to set out the duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults and how this will be implemented by the Council in the discharge of its duties.
- 2.2. All children and adults at risk have a right to protection and freedom from abuse or exploitation, regardless of age, disability, gender, racial heritage or racial culture, religious belief, sexual orientation, economic status or otherwise. The Council recognise the need to ensure their welfare when they encounter the services provided.
- 2.3. This policy applies to all Council staff members, all councillors and all those organisations who have a working relationship with the Council.
- 2.4. This policy will set out the following:
  - the Council's approach to the safeguarding of its clients
  - the ways in which the Council does this
  - the steps taken to avoid abuse taking place
  - the actions that will be taken by the Council to deal with abuse if it occurs

## 3. Scope of Policy

- 3.1. Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and all staff who, during their role have direct or indirect contact with vulnerable people, have a responsibility to safeguard and promote their welfare.
- 3.2. Children and young people are defined as those aged under 18.
- 3.3. A vulnerable adult is someone aged 18 or over:

- who is, or may be, in need of community care services due to age, illness or a mental or physical disability
- who is, or may be, unable to take care of themselves, or unable to protect themselves against significant harm or exploitation, e.g., a person who:
  - is frail due to age
  - is suffering from mental illness or dementia
  - has drug or alcohol problems
  - has a learning disability
  - has mental or physical ill health or disability
  - has sensory loss e.g., hearing/sight impairment

3.4. Vulnerability is related to how able an adult is to make and exercise their own informed choice, free from duress or undue influence, and to protect themselves from abuse, neglect and exploitation.

3.5. An adult should be assumed to be covered by this policy unless there is information to indicate that they are not.

#### 4. Types of Abuse

4.1. 'No Secrets' produced by the Department for Health in 2000 describes abuse as 'a violation of an individual's human and civil rights by any other person or persons. There are seven categories of abuse:

4.2. **Physical:** causing physical harm, including hitting, shaking, biting, grabbing, withholding food or drink, force-feeding, wrongly administering medicine, unnecessary restraint, failing to provide physical care and aids to living.

4.3. **Sexual:** including sexual assault, rape, inappropriate touching/molesting, forcing or enticing someone into sexual acts they don't understand or feel powerless to refuse; grooming a child or young person in preparation for abuse.

4.4. **Emotional or psychological:** persistent emotional ill treatment or rejection, including verbal abuse, shouting, swearing, threatening abandonment or harm, isolating, taking away privacy or other rights, bullying/intimidation, blaming, belittling, silencing, controlling or humiliating.

4.5. **Financial or material:** illegal or improper use of an adult's property, money or other assets without their informed consent or where the consent is obtained by fraud. It can include withholding money or possessions, theft of money or property, fraud, intentionally mismanaging finances, borrowing money and not repaying.

4.6. **Neglect:** persistent or severe failure to meet a person's basic physical and psychological needs. It will result in serious impairment of their health or development, and can include withholding shelter, food, drink, heating and clothing, failing to provide access to health, social and educational services, ignoring physical care needs, exposing a person to unacceptable risk, failing to ensure adequate supervision or unresponsiveness to the basic emotional needs of a child.

4.7. **Discriminatory:** including slurs, harassment and maltreatment due to a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010.

4.8. **Institutional:** including the use of systems and routines which neglect a person receiving formal care e.g., in a children's home.

## 5. Signs of Abuse

5.1. There are many possible signs of abuse, none being conclusive on their own e.g.:

- unexplained injury/weight loss/cuts and bruises/dirtiness
- changes in behaviour
- depression/low self-esteem
- lack of self-care/dehydration/abnormal eating pattern
- harm to self
- obsessive behaviour
- bills not being paid
- an overly critical or disrespectful carer who may bully or undermine
- isolation from usual network of friends, family or community

## 6. Safeguarding

6.1 Safeguarding children from abuse and promoting their welfare means:

- protecting children from maltreatment
- preventing impairment of children's health or development; ensuring children are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care
- taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes

6.2 Safeguarding vulnerable adults means protecting them from maltreatment and preventing injury or significant harm. Abuse violates an adult's human and civil rights. It can vary from treating someone with disrespect in a way which significantly affects the person's quality of life, to causing actual physical suffering.

6.3 A safeguarding concern arises if abuse is suspected or disclosed. Abuse can happen anywhere – at home, in a residential or nursing home, a hospital, in the workplace, at a day centre or educational establishment or in the street.

## 7. Reporting Safeguarding Concerns

7.1 We all have a responsibility to report any safeguarding concerns over the welfare of children, young people or vulnerable adults. This extends to the identification of signs of abuse; poor practice by staff, councillors and others acting for or on behalf of the Council, and allegations brought to the Council's attention by a member of the public. Reporting safeguarding concerns can prevent serious abuse or harm from happening, or from escalating.

7.2 Staff, councillors and volunteers must not attempt to investigate abuse themselves; neither must they confront anyone who is allegedly responsible for abuse nor tell them that allegations have been made about them.

7.3 Report safeguarding allegations or concerns to Dorset Council's Children's and Adults Services at the earliest possible opportunity, at least within 24 hours.

7.4 Contact the Police if a child, young person or vulnerable adult may be in imminent danger or a criminal offence may have been committed.

7.5 On reporting a concern as much information should be provided as possible, e.g.:

- the child, young person or vulnerable adult's name and address (and parents'/carers' address if different)
- the reason for concern – a note of significant events or conversations should be made as promptly as possible to assist with any referral and subsequent investigation. Evidence such as social media entries should be preserved
- any other known factors which may be contributing to the problem
- additional information such as age (or date of birth), ethnicity, religion, language and disabilities/ specific needs

7.6 The safeguarding concern should still be reported whether the information is complete.

## **8. Confidentiality, Record Keeping and Sharing Information**

8.1 Information about safeguarding concerns should be regarded as confidential. The information is not secret, and the Council will co-operate with investigations by Dorset Council's Children's and Adults services, or the Police as applicable, and follow their advice to ensure that any risk to the safety of children, young people and vulnerable adults is addressed.

8.2 Where a disclosure is made it is important that the staff or councillors do not promise the child/young person/vulnerable adult to keep the information secret, but that they will only disclose it to someone who can help them.

8.3 It is extremely important that allegations or concerns are not discussed, as any breach of confidentiality could be damaging to the child or vulnerable person, their family and any child protection investigation that may follow.

## **9. Allegations against a councillor or member of staff**

9.1 If someone witnesses behaviour by a councillor, member of staff, contractor or partner, or an allegation is made about them that indicates that they have, or may have:

- harmed a child, young person or vulnerable adult, or put them at risk of harm
- possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child, young person or vulnerable adult or behaved in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children, young people or vulnerable adults

They must report it as a safeguarding concern to the Police and/or Dorset Council's Children's and Adults Services at the earliest possible opportunity.

9.2 A councillor or member of staff must report any allegation made against them to the Town Clerk or Chair of the Council.

9.3 Safeguarding concerns and allegations relating to staff will be dealt with in accordance with the Disciplinary Procedure including in instances where the member of staff resigns or leaves. However, investigations by the responsible authorities will take precedence over internal Council procedures relating to conduct. The Town Clerk, Chair of the Council or Chair of the Staffing Committee will liaise with the responsible authorities to agree the appropriate course of action.

9.4 The Town Clerk, Chair of the Council or Chair of the Staffing Committee will seek advice from Dorset Council's Children's and Adults Services or Police prior to informing a member of staff of

an allegation against them. The Town Clerk, Chair of the Council or Chair of the Staffing Committee will offer appropriate welfare support to the member of staff and ensure that they are kept appropriately informed during any investigation process.

9.5 In accordance with the law, the Council will refer to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) any member of staff:

- who was dismissed because they harmed a child or adult
- who was dismissed or removed from working in a regulated activity because they might have harmed a child or adult otherwise
- who would have been dismissed for either of these reasons, but they resigned first; or
- who works with children or vulnerable adults in regulated activity and has been cautioned or convicted for a relevant offence

9.6 Safeguarding concerns and allegations relating to councillors will be referred to Dorset Council's Monitoring Officer and dealt with in accordance with the Code of Conduct.

## **10. Recruitment and Selection**

10.1 Criminal record checks will be made where appropriate.

10.2 Roles that involve 'regulated activities', such as caring for, supervising or being in sole charge of children or vulnerable adults, require an Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Check.

10.3 This may include checking whether someone is included in the two DBS 'barred lists' of individuals who are unsuitable for working with children and adults. DBS Checks must be obtained for staff and volunteers undertaking these roles, and they will not be permitted to commence unaccompanied work until they have been received.

10.4 It is against the law for employers to employ someone, or allow them to volunteer for, this kind of work if they know they are on one of the barred lists.

## **11. Information and Training**

11.1 Appropriate information will be made available to staff and councillors in the form of this policy and any necessary training.

## **12. External organisation licensed by, or working with, for, or on behalf of the Council**

12.1 The Council works with and through several external organisations such as: charities, contractors, other public sector bodies etc.

12.2 Where these external organisations are likely to have significant contact with children, young people or vulnerable adults as a direct result of their work for, on behalf of, or in partnership with the Council, they are required to have safeguarding procedures, such as safe recruitment and selection processes, in place.

12.3 They must be made aware of this policy and must provide the Council with a copy of their safeguarding procedure.

### **13. How to make a safeguarding adults alert/referral**

13.1 If you're an adult experiencing abuse or neglect, or if you're concerned about an adult possibly experiencing abuse or neglect, contact Dorset Council's Adult Services. Further information is available on the Dorset Council's web site: <https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/care-and-support-for-adults/care-and-support-for-adults>

### **14. How to make a safeguarding children and young people alert/referral**

14.1 Details of Dorset Council's Children's Service can be found: <https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/contact-childrens-services>

14.2 If there is an immediate issue of safety, then the Police should be contacted.

### **15. Useful Contacts**

15.1 Pan-Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership - <https://pdscp.co.uk/>

15.2 NSPCC - <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/>

### **16. Review**

16.1 This Safeguarding Policy was presented to the Full Council, for approval and adoption on 28 May 2024, minute no. TC 24/34.

16.2 Future reviews will be carried out bi-annually or when any changes are made to related legislation, whichever is sooner.

### **17. References**

- Care Act 2014
- Children Act 2004
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006
- Data Protection Act 2018 – <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2018/12/contents/enacted/data.htm>
- UK General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) - <https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/guide-to-data-protection/guide-to-the-general-data-protection-regulation-gdpr/>
- Department of Health and Social Care – 'No Secrets' Guidance - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/no-secrets-guidance-on-protecting-vulnerable-adults-in-care>
- Council's Disciplinary Procedure
- Council's Grievance Procedure