SHAFTESBURY TOWN COUNCIL

Delivering Excellence across the Shaftesbury Community

Children, Young People and Adults Safeguarding Policy

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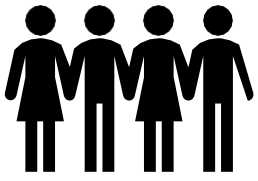

Managing People Policies

SAFEGUARDING POLICY

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1. **Introduction**

Shaftesbury Town Council (STC) makes a positive contribution to a strong and safe community and recognises the right of every individual to stay safe. We will ensure that our activities are safe for our staff, volunteers and users. Unfortunately, people may pose a risk to adults at risk and may wish to harm or abuse them. Also, accidents can happen unless steps are taken to minimise them. Therefore, safeguarding is everybody's business.

Shaftesbury Town Council encounters children, young people and adults at risk through the following activities: Advisory Committees, public workshops and engagement sessions, community events, Shaftesbury School Youth Council.

Everyone who works for or on behalf of STC has a duty to recognise safeguarding concerns. This includes concerns where there may be risk to children or adults from family members, members of the public, or from the behaviour of colleagues and others. This policy and procedure is also intended to safeguard everyone who works at STC and to preserve the good reputation of the organisation**.**

This policy seeks to ensure that STC undertakes its responsibilities with regard to protection of children, young people and adults at risk and will respond to concerns appropriately. The policy establishes a framework to support paid and unpaid staff in their practices and clarifies the organisation's expectations.

2. **Legal Framework**

This policy is guided by relevant UK legislation, including but not limited to:

- Children Act 1989 & 2004
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018
- The Care Act 2014
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006
- Equality Act 2010
- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- Data Protection Act 2018 & UK GDPR

3. **Definitions**

To assist in understanding this policy a number of key definitions need to be explained:

Child - In England, Northern Ireland, Ireland and Wales a child is someone under the age of eighteen whether living with their families, in state care, or living independently (Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018).

Safeguarding children is defined as:

- Protecting children from abuse and maltreatment.
- Preventing harm to children's mental and physical health or development.
- Ensuring children grow up with the provision of safe and effective care.
- Taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes in line with National guidance.

Safeguarding concern - When there is information that a child, young person (or an adult at risk) has been harmed, or is at risk of being harmed, by their own or someone else's behaviour.

Safeguarding allegation - Where a person who is either a staff member, volunteer or contractor working on behalf of STC has:

- Behaved in a way that has harmed a child, 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 he or she may pose a risk of harm to children or
- Behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children.

Parent - Refers to birth parents and other adults who are in a parenting role, for example step-parents, foster carers, adoptive parents and LA corporate parents.

Adult - An adult is anyone aged 18 or over.

Adult at risk- An adult who has needs for care and support (whether or not the authority is meeting any of those needs), and is experiencing, or is at risk of, abuse or neglect; and as a result of those needs is unable to protect themselves against the abuse or neglect or the risk of it.
Whilst not an exhaustive list, an adult who may be at risk of harm or abuse may include:

- An older person,
- A person with a physical disability, a learning difficulty or a sensory impairment,
- Someone with mental health needs, including dementia or a personality disorder,
- A person with a long-term health condition,
- Someone who is substance dependant to the extent that it affects their ability to manage day to day living. In such cases the capacity of an individual to make informed decisions (due to mental capacity-see Section 11.0) may alter on a regular basis

People with care and support needs are not inherently vulnerable, but they may become vulnerable to the risk of abuse, harm or neglect at any point due to:

- Physical or mental ill-health, including dementia,
- Becoming disabled, physical, sensory or learning disability,
- Getting older,
- Not having support networks, appropriate accommodation or financial stability,
- Being socially isolated.

Adult safeguarding - is protecting a person's right to live in safety, free from abuse, harm and neglect.

Harm - The ill-treatment or impairment of the health or development of an individual, including impairment suffered from seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another.
Concern- Any situation when there is information that an Adult at risk has been harmed, or is at risk of being harmed or abused, by their own or someone else's behaviour.

Capacity - refers to the ability of an individual to make a decision at a particular time. The starting assumption must always be that a person has the capacity to make a decision unless it can be established that they lack capacity (Mental Capacity Act 2005).

Poor practice:
Sometimes, concerns may relate to poor practice where an adult's or another young person's behaviour is inappropriate and may be causing distress to a child or young person. In the application of this policy, poor practice includes any behaviour which contravenes the principles of this document or STC Code of Conduct. Where poor practice is serious or repeated this could also constitute abuse and should be reported immediately.

Abuse of Trust
The Sexual Offences (Amendment) Act 2000 section 3 created the offence of abuse of trust. It is an offence for a person aged 18 or over to have sexual intercourse with a person under 18, or to engage in any other sexual activity with, or directed towards such a person, if in either case that person is in a position of trust in relation to the under 18-year-old. This applies even if the relationship is consensual.

A person aged 18 or over ("Person A") is in a position of trust in relation to a person under that age ("Person B") if any of four conditions are satisfied. One relates to the education field and is as follows: "Person A" looks after persons who are under 18 and are receiving full-time education in an institution and "Person B" is receiving such education within that institution. This applies within the STC and includes those in a professional support role and volunteers.

It is essential all staff and volunteers, instructors, coaches, to understand and maintain professional boundaries when working with children, young people and adults at risk.

4. Safeguarding Policy Statement

Commitment: Shaftesbury Town Council (STC) is committed to safeguarding the welfare of children and vulnerable adults who engage with its services, fostering a culture of safety and vigilance.

Principles:

- The welfare of children and vulnerable adults is paramount.
- All individuals, regardless of age, disability, gender, racial or ethnic origin, religion, or sexual orientation, have the right to protection from harm and abuse.

Response to Abuse:

- All suspicions and allegations of abuse will be taken seriously and dealt with swiftly and appropriately.
- Staff, volunteers, and elected members are required to report concerns to the designated officer but must not investigate or make decisions regarding abuse independently.
- If a child or vulnerable adult is at immediate risk, emergency services must be contacted.
- Confidentiality must be maintained, sharing information only with relevant authorities.

Named Safeguarding Lead:

- The Town Clerk serves as the designated safeguarding officer, responsible for implementing this policy and acting as the point of contact for safeguarding concerns.

5. Responsibilities

For All Members, Volunteers, and Staff

5.1. Familiarise themselves with and apply this policy in their activities.

5.2. Seek out and participate in appropriate safeguarding training.

5.3. Exhibit appropriate behaviour at all times and challenge inappropriate actions in others.

5.4. Recognise signs of harm or abuse and report concerns promptly.

For Members and Senior Officers

5.5. Promote awareness and understanding of the safeguarding policy among staff and volunteers.

5.6. Ensure that training, including refresher courses, is made available.

5.7. Regularly monitor compliance with the safeguarding policy.

5.8. Uphold and communicate the Council's whistleblowing policy.

For the Named Safeguarding Lead (Town Clerk)

5.9. Act as the primary contact for safeguarding concerns and ensure staff and volunteers know where to report issues.

5.10. Ensure concerns are documented, appropriately referred, and followed up to resolution.

5.11. Maintain confidential records of safeguarding incidents, stored securely in compliance with data protection laws.

5.12. Ensure staff and volunteers receive safeguarding training

5.13. Liaise with external agencies where necessary

6. Shaftesbury Town Council Standards and Procedures

Safer Recruitment:

Recruitment – the following good practice recruitment processes should be followed

- Providing the following safeguarding statement in recruitment adverts or application details – ‘recruitment is done in line with safe recruitment practices.’
- Job descriptions or role profiles for all positions involving contact with children, young people and adults at risk will contain reference to safeguarding responsibilities.
- There are person specifications for roles which contain a statement on core competency regarding children, young people or adults at risk protection/ safeguarding
- Shortlisting is based on formal application processes/forms and not on provision of CVs
- Interviews are conducted according to equal opportunity principles and interview questions are based on the relevant job description and person specification
- Checking gaps in work history
- DBS checks/DBS Update Service will be conducted for specific roles for all staff (paid or unpaid) working with children, young people or adults at risk. Portable/carry over DBS checks from another employer will not be deemed to be sufficient. It is a criminal offence for individuals barred by the DBS to work or apply to work with children or adults at risk in a wide range of posts (guidance here)
- No formal job offers are made until after checks for suitability are completed (including DBS, if relevant, and 2 references).

STC will ensure that their established staff and roles are regularly reviewed through e.g.

- A three year rolling programme of re-checking DBS certificates/annual check of Update Service is in place for holders of all identified posts.
- Existing staff (paid or unpaid) who transfer from a role which does not require a DBS check to one which involves contact with children/adults at risk will be subject to a DBS check.

Recruitment of Ex-offenders

STC will endeavour to ensure that ex-offenders are not discriminated against, and any matter revealed on a DBS certificate will be discussed with the individual seeking the position before withdrawing a conditional offer of employment'. The same applies to any prospective staff member, volunteer or councilor.

Service delivery contracting and sub-contracting.

- There will be systematic checking of safeguarding arrangements of partner organisations
- Safeguarding will be a fixed agenda item on any partnership reporting meetings.
- Contracts and memorandums of agreement for partnership delivery work will include clear minimum requirements, arrangements for safeguarding and non-compliance procedures**.**

Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Checks:

DBS checks are not required for Councillors, volunteers, or staff unless their duties involve regular contact with children or vulnerable adults.

Volunteer Vetting:

All volunteers must provide two references from reputable individuals (not family members), which will be verified by the Town Clerk.

Reputation and Suitability:

If credible information (e.g., from the Police, NSPCC, or Social Services) indicates that an individual is unsuitable to work with children or vulnerable adults, STC reserves the right to terminate their involvement in Council projects.

7. Managing Allegations and Complaints

- Any allegation against staff or volunteers will be taken seriously and investigated promptly.
- Procedures align with local authority safeguarding protocols.
- Suspension may be necessary during investigations.

8. Training and Awareness

- All staff must complete safeguarding training upon induction and refresh training annually.
- Volunteers and contractors will be briefed on safeguarding expectations.

9. Links with other policies and procedures

The scope of this Safeguarding Policy is broad ranging and in practice, it will be implemented via a range of policies and procedures within the organisation. These include**:**

Whistleblowing
Grievance and disciplinary procedures
Health & Safety
Equality Diversity and Human Rights
Data Protection
Staff Induction
Staff training

10. Communications training and support for staff

STC commits resources for induction, training of staff (paid and unpaid), effective communications and support mechanisms in relation to Safeguarding.

Induction will include

- Discussion of the Safeguarding Policy (and confirmation of understanding)
- Discussion of other relevant policies
- Ensure familiarity with reporting processes, the roles of line manager
- Initial training on safeguarding including: code of conduct, safe working practices, safe recruitment, etc.

Training

All staff who, through their role, are in contact with children, young people and adults at risk will have access to safeguarding training at an appropriate level. Sources and types of training will include: online training, staff meetings and relevant in-person training by Community Action Network.

Communications and discussion of safeguarding issues

Commitment to the following communication methods will ensure effective communication of safeguarding issues and practice:

- Team meetings - Encouraging open discussion to identify any barriers to reporting so that they can be addressed.
- Council meetings
- One to one meetings (formal or informal)

Support

STC recognises that involvement in situations where there is risk or actual harm can be stressful for staff concerned. The mechanisms in place to support staff include: (insert mechanisms add delete as appropriate -

- Debriefing support for paid and unpaid staff so that they can reflect on the issues they have dealt with.
- Seeking further support as appropriate e.g. access to counselling.
- Staff who have initiated protection concerns will be contacted by line manager within a certain timescale e.g. 1 week.

12. Professional Boundaries

Professional boundaries are what define the limits of a relationship between a support worker and a client. They are a set of standards we agree to uphold that allows this necessary and often close relationship to exist while ensuring the correct detachment is kept in place.

STC expects staff to protect the professional integrity of themselves and the organisation.
Personal relationships between a member of staff (paid or unpaid) and an adult who is being provided with support is prohibited. This includes relationships through social networking sites. It is also prohibited to enter into a personal relationship with an adult who has been provided with a service over the past 12 months

The information listed below is over and above the generic staff policies that are in place.

- Use of abusive language
- Response to inappropriate behaviour/language
- Use of punishment or chastisement
- Passing on service users' personal contact details
- Degree of accessibility to service users (e.g. not providing personal contact details)
- Taking family members to a client's home
- Selling to or buying items from a service user
- Accepting responsibility for any valuables on behalf of a client
- Accepting money as a gift/ Borrowing money from or lending money to service users
- Personal relationships with a third party related to or known to service users
- Accepting gifts/ rewards or hospitality from organisation as an inducement for either doing/ not doing something in their official capacity
- Cautious or avoidance of personal contact with clients

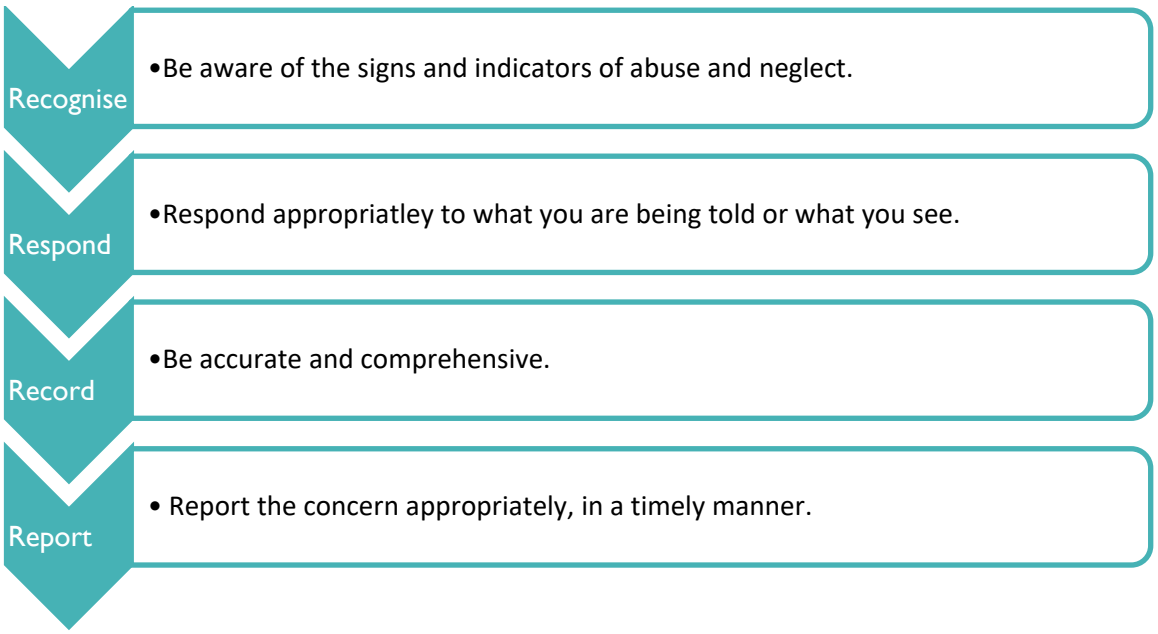
Please refer to other staff related policies which can be found in the staff handbook.

Staff members should declare actual or potential interests to their line manager.

If the professional boundaries are breached this could result in disciplinary procedures or enactment of the allegation management procedures.

13. Reporting

The process outlined below details the stages involved in raising and reporting safeguarding concerns at STC.



If you are concerned about a child, young person or adult's welfare:

1. RECOGNISE and believe they are in immediate danger - call the police and /or an ambulance on 999. Record what took place and the action taken and report to the DSL ASAP.

If not go to RESPOND.

2. RESPOND - If the child, young person or adult has disclosed information you should:

- Stay calm, treat them seriously, offer them support and listen to them but do not probe or conduct a mini-investigation
- Write down what they tell you using their own words as soon as possible
- Keep any evidence safe
- Discuss with the child, young person or adult what they would like done about it,
- Seek consent if an adult to take action and to report the concern. Consider whether the adult may lack capacity to make decisions about their own and other people's safety and wellbeing. If you decide to act against their wishes or without their consent, you must record your decision and the reasons for this. Do not promise to keep what they have said a secret or you will not tell anyone else.
- Do not attempt to discuss this with the person alleged to have caused the harm
- If you are concerned for the child or young person or the adult has given you permission to report it, or you have decided to go against the adults wishes go to RECORD

3. Discuss with Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) as soon as possible and within the same working day and a decision is taken whether to take further action. If you are unable to discuss with the DSL or line manager and believe the concern needs immediate action then you should undertake the next steps yourself.

If yes then go to REPORT.

4. DSL records concerns using as much information as possible such as what was said, what was observed, when, where and who else was there, date, time and place of disclosure/concerns.

5. DLS makes appropriate referral (see section Contacts) within 24 hours of disclosure or concern raised.

6. Followed up in writing within 48 hours with copy kept in the organisation's Incidents file.

14. Allegations Management

STC recognises its duty to report concerns or allegations against its staff (paid or unpaid), within the organisation or by a professional from another organisation (contractors, freelancers). An allegation may relate to a person who is in contact with children, young people or with adults who has:

- behaved in a way that has harmed, or may have harmed a child, young person or adult;
- behaved towards a child, young person or adult in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm.

If the information indicates an identifiable child, young person or adult with care and support needs is experiencing or is at risk of abuse or neglect then the process in 13. Reporting should be followed.

If the person has a DBS check do not forget to inform them.

15. Monitoring

The organisation will monitor the following Safeguarding aspects:

- Safe recruitment practices
- DBS checks undertaken
- References applied for new staff
- Records made and kept of supervision sessions
- Training – register/ record of staff training on adult safeguarding
- Monitoring whether concerns are being reported and actioned
- Checking that policies are up to date and relevant
- Reviewing the current reporting procedure in place
- Presence and action of DSL responsible for Safeguarding is in post

16. Contacts

Designated Safeguarding Lead: (Brie Logan, Town Clerk)
Deputy Safeguarding Lead: (Billy Maddock, Assistant Town Clerk)

For concerns about an immediate risk or harm to an adult at risk ring 999

If you suspect that an adult is being abused or neglected, then contact Dorset Council
Contact the Police on 999 if you think someone is in immediate risk of harm.

- on 01305 221 016 during office hours
- on 01305 858 250 for the Out of Hours Service
- Or Dorset Police: Tel 101

If you're concerned about the safety or wellbeing of a child or young person in the Dorset area:
Family Support and Advice Line
Name: Single point of contact for safeguarding concerns
Tel: 01305 228558
For out of hours emergencies call: 01305 221000

North Locality Team on 01258 474036 - northlocality@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk
LADO - 01305 221122 or email lado@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Policy Accessibility:
This policy will be available at all relevant Council premises and upon request.

Additional Notes

- **Confidentiality and Data Protection:**
  The safeguarding of personal data is critical. All information will be handled in line with data protection laws and confidentiality requirements.
- **Policy Review:**
  This safeguarding policy will be reviewed annually or after any significant safeguarding event to ensure it remains up-to-date and reflective of best practices and legal requirements.