



Safeguarding Policy & Procedures

Approved By the Town Council 8th September 2025

This document sets out the Town Council's Safeguarding policy and procedures; it applies to staff, councillors, volunteers and people / organisations contracted by the Town Council to provide services e.g. youth work provision

Policy Statement

North Petherton Town Council is fully committed to safeguarding the welfare of all everyone using council services, participating in council run or supported activities and visiting council provided facilities. It recognises its responsibility to take all reasonable steps to create and maintain safe environments, promote safe working practice and to protect vulnerable adults, children and young people from harm, abuse and exploitation.

Paid staff and volunteers will endeavour to work together to provide a safe and welcoming environment to encourage the development of an ethos which embraces difference and diversity and respects the rights of children, young people, and adults

Introduction

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility - staff, volunteers and Councillors. Everyone should be aware of their responsibilities in relation to the protection of children, young people and adults at risk.

Note: The Children's Act 1989 defines a child as a person under the age of 18 years.

Policy Principles

- North Petherton Town Council is committed to providing safe environments for all
- The welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults is paramount
- All children and vulnerable adults have a right to protection from abuse
- Town Council staff, volunteers and Councillors have a responsibility to support the care and protection of children and vulnerable adults.

North Petherton Town Council will

- Ensure that all Town Council facilities, events and services support, promote and facilitate a safe experience for all who use them
- Ensure that all individuals who come into contact with the Town Council are treated with dignity, respect and safeguarded from harm
- Ensure that all workers, volunteers and councillors understand their legal and moral obligations to protect children and young people from harm, abuse and exploitation;
- Develop best practice in relation to the recruitment of all workers, councillors and volunteers including DBS checks, and rechecks every three years

Note: There is no defined expiry date for DBS checks and organisations are free to establish when additional requests to the DBS are made.

- Ensure that all workers, volunteers and councillors understand their responsibility to work to the standards and procedures detailed in the organisation's Code of Conduct, Code of Good Practice and the Child Protection Procedures
- Ensure that all workers, volunteers and councillors understand their obligations to report care or protection concerns about a child/young person, or a worker's conduct towards a child/young person, to the organisation's designated person for child protection (the Town Clerk);

- Library volunteers will complete the basic safeguarding training available on-line through Somerset Council
- Ensure that all procedures relating to the conduct of workers are implemented in a consistent and equitable manner;
- Ensure that the designated person is appropriately trained and understands his/her responsibility to refer any child protection concerns to the statutory child protection agencies (i.e. Police, Multi Agency Support Hub (MASH) and/or Somerset Council Social Services);
- Provide opportunities for all workers, volunteers and councillors to develop their skills and knowledge particularly in relation to the care and protection of children and young people annually;
- Ensure that children and young people are enabled to express their ideas and views on a wide range of issues and will have access to the organisation's Complaints Procedure;
- Ensure that parents/carers are encouraged to be involved in the work of the organisation and, when requested, have access to all guidelines and procedures;
- Endeavour to keep up-to-date with national developments relating to the care and protection of children and young people
- Take appropriate action to investigate any concerns or allegations of abuse and to support individuals who may be affected

Integration into everyday Work

When an activity is at the planning stage consideration of safeguarding responsibilities should be an integral part of the process and potential safeguarding issues and relevant mitigations identified

Reporting Process

Any incident or situation which give a member of staff, a volunteer or a councillor should be reported as soon as possible to the Town Clerk

Responding to a child or vulnerable adult who says either they or another child or vulnerable adult is/are being abused and responding to allegations against an employee/volunteer/Member or another young person:

If a person discloses to you abuse by someone else:

- Do create a safe environment by offering the child, young person, or vulnerable adult a private and safe place if possible.
- Do stay calm and reassure the child, young person, or vulnerable adult and stress that he/she is not to blame.
- Allow the person to speak without interruption, accepting what is said,
- Do tell the person that you know how difficult it must have been to confide in you and that they have done the right thing in talking to you.
- Do listen carefully and tell the child, young person, or vulnerable adult, what you are going to do next.

- Do tell only the DSL without delay, using the child's own words where possible but DO NOT investigate.
- Advise that you will try to offer support, but that you MUST pass the information on.
- Record the facts as you know them.
- DO NOT take photographs of any injuries.
- DO NOT postpone or delay the opportunity for the person to talk.
- DO NOT take notes while the person is speaking or ask the person to write an account.
- DO NOT ask leading questions
- DO NOT try to investigate the allegation yourself.
- DO NOT promise confidentiality e.g. to say you will keep 'the secret'
- DO NOT approach or inform the alleged abuser
- DO Refer the allegation immediately to the Town Clerk. If the Town Clerk is implicated, refer to the Mayor. All allegations must be referred, no matter how insignificant they seem to be, or when they occur.
- Try to ensure that no-one is placed in a position which could cause further compromise.
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Action to be taken by the person receiving the referral as soon as possible, in any event within 24 hours:

- Write down notes, dates, times, facts, observations, verbatim speech, if possible, as soon as possible after the incident or disclosure has occurred.
- Ensure correct details are available: young person's/vulnerable adult's name and address, and the name and address of their parent or guardian.
- Immediately contact the Somerset Childrens Advice & Duty Service. Ask for the name of the person you are speaking with. Do not filter out or withhold any information. Ask if there is anyone else who should be informed.
- Prepare a confidential file. Record all notes, conversations and advice from the Childrens Advice & Duty Service. Every effort should be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned.

Responding to concerns about a child's welfare where there has been no specific disclosure or allegation:

All employees, volunteers and Councillors are encouraged to share concerns with the Town Clerk. The Town Clerk will, if appropriate, make the necessary referral.

Recognising abuse is not always easy. The list below provides some indicators of abuse, however, the list is not exhaustive and contains only indicators, not confirmation, of abuse:

- (a) Having unexplained or suspicious injuries, e.g. bites or bruising.
- (b) Having an injury for which the explanation seems inconsistent or which has not been treated adequately.
- (c) Change in behaviour, including becoming withdrawn, or becoming aggressive.
- (d) Displaying inappropriate sexual awareness for their age.
- (e) Refusal to remove clothing for normal activities, e.g. swimming.
- (f) Looking neglected in appearance.
- (g) Losing or putting on weight for no apparent reason.
- (h) Lack of trust in adults.

Allegations against staff, volunteers and Councillors

- All staff, volunteers and Councillors should take care not to place themselves in a situation where they could be vulnerable to an allegation of inappropriate behaviour or abuse. It is advisable that work with individual children, young people or vulnerable adults should always be conducted in view of at least one other adult.
- If an allegation is made against a member of staff or a volunteer, the person receiving the allegation must immediately inform the Town Clerk (as the DSL)
- If an allegation is made against a Councillor, the person receiving the allegation must immediately inform the Monitoring Officer at Somerset Council and the Town Clerk.

Confidentiality

Every effort will be made to maintain confidentiality and guard against publicity whilst an allegation is being investigated or considered.

Behaviour of staff, volunteers and councillors

These guidelines have been devised to protect children and vulnerable adults from abuse, as well as to protect staff, volunteers and Councillors from situations where false allegations may occur.

The guidelines apply to everyone working with vulnerable persons or children involved in activities organised by or on behalf of North Petherton Town Council or at services provided by North Petherton Town Council.

You must:

- Treat everyone with respect, regardless of their age, ethnicity, social background, ability, sexual orientation, culture or religious beliefs.
- Provide an example of good conduct you wish others to follow.
- Plan activities which involve more than one other person being present, or at least which are within sight or hearing of others.
- Respect a person's right to personal privacy.
- Provide access for young people to talk to others about any concerns they may have.
- Encourage young people and adults to feel comfortable and caring enough to point out attitudes or behaviours they do not like.
- Remember that someone else might misinterpret your actions, no matter how well intentioned.
- Recognise that special caution is required when you are discussing sensitive issues, such as bullying, bereavement, abuse or personal development.
- Recognise that some children or vulnerable adults will be more vulnerable to abuse than others, and may face extra barriers in getting help because of their race, gender, age, religion, disability, sexual orientation, social background or culture.
- Challenge unacceptable behaviour and report all allegations/suspicious of abuse.
- Be identifiable and wear a name badge (if issued) at all times.

You must not:

- Engage in physical horseplay, such as wrestling or tickling.
- Have any inappropriate verbal or physical contact with children or vulnerable people, or make suggestive remarks or gestures.
 - Permit abusive youth peer activities (e.g. initiation ceremonies, ridiculing, bullying, etc.)
 - Play physical contact games with children or vulnerable adults.
 - Jump to conclusions about others without checking the facts.
 - Ask children or vulnerable adults to do things that are potentially dangerous, illegal or otherwise unreasonable.
 - Exaggerate or trivialise abuse issues.
 - Show favouritism to any individual.
 - Rely on just your good name to protect you.
 - Believe it could "never happen to me".
 - Take chances when common sense, policy or practice suggest a more prudent approach.
 - Allow allegations made to go unchallenged, unrecorded and not acted upon.

Role of the Town Clerk with regard to Safeguarding

The Town Clerk will take the lead in all safeguarding matters pertaining to the Town Council and in doing so takes on the role and responsibilities that would usually be commensurate with the role and responsibilities of a Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

All safeguarding concerns should be reported to the Town Clerk who is then responsible for assessing the situation, making the relevant records and taking appropriate action.

The Town Clerk is responsible for:

- Ensuring that all staff and volunteers are aware of their responsibilities and obligations to safeguard individuals.
- Providing advice, guidance, and support to staff and volunteers on safeguarding matters.
- Ensuring that the council's policies and procedures relating to safeguarding are up to date and are being implemented effectively.
- Ensuring that concerns or allegations of abuse are reported and responded to appropriately.
- Liaising with external agencies, including the local authority and police, as required.

The Town Clerk will undertake safeguarding training to at least Level 2 and ideally to Level 3; the training to be refreshed every 3 years. all safeguarding training will be paid for by the Town Council.

The Town Clerk for North Petherton Town Council will be the principal point of contact for safeguarding matters, unless the role is placed with the remit of another Town Council Officer and that is agreed by the Full Council.

Useful Contacts, Links And Information

This list is principally for the use of the Town Clerk and should only be used by other persons if the Town Clerk cannot be contacted.

Organisation	Contact Details	Notes
North Petherton Town Council	Tel: 01278 574 074 or email Joy.norris@northpethertontowncouncil.gov.uk	Principal contact for safeguarding matters
	Councillor Linda Hyde Tel: 07717 463139	Mayor
Avon & Somerset Constabulary	https://www.avonanDSLmerset.police.uk/report/child-abuse/ Police Central Referral Unit: 0845 605 116.	preferred method of reporting is in person at a local police station
	999	Where a child or vulnerable adult is at IMMEDIATE risk
	Police Prevent Team Tel:- 01278 647466 PreventSW@avonanDSLmerset.police.uk	To raise concerns and ask for advice about radicalisation
	Operation Topaz (Avon and Somerset Police) https://www.avonanDSLmerset.police.uk/forms/vul	Child sexual exploitation & child criminal exploitation
Child Exploitation and Online Protection command	https://www.ceop.police.uk/ceop-reporting/	Reporting online sexual abuse and grooming
Somerset Council Prevent Lead	Local Authority Prevent Lead prevent@somerset.gov.uk	To raise concerns and ask for advice about radicalisation
Somerset Direct	Tel: 0300 123 2224	To make an URGENT referral e.g. child is likely to suffer or is suffering significant harm, cases of domestic abuse

Organisation	Contact Details	Notes
		or if a person is seeking help because they are homeless: open 8am-6pm on a Monday and 8.30-5.30pm Tuesday to Friday.
Somerset Council	https://www.somerset.gov.uk/care-and-support-for-adults/report-an-adult-at-risk/	To report an adult at risk
Somerset Council Emergency Duty Team	0300 123 23 27.	Outside office hours only
DSL Consultation Line	0300 123 3078	
Inclusion Advice Line	0300 123 2224 Inclusion Advice Line	For advice and support in relation to attendance, SEND, Children Looked After:
Critical Incident Support	EPS 01823 357000	
Local Authority Designated Officer - (LADO)	Allegations Management - Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership	To raise concerns and ask for guidance in relation to the conduct of someone who works with children
Care Quality Commission	03000 616161 enquiries@cqc.org.uk	only to be used if contact cannot be made with Somerset Council social services
Child Exploitation and Online Protection Agency	https://www.ceopeducation.co.uk/ and www.thinkuknow.co.uk	

Organisation	Contact Details	Notes
NSPCC	0808 800 5000	help for adults concerned about a child
	0800 1111	help for children and young people
NSPCC FGM Helpline	0800 028 3550 fgmhelp@nspcc.org.uk	FGM Advice
Somerset NHS Foundation Trust Mental Health Services	https://www.somersetft.nhs.uk/mental-health/ 01823 333444 (Musgrove Park Hospital) or 01935 475122 or 01935 606060 (Yeovil Hospital) https://www.somersetft.nhs.uk/help-in-a-crisis/mental-health-crisis8/	
Forced Marriage Unit	Forced Marriage Unit 020 7008 0151 fm@fco.gov.uk	Persons, including children, affected by Forced Marriage
Professional Online Safeguarding Helpline	T: 0344 381 4772 E: helpline@saferinternet.org.uk	Online safety advice
Domestic Abuse Helpline	0808 2000 247	
Young Carers – advice and support.	<u>0300 123 2224</u> YoungCarersmailbox@somerset.gov.uk	
	Somerset Harmful Sexual Behaviour Protocol - Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership	Advice around harmful sexualised behaviour.

Further guidance is available on the web - please see HM Government – What to do if you're worried that a child is being abused.

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/281231/DFES-04319-2006-ChildAbuse_Summary.pdf

Definitions

- **A child or young person** is anyone under the age of 18 years. The fact that a child has reached 16 years of age, is living independently or is in further education, is a member of the armed forces, is in hospital or in custody in the secure estate, does not change his/her status or entitlements to services or protection.
- **A vulnerable adult** is someone who by reason of mental or other disability, age, or illness is unable to take care of themselves or unable to protect themselves against significant harm or exploitation. An adult for the purpose of this policy is anyone over 18 years of age.
- **Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and adults as defined for the purposes of this policy:** - protecting children and adults from maltreatment, or harm - preventing impairment of children's and adult's health or development - ensuring that children and adults are participating in experiences, using services, or facilities consistent with the provision of safe and effective care and provision - taking action to enable all children and adults to have the best life chances, or user experience.
- **Abuse:** A form of maltreatment of a child or adult. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child or adult by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children or adults may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting by those known to them or, more rarely, by others (e.g. via the internet). They may be abused by an adult or adults, or another child or children. Abuse can also be mistreatment that violates a person's human and civil rights
- **Physical abuse** – including assault, hitting, slapping, pushing, misuse of medication, restraint, inappropriate physical sanctions
- **Domestic abuse**– psychological, physical, sexual, financial, emotional abuse, so called 'honour' based violence
- **Sexual abuse** – rape, indecent exposure, sexual harassment, inappropriate looking or touching, sexual teasing or innuendo, sexual photography, subjection to pornography or witnessing sexual acts, indecent exposure, sexual assault, sexual acts to which the adult has not consented or was pressured into consenting
- **Psychological abuse** – including emotional abuse, threats of harm or abandonment, deprivation of contact, humiliation, blaming, controlling, intimidation, coercion, harassment, verbal abuse, cyber bullying, isolation, unreasonable and unjustified withdrawal of services or supportive networks
- **Financial or material abuse** – including theft, fraud, internal scamming, coercion in relation to an adult's financial affairs or arrangements, including in connection with wills, property, inheritance or financial transactions; the misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits
- **Modern slavery** – including slavery, human trafficking, forced labour and domestic servitude, traffickers and slave masters using whatever means they have at their disposal to coerce, deceive and force individuals into a life of abuse, servitude and inhumane treatment

- **Discriminatory abuse** – including forms of harassment, slurs or similar treatment (because of race, gender and gender identity, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion)
- **Organisational abuse** – including neglect and poor care practice within an institution or specific care setting, such as a hospital or care home. This may range from one-off incidents to ongoing ill-treatment. It can be through neglect or poor professional practices as a result of the structure, policies, processes and practices within an organisation
- **Neglect and acts of omission** – including ignoring medical, emotional or physical care needs; failure to provide access to appropriate health, care and support or educational services; the withholding of the necessities of life, such as medication, adequate nutrition and heating
- **Self-neglect** – covering a wide range of behaviour neglecting to care for one's personal hygiene, health or surroundings and includes behaviour such as hoarding. A decision on whether a safeguarding response is required will depend on the adult's ability to protect themselves by controlling their own behaviour.