



Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy

1. Introduction

The primary responsibility for children's welfare rests with the adult supervising the child (parent/carer)

Sprowston Town Council wishes to ensure that children are safe and protected from harm whilst visiting its premises and using its facilities.

The following Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy outlines the systems and procedures Sprowston Town Council have put in place in order to achieve this aim. Its successful achievement requires co-operation and partnership between Sprowston Town Council and the users of its facilities; all staff and volunteers are responsible for supporting this policy.

This document sets out the principles underlying the policy. The document also seeks to provide practical guidance to members of Sprowston Town Council staff and volunteers working with young people.

Section 1: Principles and Definitions

1.1 Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy Statement

The council aims to ensure that children are protected from harm while they visit the premises of Sprowston Town Council. This will be done by -

- Following the appropriate guidelines to select appropriate staff and to carry out enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks as per these guidelines
- Giving group leaders, service providers and any other interested parties information about Sprowston Town Council's procedures regarding the safety of children whilst at the council's premises when requested
- When requested, providing information to group leaders, service providers and any other interested parties about Sprowston Town Council's expectations regarding child protection responsibilities while visiting council premises.

1.2 Key principles

The key principles of this policy are:

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To ensure that children visiting the council's premises can be protected by setting standards of best practice. This will also ensure that council staff and volunteers are protected and do not place themselves in an unnecessarily vulnerable position.

1.3 Scope

This policy applies to all Members and staff regardless of whether or not they have regular contact with children and vulnerable adults.

For the purposes of the policy, a member of staff covers employees including casual labour, volunteers, work experience placements and trainees.

This policy should also be read in conjunction with other policies in the Council Constitution including the Staff Handbook (particularly the Equality and Diversity, Complaints and Whistleblowing sections), the Health, Safety and Welfare Policy and the Information Policy.

1.4 Definitions

For the purposes of the policy, a **child** is anyone under the age of 18 years.

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 purposes of this policy is anyone over 18 years of age.

1.5 Main Forms of Abuse

a. Physical Abuse

This may involve actions such as hitting, shaking and burning as well as the use of inappropriate restraint. Physical abuse, as well as being a deliberate act, can be caused by an omission or failure to protect. In the case of children, it includes the giving of alcohol, inappropriate drugs or poison to them.

b. Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is a persistent lack of love and affection. A child may be constantly verbally abused, threatened, ignored or taunted. Other forms of emotional abuse include excessive overprotection and unrealistic pressure to succeed. In addition it may include intimidation, humiliation, verbal abuse, harassment or discriminatory harassment to adults.

c. Sexual Abuse

Involves forcing or enticing a child or vulnerable adult to take part in sexual activities whether or not the child or vulnerable adult is aware of or consents to what is happening. It may also involve non-contact activities such as showing pornographic material, sexual innuendo or encouraging someone to behave in a sexually inappropriate way.

d. Neglect

The persistent failure to meet a child's or vulnerable adult's best physical and/or psychological needs. These needs include adequate food and warm clothing and also

medical care, social care and educational services. Neglect may include simply being left alone or excluded.

Section 2:

Practical Guidance for Members, Council Staff and Volunteers working with young people

This section seeks to offer practical guidance to those working at council premises or engaged in council events that involve contact with young people to ensure that they and the young people with whom they are working are protected.

2.1 General Conduct when working with Young People

Members, Council staff and volunteers should be encouraged to demonstrate exemplary behaviour in order to protect themselves from allegations of abuse. Stated below are the standards of behaviour required of Members, Council staff and volunteers to ensure that a positive culture and climate is created during all council activities involving contact with young people:

- Be identifiable e.g. wearing Town Council branded clothing or name badges
- To always work in an open environment (e.g. avoiding private or unobserved situations and encouraging an open environment i.e. no secrets)
- To treat all young people equally and with respect and dignity;
- To maintain a safe and appropriate distance from the young people;
- To build balanced relationships based on mutual trust which empowers young people to share in the decision-making process;
- To involve group leaders, parents/carers and other key influences wherever possible;
- To be an excellent role model - this includes not smoking or drinking alcohol in the company of young people or using inappropriate language;
- To give enthusiastic and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism;
- Remember that someone else might misinterpret certain actions, no matter how well intentioned;
- To obtain written parental consent if staff members are required to transport young people in their cars;
- To obtain written consent prior to any photographs, videoing or audio recording;
- Ensure that photographs or footage is of the audience and taken into proper consideration when publishing any photographic/film material ie focus on the activity, rather than full shots of children.

- Always operate within Sprowston Town Council's Code of Conduct, principles, guidance, policies and procedures.

2.2 Unacceptable Practices

The following should never be sanctioned:

- Have inappropriate or unwarranted physical or verbal contact with children or vulnerable adults.
- Spending excessive amounts of time alone with young people away from others
- Taking young people to your home where they will be alone with you
- Allowing young people to travel on their own with you in a vehicle
- Engaging in rough, physical or sexually provocative games, including horseplay
- Entering a toilet with young people unless another adult is present or gives permission (this may include parent, teacher or group leader).
- Allowing or engaging in any form of inappropriate contact
- Allowing or encouraging abusive peer activities (e.g. any game/activity where an individual may be held up to ridicule)
- Allowing young people to use inappropriate language unchallenged
- Making sexually suggestive comments to, or within the hearing of a young person, even in fun
- Reducing a young person to tears as a form of control
- Allowing allegations made by a young person to go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon;
- Doing things of a personal nature for young people or disabled adults that they can do for themselves;

There may be exceptional circumstances where it is necessary to restrain a child or a vulnerable adult to prevent them from damaging themselves or others. Only the minimum reasonable force necessary may be used. All incidents of physical restraint must be recorded on an incident form and submitted to the Town Clerk, as well as informing the parents and/or carer as soon as possible.

2.3 Responding to complaints and alleged or suspected incidents

The following guidelines should be used when an allegation is disclosed by a young person to a member of council staff and/or volunteer:

i) Listen and reassure

- Maintain confidentiality but do not make promises you cannot keep, and explain that the information will have to be passed on and what action you will be taking
- Be calm
- Be reassuring and make it clear that you are glad that they have told you
- Show that you are taking the child or vulnerable adult seriously and that you understand and believe them
- Keep questions to a minimum; if you have to ask questions keep them open and not leading.

Important points to remember when dealing with a disclosure:

- Try not to display any sign of shock or disapproval when the young person is making a disclosure
- Do not jump to conclusions
- The young person may not regard the experience as either bad or painful, they may not feel guilty or angry
- Be aware of your own feelings which may be different to those of the young person
- Take care of yourself by making sure that you have an opportunity to discuss your feelings with someone at a later stage
- Do not destroy any evidence as it may be useful in a court of law
- Initial disclosure, even if retracted, must still be referred.

ii) Recording information

Information will be stored securely in the council office with limited access to designated people, in line with data protection laws (e.g. that information is accurate, regularly updated, relevant and secure).

An accurate record should be made of:

- The date and time of the incident and/or disclosure
- The parties who were involved
- What was said and done by whom
- The full name of the person reporting and to whom reported

And where appropriate:

- Any action taken by Sprowston Town Council
- Reasons why there was no referral to a statutory agency

iii) Designated Officer – Town Clerk

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The designated officer, or the Chairman of the Council in the absence of the Town Clerk, handles the child protection issues and oversees the policy's implementation. The designated officer will always be the initial point of contact for all staff and volunteers with concerns or if abuse has been disclosed. Necessary steps can then be taken to ensure the safety of the young person.

iv) Informing the appropriate authorities

Whilst it is not the responsibility of any council staff member and/or volunteer to determine if abuse is taking place **it is their responsibility to report concerns to the Designated Officer (or to local social services or the police) in order that appropriate agencies can then make enquiries and take any necessary action to protect the young person.**

iv) Allegations against Staff or Volunteers

In the case of the allegation being against a staff member or volunteer it is of equal importance to act immediately on the allegation. If activity/contact is on-going when the incident is reported then it is the responsibility of the Designated Officer to ensure the immediate safety of that young person by taking the necessary steps, including the removal of alleged individuals.

Any individual accused of abuse will be suspended in line with the local disciplinary procedure pending further police and social services inquiries.

Irrespective of the findings of social services or police inquiries, all individual cases must be assessed under the appropriate misconduct/disciplinary procedure to completion, to decide whether a member of staff or volunteer should be reinstated and how this can be sensitively handled with other staff or volunteers. This may be a difficult decision, particularly where there is insufficient evidence to uphold any action by the police. In such cases, a decision must be based on the balance of probabilities in relation to continued risk, and all available information. ***The welfare of children will always remain paramount.***

2.4 Responding to a child or vulnerable adult making an allegation of abuse against a Councillor, officer or contractor

Members and staff will stay calm and listen carefully, allowing the child or person to continue at their own pace and reassure them that they have done the right thing in speaking out. It may be necessary to ask questions for clarification only and at all times asking questions that suggest a particular answer (i.e. leading questions) should be avoided.

The record keeping advice on page 5 should be followed and, at an early opportunity, it must be explained to the child or vulnerable adult that the information will need to be shared. Do not promise to keep secrets.

These allegations should be recorded and reported to the Town Clerk at the earliest opportunity. If the allegations are made in respect of the Town Clerk then the report must be made to the Chairman of the Council.

2.5 Responding to suspicions that a Councillor or officer may be abusing a child or vulnerable adult or not following the code of good practice

Anyone that suspects a colleague may be abusing a child or vulnerable adult should act on their suspicions immediately. These suspicions should be recorded and reported to the Town Clerk at the earliest opportunity. If the suspicions are raised in respect of the Town Clerk then the report must be made to the Chairman of the Council.

If the matter relates to poor practices the disciplinary/capability procedures may be followed, as detailed in the Staff Handbook.

If it relates to abuse, the matter will later be referred to Social Services who may also involve the Police. The person concerned will be suspended pending the outcome of an internal investigation into the allegations.

Sprowston Town Council acknowledges that this is an extremely sensitive issue for staff and everyone working on its behalf. The Council will fully support and protect anyone who, in good faith, reports a concern that a colleague is or may be abusing a child or a vulnerable adult.

2.6 Recruitment, Training and Monitoring

All successful applicants for posts involving contact with children or vulnerable adults will be subject to enhanced DBS checks to ensure there are no irregularities in their background which may give cause for concern. This check will be carried out by Sprowston Town Council prior to employment.

Staff who have regular direct and indirect contact with children or vulnerable adults will have training to raise their awareness of protection issues at their induction and at regular intervals throughout their employment at Sprowston Town Council.

3. Confidentiality

The legal principle that the welfare of the child or vulnerable adult is paramount means that the consideration of confidentiality, which might apply to other situations within the Council, should not be allowed to override the right of the person to be protected from harm.

However, where possible every effort should be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for and by all concerned when an allegation is made and whilst it is being investigated.

The Council will seek to balance protecting children and vulnerable adults from harm whilst protecting its staff from the risk of unfounded allegations.

The Town Clerk will be responsible for dealing with all allegations and suspicions of abuse concerning a member of staff, in conjunction with any relevant authorities and agencies.

The Monitoring Officer at Broadland District Council will be responsible for dealing with all allegations and suspicions of abuse concerning Councillors, in conjunction with any relevant authorities and agencies.

The Town Clerk or Monitoring Officer will not decide if anyone has been abused – this is the task of Social Services, which has the legal responsibility.

SAMPLE INCIDENT RECORD FORM

Referrers name:
Referrers phone number:
Referrers position:
Child's name:
Child's address:
Parents/carers names, address and phone number: CONTACTED YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>
Child's date of birth:
Date and time of any incident:
Your observations KEEP FACTUAL:
Exactly what the child said (using the child's language) and what you said: (Remember; do not lead the child – record actual details. Continue on separate sheet if necessary)
Details of alleged / suspected abuser: Name: Their position: Address: Any other details that you feel will be important:

Sign	Date	Time
DO NOT DELAY IN THE SUBMISSION OF THIS FORM BECAUSE YOU ARE UNABLE TO COMPLETE ALL OF THE DETAILS, PLEASE CONTINUE TO NEXT PAGE		

External agencies contacted in an emergency or when a Designated Officer was not contactable:

Police:

Name and number of contact:

Action Agreed:

Social Services:

Name and number of contact:

Action Agreed:

I can confirm that to the best of my knowledge the information provided above is correct, and that I will be available to answer any further questions on this matter.

Referrers Signature:

Print name:

Date: