

SAFEGUARDING POLICY

Note: This policy aims solely to safeguard children and vulnerable adults involved in activities, services and facilities under the direct remit and control of Somerton Town Council (STC).

It is important to note that it is not the responsibility of Somerton Town Council to decide whether or not abuse has taken place. However, it is the responsibility of all individuals to take action by reporting their concerns, in accordance with this policy and procedure, to the appropriate agencies. The Council office shall also be informed of such matters.

1. Definitions

As defined in the Children act 1999, a child is anyone under the age of 18 for the purposes of this document.

‘Vulnerable person’ is defined as anyone over the age of 18 who needs support in making decisions, taking actions or expressing their wishes about care or money matters. For example, older people, the mentally ill or disabled people.

‘Child abuse and neglect’ is a generic term encompassing all ill treatment of children, including serious physical and sexual assaults, psychological harm, as well as cases where the standard of care does not adequately support the child’s health or development. Children may be abused or neglected through infliction of harm, or through the failure to act to prevent harm. Abuse can occur in a family or institutional or community setting. The perpetrator may or may not be known to the child.

2. Purpose of policy

The purpose of this policy is to safeguard children and vulnerable persons under the supervision of the Town Council, without unduly constraining activities, services and facilities.

3. Statement of intent

Somerton Town Council (STC) is firmly committed to practices which protect children and vulnerable persons from harm.

Staff, Councillors and volunteers recognise and accept our responsibilities to develop the awareness of the issues that may cause harm.

- The welfare of the child/vulnerable person is paramount
- All children, regardless of age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious beliefs and/or sexual identity, have the right to protection from abuse.
- Any suspicion or allegation of abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately.
- All staff and Councillors have a responsibility to report concerns to the appropriate authorities- Police, Social Services, etc. along with the council office.
- Any local amenity or volunteer group under the management of the Town Council are aware and comply with this policy.
- The Town Clerk, along with other appropriate agencies, are to be immediately informed if any child reports or suggests that they may be the victim of Child Abuse, or if any person suspects this to be the case.

Good child protection practice protects not only children, but also the staff who may come into contact with them. This is known as 'a safeguarding culture'. To this end, all Councillors and staff with involvement in Youth or the Youth Committee shall be subject to DBS checks.

4. Other organisations

Where STC venues or sports grounds are booked out to other organisations, but the activity is not run, organised or supervised by the Town Council, STC cannot be held responsible for the actions of those running the activity. However; STC will adhere to best practice guidelines and request copies of that organisation's safeguarding policy at the time of making the booking.

Other organisations sometimes work in conjunction with STC in providing youth services or activities. These organisations may have their own protection policy, and if so, must take both policies into account; in order to comprehensively safeguard those in their care.

Good Practices

All personnel should adhere to the following principles, and ensure that:

- All current and applicable Health and Safety Legislation is strictly adhered to.
- Nominate an 'officer' to be the first point of contact for the child whilst in the care of the Town Council for that council-led event.
- Children enjoy and benefit from any activity with the Town Council.
- Children are treated fairly and are not subject to bullying.
- Personnel are good role models and do not drink alcohol or smoke when working with children.
- Treat all children equally. This means giving them all similar attention, time, respect and dignity.
- Respect the developmental stage of each young person and structure any tasks allocated to them accordingly.
- Wherever possible, conduct any training and meetings in an open environment, avoiding one-to-one contact in unobserved situations. If one-to-one meetings are unavoidable, ensure office doors are kept open at all times.
- Avoid unnecessary physical contact with children.

- Be aware of any medical conditions, food allergies, existing injuries and medicines which should be taken at specific times.
- Ensure a qualified First Aider or emergency medical support is available at all times, and the child is aware of emergency procedures in the event of a fire alarm sounding.
- Any injury or incident is accurately recorded.
- Comply with any rules/recommendations by a School or parent.
- Be totally sure that any instructions given to a child are appropriate and understandable.

Poor Practices

All personnel should **avoid** the following:

- Spending excessive amounts of time alone with one child away from others.
- Rough, physical or sexually provocative games, including 'horseplay'.
- Allowing or engaging in any form of inappropriate touching.
- Allowing children to use inappropriate language unchallenged.
- Making sexual or suggestive comments to a child, even in fun.
- Reducing a child to tears as a form of control.
- Allowing allegations made by a child to go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon.
- Doing things of a personal nature for a child that they can do for themselves.
- Giving gifts of any nature to children.
- Indicating to a child that any activity or discussion is secret and should not be disclosed to anyone else.
- Taking photographs, videos or using any other recording device to record images of any child.

Observations

Any persons noticing a child or vulnerable person exhibiting signs of physical injury or behaviour pattern which cannot be readily explained, must immediately inform the appropriate agencies, and the council office, and record it.

Disciplinary and protection measures

Any councillor or personnel considered to be behaving inappropriately toward any child will be subject to immediate suspension from contact from children, pending an investigation.

Any councillor or personnel with concerns that they may be mistakenly reported for, or suspected of, any behaviour which may be deemed as inappropriate, must request an immediate interview with the appropriate officer, who will instigate the appropriate investigations for the protection of those persons.