

# Children and Adult Safeguarding Policy 2019 and Guidelines for working with vulnerable people

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# Children and Adult Safeguarding Policy

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 All vulnerable people (children, young people and vulnerable adults) have the right to live their lives to the full, to be protected, to have the opportunity to participate in and enjoy every activity and to be treated with dignity and respect. West Suffolk Council has a moral and legal duty to ensure the safeguarding of vulnerable people across all of its services.
- 1.2 In 2014, the Care Act was published setting out a clear legal framework on the protection of adults at risk of abuse or neglect. The act adopts a person-centred approach. The six principles of the Care Act are:
- empowerment
  - protection
  - prevention
  - proportionality
  - partnership
  - accountability.
- 1.3 In 2023, the Government published statutory guidance [Working together to safeguard children](#). The document sets out the legislative requirements and expectations on how individual services within local authorities should safeguard and promote the welfare of children from all backgrounds, in all settings. This policy follows the principles set out in the guidance. The guidance replaces Working Together to Safeguard Children (2015).
- 1.4 West Suffolk Council provides a range of services and facilities to the community. The nature of the provision means, inevitably, employees (permanent, temporary or contracted), volunteers and councillors, as well as contractors will come into contact with vulnerable people and their families in a variety of settings. The council acknowledges its responsibility for the protection and safety of vulnerable people.

## 2. Purpose and scope

- 2.1 The purpose of this policy is to ensure that there is an overarching approach to safeguarding across the organisation and that, in discharging its functions, the council has due regard for the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of vulnerable people. This policy establishes the roles and responsibilities of staff, volunteers, councillors and contractors in relation to safeguarding the welfare of vulnerable people.
- 2.2 In accordance with the [Legislation.gov.uk - Children and Social Care Work Act 2017](#), councils working together across Suffolk deliver the corporate parenting principles. Corporate parenting is where local authorities have a legal duty to support care leavers making the transition from care into adulthood. Local authorities have a responsibility to ensure that young people know what services are available to care leavers. The act improves support for looked after children and care leavers, promotes the welfare and safeguarding of children and makes provisions about the regulation of social workers. Information is being offered by Suffolk County Council: [Suffolk County Council - Services for young people leaving care](#).

- 2.3 The guidance included in, and accompanying, this guidance provides more detailed good practice advice for those working directly with vulnerable people. It sets out procedures for reporting concerns and recording information.
- 2.4 This policy applies to all West Suffolk Council services and activities and applies to:
- employees
  - councillors
  - volunteers
  - partners and contractors working on the council's behalf.

### 3. Definitions

- 3.1 For the purpose of this policy and accompanying guidance, the following definitions apply:
- **Safeguarding** is the term that describes the function of protecting vulnerable people from potential abuse or neglect. It is an important shared priority of many public services and a key responsibility of local authorities. Safeguarding relates to the need to protect certain people who may be in vulnerable circumstances. These are people who may be at risk of abuse or neglect due to the actions (or lack of action) of another person. In these cases, it is critical that services work together to identify people at risk and put in place interventions to help prevent abuse or neglect and to protect those people.
  - **Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is defined as:**
    - protecting children from maltreatment
    - preventing impairment of children's health or development
    - ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care
    - taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes.
  - **A child or young person:** anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday. 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 is in custody in the secure estate, does not change their status or entitlements to services or protection.
  - **A vulnerable adult:** someone aged 18 or over who is, or may be, in need of community services due to age, illness or a mental or physical disability, who is, or may be, unable to take care of himself or herself or unable to protect himself or herself against significant harm or exploitation.
  - **Vulnerable people:** For the purpose of this policy and guidance, children, young people and vulnerable adults will be referred to as vulnerable people.

## **4. Roles and responsibilities**

- 4.1 Local authorities have a duty under Section 11 of the [Legislation.gov.uk - Children Act 2004](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/31) to ensure that they consider the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children when carrying out their functions. As a district level local authority, West Suffolk Council has a statutory responsibility and a duty of care to cooperate and report issues relating to safeguarding to the appropriate authorities and to work with partners to promote the welfare of vulnerable people.
- 4.2 The council is committed to ensuring that any vulnerable person who comes into contact with an employee, volunteer or any aspect of the council's activities (including services contracted to a third party) feels safe and protected, is listened to and has their views taken into account.
- 4.3 The council acknowledges it is not its responsibility to investigate whether a vulnerable person is in need or that abuse has taken place, but that all employees, volunteers, councillors and contractors act upon any concerns they have, by referring to the appropriate authority and by accurately recording their concerns. Those with concerns are required to cooperate with the Suffolk Safeguarding Partnership and the Suffolk Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) who may be dealing with any referrals.
- 4.4 The legislation Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 sets out that the three safeguarding partners (local authority, Chief Officer of Police and clinical commissioning groups) must work together with relevant agencies to safeguard and protect the welfare of children. All three partners have equal and joint responsibility for local safeguarding arrangements. In Suffolk, the new Suffolk Safeguarding Partnership arrangements came into force on 29 September 2019.
- 4.5 The legislation further sets out that the three safeguarding partners should agree on ways to coordinate their safeguarding services, act as a strategic leadership group in supporting and engaging others and implement local and national learning including from Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews and, at West Suffolk Council, we will support the safeguarding partners in their work.
- 4.6 The council will endeavour to ensure the suitability of all employees and volunteers who work with vulnerable people through robust recruitment and selection procedures, appropriate training and other working practices and procedures.
- 4.7 The council will ensure the longstanding suitability of contractors via a robust tender process. Ongoing monitoring of the contract will be undertaken via the contract management system. Whichever officer has responsibility for managing a contract, said officer will regularly review safeguarding compliance.
- 4.7 The council provides support and advice services to adults, some of whom may pose a risk to children and young people. The council is committed to managing any such risk.
- 4.8 As a licensing authority, the council will comply with the terms of the Licensing Act 2003 in relation to protecting children and vulnerable adults from harm. The

act requires that robust mechanisms are in place to ensure licensing applications are examined by the appropriate agencies.

- 4.9 The council's housing and homelessness services have a duty under Section 11 of the Children Act 2004. Any person working on behalf of the council in these services may become aware of conditions that could have or are having an adverse impact on children. Part 1 of the Housing Act 2004 sets out that authorities must take account of the impact of health and safety hazards in housing on vulnerable occupants, including children, when deciding on the action to be taken by landlords to improve conditions. Housing authorities have an important role to play in safeguarding vulnerable young people, including young people who are pregnant or leaving care or a secure establishment.
- 4.10 The Families and Communities service will undertake measures to ensure safeguarding practices are implemented when working with community groups and/or locality budgets, as set out in paragraph 15.
- 4.11 The council requires all employees, volunteers, councillors and contractors in the organisation to understand their responsibility to share concerns about the welfare of any vulnerable person with the designated Safeguarding Officer or the deputy designated officer(s).

#### 4.12 **Lead Designated Safeguarding Officer**

The Lead Designated Safeguarding Officer, supported by the deputy Safeguarding Officer, has the responsibility to maintain links with Suffolk Safeguarding Board and Prevent Coordinators, plan and implement training for all employees, and carry out investigations where appropriate into welfare concerns reported and liaise with external bodies such as the relevant county Safeguarding Partnership, where appropriate. Overall recording and management of safeguarding issues and reporting to the Partnership on any issues that arise will be completed by the Lead Designated Safeguarding Officer. They will also review procedures and policies as well as maintain own continuing professional development (CPD) to ensure their role can be fulfilled competently.

#### 4.13 **Designated Safeguarding Officer and Leads**

The Designated Safeguarding Officer and Leads have the responsibility to deal with employee concerns over learners' welfare, signpost and offer guidance to lower-level concerns and liaise with the Safeguarding Lead for concerns requiring referral to external agencies. They will carry out investigations where appropriate into welfare concerns reported and liaise with external bodies such as the Safeguarding Partnership where appropriate. It is also the role of the Designated Safeguarding Officer and Leads to ensure that contract details are recorded on the contract management system and that an annual safeguarding compliance meeting is undertaken with contractors and other external partners. The Designated Safeguarding Officer will maintain own continuing professional development (CPD) to ensure the role can be fulfilled competently.

- 4.14 Designated officers are there essentially to provide advice, guidance and support when a referral or allegation is made. The council will endeavour to equip appointed officers with the necessary skills, information and confidence to carry out this role.

- 4.15 The council accepts responsibility for ensuring its employees, volunteers, councillors, partners and contractors are aware of this policy and the related guidance. It is also responsible for ensuring that employee, volunteer and councillor concerns about the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults are received and acted upon.

## 5. Types of abuse and recognising the signs of abuse

This section provides an overview of the types and signs of abuse that employees, volunteers, councillors and contractors should be aware of. The types of abuse for adults and children are different. More information is provided in the links below.

### 5.1 Adults

The [Suffolk Safeguarding Partnership](#) provides information about safeguarding issues. The [Suffolk Safeguarding Partnership - Safeguarding Adults Framework](#) provides guidance about the different types of abuse, also summarised below:

Discriminatory or hate crime	Unequal or abusive treatment based on age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex or sexual orientation.
Domestic abuse	Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality.
Financial or material abuse	The unauthorised and improper use of funds, property or any resources. This includes the use of theft, coercion or fraud to obtain or try to obtain a person's money, possessions or property.
Modern day slavery	Holding a person in a position of slavery, forced servitude or compulsory labour, or facilitating their travel with the intention of exploiting them soon after.
Neglect and acts of omission	Ongoing failure to meet a person's basic physical or psychological needs.
Organisational abuse	Neglect or poor professional practice as a result of the structure, policies, processes and practices within an organisation, resulting in ongoing neglect or poor care.
Physical abuse	The act of causing physical harm to someone.
Psychological abuse	Ongoing psychological or emotional maltreatment of an adult. Consideration of the impact of the person must be taken into consideration.
Self-neglect and hoarding	The inability (intentionally or unintentionally) to maintain a socially and culturally acceptable standard of self-care with the potential for

	serious consequences to the health and wellbeing of those who self-neglect and perhaps to their community.
Sexual abuse	When an adult is forced, persuaded or coerced to take part in sexual activities. This does not have to be physical contact and it can be online. May include cases of an historical nature.
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## 5.2 Children

The [Suffolk Safeguarding Partnership](#) provides information about safeguarding issues. The partnership's webpage provides information about the different types of abuse, also set out below:

Child sexual exploitation	<p>A form of child sexual abuse where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or</li> <li>b. for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator.</li> </ul> <p>The victim may have been exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.</p>
Child trafficking	<p>Involves a child or children being recruited, harboured or brought into a situation of exploitation through the use of violence, deception or coercion and forced to work against their will. It is a form of modern slavery. The child could have been moved across international borders or within the UK. When children are trafficked, no violence, deception or coercion needs to be involved; simply bringing them into exploitative conditions constitutes trafficking.</p>
Criminal exploitation (county lines and gangs)	<p>The way street gangs exploit vulnerable younger adolescents, in both the major cities and the destination locations, to distribute narcotics across large areas of the country.</p>
Cyber bullying	<p>Involves identity theft and scams, exposure to pornography and other inappropriate sites, online grooming and exploitation.</p>
Fabricated illness	<p>Fabricated or induced illness is a rare form of child abuse. It occurs when a parent or carer exaggerates or deliberately causes symptoms of illness in the child.</p>
Female genital mutilation	<p>Involves partial or total removal or damage to the female genital organs for non-medical purposes.</p>
Honour based abuse and violence	<p>This is a collection of practices which are used to control behaviour and exert power within families to protect perceived cultural and religious beliefs and/or honour. Such violence can occur when perpetrators perceive that an individual is being punished for actually, or allegedly, undermining what the family or community believes to be the correct code of behaviour.</p>
Modern day slavery	<p>Child slavery is often confused with child labour, but is much worse. Whilst child labour is harmful for children and hinders their education and</p>

	development, child slavery occurs when a child's labour is exploited for someone else's gain. It can include child trafficking, child soldiers, child marriage and child domestic slavery.
Neglect	The most common form of abuse. It is when a parent or carer fails to meet a child's physical, emotional, educational or medical needs.

More information about the types and signs of abuse can be found on: [Suffolk Ordinary Lives – Safeguarding Adults: Types of abuse](#)

## 6. Information and security

- 6.1 Information sharing is essential for effective safeguarding and promoting welfare. In July 2018, and in response to the new General Data Protection Regulation, the Government updated the guidance [Assets Publishing Service – Information Sharing: Advice for practitioners providing safeguarding services to children, young people, parents and carers](#) which supports any person in the decisions they take to share information, which reduces the risk of harm to vulnerable people.
- 6.2 The guidance includes reference to the seven golden rules to information sharing:
- Remember that the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), Data Protection Act 2018 and human rights law are not barriers to justified information sharing, but provide a framework to ensure that personal information about living individuals is shared appropriately.
  - Be open and honest with the individual (and/or their family where appropriate) from the outset about why, what, how and with whom information will, or could be, shared and seek their agreement, unless it is unsafe or inappropriate to do so.
  - Seek advice from other practitioners, or your information governance lead, if you are in any doubt about sharing the information concerned, without disclosing the identity of the individual where possible.
  - Where possible, share information with consent and, where possible, respect the wishes of those who do not consent to having their information shared. Under the GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018, you may share information without consent if, in your judgement, there is a lawful basis to do so, such as where safety may be at risk. You will need to base your judgement on the facts of the case. When you are sharing or requesting personal information from someone, be clear of the basis upon which you are doing so. Be mindful that an individual might not expect information to be shared.
  - Consider safety and wellbeing. Base your information sharing decisions on considerations of the safety and wellbeing of the individual and others who may be affected by their actions.

- Necessary, proportionate, relevant, adequate, accurate, timely and secure. Ensure that the information you share is necessary for the purpose for which you are sharing it, is shared only with those individuals who need to have it, is accurate and up to date, is shared in a timely fashion and is shared securely (see principles).
- Keep a record of your decision and the reasons for it – whether it is to share information or not. Record what you have shared, with whom and for what purpose.

6.3 The [Legislation.gov.uk - Data Protection Act 2018](https://legislation.gov.uk/Data-Protection-Act-2018) controls how organisations, business and governments use personal information. It is through this act that the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) was implemented by Government. Further information on the data that West Suffolk Council holds and how it is used can be found on the council's [Data and information](#) webpages.

6.4 The council only keeps records of the safeguarding referrals it makes to the MASH for six months, if no further investigation is required. Thereafter, records are deleted in line with the council's Record Management Guidance.

6.5 In addition, the [West Suffolk Council Information Security Policy](#) is intended to ensure that technology provided to employees and councillors, and which is available for use by the public in our facilities, is used appropriately. It outlines expectations on data protection and acceptable use of the Internet and electronic media.

6.6 As a precaution, employees are asked not to email identifiable information relating to a safeguarding referral. Instead, staff are asked to seek advice from the Designated Safeguarding Officer in the first instance.

## **7. Sharing your concerns**

7.1 From time to time, staff may come across a vulnerable person in the normal course of their work that gives rise to concern. Concerns about a vulnerable person's safety and welfare may vary in seriousness and in nature and staff or councillors may be unsure about whether their concerns warrant reporting. It is important to understand the signs and types of abuse (as set out in section 5 above). It is everyone's responsibility to act upon their concerns, but often it is only when information from different sources is put together that a clear picture of the risks and needs of the child, young person or vulnerable adult emerges. Sharing concerns with a designated officer who has been trained to support and advise staff and councillors will help to focus on exactly what the concerns are and ensure the best possible outcomes for the child, young person or vulnerable adult.

7.2 While it is appropriate to respond to events, staff and councillors should never set out to interview or investigate themselves, because doing so is likely to make it difficult for police officers and social workers to investigate and act to protect the individual. Vulnerable people should be listened to and not silenced, but they should not be interviewed.

7.3 When receiving a disclosure of abuse from a vulnerable person, it is important that the member of staff or councillor behaves and acts in ways which reassure

the vulnerable person and that they do not impede any future investigations. In particular, staff and councillors should:

- recognise signs of a vulnerable person's willingness or need to speak with them
- never promise confidentiality, instead telling the vulnerable person that they may have to pass on information they disclose
- encourage the vulnerable person to explain their distress without pressuring them to discuss or disclose more than they want, need or are able to
- repeat back to a vulnerable person what they have said to ensure that what has been said has been understood
- remain calm and not show any anger or distress at what may have happened
- reassure the vulnerable person that they have done the right thing in telling someone and that the events they describe are not their fault
- make an assessment of the immediate threat to the vulnerable person and tell them what they intend to do next
- record the conversation away from the vulnerable person, using direct quotes where possible.

7.4 It is important to keep an open mind about the possibility of abuse and to avoid giving the benefit of the doubt to an adult without having a sound basis for doing so.

## **8. Recording and reporting concerns**

8.1 In the event that an employee, volunteer or councillor has grounds to be concerned about the welfare of a vulnerable person, they should act immediately.

8.2 When a vulnerable person is making a disclosure, they will be informed of their right to talk to an independent person, for example social services, about any possible abuse. This is of particular importance where the allegation concerns a council employee.

8.3 The council has adopted the procedures set out by Suffolk County Council for reporting concerns with information provided in the following links:

- [Suffolk County Council – Reporting a child at risk of harm, abuse or neglect](#)
- Reporting an adult at risk of abuse, harm or neglect: [Suffolk Safeguarding Partnership – Volunteers and professionals](#)

The policy is supported by a simple toolkit for officers that guides them through identification of vulnerability and safeguarding issues and referral protocols.

- 8.4 If a child, young person or vulnerable adult is at immediate risk of significant harm, dial 999 as in any emergency.
- 8.5 Should an employee, volunteer or councillor be dissatisfied with how the council has responded to an incident, allegation or concern, they may report their concerns directly to the MASH or the police.
- 8.6 Where an employee, volunteer or councillor is dissatisfied with how a professional in a partner agency has dealt with their concerns regarding a child or young person, they may raise these by using the Suffolk Safeguarding Partnership escalation policy: [Suffolk Safeguarding Partnership – Escalations or Disputes](#). At the time of writing this policy, an escalation policy has not yet been agreed for vulnerable adults.
- 8.7 The first step when considering escalating concerns should be to discuss the matter with the council's Designated Safeguarding Officer. However, the first key principle in any dispute should be that it is everyone's professional responsibility to problem solve and come to an agreed resolution at the earliest opportunity, always keeping in mind the child's or vulnerable adult's safety and welfare.

## **9. Confidentiality**

- 9.1 The legal principle that 'the welfare of the child or vulnerable adult is paramount' means that considerations of confidentiality that might apply to other situations within the council should not be allowed to override the right of the vulnerable person to be protected from harm. Neither employees, volunteers nor councillors can give absolute guarantees of confidentiality, or promise that the information will not be shared. If a vulnerable person is at risk of significant harm, the 'normal' rules of confidentiality do not apply.
- 9.2 All concerns will be treated in confidence. At the appropriate time, however, the individual may need to come forward as a witness.

## **10. Equal opportunities**

- 10.1 The council is fully committed to taking effective action to eliminate discrimination and to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations in all that we do as an employer, a service provider and as a community leader. We believe that all people are entitled to be treated with dignity and respect and we are determined to ensure that both our employees and everyone entitled to use our services receive fair and equitable treatment. We are committed to working with our partners and communities to promote good relations and to combat prejudice, discrimination and harassment.
- 10.2 How the council will work to meet the duties under the Equality Act 2010, are set out in the [West Suffolk Equality Scheme](#). Where there are any concerns relating to equal opportunities issues as well as safeguarding concerns, then reference should be made to the council's Equality Scheme for guidance.

## 11. Recruitment and selection

- 11.1 The council will take all reasonable steps to ensure unsuitable people are prevented from working or volunteering in settings that bring them into close direct contact with children or vulnerable adults. The Protection of Freedoms Act 2012 has scaled back the requirement to undertake Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) criminal record checks, to focus on those working unsupervised or in regular close contact with vulnerable people.
- 11.2 Where a post is identified as requiring a DBS check and the new employee does not already hold a valid DBS check, the council will undertake a DBS check as part of its recruitment process. From 2013, individuals have been able to apply for their own DBS check, for which there is a fee, which they can take with them to new employers or when volunteering. The council retains the right to request a new DBS check to make sure that the check is up to date and to check the most recent records.
- 11.3 DBS criminal record checks are free of charge to volunteers. The DBS defines a volunteer as 'a person engaged in an activity which involves spending time, unpaid (except for travel and other approved out of pocket expenses), doing something which aims to benefit some third party other than, or in addition to, a close relative'.
- 11.4 Training for officers with recruitment and selection responsibilities will ensure adherence to recruitment and selection best practice. The disclosure procedures ensure information is provided to assess a potential employee's or volunteer's suitability for a post that may bring them into contact with children, young people or vulnerable adults. Guidelines have been issued to recruiting managers and posts identified that are subject to DBS enhanced disclosure checks. These posts are defined as regulated posts whose '**work involves close and unsupervised contact with vulnerable groups**'.
- 11.5 Regulated activity relating to vulnerable people can be due to either **what they do** (activity), **where they work** (establishment) or **who they are** (specific post) and are defined by the following:
- **unsupervised activities:** teaching, training, instructing, caring for or supervising children or vulnerable adults or providing advice or guidance on wellbeing, or driving a vehicle only for children or vulnerable adults. If under reasonable day to day supervision by another engaging in regulated activity, is not undertaking a regulated activity
  - working for a limited range of establishments ('**specified places**') with opportunity for contact with, for example, schools, children's homes, childcare premises; not work by supervised volunteers
  - work under either of the above is regulated activity only if done regularly
  - relevant personal care, for example washing or dressing, or health care by or supervised by a professional (does not include workplace first aiders)
  - registered childminding and foster carers

- day to day **management or supervision** of individuals carrying out regulated activity.

11.6 A regulated post checklist has been produced to assist managers with identifying posts that would fall into this category.

## **12. Training**

12.1 The council recognises the important contribution that staff, councillors and volunteers make to the process of safeguarding. The council will encourage staff and volunteers to contribute appropriately to the safeguarding process, particularly in respect of attendance at safeguarding conferences and core groups, involvement in formal protection plans and information exchange.

12.2 All employees, volunteers and councillors will receive suitable information and appropriate training during their induction process or through staff briefings to raise awareness of their role in recognising, understanding and safeguarding children and vulnerable adults.

12.3 The designated officer and leads, as well as all other staff and volunteers who have been identified by their service manager as being likely to come into direct contact with vulnerable people will receive suitable approved training to enable them to identify and deal with reporting concerns, including appropriate training in the use of the contract management system.

## **13. Supervision and support for staff**

13.1 Designated officers and the managers of those staff identified as being likely to come into direct contact with vulnerable people will receive training to enable them to support staff reporting concerns.

13.2 The council will ensure that:

- any concerns about abuse are acted upon at an early stage
- support, from an appropriately trained individual, is offered to those who report concerns
- confidentiality is maintained and information is only shared with appropriate people or agencies.

13.3 Specialist counselling support is available for staff and volunteers supporting child or vulnerable adult protection cases, to help deal with any significant emotional demands they may face.

## **14. Allegations against employees, volunteers or councillors**

14.1 Any allegations about staff will be dealt with in accordance with the council's Disciplinary and Capability Policy, the Grievance Procedure and/or the Whistleblowing (Anti-Corruption) Policy, which will include referral to Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) for consideration for barring in relevant circumstances. A senior member of the Human Resources team will investigate such allegations with a suitable colleague and consult with the council's designated officer and Assistant Director of Human Resources, Legal and

Democratic Services and the county council's Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) prior to making a request for barring.

- 14.2 Any allegations against volunteers will be investigated following guidelines for employees in consultation with the council's designated officer and Assistant Director of Human Resources, Legal and Democratic Services.
- 14.3 Any allegations against councillors will be dealt with under the local code of conduct and subsequently considered by the local Standards Committee if appropriate in consultation with the Designated Safeguarding Officer.
- 14.4 In each case, Children's Services and/or the police will determine whether child protection or criminal investigations will take place. If the employee, volunteer or councillor resigns, a referral to DBS will still be made if appropriate.

## **15. Working in partnership with others**

- 15.1 The council will work in partnership with a range of organisations and the council expects them to have in place appropriate safeguarding policies.
- 15.2 Organisations which receive grant aid or are contracted by the council to provide a service and work with vulnerable people will be expected to have an appropriate safeguarding policy in place. Their staff and volunteers must also receive appropriate safeguarding training. The council will ask to see a copy of the relevant safeguarding policy before any funding is awarded.
- 15.3 Volunteers who work with vulnerable people and who are carrying out regulated activities on behalf of the council will be subject to a DBS check and will be provided with training and support.
- 15.4 The council will ask all commissioned organisations that deliver services directly with children, young people or vulnerable adults to sign a declaration form to declare that all relevant staff and volunteers working with them hold current Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks that are no older than three years and have completed the appropriate training.
- 15.5 All contracts will be monitored by the council via the contract management system. All contractors will be required to have an annual safeguarding compliance review meeting with an appropriate officer representing the council.

## **16. Photography and filming**

- 16.1 The council recognises the positive contribution that photography can make, highlighting group and individual achievement and promoting services. The council also recognises the risk posed directly and indirectly to vulnerable people through the misuse of photographic images. Increased use of digital cameras, video recorders, mobile phones and social media make pictures instantly available for distribution and not subject to regulation that commercial developing provides. It is, therefore, necessary to have procedures in place to safeguard vulnerable people against inappropriate use of their photographic image.
- 16.2 The council expects all employees, councillors and volunteers to follow the best practice outlined in the guidance, which accompanies this policy (see section 2

of the 'Guidelines for working with vulnerable people'). Failure to do so will be deemed a disciplinary offence and dealt with in accordance with the council's Disciplinary Policy.

## **17. Work experience and employment under the age of 18**

- 17.1 Managers are required to follow the 'Work Experience Management Guidance and Induction Checklist' which directs them to considering the guidance which accompanies this policy before agreeing a work experience placement.
- 17.2 Managers are asked to demonstrate their duty of care towards employees under the age of 18 through offering the employee the opportunity to disclose any relevant safeguarding information, which should be shared with their manager or alternatively with a member of the Human Resources team.

## **18. Conclusion**

- 18.1 Through the production of this policy, the council has demonstrated its commitment to safeguarding vulnerable people. The policy recognises the diverse nature of the services and facilities provided by the council and the duty upon all employees, councillors and volunteers to act upon their concerns relating to vulnerable people.

# Guidelines for working with vulnerable people

## 1. Purpose of these guidelines

These guidelines provide good practice advice for staff, councillors and volunteers working with vulnerable people. The guidelines also provide advice about what to do if staff, councillors or volunteers are worried about the welfare of a vulnerable person.

These good practice guidelines are designed not only to protect vulnerable people, but to protect staff, councillors and volunteers, working for, and on behalf of, the council, from situations where false allegations may occur.

## 2. Good practice

When working with vulnerable people, good practice means:

- always working in an open environment (for example, avoiding private or unobserved situations) and encouraging an open environment (for example, no secrets)
- treating vulnerable people fairly and with respect and dignity
- always putting the welfare of each vulnerable person first, before achieving goals
- maintaining a safe and appropriate distance from a vulnerable person
- building suitable balanced relationships based on mutual trust which empowers vulnerable people to share in the decision-making process
- making activities fun and enjoyable and promoting fair play
- ensuring that, if any form of physical contact is required, it is provided openly – the vulnerable person should always be consulted and their agreement gained
- keeping up to date with the technical skills, qualifications and insurance required
- involving parents or carers wherever possible – if parents are not present, staff should always work with at least one co-worker
- ensuring that mixed groups are accompanied by a male and female member of staff
- giving enthusiastic and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism
- recognising the developmental needs and capacity of the vulnerable person
- prior to an event or other activity, it is necessary to secure parental consent in writing to act in their place to give permission for the

administration of emergency first aid and/or other medical treatment (if the need arises)

- being aware of any medicines being taken by participants, or existing injuries – where appropriate, a record must be kept if medication is taken or administered to a child, young person or vulnerable adult
- keeping a written record of any injury that occurs, or incidents where a vulnerable person has become upset, along with the details of any treatment given or action taken.

A degree of physical contact may be used appropriately to instruct, encourage, protect or comfort. When physical contact is required, both the vulnerable person and the member of staff should be clear about the context and appropriateness of that contact. Physical contact with vulnerable people should only be used when the aim is to:

- develop skills or techniques
- treat an injury or respond to discomfort
- prevent an injury
- meet the requirements of the particular activity.

In addition, physical contact should:

- never be in ways, or with parts of the body, that may be considered inappropriate
- meet the needs of the child, young person or vulnerable adult and not the needs of the adult
- be fully explained to the child, young person or vulnerable adult and, with the exception of an emergency, permission be sought
- not take place in secret or out of sight of others.

### **3. Practices to be avoided**

The following practices should be avoided except in emergencies. If cases arise where these situations are unavoidable, they should only occur with the full knowledge and consent of someone in charge in the organisation or the vulnerable person's carer – for example, a child sustaining an injury and needing to go to hospital, or a parent failing to arrive to pick a child up at the end of a session. Staff and councillors should:

- be aware that there are very few instances when one-to-one working is appropriate. If in doubt, they should avoid spending excessive amounts of time alone with a child, young person or vulnerable adult
- never take a child, young person or vulnerable adult to your home where they will be alone with you

- avoid giving children, young people or vulnerable adults lifts in your car.

#### **4. Practice not sanctioned**

The following practices are never sanctioned. Staff and councillors should never:

- engage in rough or sexually provocative games (including horseplay) or those requiring extended physical contact
- allow or engage in any form of inappropriate touching
- make sexually suggestive comments to anyone, even in fun
- humiliate, put down or degrade a child, young person or vulnerable adult as a form of control
- allow allegations made by a vulnerable person to go unrecorded
- do things of a personal nature for a vulnerable person that they can do for themselves
- invite or allow a vulnerable person to stay with you at your home unsupervised.

#### **5. Incidents requiring immediate reporting**

If any of the following incidents should occur, staff, councillors or volunteers should report them immediately to another colleague and make a written note of the event; carers should also be informed of the incident:

- if the staff member, councillor or volunteer accidentally hurts a vulnerable person
- if a vulnerable person in the care of a staff member, councillor or volunteer seems distressed in any manner
- if an individual appears to be sexually aroused by the actions of a staff member, councillor or volunteer
- if an individual misunderstands or misinterprets something the staff member, councillor or volunteer has done.

#### **6. Children, young people and vulnerable adults – adult ratios**

The council's general guidelines are as follows:

- Children over the age of 8 may be left unaccompanied by parents or carers for the duration of an event, subject to the type of event.

- All children under the age of 8 will have to be accompanied by a parent or carer at all times.
- Individuals with special needs (such as a behavioural condition or disability) may have to be accompanied by a carer subject to the assessment of the event leaders.
- When necessary, an information form must be completed by participants, or a parent, guardian or carer for those under the age of 18 or a vulnerable adult.
- The participant adult ratios guidelines are:
  - low risk events: a minimum of two members of staff or appropriate adults to a maximum of 20 participants
  - higher risk events: a minimum of two members of staff or appropriate adults to a maximum of 10 participants
  - family events (children will not be allowed unaccompanied): a minimum of one member of staff – the maximum number of families is variable and will depend on the location and nature of event.

Furthermore, the council will ensure that:

- a male and female member of staff will accompany any mixed group
- individuals whose behaviour is considered inappropriate or dangerous by the event leaders will be prevented from continuing the activity. Their parents or carers will be contacted immediately and requested to pick them up. Furthermore, they may be banned from participating in further activities. The same applies to organised groups using council facilities where members of staff deem that the quality or quantity of supervision is not sufficient.

## **7. Confidentiality and information sharing**

In principle, all personal information will be treated as confidential. However, confidential information may be disclosed to social care services or the police if a vulnerable person's health and welfare need protecting, or where a criminal activity has or may be committed. If a disclosure of abuse is made by a vulnerable individual, it is important for everyone to understand that they may not promise confidentiality.

In cases of medical or other sensitive information being held, staff, councillors or volunteers will only be informed on a 'need to know' basis and in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018.

If in doubt, advice should be sought from the council's legal section and/or the Designated Safeguarding Officer.

## **8. Photography and filming guidance**

In order to prevent the inappropriate use and distribution of photographic and film material, the council will follow these guidelines:

- Parents and guardians or carers will be asked to concentrate their photography or filming on the people in their charge.
- Information will be displayed and/or information will be printed on tickets, leaflets and so on to ensure that participants are aware that filming and photography will take place.
- The council will only use limited details, such as a child's name and age, if a picture or film is used for the council's publicity purposes, unless written permission is given by a parent, guardian or carer for more details to be released.
- Photographers employed by the council will be required to make a declaration that they have no safeguarding-related convictions.
- Photographers employed by the council will not be allowed to photograph or film children, young people or vulnerable adults without a council member of staff being present.

This guidance applies to any equipment capable of capturing a still or moving image, such as cameras and mobile phones.

Media photographers follow their own code of practice, set nationally by the Press Complaints Commission, which stipulates that young people under the age of 16 or vulnerable adults may not be photographed without the permission of a parent or responsible adult (such as a school teacher).

## **9. Procedure for reporting concerns**

Please see section 7 of the policy document.

## **10. More information**

More advice and guidance can be found at the government webpage [GOV.UK - Working together to safeguard children](#) and [Suffolk Safeguarding Partnership - Suffolk Safeguarding Partnership: working for you](#)