



Swanage Town Council - Safeguarding Policy

Introduction

The purpose of this policy is to make clear to all members, staff, volunteers, and contractors what is required in relation to the protection of children, young people and vulnerable adults. This policy will help to maintain a safe and positive environment for children and vulnerable adults.

1. Policy coverage

This policy applies to all members, employees, volunteers, and contractors working in partnership with Swanage Town Council. Legislation provides the framework for safeguarding and child protection in England. It makes clear the expectations and requirements around duties of care to children and creates accountability for these. The main legislation in England is the Children Act 1989, the Children Act 2004 and the Children and Social Work Act 2017.

Swanage Town Council has a duty to co-operate with other agencies and authorities to promote the well-being of children and young people. Local safeguarding partners are responsible for child protection policy, procedure and guidance at a local level.

The local safeguarding arrangements are led by three statutory safeguarding partners:

- Dorset Council
- the integrated care board (ICB, previously clinical commissioning group or 'CCG')
- the police.

It is not the role of Swanage Town Council to investigate allegations of abuse. However, all members, staff, volunteers and contracted services providers have a responsibility to take action when they suspect or recognise that a child or vulnerable adult may be a victim of significant harm or abuse.

Children, young people and vulnerable adults are:

- Anyone under the age of 18;
- Someone who is 18 or over and who is or may be in need of community care services by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness; and who is or may be unable to take care of him or herself, or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation.

This policy is to be used in conjunction with the Council's Health and Safety Policies, Equal Opportunities Policy, Complaints Policy and Staff Handbook.

2. Policy Principles

Swanage Town Council recognises that all children and vulnerable adults have an equal right to protection from abuse. It is committed to safeguarding children and vulnerable adults and protecting them from abuse when they are engaged in services organised and provided by, or on behalf of, the Council.



3. Policy Statement

Swanage Town Council is committed to taking all reasonable precautions to safeguard the welfare of children and vulnerable adults that use its services and promotes a safeguarding culture and environment.

4. Procedure and Systems

The Council's Safeguarding Lead Officer is the Town Clerk.

5. Definitions and Abuse

- Abuse covers any form of physical, emotional, mental and sexual abuse including bullying or lack of care that leads to injury or harm. For vulnerable adults abuse may also be financial.
- Neglect is where people fail to meet a child's or vulnerable person's basic physical / psychological needs and is likely to result in the serious impairment of their health or development, e.g. failure to ensure that a child is protected from unnecessary risk of injury, or exposing them to undue cold.
- Physical Abuse is where physical pain or injury is caused, e.g. hitting, shaking, biting, etc.
- Sexual Abuse is where children or vulnerable adults knowingly or unknowingly take part in an activity that meets the sexual needs of the other person or persons involved. This includes inappropriate photography or videoing.
- Emotional / Mental Abuse is where there is persistent emotional ill treatment that causes severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's or vulnerable person's emotional status e.g. bullying (including cyber and text bullying), constant criticism and unrealistic pressure to perform.

6. Responding to Allegations

If a person discloses abuse by someone else:

- Stay calm, take the allegation seriously.
- Allow the person to speak without interruption, accepting what is said, but DO NOT investigate.
- Only ask questions for clarification, do not ask leading questions and do not attempt to investigate.
- Pass no judgement. Reassure them that they did the right thing by talking to you.
- Advise that you will try to offer support, but that you MUST pass the information on, do not offer to keep secrets.
- Record the facts as you know them.
- Refer the allegation immediately and directly to the appropriate person. If an employee or volunteer is implicated, refer to their Line Manager. If a manager or another young person is implicated, refer directly to the Town Clerk. If the Town Clerk is implicated, refer to the Town 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.

As soon as possible after the incident or disclosure has occurred:

- Write down notes, dates, times, facts, observations, and verbatim speech.
- Ensure the correct details are available, the young person's / vulnerable adult's name and address, and the name and address of their parent or guardian.
- Immediately contact the Social Services Department at Dorset Council. Ask for a duty officer and indicate that you wish to discuss a matter of child / vulnerable person protection. Ask for the name of the person with whom you are speaking. 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 Social Services. Every effort should be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned.
- Store information in a secure place with limited access to designated people, in line with data protection legislation.
- Follow the advice from Social Services; take no other action unless advised to do so by Social Services. Do not attempt to investigate any matters – this is not the role of the Town Council.
- If in doubt about the advice you have received at any stage refer to Social Services for guidance.

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

All members, employees, volunteers, and organisations contracted to provide services on behalf of the Council are encouraged to share concerns with the Town Clerk.

The Town Clerk will, if appropriate, make a referral to Social Services. Recognising abuse is not always easy to identify. The list below provides some indicators of abuse; however, the list is not exhaustive and contains only indicators, not confirmation, of abuse:

- unexplained bruising, marks or injuries on any part of the body e.g. cigarette burns, bite marks;
- bruises which reflect hand marks or fingertips (from slapping or pinching);
- an injury for which the explanation seems inconsistent, or which has not been treated adequately;
- sudden changes in behaviour, including becoming withdrawn or becoming aggressive, severe temper outbursts;
- reluctance to get changed e.g., for swimming;
- neglected in appearance, dirty or 'smelly';
- constant hunger, sometimes stealing food from others;
- inappropriate dress for the conditions;
- fear of parents or carers being approached for an explanation;
- flinching when approached or touched;
- neurotic behaviour e.g., hair twisting, rocking;
- being unable to play.



- fear of making mistakes;
- self-harm;
- fear of being left with a specific person or group of people, lack of trust in adults;
- sexual knowledge which is beyond their age or development age;
- sexual drawings or language;
- saying they have secrets they cannot tell anyone about;
- not allowed to have friends.

8. Confidentiality

Members, employees, volunteers, and contracted service providers must not discuss allegations of abuse, substantiated or not, with anyone other than in connection with the formal investigation. Where it is necessary to put in procedures to prevent continuing abuse the matter should be shared with the Town Clerk so that appropriate risk assessments may be undertaken.

9. Prevention

Prospective employees will be interviewed and previous, relevant experience will be noted. Two appropriate references will be taken up for all employees. All employees will undergo a probationary period.

Swanage Town Council paid and voluntary positions will be assessed using Government Guidance [Disclosure and Barring Service - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/disclosure-and-barring-service) to determine if Disclosure and Barring Service checks are appropriate to the role. Where this is the case and in line with best practice, these checks will be repeated every three years.

10. Training

The council will make the Safeguarding policy available to all members, staff and volunteers. Line managers will encourage good practice and identify any training needs required through the Council's Appraisal System. All members and employees will be expected to read this policy and sign the Declaration at the end of the document.

11. Reporting

The Council is committed to maintaining an open culture where members employees, volunteers, children, vulnerable persons, parents, carers and guardians feel able to express concerns both about safeguarding and issues of poor practice. In addition to the procedures outlined in this policy, the Council's Whistleblowing Policy and Complaints Policy and Procedure are available to all members, employees, volunteers, and the general public.

12. Policy monitoring and review

All incidents, allegations of abuse and complaints will be recorded and monitored.

13. Procedure in Relation to Specific Activities

Work Experience

Swanage Town Council may offer work experience placements. The Council will ensure that employees working with children or vulnerable adults are aware of the Council's



Safeguarding Policy. Line managers are responsible for the health, safety and welfare of work experience students who under law are regarded as employees.

Employees aged under 18

Swanage Town Council may employ workers aged under 18. The Council will ensure that all employees are aware of the Council's Safeguarding Policy

Grants

All organisations applying for a grant will be required to supply a copy of their safeguarding policy in order for their application to be progressed, if they supply services to children and vulnerable adults.

Council Assets and Facilities

Independent sports clubs and private individuals who regularly use the assets and facilities operated by Swanage Town Council should have appropriate safeguarding policies in place, commensurate with the level of contact they have.

Contractors

Swanage Town Council will take reasonable care that contractors doing work on behalf of the Council are monitored appropriately. Any contractor or sub-contractor engaged by the Council in areas where workers are likely to come into regular contact with children, young people, or vulnerable adults, should have its own equivalent Safeguarding Policy or failing this, must comply with the terms of this policy.

First Aid

The administration of first aid to children, young people and vulnerable adults can present risks. Under ordinary circumstances, a child or young person can be administered with first aid only if their parent or guardian expressly permits this course of action. When administering first aid, wherever possible, employees should ensure that another adult is present, or is aware of the action being taken. Parents/carers should always be informed when first aid is administered. Child welfare is of paramount importance. In certain limited circumstances members, employees, volunteers, and contracted service providers may undertake first aid as a last resort only, notifying parents / carers as soon as possible, to minimise a child's or vulnerable adult's distress.

Photography

Every attempt should be made to ensure inappropriate photographs or footage of children does not occur. Members, employees, volunteers, and contracted service providers should be vigilant at all times. Anyone using cameras or film recorders for or on behalf of the Council should obtain consent from the parents of children being photographed or filmed before the activity commences. When commissioning professional photographers or inviting the press to cover Council services, events and activities the Council's expectations must be made clear in relation to safeguarding by checking the credentials of any photographers, ensuring identification is worn and by not allowing unsupervised access to children or one to one photographic sessions.



Misuse of Procedure

Malicious complaints about a member or an employee(s) and/or serious and/or persistent abuse of these safeguarding policies and procedures will not be tolerated and will be dealt with through Swanage Town Council's disciplinary process.

14. Declaration

Swanage Town Council is fully committed to safeguarding the wellbeing of children, young people and vulnerable adults and promoting their welfare. As a representative of Swanage Town Council as an Elected Members, or working as an employee, volunteer or contracted service provider of Swanage Town Council it is important that you have taken the time to thoroughly read the Safeguarding Policy and Procedures document. By being made aware of the policy it is our intention to ensure that all are proactive in providing a safe and secure environment for the children and vulnerable adults in our community.

I have received, read, and understood the Swanage Town Council Safeguarding Policy and Procedure document. By signing I agree to adhere to the principles of the policy.

Signed: _____

Name (please print): _____

Date: _____