



Wells City Council

SAFEGUARDING POLICY

Document No.32

Purpose	Guidance to both Councillors and Staff in the management of the protection of children and vulnerable adults.
Additional Papers	This document should be read in conjunction with: Document 1 Standing Orders
Monitoring Committee	Finance
Adopted	January 2025
Review Date	January 2027

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1. General Statement of policy

Wells City Council (WCC) believes that children and adults have the right to protection from abuse and should be able to live free from fear of abuse.

WCC is committed to ensuring that disclosures of abuse and safeguarding concerns are taken seriously and acted upon appropriately.

WCC is committed to ensuring that our staff and councillors understand their roles and responsibilities, and are provided with appropriate information and training in respect to safeguarding children and adults at risk.

This policy applies to all Councillors, employees, volunteers and contractors working in partnership with WCC. Under the Children Act 2004, Shepton Mallet Town Council has a duty to co-operate with Somerset County Council in discharging its duties as a Children's Services Authority and to promote the well-being of children and young people. Somerset County Council is also the lead agency for the protection of vulnerable adults.

It is important to understand it is **not** up to WCC to decide if abuse has taken place, but it is the responsibility of all individuals to report any concerns about the safety of a child, young person or vulnerable adult in accordance with the policy even if they do not involve WCC staff or services.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to outline the duty and responsibility of WCC in respect to safeguarding. The key objectives of this policy are to:

- Explain the responsibilities of the safeguarding officer (Town Clerk & RFO/Deputy Clerk), staff, councillors and volunteers
- Enable staff and Councillors who receive disclosures of witness, or suspect abuse to make informed and confident responses.
- Ensure that prompt action is taken to minimise the risk of harm occurring from any further abuse.
- Ensure that information relating to safeguarding is kept securely and only shared on a need to know basis.

3. Scope

Safeguarding is about protecting the safety, independence and well being of people at risk of abuse, and is everybody's responsibility.

The policy relates to all children, young people, adults and refugees who become known to the organisation through the course of our work and who may be at risk of abuse.

Assessing whether children or adults are experiencing abuse is the responsibility of professionals within the local authority and/or the police, WCC's role is therefore **not** to assess whether abuse has taken place, but to safeguard by informing the local authority and/or police if information becomes known to us that could indicate that abuse may have taken place, or that a child or adult may be at risk of abuse.

For the purpose of this policy, a child is defined as **a person under the age of 18** and an adult is defined as **a person aged 18 years or over. A young person is a child aged 13 years or over.**

For the purpose of this policy an adult at risk of abuse is defined as anyone aged 18 and over who:

- Has needs for care and support.
- Is experiencing, or at risk of abuse or neglect.
- Has come to the community as a refugee and may have little or no English language skills.
- Is unable to protect themselves against harm or exploitation. (Somerset Safeguarding Adults Board website, 'protecting adults')

This policy applies to Staff and Councillors regardless of whether they have regular contact with children and vulnerable adults.

For the purposes of this policy a member of staff covers employees including apprentices, casuals, volunteers, work experience placements and trainees.

This policy should also be read in conjunction with other policies including:

- Wells City Council Standing Orders,
- Wells City Council Staff Handbook
- Wells City Council Councillor Code of Conduct
- Wells City Council Social Media Policy

- Wells City Council Lone Working Policy
- Wells City Council Data Protection & Retention Policy

4. Good practice guidelines

Everyone working in direct or indirect contact with young people and vulnerable adults must abide by the guidelines noted below.

It is possible to reduce situations where abuse may occur and below are specific examples of the care which should be taken when working with children or vulnerable adults

Staff and Councillors **must**:

- Treat all children and people with dignity and respect
- Provide an example for good conduct that others can follow
- Challenge unacceptable behaviour e.g. bullying and report allegations / suspicions of abuse.
- Ensure that when possible there is more than one adult present during activities with children and or vulnerable adults, or at least be within sight or hearing of others.
- Respect the right of children and vulnerable adults to personal privacy
- Encourage children and vulnerable adults to feel comfortable enough to point out attitudes or behaviours they do not like
- Remember that someone else might misinterpret certain actions, no matter how well intentioned.
- Be aware that any physical contact with a child or vulnerable adult may be misinterpreted.
- Recognise that special caution is required when discussing sensitive issues with children or vulnerable people.
- Always operate within WCC's Code of Conduct, principles, guidance, policies and procedures.

Staff and Councillors **must not**:

- Have inappropriate or unwarranted physical or verbal contact with children or vulnerable adults
- Be drawn into inappropriate attention seeking behaviour or make suggestive or derogatory remarks or gestures in front of children or vulnerable adults

- Jump to conclusions about others without checking facts
- Either exaggerate or trivialise any abuse issues
- Show favouritism to any individual
- Rely on your good name or that of WCC to protect you
- Believe 'it could never happen to me'
- Take a chance when common sense, policy or practice suggests another more prudent approach

5. Responsibilities:

All staff and councillors have a duty to promote the welfare of children and adults at risk, this includes council staff and councillors. It is everybody's responsibility to recognise signs of, and to report, abuse wherever it is seen, suspected or disclosed. Workers must also respond appropriately to any disclosure and take any immediate action necessary to protect children and adults at risk.

6. Information

All staff will be provided with information to enable them to recognise possible signs of abuse and respond appropriately. This information will form appendices to this safeguarding policy.

It is the responsibility of the Town Clerk / Deputy to ensure this information is up to date. It is the responsibility of all staff and councillors to familiarise themselves with this information.

7. Safeguarding within the context of WCC's work

WCC staff and councillors come into contact with adults across a wide variety of services and at times children. Generally, meetings are not on topics relating to the adult's own personal affairs, they do not, by definition render the service users at particular risk (although these adults may be at risk in other contexts).

The majority of roles at WCC do not fall within the legally defined eligibility criteria for requesting Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks, however this will be requested if a staff member's role changes and it becomes necessary.

WCC employees and Councillors build up long term working relationships with members of community groups that use our services regularly. It is therefore possible that disclosures of abuse could be made to staff or Councillors, or that possible indicators of abuse may be observed.

Equally, staff and councillors themselves may be considered persons at risk and thus, it is everyone's duty to report these matters quickly through due process.

8. Publicity – guidance notes

These guidelines should be followed in commissioning photographs of children and vulnerable adults or if planned photography of children at events or using visual media for publicity purposes.

The guidelines apply to both professional photographers / camera personnel and staff or councillors taking personal or informal photographs for WCC.

- Child and vulnerable adult protection issues and visual media
 - i. For the protection of children and vulnerable adults, it is essential that the event organiser obtains a written validation of consent from the subject(s) and their Parent(s) or guardian(s) before any images are used.
 - ii. The request for consent should include an explanation of what the film or footage will contain and how the images will be used.
 - iii. Where WCC has commissioned a photographer or camera person to attend an event, they will be requested to abide by the following requirements:
 - Only take photographs or footage at the designated events or venue
 - Ensure that they take the audience and purpose into consideration when publishing photographic / film material i.e. Focus on the activity rather than full shots of children or vulnerable adults.

- Appropriate editorial content
 - i. All photographs used in publicity materials must fulfil the following set of criteria to ensure the publication is produced to the highest standard, the content is appropriate and fall

inline with equity issues. This includes choosing images which show all sections of society including representatives from black and ethnic communities, people with disabilities etc.

- ii. Photographs must not be edited in any way from the originals, for example disproportionately resizing, changing colours, distorting the images or air brushing
 - iii. Visual contents or captions cannot be used as means of identifying children or vulnerable adults. This includes names, addresses or any other unnecessary information which could be used to trace the child or vulnerable adult.
- Copyright, credit and labelling
 - i. Any professional companies or organisations that provide photographs must be appropriately credited before using them. Images supplied should be cleared for copyright and with permissions to print or re-produce.
 - ii. All images, photographs and footage should be stored securely, with access to transparencies, film or hard prints restricted to appropriate staff, and once centrally stored securely, should be deleted from other devices such as phones and laptops. These arrangements will help to protect potentially any inappropriate use of the collection.

9. Confidentiality and information sharing

- a. WCC Staff and Councillors have a responsibility to share information about children and adults at risk if that information may indicate that the child or adult at risk is experiencing abuse.
- b. If a disclosure is made to a member of staff, or a member of staff has concerns about the welfare of a child or adult at risk, the worker should follow the WCC procedure in the event of a disclosure or safeguarding concern. This includes ensuring that the person making a disclosure is aware that the worker may need to share information and cannot promise to keep it a secret.
- c. Information should only be shared on a strictly need to know basis.

10. Record keeping

- a. In the event of a disclosure or safeguarding concern, a detailed written record must be made by the person who receives the information, as soon as possible, and always on the same day.

- b. These records must be stored securely by the Town Clerk, in a locked drawer or password protected file, indefinitely.
- c. WCC Staff and Councillors may not access these records except on a need to know basis.

11. Reviewing this policy

This policy will be reviewed by WCC annually or sooner if required whenever there is a change in the related legislation, or an emergency risk is identified.

This will include on-going review of guidance, both nationally and locally. To ensure the organisation meets its safeguarding responsibilities and that there are appropriate procedures and protocols in place.

Appendix 1: Procedure in the event of a disclosure or safe guarding concern

It is important that children, young people and adults at risk are protected from abuse. All complaints, allegations or suspicions must be taken seriously, including those received anonymously. This procedure must be followed whenever a disclosure of abuse is made or there is a suspicion of abuse.

1. In the event of a disclosure:
 - a. Reassure the person concerned
 - b. Listen to what they are saying
 - c. Record what you have been told / witnessed as soon as possible
 - d. Remain calm and do not show shock or disbelief
 - e. Tell them that the information will be treated seriously
 - f. Do not start to investigate or ask detailed or probing questions. Only ask questions to clarify the basic facts of what they are already telling you.
 - g. Do not promise to keep it a secret.
 - h. Make sure the individual is safe
2. If the person is in immediate danger, the police or ambulance must be called straight away on 999. Ensure prompt action is taken to minimise the risk of harm from any further abuse, maltreatment or neglect. This is particularly important if:
 - a. The person remains in or is about to return to the place where the alleged abuse occurred;

- b. The alleged abuser is likely to have access to the person or others who might be at risk.
3. Record the information
 - a. Make a full record of the disclosure, allegation or incident as soon as possible, within one working day. The details to be collected are referenced in Appendix 2.
4. Support the individual
 - a. Keep in contact with the person you have the concern about. Ask for their permission before sharing any information, but make sure they know you may have to share it without permission. Keep them informed about who the information has been shared with.

Appendix 2: Recording concerns and disclosures.

It is important to ascertain and establish the basic facts, based on evidence of what is seen, heard or smelled and make basic notes, clearly distinguishing fact from opinion. A full record must be recorded as soon as possible and always on the same day.

Print, sign date and time the record. A copy should be stored in a secure place in line with the safeguarding policy.

Be aware that the report may be required later as part of legal action or disciplinary procedure and that you may need to appear at a hearing or court (although this is unlikely).

Include:

- a. Exactly what the person has told you, or exactly what you have witnessed. Do not include opinions or assumptions.
- b. A description of any injuries observed and their exact location. Give as much detail as possible.
- c. Describe any immediate actions you have taken to reduce risk.
- d. Where and when disclosure was made – date, time and place

Appendix 3. Dealing with allegations made against a member of staff or a Councillor.

Anyone wishing to make an allegation about a staff member or Councillor, either in relation to any suspicion, allegation or incident of abuse or non-

adherence to these procedures should report it to the Town Clerk in the first instance. Concerns about the Town Clerk should be reported to the Chair of the Council and of the Staffing Committee.

Allegations will be dealt with according to The Wells City Council Safeguarding Policy and Wells City Council's disciplinary procedures found in the Staff Handbook and the Councillor's Code of Conduct.

Please sign to confirm you have read this document and understand thoroughly your own responsibilities towards safeguarding children and vulnerable adults:

PRINT:	
SIGN:	
DATE:	