

**SEVENOAKS TOWN COUNCIL**  
**SAFEGUARDING AND CHILD PROTECTION POLICY & CODE OF PRACTICE**

**1. Introduction**

This policy applies to all staff, Councillors and volunteers working for Sevenoaks Town Council, and organisations operating on its behalf. It is designed to safeguard children and young people (up to the age of 18 years) from potential abuse as well as protect Sevenoaks Town Council, its staff, Councillors, volunteers and suppliers from potential false allegations of abuse. Sevenoaks Town Council is committed to taking all reasonable precautions to safeguard the welfare of children that use its services and promotes a safeguarding culture and environment.

Children and young people have the right to have fun and be safe in the services provided for them and the activities they choose to participate in.

Sevenoaks Town Council is not an investigative or intervention agency for child protection. Sevenoaks Town Council staff have a responsibility to refer suspected cases of abuse to

Adult:               03000 41 61 61  
Child:               03000 41 11 11  
Out of Hours:      03000 41 91 91

**2. Aims**

Sevenoaks Town Council aims to:

- i) Raise awareness of the duty of care responsibilities relating to children and young people throughout Sevenoaks Town Council;
- ii) Actively encourage good practice amongst staff, Councillors and volunteers throughout Sevenoaks Town Council;
- iii) Create a safe and healthy environment within all our services, avoiding situations where abuse or allegations of abuse may occur;
- iv) Respect and promote the rights, wishes and feelings of children and young people;
- v) Listen to children and young people, minimising dangers and working closely with other agencies;
- vi) Recruit, train, supervise and support staff, elected town councillors and volunteers who work with and come into contact with children and young people to adopt best practice to safeguard and protect children and young people from abuse, and themselves against false allegations. Staff, Councillors and volunteers who work with children and young people will be subject to the appropriate level Criminal Records Bureau check and relevant mandatory training;
- vii) Respond to any allegations appropriately and implement the appropriate disciplinary and appeals procedures;
- viii) Require staff, trustees, volunteers and suppliers to adopt and abide by Sevenoaks Town Council's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and Code of Practice.

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**3. Objectives**

Objectives to achieve these aims:

- i) To provide appropriate information, guidance and where appropriate training for staff, Councillors and volunteers, to enable them to recognise the potential signs and indicators of abuse and to improve good practice;
- ii) To aid staff, Councillors and volunteers to respond sensitively and seriously to a child or young person who discloses information about abuse, and be confident and able to take appropriate action swiftly, regardless of whom the allegation is about, e.g. carer/staff member;
- iii) To maintain a level of good working practice at all times and therefore reducing the risk to children and young people during and within Sevenoaks Town Council services;
- iv) To develop and implement effective procedures for recording and responding to incidents and accidents;
- v) To develop and implement effective procedures for recording and responding to complaints of alleged or suspected child abuse.

**4. Code of Behaviour and Good Practice Guidelines**

As part of the overall Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, Sevenoaks Town Council will carry out Disclosure and Barring Service check (DBS) checks on those whose role within Sevenoaks Town Council engage with children. In line with best practice, these checks will be repeated every three years for the appropriate people. Whilst the information provided by the DBS is important in terms of staff employment, Sevenoaks Town Council recognises that this is only part of the overall policy to create and sustain a safe environment for children that use our services and engage with staff, Councillors and volunteers.

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The following guidelines apply to those working with children or young people in activities organised by or on behalf of Sevenoaks Town Council.

**YOU MUST**

**YOU MUST NOT**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• treat everyone with respect</li> <li>• provide an example of good conduct you wish others to follow</li> <li>• plan activities which involve more than one other person being present, or at least which are within sight or hearing of others</li> <li>• respect a person’s right to personal privacy</li> <li>• provide access for young people to talk to others about any concerns they may have</li> <li>• encourage young people to feel comfortable and caring enough to point out attitudes or behaviour they do not like</li> <li>• avoid physical horseplay such as wrestling or tickling</li> <li>• remember that someone else might misinterpret your actions, no matter how well intentioned</li> <li>• challenge unacceptable behaviour and report all allegations/suspensions of abuse</li> <li>• be identifiable and wear a name badge at all times</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• have any inappropriate verbal or physical contact with children, young people or make suggestive remarks or gestures</li> <li>• permit abusive youth peer activities (e.g. initiation ceremonies, ridiculing, bullying)</li> <li>• play physical contact games with young people</li> <li>• jump to conclusions about others without checking facts</li> <li>• ask young people to do things that are potentially dangerous, illegal or otherwise unreasonable</li> <li>• exaggerate or trivialise abuse issues</li> <li>• show favouritism to any individual</li> <li>• rely on your good name to protect you</li> <li>• believe ‘it could never happen to me’</li> <li>• take chances when common sense, policy or practice suggests a more prudent approach             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• allow allegations made by a child to go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon</li> </ul> </li> <li>• be alone in a car with a child</li> </ul>
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## **5. Complaints Procedure**

It is important that Sevenoaks Town Council maintains an open culture where employees, Councillors, volunteers, children and parents/carers feel able to express concerns both about the child protection issues and issues of poor practice. Sevenoaks Town Council Complaint's Policy is available on its website [www.sevenoakstown.gov.uk](http://www.sevenoakstown.gov.uk)

## **6. Recruitment and Training**

All people required to carry out duties which involve working with children and those whose roles mean they come directly in contact with children shall undergo appropriate checks through the DBS.

Sevenoaks Town Council will provide all staff with access to this policy and will encourage good practice and identify any training needs required.

Training as a minimum will include Safeguarding Training including

- Child sexual exploitation
- Missing persons
- Child trafficking
- Radicalisation
- Gang exploitation
- Female Genital Mutilation

## **7. Responding to Allegations or Suspicions**

**If you suspect a child or young person is being abused; emotionally, physically or sexually:**

- i) Tell your line manager.
- ii) Record any facts which support your suspicions.
- iii) Agree with other adults involved what action, if any, to be taken.

**If a person discloses to you abuse by someone else:**

- iv) Allow the person to speak without interruption, accepting what is said, but do not investigate.
- v) Alleviate feelings of guilt and isolation, while passing no judgement.
- vi) Advise that you will try to offer support, but you must pass the information on.
- vii) Same steps as 1-2 as in suspecting a person is being abused.

**If you receive an allegation about any other adult or about yourself:**

- viii) Immediately tell your line manager.
- ix) Record the facts as you know them.
- x) Try to ensure no one is placed in a position which could cause further compromise.

**You must refer; you must not investigate.**

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**Procedure following allegation or suspicion of child abuse**

xi) All allegations/reasonable suspicions are to be referred immediately and directly to the Town Clerk.

xii) No investigation or questioning is to be undertaken. If the Town Clerk is implicated, refer directly to the Chairman of the Personnel Committee. If a town councillor is implicated refer directly to the Town Clerk. All allegations/reasonable suspicions are to be referred.

xiii) Action to be taken by the person receiving the referral as soon as possible and, in any event, within 24 hours.

a) Write down notes, dates, times, facts, observations, verbatim speech if possible, as soon as possible/as soon as practicable after the incident or disclosure has occurred.

b) Ensure correct details available: Young person's name and address, and name and address of parent/guardian.

c) Immediately contact the following telephone numbers

Adult: 03000 41 61 61

Child: 03000 41 11 11

Out of Hours: 03000 41 91 91

Ask for duty officer and indicate that you wish to discuss the matter of a child/vulnerable person protection. Ask for the name of the person with whom you are speaking. Discuss. (No information to be filtered or withheld.) Await advice. Ask if there is anyone who should be informed.

d) If the allegation involves a Town Councillor, inform the Sevenoaks District Council's Monitoring Officer.

e) Prepare a confidential file. Record all notes, all conversations, advice from Social Services. Every effort should be made to ensure confidentiality is maintained for all concerned.

f) Information should be stored in a secure place with limited access to designated people, in line with the data protection laws.

g) Follow advice from Social Services – take no other action unless advised to by Social Services.

If in doubt about the advice you have received at any stage refer to Social Services for guidance.

Incidents of serious abuse are likely to be rare, but it is important that all involved in Sevenoaks Town Council conduct themselves at all times in ways which will not lead to their actions being misconstrued or misinterpreted.

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**Categories of Abuse**

**Physical Abuse**

Physical Abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to the child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces illness in a child.

**Emotional Abuse**

Emotional Abuse is the persistent emotional ill-treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving children opportunities to express their views deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. It may include interactions beyond the child's developmental capability, overprotection, limitation of exploration or learning, and/or prevention of normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying, causing children to frequently feel frightened or in danger, or exploitation and corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill-treatment of a child, although it may occur alone.

**Sexual Abuse**

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

**Neglect**

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to:

- provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment);
- protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger;
- ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-givers);
- ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.

It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

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**Other Safeguarding Concerns**

**Radicalisation**

From 1 July 2015, Prevent is a formal duty for under Section 26 of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2014, to have “*due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism*”. In light of daily reported threats we must take responsibility in the shared challenge of tackling radicalisation and extremism by supporting Prevent. It is essential that staff or volunteers are able to identify children who may be vulnerable to radicalisation and know what to do when they are identified. Protecting children from the risk of radicalisation should be seen as part of safeguarding s and is similar in nature to protecting children from other harms e.g. drugs, gangs, neglect and sexual exploitation, whether these come from within their family or are the product of outside influences.

All staff and volunteers must to complete mandatory online training and familiarise themselves with the Channel – the multi-agency approach to protect people from being drawn into terrorist related activity – referral process.

If staff or volunteers have a concern about potential radicalisation, normal safeguarding procedures should be followed. Staff can also contact Kent police on 101 to seek advice or e-mail the Kent Channel coordinator directly at [channel@kent.pnn.police.uk](mailto:channel@kent.pnn.police.uk)

**Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)**

CSE involves exploitative situations, contexts and relationships where young people receive something e.g. food, accommodation, drugs, alcohol, gifts, money or in some cases simply affection as a result of engaging in sexual activities. What marks out exploitation is an imbalance of power in the relationship.

CSE involves varying degrees of coercion, intimidation or enticement, including unwanted pressure from peers to have sex, sexual bullying, including cyberbullying and grooming.

Advice regarding CSE can be accessed via the link below. The CSE toolkit helps identify levels of risk if there are concerns around CSE:

<http://www.kscb.org.uk/guidance/sexual-abuse-and-exploitation>

Free online training about many safeguarding issues including CSE and FGM are available from KSCB:

<http://www.kscb.org.uk/e-learning/e-learning-courses>

If staff or volunteers have a concern about potential CSE, normal safeguarding procedures should be followed.

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**Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)**

FGM comprises all procedures involving partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs. It is often carried out on girls aged between 5-8 years. FGM is illegal in the UK and a form of child abuse with long-lasting harmful consequences. Professionals in all agencies, and individuals and groups in relevant communities, need to be alert to the possibility of a girl being at risk of FGM, or already having suffered FGM. Where an Early Help Worker is concerned that an act of FGM appears to have been carried/may be carried out on a girl who is aged under 18, there is a statutory duty upon that individual to report it to the police.

**What does this mean for you?**

If you suspect FGM has been carried out you have a duty to report it to the police. This became a mandatory duty on 15 October 2015 so to not report would be an offence.

**What are the indicators?**

There are a range of indicators and risk factors, full details can be found via the links below. In general there are risk factors related to culture, country of origin, previous practice in the family (mother, sisters etc.). There are then risk factors it may be about to happen e.g. arrangements for extended holidays to stay or visit relatives in a high risk area (e.g. east Africa, Somalia, Eritrea, Sudan but also Egypt and parts of West Africa and the Middle East). Girls as young as 5 years old from families originating in risk areas may talk about a special ceremony or party involving girls of a similar age. Refusal to allow the child to attend PSHE/SEX education lessons might also be relevant. Indicators that FGM has recently taken place can be physical discomfort, urinary problems etc. Indicators that this has happened in the past include recurrent infection or psychological issues. Older girls may not realise that the problems relate to the FGM that they experienced when they were young.

Further information is available via the NSPCC helpline on 0800 0283550

The full national guidance is available at this link

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/female-genital-mutilation-guidelines>

A resource pack is available

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/female-genital-mutilation-resource-pack/female-genital-mutilation-resource-pack>

If staff or volunteers have a concern about potential FGM, or any other cultural traditions, rituals or beliefs such as forced marriage, honor based violence, spirit possession or witchcraft abuse, then normal safeguarding procedures should be followed.

**Linda Larter MBE**  
**Town Clerk**  
**April 2016**

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**Checklist for handling and recording allegations or complaints of abuse made against a member of staff/volunteer regarding a child/children in their care**

<b>Name and position of staff who is the subject of allegations/complaint:</b>	
<b>Is the complaint: Written or verbal?</b>	
<b>(Delete as necessary)</b>	
<b>Complaint made by:</b>	<b>Relationship to child:</b>
<b>Name of child:</b>	<b>Age and date of birth of child:</b>
<b>Parent's/carer's name(s) and address:</b>	
<b>Date of alleged incident/s:</b>	
<b>Did the child attend/seen on this/these date/s:</b>	
<b>Nature of complaint (if received in writing see guidance):</b>	
<b>Other relevant information (continue on a separate sheet if needed):</b>	
<b>Social Services (LADO) contacted at (date and time):</b>	
<b>Ofsted contacted at (date and time):</b>	
<b>Further actions advised by Specialist Children's Services and Ofsted:</b>	
<b>Your name:</b>	<b>Your position:</b>
<b>Signature:</b>	<b>Date &amp; time of completing:</b>

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**To: Town Clerk**

**From:** .....

**Dated:** .....

I confirm that I have received and understand that it is my duty to abide by Sevenoaks Town Council's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy & Code of Practice.

**Signed:** .....