



**NORTHAMPTON
BOROUGH COUNCIL**

Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy

Important:

Remember it is not up to you to decide if abuse has taken place,
BUT it is your legal duty to report safeguarding concerns you may have
about the safety of a Child or Adult even if they don't involve Northampton
Borough Council staff or service

**Safeguarding is everyone's business
Doing nothing is not an option**

Effective Date of Policy	2014
Review Date	2017
Policy Owner	Head of Housing and Wellbeing

NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL SAFEGUARDING POLICY FOR CHILDREN AND VULNERABLE ADULTS

Introduction

Northampton Borough Council believes that it is always unacceptable for a child or vulnerable person to experience abuse or harm of any kind and recognises its responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children, young people and vulnerable adults by a commitment to a practice that protects them.

Principles

- The welfare of children and vulnerable adults is paramount;
- All children and vulnerable adults (whatever their background and culture, maternity or pregnancy status, age, disability, gender, racial origin, religious belief, sexual orientation and/or gender identity) have the right to participate in society in an environment which is safe and free from violence, fear, abuse, bullying and discrimination ;
- All children and vulnerable adults have the right to be protected from harm, exploitation and abuse and to be provided with safe environments to live and play;
- Working in partnership with children, their parents, carers and vulnerable adults and other agencies is essential in promoting children and vulnerable people's welfare;
- Northampton Borough Council has a duty to promote the well-being of children and young people and to cooperate with the County Council in delivering its safeguarding duties;
- Northampton Borough Council is responsible for establishing appropriate policies and procedures to ensure that the Council's activities promote the safety and wellbeing of children and vulnerable adults, e.g. safe recruitment policies, safe working practice.

Purpose

This policy demonstrates how the Council will meet its legal obligations and reassure members of the public, service users, councillors, employees and people working on behalf of the Council:

- What they can expect Northampton Borough Council to do to protect and safeguard children and vulnerable adults;
- To provide staff with guidance on the procedures that they should adopt in the event that they suspect a child or vulnerable adult may be experiencing, or be at risk of harm;
- To voice any concerns they may have through an established procedure;
- That there is an effective recording and monitoring system in place;
- That councillors, employees, volunteers and contracted service providers receive the appropriate training.

Policy Statement

Northampton Borough Council 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.

Northampton Borough Council will ensure through its Recruitment and Selection policy that suitable people are selected for working with children and vulnerable adults.

Northampton Borough Council will take any concern made by a councillor, employee, volunteer or contracted service provider, child or vulnerable adult seriously and sensitively.

Referrals made by a councillor, employee, volunteer or contracted service provider cannot be anonymous and should be made in the knowledge that, during the course of enquiries, the agency who made that referral will be made clear as individuals may be required as prosecution witnesses.

Northampton Borough Council will not tolerate harassment of any councillor, employee, volunteer, contractor, child or vulnerable adult who raise concerns of abuse.

Northampton Borough Council will work in cooperation with Northamptonshire County Council; it will comply with the Northamptonshire Safeguarding Adults and Local Safeguarding Children Board Inter-Agency procedures and will respond positively to any recommendations regarding the improvement of its safeguarding policies and procedures.

Aims

- Respecting the rights, wishes, feelings and privacy of children and vulnerable adults by listening to them and minimising risks that may affect them;
- Preventing abuse and harm by good practice, creating a safe and healthy environment to avoid situations where abuse or allegations of abuse occur;
- Ensuring that councillors, employees and volunteers understand Northampton Borough Council's relevant Codes of Conduct and Safeguarding Policy;
- Raising awareness among councillors and employees of the safeguarding duty the Council has in relation to the Children and the Safeguarding Vulnerable Group Acts, where the County Council has lead responsibility;
- Ensuring that contracted, commissioned and grant funded services have safeguarding policies and procedures commensurate with the level of involvement they have with children and vulnerable adults;
- Responding to any allegations appropriately and implementing the appropriate disciplinary and appeals procedures;
- To ensure clear procedures are in place, promoted and implemented in line with Northamptonshire Inter-Agency procedures for safeguarding children and vulnerable adults;
- To share information about concerns with agencies that need to know, and involving parents, children and vulnerable adults appropriately.

To achieve these aims, we will

- Ensure that training appropriate to the level of involvement with children and vulnerable adults is available for councillors, employees, volunteers and contracted service providers;
- Respond appropriately to concerns reported;
- Develop and implement effective procedures for recording and responding to incidents and accidents;
- Develop and implement effective procedures for recording and reporting to the Northamptonshire County Council, any allegations or suspicions of harm or abuse;
- Promote the welfare and wellbeing of children and vulnerable adults during and within Council services, including in the planning of services;
- Maintain a good level of safe working practice at all times to minimise risk to children and vulnerable adults that come into contact with councillors, employees, volunteers and contracted service providers.

Scope of this Policy

This Safeguarding Policy is for councillors, employees, volunteers or contracted service providers that come into contact with or deliver Council services to children or vulnerable adults. Safe Working Culture and Practice should be used on all occasions where councillors, employees, volunteers or contractors come into contact with children or vulnerable adults.

Safe recruiting is of particular importance in the following instances:

- School talks and events
- Work experience
- Community engagement
- Housing visits
- Visits to homes/private premises for inspection/enforcement purposes
- Parks and Grounds Maintenance
- Sports and leisure activities
- Wardens

Contractors-Commissioning-Grant Funded Organisations

Any contractor, sub-contractor, or other organisations commissioned or funded by or on behalf of the Council engaged in areas where workers are likely to come into regular contact with children or vulnerable adults, should have its own child protection and vulnerable adult policies. Contractors, sub-contractors and other organisations commissioned or funded by or on behalf of the Council must undertake and monitor the validity and the level of the DBS (ex CRB/ISA) checks for their relevant workers.

Some definitions

When the term 'children' is used in this document, this also includes 'young people' and 'young persons'. The phrase 'children and vulnerable adults' (or 'children, young people and vulnerable adults') refer to:

- a) Anyone under the age of 18 years
- b) A person aged 18 years or over and who may be unable to take care of themselves, or protect themselves from harm or from being exploited.

This may be because they:

- have a mental health problem or illness, including dementia
- have a disability
- have a sensory impairment
- are old and frail and or experiencing a temporary illness
- people with a substance misuse or an alcohol problem

When the term 'parents' is used, we mean it in the broadest sense to include parents, carer(s) and guardians.

The term 'Contractors' also refers to sub-contractors and contracted service providers.

Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Safer recruitment decisions

Northampton Borough Council is not a Children's Services Authority and therefore scope for working directly with children or with vulnerable adults is limited. Disclosure should only be sought where individuals have substantial or regular or unsupervised contact with children or vulnerable adults as part of their duties or responsibilities for or on behalf of the Council. DBS checks only guarantee that the person concerned doesn't have a relevant criminal conviction up to the date that the certificate is issued.

Risk assessments will be undertaken on job descriptions within the Council to identify which jobs are likely to involve regular and/or substantial unsupervised contact with children and vulnerable adults. DBS checks will be undertaken appropriate to the right level of contact. The risk assessment for an adult working with vulnerable adults must also taking into account other forms of potential abuse which do not necessary apply when working with children (i.e. financial abuse).

When posts are advertised, applicants are notified if they are subject to a DBS check. Checks are usually undertaken at 2 year intervals.

For further information about the Disclosure and Barring Service DBS, please check their external [website](#).

Recognising potential abuse

In this policy, abuse covers physical, emotional, sexual and mental abuse including bullying. Abuse can also be financial for vulnerable adults. Child abuse and the abuse of vulnerable adults are difficult issues and present challenges to all who provide services for these groups. Even for those experienced in working with child abuse, it is not always easy to recognise a situation where abuse may occur or has already taken place. People working for Northampton Borough Council (whether in a paid or voluntary capacity) are not experts at such recognition. However, they do have a responsibility to act if they have any concerns about the behaviour of someone (an adult or another child) towards a child or vulnerable adult. Northampton Borough Council will therefore encourage and expect councillors and staff (or anybody working on behalf of the Council, either paid or unpaid) to discuss any concerns they may have about the welfare of a person immediately with their reporting or line manager, or a Designated Safeguarding Officer.

It is not the responsibility of council members, employees, volunteers or contracted service provider to determine if abuse is taking place. It is however their responsibility to follow the appropriate procedure within this policy should an alert be received or concern raised that abuse may be taking place. Following the correct procedure will ensure the correct people / agencies are informed and the appropriate action taken.

Data Protection, Record Retention and Storage of Information and by Northampton Borough Council

Copies of safeguarding referrals and any other relevant documents or records (e.g. telephone calls, CCTV information, etc.) relating to the incident will be securely stored. This information will be retained in accordance with data protection periods and retention guidelines. The Council's [Data Protection Policy](#) is available on the internet.

All staff and volunteers must also comply with the Council's internet and email policies.

Information relating to an employee will be retained in their personal file. Access to Safeguarding incident records will be by Designated Safeguarding Officers and Senior Managers only.

Confidentiality and Information sharing

Confidentiality is a key issue in Safeguarding. Safeguarding children and vulnerable adults is more important than the privacy of another person. Sometimes sharing information is necessary to establish the level of risk to a child or vulnerable adult. Ask yourself; is it safe for me NOT to share the information? Decisions on who needs to be informed are set out in the [Local Safeguarding Children Board Northamptonshire](#) and [Northamptonshire Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Board](#) Information Sharing Protocols. It is important that information is shared appropriately and sensitively with relevant agencies. This will be the decision of the appropriate Designated Safeguarding Officer. Always record what you have shared, with whom and why. If an allegation is made towards another member of staff, full support will be given in line with the Council's [Whistle Blowing Policy](#).

Involving of children, families and carers

There is always a commitment to work in partnership with parents or carers where there are concerns about their children. Therefore, in most situations, it would be appropriate to talk to parents or carers to help clarify any initial concerns.

Decisions should be made with the agreement of children and their parents whenever possible, unless to do so would place the child at risk of significant harm, and this would be in their best interest. Failure to obtain parental agreement should not be seen as a factor to delay making a referral.

When it is not appropriate to share concerns with parents

Information obtained about individuals should usually be shared with them unless sharing the information would be likely to result in serious harm to the individual, a child or another person, or the information relates to a third party who expressly indicated the information should not be disclosed. (e.g. where a parent/carer may be responsible or accused for the abuse or not able to respond to the situation appropriately).

Where information is obtained and recorded which should not be shared with the individual concerned for one of the above reasons, it should be noted on the record and the reasons recorded.

Complaints

All complaints relating to safeguarding issues will be dealt with in line with the Northampton Borough Council [Customer Feedback Procedure](#) and safeguarding processes may run in parallel.

Implementation and Monitoring

Roles and Responsibilities

The Head of Housing and Wellbeing is the Council's lead officer in relation to the Vulnerability Agenda and is a member of the LSCBN.

Designated Safeguarding Officers are responsible for:

- to attend relevant training for designated officers and other relevant training
- to act as a source of advice on all safeguarding matters
- to be familiar with the Safeguarding procedures of Northampton Borough Council to ensure that systems are in place for effective record keeping
- to ensure there are effective internal procedures to handle concerns
- to be the link person with the individual or organisation that have raised a concern
- to decide as to whether to involve referral agencies (e.g. Children and Young People Services, Protection of Vulnerable Adults) including Common Framework Assessments
- to help people making referrals complete any forms, as appropriate
- to be the link person with relevant local agencies and consult with them on concerns that have been raised
- to consider the need for support for those involved disclosures when cases of poor practice or abuse arise
- to report information to the relevant Sports National Governing Body if the allegations concern a volunteer or coach in a specific sport
- to deal with enquires / information requests from other agencies in relation to safeguarding concerns
- ensure that records are kept and that they are safe and secure at all times
- ensure that the Policy, Procedures and Action Plan are reviewed on an annual basis to ensure compliance with Safeguarding legislation.
- Provide regular progress reports .

All Heads of Service must ensure that their staff are subject to appropriate Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA) and Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks and that their staff comply with the Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy and Procedures

All Line and Contract Managers are responsible for ensuring that staff they are responsible for receive the training they need, commensurate with their responsibilities. Guidance on which members of staff should receive training and at what level is available from Human Resources and Organisation Development.

All members of staff, volunteers are responsible for carrying out their duties in a way that safeguards and promotes the welfare of children and vulnerable adults. They must also act in a way that protects them from wrongful allegations of abuse as far as possible, in line with this policy. They must bring matters of concern about safety and welfare of children and vulnerable adults to the attention of an appropriate Designated Safeguarding Officer.

Contractors, sub-contractors or other organisations funded by or on behalf of the Council are responsible for applying to appropriate DBS checks and that their staff comply with their appropriate Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy and Procedures. They are also responsible for informing relevant Council managers of any concerns they encounter and refer in relation to safeguarding issues.

Reporting and Monitoring

Understanding and compliance with procedures will be monitored through a range of mechanisms including: audits, one to ones, annual appraisals, employee feedback, ad-hoc checks and mystery shopping.

An annual report, covering safeguarding concerns, activity, feedback from any serious case reviews and progress against action plan, will be provided to Management Board. The report will be published on the Council's Intranet.

Communication

In order for this policy to be successfully implemented, it is essential that it be effectively communicated to all staff, councillors, volunteers, children, parents/carers and anybody else affected.

It is the responsibility of managers to ensure that all Council employees are familiar with the policy and procedures and the responsibility for all staff to ensure that the policy is advocated and promoted to partner organisations, parents and children and vulnerable adults.

Communication to staff directly employed / deployed – this will take place through initial induction to the employing / deploying organisation and the training identified with line manager or other relevant officer.

Communication to Partner organisations – All staff should advocate the principles of this policy and encourage other organisations to adopt this policy or use the county safeguarding framework to check or develop their own.

Communication with contractors, sub-contractors, or other organisations commissioned or funded by or on behalf of the Council engaged in areas where workers are likely to come into regular contact with children and/or vulnerable adults-Adherence to current legislation and to the county's Safeguarding framework should be included within Service Level Agreements or as a condition of grant aid or partnership funding.

Misuse of the procedure

Malicious complaints and/or serious and/or persistent abuse of these safeguarding policies and procedures will not be tolerated and will be dealt with through Northampton Borough Council's disciplinary process.

Equality and Inclusivity

An equality impact assessment has been undertaken and the findings have been used to inform and develop this policy. Children and vulnerable adults, no matter what their circumstances or personal characteristics, have the right to be protected from harm and abuse. Whilst the policy has been designed to support children and vulnerable adults, potential barriers in relation to reporting were identified and mitigation and/or actions put in place to simplify the process and to make it more accessible.

Policy Review

This Safeguarding Policy will be reviewed every three years or in the event of changes in legislation, or to take into account changes in working practices which may result from incidents or allegations occurring.

Last update August 2014