



## **Safeguarding of Vulnerable Adults Policy & Procedure**

### **Safeguarding Adults Policy Statement**

This policy will enable Sevenoaks Town Council to demonstrate its commitment to keeping safe the vulnerable adults who use its services.

Sevenoaks Town Council acknowledges that it has a duty to act appropriately to any allegations, reports or suspicions of abuse.

It is important to have the policy and procedures in place so that staff, volunteers, service users and carers and Councillors can work to prevent abuse and know what to do in the event of abuse.

### **The Policy Statement and Procedures have been produced in order to enable the Sevenoaks Town Council to**

- Promote good practice and work in a way that can prevent harm, abuse and coercion occurring.
- To ensure that any allegations of abuse or suspicions are dealt with appropriately and the person experiencing the abuse is supported.
- To stop abuse occurring.

### **The Policy and Procedures relate to the safeguarding of vulnerable adults. Vulnerable adults are defined as**

- People aged 18 or over
- Who are receiving or may need community care services because of learning, physical or mental disability, age or illness.
- Who are or may be unable to take care of themselves, or unable to protect themselves against significant harm or exploitation.

### **In order to implement the Policy Sevenoaks Town Council will work**

- To promote the freedom and dignity of the person who has or is experiencing abuse.

## **Adopted at Finance & Delivery Committee on 9<sup>th</sup> June 2025**

- To promote the rights of all people to live free from abuse and coercion.
- To ensure the safety and well being of people who do not have the capacity to decide how they want to respond to abuse they are experiencing.
- To manage services in a way which promotes safety and prevents abuse.
- Recruit staff and volunteers safely, ensuring all necessary checks are made.
- Provide effective management for staff and volunteers through supervision, support and training.

### **Sevenoaks Town Council will**

- Ensure that all senior management, staff and volunteers are familiar with this policy and procedures.
- Will work with other agencies where necessary in line with this policy.
- Will act confidentially and will usually gain permission from service users before sharing information about them with another agency.
- Will pass information to an adult social services department where necessary.
- Will inform service users that, where a person is in danger, or a crime has been committed then a decision may be taken to pass information to another agency without the service users permission.
- Will endeavour to keep up to date with national developments relating to preventing abuse and for the welfare of adults.
- Will ensure that the Safeguarding Officer (s) understands their responsibility to refer incidents of adult abuse to the relevant statutory agencies e.g. police or adult social services.

**The Designated Named Person for Safeguarding Adults in Sevenoaks Town Council is:**

### **1. Introduction**

Sevenoaks Town Council provides a range of services which may be used by vulnerable adults. This policy has been designed to ensure the welfare and protection of any adult who accesses services provided by Sevenoaks Town Council. The procedures recognise that adult abuse can be a difficult subject for workers and volunteers to deal with. It is believed that the protection of vulnerable adults from harm and abuse is everybody's responsibility, and the aim of these procedures is to ensure that staff, councillors and volunteers act appropriately in response to any concern about adult abuse.

### **2. Preventing Abuse**

Sevenoaks Town Council is committed to putting in place safeguards and measures to reduce the likelihood of abuse taking place within its services it offers and that all those involved with Sevenoaks Town Council will be treated with respect.

Therefore, this policy also needs to be considered in conjunction with the following:

- Sevenoaks Town Council Employee Handbook
- Sevenoaks Town Council Volunteer Policy
- Sevenoaks Town Council Equality Policy
- Sevenoaks Town Council Whistle blowing Policy
- Sevenoaks Town Council's Data Protection Policies

Sevenoaks Town Council is committed to safer recruitment policies and practices for paid staff and volunteers. This will include Disclosure and Barring Service checks for staff and volunteers for appropriate roles. Also ensuring references are taken up and adequate training on Safeguarding Adults is provided for staff and volunteers.

Sevenoaks Town Council will work within the current legal framework for reporting staff or volunteers that are abusers.

Service users will be encouraged to become involved with the running of the town council facilities. This policy will be placed on Sevenoaks Town Council website for all users of the town council's facilities to view.

### **3. Recognising the signs and symptoms of abuse**

"Abuse is a violation of an individual's human and civil rights by any other person or persons" (No Secrets: Department of Health, 2000)

Abuse includes:

- Physical abuse including hitting, slapping, punching, burning, misuse of medication, inappropriate restraint.

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- Sexual abuse including rape, indecent assault, inappropriate touching and exposure to pornographic material.
- Psychological or emotional abuse including belittling, name calling, threats of harm, intimidation, isolation.
- Financial or material abuse including stealing, selling assets, fraud, misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits.
- Neglect and acts of omission including withholding the necessities of life such as medication, food or warmth, ignoring medical or physical care needs.
- Discriminatory abuse including racist, sexist, that based on a person's disability and other forms of harassment, slurs or similar treatment.
- Institutional or organisational abuse including regimented routines and cultures, unsafe practices, lack of person-centred care or treatment.
- Lack of self-care to an extent that it threatens personal health and safety, such as not taking prescribed medication or not eating properly. Neglecting to care for one's personal hygiene, or surroundings, inability or unwillingness to manage one's personal affairs.

Abuse may be carried out deliberately or unknowingly. Abuse may be a single act or repeated acts.

People who behave abusively come from all backgrounds and walks of life. They may be doctors, nurses, social workers, advocates, staff members, volunteers or others in a position of trust. They may also be relatives, friends, neighbours or people who sue the same services as the person experiencing abuse.

### **4. Working with vulnerable adults – specific guidelines for volunteers and staff**

Risk assessments should be performed before anyone works with vulnerable adults. Sevenoaks Town Council has public liability insurance for this and other services.

Assignments or activities involving vulnerable adults should be supervised by someone competent in planning for the age group and ability of the participants.

Volunteers should avoid working alone with a vulnerable adult wherever possible.

Staff and volunteers should not enter into any social or other non-work related arrangements with a vulnerable adult they are working with.

The exchange of gifts is not appropriate and could be considered as a bribe or inducement and give rise to allegations of improper conduct.

Physical contact is not acceptable unless it is to prevent accident or injury or provide medical assistance. The consent of the affected person and, where appropriate, consent from those with caring responsibility should be obtained before treatment is given.

### **5. Responding to people who have experienced or are experiencing abuse**

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Sevenoaks Town Council recognises that it has a duty to act on reports or suspicions of abuse or neglect. It also acknowledges that taking action in cases of adult abuse is never easy. The following advice is given to anyone witnessing or receiving a disclosure of abuse from the individual concerned:

- Reassure the person concerned
- Listen to what they are saying
- Record what you have been told / witnessed as soon as possible.
- Remain calm and do not show shock or disbelief.
- Tell that the information will be treated seriously.
- Don't start to investigate or ask detailed or probing questions.
- Don't promise to keep it a secret.

### **If you witness abuse or abuse had just taken place the priorities will be:**

- To call an ambulance if required.
- To call the police if a crime has been committed.
- To preserve evidence.
- To keep yourself, staff, volunteers and service users safe.
- To inform the Town Clerk as the Designated Named Person in Sevenoaks Town Council.

All situations of abuse or alleged abuse must be reported to the Town Clerk or Deputy Town Clerk who will record the incident and save the document in a protected manner.

If it is appropriate and there is consent from the individual, or there is a good reason to override consent, such as risk to others, the Designated Named Person or their deputy will make a referral (alert) to the adult social care team with the local authority relevant to the individual.

If the individual experiencing abuse does not have the capacity to consent, a referral will be made without that person's consent, in their best interests.

If staff, councillors or volunteers feels unable to raise this concern with the Designated Named Person (Town Clerk) then concerns can be raised directly with an adult social care department.

The Designated Named Person will take advice from the appropriate adult social care department (local to the at risk individual) and / or other advice giving organisations such as the police.

### **Steps taken by Sevenoaks Town Council when abuse is reported.**

1. Incident is reported to the Designated Named Person (Town Clerk) or their Deputy either verbally, email or in writing.

2. The Designated Named Person or their Deputy will contact adult social services team responsible for the individual and complete a referral form provided by social services if required.
3. The Designated Named Person or their Deputy will implement any actions recommended by the authorities supporting the case. In most cases no further action will be required by Sevenoaks Town Council.

## **6. Managing allegations made against members of staff or volunteers.**

Sevenoaks Town Council will ensure that any allegations made against members of staff will be dealt with swiftly.

Where a member of staff or volunteer is thought to have committed a criminal offence the police will be informed. If a crime has been witnessed the police should be contacted immediately.

The safety of the individual(s) concerned is paramount. A risk assessment must be undertaken immediately to assess the level of risk to all service users posed by the alleged perpetrator. This will include whether it is safe for them to continue in their role, or any other role within the council, whilst the investigation is undertaken. The Town Clerk has delegated powers in these circumstances to suspend whilst investigation takes place if necessary.

The Designated Named Person will liaise with the relevant adult social care team to discuss the best course of action and to ensure that the Sevenoaks Town Council's disciplinary procedures are coordinated with any other enquiries taking place as part of the ongoing management of the allegation.

Sevenoaks Town Council has a Whistle Blowing Policy within its Employee Handbook and staff will be supported using this policy.

## **7. Recording and managing confidential information**

Sevenoaks Town Council is committed to maintaining confidentiality wherever possible and information around Safeguarding Adults issues should be shared only with those who need to know. Sevenoaks Town Council has a Privacy Policy.

All allegations / concerns will be recorded in a protected manner within the town council's filing system. Access to the file will be restricted to the Town Clerk and Deputy Town Clerk.

The information will be factual and not based on opinions, including a record of what the person has said, what has been seen, and witnesses if appropriate.

## **Adopted at Finance & Delivery Committee on 9<sup>th</sup> June 2025**

The information that is recorded will be kept secure and will comply with data protection regulations.

### **8. Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks**

The Disclosure and Barring Service identifies certain activities as regulated. An employee involved in regulated activity with vulnerable adults will be subject to a DBS check.

Sevenoaks Town Council uses the DBS checking service to help assess the suitability of applicants for relevant positions of trust.

Sevenoaks Town Council complies with the Code of Practice regarding the correct handling, use, storage, retention and disposal of certificates and certificate information.