



FELIXSTOWE

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 adults at risk of harm. Children, young people and adults at risk of harm have the right to participate, have fun and be safe in the services provided for them and the activities they choose, or their parents/carers choose for them. This policy will help to maintain a safe and positive environment for children and adults at risk of harm.

Policy Coverage

This policy applies to all Members, employees, volunteers and contractors working in partnership with Felixstowe Town Council. Under the Children Act 1989 and the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, Felixstowe Town Council has a duty to co-operate with other agencies and authorities to promote the well-being of children and young people. Suffolk County Council is the lead agency for the protection of adults at risk of harm.

It is not the role of Felixstowe Town Council to investigate allegations of abuse. However, all Members, employees, volunteers and contracted services providers have a responsibility to take action when they suspect or recognise that a child or adults at risk of harm may be a victim of significant harm or abuse. This policy is to be used in conjunction with the Council's Risk Management Policy, Health and Safety Policies, Equal Opportunities Policy, Complaints Policy, Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures.

The phrase '**children and young people**' refers to anyone under the age of 18 years.

The phrase '**Adult at Risk**' refers to someone who is over the age of 18 who (para 42.1 of the Care Act 2014 refers):

- has care and support needs.
- is experiencing, or is at risk of, abuse or neglect.
- as a result of their care and support needs is unable to protect themselves against the abuse or neglect or the risk of it.

If someone has care and support needs but is not currently receiving care or support from a health or care service, they may still be an adult at risk

Policy Principles

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

Referrals of suspicions of abuse cannot be anonymous and should be made in the knowledge that, during the course of enquiries, the agency that made that referral will be made clear.

Felixstowe Town Council will not tolerate the harassment of any Member, employee, volunteer, contracted service provider or child/vulnerable adult who raises concerns of abuse.

Policy Statement

Felixstowe Town Council is committed to taking all reasonable precautions to safeguard the welfare of children and adults at risk of harm that use its services and will promote a safeguarding culture and environment.

- It will endeavour to keep children and adults at risk of harm safe from abuse.
- Suspicion of abuse will be responded to promptly and appropriately.
- It will act in the best interests of the child or adult at risk of harm at all times.
- It will proactively seek to promote the welfare and protection of all children and adults at risk of harm.
- It will endeavour to ensure that unsuitable people are prevented from working with children and adults at risk of harm through, as appropriate, its recruitment and selection policy and by reminding hirers of their safeguarding responsibilities.
- It will take any safeguarding concern and act in line with Suffolk safeguarding policies and procedures for reporting abuse.

Procedure and Systems

Definitions of Abuse:

- **Abuse** covers any form of physical, emotional, mental and sexual abuse including bullying, including lack of care that leads to injury or harm. For adults at risk of harm, 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 adults at risk of harm 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.

It is important to recognise that disabled children may be particularly vulnerable to abuse and may have added difficulties in communicating what is happening to them. Dependency on others for primary needs, e.g., feeding and clothing may make a person feel powerless to report abusive treatment.

This policy is inclusive of all children, young people and adults at risk of harm, irrespective of age, gender, race or ethnicity, religion, disability or sexual preference and as per the protected characteristics for the Equalities Act 2010.

Use of Video and Photography

The use of photographs and images of young people will be controlled to prevent possible misuse. In general, agreement will be sought from parents or guardians that images can be used as appropriate.

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.
- Alleviate feelings of guilt and isolation, while passing 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 Mayor of Felixstowe. 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 relevant agencies through the Suffolk Referral Process.
- Referral details can be found here: <https://suffolksp.org.uk/concerned>
- 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.

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 Council's Designated Safeguarding Lead. The Town Clerk will, if appropriate, make a referral to Social Services.

Recognising abuse is not always easy. 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.
- 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.

Contact Details for the Suffolk Referral Process

<https://suffolksp.org.uk/concerned>

Social Services Child Protection – Suffolk County Council: 0808 800 4005

East Suffolk Council – Monitoring Officer: 0333 0162 000

Suffolk Police: 101 or in an emergency 999

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 referred to the Town Clerk so that appropriate considerations can be made by the Personnel Committee.

Appropriate and confidential records should be maintained and should be signed and dated.

Prevention

Recruitment

- 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.
- All Members, employees and volunteers who are required to carry out duties that involve working unsupervised with children or adults at risk of harm or whose roles mean they come directly into contact with unsupervised children or adults at risk of harm will be checked by the Government's Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) and / or appropriate safeguarding agency. In line with best practice, these checks will be repeated every three years.

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. All Members and employees will be expected to read this policy and sign the Declaration at the end of the document.

Members and employees will be offered appropriate training on safeguarding children and adults at risk of harm.

Reporting

The Council is committed to maintaining an open culture where Members, employees, volunteers, children, vulnerable persons, parents, guardians and carers feel able to express concerns both about child protection, adults at risk and issues of poor practice.

In addition to the procedures outlined in this policy, the Council's Complaints Policy is available to all Members, staff, volunteers, and the general public.

Codes of Practice and Behaviour

These guidelines have been devised to protect children and adults at risk of harm from abuse, as well as to protect members, staff and volunteers from situations where false allegations may occur.

The guidelines apply to those working with children or vulnerable persons involved in activities organised by or on behalf of Felixstowe Town Council or at services provided by Felixstowe Town Council.

Members, staff and volunteers must:

- Treat everyone with respect, regardless of their age, ethnicity, social background, ability, sexual orientation, culture or religious beliefs.
- Provide an example of good conduct they wish others to follow.
- Ensure activities involve more than one other person being present, or at least which are within sight and hearing of others.
- Respect a person's right to personal privacy.
- Provide access for young people to talk to others about any concerns they may have.
- Encourage young people and adults to feel comfortable and caring enough to point out attitudes or behaviours they do not like.
- Remember that someone else might misinterpret their actions, no matter how well-intentioned.
- Recognise that special caution is required when discussing sensitive issues, such as bullying, bereavement, abuse or personal development.
- Recognise that some children or adults at risk of harm will be more vulnerable to abuse than others, and may face extra barriers in getting help because of their race, gender, age, religion, disability, sexual orientation, social background or culture.
- Challenge unacceptable behaviour and report all allegations/suspicions of abuse.
- Be identifiable at all times.

Members, staff and volunteers must not:

- Engage in physical horseplay, such as wrestling or tickling.
- Have any inappropriate verbal or physical contact with children or vulnerable people, or make suggestive remarks or gestures.
- Permit abusive youth peer activities (e.g. initiation ceremonies, ridiculing, bullying etc.).
- Play physical contact games with children or adults at risk of harm.
- Jump to conclusions about others without checking the facts.
- Ask children or adults at risk of harm to do things that are potentially dangerous, illegal or otherwise unreasonable.
- Exaggerate or trivialise abuse issues.
- Show favouritism to any individual.
- Rely on just their good name to protect them
- Believe it could “never happen to me”.
- Take chances when common sense, policy or practice suggest a more prudent approach.
- Allow allegations made to go unchallenged, unrecorded and not acted upon
- Felixstowe Town Council takes its responsibility very seriously. Employees who breach these guidelines will face investigation and may face disciplinary action, which could lead to a dismissal. Volunteers in breach of the above Code of Conduct will have their services terminated with immediate effect and their parent organisation (as appropriate) will be informed. If a Member does not adhere to the policy, there may be grounds for reporting their behaviour to the Monitoring Officer, who may require an investigation under the Suffolk Code of Conduct. Where there is evidence of illegal activity, the member, employee or volunteer will be reported to the relevant authorities and may face a criminal investigation.

Procedure in Relation to Specific Services

Work Experience

Felixstowe Town Council may offer work experience placements. The Council will ensure that employees working with children or adults at risk of harm are provided with a copy of Town 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.

Hall Hire

Independent sports clubs and private individuals who regularly use the facilities operated by Felixstowe Town Council must have appropriate safeguarding policies and procedures in place, commensurate with the level of contact they have. Furthermore, their employees or volunteers who have significant and regular

unsupervised contact with children and adults at risk of harm must have satisfactory DBS checks.

The Council will state on its Booking Forms and on posters in its Halls for hire that it is the Council's expectation that groups will follow good practice procedures in relation to child and adult at risk of harm Safeguarding.

Use of Contractors

Felixstowe 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 adults at risk of harm, must have its own equivalent Child Protection and adult at risk of harm policies, or failing this, must comply with the terms of this policy. This requirement will be written into the contract. If this is not met, the contractor will be deemed to be in breach of their contract.

Internet and e-mail Policy

Please refer to Felixstowe Town Council's Data Protection policy and IT Policy

First Aid

The administration of first aid to children, young people and adults at risk of harm 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 circumstances members, employees, volunteers and contracted service providers may undertake first aid as a last resort, notifying parents / carers as soon as possible, to minimise a child's or vulnerable adult's distress.

Special Events - Photography

Anyone using cameras or film recorders for or on behalf of the Council should obtain appropriate consent from parents/guardians 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 child protection 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

Complaints about a Member or an employee(s) and/or serious abuse of these safeguarding policies and procedures will be dealt with through Felixstowe Town Council’s disciplinary process where the complaint affects an employee and via the Code of Conduct when the complaint relates to a Member.

Policy Monitoring and Review

All incidents and allegations of abuse and complaints will be recorded and monitored. This policy will be reviewed annually to ensure its effectiveness and to reflect any legislative changes.

Declaration

Felixstowe Town Council is fully committed to safeguarding the wellbeing of children, young people and adults at risk of harm and promoting their welfare. Representing Felixstowe Town Council as an Elected Member or working as an employee, volunteer or contracted service provider of Felixstowe Town Council it is important that you have taken the time to thoroughly read the Safeguarding Policy and Procedures document.

In making its employees, volunteers, contractors, and elected members aware of this policy, it is our intention to ensure that all are proactive in providing a safe and secure environment for the children and adults at risk of harm in our community.

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

Signed: _____

Name (please print): _____

Date: _____

Policy Approved: Personnel 2 April 2025 (*pending*)
Review Body: Personnel Committee
Review Period: Annually
Next Review: Personnel (April 2026)