

Sturminster Marshall Parish Council

Safeguarding Policy

Adopted: November 2025

Review: November2026

Purpose of Policy

The purpose of the Safeguarding Policy is to provide a framework for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people and adults.

The policy aims to ensure that:

- All children, young people and adults are safe and protected from harm;
- Other elements of provision and policies are in place to enable children, young people and adults to feel safe and adopt safe practices; and
- Everyone (e.g. Councillors, council staff, volunteers) are aware of the expected behaviours and Sturminster Marshall Parish Council's legal responsibilities in relation to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people and adults.

Policy Statement

This policy develops procedures and good practice within our organisation to ensure that each person can demonstrate that there is an understanding of the duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults. Sturminster Marshall Parish Council deplores the sexual exploitation of children and will not tolerate failure at any level to prevent harm, support victims and bring offenders to justice. This policy has been developed in line with government legislation, publications and guidance.

The parish council takes seriously its responsibility under the current legislation to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, young people and adults; and to work together with other agencies to ensure that there are adequate arrangements within our organisation to identify and support those who are suffering harm. Where someone is suffering significant harm, or is likely to do so, action will be taken to protect that person.

Our organisation has a responsibility to make sure that it has an effective safeguarding policy and procedures in place and monitors that the council complies with them. Our organisation has appointed a Safeguarding Lead who has responsibility for dealing with all safeguarding issues.

Our organisation recognises that for this policy to be effective, it is essential that everyone working in and for the organisation has an understanding of what safeguarding is, know that 'safeguarding is everybody's responsibility', know how to access safeguarding information, know of any possible contribution that they may be required to make to safeguard children, young people and adults and how to access further advice, support or services.

Individual responsibilities

Our organisation recognises that safeguarding is not just about protecting children, young people and adults from deliberate harm. It also relates to health and safety; meeting the needs of children, young people and adults with medical conditions; providing first aid; visits organised or sponsored by the council; internet or e-safety; appropriate arrangements to ensure security, taking into account the local context.

Additionally, we recognise that safeguarding can involve a range of potential issues such as: bullying, including cyberbullying (by text message, on social networking sites, and so on), peer on peer and prejudice-based bullying; racist and homophobic or transphobic abuse; sexting; substance misuse; issues which may be specific to a local area or population, for example gang activity and youth violence and other particular issues affecting children including domestic violence, sexual exploitation, female genital mutilation, extremist behaviour and radicalisation, forced marriage and modern slavery.

Everyone associated with the parish council maintains an attitude of 'it can happen here' and are aware of the signs and indicators of abuse.

Everyone has a responsibility to provide a safe environment for children, young people and vulnerable adults.

Our recruitment policy and induction process includes information on our arrangements and systems for safeguarding, behaviour policy, code of conduct and details of the Safeguarding Lead.

Everyone is provided with opportunities to receive appropriate training, which is regularly updated, in order to develop their understanding of the signs and indicators of abuse and of the council's safeguarding procedures.

Everyone knows how to respond to someone who discloses abuse, or for whom they have a concern, and the procedure to be followed in appropriately sharing a concern of possible abuse or a disclosure of abuse.

All residents are made aware of our organisation's responsibilities with regard to safeguarding through publication of the safeguarding policy.

When services are delivered by a third party or agency, we will follow the requirements of the Disclosure and Barring Service and check that the person presenting themselves is the same person on whom appropriate checks have been made. We will seek to ensure the suitability of adults working with and in the presence of children at any time. Community users organising activities for children, young people and vulnerable adults are aware of and understand the need for compliance with the council's safeguarding procedures.

Our organisation operates safer recruitment practices including making sure that:

- statutory duties to undertake required checks on staff who work with children are complied with in line with the Disclosure and Barring Service requirements for Regulated Activity; the Child Care Act 2006 and Childcare (Disqualification) Regulations 2009
- statutory guidance relating to volunteers is followed
- recruitment panel members are properly trained.

Should we dismiss or remove someone because they have harmed a child, or poses a risk of harm to a child or would have done so if they had not left, we will report this to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) and any appropriate professional or regulatory body.

Our safeguarding policies and procedures will be reviewed and updated tri-annually.

If a child, young person or adult makes an allegation or disclosure of abuse against an adult or other child or young person, we will:

- stay calm and listen carefully;
- reassure the person that s/he has done the right thing in telling you;
- not investigate or ask leading questions;
- let the person know that s/he will need to tell the Safeguarding Lead;
- not promise to keep what they have been told a secret;
- inform the Safeguarding Lead as soon as possible; and
- make a written record of the allegation, disclosure or incident which will be signed, and dated.

Confidentiality and Information Sharing

Information sharing is vital to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people and adults. A key factor identified in many serious case reviews (SCRs) has been a failure by practitioners to record information, to share it to understand its significance and then take appropriate action.

- we recognise that all matters relating to protection are confidential;

- we will disclose personal information about a child, young person or adult on a need-to-know basis only;
- everyone is aware that they have a professional responsibility to share information with other agencies in order to safeguard children, young person or adult;
- everyone is aware that they cannot promise to keep secrets which might compromise the safety or well-being of a child, young person or adult, or that of another; and
- we will always undertake to share our concerns with the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), unless to do so could put the child, young person or adult at greater risk of harm, or impede a criminal investigation. If in doubt, we will consult with the LADO.

Managing Allegations against individuals who work for us

We are aware of the possibility of allegations being made against someone who works for our organisation. or volunteers that are working with or may come into contact with children, young person or adults. They can be made by children, young person or adults or other concerned adults.

Everyone in our organisation and volunteers has been made aware of the process to be followed if such an allegation is made.

In such circumstances we will:

- Report the matter to the LADO;
- consider the safeguarding arrangements of the child, young person or adult to ensure they are not in contact with the alleged abuser;
- consider the rights of the individual concerned for a fair and equal process of investigation;
- ensure that the appropriate disciplinary procedure is followed, including whether suspending that person from work or volunteering for us until the outcome of any investigation is deemed necessary;
- advise the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) and any other appropriate regulatory or professional body where the individual has been disciplined or dismissed as a result of the allegations founded or would have been if they have resigned.

Whistleblowing

We recognise that a child, young person or adult cannot be expected to raise concerns in an environment where we fail to do so. Everyone is advised of our Whistleblowing Policy and of how it can be implemented. Everyone is aware of their duty to raise concerns about the attitude and actions of colleagues where these are inappropriate or unsuitable. If necessary, concerns will be raised with the delegated 'Whistleblowing' representative – the Clerk.

Supporting Staff and volunteers

Everyone will be advised on the boundaries of appropriate behaviour – such matters form part of our staff and volunteer induction and they have access to support and guidance when required or requested

We recognise that staff and volunteers working in our organisation who have become involved in the case of a child who has suffered harm, or appears likely to suffer harm, may find the situation stressful and upsetting.

We support this by providing an opportunity for them to discuss their anxieties with the Safeguarding Lead, or another person and/or a trade union representative as appropriate.

Our Safeguarding Lead and / or anyone working for the organisation has access to support and appropriate workshops, courses or meetings as organised or recommended by the Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership.

Prevention

We recognise that we can play a significant part in the prevention of harm to children, young person or vulnerable adult by providing them with effective lines of communication with trusted adults, supportive friends and an ethos of protection. Our organisation will support children, young person or adult by:

- Establishing and maintaining an ethos, understood by everyone, which enables children, young people or adults to feel secure and encourages them to talk, knowing that they will be listened to.
- Promoting a caring, safe and positive environment ensuring that all children, young people or adults know that there is someone in our organisation whom they can approach if they are worried or in difficulty.
- Liaising and working together with all other support services and those agencies involved in the safeguarding of children and adults.
- Recognising that children, young people or adults come from a variety of different cultural backgrounds, we have developed policies to ensure that we embrace diversity in religion and faith, race, ethnicity, gender and sexual orientation.
- We will include our Safeguarding Policy in our governance documents/website and will post copies of our policy throughout the organisation.

Training

Everyone has been provided with and agreed that they have read and understood our Safeguarding Policy.

Everyone will have access to appropriate safeguarding training which is regularly updated in order to keep it updated in line with local and national guidance/legislation. We will also, as part of our induction, issue information in relation to our Safeguarding Policy and any other policy and information related to safeguarding and promoting our Safeguarding Policy to all newly appointed individuals.