HARROGATE
TOWN COUNCIL

SAFEGUARDING POLICY & PROCEDURE

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Contents

1 Introduction 3
2 Legislative and Guidance Framework 3
3 Definitions 3
4 Scope 3
5 Code of Conduct and Professional Boundaries 4
6 Roles and Responsibilities 4
7 Safer Recruitment and DBS 5
8 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion 5
9 Training and Awareness 5
10 Reporting and Responding 5
11 Confidentiality and Information Sharing 6
12 Monitoring and Review 6

1 Introduction

1.1 Harrogate Town Council is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people and adults at risk and to ensuring that they are protected from harm, abuse and neglect.

1.2 The Council recognises its legal, moral and corporate responsibilities to put in place safeguarding arrangements that are proportionate to the nature of its activities and services. These arrangements are designed to ensure that individuals are protected while engaged in, attending, or affected by Council-led activities, events, services, facilities or land.

1.3 This policy has been developed in line with current legislation and national guidance, including guidance issued by the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) and the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC).

1.4 Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility, and all those working on behalf of the Council are expected to act in a way that safeguards the welfare of others at all times.

2 Legislative and Guidance Framework

2.1 This policy is informed by, and complies with, current safeguarding legislation and statutory guidance, including the Children Act 1989, the Children Act 2004, Working Together to Safeguard Children, the Care Act 2014, the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006, the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012, the Equality Act 2010, the Human Rights Act 1998, and the Data Protection Act 2018 together with UK GDPR.

2.2 The policy also reflects NALC and SLCC safeguarding guidance for local councils.

3 Definitions

3.1 A child or young person is defined as anyone under the age of 18, in accordance with the Children Acts 1989 and 2004.

3.2 An adult at risk is defined in line with the Care Act 2014 as a person aged 18 or over who has needs for care and support, is experiencing or is at risk of abuse or neglect, and as a result of those needs is unable to protect themselves from the abuse or risk of abuse.

4 Scope

4.1 This policy applies to all employees of the Town Council, all town councillors, volunteers, work experience placements, contractors, agency staff and any partner organisations or individuals delivering services or activities on behalf of the Council.

4.2 The policy applies to all Council services, activities, events, whether delivered directly by the Council or in partnership with others.

5 Code of Conduct and Professional Boundaries

5.1 All councillors, employees, volunteers and contractors working on behalf of the Town Council must maintain professional boundaries at all times when working with, or in the presence of, children, young people and adults at risk.

5.2 Individuals must:

- Treat all individuals with respect, dignity and fairness.
- Act in a manner that is appropriate to their role and responsibilities.
- Avoid any behaviour that could be misinterpreted or place themselves or others at risk.
- Not engage in inappropriate physical contact, language, behaviour or relationships.
- Avoid being alone with a child or adult at risk wherever possible, and ensure activities are conducted in open or observable environments.
- Not exchange personal contact details, communicate via personal social media accounts, or engage in online contact outside of authorised Council activity.
- Not take photographs, videos or audio recordings of children or adults at risk without appropriate consent and a clear Council purpose.

5.3 Any concerns about boundaries or conduct must be reported in line with this policy.

6 Roles and Responsibilities

6.1 Designated Safeguarding Lead

6.1.1 The Town Clerk is the Council's Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and has overall responsibility for safeguarding within the Town Council. In the absence of the Clerk the Chair of the Council's Staffing Committee will act as the Deputy DSL.

6.1.2 The DSL is responsible for acting as the main point of contact for safeguarding concerns, ensuring that concerns are responded to promptly and appropriately, and making referrals to statutory safeguarding agencies where necessary.

6.1.3 The DSL will liaise with safeguarding partners, ensure that safeguarding procedures are implemented and kept under review, ensure that appropriate safeguarding training is in place, and maintain secure and confidential safeguarding records (retained in accordance with data protection legislation).

6.2 Staff, Councillors and Volunteers

6.2.1 All staff, councillors and volunteers working on behalf of the Council have a responsibility to be alert to potential safeguarding concerns and to act in the best interests of children, young people and adults at risk.

6.2.2 Individuals must follow this policy and associated procedures, report safeguarding concerns immediately, never promise confidentiality to a person making a disclosure, and co-operate with safeguarding processes and investigations as required. Failure to follow safeguarding responsibilities may result in disciplinary or other appropriate action.

6.2.3 Where Council activities, events or services involve children or adults at risk, the Council will ensure that appropriate safeguarding risk assessments are undertaken and proportionate control measures are put in place.

7 Safer Recruitment and DBS

7.1 The Town Council is committed to safer recruitment practices. The Council assesses roles to determine whether they involve regulated activity and ensures that appropriate Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks are undertaken where required.

7.2 Risk assessments will be used to determine whether DBS checks are necessary for volunteer roles. Safeguarding responsibilities will be clearly set out in role descriptions, contracts, and induction processes, and appropriate safeguarding training will be provided.

8 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

8.1 The Town Council is committed to safeguarding all individuals regardless of age, disability, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion or belief.

8.2 Safeguarding arrangements will be applied fairly and equitably, and reasonable adjustments will be made where necessary to ensure that individuals are protected and supported.

9 Training and Awareness

9.1 The Council will ensure that safeguarding training is provided at a level appropriate to the role of the individual. Councillors will receive safeguarding awareness training relevant to their role.

9.2 Training will be refreshed periodically to ensure continued awareness of safeguarding responsibilities and current best practice.

10 Reporting and Responding

10.1 Concerns must be reported immediately to the DSL who will liaise with the North Yorkshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (https://safeguardingchildren.co.uk/) directly.

10.2 Where there are **significant immediate concerns about the safety of a child or Vulnerable Adult**, the Police are to be contacted on 999.

10.3 Any allegation, concern or complaint that a councillor, employee, volunteer or contractor has behaved in a way that has harmed, or may have harmed, a child or adult at risk; or behaved towards a child or adult at risk in a way that indicates they may pose a risk, must be reported immediately to the DSL. If the concern relates to the Designated Safeguarding Lead, it must be reported to the Chair of the Staffing Committee.

10.4 Everyone has a responsibility to refer a child when it is believed or suspected that a child:

- Has suffered significant harm and /or
- Is likely to suffer significant harm and/or

- Has developmental and welfare needs which are likely only to be met through the provision of family support services (with the agreement of a child's parent).

10.5 If you believe the situation is urgent but does not require the police, call 0300 131 2 131 to make telephone contact. When prompted, say "children's social care".

10.6 All staff, councillors and volunteers must familiarise themselves with this procedure and follow it whenever a safeguarding concern arises. A safeguarding action flowchart is attached at **Appendix A**.

11 Confidentiality and Information Sharing

11.1 Information relating to safeguarding concerns will be handled sensitively and shared only on a need-to-know basis. While confidentiality will be respected wherever possible, it will not prevent information being shared where this is necessary to protect a child, young person or adult at risk.

11.2 All information will be processed in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR.

12 Monitoring and Review

12.1 This policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner if there are changes to legislation, statutory guidance, or following a safeguarding incident where a review is deemed necessary.

Appendix A - Safeguarding action flowchart