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Safeguarding Policy – Children, Young People & Vulnerable Adults

1. Scope

1.1. This policy is the responsibility of all councillors and staff connected to Exmouth Town Council.

1.2. Children and young people are defined as those aged under 18.

1.3. A vulnerable adult is someone aged 18 or over:

- Who is, or may be, in need of community services due to age, illness or a mental or physical disability;
- Who is, or may be, unable to take care of himself/herself, or unable to protect himself/herself against significant harm or exploitation.

For example, a person who:

- is frail due to age
- has drug or alcohol problems
- has a learning disability
- has mental or physical ill health or disability.

Vulnerability is related to how able an adult is to make and exercise their own informed choice, free from duress or undue influence, and to protect themselves from abuse, neglect and exploitation. There is no hard and fast rule: an adult should be assumed to be covered by this policy unless there is information to indicate that they are not.

2. Reason for the policy

Everyone, including children, young people and vulnerable adults, has the right not to be abused. We recognise the need to ensure their welfare when they come into contact with the services we provide.

3. Types of abuse

3.1. Physical: causing physical harm**,** including hitting, shaking, biting, grabbing, withholding food or drink, force-feeding, wrongly administering medicine, unnecessary restraint, failing to provide physical care and aids to living;

3.2. Sexual: including sexual assault, rape, inappropriate touching/molesting, forcing or enticing someone into sexual acts they don't understand or feel powerless to refuse; grooming a child or young person in preparation for abuse.

3.3. Emotional or psychological: persistent emotional ill-treatment or rejection, including verbal abuse, shouting, swearing, threatening abandonment or harm, isolating, taking away privacy or other rights, bullying/intimidation, blaming, belittling, silencing, controlling or humiliating;

3.4. Financial or material: illegal or improper use of an adult's property, money or other assets without their informed consent or where the consent is obtained by fraud. It can include withholding money or possessions, theft of money or property, fraud, intentionally mismanaging finances, borrowing money and not repaying;

3.5. Neglect: persistent or severe failure to meet a person's basic physical and psychological needs. It will result in serious impairment of their health or development, and can include withholding shelter, food, drink, heating and clothing, failing to provide access to health, social and educational services, ignoring physical care needs, exposing a person to unacceptable risk, failing to ensure adequate supervision or unresponsiveness to the basic emotional needs of a child;

3.6. Discriminatory abuse: including slurs, harassment and maltreatment due to a protected characteristic (Equality Act 2010);

3.7. Institutional abuse: including the use of systems and routines which neglect a person receiving formal care e.g. in a children's home.

4. Signs of abuse

There are many possible signs of abuse, none being conclusive on their own. Examples include:

- Unexplained injury / weight loss / cuts and bruises / dirtiness
- Changes in behaviour
- Depression / low self-esteem
- Lack of self-care / dehydration / abnormal eating pattern
- Harm to self
- Obsessive behaviour
- Bills not being paid
- An overly critical or disrespectful carer who may bully or undermine
- Isolation from usual network of friends, family or community

5. Safeguarding

5.1. Safeguarding children from abuse and promoting their welfare means:

- protecting children from maltreatment;
- preventing impairment of children's health or development;
- ensuring children are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care;
- taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes.

5.2. Safeguarding vulnerable adults means protecting them from maltreatment, and preventing injury or significant harm. Abuse violates an adult's human and civil rights. It can vary from treating

someone with disrespect in a way which significantly affects the person's quality of life, to causing actual physical suffering.

5.3. A safeguarding concern arises if abuse is suspected or disclosed. Abuse can happen anywhere – at home, in a residential or nursing home, a hospital, in the workplace, at a day centre or educational establishment or in the street.

6. Reporting safeguarding concerns

6.1. We all have a responsibility to report any safeguarding concerns over the welfare of children, young people or vulnerable adults. This extends to the identification of signs of abuse; poor practice by staff, councillors and others acting for or on behalf of the council, and allegations brought to our attention by a member of the public. Reporting safeguarding concerns can prevent serious abuse or harm from happening, or from escalating.

6.2. Staff and councillors must not attempt to investigate abuse themselves; neither must they confront anyone who is allegedly responsible for abuse nor tell them that allegations have been made about them.

6.3. The Town Council has appointed the Town Clerk and/or the incumbent Mayor as the Designated Person(s) for Safeguarding. The Designated Person(s) for Safeguarding will oversee and monitor implementation of this policy and any resultant procedures on behalf of the Town Council. In particular, the Designated Person(s) for Safeguarding will:

- advise the Town Council on any matters related to the safeguarding of children, young people and vulnerable adults, and
- take the appropriate action when abuse is disclosed, discovered or suspected.

6.4. Report safeguarding allegations or concerns to Devon County Council Children's or Adults Services at the earliest possible opportunity, and at least within 24 hours.

Contact details for children's services:

Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) on **0345 155 1071** or

email mashsecure@devon.gov.uk

Adult Help Desk 01452 426868

Emergency out of hours number 0345 600 0388

Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) is open to take calls from 9am to 5pm Monday to Thursday and from 9am to 4pm on Fridays. If an emergency situation happens outside these hours or on a Bank Holiday contact the Emergency Duty Service.

Contact details for **vulnerable adults' services**:

Care Direct on **0345 155 1007** or

email csc.caredirect@devon.gov.uk

Emergency out of hours number 0345 600 0388

Care Direct is open to take calls from 8am to 8pm Monday to Friday and from 9am to 1pm on Saturdays. If an emergency situation happens outside these hours or on a Bank Holiday contact the Emergency Duty Service.

Dial 999 if a child, young person or vulnerable adult may be in imminent danger or a criminal offence may have been committed.

6.5. Devon County Council or the Police should be given as much factual information as possible. For example:

- The child, young person or vulnerable adult's name and address (and parents'/carers' address if different);
- The reason for concern – a note of significant events or conversations should be made as promptly as possible to assist with any referral and subsequent investigation. Evidence such texts or Facebook entries should be preserved;
- Any other known factors which may be contributing to the problem;
- Additional information such as age (or date of birth), ethnicity, religion, language and disabilities / specific needs.

However, the safeguarding concern should still be reported whether or not the information is complete.

7. Confidentiality, record keeping and sharing information

7.1 Information about safeguarding concerns should be regarded as **confidential**. The information is not secret, however, and Exmouth Town Council will co-operate with investigations by Devon County Council Children's or Adults' services, or the Police as applicable, and follow their advice to ensure that any risk to the safety of children, young people and vulnerable adults is addressed.

7.2 Where a disclosure is made it is important that the staff member does not promise the child/young person/vulnerable adult to keep the information secret but says that they will only disclose it to someone who can help them.

8. Allegations against a councillor or member of staff

8.1 If someone witnesses behaviour by a councillor, member of staff, contractor or partner, or an allegation is made about them that indicates that they have, or may have:

- harmed a child, young person or vulnerable adult, or put them at risk of harm;
- possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child, young person or vulnerable adult or
- behaved in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children, young people or vulnerable adults,

they must report it as a safeguarding concern to the Police and/or Devon County Council Children's or Adults' Services at the earliest possible opportunity.

8.2 A councillor or member of staff must report any allegation made against them to the Clerk or Mayor.

8.3. Safeguarding concerns and allegations relating to staff will be dealt with in accordance with the

Disciplinary Procedure (including in instances where the member of staff resigns or leaves). However, investigations by the responsible authorities will take precedence over internal council procedures relating to conduct. The Clerk or Mayor will liaise with the responsible authorities to agree the appropriate course of action.

8.4 The Clerk or Mayor will seek advice from the Devon County Council Children's or Adults' Services or Police prior to informing a member of staff of an allegation against them. The Clerk or Mayor will offer appropriate welfare support to the member of staff and ensure that they are kept appropriately informed during any investigation process.

8.5 In accordance with the law, the Council will refer to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) any member of staff

- who was dismissed because they harmed a child or adult;
- who was dismissed or removed from working in a regulated activity because they might have harmed a child or adult otherwise;
- who would have been dismissed for either of these reasons, but they resigned first; or
- who works with children or vulnerable adults in regulated activity and has been cautioned or convicted for a relevant offence.

8.6 Safeguarding concerns and allegations relating to councillors will be referred to the Monitoring Officer and dealt with in accordance with the Code of Conduct of Members of the Council.

9. Recruitment and Selection

Criminal record checks will be made where appropriate. Roles that involve "regulated activities," such as caring for, supervising or being in sole charge of children or vulnerable adults, require an Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Check. This may include checking whether someone is included in the two DBS 'barred lists' of individuals who are unsuitable for working with children and adults. DBS Checks must be obtained for staff and volunteers undertaking these roles, and they will not be permitted to commence unaccompanied work until they have been received. It is against the law for employers to employ someone, or allow them to volunteer for, this kind of work if they know they are on one of the barred lists.

10. Information and Training

Appropriate information will be made available to staff and councillors in the form of this policy and any necessary training.

11. External organisations licensed by, or working with, for or on behalf of the council

11.1 The council works with and through a number of external organisations such as charities, contractors, other public sector bodies etc.

11.2 Where these external organisations are likely to have significant contact with children, young people or vulnerable adults as a direct result of their work for, on behalf of, or in partnership with the council, they are required to have safeguarding procedures, such as safe recruitment and selection processes, in place. They must be made aware of this policy and must provide the council with a copy of their safeguarding procedure.

12. Policy Review

This policy and resultant procedures will be monitored and reviewed at least annually.

Reaffirmed 18th May 2026
Review date: May 2027