



**COTSWOLD
DISTRICT COUNCIL**

Safeguarding Policy and Procedures



Safeguarding is Everyone's Concern

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I. Introduction and Background

Cotswold District Council (the Council) advocates that SAFEGUARDING IS EVERYONE'S BUSINESS and that all people have the right to live in safety, free from abuse, harm and neglect.

The Council will create an environment where staff, volunteers and elected members are adequately trained and encouraged to think of safeguarding as being part of their responsibility, understanding the need for them to play a full and active part in the delivery of the Council's response.

The Council has a commitment to safeguarding which is primarily about protecting vulnerable adults, young people or children from harm, abuse or neglect, but also has a wider remit around early prevention, health, wellbeing and human rights. This is demonstrated through its policies, recruitment processes and the work it does in partnership with others.

Safeguarding is not a practice that operates in isolation, but cuts across every service and function undertaken and has direct links with other policies; it therefore needs to be embedded within the organisation.

The Council has a statutory responsibility and a duty of care to cooperate and report issues relating to safeguarding to the appropriate authorities and partner agencies.

The policy aims to:

- Raise awareness of safeguarding, the signs of abuse and information on what to do if any form of abuse is identified or suspected
- Protect children and vulnerable adults from harm while using services that the Council is responsible for (both directly provided and commissioned) by ensuring services have safe working practices in place
- Ensure that employees, casual workers, volunteers and elected members associated with Cotswold District Council are able to report any safeguarding concerns appropriately
- Ensure employees, casual workers, volunteers and elected members have effective training and support to allow them to safeguard children and vulnerable adults
- Work in a way that safeguards children, young people and vulnerable adults from harm and supports their development as members of the local community
- Ensure procedures are in place to protect the child, young person or vulnerable adult first and foremost when suspected abuse or actual abuse is reported and that all employees, contracted organisations and volunteers providing services for children, young people and vulnerable adults understand these procedures
- Understand when abuse is reported it is recognised that the child, young person or vulnerable adult is potentially at risk and their safety is paramount

- Share information when needed in compliance with our Data Protection Policy, Data Protection legislation (General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and Data Protection Act 2018

2. Responsibilities

The Council

The Council has a duty under the Children Act 2004 to ensure that it considers the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children when carrying out their functions.

The council's role for safeguarding vulnerable adults is governed by the Care Act 2014 and the responsibilities apply to adults who: have care and support needs; are experiencing or are at risk of abuse or neglect; are unable to protect themselves from risk of or are experiencing abuse or neglect.

The Council is a member of various countywide partnerships that support the safeguarding of children, young people and vulnerable adults in particular Gloucestershire Safeguarding Adults Board (GSAB) and the Gloucestershire Safeguarding Children Board (GSCB).

The Council will ensure that:

- It meets its legal obligations
- Where applicable, the safeguarding of children, young people and vulnerable adults is considered in strategies, plans and services
- The best safeguarding practices are embedded and maintained across all services to ensure continuous improvement and compliance with national and local policies
- All safeguarding matters relating to safeguarding are expedited in a timely manner and treated seriously
- Support staff and members on all aspects of safeguarding and ensure procedures are adhered to

Staff

Cotswold District Council Staff will:

- Treat all safeguarding matters seriously
- Report any concerns following the procedures in Point 9 below
- Be aware of the policies
- Complete safeguarding training relevant to their role

Elected Members

Elected members are uniquely placed to support the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults within their community. They can also provide effective leadership to ensure that the Council is fulfilling its corporate responsibility. Elected members should always:

- Report their concerns about a child or vulnerable adult's welfare or someone else's behaviour in regards to a child or vulnerable adult as outlined in this policy
- Adopt good practice in terms of safeguarding at all times when carrying out their council duties
- Seek support or raise concerns when necessary

3. Recruitment and Selection of Employees and Volunteers

The Council has a duty of care to protect children, young people and vulnerable adults from harm and is legally obliged to assess the suitability of individuals to positions of trust as set out in section 11 of the Children's Act 2004 and the Care Act 2014 in respect of vulnerable adults.

The Council has a Disclosure and Barring Service Policy available from HR and on the Portal. Senior Managers are responsible for ensuring that members of staff and volunteers in relevant posts will be subject to the appropriate level of criminal record checks.

The Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)¹ is used to check the criminal record of applicants for posts where there is frequent and/or intensive contact with children under the age of 18 and/or vulnerable adults as part of normal and routine duties. 'Frequent' means once a week or more and 'intensive' means four days a month or more or overnight. When it is uncertain whether a member of staff or volunteer fits into one of these categories, the Head of HR and a Senior Manager must discuss the issue to agree a joint decision. Where agreement cannot be reached the Head of HR will make the final decision.

It will be made clear to applicants for posts of this nature that the position is exempt from the provisions of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 and they will need to obtain a satisfactory DBS certificate at the appropriate level prior to commencing employment.

Post holders requiring clearance will not be confirmed in their posts until disclosure information has been received and evaluated. All relevant posts are subject to a satisfactory disclosure being received. This will be detailed in an employee's written statement of terms and conditions of employment.

¹ The DBS operates the vetting and barring scheme which aims to prevent unsuitable people from working with children, young people or vulnerable adults and conducts criminal record checks to enable an assessment to be made on the suitability of a person to care or work with children, young people or vulnerable adults.

The Council's recruitment and selection procedure also ensures that staff or volunteers who will be working with children and/or vulnerable adults meet appropriate standards around experience and qualifications and that evidence is secured as part of the recruitment process.

All existing employees whose role requires a DBS certificate will be required to have a recheck every three years. They will be asked if they wish to participate in the DBS online Update Service, whereby for a small annual subscription fee (initial fee refunded if person remains in employment 12 months after joining the update service), the DBS certificate will be kept up to date and will be portable from role to role where the same type and level of check is required. If a new employee is not already subscribing to the Update Service at the time of being offered a post that requires a DBS check, they will be asked to complete a new DBS application form.

If a criminal record is disclosed the individual's employment situation will be reviewed and this may result in the termination of their employment.

The Council has a duty to refer an individual to the DBS where they consider that a person has caused or may pose a risk of harm to children or vulnerable adults. Line Managers will be made aware of the procedures to follow in such circumstances and that failure to follow them will result in a disciplinary offence.

4. Training

There are different levels of training available to staff, elected members and volunteers through the Portals, Safeguarding Children Board and Safeguarding Adults Board.

All new members of staff and elected members will be briefed on their responsibilities towards children, young people and vulnerable adults during their induction. Staff will be required to undertake the Level 2 on-line iHASCO Safeguarding training module on the Portal and elected members will be made aware of available training through their Portal.

5. Responding to Disclosure, Suspicions and Allegations of Abuse

It is not the responsibility of those working for the Council to decide if abuse is occurring but it is their responsibility to act on concerns and notify the appropriate person or organisation.

[The Procedures](#) for everyone to follow are set out under point 7 below.

6. Allegations of Previous Abuse

Symptoms can include hyper-vigilance, intrusive thoughts, and flashbacks. Flashbacks can be triggered by a variety of stimuli including current abuse by another adult, talking

to someone else, an abusive experience, or learning of the abusive experiences of others.

Historical abuse refers to any allegations of child abuse, which occurred when the victim was a child, and which have been made when the victim is an adult.

Allegations of abuse may be made some time after the event (e.g. by an adult who was abused as a child or by a member of staff who is still currently working with children).

Historical abuse is not confined to abuse which occurred within institutions or at the hands of professionals; historical abuse allegations may also be made about non-professionals, i.e. family members, carers, or other young people.

Complaints should be taken seriously regardless of the amount of information available, for example, where the name of the people involved is not available or cannot be recalled.

Individuals making allegations of historical abuse may have carried their traumatic experiences with them for a significant number of years. Signposting to support services is essential.

7. Procedures – What To Do

It is not the responsibility of an employee or elected member to make the decision whether or not abuse is actually taking place. It is their responsibility to take all allegations seriously whether about a member of staff, elected member or the general public. Their role is to act on their concerns if an incident of abuse is reported.

There is a responsibility to protect children and vulnerable adults in order that appropriate organisations and agencies such as Police or Social Services can investigate and take any necessary action.

It is extremely important that any allegations are not discussed (unless absolutely necessary) as any breaches could be damaging to the child or vulnerable adult and to any investigation which may follow.

What to do:

- Listen carefully to what they have to say
- Don't ask direct questions
- Do not lead the conversation
- Do encourage them to talk

- Be honest with them about what you can and cannot do
- Tell them that you are not able to keep what they have told you secret and you will try to find them the help they need
- When they have finished, make a detailed note of what they have said in their own words
- If you have serious concerns about the immediate safety of the person, contact Social Services or the Police, guidance can be found below
- Complete the **Incident Record Form** which can be found on the Portal this will automatically alert the Safeguarding Team of your concerns and actions taken
- Do not contact or confront the individual who is alleged to be responsible
- Any requests for information from members of the public (including parents) or the media should be directed to the designated Safeguarding Lead

Next Steps:

The Safeguarding Support Team and/or the Safeguarding Lead will consider the information provided and decide whether or not the concern needs reporting to the appropriate Safeguarding bodies or whether signposting to support groups or other organisations is required.

- If the case requires a formal safeguarding referral the original member of staff who completed the Incident Record Form will be requested to make the appropriate online formal referral
- In cases involving employees, elected members or volunteers in an allegation of sexual abuse, including the observing, handling or distributing of materials in any media that involves the sexual abuse of children, the matter should be immediately referred to the Police by a Senior Manager
- Where there are concerns about a member of staff's, elected members or volunteers behaviour outside the workplace towards a child, young person or vulnerable adult, this should be reported at the earliest opportunity to an appropriate Senior Manager
- The Council assures all staff, elected members and volunteers that it will fully support and protect anyone who in good faith (without malicious intent) report his or her concerns about a colleague's practice or the possibility that a person may be being abused or bullied
- The Council recognises that it has a duty to staff, elected members and volunteers against which allegations have been made
- The person who receives information concerning a suspected case of abuse by another member of staff, elected member or volunteer should make a full record of what has been said as soon as possible and pass the information onto an appropriate Senior Manager

Guidance for recording information for Social Services or the Police:

To ensure that this information is as helpful as possible, a detailed record should always be made at the time of the disclosure/concern, which should include the following:

- The name, age and date of birth of the person at risk
- Their home address and telephone number
- Whether or not the person making the report is expressing their own concerns or those of someone else
- The nature of the allegation. Include dates, times, any special factors and other relevant information
- Make a clear distinction between what is fact, opinion or hearsay
- A description of any visible bruising or other injuries. Also any indirect signs, such as behavioural changes
- Details of witnesses to the incidents
- The individual's account, if it can be given, of what has happened and how any bruising or injuries occurred
- Have the parents been contacted?
- If so, what has been said?
- Has anyone else been consulted? If so, record details
- If the child was not the person who reported the incident, has the child been spoken to? If so, what was said?
- Has anyone been alleged to be the abuser? Record details
- Where possible referral to the Social Services or Police should be confirmed in writing within 24 hours and the name of the contact who took the referral should be recorded
- Complete the **Incident Record Form** on the Portal this will automatically alert the Safeguarding Team of concerns and actions taken

8. Procedures for Managing Unacceptable Customer Behaviour

Cotswold District Council is committed to providing great services to all their customers. However, they acknowledge that this needs to be balanced against providing a safe working environment for their staff to operate within.

We exist to improve our local communities with services our staff are proud to deliver.

On occasion, customers may behave inappropriately towards our staff. Where this occurs, the Council reserves the right to manage customer contact in an appropriate manner to protect our staff and to maintain the effectiveness of our service to other customers.

This procedure sets out the approach of the Council on managing any customers whose actions or behaviours are considered unacceptable and are either having a harmful impact on staff or their ability to provide a consistent level of service to other customers.

For the avoidance of doubt this procedure covers all methods of contact, including face to face, email, telephone, letter and via social media.

[Link to Procedure Document](#)

9. Confidentiality, Data Protection and Sharing of Information

Information sharing is vital in identifying and tackling all forms of abuse and neglect. The Data Protection laws should not prevent, or limit, the sharing of information for the purposes of keeping children safe. Lawful and secure information sharing between Social Services and other local agencies is essential for keeping adults and children safe and ensuring they get the support they need.

The Data Protection Act 2018 introduced 'safeguarding' as a reason to be able to process sensitive, personal information, even without consent (**DPA, Part 2, 18; Schedule 8, 4**).

Fears about sharing information **must not be allowed** to stand in the way of promoting the welfare and protecting the safety of adults and children. As with all data sharing, appropriate organisational and technical safeguards.

All members of staff and volunteers must comply with legislative requirements and Council guidelines with regard to Confidentiality, Data Protection and Information Sharing.

The Council recognises that all information regarding the safeguarding of children, young people and vulnerable adults should be kept confidential. However, in order that children, young people and vulnerable adults are protected from harm, in some circumstances, usual considerations of confidentiality that might apply to other situations within the Council may be overridden.

The Council will abide with the relevant Safeguarding Board Information Sharing Protocols.

The Council understands the importance of ensuring that personal data is always treated fairly, lawfully and appropriately and that the rights of individuals are upheld. The Council is fully committed to compliance with the requirements of the Data Protection Act.

The Council is required to share information for a number of reasons, including when information is requested in connection with an assessment of a child's needs under

section 17 of the Children Act 1989 or an enquiry under section 47 of that Act or in connection with court proceedings.

The Council may need to share information about a child or young adult with other agencies. This information sharing is coordinated by the relevant Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub.

The type of information that may be shared includes names, contact details, information about a person's physical or mental health or relations with others. The sharing of this information will be restricted to those who have a demonstrable need to know and robust protections, such as encryption, will be used to share this information.

All staff and volunteers must comply with the Council's internet and e-mail policy and IT Security Policy.

The Lead Safeguarding Officer(s) will act as a first point of contact for notification of any deaths of children /young people or vulnerable adults on Council premises.

Information must only be shared on a 'need-to-know' basis, but you do not need consent to share information if a child is suffering, or at risk of, serious harm.

Staff/volunteers who receive information about children and their families in the course of their work should share that information only within appropriate professional contexts

Timely information sharing is essential to effective safeguarding.

Annex A - Definitions and Types of Abuse

Children and Young People

There are different types of abuse as defined in ‘What to do if you’re worried a child is being abused’. ([MHCLG March 2015](#)).

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is defined as:

- Protecting children from maltreatment
- Preventing impairment of children’s health or development
- Ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care
- Taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes

Child protection is part of this definition and refers to activities undertaken to prevent children suffering, or being likely to suffer, significant harm.

Abuse is a form of maltreatment of a child, and may involve inflicting harm or failing to act to prevent harm.

Neglect is a form of abuse and is the persistent failure to meet a child’s basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child’s health or development.

Children includes everyone under the age of 18

A child may be at risk of abuse in many ways:

Type	Definition	Example Indicators
Emotional	The persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent effects on the child’s emotional development.	Conveying to children that they are worthless or inadequate; imposing age or developmentally inappropriate expectations; serious bullying; exploitation; isolation; segregation.
Sexual	Forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware what is happening, including use of images through social media or other IT.	Inappropriate sexual behaviour, use of language, fear of adults, recoiling from physical contact.

Neglect	The persistent failure to meet a child's psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development.	Inadequate food, clothing or shelter. Poor access to appropriate medical care or treatment, isolation, truanting, lateness.
Physical	May involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child.	Unexplained bruising, burns, fractures, weight gain or loss, repeat illness.
Criminal and Sexual Exploitation	Using a child for profit, labour, sexual gratification or some other personal or financial advantage.	Challenging behaviour appears to be making choices. Don't understand that they are being exploited. Criminal exploitation is a main method used by County Lines gangs. Sexual exploitation can occur through use of technology without the child's recognition such as being persuaded to post sexual images on social media or other IT.

Vulnerable Adults

A vulnerable adult is any person aged 18 or over whom:

- Has needs for care and support (whether or not the local authority is meeting any of those needs)
- Is experiencing, or at risk of, abuse or neglect
- As a result of those care and support needs is unable to protect themselves from either the risk of, or the experience of abuse or neglect

A vulnerable adult may be at risk of abuse in many ways:

Type	Definition	Example Indicators
Physical	Non accidental use of physical force that results or could result in bodily injury, pain or impairment including: assault,	Unexplained bruising, cowering or flinching, bruising consistent with being hit, unexplained burns, unexplained fractures.

	hitting, slapping, pushing, misuse of medication and restraint.	
Domestic Abuse	An incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse by someone who is or has been an intimate partner or family member regardless of gender or sexuality.	Unexplained bruising, cowering or flinching, bruising consistent with being hit, isolation from friends and family, emotional abuse, withholding finances.
Sexual	Direct or indirect involvement in sexual activity without consent.	Incontinence, difficulty/discomfort walking, excessive washing, sexually transmitted diseases, bruising/bleeding in genital areas, bruising, urinary infections.
Emotional or Psychological	Acts or behaviour which impinges on the emotional health of, or which causes distress or anguish to individuals.	Disturbed sleep, anxiety, confusion, extreme submissiveness or dependency, sharp changes in behaviour, loss of confidence or appetite.
Neglect and Acts of Omission	Ignoring or withholding physical or medical care needs which result in a situation or environment detrimental to the individual.	Ignoring medical, physical or emotional care needs (incl. dressing), failure to provide access to appropriate health care, withholding medication, adequate nutrition and heating.
Financial and Material Abuse	Unauthorised, fraudulent obtaining and improper use of funds, property or any resources of an adult at risk. Scamming and coercion in relation to an adult's financial affairs.	Unexplained or sudden inability to pay bills, unexplained withdrawals of money from accounts, personal possessions going missing, unusual interest by a friend/neighbour in financial matters.
Discriminatory	When values, beliefs or culture result in a misuse of power that denies mainstream opportunities to some groups or individuals. Including discrimination on grounds of race, faith, religion,	Inciting others to commit abusive acts, lack of effective communication, bullying.

	age, disability, gender, sexual orientation and political views, along with racist, sexist, homophobic or ageist comments or jokes or comments and jokes based on a person's disability or any other form of harassment, slur or similar treatment.	
Institutional or Organisational	Where the culture of the organisations places the emphasis on the running of the establishment above the needs and care of the person.	Lack of care plans, contact with the outside world not encouraged, no flexibility or lack of choice.
Self-neglect	Neglecting to care for one's personal hygiene, health or surroundings and includes behaviour such as hoarding.	Deterioration in physical appearance, lack of grooming, rapid weight gain or loss.

There are a number of specific acts that constitute abuse which could affect both vulnerable adults and children;

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

FGM is a collective term used for illegal procedures, such as female circumcision, which include the partial or total removal of the external female genital organs, or injury to the female genital organs for a cultural or non-therapeutic reason.

Honour Based Violence (HBV)

HBV is abuse in the name of honour, covering a variety of behaviours (including crimes), mainly but not exclusively against females, where the person is being punished by their family and/or community for a perceived transgression against the 'honour' of the family or community, or is required to undergo certain activities or procedures in 'honour' of the family.

It is a form of domestic abuse which relates to a victim who does not abide by the 'rules' of an honour code. This will have been set at the discretion of relatives or community; the victims are punished for bringing shame on the family or community.

Forced Marriage

In a forced marriage a person is coerced into marrying someone against their will. They may be physically threatened or emotionally blackmailed to do so. It is an abuse of human rights and cannot be justified on any religious or cultural basis.

It is not the same as an arranged marriage where they have a choice as to whether to accept the arrangement or not. The tradition of arranged marriages has operated successfully within many communities and countries for a very long time.

Stalking

The Protection of Freedoms Act 2012 defines “stalking” as an offence. However, there is no legal definition, but examples include: following or spying on a person or forcing contact with the victim through any means including social media. Any of these examples carried out repeatedly or persistently can cause significant alarm or distress.

Radicalisation

Prevent is a government strategy which aims to raise awareness and resilience to radicalisation. It recognises that children and vulnerable adults can be susceptible to extremist views and coerced into criminal behaviour.

Modern Slavery

There are many different characteristics that distinguish slavery from other human rights violations, however only one needs to be present for slavery to exist. It involves people being forced to work through mental or physical threat, owned or controlled by an ‘employer’ usually through mental or physical abuse or the threat of abuse, dehumanised and being treated as a commodity or bought and sold as ‘property’.

Human Trafficking

Takes place when a victim is moved from one place to another for the purpose of exploitation, this could be through sexual exploitation, domestic servitude, forced labour, forced criminality or organ harvesting. The trafficker is able to control and exploit through violence, coercion or deception.

Cyber Crime

Cyber-crime is defined as criminal activity carried out by means of computers or the internet. Criminals are increasingly exploiting the speed, convenience and anonymity of the internet to commit a diverse range of criminal activities without physical or virtual borders. These crimes can cause serious harm and pose significant threats to vulnerable adults and children. Cyber-crime may take the form of cyber bullying. Cyber-bullying is the process of using the Internet, mobile phones or other devices to send or post text or images intended to hurt or embarrass another person. Victims of cyberbullying may not know the identity of their bully, or why the bully is targeting them. The harassment can have wide-reaching effects on the victim, as the content used to harass the victim can be spread and shared easily among many people and often remains accessible for a long time after the initial incident.

Annex B - Useful Partner Contacts

Police Non-Emergency	101
Early Help Team	01452 328160
Children's Helpdesk	01452 426565
Adults Helpdesk	01452 426868
Gloucestershire Domestic Abuse Support Service	0845 602 9035
Gloucestershire Rape and Sexual Abuse Centre	01452 526770
Family Information Service	0800 542 0202
NSPCC	0808 800 5000
ChildLine	0800 1111
Crimestoppers	0800 555 111
Victim Support	01452 317444
Age UK	01452 422660
Samaritans	01452 306333
Modern Slavery National Helpline	0800 121 7000
P3	01242 576002
Change Grow Live	01452 223014
VCS Alliance	info@glosvcsalliance.org.uk
Gloucestershire Probation	01452 389200
Restorative Gloucestershire	01452 754542

Annex C - Reporting Procedure Summary Diagrams

These should be used in conjunction with the detailed [step by step procedure guidance](#) within the Safeguarding Policy.

Reporting Procedure Summary Diagram

