



South Staffordshire Council

**Protection of Children and Vulnerable
Adults at Risk of Abuse and Neglect
Policy and Procedure
2024 (v4 Ed 28th Feb 2024)**



The Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent
Adult Safeguarding Partnership
Abuse must stop



Staffordshire
Safeguarding Children Board

**PROTECTION OF CHILDREN AND VULNERABLE ADULTS AT RISK OF ABUSE AND NEGLECT
POLICY AND PROCEDURE**

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SECTION ONE - PROTECTION OF CHILDREN AND VULNERABLE ADULTS AT RISK OF ABUSE AND NEGLECT POLICY

1. Forward

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.

As elected members, council employees and volunteers, we may go into people's homes, deliver services to children and vulnerable adults at risk of abuse and neglect or notice something which causes us concern when we are out and about in South Staffordshire.

Whatever our role, we may at some point come across abuse to children and young people and vulnerable adults at risk. It is not our role as a district council to investigate any signs of abuse, but we do have a responsibility to act if we have concerns and alert those who can investigate those concerns.

This policy, along with the supporting procedures, guidance and training sets out our commitment to safeguarding, our roles and responsibilities and what we need to do if we have any concerns.

2. INTRODUCTION

South Staffordshire Council has both a moral and legal obligation to ensure a duty of care for children and vulnerable adults across its services. We are committed to ensuring that all children and vulnerable adults are protected and kept safe from harm whilst engaged in services organised and provided by the Council.

The policy and its associated procedures are to help protect and where possible prevent all children and vulnerable adults including those living in our communities placed in our care or accessing our services from abuse or neglect and to protect South Staffordshire Council, its staff, elected members, and volunteers.

3. POLICY STATEMENT

The scope of this policy is to understand the district/borough council legislative framework, to outline the procedures to be followed and to identify the relevant contacts in relation to safeguarding children and vulnerable adults at risk. The policy covers Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults.

South Staffordshire Council has a legal responsibility to safeguard, promote wellbeing and protect children and vulnerable adults.

This will include:

- Respecting and promoting the rights, wishes and feelings of children and vulnerable adults.

- Raising the awareness of the duty of care responsibilities relating to children and vulnerable adults throughout the Council.
- Promoting and implementing appropriate reporting procedures to safeguard the well-being of children and vulnerable adults to protect them from harm.
- Creating a safe and healthy environment within all our services, to protect all parties and reduce the risk of abuse or allegations of abuse from occurring.
- Recruiting, training, supporting, and supervising staff including the designated officer, safeguarding champions and front-line advisors, elected members, and volunteers to adopt best practice to safeguard and protect children and vulnerable adults at risk from abuse, and to also minimise any risks to themselves.
- Responding promptly to any suspicions or allegations of misconduct or abuse of children or vulnerable adults in line with the Staffordshire Safeguarding Children Board (SSCB) inter-agency policies and procedures for safeguarding children and promoting their welfare and the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Adult Safeguarding Partnership Adult Safeguarding procedures.
- Requiring staff, elected members, and volunteers to adopt and abide by the Council's Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults at Risk of Abuse and Neglect policy and procedures, and codes of conduct and associated procedures.
- Reviewing and evaluating this policy and procedure on an annual basis or in line with best practice, changing legislation, organisational requirements, and service delivery.
- Ensuring representatives of South Staffordshire Council who have contact with children, young people or vulnerable adults are subject to safer recruitment procedures. This is also applicable for when the council is working in partnership with other private, voluntary, or contracted organisations and employees.

4. **PRINCIPLES**

This policy and supporting procedures are based on the following principles: -

- The welfare of children and vulnerable adults is the primary concern.
- All children and vulnerable adults irrespective of their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, socio-economic status, religious belief and/ or sexual orientation have the right to protection from abuse and harm.
- It is everyone's responsibility to report any concerns about abuse and neglect in order that children and vulnerable adults are appropriately safeguarded.
- All incidents of alleged poor practice, misconduct and abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly as outlined in the **South Staffordshire Council's SAFEGUARDING Reporting Process April 2024 at Appendix 1.**

- All personal data will be processed in accordance with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998.¹

Recognising abuse is not easy, and it is not the responsibility of council staff, elected members, or volunteers to decide whether abuse has taken place or if there is significant risk. We do however have a responsibility to act if we think it may be happening. Abuse, including neglect, are forms of maltreatment of a child or vulnerable adult.

Somebody may abuse a child or vulnerable adult by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children and vulnerable adults at risk may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting; by those known to them or, more rarely, by a stranger for example via the internet. They may also be abused by an adult or adults, or by another child or children.

Children and vulnerable adults at risk can be subjected to more than one form of abuse at any one time and emotional abuse is present in all cases.

5. SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS/LEGISLATION

The legislative framework underpinning this policy is summarised below. In addition, this policy should be read in conjunction with other Council policies also listed below.

The major pieces of legislation and guidance are:

- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023
- Children Acts 1989, 2004 and 2014
- Modern Slavery Act 2015
- Care Act 2014
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006
- Mental Capacity Act 2005
- Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998
- Data Protection Act 1998
- European Convention of Human Rights
- Disclosure and Barring Service (formerly the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) and Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA).

Staffordshire Safeguarding Children Board's Inter-Agency policies and procedures for Safeguarding Children and Promoting their Welfare
[Core Procedures - Staffordshire Safeguarding Children Board \(staffsscb.org.uk\)](http://staffsscb.org.uk)
 Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Adult Safeguarding Partnership Inter-Agency Procedures

The additional Council policies are:

¹ **Note:** The application\implementation of the data protection requirements in the context of this policy and procedure will, until otherwise determined:-
 a. be subject to the request made to Local Authorities by Lord Justice Goddard as chair of the Goddard Inquiry (20150 to retain of "any and all documents; correspondence; notes; emails and all other information – however held – which may contain content pertaining directly or indirectly to the sexual abuse of children or to child protection and care." and
 b. Good Practice guidance produced from time to time on compliance with the Goddard Inquiry.

- Equality and Diversity Policy
- Whistle blowing Policy and Procedure
- Recruitment and Selection Policy and Procedure
- Disclosure and Barring Policy and Procedure
- Data Protection Policy
- Disciplinary Procedure
- Individual Service operating procedures relating to undertaking the delivery of services to children, vulnerable adults, their parents, guardians, or carers.

SECTION TWO – PROCEDURE AND GUIDANCE

1. INTRODUCTION

This set of procedures and guidelines sets out how South Staffordshire Council will implement the Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults at Risk of Abuse or Neglect policy. It is to be used by all staff that encounter those who fall under the definition of the procedure, or those who are responsible for managing services that affect these individuals or groups.

The procedure guide is intended to be used in conjunction with the policy document, and other supporting individual service procedures. **See appendices for details.**

2. DEFINITIONS USED WITHIN THE PROCEDURE

The term children or young person is used to refer to anyone under the age of 18 years in accordance with the Children Act 1989.

All the policies and procedures described within this document refer to vulnerable adults as well as children.

Vulnerable Adults at risk for the purposes of this procedure are an adult who: has needs for care and support (whether or not the local authority is meeting any of those needs) and; is experiencing, or at risk of, abuse or neglect; and 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.

The term staff, elected members and volunteers is used to refer to employees, district councillors, volunteers and anyone working on behalf of, delivering a commissioned service for or representing the Council.

3. MENTAL CAPACITY ACT 2005

Every adult has the right to make his or her own decisions and must be assumed to have capacity to do so unless it is proved otherwise. This means that you cannot assume that someone cannot decide for themselves just because they have a particular medical condition or disability.

The Mental Capacity Act states that a person lacks capacity if they are unable to make a specific decision, at a specific time, because of an impairment of, or disturbance, in the functioning of mind or brain. The loss of capacity could be partial or temporary and it is possible for a person to lack capacity to make one specific decision but not about another.

The reasons for questioning if a person has capacity to decide at a particular time may be that:

- The person's behaviour or circumstances raise doubt as to whether they have the capacity to decide.
- Concerns about a person's capacity have been raised by someone else; for example, a family member or a healthcare worker.
- The person has previously been diagnosed with a condition causing an impairment to the performance of their mind or brain, and it has already been shown that they lack capacity to make other decisions.

The five principles of the Mental Capacity Act

- A person must be assumed to have capacity unless it is established that he lacks.
- A person is not to be treated as unable to decide unless all practicable steps to help him do so have been taken.
- A person is not to be treated as unable to decide merely because he makes an unwise decision.
- Anything done for or on behalf of the person must be in his best interests.
- Before making the decision, other less restrictive options should be considered.

Assessing capacity

- If you think that an individual lacks capacity, you need to be able to demonstrate it.
- If you think the person may not have capacity to make their own decision- you must evidence their lack of capacity by using the "*Two Stage Test*" to assess their ability to make the specific decision at that time and document your findings.
- The assessment must- wherever possible- take place at a time that will maximise on the person's ability to make their own decision.

Stage one of the Two Stage Test- The diagnostic test –

- Is there a diagnosis of an impairment or disturbance in the functioning of the mind or brain? For example, does the person have dementia, a brain injury, learning disability etc.?
and
- Does the person lack capacity to make the decision specified because of the impairment or disturbance?

If the answer is yes to this test, then the assessment would progress to stage two.

Stage two of the Two Stage Test- The diagnostic test –

Is the person able to?

- Communicate their decision – if a person cannot communicate their decision – for example, if they are in a coma – the Act specifies that they should be treated as if they lack capacity. You should make all efforts to help the person communicate their decision before deciding they cannot.
- Understand the relevant information about the decision (information should be given in a way that they understand, in their preferred communication method, such as using pictures, signs etc.)
- Retain the information – a person should be able to retain the information given for long enough to make the decision. If information can only be retained for short periods of time, it should not automatically be assumed that the person lacks capacity. Notebooks, for example, could be used to record information which may help a person to retain it.
- Balance the information (weighing up the different options and what this means to or for them, understanding the consequences)

If the answer is ‘no’ to any of the 4 questions above, then the person is assessed as lacking capacity to make the specified decision at that time.

- Your decision about a person’s capacity is on a balance of probabilities, which means more likely than not.
- The key point is that you should have reasonable belief that the person lacks capacity to make the specific decision at that specific time.

You must use the Two Stage Test to assess capacity and you must document your capacity assessment including what steps you took to help the person to make their own decision.

4. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Member Safeguarding Champion – Councillor Robert Reade

Councillor Robert Reade is the Safeguarding Champion for Elected Members and works with the Council’s internal corporate working group to ensure the Council is meeting its obligations within Childrens’ and Adults’ Safeguarding.

Designated Officer - Elaine Harper Assistant Director Welfare Services

The Assistant Director Welfare Services is our Designated Professional Lead for the protection of children and vulnerable adults and is responsible for: -

- Ensuring the Council complies with its statutory and governance responsibilities concerning the protection of children and vulnerable adults.

- Ensuring that all employees (including volunteers, contractors, agents and other partner representatives) are aware of this policy and understand how to comply with this procedure.
- Working with responsible bodies to implement and promote a partnership approach to working together to protect children and vulnerable adults in all areas of the community.
- Manage the Council's internal corporate working group.

Information and Referral Officer - Maggie Quinn

The Council's Information and Referral Officer is the Community Wellbeing and Partnership Officer and responsible for:

- Ensuring policy documents and procedures are up to date and in line with best practice as defined under legislation and statutory guidance.
- Receive information from staff, volunteers, children, and vulnerable adults who have concerns, and ensure procedures have been followed. **See appendices 1 (referral process), 2 (children) and 3 (vulnerable adults).**
- Act as the delegated liaison on behalf of the Council for any formal investigations into allegations of abuse undertaken by the police and / or Staffordshire's Children's Social Care Service (CSC).
- Receive the appropriate protection of children and vulnerable adults at risk of abuse and neglect training.
- Maintain a central record of referrals to Staffordshire Children's Advice and Support (SCAS) and the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Adult Safeguarding Partnership Board (SSASPB).

Safeguarding Champions:

The safeguarding champions are listed below and can support and advise staff, elected members and volunteers who have a safeguarding concern:

- **Karen Riley**, Customer Engagement Team Manager – Welfare Services
- **Tahmina Choudhury**, Assistant Team Manager Housing and Welfare
- **Steve Gallis**, Assistant Team Manager Country Park
- **Michelle Kettles**, Welfare and Benefit Team Manager
- **Jane Turner**, Assistant Leisure Centre Manager
- **Wendy Green**, Assistant Team Manager Environmental Health and Licensing
- **Maggie Quinn**, Community Wellbeing and Partnership Officer who is also the Information and Referral Officer

Human Resources

Human Resources are responsible for ensuring:

- Appropriate procedures are in place to carry out and/or verify pre-employment checks for all employees and workers working with the Council who have regular contact with children and/or vulnerable adults in carrying out their duties, including robust reference and Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checking.
- Enhanced checks will be carried out for those employees that meet the definition of 'Regulated Activity.' For further information please refer to the Council's DBS policy.
- DBS checks and employee references are kept secure and confidential in compliance with the DBS Code of Practice.
- A record is kept of all employees that have completed a DBS check.
- Training provision is in place for all staff who work with children and vulnerable adults.
- Appropriate support is provided for any employee that reports a concern in good faith, even if these concerns are subsequently proven to be unfounded.
- Assistance in any investigations regarding allegations against members of staff paying due regard to the role of the Local Authority Designated Officer and interagency procedures.
- The Council complies with its duty under the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 by referring relevant information to the DBS where required to do so in respect of employees and volunteers. This will be undertaken in line with the approved processes set out in the Council's Disclosure and Barring Service policy and procedure. (See section 4, paragraph 8 for more detail).

5. TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

Training schedule:

Designated Professional Lead	Level 1 – 4 Safeguarding training including Safeguarding Lead training.
Safeguarding Champions	Level 1 and 2 Safeguarding training.
Office Employees	Online Safeguarding Course L1 (SCC)
Elected Members	Level 1 training Children and Vulnerable Adults – delivered by South Staffordshire Council
Leisure and Park Rangers	Train the trainer support from Safeguarding Champions

All Employees, Workers, and Elected Members

All employees and volunteers working with children, young people, and vulnerable adults at risk of abuse, should receive appropriate training to assist them:

- in the recognition of abuse
- to adopt good working practices
- to identify the designated safeguarding officer(s), who staff can contact about safeguarding issues.
- to know what to do if they have safeguarding concerns.

It is not the role of the district council to decide whether a child or vulnerable adult at risk has been abused or not. This is the duty of the statutory protection agency (Staffordshire County Council) which has the legal responsibility for investigating allegations of abuse.

It is, however, everybody's responsibility to ensure that concerns are shared, and appropriate action taken.

Employees, volunteers, and elected members:

- Should not begin any unsupervised activity involving direct access to children, young people, or vulnerable adults at risk of abuse and neglect prior to the Council receiving a satisfactory DBS disclosure.
- Should be aware of this policy and procedure and of any local or national related policies/procedures that are applicable for their service area, as part of their induction programme.
- Need to attend mandatory protection of children and vulnerable adults at risk of abuse and neglect training if applicable to their employment role and responsibilities (i.e., if they have direct or some form of indirect contact with children/young people/vulnerable adults).
- Be aware of appropriate and inappropriate behaviour for employees who are working with children, young people, and vulnerable adults.
- Have an expected responsibility to act when they have concerns, witnessed or hold information that relates to the abuse and/or neglect of a child, young person, or vulnerable adult.
- Ensure parental consent is always sought regarding photographs or videos etc. (See Appendix D and E).

Staffordshire County Council has the legal responsibility for investigating allegations of abuse.

SECTION THREE - RECOGNITION OF ABUSE

Important Rule

It is important to remember that many children and vulnerable adults will exhibit some of these signs and indicators at some time, and the presence of one or more should not be taken as proof that abuse is occurring. There may well be other reasons for changes in behaviour such as a death, or the birth of a new baby in the family, relationship problems between parents/carers, etc. However, you should always report anything that causes you to suspect that abuse may be happening or discuss your concerns with one of the Designated Officers as detailed in section 3 for appropriate action to be taken to ensure the welfare and safety of children and vulnerable adults.

Recognising Abuse

Recognising abuse is not easy, and it is not the responsibility of council staff/workers, elected members, or volunteers to assess if an allegation of abuse is correct. South Staffordshire Council has a responsibility to share information and report concerns if we think it may be happening.

Abuse, including neglect are forms of maltreatment of a child or vulnerable adult. Somebody may abuse a child or vulnerable adult by inflicting harm or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children and vulnerable adults may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting; by those known to them or, more rarely, by a stranger for example via the internet. They may also be abused by an adult or adults, or by another child or children.

1. TYPES OF ABUSE

Please note that the tabled examples and signs detailed on the following pages may also be indicators of other medical factors and may not necessarily confirm abuse and neglect. These tables are provided as a guide to help employees identify the types and signs of abuse and to help them decide whether concerns should be raised.

It is accepted that there are the following types of abuse:

1.1 CHILDREN:

Physical abuse, emotional abuse (or psychological), sexual abuse and neglect.

If you have regular contact with a child or young person and can see changes in their behaviour, clothing, actions, or conversations seek advice from one of the safeguarding champions at South Staffordshire Council who can provide you with advice.

An **Information Gathering Form for children** is at **Appendix A** to assist you in getting as much information as possible about the child, their carer and any concerns you may have.

Examples include	Signs include
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shaking • Pinching • Slapping • Force-feeding • Biting • Burning or Scalding. • Causing needless physical discomfort • Inappropriate restraint • Locking someone in a room 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unexplained bruising, marks, or injuries on any part of the body • Frequent visits to the GP or A&E • An injury inconsistent with the explanation offered • Fear of parents or carers being approached for an explanation • Aggressive behaviour or severe temper outbursts • Flinching when approached • Reluctance to get changed or wearing long sleeves in hot weather • Depression • Withdrawn behaviour or other behaviour change • Running away from home/ residential care • Distrust of adults, particularly those with whom a close relationship would normally be expected

EMOTIONAL/PSYCHOLOGICAL ABUSE – CHILDREN AND VULNERABLE ADULTS	
Examples include	Signs include
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intimidation and/or threats • Bullying • Rejection • Shouting • Indifference and the withdrawal of approval • Denial of choice • Deprivation of dignity or privacy • The denial of human and civil rights • Harassment • Being made to fear for one's well being 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A failure to thrive or grow • Sudden speech disorders • Developmental delay, either in terms of physical or emotional progress • Behaviour change • Being unable to play or socialise with others • Fear of making mistakes • Self-harm • Fear of parent or carer being approached regarding their behaviour • Confusion

SEXUAL ABUSE - CHILDREN AND VULNERABLE ADULTS	
Examples include	Signs include
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rape and other sexual offences • For adults, sexual activity including sexual contact and non-sexual contact that the person does not want, to which they have not consented, could not 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pain or itching in the genital/anal areas • Bruising or bleeding near genital/anal areas • Sexually transmitted disease • Vaginal discharge or infection

<p>consent, or were pressured into consenting to.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being encouraged or enticed to touch the abuser • Coercing the victim into watching or participating in pornographic videos, photographs, or internet images • Any sexual relationship that develops where one is in a position of trust, power, or authority 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stomach pains • Discomfort when walking or sitting down • Pregnancy • Sudden or unexplained changes in behaviour, e.g., becoming aggressive or withdrawn • Fear of being left with a specific person or group of people • Nightmares • Leaving home • Sexual knowledge which is beyond their age or development age • Sexual drawings or language • Bedwetting • Saying they have secrets they cannot tell anyone about • Self-harm or mutilation, sometimes leading to suicide attempts • Eating problems such as overeating or anorexia • Disclosure
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NEGLECT - CHILDREN AND VULNERABLE ADULTS	
Examples include	Signs include
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Withholding help or support necessary to carry out daily living tasks • Ignoring medical and physical care needs • Failing to provide access to health, social or educational support • The withholding of medication, nutrition, and heating • Keeping someone in isolation. • Failure to intervene in situations that are dangerous to the person Inadequate supervision and guidance – leaving the child to cope alone, abandoning them, or leaving them with inappropriate carers and failing to provide appropriate boundaries about behaviours such as underage sex or alcohol. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constant hunger, sometimes stealing food from others • Dirty or ‘smelly’ • Loss of weight, or being constantly underweight • Inappropriate dress for the weather • Complaining of being tired all the time • Not requesting medical assistance and/or failing to attend appointments • Having few friends • Worsening of health conditions • Pressure sores • Mentioning they are being left alone or unsupervised • Sore or extreme nappy rash • Skin infections • Lack of response to stimuli or contact • Poor skin condition(s) • Frozen watchfulness • Anxiety • Distressed

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child moves away from parent under stress • Little or no distress when separated from primary carer • Inappropriate emotional responses • Language delay
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Increased Risk to Children

There are many issues that may contribute to child abuse, but some factors increase the risk to children and make them more vulnerable to abuse. They can be found in the background of parents, in the environmental situation and in attributes of the child themselves:

Parental factors:

- Parent has a mental illness
- Parent is misusing drugs or alcohol
- Parent has already abused a child
- Parent has previously had children removed
- Unwanted pregnancy
- Parent has a background of abuse when growing up
- Parents have unrealistic expectations of the child and lack parenting knowledge
- Parent is isolated and has little support
- Parent has a learning difficulty/disability

Environmental factors:

- Overcrowding in the house
- Poverty or lack of opportunity to improve the family's resources
- Domestic abuse is present
- A non-biological adult (i.e., unrelated) living in the house
- Family is experiencing multiple stresses

Child factors:

- Baby is sickly, colicky, or unwanted
- Child has a physical or learning disability
- Lack of attachment between child and parent
- Child resides in care, particularly residential
- Child is excluded from mainstream school
- Child uses drugs/ alcohol
- Child goes missing
- Child is living in private fostering arrangements

1.2 VULNERABLE ADULTS:

Physical abuse, emotional abuse (or psychological), sexual abuse and neglect (as above for children).

Also, financial, discriminatory, organisational/institutional, domestic abuse, modern slavery, neglect and acts of omission and self-neglect (see below).

An **Information Gathering Form for vulnerable adults** is at **Appendix B** to assist you in getting as much information as possible about the adult and their situation and any concerns you may have.

FINANCIAL ABUSE – VULNERABLE ADULTS	
Examples include	Signs include
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being over charged for services • Being tricked into receiving goods or services that they do not want or need • Inappropriate use, exploitation, or misappropriation of property and/or utilities • Theft • Deception • Fraud • Exploitation or pressure in connection with wills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of basic requirements e.g., food, clothes, shelter • Inability to pay bills. • Unexplained withdrawals from accounts. • Inconsistency between standard of living and income • Reluctance to take up assistance which is needed • Unusual interest by family and other people in the person’s assets • Recent changes in deeds • Power of Attorney is obtained against the wishes of the person whom decisions are to be made.

DISCRIMINATORY ABUSE - VULNERABLE ADULTS	
Examples include	Signs include
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of inappropriate “nick names” • Use of derogatory language or terminology • Enforcing rules or procedures which undermine the individual’s well being • Denial to follow one’s religion • Lack of appropriate food • Denial of opportunity to develop relationships • Denial of health care. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being treated unequally from other users in terms of the provision of care, treatment, or services • Being isolated • Derogatory language and attitude by carers • Dismissive language by staff • Hate campaigns by neighbours or others • Deteriorating health • Indicators of other forms of abuse

INSTITUTIONAL ABUSE - VULNERABLE ADULTS	
Examples include	Signs include
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service users required to ‘fit in’ excessively to the routine of the service • More than one individual is being neglected • Everyone is treated in the same way 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inflexible daily routines, for example: set bedtimes and/or deliberate waking • Dirty clothing and bed linen • Lack of personal clothing and possessions

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other forms of abuse on an institutional scale 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inappropriate use of nursing and medical procedures • Lack of individualised care plans and failure to comply with care plans • Inappropriate use of power, control, restriction, or confinement • Failure to access health care, dentistry services etc. • Inappropriate use of medication. • Misuse of residents' finances or communal finances • Dangerous moving and handling practices • Failure to record incidents or concerns
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DOMESTIC ABUSE - VULNERABLE ADULTS	
Examples include	Signs include
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Controlling or coercive behaviour • Forced marriage, honour-based violence • Includes physical, sexual financial and emotional abuse in the context of home or family relationships. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of finances • Pulling away from family and friends • Emotional outbursts and lacking in self esteem • Fear of making mistakes • Self-Harm

SELF NEGLECT - VULNERABLE ADULTS	
Examples include	Signs include
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Little or no personal care • Refusing medication or refusing to stay on medication • Disorientated or incoherent • Unsafe living conditions & hoarding • Inability to manage finances and property • Isolation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor grooming, dirty or ragged clothes, unclean skin, and fingernails • Unwilling to accept medical care • Unable to focus, carry on normal conversation or answer basic questions about date, place, and time • Lack of food or basic utilities in the home, unclean living quarters, rodents, or other vermin • Hoarding animals or trash, inability to get rid of unneeded items • Inability to manage finances and property: not paying bills, repeatedly borrows money, gives money or property away • Little contact with family or friends, no social support

MODERN SLAVERY - VULNERABLE ADULTS	
Examples include	Signs include
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Includes slavery, human trafficking, forced labour and domestic servitude. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of finances • Lack of basic hygiene • Low weight • Poor grooming, dirty or ragged clothes, unclean skin, and fingernails • Fear of making mistakes • No communication skills • Frequent bouts of a sexually transmitted disease • Teenage pregnancy

Increased risks to vulnerable adults

There are certain situations and factors that put people at particular risk of abuse. If one or more of these factors are present, it does not mean that abuse will occur, but it will increase the risk:

- Isolation.
- Living in the same household as an abuser.
- A previous history of abuse.
- The existence of financial problems.
- A member of the household experiences emotional or social isolation.
- Inappropriate physical or emotional environment e.g., lack of privacy and/ or personal space.
- Where there has been a change of lifestyle e.g., illness, unemployment, or employment.
- Dependence on others for personal and practical care.
- Where a person is dependent on other people to administer money or where several people manage their money.
- Where the vulnerable person exhibits difficult and challenging behaviour.
- The carer has difficulties such as debt, alcohol, or mental health problems.
- Poor leadership in care services.
- Unmonitored provision of care e.g., where reviews or inspections do not take place.
- Failure to comply with standard operating policies and procedures.

1.3 OTHER TYPES OF ABUSE

Domestic Violence and Abuse

As of 1st March 2013, the home Office definition of **Domestic violence and abuse** is:

Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling², coercive³ or threatening behaviour, violence, or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. This can encompass but is not limited to the following types of abuse; psychological, physical, sexual, financial and/or emotional

Source: [Definition of domestic violence and abuse: guide for local areas - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/definition-of-domestic-violence-and-abuse)

In all cases where there is knowledge or suspicion that there exists a **potential** for a child or children to be suffering harm as a result of domestic violence and abuse, then a referral should be made to Children's Social Care via the Staffordshire Children's Advice and Support (SCAS) on **0300 111 8007** (Out of hours 0345 604 2886) .

Where it is thought that a victim of domestic violence and abuse meets the definition of an adult at risk of abuse and neglect, then an Adult Protection referral should be made to the Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Adult Safeguarding Partnership Board (SSASPB) on 0345 **604 2719** (Out of hours 0345 604 2886). For further information please refer to the Council's Domestic Abuse Policy.

Hidden Harm

Children may be suffering from the effects of what is known as 'hidden harm' if they live with parents or carers who are misusing drugs or alcohol. Children in these situations may be acting as young carers or they may be subjected to any of the forms of abuse described above. Separate policies and procedures for children living with parents who misuse substances and those who are deemed as young carers can be found on the SSCB website. [Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Safeguarding Children Board \(ssscb.org.uk\)](https://www.sscb.org.uk)

Child Sexual Exploitation

Child sexual exploitation is a form of sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur using technology. (DFE2017)

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE DO NOT MAKE INFORMED CHOICES TO ENTER OR REMAIN IN SEXUAL EXPLOITATION. RATHER, THEY DO SO FROM COERCION, ENTICEMENT, MANIPULATION, FEAR OR DESPERATION. FOR FURTHER GUIDANCE
[Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Safeguarding Children Board \(ssscb.org.uk\)](https://www.sscb.org.uk)

Forced Marriage

² Controlling behaviour is: a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour.

³ Coercive behaviour is: an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim.

Forced marriage⁴ is a marriage without the full and free consent of both parties. It is a form of domestic violence and an abuse of human rights. In an arranged marriage the family will take the lead in arranging the match, but the couples have a choice as to whether to proceed. In forced marriage, one or both spouses do not (or, in the case of some disabled young people and some vulnerable adults, cannot) consent to the marriage and some element of duress is involved. Duress can include physical, psychological, sexual, financial, and emotional pressure. It is important to note that the Mental Capacity Act does **NOT** allow for consent to marry to be given on behalf of a person without capacity to make this decision for themselves.

Female Genital Mutilation

Female genital mutilation (FGM) includes procedures that intentionally alter or cause injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons.” (World Health Organisation, 2014). It is illegal in the UK.

FGM is known by several names including „female genital cutting“, „female circumcision“ or initiation“. The term female circumcision suggests that the practice is like male circumcision, but it bears no resemblance to male circumcision, has serious health consequences and no medical benefits. FGM is also linked to domestic abuse, particularly in relation to honour based violence“.

[Microsoft Word - Female Genital Mutilation \(staffscb.org.uk\)](http://staffscb.org.uk)

Modern Slavery/Trafficking

Modern slavery encompasses slavery, human trafficking, forced labour and domestic servitude. Traffickers and slave masters use whatever means they have at their disposal to coerce, deceive, and force individuals into a life of abuse, servitude, and inhumane treatment.

The organised crime of human trafficking into the UK has become an issue of considerable concern to all professionals with responsibility for the care and protection of children and vulnerable adults. Any form of trafficking humans is an abuse.

Trafficking of persons means the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring, or receipt of persons, by means of the threat of, or use of coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability. It also includes the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation.

It is important to note that some cases involve UK-born people being trafficked within the UK, e.g., people being trafficked from one town to another. The consent of the victim of trafficking is irrelevant where any of the above methods have been used.

Trafficked people may be used for sexual exploitation, agricultural labour including tending plants in illegal cannabis farms and benefit fraud. Children as well as adults are trafficked.

⁴ Research carried out by the then Department for Children, Schools and Families estimated that the national prevalence of reported cases of forced marriage in England was between 5,000 and 8,000, with the youngest victim being 2 years old and the oldest 76 years..

If you have a concern regarding the possible trafficking of a person, you should immediately contact the Designated Officer or make a referral direct to the appropriate team. Practitioners should not do anything which would heighten the risk of harm or abduction to the child or vulnerable adult.

Race and Racism

People from black and minority groups (and their parents or carers) are potentially likely to have experienced harassment, racial discrimination, and institutional racism. Although racism causes significant harm it is not a category of abuse (unless the victim meets the definition of an vulnerable adult at risk of abuse and neglect, in which case an appropriate referral should be made) and dealing with it is considered under other specific policies of the Council and the District Community Safety Partnership.

Threats of suicide

All our employees and members should treat all threats of suicide as a potential life-threatening risk to individuals and a reputational risk to the organisation if we do not act appropriately.

Individuals expressing suicidal intentions must be taken very seriously.

Islamophobia

Fear, hatred, and discrimination against practitioners of Islam or the Islamic religion. Islamophobia is a type of xenophobia, or fear of foreigners or foreign things.

Hate Crime

The Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) and the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) have a nationally agreed definition of Hate Crime. Hate crimes are taken to mean any crime where the perpetrator's hostility or prejudice against an identifiable group of people a factor in is determining who is victimised. This is a broad and inclusive definition. A victim does not have to be a member of the group. In fact, anyone could be a victim of a hate crime.

The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) and The Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) have agreed 5 monitored strands of hate crime as set out below. A hate crime is any criminal offence that is motivated by hostility or prejudice based upon the victim's:

- disability
- race
- religion or belief
- sexual orientation
- transgender identity

Hate crime can take many forms including:

- physical attacks such as physical assault, damage to property, offensive graffiti, and arson
- threat of attack including offensive letters, abusive or obscene telephone calls, groups hanging around to intimidate, and unfounded, malicious complaints

- verbal abuse, insults, or harassment - taunting, offensive leaflets and posters, abusive gestures, dumping of rubbish outside homes or through letterboxes, and bullying at school or in the workplace.

If the victim of a Hate Crime meets the definition of a vulnerable adult at risk of abuse and neglect, an Adult Protection referral should be made to the Contact Centre on **0345 604 2719**.

Safeguarding People who are vulnerable to being drawn into Violent Extremism and/or Terrorism

The current threat from terrorism in the United Kingdom can involve the exploitation of vulnerable people, including children of all ages, young people, and vulnerable adults to involve them in terrorism or activity in support of terrorism.

Violent Extremism is defined by the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) as:

"The demonstration of unacceptable behaviour by using any means or medium to express views, which:

- *Encourage, justify, or glorify terrorist violence in furtherance of beliefs;*
- *Seek to provoke others to terrorist acts;*
- *Encourage other serious criminal activity or seek to provoke others to serious criminal acts;*
- *Foster hatred which might lead to inter-community violence in the UK."*

There are several offences that can be considered when dealing with violent extremism. They include offences arising through spoken words, creation of tapes and videos of speeches, internet entries, chanting, banners and written notes and publications.

The main offences employed to date have been soliciting murder and inciting racial hatred.

The Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Local Safeguarding Children Boards and the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Adult Safeguarding Partnership Board recognise the need to protect people against the messages of all violent extremism including that linked to Far Right / Neo Nazi / White Supremacist, Al Qaeda ideologies, Irish Nationalist and Loyalist paramilitary groups, and that linked to Animal Rights movements.

<http://www.staffscb.org.uk/Professionals/Procedures/Section-Six/Section-Six-Docs/Section-6L-Staffordshire-and-Stoke-on-Trent-LSCB-and-SSASPB-Prevent-Channel-Guidance.docx>

SECTION FOUR - RESPONDING TO DISCLOSURE, SUSPICIONS AND ALLEGATIONS

Council employees/ elected members/ volunteers may come across cases of suspected abuse or neglect either through direct or indirect contact with children and vulnerable adults, for example, running a holiday activity, or visiting homes as part of their day-to-day work. It is not an employee's/ elected members/ volunteer's responsibility to decide whether a child or vulnerable adult has been abused. It is however their responsibility to act immediately on any such suspicions and report their concerns and to ensure any relevant information is passed to the appropriate team (see referral form Appendix 1).

1. RESPONDING TO DISCLOSURE

Abused children and vulnerable adults at risk are more likely to disclose details of abuse to someone they trust and with whom they feel safe. By listening and taking seriously what the child or vulnerable adult is saying employees/ elected members/ volunteers are already helping the situation.

The following points are a guide to help employees respond appropriately:

Dos and Don'ts	
Dos	Don'ts
React calmly so as not to frighten them.	Dismiss the concern.
Seek the views and wishes of the vulnerable adult at risk in relation to the safeguarding concern.	Panic
Take what the person says seriously, recognising the difficulties inherent in interpreting what is being said by a person who has for example a speech impairment and / or differences in language.	Allow your shock or distaste to show.
Avoid asking leading or direct questions other than those seeking to clarify your understanding of what the person has said. They may be subsequently formally interviewed by the Police and/or Children's Social Care Services and they should not have to repeat their account on several occasions. The first person told may become at witness at court if they have asked/gained direct relevant information.	Probe for more information than is offered.
	Speculate or make assumptions.
	Make negative comments about the alleged abuser.
	Make promises or agree to keep secrets
	Ask the child, young person, vulnerable adult at risk of abuse and neglect any witnesses to sign your written information as this may be significantly detrimental to any subsequent police investigation

Dos and Don'ts	
Dos	Don'ts

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reassure the child or vulnerable adult <u>at risk of abuse and/or neglect</u> that they are right to tell. • Explain to them that concerns may have to be shared with someone who is able to act. • Make a written record of what has been disclosed at the earliest opportunity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take photographs of any alleged injuries. Any such recording must only be done by an approved medical or other practitioner, following referral. • Examine injuries.
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2. RESPONDING TO CONCERNS FOR A CHILD

If any employee, worker elected member or volunteer has any concerns regarding a child who they think is being abused it is important for them to report within 24 hours.

If it is recognised that a child is in immediate danger or there is a risk to life, call 999 immediately.

If there are signs of a child being abused begin to complete the Referral Form for Children to gather information. You may see signs over a period, include all signs in the form to create an overall picture of your concerns.

Ask for guidance from a Safeguarding Champion as there may be a need to either get consent from a parent/carer to refer into Staffordshire Children’s Advice and Support (SCAS) or inform them that you will be referring in.

Consent:

If you feel it appropriate to discuss your concerns with the child, and possibly the family too, it may help to resolve the issue and negate the need for a referral. To have a discussion can build trust and encourage parents to seek support which can prevent issues escalating.

Parents may refuse to engage or give their consent for a referral. At this point you may need to make a judgement as to whether, without help, the needs of the child would escalate. You don’t have to make this decision on your own, ask for guidance from a Safeguarding Champion.

Making a referral:

It is the responsibility of the individual employee, worker, elected member, or volunteer to report safeguarding concerns by contacting **Staffordshire Children’s Advice and Support (SCAS) – 0300 111 8007** between 8.30 am – 5pm Monday to Thursday and 8.30am – 4.30pm Friday or Out of hours 0345 604 2886. Use the Referral Form for Children you have completed as the basis of your conversation with the operator at SCAS. They will ask you some questions and will tell you if they will be taking the referral or not.

The Referral Form for Children needs to be kept as a safeguarding record and the outcome of the conversation with SCAS needs to be recorded too.

Early Help - Responding to lower-level concerns in relation to children.

If any employee, worker, elected member or volunteer encounter children and families that need additional support and help there is a Vulnerability Hub in South Staffordshire where children and families are discussed. A range of agencies are represented at the Vulnerability Hub who can provide early help and support to prevent them from reaching a crisis point. Further information about Early Help is available at: <https://staffsscb.org.uk/working-together-to-safeguard-children/early-help-strategy/> For referrals into the Vulnerability Hub email Hub@sstaffs.gov.uk you will be expected to attend the meeting to explain the circumstances of your referral.

3. RESPONDING TO CONCERNS FOR A VULNERABLE ADULT

If any employee, worker elected member or volunteer has any concerns regarding a vulnerable adult who they think is being abused it is important for them to report within 24 hours.

If it is considered that a vulnerable adult is in immediate danger or there is a risk to life, call 999 immediately.

If there are signs of adult abuse, begin to complete the Referral Form for Vulnerable Adults to gather information. You may see signs over a period, include all signs in the form to create an overall picture of your concerns.

Ask for guidance from a Safeguarding Champion as there may be a need to get consent from a carer to refer into the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Adult Safeguarding Partnership Board (SSASPB) or inform them that you will be referring in.

Consent:

Consent is not required for adult protection referrals; however, it is good practice to gain consent if possible. If the vulnerable adult lacks capacity to decide to share the information for themselves, a decision can be taken in their best interests about whether this is appropriate.

You don't have to make this decision on your own, ask for guidance from a Safeguarding Champion.

Information can also be shared without consent if there is an overriding public or vital interest;

- Risk of harm to the wellbeing and safety of the vulnerable adult or others
- Other vulnerable adults or children could be at risk
- It is necessary to prevent crime, or a crime may have been committed
- The person lacks capacity to consent

Making a referral:

It is the responsibility of the individual employee, worker, elected member, or volunteer to report safeguarding concerns by contacting **Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Adult Safeguarding Partnership Board (SSASPB) – 0345 604 2719 between 8.30 am – 5pm Monday to Thursday; and 8.30am – 4.30pm Friday or Out of hours 0345 604 2886.** Use the Referral Form for Vulnerable Adults you have completed as the basis of your conversation with the operator at SSASPB. They will ask you some questions and will tell you they will pass all the details onto the Adult Safeguarding Team.

The Referral Form for Vulnerable Adults needs to be kept as a safeguarding record and the outcome of the conversation with SCAS needs to be recorded too.

Responding to lower-level concerns in relation to vulnerable adults

If any employee, worker, elected member or volunteer encounter vulnerable adults that need additional help due to care and support needs there is a Vulnerability Hub in South Staffordshire where vulnerable adults are discussed. A range of agencies are represented at the Vulnerability Hub who can provide early help and support to prevent them from reaching a crisis point.

To refer into the Vulnerability Hub email: Hub@sstaffs.gov.uk you will be expected to attend the meeting to explain the circumstances of your referral.

4. RESPONDING TO ALLEGATIONS AGAINST STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

Procedures and guidance relating to allegations against people who work with children are contained within Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023 (Chapter 4):

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65cb4349a7ded0000c79e4e1/Working_together_to_safeguard_children_2023_-_statutory_guidance.pdf

It is essential that any concerns for the welfare of a child arising from abuse or harassment by a member of staff or a volunteer should be reported **IMMEDIATELY** to the The Designated Officer (Elaine Harper, Assistant Director Welfare Services) or the Information and Referral Officer (Maggie Quinn, Community Wellbeing and Partnership Officer). In their absence one of the other Safeguarding Champions detailed in section 3 should be informed along with the Assistant Director Organisation and People Development (HR).

The Designated Officer or Information and Referral Officer must contact Staffordshire Children's Advice and Support (SCAS) or Adults Safeguarding within 24 hours.

5. SUPPORT FOR THE REFERRER

The Council will fully support and protect all employees, workers, elected members or volunteers who, in good faith (without malicious intent), make a referral about a colleague who may be abusing a child or vulnerable adult and report his or her concern about a colleague's practice.

This support may take the form of counselling through the Council's service, moving the person reporting the abuse / potential abuse to another workplace temporarily whilst the incident is investigated. The Council also has a whistle blowing procedure which a referrer can follow if there are reasons why the standard procedures for dealing with allegations make them feel particularly vulnerable, or if they consider their concerns are not being acted upon appropriately.

However, all employees, workers, elected members or volunteers have a duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and vulnerable adults and to investigate concerns robustly. It may not be possible to maintain complete anonymity, but the interests of the referrer will be protected when concerns are raised.

6. DISCLOSURE

Any employees, workers, elected members or volunteers who become the subject of a police investigation in relation to physical or sexual offences against vulnerable adults or children, or are charged with such a criminal offence, must inform the Assistant Director Organisation and People Development (HR). Staff must disclose any convictions, cautions, court orders, reprimands and warnings which may affect their suitability to work with children whether received before, or during their employment at the organisation. The Assistant Director Organisation and People Development will discuss any potential safeguarding matters and any required action will be agreed.

7. TYPES OF INVESTIGATION

There may be several strands to a child or vulnerable adult protection investigation e.g., professionals' strategy meetings, child protection conferences and core groups, criminal investigations joint evaluation meetings as well as disciplinary investigations. Employees, workers, elected members or volunteers may need to be involved as witnesses, holders of key information, or regarding ongoing processes around protection and welfare.

The Council will consider protecting all parties when an employee is accused of abuse pending a formal investigation. For the employee who is accused, options may include alternative work. Where that is not possible agreed gardening leave or suspension may be considered. An investigation will be carried out as quickly as is possible for the protection of all parties involved. The Council will assess each individual allegation on its own, considering the findings of any criminal investigation and respond to the outcome of the investigation in line with Council policy and procedure.

Employees, workers, elected members or volunteers are strongly advised to ensure they respect and maintain appropriate boundaries between themselves and children, young people, and vulnerable adults. The Code of Conduct in section 5 provides advice about professional practice that will minimise the potential for unintentional inappropriate behaviour and/or misunderstandings.

8. REFERRAL TO THE DISCLOSURE AND BARRING SERVICE

Where an employee has been dismissed or where a member of staff/volunteer has been removed from working with children and/or vulnerable adults (in what is legally defined as a Regulated Activity) because they meet the referral criteria the Council will manage any required referral to the disclosure and barring service (DBS) in line with the relevant provisions of the Disclosure and Barring policy and procedure.

9. CONFIDENTIALITY

Every effort should be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned. Information should be handled and disseminated on need-to-know basis only.

Where there is any possibility that a criminal act may have been committed care should be taken not to take any action that may jeopardise any subsequent criminal investigation. **This includes contacting the alleged perpetrator.** Advice should FIRST be sought from the police

and/or Children's Social Care LADO. This will be co-ordinated by the Assistant Director Welfare Services.

It is extremely important that allegations or concerns are not discussed, as any breach of confidentiality could be damaging to the child or vulnerable adult, their family and any child/vulnerable adult protection investigations that may follow.

Any individual under supervision has the right to be notified about the cause for concern. This should be done in joint consultation with Children's Social Care Services and the Police. It is important that the timing of this does not prejudice the investigation.

Recorded information should be stored in a secure place with limited access e.g., to the Designated Child and Adult Protection Officer, and in line with data protection laws (e.g., that information is accurate, regularly updated, relevant and secure).⁵

If enquiries arise from the public (including parents) or any branch of the media, it is vital that all staff, elected members, and volunteers are briefed so that they do not make any comments regarding the situation. Staff, elected members, and volunteers should be informed who the relevant designated Council spokesperson will be, and all enquiries directed through them. Staff, elected members, and volunteers should reply 'no comment' to all questions / enquiries.

SECTION FIVE – CODE OF CONDUCT

1. PROMOTING GOOD PRACTICE

a. Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults at Risk of Abuse and Neglect

It is possible to limit the situations where the abuse of children and vulnerable adults may occur, by promoting good practice to all staff, elected members, and volunteers.

This code of conduct details the type of practice required by all staff, elected members, and volunteers when in contact with children or vulnerable adults. The types of practice are categorised into good practice, practice to be avoided and practice never to be sanctioned.

This Code of Practice will be issued to all employees who work with or encounter children and/or vulnerable adults along with an executive summary of this policy/procedure.

b. Code of Practice for working with Children and Vulnerable Adults at Risk of Abuse and Neglect

South Staffordshire Council supports and requires the following good practice by staff, members, and volunteers when in contact with children and vulnerable adults.

When working with children and vulnerable adults all parties should:

- Adhere to the protection of children, and vulnerable adults at risk of abuse and neglect policy always.
- Always work in an open environment e.g., avoid private or unobserved situations and encourage an open environment for activities.
- Treat all children and vulnerable adults equally, with respect and dignity.
- Be an excellent role model including not smoking or drinking alcohol in the company of children and vulnerable adults at risk.
- Ensure if any form of manual or physical support is required for a child or vulnerable adult, it is provided openly, the child or adult is informed of what is being done and their consent is obtained.
- Deliver educational instruction first verbally; secondly role-modelling; and thirdly, and only, if necessary, with hands on – which must be accompanied by telling the child or vulnerable adult why it is necessary and obtaining their consent.
- Involve parents, guardians, and carers wherever possible.
- Build balanced relationships on mutual trust that empower children and vulnerable adults to share in the decision-making process.
- Recognise the developmental needs and capacity of children and vulnerable adults. Avoid excessive training or competition and either pushing them against their will or putting undue pressure on them.

An example form for obtaining parental consent for taking part in events/activities is given at appendix C.

2. PRACTICE TO BE AVOIDED

In the context of job roles within South Staffordshire Council, the following practice should be avoided by employees:

- Avoid having favourites – this could lead to resentment and jealousy by other children or vulnerable adults and could lead to false allegations.
- Avoid spending excessive amounts of time alone with children or vulnerable adults away from others.
- If it is necessary to enter rooms, the door should remain open, if appropriate.
- Avoid, where possible, doing things of a personal nature for children and vulnerable adults that they can do for themselves.
- Avoid engaging in physical contact (e.g., horseplay) except as permitted within the rules of the game or competition.

NB. It may sometimes be necessary to do things of a personal nature for children/ vulnerable adults at risk of abuse and neglect, particularly if they are incredibly young or are disabled. These tasks should only be carried out with the full understanding and consent of the parent or guardian. In an emergency that requires this type of help, employees should endeavour to have someone present and fully inform the parents as soon as it is possible. In such situations it is important that all staff etc. are sensitive to the child/ vulnerable adult and undertake personal care tasks with the utmost discretion. Staff should not take on the responsibility for tasks for which they are not appropriately trained.

3. PRACTICE NEVER TO BE SANCTIONED

In the context of job roles within the Council, the following practices should never be sanctioned by employees:

- Never engage in contact of a personal nature e.g., texting, dialog on face book and other social media.
- Never engage in sexually provocative games.
- Never form intimate emotional or physical relationships with children or vulnerable adults.
- Never allow or engage in touching a child or vulnerable adult in a sexually suggestive manner.
- Never allow children and vulnerable adults to swear or use sexualised language unchallenged.
- Never make sexually suggestive comments to a child or vulnerable adult, even in fun.
- Never reduce a child or vulnerable adult to tears as a form of control.
- Never allow allegations made by a child or vulnerable adult to go unchallenged, unrecorded, or not acted upon.
- Never share a room with a child or vulnerable adult for sleeping accommodation.

- Never invite or allow children or vulnerable adults to stay with an employee at their private home.
- Never use the internet to access child pornography sites (see Email and Internet Code of Conduct).
- Never physically restrain a child or young person unless this is an appropriate response to prevent physical injury to the individual or to another person, or to prevent damage to any property. In any circumstances physical restraint must be proportionate and reasonable otherwise the restraint could be defined as assault.
- Never leave children unattended or with employees who have not been subject to an appropriate Disclosure and Barring Service check.
- Never issue medication to a child or a vulnerable adult unless there are specific and detailed instructions and written consent given by the child / young person's parent, carer, or legal guardian (someone who has parental responsibility for the child / young person).

Important Note: In exceptional cases room sharing may be required for health and safety reasons or if the child is incredibly young or particularly vulnerable. If so, this should be explained why this is necessary to the child/ vulnerable adult and their parent or guardian or carer and their consent sought. Where possible ensure that at least two adults, preferably male and female are in the room.

Employees who breach this code of behaviour may be subject to the Council's disciplinary procedures depending upon the circumstances of the case.

4. FIRST AID AND TREATMENT OF INJURIES

If a child or vulnerable adult at risk of abuse and neglect requires first aid or any form of medical attention whilst in the care of an employee, then the following good practice should be followed:

- Be aware of any pre-existing medical conditions, medicines being taken by participants or existing injuries and treatment required
- Keep a written record of any injury that occurs, along with the details of any treatment given.
- Where possible, ensure access to medical advice and/or assistance is available.
- Only those with a current, recognised First Aid qualification should respond to any injuries.
- Where possible any course of action should be discussed with the child/ vulnerable adult, in language that they understand, and their permission sought before any action is taken.
- In more serious cases, assistance must be obtained from a medically qualified professional as soon as possible.
- The child's or vulnerable adult's parents/guardians or carers must be informed of any injury and any action taken as soon as possible, unless it is in the child's or vulnerable adult's interests and on professional advice not to.
- A notification of Accident Form must be completed and signed and passed to the Health and Safety Officer.

If it is necessary to provide transport or take children or vulnerable adults away from home the following good practice must be followed:

- Where practical request written parental/guardian consent if members of staff are required to transport children/ vulnerable adults.
- Always tell another member of staff that a child is being transported, giving details of the route and the anticipated length of the journey.
- Ensure all vehicles are correctly insured.
- All reasonable safety measures are taken, e.g., children in the back seat behind the driver, seatbelts are worn and booster seats in place.
- Ensure where possible, a male and female accompany mixed groups of children or vulnerable adults. These vulnerable adults should be familiar with and agree to abide by the Council's Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults at Risk of Abuse and Neglect policy and procedures.
- Always plan and prepare a detailed programme of activities and ensure copies are available for other staff and parents/guardians.

South Staffordshire Council and its staff, elected members and volunteers should undertake reasonable care that contractors doing work on behalf of the Council are monitored appropriately. Service Level agreements or contracts in place for these contractors should therefore specify this requirement.

Any contractor or sub-contractor engaged by the Council in areas where workers are likely to come into contact with children or vulnerable adults, must have their own equivalent Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults at Risk of Abuse and Neglect policy, or failing this, must confirm that they have read and understood and are willing to comply with the terms of this policy and associated procedures.

Where there is potential for contact with children or vulnerable adults it is the responsibility of the manager who is using the services of the contractor (the Client) to check that the correct Disclosure and Barring Service check has been satisfactorily completed, that (the Client) has a suitable child/ vulnerable adult protection policy and suitable staff safeguarding training in place.

5. GUIDELINES ON CHILDREN AND VULNERABLE ADULTS AT RISK OF ABUSE AND NEGLECT IN PUBLICATIONS AND ON THE INTERNET

Websites and publications provide excellent opportunities to publicise achievements of individuals and provide a showcase for the activities of children and vulnerable adults at risk of abuse and neglect. In some cases, however, displaying certain information about children and vulnerable adults could place them at risk. The following procedure must be followed to ensure the Council's publications and information on the internet does not place children or vulnerable adults at risk.

- Publications or information on an internet site must never include personal information that could identify a child and vulnerable adult.
- Any contact information must be directed to the Council or another relevant organisation's address.

- Before publishing any information about a child or a vulnerable adult, written consent must be obtained from the child or vulnerable adult's parent/guardian/carer. If the material is changed from the time of consent, the parents/guardians must be informed, and consent provided for the changes.
- The content of photographs or videos must not depict a child or vulnerable adult in a provocative pose or in a state of partial undress. Children and vulnerable adults must never be portrayed in a demeaning or tasteless manner.
- For photographs or videos of groups or teams of children or vulnerable adults ensure that only the group or team is referred to not individual members. Credit for achievements by a child or vulnerable adult are to be restricted to first names only.
- All published events involving children or vulnerable adults must be reviewed to ensure the information will not put children or vulnerable adults at risk. Any publications of specific meetings or child/vulnerable adult events e.g., team coaching sessions, must not be distributed to any individuals other than to those directly concerned.
- Care must be taken when publishing photographs, film or videos of children or vulnerable adults who are considered particularly vulnerable e.g., the subject of a child or adult protection issue or a custody dispute.

Important Note: Any concerns or enquiries about publications or internet information should be reported to the Council's Designated Child and Adult Protection Officer.

6. GUIDELINES ON USE OF PHOTOGRAPHY, VIDEOING AND FILMING OF CHILDREN AND VULNERABLE ADULTS AT RISK OF ABUSE AND NEGLECT (INCLUDING MOBILE PHONE TECHNOLOGY)

There is evidence that some individuals have used public events as an opportunity to take inappropriate photographs or film footage of children. The following best practice is to be adopted to protect children and vulnerable adults at risk of abuse and neglect who are being photographed or videoed:

- When commissioning professional photographers or inviting the press to cover Council services, events and activities organisers must ensure that they make expectations clear in relation to child and vulnerable adult protection.
- Organisers must check the credentials of any photographers and organisations used.
- Where possible the consent of the parent/guardian for photographing, videoing and/or filming of a child or vulnerable adult must be obtained prior to the event or activity. (See appendix D and E).
- Where possible anyone wishing to use photographic/film/video equipment at a venue must obtain the approval of the Council.
- An activity or event specific identification badge/sticker must be provided and clearly always displayed, by accredited photographers, film, and video operators on the day of the activity or event.
- Unsupervised access must not be allowed to children or vulnerable adults or one to one photographic session.
- Do not allow photographic sessions outside of the activities or services, or at a child or vulnerable adult's home.
- It is recommended that the names of children or vulnerable adults should not be used in photographs or video footage, unless with the express permission of the child or vulnerable adult's parent, guardian, or carer.

- South Staffordshire Council always reserves the right to prohibit the use of photography, film or video at any event or activity with which it is associated.
- The specific details concerning photographic /video and filming equipment should, where possible, be published prominently in event programmes and must be announced over the public address system prior to the start of an event. The recommended wording is:

“In line with the recommendation in the Council’s Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults at Risk of Abuse and Neglect policy, the promoters of the event request that any person wishing to engage in any video, zoom or close-range photography should register their details with staff at the spectator’s entry desk before carrying out any such photography. The promoter reserves the right to decline entry to any person unable to meet or abide by the promoters’ conditions.”

- Any concerns with photographers or video or film operators are to be reported to the Council’s Designated Child and Adult Protection Officer and where relevant, the Police.

7. PARENTS/CARERS USE OF PHOTOGRAPHIC AND FILMING AT EVENTS

It is good practice to inform parents/carers of our expectations of them using their own photographic/filming equipment at events organised by the Council.

- Parents/carers and spectators should register with the organiser, their intent to use zoom, close range photography or filming equipment at an event.
- Children, vulnerable adults, parents/carers should be informed that if they have concerns, they can report these to the organiser.
- Concerns regarding inappropriate or intrusive photography or filming should be reported to the organiser, or senior member of staff present. It is their responsibility to record the incident on the incident report form and pass on to the Designated Child and Adult Protection Officer to take appropriate action.

An example of wording to be displayed at an event or on publicity material prior to the event should follow the lines of:

“In line with South Staffordshire Council’s Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults at Risk of Abuse and Neglect policy, any person wishing to engage in the zoom, close range photography or filming, should register their intent with the event/activity organiser, prior to carrying out any such photography or filming. The organiser reserves the right to refuse any such photography or filming if there are concerns or complaints about its appropriateness”

An example form for use at Events and for taking, video material, photographs is given at appendices D and E.

8. VIDEOING AS A COACHING AID

There is no intention to prevent coaches or teachers using video equipment as a legitimate coaching aid. However, performers and their parents/carers should be aware that this is part of the coaching programme and care should be taken in the storing of such films.

SECTION SIX – BEST PRACTICE IN THE RECRUITMENT OF STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS WORKING WITH CHILDREN

1. PRE-RECRUITMENT

If any form of advertising is used to recruit staff and volunteers, it should reflect:

- The responsibilities of the role
- The level of experience or qualifications required (e.g., experience of working with children is an advantage)
- The Council's open and positive stance on the protection of children and vulnerable adults at risk of abuse and neglect to promote a strong culture of vigilance which may deter unsuitable people from applying.
- The use of the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) and other vetting procedures in the recruitment and selection process.

2. APPLICANT INFORMATION

All applicants, whether for paid or voluntary, full- or part-time positions, should complete an application form, which should elicit the following information:

- Name, address, and National Insurance Number
- Past career, relevant interests, any gaps in employment and reasons for leaving
- Relevant experience, educational qualifications, job specific qualifications and training
- Any criminal record
- The names of at least two people (not testimonials) willing to provide a reference where it is a requirement of the job.

3. CHECKS AND REFERENCES

Staff and volunteers recruited to work in services for children and vulnerable adults at risk of abuse and neglect must be checked for any irregularities (or issues), which may give reason for concern.

A minimum of two references must be taken up, one of which must be the previous employer and if available, at least one should be associated with former work with children or vulnerable adults at risk of abuse and neglect. References should include the applicant's suitability to work with children or vulnerable adults where it is a requirement of the job.

Qualifications relevant to being able to professionally practice will be checked with awarding bodies.

All posts that meet the definition of 'Regulated Activity' will require an Enhanced DBS Disclosure. These checks will be completed by the Human Resources Team.

If a DBS check highlights an unspent conviction a risk assessment will be carried out to assess the suitability of the applicant to work with children or vulnerable adults. This will be carried out by the Service Manager and a member of the HR Team who has attended Safer Recruitment training.

4. INTERVIEW

Interviews are carried out in line with the Council's Recruitment and Selection procedures. Managers are required to ensure the interview is likely to include questions on how to deal with children and vulnerable adult protection issues.

5. INDUCTION AND TRAINING

Checks are only part of the process to protect children and vulnerable adults from abuse and/or neglect. Appropriate training will enable individuals to recognise their responsibilities regarding their own good practice and the reporting of suspected poor practice/concern of abuse and/or neglect. Service Managers are required to ensure relevant service induction takes place.

The induction and training should include:

- An assessment of the training needs required (Manager)
- Clarification, agreement and signing up to the Council's Code of Conduct for Employees (HR)
- Clarification, agreement and signing up to the Council's Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults at Risk of Abuse and Neglect policy and procedure (policy declaration – appendix G) (HR)
- The provision of an executive summary of the policy and code of conduct regarding safeguarding (HR)
- The expectations, roles and responsibilities of the job are clarified (Manager)
- As a minimum the Council expects all staff to have undergone formal children and or vulnerable adult at risk of abuse and neglect training related to their job within 6 months of commencement of employment with the Council. Refresher training will be required every 3 years. This is the responsibility of line managers in services where children and/or vulnerable adults at risk of abuse and neglect are clients/customers.

6. PROBATION, MONITORING AND PERFORMANCE DEVELOPMENT REVIEWS

All newly appointed members of staff undergo an agreed period of probation on commencement of their role.

All members of staff who have contact with children and vulnerable adults at risk of abuse and neglect will be monitored and their performance appraised. This will give an opportunity to evaluate progress, set new goals, identify training needs, and address any issues of poor practice. Line Managers should be sensitive to any concerns about poor practice and act on them at an early stage. They should also offer appropriate support to those who report concerns/complaints.

It is the responsibility of Line Managers to monitor good practice.

This can be done in several ways:

- Direct observation of the activity or service. Staff appraisals, mentoring and providing feedback on performance.
- Children and vulnerable adults feedback on the activities or services.

South Staffordshire Council is committed to the fair treatment of its staff, potential staff, or users of its services, regardless of race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, responsibilities for dependants, age, physical/mental disability, or offending background.

Having a criminal record will not necessarily bar someone from working with the Council. This will depend on the nature of the position, the nature of the offence, how long ago and at what age the offence was committed and any factors which may be relevant.

Failure to declare a conviction, caution, or pending police action, will disqualify the applicant from appointment or result in summary dismissal if the discrepancy becomes known.

SOUTH STAFFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

South Staffordshire Council's Referral Form for Children (up to 18 years), who may be at risk of Abuse and Neglect:

Where there is a risk to the life of a child or a likelihood of serious immediate harm then you must contact the police on 999. Please also complete the referral form and follow the process below.

For abuse and neglect concerns please complete the following details and contact Staffordshire Children's Advice and Support (SCAS) – 0300 111 8007
8.30 am – 5pm Monday to Thursday and 8.30am – 4.30pm Friday
(Out of normal office hours - 0345 604 2886)

Through the SCAS advice line you will be connected to a Social Worker who will take all the details and ask you questions, following this a formal referral by email may be the outcome.

Please complete as much information as possible but you may not be aware of all details depending on the situation – do not let this delay your referral to Staffordshire Children's Advice and Support (SCAS) team.

Please send copies/details of this report, and any correspondences, conversations, and observations to safeguardingreferralteam@sstaffs.gov.uk A record will then be opened in the child/adult's name.

Consent

If your enquiry is not urgent and you have selected that the child is not at risk of significant harm, you need to seek consent from the parent or guardian before an enquiry form is submitted, however if consent is not given inform the parent/guardian that a referral will be made.

If you need further support to complete this referral, please contact one of the safeguarding champions and/or refer to the Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults at Risk of Abuse and Neglect Policy and Procedure Page 11.

Referrer Details:			
Referred by:			
Contact details:		Designation:	
Date of Referral:		Time:	
Is the parent/carer aware of this referral	Y / N	Is the child/young person aware of this referral	Y / N
Child / young person's details (Please fill in as much of this section as you can):			

Name of child/young person:		Any other names or aliases:	
Date of birth:		Gender:	Female Male
Home Address (incl. postcode):			
Tel No (including mobile numbers):			
Any other known addresses:			
Child / young persons' ethnicity:			
Is English their first language:	Y / N	Parent's / Carer's first language:	
Does the child / young person have a disability:	Y / N	Name of Parents / Carers:	
Are there any other siblings or other children linked to your enquiry that need to be added (maximum of 4 additional children)?			
<u>Parent/Carers details. (If different from above)</u>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Name • DOB • Phone • Email • Do they live at the same address? Yes/No • Ethnicity • Do they need an interpreter? 			
<u>Concerns</u>			
If the child is at immediate risk, for example they are home alone now or exposed to drugs now, please call the police immediately.			
How would you categorise the risk?			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical • Emotional • Sexual • Neglect • Home alone • Missing • Domestic violence • Person posing risk to child • Exposure to drugs • Exposure to alcohol • Mental health 			

- Other

If you selected 'Other' please give the details here:

How long is it since you first had these concerns?

When did you last see the child(ren)?

Have you reported your concerns before? Yes/No

If yes, who did you report it to and what advice were you given?

What advice were you given?

Were you given a reference number? If so, please enter it here.

Are you aware of any substance misuse, domestic violence or adult mental health difficulties that affect the family? If so, please enter the details here.

Please tell us anything else you know about the family that may be relevant to the child(ren)'s safety and welfare?

Please explain what has happened, or what you are concerned about?

SOUTH STAFFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

South Staffordshire Council's Referral Form for Vulnerable Adults who may be at risk of Abuse and Neglect

If the adult is in immediate danger, please call 999.

If the adult is not at risk of abuse or neglect but has care and support needs these referrals should be made to Staffordshire Cares 0300 111 8010 or staffordshirecares@staffordshire.gov.uk and/or the adult should be advised to book a GP appointment for signposting.

If the adult is at risk of abuse or neglect and lives in Staffordshire
Telephone: [0345 604 2719](tel:03456042719) (Monday to Thursday 8:30am to 5pm, Fridays 8:30am to 4:30pm, excluding Bank Holidays) or [0345 604 2886](tel:03456042886) at any other time

Please send copies/details of this report, and any correspondences, conversations, and observations to safeguardingreferralteam@sstaffs.gov.uk A record will then be opened in the child/adult's name

For further advice and guidance on what is abuse and neglect, visit, [safeguarding quality and regulatory concerns \(ssaspb.org.uk\)](http://safeguardingqualityandregulatoryconcerns(ssaspb.org.uk))

Referrer Details:			
Referred by:			
Contact details:		Job Title:	
Date of Referral:		Time:	
Is the person aware of this referral	Y / N	Is the carer aware of this referral	Y / N
Person's details (Please fill in as much of this section as you can):			
Name of adult being referred:		Any other names or aliases:	
Date of birth:		Gender:	Female Male
Home Address (incl. postcode):			
Tel No (including mobile numbers):			
Any other known addresses:			
Adult's ethnicity:			

Is English their first language:		Y / N
Does the adult have a disability:	Y / N	If yes, please explain
Reason for referral:		

**FORM FOR REPORTING OF AN INCIDENT OR SUSPICION
ABOUT THE BEHAVIOUR OF COLLEAGUES IN RELATION TO
THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN OR VULNERABLE ADULTS AT RISK OF ABUSE AND NEGLECT**

Name of individual about whom you have concerns:	
Place of work (if known):	

Your Name:	
Place of work and contact details:	
Description of concerns, including any incidents witnessed, the time, date and place of any incidents, other people involved.	
Have you spoken to the individual about your concerns? Record their response/reaction.	

Date:	
-------	--

Report received by:	
Date:	

Details of action taken:	
--------------------------	--

**PLEASE SEND THIS FORM 'IN CONFIDENCE'
TO ASSISTANT DIRECTOR ORGANISATION AND PEOPLE DEVELOPMENT (FORM TO BE
STORED SECURELY AND CONFIDENTIALLY)**

Example Consent Form

All information will be treated in strict confidence

Event/Activity:	Date:
Name of child:	Date of birth:
Home address:	
Home telephone No:	Mobile telephone No:
Medical conditions (if any) e.g., asthma, diabetes, allergies:	

I confirm that my son/daughter is in good health, and I give consent / do not consent for my son/daughter to participate in the above event/activity.

I consent / do not consent to any emergency treatment required by my son/daughter during the event/activity.

I give / do not give consent for my son/daughter to be photographed during the above event/activity and I consent to the photographs being used by South Staffordshire Council for bona fide promotional purposes. This also includes the use on the World Wide Web (internet).

The information you provide will be used in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998, to ensure the safety of all participants and may be shared with other people/organisations involved in the delivery of the above event/activity, if appropriate. By signing this form, you are consenting to the Council using the information, which you have supplied in the manner stated above.

Name of Parent/Guardian:

.....

Signature: Date:

Authorised by

Date.....

Position held

Under the Data Protection Act 1998 the information that you have provided will be used only for the purposes contained within our Registration Document which is publicly available from South Staffordshire Council or the Information Commissioners Office, www.ico.gov.uk.

Photography Consent Form to be completed by parents

SOUTH STAFFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

I give my permission for my child's photo to be taken and used for promotional purposes produced by South Staffordshire Council only, no names will be used, and information will be stored in conjunction with the Data Protection Act 1998.

The photos will only be used for promotional purposes for one year.

Parent/Guardian (Print Name):

Parent/Guardian (Signature):

Name of Child.....

South Staffordshire Council is fully committed to safeguarding the wellbeing of children and vulnerable adults by protecting them, from neglect, physical, sexual, emotional, and financial harm.

Working as an employee or volunteer of South Staffordshire Council or as an elected member it is important that you have taken time to thoroughly read this Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults at Risk of Abuse and Neglect policy and procedures.

By being made aware of the policy it is our intention to ensure that all are proactive in providing a safe and secure environment for the children and vulnerable adults at risk of abuse and neglect in our care.

Declaration:

I have read and understood Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults at Risk of Abuse and Neglect policy and procedures, and I accept the principles therein. I have also been provided with an executive summary of the policy and the supporting code of practice to refer to during my employment.

Signed:

Date:

Name (Please print):

.....

Position in organisation:

.....