



South Cambridgeshire District Council

Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Policy

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Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Policy

1. Introduction

Many South Cambridgeshire District Council services have a crucial role to play in protecting vulnerable adults, and in shaping their lives. Elected members, staff and volunteers may be meeting vulnerable adults in the course of their work. This may range from occasional involvement to organising and running activities and events specifically designed to enable adults, particularly older adults living in sheltered housing, to take part in activities with other residents to promote more inclusive communities

The protection of vulnerable adults applies to people aged 18 and over. South Cambridgeshire District Council must ensure that adequate policies and procedures are in place to guide elected members, staff and volunteers who come into contact with vulnerable adults during their work with the Council. To fulfill this duty South Cambridgeshire District Council is signed up to comply with Cambridgeshire County Councils Adult Protection Guidance and Procedures (www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk). The procedures incorporate:

- No Secrets – Guidance on Developing and Implementing Multi-Agency Policies and Procedures to Protect Vulnerable Adults from Abuse (2000), Department of Health (DoH)
- Safeguarding Adults A National Framework of Standards for good practice and outcomes in adult protection work (2005), The Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS)
- The legislative framework provided by the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006

Whether elected members, staff or volunteers are directly working with vulnerable adults or have minimal contact as a result of other duties, they will be in a position of trust. This requires them to place the welfare of vulnerable adults first and adopt practices that support, protect and empower them.

Compliance with policy and guidelines will also help elected members, staff and volunteers to avoid or manage situations where they may be subject to unfounded allegations whether mistaken or malicious.

2. Background

The shift in the mid-1990s from single agency and client group specific abuse policies to generic adult protection policies led by Social Services Departments, culminated in “ No Secrets” (Department of Health, 2000a). No Secrets laid out how local authorities should protect vulnerable adults.

A vulnerable adult is defined as

A person aged 18 or over, who is in receipt of, or maybe in need of community care services by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness and who is, or maybe unable to take care of him or herself or able to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation (No Secrets, DoH, 2000).

The Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act defines a person as a vulnerable adult if they have attained the age of 18 and are in residential accommodation. This includes;

- (a) Living in sheltered housing
- (b) Receives domiciliary care
- (c) Receives any form of health care
- (d) Is detained in lawful custody
- (e) Is by virtue of a court under supervision by a person exercising functions for the purposes of Part 1 of the Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000
- (f) Receives a welfare service of a prescribed description
- (g) Receives any service or participates in any activity provided specifically for persons as detailed in s59 (9) of the act
- (h) Have payments made to them or another on their behalf in pursuance of arrangements made under s57 of the Health & Social Care Act 2001 or
- (i) Require assistance in the conduct of their own affairs.

4. National and Local Policy context

The categories of abuse recognised by Cambridgeshire County Council Safeguarding Policies and Procedures are;

- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse or exploitation
- Psychological abuse
- Financial; abuse or Exploitation or material abuse
- Neglects and acts of omission
- Discriminatory abuse

In addition to the above CCC recognises four additional categories of abuse. These are;

- Domestic abuse and violence
- Professional abuse
- Institutional abuse
- Significant harm

The full definitions of the above categories are available in the CCC Practice Guidance and Procedures on Cambridgeshire County Councils website (www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk).

South Cambridgeshire District Council aims to safeguard vulnerable adults from the above categories of abuse in the following ways;

- Providing supported housing for older people with communal facilities, preventing homelessness, providing supported accommodation for young parents and care leavers, providing affordable housing
- Providing appropriate housing in safe locations
- Promoting social, cultural and educational activities within the communal rooms in sheltered housing complexes

- Empowering the sheltered housing forums, the disability forum and leasehold forums that allow older people to shape and inform the decisions and policy of SCDC Affordable Homes
- Promoting the health, particularly in relation to food hygiene and nutrition.

This policy and procedures developed by Cambridgeshire County Council have been adopted by the Council to promote the safeguarding and welfare of vulnerable adults in South Cambridgeshire. It is intended to clarify individual roles and responsibilities, raise awareness and reassure staff that there are clear processes in place should they have any concerns, or in the rare event that an allegation is made against them.

South Cambridgeshire District Council has signed up to agree and implement CCC Adults Protection Practice and Procedures and is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of vulnerable adults.

The Council's policy and procedures are intended to complement those of the CCC, and the Council may refer to these for further guidance as necessary.

The Council also has a number of policies which are relevant to its safeguarding obligations including for example its complaints, whistle blowing, domestic abuse policies and staff code of conduct, which are available on its website www.scambs.gov.uk.

5. Scope and definitions

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of vulnerable adults as defined in CCC Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Practice Guidance and Procedures

For the purposes of this policy, the word 'adult' is used to refer to those aged 18 or over, The word 'staff' is used to refer to anyone working on behalf of the Council, whether that work is paid or voluntary, full or part time, the self-employed, and elected members. More specifically this would include –

- Employees
- Agency staff
- Councillors
- Contract staff – when working under contract to the Council e.g. contractors working in council owned homes
- Volunteers – when working by agreement for or on behalf of the Council e.g. providing assistance at social occasions or during consultation events.

6. Aims of the Policy

In order to meet its Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults obligations as defined by CCC, the Council will adopt the following aims:-

1. Senior Management commitment to the importance of safeguarding and protecting vulnerable adults

2. A clear statement of the Council's responsibilities towards vulnerable adults is available for all staff
3. A clear line of accountability within the Council for work on safeguarding and protecting the welfare of vulnerable adults
4. Service development takes account of the need to safeguard and promote welfare and is informed, where appropriate, by the views of carers and families
5. Staff training on safeguarding and promoting the welfare of vulnerable adults
6. Safer recruitment practice
7. Effective inter agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of vulnerable adults
8. Information sharing

6.1 Senior Management commitment to the importance of safeguarding and protecting vulnerable adults welfare

To ensure commitment at senior management level the Council will identify a Senior Management Team member to champion the importance of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of vulnerable adults throughout the organisation.

The Vulnerable Adults Champion will:

- Have a sound working knowledge of relevant legislation and guidance with respect to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of vulnerable adults
- Be responsible for communicating to all staff (employed and voluntary) in the Authority the importance of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of vulnerable adults and that it is everybody's responsibility to do so
- Hold managers to account for the contribution of their services to safeguarding and promoting vulnerable adults' welfare through regular monitoring and audit arrangements
- Ensure staff have effective working relationships with other parts of their own agency and with other agencies in order to safeguard and promote vulnerable adults' welfare
- Report identified training needs of staff to senior managers with responsibility for staff training

6.2 A clear statement of the Council's responsibilities towards vulnerable adults is available for all staff

The Council will make the necessary arrangements to ensure that staff and elected members have a clear understanding of their responsibilities for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of vulnerable adults, and know what action should be taken if they have concerns about the safety or welfare of a vulnerable adult. These arrangements are detailed in CCC guidance and to assist in meeting them South Cambridgeshire District Council will:

- Ensure all staff are aware of a contact number or person (the service designated officer) who should be contacted for advice or to make a referral to when there are concerns about a vulnerable adults' welfare or safety
- Incorporating staff's responsibilities for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of vulnerable adults into the service plans and, where appropriate, the work objectives agreed for individual staff members

- Fostering a culture of openness and shared communication where staff are actively encouraged to express any early concerns about the welfare of a vulnerable adult.

6.3 A clear line of accountability within the Council for work on safeguarding and protecting the welfare of vulnerable adults

The Council has appointed a Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Champion at Senior Management Team level; a Named Senior Officer who has responsibilities for dealing with allegations against staff; and a number of Service Designated Officers who are able to offer advice to staff within their service areas if they have concerns about a vulnerable adults welfare. In addition a Coordinating Designated Officer assists the Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Champion in discharging their duties.

Full role descriptions and details of staff within those roles are provided at appendix 3 of the Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults procedures and guidelines.

6.4 Service development takes account of the need to safeguard and promote welfare and is informed, where appropriate by the views of carers and families

In exercising its duty towards Vulnerable Adults the Council will consider:

- The impact of each service on vulnerable adults safety and welfare, for example, does the location of a service mean that the adults and carers for whom it is intended can safely and easily access it?
- How adults and carers are to be kept safe whilst using services, for example having in place trained staff, and adhering to health and safety regulations; and ways in which they can improve existing services to ensure adults safety and promote their welfare, for example, ensuring all sheltered communal areas are safe, accessible and provide opportunities for adults to integrate and enjoy themselves, and that these changes are informed by the views of local adults, carers and professional bodies.

The Council will ensure that the planning and development of services to safeguard and promote vulnerable adults welfare are informed by the views of vulnerable adults and their carers. Particular efforts will be made to ensure that specific groups of vulnerable adults who are often excluded from participation activities are supported in giving their views, for example, disabled adults and Gypsies and Travellers. The views and opinions of vulnerable adults will also be sought in ways that are appropriate to their understanding.

South Cambridgeshire District Council will take into account the needs of vulnerable adults in the planning and delivery of services through appropriate consultation and community engagement and set out proposals and actions in the relevant corporate service plans.

6.5 Staff training on safeguarding and promoting the welfare of vulnerable adults

In exercising the duty to make arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of Vulnerable adults, the Council will ensure that:

- All staff working, or in contact, with vulnerable adults participate regularly in relevant training tailored towards their individual roles;
- Senior staff are kept up to date with changes in statutory requirements and new evidence based ways of working with vulnerable adults so that the relevant information can be cascaded down to those on the front-line;
- Training for staff working or in contact with vulnerable adults is provided on both a single agency and an inter-agency basis;
- Staff should have access to CCC Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Guidance and Procedures and be trained in how to implement it effectively
- Training helps staff understand both their own roles and responsibilities and those of other professionals and organisations for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of vulnerable adults; and
- Training enhances staff awareness of race, culture and disability and the impact they have on family life

All employees working with vulnerable adults and/or or likely to have access to vulnerable adults will be required to attend appropriate safeguarding awareness training courses that will be organised by the council or key partner agencies within Cambridgeshire.

The Council will ensure that it has a comprehensive training programme that meets the requirements of the CCC guidance.

Levels of training will be provided to reflect the level and type of contact that staff have with vulnerable adults. The Council's HR team will maintain a training database that sets out what training is required and records what training staff have received.

All staff who have direct contact vulnerable adults, or who visit families in their homes will receive basic safeguarding training. This will include, for example, Housing Officers, Housing repairs staff, Housing Benefit and Council Tax visiting staff and Community Development staff

Service designated officers will, in addition, receive designated officer training.

6.6 Safer Recruitment

The Council has policies and procedures in place to help prevent unsuitable people from working with vulnerable adults. Safe recruitment means scrutinising information provided by applicants and referees; taking up and satisfactorily resolving any discrepancies or anomalies; verifying identity and any academic or vocational qualifications; obtaining independent professional and character references; checking previous employment history and experience and that a person has the health and physical capacity for the job; and carrying out a face to face interview that explores the candidate's suitability to work with children as well as their suitability for the post.

All offers of employment for these posts will be subject to an Enhanced CRB Disclosure. Until these checks have been completed satisfactorily, no offer of employment will be confirmed. All recruitment and selection must follow the Council's Recruitment and Selection Policy and Procedures.

Managers who recruit staff that have contact with vulnerable adults will receive Safer Recruitment training and this will be recorded on the training database referred to in 6.5 above.

6.7 Effective inter agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of vulnerable adults

South Cambridgeshire District Council will work with local partners that are signed up to the CCC Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Practice Guidance and Procedures and the voluntary sector to ensure that we meet our duty of care to vulnerable adults. The partner organisations signed up to the guidance and procedures are Cambridgeshire NHS, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough NHS Foundation Trust, Cambridgeshire Community Services, Cambridgeshire Constabulary, Cambridgeshire Learning Disability Partnership and Cambridgeshire Supporting People Team. Although not officially signed up examples of voluntary agency partners are Age Concern, Help the Aged and Mencap.

At an operational level, the Coordinating Designated Officer will ensure that good working relationships are built and maintained with the County Council's Adult protection teams and the Police.

6.8 Information Sharing

The Council will ensure that staff understand how to share information in a way that is both legal and ethical. The cross-Government publication *Information Sharing: Practitioners' Guide* (published in April 2006) provides guidance for practitioners on information sharing covering health, education, social care and youth offending.

Confidentiality is a key issue in safeguarding vulnerable adults. Whilst information generally should not be shared, it must be shared with appropriate agencies to ensure that a vulnerable adult is not left unprotected.

Occasionally there will be a need or requirement to collect and use certain types of information on vulnerable adults. This personal information must be dealt with properly however it is collected, recorded and used – whether on paper, in a computer, or recorded on other material - and there are safeguards to ensure this in the Data Protection Act 1998.

If the Council holds information about families or individuals that is considered to be relevant and essential for other statutory agencies to carry out their statutory safeguarding vulnerable adult and/or safeguarding children responsibilities, this information will be shared, as appropriate, with those authorities upon request, in accordance with the cross-Government publication *Information Sharing: Practitioners' Guide* and the duty to assist under Section 27 and 47 of the Children Act 2004.

7. Monitoring and Review

The Council has established a Safeguarding Officer Group that meets bi monthly, whose role is to develop and review the policy framework and monitor the effectiveness of these arrangements in meeting the Council's safeguarding obligations. This group will also be in compliance with the requirements of section 11 of the Children Act 2004. The group will develop an annual action plan, which will be monitored at Safeguarding Group meetings.

The Council will adopt statutory and good practice advice on safeguarding vulnerable adults. The Council will seek to benchmark services with other providers where possible

Membership will be reviewed annually to ensure adequate cross service representation.

The responsibility for vulnerable adults matters on the Council's Executive rests with the Leader of the Council.