

Okehampton Youth Council

Safeguarding Policy



Policy Statement

As an organisation that has contact with children, Okehampton Town Youth Council (OTYC) has a duty of care to them.

As a minimum, this duty of care includes:

- Safeguarding and promoting the interests and well-being of the children with whom it works.
- Reducing the vulnerability of children by upholding the law, professional attitudes and practices.
- Making sound decisions by assessing the individual's emotional, physical, intellectual and mental capacity in relation to self-determination and consent, in order to take all reasonable steps to protect the person from harm, abuse and exploitation.

Introduction

OTYC makes a positive contribution to a strong and safe community and recognises the right of every individual to be safe and secure. We will ensure that our activities are safe for our staff, volunteers and young people. Unfortunately, people may pose a risk to children, and may wish to harm or abuse them.

Accidents can happen unless steps are taken to minimise the risk. Therefore, safeguarding children is everybody's business. There are various laws that protect individuals from harm or abuse including the Human Rights Act 1998, Childrens Act 1989 and 2004 and the Children and Social Work Act 2027.

OTYC has put in place safeguards to protect those who work and volunteer for us.

OTYC has also put in place safeguards to avoid putting their workers and volunteers in positions where harm or abuse might be alleged, and to ensure that all workers and volunteers know exactly what to do should harm or abuse be suspected.

OTYC believes it is important to not only protect the vulnerable from harm and abuse but to actively promote the welfare of children - not just to protect, but to safeguard. Therefore, we also have a responsibility to take action if we know, or suspect, that a child or young person is at risk of harm or abuse. OTYC recognises that some children are additionally vulnerable because of the impact of discrimination, previous experiences, their level of dependency, communication needs or other issues.

Adults working with OTYC

- All adults who work regularly with OTYC will be asked to undertake an Enhanced Disclosure and Barring (DBS) check and complete a registration process in order that we have their names and addresses on file and confirmed.
- All adult helpers will read and sign to say they will adhere to this policy.
- No adult helper of the OTYC should be alone with any member of OTYC while undertaking Council business (other than family members).
- Safeguarding training will be reviewed and updated where needed during the first year for all adult helpers.
- Adults working with OTYC will be made aware that abuse can occur at all levels of society and in all family types.
- All adults working with OTYC will be made aware of this Safeguarding Policy and will be informed about the different forms of abuse covered by the Devon Safeguarding Children Partnership - namely physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse and neglect.

Recognising and reporting Abuse – Adult Helpers

If a child is considered to be in immediate danger, the adult should call 999.

If an adult helper suspects a child may be in need of safeguarding, they will notify the Town Clerk who is the Nominated Safeguarding Officer (NSO) for OTYC, and to the Children Services duty line (contact details at appendix 1).

All concerns should be submitted by telephone if deemed urgent and followed by a written incident report (see appendix 2).

Recognition of abuse and advice on responding to allegations can be found in appendix 3.

PROCEDURE IF YOU SUSPECT ABUSE OR AN ALLEGATION IS MADE

This may arise in a number of different ways:

- When a young person tells you something has happened
- An adult or young person tells you about their concerns for another young person
- You observe unexplained injury, or changes in behaviour, which cause you concern
- You receive an allegation about any adult or about yourself

If a young person tells you about abuse, it is because they see you as a 'safe' person.

- Listen carefully to what the young person is saying
- Show you take them seriously and thank them for telling you
- Avoid asking the child to repeat the information
- Explain that you cannot keep what the young person tells you a secret
- Reassure the young person that they have done the right thing
- Make no judgement about what you have heard and stay calm
- Follow the procedure below

If you suspect abuse, a young person confides in you, or a complaint is made about any adult or about yourself, it is your duty to report the concern.

At any point if you believe the child is in immediate danger or requires medical attention, call the police and/or an ambulance on 999.

If a young person tells you about abuse by someone else, DO:

- Allow the young person to speak without interruption, accepting what is said.
- Thank the young person for telling you.
- Offer immediate understanding and reassurance, while passing no judgement.
- Advise that you will try to offer support but that you have a duty to report to your line manager (inform parent/carer unless it would increase risk of harm)
- Explain to the young person what will happen next and keep them up to date.
- Immediately, and within the same working day, discuss the incident with the Nominated Safeguarding Officer (NSO): Town Clerk
- Fill out a Record of Concern form, using the young person's actual words wherever possible.
- Sign, date and pass your Record of Concern directly to the NSO.

DO NOT:

- Interrogate or ask leading questions.
- Make promises you can't keep.
- Interrupt or change the subject.
- Cast doubt on what the child has said.
- Make the child feel responsible for what has happened.
- Fail to act.

If you have a concern about a young person's safety and well-being:

- Immediately tell the Nominated Safeguarding Officer (NSO)
- Fill out a Record of Concern, detailing what you witnessed, heard or were told
- Sign, date and pass your Record of Concern directly to the NSO

If you receive a complaint or allegation about any person, including yourself:

- Immediately tell the Nominated Safeguarding Officer (NSO)
- Write careful notes of what you witnessed, heard or were told.
- Sign, date and pass your notes directly to the NSO.
- Try to ensure no-one is placed in a position which could cause further compromise.

On all occasions:

- You must refer; you must not investigate.
- If the Nominated Safeguarding Officer is suspected of involvement pass information instead to the Assistant Clerk or directly to Social Services.

- Where appropriate (if safe to do so), the child or young person's parents/carers must be informed, and notes made accessible to them.
- Reports of concerns must be followed up
- Remember that abuse can be carried out by an adult OR a young person.

Safety Issues

- Members of the committee under the age of 18 will only attend meetings, conferences, events etc with the explicit consent of their parent/guardian.
- All vehicles used by OTYC for direct activities/business will be insured for business use and have current valid MOT's. All drivers will have driving documents i.e. License insurance and MOT checked, photocopied and kept on file
- Seatbelts will be used at all times.
- Any journeys, events etc will be risk assessed by an adult prior to the event.
- Specific risk assessments will be carried out for all activities undertaken by OTYC and 3rd parties conducting activities on behalf of OTYC will also be required to show evidence of having their own risk assessments and other relevant procedures in place.
- Public Liability Cover is held by the OTC.

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

- Any volunteer, staff member or young person has the right to report a complaint about another in confidence and free from harassment.
- In the first instance, complaints should be made in writing to the Town Clerk, Okehampton Town Council, Town Hall, Fore Street, Okehampton EX20 1AA or if verbally, with another person present.
- Where possible a complaint should be dealt with quickly and involving as few people as are necessary. If the complaint remained unresolved, it should be referred to the Okehampton Town Council Mayor or Chairman of the Policy & Resources Committee, details of whom can be found on OTC's website.

WHISTLEBLOWING

OTYC is dedicated to the highest standards of operation, probity and accountability.

In line with this commitment, employees, volunteers and others with serious concerns about any aspect of the groups work are encouraged to come forward and voice those concerns.

In the first instance if you have safeguarding concerns or want to complain about a lack of action on a safeguarding concern, speak to the NSO.

However, if you have continuing concerns, e.g. your concerns are not acted on, you are encouraged to contact the appropriate authorities (the local safeguarding boards and/or Police).

Advice is available from Protect - free confidential advice for people who witnessed wrongdoing in their workplace but are not sure how to raise their concerns (<https://protect-advice.org.uk> 020 3117 2520) and NSPCC National Whistleblowing Advice Line on 0800 028 0285.

Appendix 1

USEFUL CONTACTS

Local Contacts		
Town Clerk (NSO)	Okehampton Town Council Town Hall Fore Street Okehampton EX20 1AA townclerk@okehampton.gov.uk www.okehampton.gov.uk	01837 53179
Devon Safeguarding Children Partnership	www.devonscp.org.uk/	01392 386067
Children's Social Care, Devon County Council (Okehampton area is covered from Tiverton office)	Monday – Thursday 9am-4pm Friday 9am-4pm Out of Hours Emergency Duty Service	01392 383000 0345 6000388
Devon and Cornwall Police	Okehampton Police Station Barton Road Okehampton EX20 1NW	Tel: 101 (in an emergency contact via 112/999)
NSPCC	Help for adults concerned about a child.	0808 800 5000 Text: 88858
Childline	Help for children and young people.	0800 1111

Appendix 2

Safeguarding Policy - Incident Report Form

Please complete as fully as possible:

Date of incident/concern raised

Venue/location

Time of disclosure/incident/concern

Name of person at risk

Gender identity.....

Date of birth

Address.....

.....
.....

Postcode.....

Telephone number.....

Next of kin.....

Address (if different from above)

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.....

Postcode.....

Telephone number (if different from above)

Person expressing concern.....

Address.....

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.....

Postcode.....

Telephone number.....

Nature of concern

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What has prompted the concerns (physical, behavioural, other)

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Has the person at risk been spoken to?

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Who by?

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What was said to the adult at risk and what did the adult at risk say? (add more detail at the end if necessary and include as much information as possible)

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Is there an alleged abuser/s?

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Who is this?

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Has this person been approached?

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Has anyone else been approached?

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Has anyone else been consulted?

.....

Has the incident been reported to appropriate Safeguarding Services?

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Name of reporting person?

Signature

Date

Recognition of Abuse

The 4 main areas of abuse are:

- *Physical Abuse*: Action will be taken under this heading if the adult has reason to believe that there has been a physical injury to a child or young person, including deliberate poisoning, where there is a definite knowledge or reasonable suspicion that the injury was inflicted knowingly, or knowingly not prevented.
- *Sexual Abuse*: Action will be taken under this heading if the adult has reason to believe that there has been inappropriate sexual activity or sexual grooming.
- *Emotional Abuse*: Action will be taken under this heading if the adult has reason to believe that there has been a severe adverse effect on the behaviour and emotional development of a child or young person caused by persistent or severe ill treatment or rejection.
- *Neglect*: Action will be taken under this heading if the adult has reason to believe that there has been persistent or severe neglect of a child or young person which could have resulted in serious impairment of the child or young persons health and development
- *Bullying*: Any member found bullying will be asked to resign from the committee

Indicators of Physical Abuse***Physical Observations***

- Bruising – especially bruising on the trunk/ bruises on the face, upper arm, shoulders and neck, consistent with gripping/finger-tip bruising/finger marks
- Burns and scalds – especially cigarette burns/burns caused by lengthy exposure to heat
- Human bite marks
- Fractures, particularly spiral fractures
- Swelling and lack of normal use of limbs
- Any serious injury with no explanation or conflicting explanations/inconsistent accounts
- Untreated injuries

Behavioural Observations

- Unusually fearful with adults
- Unnaturally compliant to parents
- Refusal to discuss injuries/fear of medical help
- Withdrawal from physical contact
- Aggression towards others
- Wears cover-up clothing
- Any behaviour that you would not expect to see in a child, at their age or stage in development.

Indicators of Sexual Abuse

Physical Observations

- Damage to genitalia, anus or mouth
- Sexually transmitted disease
- Unexpected pregnancy especially in young girls
- Soreness in genital area, anus or mouth
- Unexplained recurrent urinary tract infections and discharges or abdominal pain.

Behavioral Observations

- Sexual knowledge inappropriate for age
- Sexualized behaviour in young children
- Sexually provocative behaviour/promiscuity
- Hinting at sexual activity
- Inexplicable falling off in school performance
- Sudden apparent changes in personality
- Lack of concentration, restlessness, aimlessness
- Socially withdrawn
- Overly compliant behaviour
- Acting out, aggressive behaviour
- Poor trust in significant adults
- Regressive behaviour, onset of wetting, by day or night
- Onset of insecure, clinging behaviour
- Arriving early, leaving late, running away from home
- Suicide attempts, self-mutilation, self-disgust
- Eating disorders, hysteria attacks in adolescents
- Any behaviour that will adversely affect a child's development

Indicators of Emotional Abuse

- Physical, mental and emotional developmental lags
- Acceptance of punishment that appears excessive
- Over-reaction to mistakes
- Continual self-deprecation
- Sudden speech disorders
- Fear of new situations
- Inappropriate emotional responses to painful situations
- Neurotic behaviour (such as rocking, hair twisting, thumb-sucking)
- Self-mutilation
- Fear of parents being contacted
- Extremes of passivity or aggression
- Drug/solvent abuse
- Running away
- Compulsive stealing, scavenging.

Indicators of Neglect

Physical Observations

- Poor personal hygiene
- Poor state of clothing
- Emaciation, pot belly, short stature
- Poor skin tone and hair tone
- Untreated medical problems

Behavioral Observations

- Constant hunger
- Constant tiredness
- Frequent lateness or non-attendance at school or OTYC meeting
- Destructive tendencies
- Low self-esteem
- Neurotic behaviour
- No social relationships
- Running away
- Compulsive stealing or scavenging