

Policy and Procedure for

Child Protection



and

Safeguarding Children



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Introduction

The Children Act 1989 states that the child's welfare is paramount and that every child has a right to protection from abuse, neglect and exploitation. Statutory guidance on making arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children under Section 11 of the Children Act 2004 was published in August 2005. The guidance came into force 1 October 2005 and details what is expected of District Councils. This includes:

- Senior management commitment to the importance of safeguarding and promoting children's welfare
- A clear statement of the Council's responsibilities to children, made available to staff
- Clear lines of accountability for work on safeguarding and promoting well being
- Using the views of children and young people to help shape services
- Safe recruitment procedures for those coming into contact with children and young people
- Appropriate training for staff
- Effective working relations within the Council and with other agencies to safeguard and promote well being, and to share information effectively.

Child Protection and Safeguarding Children Policy Statement

Swale Borough Council is committed to safeguarding the welfare of children and young people when they come into contact with the services that we provide. Child protection is part of safeguarding children and promoting welfare. Kent County Council has a Multi Agency Children's Safeguarding Board for Kent which Swale Borough Council (SBC) supports. This policy is designed to function within that context and accordingly amendments may be made based on recommendations arising from the Kent Safeguarding Children's Board.

SBC offers a range of services to children and young people and recognises that these may have a very powerful and positive influence on them. It is our aim to aid the development of self-esteem and social awareness of children and young people and to provide opportunities for enjoyment with personal achievement in accordance with the Statutory Every Child Matters Framework 2004. SBC will promote the safeguarding of children in all our services affecting them and consult with children in policy and service delivery matters which affect them so that they may help shape our services.

In addition to direct service delivery for children, the wide ranging nature of the council's work gives many staff substantial one-to-one access to children and young people. **This policy applies to all staff who may come into contact with children and young people in the course of their work, whether in someone's home, on Council premises, or in the community.**

As many staff are in regular contact with children and young people, they are in a position to observe outward signs of abuse and can and should alert others

when such signs are observed. All SBC staff have a responsibility to be proactive, and to refer suspected cases of abuse to Kent County Council Children's Social Services or to the Police.

The Council's Child Protection and Safeguarding Children Policy and accompanying procedure guidance is designed to promote children's welfare, to protect children from potential abuse and to protect staff and volunteers from potential false allegations of abuse.

Scope

The Child Protection and Safeguarding Children Policy and Procedures apply to all staff (full time, temporary, casual or part time), volunteers and those working on behalf of the council whose work involves contact with children and young people under the age of 18 and statemented ("vulnerable") young people under the age of 25. Hereafter collectively referred to as 'staff'. Elected Members also have a duty to support and promote the policy. SBC's Executive Portfolio Holder for Finance, Performance, Learning and Skills; Councillor Mike Cosgrove is the Council's lead Member for Child Protection and Safeguarding Children.

Contractors and/or those providing a service on behalf of the council i.e. sports coaches, unless bound to comply with their own Child Protection and Safeguarding Children Policy and Procedures (which shall be no less onerous than the Council's), shall comply with the terms of this policy and procedure and shall ensure that employees and sub-contractors do likewise throughout the duration of the contract.

It is accepted that elected members of Swale Borough Council are not employees, but they do share a responsibility with staff when representing Swale Borough, Council or carrying out the functions of their elected office. Therefore all aspects of this policy apply equally to elected members.

Accountability

Final accountability for ensuring that SBC fulfils its child protection and safeguarding children responsibilities falls to the Chief Executive. However, responsibility is delegated to the designated Child Protection Officer (Peter Speakman). The designated Child Protection Officer is also the Council's Champion for Children; responsible for promoting well-being. The designated officer will be suitably trained in child protection and will be responsible for ensuring that:

- The actions set out within the Child Protection and Safeguarding Children Policy and Procedures are carried out.
- A record is maintained of all child protection related documents and reports.
- Child protection concerns are received and recorded.
- Information is promptly and carefully assessed, clarifying or obtaining more information about the matter as appropriate.

- Relevant statutory agencies are consulted regarding any child protection concerns raised.
- Referrals to relevant statutory agencies regarding any child protection concerns are carried out formally.

All staff are responsible for ensuring that the activities that they are involved in during the course of their work are carried out in accordance with this policy and procedures relating to it.

Aim

The aim of the Child Protection and Safeguarding Children Policy and Procedures is to safeguard and promote the welfare of children by:

- Prevention
Employees and elected Members of the Council will endeavour to ensure that all children and young people using the Council's services do so safely and appropriately, and are treated with respect and understanding. The Council will organise its services and activities for children with a preventative, safeguarding purpose in mind.
- Protection
The Council will take all reasonable steps to safeguard and protect the rights, health and well-being of children who take part in activities organised by the Council and within its facilities, as well as those of children who staff may come into contact with in the course of their work.
- Support
Child protection training will be made available to all members of staff who work with or come into regular contact with children in the course of their job. The Council recognises that child protection issues can be emotive and the Council will offer suitable, impartial support to any member of staff affected by this policy, whether directly or indirectly.

Recruitment

All SBC staff will be appointed in line with the Council's recruitment and selection policies and procedures to ensure that all necessary checks are carried out on individuals expected to work with children and young people.

Pre selection checks must include the following:

- Completion of an application form including a self-disclosure about criminal records.
- Consent to obtain information from the Criminal Records Bureau to check for convictions for criminal offences against children in accordance with current legislation.
- Receipt of two references in accordance with SBC recruitment and selection procedures.
- Substantiation of qualifications.

- Substantiation of identity.

An enhanced CRB check will be carried out for all persons being recruited to work directly with children. No appointment will be confirmed until a satisfactory enhanced CRB check is confirmed by the Council's HR section. Regular screening by the Criminal Records Bureau will be undertaken on all staff that work with children and vulnerable adults as part of their normal duties.

Training

In addition to the pre-selection checks, the child protection and safeguarding process includes training after recruitment. SBC is committed to ensuring that all employees and elected members that work directly or indirectly with children and young people have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities and the requirement for reporting suspected poor practice or concerns of possible child abuse. All staff with substantial access to children and young people shall be provided with recognised and up to date training in:

- Child protection awareness
- Equality and Diversity awareness
- First Aid (where appropriate)

Training needs and opportunities relating to child protection and safeguarding issues will be identified and addressed through the Council's Induction and Appraisal procedures and in response to any changes in legislation. Training may include internal courses/workshops, externally accredited courses/seminars or workshops, or workshops organised by child protection agencies.

Information Sharing and Partnerships

The Council is committed to working with partners in the Kent Safeguarding Children's Board and elsewhere in matters relating to Child Protection and safeguarding and to delivering the Kent Children and Young People's Plan. The Council supports the principle of information sharing and is currently working with Kent County Council to support the development of the ContactPoint Project 'information-sharing index' tool which will join up practitioners to work together to meet the needs of children, young people and their families. The Council will also review this policy and seek to review policy at all levels with Partners given the benefit of local experience and performance.

Legislation, Guidance and Reference

This Safeguarding Children and Child Protection Policy and the accompanying Child Protection Procedures have been developed in line with the principles of The Children Act 1989 and The Children Act 2004, and with reference to the following:

- Working Together To Safeguard Children 2006
- What to Do If You're Worried a Child Is Being Abused (2006)
- Every Child Matters 2004

- The NSPCC publication Sportscheck
- Kent & Medway Child Protection Procedures 2001 (currently under review by the Local Children Safeguarding Boards for Kent and Medway; expected publication date November 2007)

The Policy and Procedures should also be read in conjunction with the following Council documents:

- Recruitment and Selection Policy and Procedures
- Corporate Equality Policy
- Code of Conduct for Staff
- Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures.
- Complaints Procedure
- Whistleblowing Code

Child Protection and safeguarding Children Procedures

The guidance in these procedures is designed to assist staff who work with, or have contact with children and young people in implementing the Council's Child Protection and Safeguarding Children Policy. The information comprises the council's standard procedures, which may be supplemented by additional procedures where necessary as required by individual service's operational needs.

All staff must be aware of, and have been provided with, or have access to a copy of the Council's Child Protection and Safeguarding Children Policy and Procedures.

A Safeguarding and Child Protection Group, chaired by the designated Child Protection Officer will be convened with the remit to oversee the working and development of the policy and procedures. It will meet twice a year and report to the corporate management team. The composition and responsibilities of the Group will be reviewed after one year.

Principles

The application of the Council's Child Protection and Safeguarding Children Policy and Procedures is based on the following key principles:

- The welfare of the child is paramount.
- All children, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious belief and/or sexual identity have the right to protection from abuse.
- Whilst it is not the responsibility of the Council to determine whether or not abuse has taken place (this is undertaken in liaison with external child protection professionals), it is everyone's responsibility to report any concerns to the designated child protection officer / line manager / head of service.
- All incidents of suspected poor practice and any allegations made will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately.

- Confidentiality should be upheld in line with the Data Protection Act 1998, the Human Rights Act 2000 and the Freedom of Information Act 2000, as well as the **Kent Information Sharing Protocol** (as required under the Children Act 2004). However, the safety of the child or young person is the primary consideration and will override all other considerations. No promises of confidentiality must be made, as confidentiality will be governed by the need to protect the child or young person. Confidentiality may not be maintained if the withholding of information will prejudice the welfare of the child or young person. The identity of the person subject to the referral will normally remain confidential but may have to be revealed for the purposes of subsequent legal action.

Promoting Good Practice with Children

Staff working for Swale Borough Council may have regular contact with children and are an important link in identifying where a young person may need protection. Equally, staff, children and young people should be clear on what is expected and what is viewed as unacceptable behaviour. Adhering to these guidelines will help staff to protect themselves from false allegations and help create a positive culture and climate:

- Always work in an open environment (avoiding private or unobserved situations).
- Treat all young people equally and with respect and dignity.
- Always put the welfare of each child first, before winning or achieving other goals.
- Maintain a safe and appropriate emotional and physical distance with children.
- Make activities enjoyable and promote fair play.
- Ensure that, if any form of manual or physical support is required, it is provided openly and appropriately. Children should always be consulted and their agreement gained.
- Involve parents/carers wherever possible.
- Be an excellent role model.
- Give enthusiastic and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism.
- Recognize the developmental needs and capability of children – avoid pushing them against their will.
- Ensure that a written record is kept of all incidents involving children along with details of the subsequent action taken/treatment given.

Staff should **never**:

- Engage in rough, physical or sexually provocative games, including horseplay.
- Share a room with a child.
- Allow or engage in any form of inappropriate touching.
- Allow children to use inappropriate language unchallenged.
- Make sexually suggestive comments to a child, even in fun.
- Reduce a child to tears as a form of control.
- Allow allegations made by a child to go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon.
- Do things of a personal nature for a child that they can do themselves.
- Take children to their home unsupervised.
- Administer medication unless specifically trained and authorized to do so.
- Take a child to the toilet unsupervised.
- Transport children unsupervised.
- Take chances when common sense, policy or practice suggests a more prudent approach.

NB The above guidance should not be considered as exhaustive. If staff have any concerns regarding the appropriateness of any practice/action they should contact their line manager.

It may sometimes be necessary for staff to do things of a personal nature for children, particularly if they are young or disabled. These tasks should only be carried out with the full understanding and consent of parents/carers and, where possible, the child for whom the task is being carried out.

Photography

Consent must be gained from parents and guardians of all children under the age of 16 before any photographs are taken of children on SBC property or at SBC organised events. A consent form can be found at appendix B

Recognition of Poor Practice, Abuse and Bullying

Poor practice

Poor practice includes any behaviour that contravenes the guidelines set out in this Child Protection Policy and Safeguarding Procedure or the:

- Rights – of the children and their parents/carers.
- Responsibilities – for the welfare of the child.
- Respect – for other children.

Abuse

Even for those experienced in working with child abuse, it is not always easy to recognise a situation where abuse may occur, or has already taken place. Whilst it is accepted that staff are not experts at such recognition, they do have a responsibility to act if they have any concerns about the behaviour of someone (an adult or a child) towards a child. All staff have a duty to discuss any concerns they may have about the welfare of a child or young person immediately with the Designated Child Protection Officer, their line manager or head of service.

Abuse is form of maltreatment of a child; somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm or by failing to prevent harm. It can take many forms but is usually divided into four categories (*drawn from DfES: 2006 Working Together to Safeguarding Children - A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and Kent Safeguarding Children's Board Policy and Procedure for Responding to Children in Need*):

1. Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, scalding, drowning, giving children alcohol and/or inappropriate drugs, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer feigns the symptoms of, or deliberately causes ill health to a child whom they are looking after. This situation is commonly described using terms such as factitious illness by proxy or Munchausen syndrome by proxy.

2. Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child that would adversely affect the child's emotional development. It may involve:

- Conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. This may be verbally or via electronic or written communication.
- Imposing age or developmentally inappropriate expectations, for example overprotection or limitation of exploration and learning.
- Causing children to feel frightened or in danger for example witnessing domestic abuse, seeing or hearing the ill treatment of another.
- Exploitation or corruption of children.

Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill-treatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

3. Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, including prostitution, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative and non-penetrative acts. Penetrative acts include 'rape' (intentional penetration of vagina, anus or mouth with a man's penis) and 'assault by penetration' (intentional sexual penetration of the vagina or anus of a child with a part of her/his body or an object).

Sexual activities may also include non-contact activities, e.g. involving children in looking at, or in production of abusive images, watching sexual activities or encouraging them to behave in sexually inappropriate ways. This may include use of photographs, pictures, cartoons, literature or sound recordings e.g. the internet, books, magazines, audio cassettes, tapes, CD's

Children under 16 years of age cannot provide lawful consent to any sexual activity, though in practice many are involved in sexual contact to which, as individuals, they may have agreed.

4. Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in serious impairment of health and development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once the child is born neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to:

- Provide adequate food, shelter and clothing (including exclusion from home or abandonment).
- Protect a child from physical harm or danger.
- Meet or respond to a child's basic emotional needs.
- Ensure adequate supervision including use of adequate care-takers.
- Ensure adequate access to appropriate medical care or treatment.
- Ensure that educational needs are met.

Indicators of Abuse

It is important to remember that a child may suffer or be at risk of suffering from one or more types of abuse and that abuse may take place on a single occasion or may occur repeatedly over time. There is no absolute criteria on which to rely on when judging what constitutes significant harm, the following indicators on the signs and symptoms may be consistent with abuse; but children may exhibit them for other reasons. For this reason any concerns about a child must be raised with the designated child protection officer, line managers or head of service at the earliest opportunity.

Examples of the indicators of different types of abuse are identified in Appendix A.

Bullying

It is important to recognise that abuse is not always carried out by an adult on a child; the abuser may be a young person, for example, in the case of bullying.

Bullying may be seen to be deliberately hurtful behaviour, usually repeated over a period of time, where it is difficult for those bullied to defend themselves.

Although anyone can be a target for bullying, victims are typically shy, sensitive and perhaps anxious and insecure. Sometimes they are singled out for physical reasons – being overweight, physically small, having a disability or belonging to a different race, faith or culture. Bullying can and does occur anywhere where there is inadequate supervision – on the way to and from school for example.

Bullies come from all walks of life; they bully for a variety of reasons and may have been bullied or abused themselves. Typically, bullies have low self-esteem, be excitable, aggressive and jealous. Crucially, they have learned how to gain power over others.

Bullying may be:

- Physical, e.g. hitting, kicking, theft.
- Verbal, e.g. name-calling, constant teasing, sarcasm, racist or homophobic taunts, threats, graffiti, gestures.
- Emotional, e.g. tormenting, ridiculing, humiliating, ignoring.
- Sexual, e.g. unwanted physical contact, abusive comments.

The damage inflicted by bullying is often underestimated. It can cause considerable distress to children, to the extent that it affects their health and development or, at the extreme, causes them significant harm (including self-harm). There are a number of signs that may indicate that a child is being bullied:

- Behavioural changes, such as reduced concentration and/or becoming withdrawn, clingy, depressed, tearful, erratic mood swings, reluctance to go to school, activities or sports clubs.
- A drop in performance at school or standard of play.
- Physical signs, such as stomach aches, headaches, difficulty in sleeping, bed wetting, scratching, bruising, damaged clothes, and bingeing, for example on food, cigarettes or alcohol.
- A shortage of money or frequent loss of possession

Responding to suspicions and allegations of abuse and poor practice

It is important to maintain an open culture where, employees, volunteers, elected members, children or parents or carers feel able to express concern about child protection issues and issues of dealing with children and vulnerable adults.

This procedure and guidance applies whenever it is alleged that a member of 'staff' (as defined on page 2 as within the scope of this policy) has:

- Behaved in a way that has or may have harmed a child
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child
- Behaved towards a child in a way which indicates s/he is unsuitable to work with children

These procedures apply to situations when:

- There are suspicions or allegations of abuse by a person who in the Council works with children in either a paid or unpaid capacity – as a permanent, temporary or agency staff member, contract worker, consultant, or volunteer
- It is discovered that an individual known to have been involved previously in child abuse, is or has been working with children

If an allegation relating to a child is made about a person who undertakes paid or unpaid work with vulnerable adults, consideration must be given to the possible need to alert those who manage her/him in that role.

Any employee, child or young person reporting concerns under this Policy is assured that their concerns will be taken seriously and treated sensitively. Every effort will be made to respect the anonymity of the person making the report, although it is not possible to guarantee this, particularly if to do so would adversely affect the welfare of the child or young person, or one or more legal authorities become involved.

Swale Borough Council will not tolerate harassment of any employee, child or young person who raises concerns of child abuse. Such harassment will be dealt with under disciplinary procedures, and the Council will robustly support any ensuing investigation by any recognised authority.

False allegations do occur. However, if a child indicates that they are being abused, or information is obtained which gives concern that a child is being abused; this should never be ignored. Any allegation of abuse must be reported to the designated child protection officer, line manager or head of service.

The details of the key contacts in this procedure can be found at Appendix C.

Responding to a young person making a disclosure or allegation

Action to be taken

A member of staff receiving information should:

- react calmly so as not to frighten the child.
- listen carefully.
- reassure the child that they are right to tell.
- not make promises of confidentiality, but let them know that you will have to tell another adult
- take what the child says seriously, recognising the difficulties inherent in interpreting what is said by a child
- keep questions to an absolute minimum to ensure a clear and accurate understanding of what has been said. Questions should not be leading and should consist of Who...? What...? When...? Where...?
- tell them what you will do next and with whom the information will be shared

- make a full written record of what has been said (using the child's own words), heard and/or seen as soon as possible using an Incident Report form (Appendix A). Note the date and time, any names mentioned and to whom the information was given. Ensure the record is signed and dated.

Actions to be avoided

The person receiving information should not:

- panic
- allow their shock or distaste to show
- probe for more information than is offered
- speculate or make assumptions
- make negative comments about the alleged abuser
- approach the alleged abuser
- make promises to keep secrets
- discuss the issue with anyone other than the Designated Officer, the line manager or head of service.

Responding to suspicions of abuse

It is essential that employees understand that child abuse is a complex issue, and that diagnosis of the validity of an allegation is the responsibility of relevant, expert agencies. The role of employees is to report and refer any concerns, not to investigate or judge. All allegations that fall within the scope of this policy and procedure are to be followed up and examined objectively by the KCC Local Area Designated Officer (LADO) who is independent of Swale Borough Council Council.

Sharing concerns with parents

The Council is committed to working in partnership with parents or carers where there are concerns about their children. Therefore, in most situations, it would be important to talk to parents or carers to help clarify initial concerns. It is essential, therefore, that the designated Child Protection Officer, the line manager or head of service undertakes this liaison.

However, there are circumstances in which a child might be placed at even greater risk if concerns are shared (e.g. where a parent or carer is the alleged abuser or is not able to respond to the situation appropriately). If there is any concern that informing a parent or carer may place the child at risk or may compromise police evidence, immediate advice must be sought from the KCC Local Area Designated Officer (LADO), County Duty Service (Social Care) or the police by the designated child protection officer.

Reporting procedure

- Staff responding to a suspicion of abuse or poor practice should complete and Incident Report form (see Appendix A).

- The incident should be reported to the designated Child Protection Officer, the line manager or head of service. The manager informed should inform the designated Child Protection Officer.
- The designated Child Protection Officer will assess the incident; decide what appropriate action needs to be taken and contact the KCC Local Area Designated Officer (LADO), County Duty Service (Social Care) or the Police as necessary. Should the designated officer not be available, the HR Manager will assume this role.
- The KCC Local Area Designated Officer (LADO) will be informed within 1 working day of all allegations that come to the Council's attention and appear to fall within the scope of this policy and procedure.
- The Council will co-operate fully with any resulting investigation carried out by external child protection agencies or the police.

Records and information

Information passed to the external child protection agencies or police must be as helpful as possible, hence the necessity for making a detailed report at the time of the initial disclosure/concern. Information included in this report should include:

- the nature of the allegation
- a description of any visible bruising or other injuries
- the child's account in their own words, if it can be given, of what has happened and how any bruising or other injuries occurred
- witnesses to the incident(s)
- any times, dates or other relevant information
- a clear distinction between what is fact, opinion or hearsay
- date and time of record.

Reporting the matter to the KCC Local Area Designated Officer (LADO), County Duty Service (Social Care) or the Police should not be delayed in an attempt to obtain more information.

A record should also be made of the name and designation of the KCC Local Area Designated Officer (LADO) or police officer to whom the concerns were passed, together with the time and date of the call, in case any follow-up is needed. A note of any crime report number should also be taken.

All employees of Swale Borough Council must be prepared to attend a relevant child protection conference or child in need meeting, and comply with the need to complete appropriate paperwork.

Electronic and hard copies of all reports and incident information must be sent to the designated Child Protection Officer.

Allegations against staff

Allegations against staff

Any person working on behalf of the Council who suspects that a colleague may be abusing a child or young person must act on their suspicions. Action should also be taken if it is felt that colleagues are not following the codes of conduct. This action will serve not only to protect children but also colleagues from false accusations:

Employees are often the first to realise that there may be something seriously wrong within their own working environment. However, they may not express their concerns because they feel that speaking up would be disloyal to their colleagues or the Council and that there is a possibility that their concerns are unfounded. They may also fear harassment or victimisation. In these circumstances it may be easier to ignore the concern rather than report what may be a suspicion of malpractice.

The Council acknowledges that this is an extremely sensitive issue and assures all employees and persons working on its behalf that it will fully support and protect anyone, who in good faith reports a concern or an allegation that a colleague is, or may be, abusing a child.

Types of investigation

Where there is a complaint of abuse against a member of staff, there may be three types of investigation:

- criminal
- child protection
- disciplinary (to be treated as gross misconduct)

Civil proceedings could also be instigated by the person/family of the person who alleged the abuse. The results of any Police and County Duty Service (Social Care) investigation may influence a disciplinary investigation by the Council, but not necessarily.

Action to be taken

Poor practice

If, following consideration by the designated Child Protection Officer and appropriate external Child Protection agencies, the allegation is clearly about poor practice, the relevant manager may wish to invoke an investigation in accordance with Swale Borough Council's Disciplinary Procedure.

Suspected abuse

Where it is suspected that abuse has taken place:

- Any suspicion that a member of staff has abused a child should be reported to the designated Child Protection Officer, the line manager of the member of staff or head of service immediately. The manager informed should inform the designated Child Protection Officer.
- The designated Child Protection Officer will take such steps as they feel appropriate to ensure the safety of the child in question and any other child who may be at risk.
- The designated Child Protection Officer will report the incident to the relevant head of service and the Human Resources Manager where consideration will be given to the next steps. These steps may include suspension on full pay, whilst the matter is investigated further.
- The designated Child Protection Officer will seek advice from the KCC Local Area Designated Officer (LADO) and County Duty Service (Social Care) as appropriate, who may involve the police.
- The designated Child Protection Officer will initiate an investigation in line with Swale Borough Council's Disciplinary Procedure to oversee the internal investigation. In most instances this team will include the designated Child Protection Officer.
- If the designated Child Protection Officer is the subject of the suspicion/allegation, the report must be made directly to the Chief Executive who will assume their role in the above procedure.

Confidentiality

Every effort should be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned. Information should be handled and disseminated on a need to know basis only. This is required in order to:

- Protect children
- Facilitate enquiries
- Avoid victimisation
- Safeguard the rights of the person about whom the allegation has been made and others who might be affected
- Manage disciplinary/complaints aspects

It is expected that those involved on a need to know basis would include the following:

- Members of the team overseeing any investigation
- The parents of the child alleged to have been abused
- The person making the allegation
- KCC Local Area Designated Officer (LADO)
- County Duty Service (Social Care) and the Police
- The alleged abuser (and parents if the alleged abuser is under 18 years of age)

Any information will be stored in a secure place with access limited to the investigation team and in line with data protection.

Internal inquiries and suspension

- Irrespective of the findings of the County Duty Service (Social Care) or of police inquiries, the Council will assess all individual cases under its own disciplinary procedures to decide whether a member of staff can be reinstated and how this can be sensitively handled.
- The Council will reach a decision based on the available information and decide on a balance of probability basis whether an allegation is true. The welfare of children will always remain paramount.

Notification to Social Services

- A copy of the Incident Report form should be submitted to the County Duty Service (Social Care) without delay. This is the responsibility of the Designated Child Protection Officer.
- Any further inquiries from the County Duty Service (Social Care) or any other interested third party should be passed immediately to the disciplinary investigation team to deal with. A written record should be kept of any such conversations.

Support to the Subject of Allegations

Subject to the specific procedures the subject of the allegations should be:

- Advised at the outset to contact her/his Union representation if a member
- Treated fairly and honestly and helped to understand the concerns expressed, processes involved and possible outcomes
- Kept informed of the progress of the case and of the investigation
- Clearly informed of the outcome of any investigation and the implications for disciplinary or related processes.
- Provided with appropriate support (via occupational health).

Action if bullying is suspected

The same procedure should be followed as set out for **Responding to Suspicions of Abuse** above if bullying is suspected.

Action to help the victim and prevent bullying

- All signs of bullying should be taken seriously
- All children should be encouraged to speak and share their concerns
- The victim should be helped to speak out and tell the person in charge or someone in authority.
- An open environment should be created.

- All allegations should be investigated and action taken to ensure the victim is safe. The victim and bully(ies) should be spoken to separately.
- Staff should reassure the victim that they can be trusted and will help them, although they cannot promise not to tell anyone else.
- Records should be kept of what is said.
- Staff should report concerns to their line manager.

Action towards the bully(ies)

- The situation should be explained to the bully(ies).
- An effort should be made to get the bully(ies) to understand the consequences of their behaviour.
- An apology to the victim should be sought.
- The parents of the bully(ies) should be informed.
- Any borrowed items should be returned to the victim.
- Appropriate sanctions should be imposed as necessary.
- Encouragement and support for the bully(ies) to change their behaviour should be offered.
- Meetings should be held with parents to report on progress.
- All appropriate staff should be informed of action taken.
- A written record of action taken should be kept.

Allegations of previous abuse

Allegations of abuse may be made some time after the event (e.g. by an adult who was abused as a child by a member of staff who is still currently working with children). Where such an allegation is made, the procedures as detailed above should be used and the matter reported to the police by the Designated Child Protection Officer. This is because other children may be at risk from this person. Anyone who has a previous criminal conviction for offences related to child abuse is automatically excluded from working with children.

Misuse of the Procedure

Malicious complaints about an employee(s) and /or serious and/or persistent abuse of these child protection procedures will not be tolerated and will be dealt with through the disciplinary process.

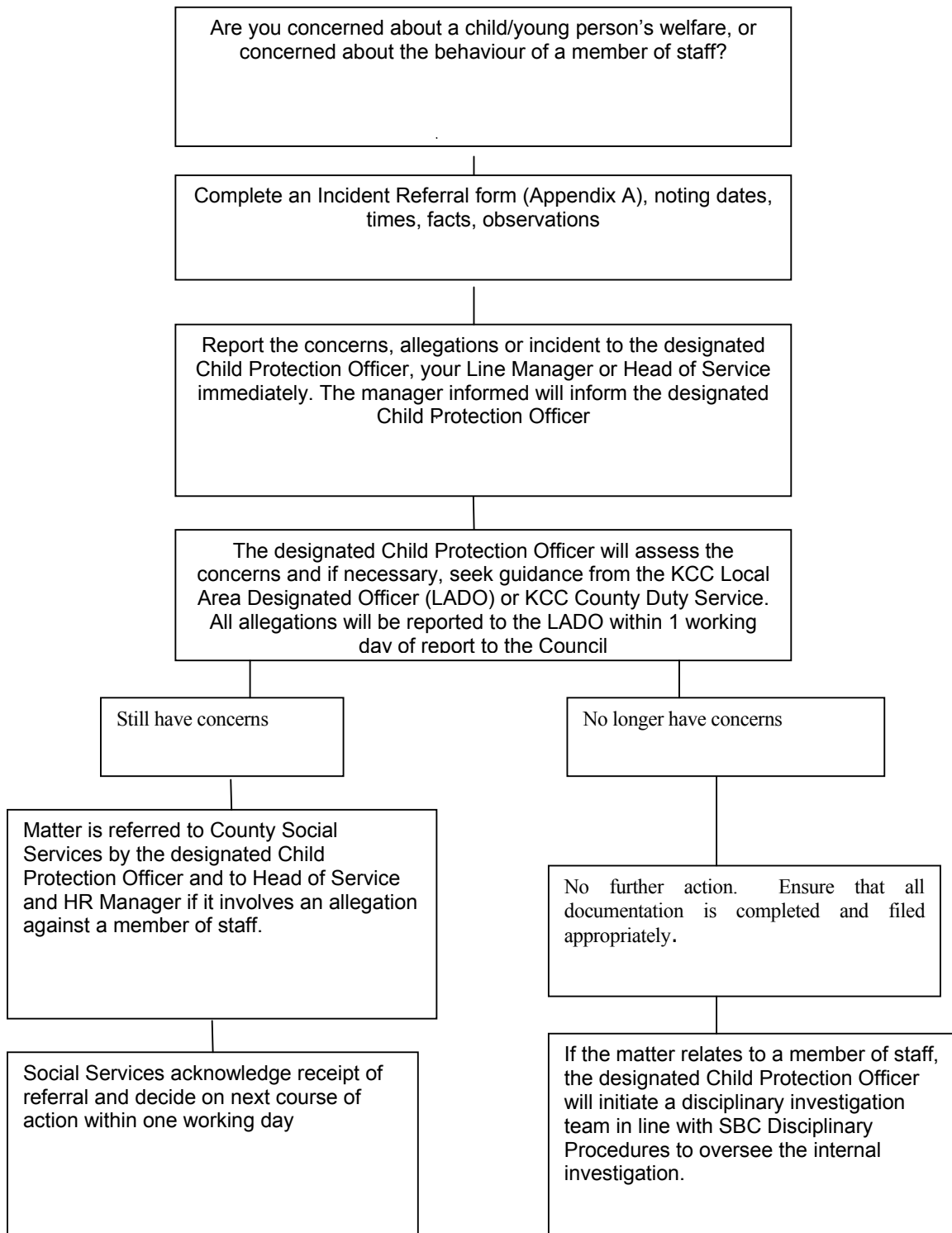
Employees may not discuss any allegation of child abuse, whether substantiated or not, with:

- Anyone within Swale Borough Council, other than the manager who they consulted, the Chief Executive, and the designated Child Protection Officer;
- Any member of any external agency, other than as part of the formal reporting procedure as set out in this policy or as part of the investigative process; and
- Any other interested party, including parents, carers, and relatives of the child or young person without the express permission of the person with overall responsibility for the investigation.

This does not exclude the employee from the need or right to consult with a solicitor, trade union representative, Human Resources, or other *bona fide* legal adviser.

Any enquiries from the media concerning an allegation of child abuse must be referred to the lead investigating agencies press office, or the SBC Press Officer. Any direct question must be answered with the phrase "No comment."

Reporting Child Protection Concerns / Allegations Against Staff



Appendix a. Examples of Indicators of abuse.

Type of abuse	Physical Indicator	Behavioural Indicator
Physical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequent or unexplained bruising, marks or injury • Bruises which reflect hand marks or shapes of articles e.g. belts • Cigarette burns • Bite marks • Unexplained broken or fractured bones • Scalds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fear of parent being contacted • Behavioral extremes – aggressive/angry outbursts or withdrawn • Fear of going home • Flinching when approached or touched • Depression • Keeping arms/legs covered • Reluctance to change clothes • Panics in response to pain • Reports injury caused by parents
Emotional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delays in physical development or progress • Sudden speech disorders • Failure to thrive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neurotic behaviour • Sleeping disorders, unable to play • Fear of making mistakes • Sucking, biting or rocking • Inappropriately adult or infant • Impairment of intellectual, emotional, social or behavioral development
Sexual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pain/itching in the genital area • Bruising/bleeding near genital area • Sexually transmitted disease • Vaginal discharge/infection • Frequent unexplained abdominal pains • Discomfort when walking/sitting • Bed wetting • Excessive crying 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inappropriate sexual behaviour or knowledge for the child's age • Promiscuity • Sudden changes in behaviour • Running away from home • Emotional withdrawal through lack of trust in adults • Unexplained sources of money or 'gifts' • Inappropriate sexually explicit drawings or stories • Bedwetting or soiling • Overeating or anorexia • Sleep disturbances • Secrets which cannot be told • Substance/drug misuse • Reports of assault
Neglect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constant hunger • Poor hygiene • Weight loss/underweight • Inappropriate dress • Consistent lack of supervision/abandonment • Unattended physical problems or medical needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begging/stealing food • Truancy/late for school • Constantly tired/listless • Regularly alone/unsupervised • Poor relationship with care giver

Appendix b.

Report of Incident/Concern Involving Child or Young Person

This form is to be used in every instance where an employee of Swale Borough Council raises a concern about the well being of a child or young person.

It may be completed in consultation with the employee's line manager and/or Swale Borough Council's designated Child Protection Officer.

When completed, it must be submitted to designated Child Protection Officer.

PART A:

Employee details (to be completed by the employee reporting the incident)

Name	
Department	
Position	
Contact details: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Office telephone• Mobile telephone• E-mail address• Office address	

Child or Young Persons details:

Child's first names	
Child's last name	
Any other name(s)	
Age and date of birth	
Address	
Contact telephone numbers	

Parent(s)/Carer(s) details:

<u>Name</u>	Relationship	DOB	Contact details

Reason for concern:

Please detail all information, including date, time, place, how long you have known the child or young person and in what capacity, and the precise details of the concern. Clearly define what is fact, opinion or hearsay.

List of evidence, documents, records made etc:

Item	Location
Describe the evidence, document, record etc.	State the location of the item (e.g. in employees note book; retained by line manager, etc.

Injuries:

Description	Site
Describe the injury(ies) seen by you.	Describe location. Do not ask the child or young person to remove clothing.

Medical assistance:

Detail any medical assistance you obtained, including the name of any doctor, nurse, or other professional. If an ambulance was called, state ambulance number, and crew base.

Police:

If Police called, detail who called them, and provide name, badge number, and police station of all officers attending.

Social Services:

If Social Services contacted, provide details of who spoken to, time, and advice they gave.
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Line Manager:

<u>Name</u>	Date informed	Time informed

Signature of officer completing form:

<u>Signature</u>	Date	Time

PART B:

Line Managers Action (to be completed by employee's line manager or Head of Service)

Name	
Directorate	
Position	
Contact details: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Office telephone • Mobile telephone • E-mail address • Office address 	

Action taken:

<i>Detail date, time, and place informed, information given by the employee, and action you took.</i>

Signature of officer completing form:

<u>Signature</u>	Date	Time

This form must be completed no later than 24 hours after the incident, and passed to Swale Borough Council's designated Child Protection Officer.

PART C:

To be completed by Swale Borough Council's Designated Child Protection Officer

Informed:

<u>Date</u>	Time	By whom

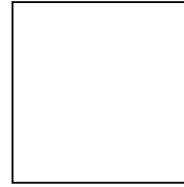
Action taken/comments:

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Signature:

<u>Signature</u>	Date	Time

Appendix c.



PHOTOGRAPH CONSENT FORM

Project:

I give permission for a photograph of:

Name 1: Age:
PRINT NAME

Name 2: Age:
PRINT NAME

Name 3: Age:
PRINT NAME

Name 4: Age:
PRINT NAME

To be published in Swale Borough Council's marketing and publicity material.

Signed..... **Date:**

Print Name:

Address.....
....

(A parent or guardian must give authorisation for children under the age of 16)

Please note: Names and ages of children will only be printed with your consent. Addresses and other personal details will remain confidential.

Appendix d. - Key Contacts

1. Designated Child Protection Officer

Peter Speakman, Chief Community Services Officer.

Tel : 01795 424341 ext 7251 or at home on 01227 730273

2. Human Resources Manager

Carol Sharp, Head of Human Resources.

Tel : 01795 424341 ext 7293

3. The Executive Portfolio Holder for Finance, Performance, Learning and Skills

Councillor Mike Cosgrove.

4. Kent Social Services (Swale Office)

The County Duty Service is the main access point for people wanting to contact Adult or Children's services concerning themselves or others and they are available 24 hours/day, 7 days/week

Tel : Kent County Council's Contact Centre on 08458 247 247.

5. Kent Police

Sittingbourne Police Station
Central Avenue,
Sittingbourne

8am-8pm Monday-Saturday, 10am-6pm Sundays

Tel : 01795 477055

6. Kent Safeguarding Children's Board

<http://www.kcpc.org.uk>

