

South Woodham Ferrers Town Council

Volunteer Policy

1. Purpose

This policy sets out the Town Council's approach to the recruitment, support, and management of all volunteers for the Town Council.

It ensures a safe, welcoming, and inclusive environment for residents and volunteers, while upholding the Council's duty to prevent discrimination and promote equality — including for volunteers with neurodiverse conditions.

2. Policy Statement

The Town Council recognises the valuable contribution volunteers make to community activities.

All volunteers are entitled to fair and respectful treatment, equal opportunities, and appropriate support to carry out their role effectively.

Discrimination, harassment, or exclusion on any grounds — including disability, neurodiversity, age, gender, race, religion, or belief — will not be tolerated.

3. Scope

This policy applies to:

- All volunteers engaged in the Town Council's Toddler Group and other groups run by the Town Council.
- Staff or councillors supervising or liaising with volunteers.
- Partner organisations working alongside the Toddler Group.

4. Principles

The Council is committed to the following principles:

1. **Inclusion and Equality:** Everyone has the right to participate fully and be valued for their individual strengths and experiences.
2. **Accessibility:** Reasonable adjustments will be made to support volunteers with disabilities or neurodiverse conditions (for example, adapting communication methods, providing clear routines, or allowing additional time for tasks).
3. **Safety and Safeguarding:** The welfare of children and vulnerable adults is paramount. All volunteers must follow the Council's Safeguarding Policy.
4. **Respect and Dignity:** All interactions should reflect kindness, patience, and mutual respect.

5. Transparency: Decisions about volunteer roles or responsibilities will be based on clear, objective criteria related to the needs of the group.

5. Recruitment and Induction

- Volunteer roles will be openly advertised where possible to ensure fairness and diversity.
- All prospective volunteers will complete a short expression of interest form and may be invited for an informal discussion.
- Volunteers will receive an induction covering:
 - The purpose of the Toddler Group.
 - Health and safety.
 - Equality and inclusion principles.
 - Safeguarding expectations.
 - Who to contact for support or feedback.
- Where appropriate, DBS checks (or the local equivalent) will be required.

6. Training and Support

- Volunteers will have access to relevant training, such as safeguarding, equality awareness, or child development basics.
- A named Volunteer Coordinator or group leader will provide ongoing supervision and check-ins.
- Adjustments (e.g., flexible scheduling, written instructions, sensory considerations) will be made to support volunteers' individual needs.

7. Conduct and Communication

- Volunteers are expected to follow the Council's Code of Conduct and act in the best interests of the community.
- Differences in communication or behaviour linked to neurodiversity will be understood and accommodated, not judged or penalised.
- Conflicts or misunderstandings will be handled promptly, informally where possible, and always with respect.

8. Health, Safety and Safeguarding

- All volunteers must comply with health and safety procedures and report hazards or incidents immediately.
- Volunteers are required to familiarise themselves with the Council's Safeguarding Policy and report any concerns following the established procedure.

9. Problem-Solving and Complaints

- Volunteers who feel they have been treated unfairly, discriminated against, or unsupported should raise their concern with the Town Clerk.
- Concerns will be handled confidentially and without prejudice.
- Where necessary, reasonable adjustments or mediation will be arranged.

10. Review and Monitoring

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Town Clerk and Council to ensure it remains inclusive and compliant with equality legislation, including the Equality Act 2010.

11. Related Policies

- Safeguarding Policy
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Code of Conduct

Responsible Officer	Town Clerk	Date effective from	October 2025	Review date	October 2026
----------------------------	------------	----------------------------	--------------	--------------------	--------------

Reviewed at Council 21/10/2025 C25-202