



# **SAFEGUARDING POLICY**

## Contents

ASHINGTON TOWN COUNCIL SAFEGUARDING POLICY AND PROCEDURE .....	4
1. INTRODUCTION .....	4
2. SCOPE OF POLICY .....	4
<b>Activities Outside the Council's Remit</b> .....	4
3. POLICY AIMS .....	5
4. LEGISLATION .....	5
5. DEFINITIONS .....	5
6. TOWN COUNCIL CONTEXT .....	5
1. Youth Advisory Committee .....	5
2. Family Events .....	5
3. School and Youth Group Visits .....	6
4. Community Engagement .....	6
5. Allotments Management .....	6
6. Civic Events and Ceremonies .....	6
7. Community Grants and Support .....	6
8. Public Consultations and Engagement .....	6
9. Council Premises and Facilities .....	6
10. Communications and Information Sharing .....	6
7. SAFEGUARDING LEAD .....	6
8. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES .....	7
THE COUNCIL .....	7
EVERYONE .....	7
9. CODE OF CONDUCT .....	7
10. SAFE WORKING PRACTICES .....	8
Youth Advisory Committee .....	8
Family Events .....	8
School and Youth Group Visits .....	8
Allotments Management .....	8
Civic Events and Ceremonies .....	8
Community Grants and Support .....	9
Public Consultations and Engagement .....	9
Council Premises and Facilities .....	9
Communications and Information Sharing .....	9
11. DBS CHECKS .....	10
12. AWARENESS AND TRAINING .....	10
13. INFORMATION SHARING AND CONFIDENTIALITY .....	10
14. REPORTING CONCERNS .....	10

15.	SAFEGUARDING PROCEDURE .....	11
	RECOGNISE .....	11
	RECORD .....	11
	REPORT.....	11
	REFER .....	11
16.	PREVENT DUTY.....	11
17.	ALLEGATIONS MANAGEMENT .....	11
18.	WORKING WITH PARTNERS.....	12
19.	MONITORING AND REVIEW OF THIS POLICY .....	12
	APPENDIX: USEFUL CONTACTS.....	12

This Safeguarding Policy was adopted by the council at its meeting held on 26<sup>th</sup> May 2026.  
Reviewed May 2026 to include clarification of the policy's scope in relation to activities carried out by Councillors and Officers outside their Council role.

# ASHINGTON TOWN COUNCIL SAFEGUARDING POLICY AND PROCEDURE

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Ashington Town Council is committed to safeguarding children, young people, and vulnerable adults. We recognise our responsibility to take all reasonable steps to promote safe practice and to protect children, young people and vulnerable adults from harm, abuse, and exploitation.

Ashington Town Council makes a positive contribution to a strong and safe community and recognises the right of every individual to stay safe.

This policy seeks to ensure that members and officers know how to respond if they see a potential safeguarding issue, while recognising that the Town Council's contact with children and vulnerable adults is typically limited and occurs in supervised settings.

## 2. SCOPE OF POLICY

This policy applies to all staff, councillors, volunteers, and contractors working for or on behalf of the Council.

### **Activities Outside the Council's Remit**

This policy does not extend to activities carried out by Councillors or Officers in a personal capacity, or in their capacity for another organisation, where those activities are not connected to their role with Ashington Town Council. The Council has no safeguarding jurisdiction over conduct that falls outside its own functions and activities, and is not legally liable for safeguarding failures that occur in another context. This boundary is important both to define the Council's responsibilities accurately and to protect it from claims arising from activities over which it has no supervision, control, or authority.

Examples of activities that fall outside the scope of this policy include:

- A Councillor acting in a wholly personal capacity — for example, a Councillor who helps a neighbour, attends a community event as a private individual, or supports a cause entirely unrelated to their role as an elected member. Even if the person is known to the community as a Councillor, the Council's safeguarding policy does not govern their personal conduct in these circumstances.
- A Councillor or Officer volunteering for another organisation — for example, volunteering at a sports club, youth group, charity, or community association that is separate from the Council. In that setting, the individual is operating under the safeguarding framework of that organisation, not the Council's. The host organisation is responsible for ensuring appropriate safeguarding arrangements are in place, and the individual is subject to that organisation's policies and DBS requirements. The Council has no oversight or liability for safeguarding in these settings.

Councillors and Officers must be careful not to give any impression that they are acting on behalf of the Council when engaged in personal or voluntary activities in another capacity. Where there is any ambiguity about whether an activity is connected to the Council, the Executive Officer should be consulted before the activity is undertaken.

Where a Councillor or Officer is acting in a capacity connected to another organisation — whether as a volunteer, trustee, board member, or representative — any safeguarding concern relating to that activity should be raised with the safeguarding lead of the organisation concerned, or with Northumberland County Council's Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) if the concern

involves an allegation against a person in a position of trust with children. The Council's LADO for Northumberland is contactable through OneCall (01670 536 400). See Section 17 (Allegations Management) for further detail on how such complaints received by the Council will be handled.

### 3. POLICY AIMS

- To safeguard children, young people, and vulnerable adults with whom the Council comes into contact.
- To ensure staff, councillors and volunteers are clear on their responsibilities to safeguard and respond appropriately to safeguarding concerns.
- To ensure consistent good practice across the Council.
- To provide guidance on the Council's limited but important role in the wider safeguarding system.

### 4. LEGISLATION

The principal pieces of legislation governing this policy are:

1. Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023
2. The Children Act 1989 and 2004
3. Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006
4. The Care Act 2014
5. Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 (Prevent Duty)
6. Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR

### 5. DEFINITIONS

**Safeguarding** means protecting peoples' health, wellbeing, and human rights, and enabling them to live free from harm, abuse, and neglect.

A **child** is anyone under the age of 18.

A **vulnerable adult** is anyone aged 18 or over who needs care and support, is experiencing or at risk of abuse or neglect, and as a result of their care needs, cannot protect themselves.

**Abuse** can take many forms, including physical, psychological, sexual, financial, neglect, discriminatory, institutional, domestic abuse, modern slavery, and online abuse.

### 6. TOWN COUNCIL CONTEXT

Ashington Town Council has limited direct contact with children and vulnerable adults. Our typical activities include:

1. **Youth Advisory Committee** - This committee works exclusively in partnership with properly trained youth organisations. Town Council staff and councillors are never solely responsible for supervising young people without qualified youth workers present.
2. **Family Events** - The Council organises or supports events suitable for families. For these events:

- Outside operators and contractors are required to provide evidence of appropriate DBS checks
  - Outside operators must confirm they have their own safeguarding policies
  - Events are open to the public with parents/carers responsible for their children
3. **School and Youth Group Visits** - Council representatives occasionally visit schools and youth groups to:
- Give talks about local democracy
  - Participate in educational activities
  - During these visits, school staff or youth leaders remain present, and Council representatives are never alone with young people.
4. **Community Engagement** - When engaging with the community, Council staff and members may encounter vulnerable adults. These interactions typically occur in public settings or with appropriate support workers present.
5. **Allotments Management** - Regular inspections of allotment sites where vulnerable adult tenants may be present. Processing applications and managing waiting lists that might include vulnerable adults. Resolving disputes or handling complaints that might involve vulnerable tenants.
6. **Civic Events and Ceremonies** - Hosting public ceremonies (e.g., Remembrance Day, civic awards) attended by vulnerable adults. Civic Head visits to care homes, sheltered housing, or disability support groups. Community recognition events honouring vulnerable residents for their contributions
7. **Community Grants and Support** - Reviewing applications from organisations serving vulnerable adults. Site visits to funded projects that support vulnerable adults. Monitoring outcomes of grants that benefit vulnerable populations
8. **Public Consultations and Engagement** - Town hall meetings or public forums where vulnerable adults participate. Surveys or questionnaires that might be completed by vulnerable residents. Focus groups that include vulnerable community members. Community needs assessments that identify vulnerable populations
9. **Council Premises and Facilities** - Vulnerable adults using council-managed community spaces. Public accessing council offices to request services or information.
10. **Communications and Information Sharing** - Managing the council website and social media that vulnerable adults access. Producing newsletters and public information that reaches vulnerable residents. Handling inquiries from vulnerable adults about council services. Signposting vulnerable residents to appropriate support services.

## 7. SAFEGUARDING LEAD

The Executive Officer is the designated Safeguarding Lead and is responsible for leading safeguarding arrangements. This involves:

- Ensuring safeguarding policies and procedures are in place, reviewed annually and followed.
- Acting as the main contact point for safeguarding issues.
- Maintaining contact details for reporting concerns, e.g. social services, police.
- Ensuring appropriate awareness training is available to staff, councillors, and volunteers.

## **8. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

### ***THE COUNCIL***

Ashington Town Council has responsibility to ensure a Safeguarding Policy is in place and appropriate, that the policy is accessible to everyone and is implemented.

The policy must be monitored and reviewed annually, or when changes are made to any of the legislation relating to this policy.

### ***EVERYONE***

All staff, members, volunteers, and contractors have responsibility to:

- Follow the guidance laid out in this policy
- Pass on any welfare concerns using the reporting procedures
- Report safeguarding concerns promptly
- Maintain confidentiality where appropriate

It is not the responsibility of Ashington Town Council, or individuals, to conduct their own safeguarding investigation. This will be undertaken by either Northumberland County Council or the Police.

## **9. CODE OF CONDUCT**

When interacting with children, young people, or vulnerable adults, all staff, councillors, and volunteers should:

- Treat all individuals with respect and dignity
- Always put the welfare of the individual first
- Maintain a safe and appropriate distance
- Never be alone with a child or vulnerable adult without appropriate supervision
- Never engage in rough, physical, or sexually provocative games
- Never make sexually suggestive comments, even in fun
- Never allow allegations made by a child, young person, or vulnerable adult to go unchallenged, unrecorded, or not acted upon

## **10. SAFE WORKING PRACTICES**

### ***Youth Advisory Committee***

- Council representatives attending events and activities from the Youth Advisory Committee will always work alongside qualified youth workers
- The partner youth organisations maintain primary responsibility for direct supervision of young people
- Any concerns identified during these meetings should be reported to both the youth organisation's designated safeguarding lead and the Council's Executive Officer

### ***Family Events***

- Contracts with outside operators will include requirements for appropriate DBS checks for staff working directly with children
- Operators must provide confirmation of their own safeguarding policies and procedures
- Event risk assessments will include safeguarding considerations
- Clear signage will indicate that children remain the responsibility of their parents/carers

### ***School and Youth Group Visits***

- Council representatives will only visit by prior arrangement
- School staff or youth leaders must remain present throughout
- Council representatives will follow the safeguarding protocols of the host school or organisation

### ***Allotments Management***

- Conduct allotment inspections with prior notice where possible
- Visit in pairs when meeting with tenants who are known to be vulnerable
- Maintain appropriate professional boundaries when advising or supporting vulnerable tenants
- Ensure allotment policies and communications are accessible in clear, simple language
- Document any concerns about a tenant's welfare and report according to safeguarding procedures
- Provide reasonable adjustments and support for vulnerable adult plot holders where appropriate

### ***Civic Events and Ceremonies***

- Ensure venues for public events are accessible to people with disabilities
- Train staff and volunteers to recognise and assist vulnerable adults who may need support
- Consider specific needs (seating, access, breaks, quiet areas) for vulnerable adults at events
- Provide information about events in accessible formats

- Have a designated point of contact at events who can assist vulnerable attendees
- Ensure photography and publicity protocols respect privacy and dignity

### ***Community Grants and Support***

- Include safeguarding requirements in grant application processes for projects serving vulnerable adults
- Request confirmation of appropriate policies from organisations applying for funding
- Conduct proportionate due diligence on organisations working with vulnerable adults
- Include safeguarding considerations in monitoring and evaluation of funded projects
- Maintain appropriate professional relationships when conducting site visits
- Document any concerns observed during site visits to funded projects

### ***Public Consultations and Engagement***

- Ensure consultation methods are accessible to all community members
- Provide alternative formats for information (large print, simplified text, audio)
- Consider holding specific sessions for groups who might need additional support
- Train staff facilitating consultations to be responsive to diverse needs
- Maintain confidentiality for sensitive personal information shared during consultations
- Document and appropriately share any safeguarding concerns that arise

### ***Council Premises and Facilities***

- Ensure staff working in public-facing roles receive appropriate safeguarding awareness training
- Maintain a visitor log for council premises where appropriate
- Have clear procedures for staff to follow if they have concerns about visitors
- Ensure meeting rooms used for appointments with the public are appropriately situated
- Consider conducting meetings with potentially vulnerable adults in pairs where appropriate
- Ensure building design and policies support dignity and independence of vulnerable users

### ***Communications and Information Sharing***

- Ensure council communications are accessible and available in alternative formats
- Train staff handling public inquiries to recognise potential safeguarding concerns
- Maintain up-to-date information about local support services for signposting
- Establish procedures for handling disclosures that may occur during communications
- Ensure website and digital communications meet accessibility standards

- Have clear protocols for responding to concerning communications that may indicate risk

## **11. DBS CHECKS**

Given the Town Council's limited direct contact with children and vulnerable adults, DBS checks will be required only in specific circumstances:

- DBS checks are not routinely required for councillors or staff whose contact with children or vulnerable adults is incidental or always supervised
- If specific roles evolve to include regular unsupervised contact with children or vulnerable adults, the need for appropriate DBS checks will be assessed
- For specific events or projects involving direct work with children or vulnerable adults, appropriate DBS checks will be arranged for relevant staff or volunteers

## **12. AWARENESS AND TRAINING**

The Council will ensure:

1. All staff and councillors receive basic safeguarding awareness information upon induction, including how to recognise potential concerns and how to report them.
2. The Safeguarding Lead (Executive Officer) receives appropriate safeguarding training.
3. Staff involved in specific projects with children or vulnerable adults receive appropriate guidance.

## **13. INFORMATION SHARING AND CONFIDENTIALITY**

When sharing information, staff and councillors should:

1. Remember that Data Protection laws are not a barrier to justified information sharing for safeguarding purposes.
2. The Data (Use and Access) Act 2025 introduced 'Recognised Legitimate Interests' as a lawful basis for processing personal data, which explicitly includes safeguarding individuals at risk — this provides additional statutory support for sharing information where there is reasonable cause to suspect a child or vulnerable adult may be at risk of harm.
3. Share information with relevant authorities when there is reasonable cause to suspect a child or vulnerable adult may be at risk of harm.
4. Only share what is necessary, proportionate, relevant, accurate, and timely.
5. Record decisions to share (or not share) information and the reasons for these decisions.

## **14. REPORTING CONCERNS**

Staff, councillors, and volunteers must report all safeguarding concerns to the Executive Officer. The Executive Officer will then respond appropriately, recording actions taken.

The Executive Officer will only accept safeguarding concerns that relate to activities carried out in connection with official Council business. Where a concern is received about the conduct of a Councillor or Officer in a capacity unconnected to the Council — for example, in a personal capacity or while volunteering for another organisation — the Executive Officer will not handle that concern under this policy. The Executive Officer will instead advise the person raising the concern

of the appropriate route: either the safeguarding lead of the relevant organisation, or Northumberland County Council's LADO (contactable via OneCall: 01670 536 400) where the concern relates to a person in a position of trust with children. This approach reflects the Council's legal position: it has no jurisdiction, and carries no liability, for safeguarding matters arising outside its own activities. See also Section 2 (Scope of Policy).

Concerns about the Executive Officer should be reported to the Chair of the Council.

In an emergency, or if someone is in immediate danger, dial 999.

## **15. SAFEGUARDING PROCEDURE**

This is based on what is usually referred to as the "4 Rs":

### ***RECOGNISE***

Be alert to potential signs of abuse or neglect.

### ***RECORD***

Write down what you have observed or been told:

- Date, time and place
- What you saw or were told
- Who was involved
- Any other relevant details

### ***REPORT***

Report your concern to the Executive Officer as soon as possible.

### ***REFER***

The Executive Officer will determine whether to refer to external agencies. For Northumberland, referrals are made to OneCall:

**Onecall** is one number for all adult social care, children's services, and community health enquiries in Northumberland.

**Telephone: 01670 536 400 Email address: [onecall@northumberland.gov.uk](mailto:onecall@northumberland.gov.uk)**

## **16. PREVENT DUTY**

Under the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015, the Council has a duty to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism. Any concerns about potential radicalisation should be reported following the same safeguarding procedures outlined above.

## **17. ALLEGATIONS MANAGEMENT**

The process for raising and dealing with allegations against staff, councillors or volunteers is as follows:

1. Report any concerns to the Executive Officer. The Executive Officer will complete a written record of the concern.
2. Contact OneCall for advice.
3. Follow the advice provided.

If the concern relates to the Executive Officer, contact OneCall directly.

Where an allegation is received by the Council concerning a Councillor or Officer acting in a capacity outside their Council role — for example, in a personal capacity or while volunteering for another organisation — the Council will not investigate or manage that allegation under this policy. The allegation falls outside the Council's jurisdiction. The Council is not vicariously liable for the conduct of Councillors or Officers acting outside the scope of their Council role, and it would be inappropriate and potentially misleading for the Council to handle the allegation as if it were.

The Executive Officer will acknowledge receipt of the concern, explain clearly why it falls outside this policy, and direct the complainant to the responsible body: the safeguarding lead of the relevant organisation, and/or Northumberland County Council's LADO via OneCall (01670 536 400). A record of the contact and the action taken will be retained. Where the conduct concerned raises wider concerns about fitness for public office, the Executive Officer may notify the Monitoring Officer at Northumberland County Council as appropriate.

Where the Council receives a concern about out-of-scope conduct and there are reasonable grounds to believe a child or vulnerable adult may be at immediate risk of harm, the Executive Officer will contact OneCall (01670 536 400) or the emergency services directly regardless of which body carries responsibility for the underlying allegation.

## **18. WORKING WITH PARTNERS**

When working with partner organisations on activities involving children or vulnerable adults:

1. Confirm which organisation's safeguarding procedures will be followed
2. Establish clear responsibilities for supervision
3. Ensure appropriate information sharing protocols are in place
4. Verify that staff from partner organisations have appropriate DBS checks where required

## **19. MONITORING AND REVIEW OF THIS POLICY**

The Executive Officer shall be responsible for reviewing this policy annually to ensure that it meets legal requirements and reflects best practice.

Any proposed amendments will be presented to the Council for approval.

## **APPENDIX: USEFUL CONTACTS**

- Northumberland OneCall: 01670 536 400
- Police (non-emergency): 101
- Emergency Services: 999
- NSPCC Helpline: 0808 800 5000
- Childline: 0800 1111