



SAFEGUARDING POLICY

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This Safeguarding Policy was adopted by the council at its meeting held on 20th May 2025.

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.

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. Share information with relevant authorities when there is reasonable cause to suspect a child or vulnerable adult may be at risk of harm.
3. Only share what is necessary, proportionate, relevant, accurate, and timely.

4. 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.

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

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.

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.

20. APPENDIX: USEFUL CONTACTS

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