



ANDOVER TOWN COUNCIL

Safeguarding Policy 2026

1. Purpose

Andover Town Council delivers services which can bring employees, Councillors, volunteers and contractors into contact with children and adults at risk, whether as part of their role or incidentally, for example on allotment sites, at community events or in the Council office.

The Council believes that all children and adults at risk have the right to be safe and to be protected from abuse and neglect. This policy sets out the Council's safeguarding commitments, how to recognise abuse, and how concerns and allegations must be reported. It is not the role of the Council or of any individual to decide whether abuse has taken place; it is everyone's responsibility to report concerns so that the statutory agencies can act.

2. Legal and Guidance Framework

This policy reflects the following legislation and statutory guidance:

- Children Act 1989 and Children Act 2004.
- Children and Social Work Act 2017, which replaced Local Safeguarding Children Boards with local safeguarding partners; in Hampshire this is the Hampshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (HSCP).
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023) and What to do if you're worried a child is being abused (2015).
- Care Act 2014 and its statutory guidance, which govern adult safeguarding, and the Hampshire Safeguarding Adults Board (HSAB) procedures.
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 and the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) regime.
- Domestic Abuse Act 2021, which recognises children who see, hear or experience the effects of domestic abuse as victims in their own right.
- Crime and Policing Act 2026, which introduces a statutory duty in England to report child sexual abuse, an offence of preventing or deterring a report, and the removal of the supervision exemption from regulated activity (see section 7).
- Mental Capacity Act 2005, UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018.

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DRAFT 0.1	7 October 2026	PR 037/10/26	Policy and Resources	every three years, or sooner if legislation, national guidance or Council requirements change.
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3. Scope and Definitions

This policy applies to all employees, Councillors, volunteers and, through contract conditions, contractors, across all functions and services of the Council.

- A child is any person under the age of 18 (Children Act 2004).
- An adult at risk is a person aged 18 or over who has needs for care and support, is experiencing or is at risk of abuse or neglect, and as a result of those needs is unable to protect themselves against it (Care Act 2014). This term replaces “vulnerable adult” used in earlier versions of this policy.
- “Parent/carer” is used as a generic term for parents, carers and guardians.

4. Designated Safeguarding Lead

The Town Clerk is the Council’s Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL). The Deputy Town Clerk acts as deputy in the Town Clerk’s absence. The DSL is the first point of contact for all safeguarding concerns, makes or supports referrals to the statutory agencies, keeps secure records, ensures training is delivered, and reports annually to the Council on safeguarding activity. The names and contact details of the DSL and deputy will be displayed in the Council office and given to all staff and volunteers at induction.

5. Recognising Abuse and Neglect

Children

Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023) identifies four categories of abuse: physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse and neglect. Staff, Councillors and volunteers should also be alert to harms that can occur outside the family (“extra-familial harms”), including child sexual exploitation, child criminal exploitation and county lines, serious violence, and online abuse such as grooming, bullying and sharing of indecent images. Indicators may include unexplained injuries, changes in behaviour, fearfulness, poor hygiene or weight loss, sexual knowledge or behaviour beyond the child’s age, or reluctance to go home. Indicators are not proof of abuse: the responsibility is to report concerns, not to investigate.

Adults at risk

The Care Act statutory guidance identifies the following types of abuse and neglect of adults: physical, sexual, psychological, financial or material, neglect and acts of omission, discriminatory, organisational, domestic abuse, modern slavery and self-neglect. The Council will apply the six

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Care Act safeguarding principles: empowerment, prevention, proportionality, protection, partnership and accountability.

6. Reporting Concerns

- If a child or adult is in immediate danger, call the Police on 999.
- Concerns about a child must be reported to the DSL, who will support a referral to Hampshire County Council Children's Services on 0300 555 1384 (office hours) or 0300 555 1373 (out of hours). Referrals should be made within one working day of a concern being identified and confirmed in writing within 48 hours. If the DSL is unavailable, contact Children's Services directly, do not wait.
- Concerns about an adult at risk must be reported to the DSL, who will support a referral to Hampshire County Council Adults' Health and Care on 0300 555 1386 (office hours) or 0300 555 1373 (out of hours).
- Wherever practicable, the consent of an adult at risk to a referral should be sought, and their wishes respected. However, information may be shared without consent where the adult lacks capacity to make the decision (Mental Capacity Act 2005), where others may be at risk, where a serious crime may have been committed or may be prevented, or where the adult is subject to coercion or undue influence. Concerns should always be recorded even where no referral is made.
- Do not confront or contact the person alleged to have caused harm, and do not discuss the concern with anyone other than the DSL, the statutory agencies or the Police.
- All concerns, discussions and decisions must be recorded on the reporting form at Appendix A within 24 hours, using the person's own words where a disclosure has been made.

7. Mandatory Duty to Report Child Sexual Abuse

The Crime and Policing Act 2026 establishes a statutory duty in England for anyone engaged in regulated activity with children to report child sexual abuse to the Police or the local authority where a child or a perpetrator discloses it to them, or where they witness it. A report must be made as soon as reasonably practicable. It is a criminal offence, punishable by up to seven years' imprisonment, to prevent or deter a person from making a report, and a failure to report may lead to referral to the DBS and inclusion in the children's barred list.

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The Act also removes the “supervision exemption” from the definition of regulated activity, widening eligibility for enhanced DBS checks with barred list information. The Council will follow the government’s implementation guidance as it is published, will treat the duty as its minimum standard of practice with immediate effect, and will review this policy and the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Policy when the relevant provisions are commenced.

8. Allegations Against Staff, Councillors or Volunteers

An allegation or concern that an employee, Councillor, volunteer or contractor has behaved in a way that has harmed or may have harmed a child or adult at risk, may have committed a criminal offence against them, or has behaved in a way that indicates they may be unsuitable to work with them, must be reported to the DSL immediately. Where the concern relates to the Town Clerk, it must be reported to the Chair of the HR Sub-Committee.

- For allegations concerning children, the DSL will contact the Hampshire County Council Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) within one working day, before any internal investigation, and will follow the LADO’s advice, including on whether suspension (a neutral act) should be considered. Current LADO contact details are published on the Hampshire Safeguarding Children Partnership website.
- For allegations concerning adults at risk, the DSL will follow the HSAB procedures and contact Adults’ Health and Care.
- The Town Clerk must ensure the HR Sub-Committee is made aware and that HR advice is sought at the earliest opportunity; the person concerned will be treated fairly and kept informed so far as the statutory agencies advise.
- Where the Council withdraws a person from regulated activity because they have harmed or pose a risk of harm to children or adults at risk, it has a legal duty to refer the matter to the DBS (Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006).

9. Safer Recruitment

The Council recruits safely in accordance with its Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Policy. Recruitment documentation will state the Council’s commitment to safeguarding; application forms (not CVs) will be used; gaps in employment history will be explored; identity and the right to work will be verified; at least one reference will be from a previous employer and will ask about safeguarding concerns; and DBS checks at the appropriate level will be obtained where the role is eligible, taking account of the removal of the supervision exemption by the Crime and Policing Act 2026.

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10. Safe Working Practice

Employees, Councillors and volunteers must treat all children and adults at risk with respect; ensure wherever possible that more than one adult is present, or that they are within sight or hearing of others; be mindful that physical contact and words can be misinterpreted; challenge unacceptable behaviour; and report every allegation or suspicion. They must not have inappropriate physical or verbal contact; make sexually suggestive or derogatory remarks; show favouritism; give personal contact details to, or communicate privately online with, children or adults at risk met through Council activities; transport a child or adult at risk alone except in an emergency or with parental consent; take them to their own home; or meet them outside Council activities without the knowledge of parents/carers and the Town Clerk.

11. Responding to a Disclosure

If a child or adult at risk discloses abuse: listen, take it seriously and reassure them they have done the right thing; do not probe, ask leading questions or promise secrecy; explain that the information must be shared with the DSL; record what was said in the person's own words as soon as possible; and report to the DSL the same day. Disclosures received by email, text or social media must be passed to the DSL immediately and responded to within 24 hours.

12. Unaccompanied Children

Where a young child is found unaccompanied at a Council venue or event, staff should avoid being alone with the child, seek a colleague, and try to establish whether the child is permitted to come and go alone, taking account of the child's age, understanding and any risks on their journey. Children under 10 should not normally be allowed to leave alone unless it is known the parent/carer permits it; where in doubt, keep the child on the premises and contact the parent/carer, escalating to Children's Services or the Police if they cannot be reached. Notices at Council events will remind parents and carers that they remain responsible for their children at all times.

13. Training

All staff and regular volunteers will receive safeguarding awareness training at induction and refresher training at least every three years, in line with the Training and Development Policy. The DSL and deputy will undertake designated safeguarding lead training and will complete briefing on the Crime and Policing Act 2026 mandatory reporting duty as government guidance

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is published. Councillors will be offered safeguarding awareness training. The Town Clerk will keep a training record.

14. Records and Data Protection

Safeguarding records contain special category data and will be stored securely with access limited to the DSL and those who need to know. They will be processed in accordance with the UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018 and the Council's Data Protection Policy and Procedure, and retained in line with the Records Retention and Disposal Policy. The lawful bases for sharing safeguarding information include legal obligation, public task and the protection of vital interests; fear of breaching data protection law must never prevent a safeguarding referral.

15. Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed annually, and immediately upon commencement of the mandatory reporting provisions of the Crime and Policing Act 2026 or any change to Working Together to Safeguard Children, HSCP or HSAB procedures. Key contact numbers at Appendix B will be verified at each review.

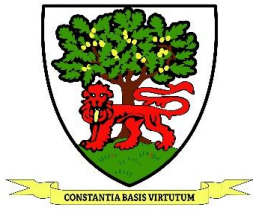
Appendix A – Safeguarding Reporting Form (outline)

- Your name, role and contact details; date and time of the concern or disclosure.
- Name, address, date of birth (or approximate age) of the child or adult at risk; parent/carer details where applicable.
- What was seen, heard or disclosed — in the person's own words; your observations; any injuries noted.
- Action taken, including referrals made, to whom, when and any advice received; signature and date.

Appendix B – Key Contacts

- Emergency: Police 999. Non-emergency: Police 101.
- Hampshire Children's Services: 0300 555 1384 (office hours); 0300 555 1373 (out of hours).

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- Hampshire Adults' Health and Care: 0300 555 1386 (office hours); 0300 555 1373 (out of hours).
- LADO: via the Hampshire Safeguarding Children Partnership – www.hampshirescp.org.uk.
- NSPCC Helpline: 0808 800 5000. Childline: 0800 1111.
- Hourglass (abuse of older people): 0808 808 8141.

Related Policies

This policy should be read alongside:

- Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Policy
- Volunteer Policy
- Lone Working Policy
- Training and Development Policy
- Complaints Procedure and Policy
- Disciplinary Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Data Protection Policy and Procedure
- Records Retention and Disposal Policy
- Code of Conduct

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