



Highley Parish Council – Safeguarding Policy (2026 Update)

To be adopted at the Annual Council Meeting – 12 May 2026

1. Policy Statement

Highley Parish Council is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of **children, young people and adults at risk**. We believe that everyone has the right to feel safe, respected and protected from harm, abuse or neglect.

The Council recognises its responsibilities as a local authority body and will take all reasonable steps to ensure that:

- Concerns are responded to promptly and appropriately
- Staff, councillors, volunteers and contractors understand their safeguarding responsibilities
- Appropriate reporting routes are in place
- Safeguarding is embedded in all Council activities, services and decision-making

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.

2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- All councillors
- The Clerk and any employees
- Volunteers acting on behalf of the Council
- Contractors and individuals engaged in Council-commissioned work
- Any person representing the Council in community settings

It covers all Council activities, including events, meetings, public spaces, and interactions with residents.

3. Definitions

Children

Anyone under the age of 18.

Adults at Risk

An adult who:

- Has care and support needs, and
- Is experiencing, or is at risk of, abuse or neglect, and
- Is unable to protect themselves because of those needs

Abuse and Neglect

Includes (but is not limited to):

- Physical, emotional or sexual abuse
- Domestic abuse
- Financial or material abuse
- Neglect or self-neglect
- Discriminatory abuse
- Organisational abuse
- Modern slavery
- Online abuse
- Exploitation (including county lines, cuckooing, grooming)

4. Roles and Responsibilities

The Council

Highley Parish Council will:

- Promote a culture of safeguarding and vigilance
- Ensure safeguarding is considered in all Council decisions
- Review this policy annually
- Ensure councillors and staff understand their responsibilities
- Work in partnership with statutory agencies (SSCP, West Mercia Police, Shropshire Council)

The Clerk (Designated Safeguarding Lead – DSL)

The Clerk will:

- Act as the first point of contact for safeguarding concerns
- Record and report concerns to Shropshire Council or the Police as appropriate
- Maintain secure safeguarding records
- Ensure councillors and staff receive appropriate guidance
- Escalate concerns when necessary
- Liaise with safeguarding partners

If the concern relates to the Clerk, the report must be made to the **Chair of the Council**.

Councillors, Staff, Volunteers and Contractors

All representatives of the Council must:

- Report safeguarding concerns immediately
- Not investigate or question the individual beyond basic clarification
- Treat all disclosures sensitively and confidentially
- Cooperate with safeguarding procedures
- Complete any required training

5. Recognising Abuse

Signs of abuse may include:

- Unexplained injuries
- Fearfulness or withdrawal
- Sudden changes in behaviour
- Poor hygiene or malnutrition
- Financial irregularities
- Inappropriate sexualised behaviour
- Distress, anxiety or depression
- Evidence of coercion or control

This list is not exhaustive. If in doubt, **report it**.

6. Responding to a Safeguarding Concern

If someone discloses abuse

- Stay calm and listen
- Take the disclosure seriously
- Do not promise confidentiality
- Reassure the person they have done the right thing
- Record the facts as soon as possible
- Report the concern immediately to the Clerk (DSL) or Chair

Do NOT:

- Ask leading questions
- Confront the alleged abuser
- Investigate the matter yourself
- Delay reporting

7. Reporting Procedure

Immediate danger

Call **999**.

Urgent safeguarding concern

Contact **Shropshire Council First Point of Contact (FPOC)** or **West Mercia Police (101)**.

Internal reporting

1. Report to the **Clerk (DSL)**
2. If the concern involves the Clerk, report to the **Chair**
3. The DSL/Chair will:
 - a. Record the concern
 - b. Contact statutory services
 - c. Follow advice from safeguarding professionals

All records will be stored securely and confidentially.

8. Safeguarding in Council Activities

The Council will ensure that:

- Risk assessments consider safeguarding risks
- Contractors working with children or adults at risk have appropriate policies
- Volunteers are briefed on safeguarding expectations
- Public events include safeguarding considerations
- Lone working arrangements prioritise safety

9. Confidentiality and Record Keeping

- Information will be shared only on a **need-to-know basis**
- Records will be factual, dated and stored securely
- The Council will comply with data protection legislation
- Individuals will not be informed of referrals if doing so increases risk

10. Allegations Against Councillors, Staff or Contractors

Any allegation involving a councillor, employee or contractor must be reported immediately to the Clerk or Chair.

Where the allegation concerns a councillor, the matter may also be referred to:

- **Shropshire Council Monitoring Officer** (Code of Conduct)
- **Police or safeguarding services** where appropriate

The Council will take all allegations seriously and act promptly.

11. Training

The Council will ensure that:

- The Clerk receives safeguarding training appropriate to their role
- Councillors and staff receive safeguarding awareness guidance
- Training needs are reviewed annually

12. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed:

- Annually at the Annual Council Meeting
- Following any safeguarding incident
- In response to changes in legislation or best practice

13. Adoption

This Safeguarding Policy is adopted by Highley Parish Council on:

12 May 2026 at the **Annual Meeting of the Parish Council.**