



Child and Adult Safeguarding Policy 2025/26 – 2027/28

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Making sure Harlow Council's approach to safeguarding is always person-centred

Safeguarding is everybody's business. Doing nothing is not an option. Any step to reduce the risk of harm and prevent safeguarding issues occurring in the first place is a priority.

The Public Protection Portfolio has political oversight of safeguarding policy. Bringing together all the levers of enforcement in the council under one single portfolio has strengthened the way safeguarding is monitored at a strategic level, and how best practice is applied.

Promoting the health, safety and wellbeing of all staff, elected members, volunteers, those working for and on behalf of the council and the general public is taken seriously. That is why this safeguarding policy is designed to ensure all disclosures that the council is made aware of are reported and managed in the right way.

It is the council's policy that all safeguarding concerns and alerts are referred without delay to the appropriate internal safeguarding lead or external body, as required.

The application of this policy and adoption of the associated safeguarding procedures is mandatory. Summary guidance and e-learning is also provided at the right level to help educate and support those who may, at some point, need to respond to a safeguarding issue.

This safeguarding policy, including all the associated procedures and practices are predicated on the understanding that any adult or child in need of support will be in a position to work with the council to determine the response to their safeguarding disclosure, unless there are clear public interest issues that override this, there is a significant risk or harm, or there is evidence that they lack the capacity to do so. That is where multi-agency working is important. The partnership working already in place has established strong foundations for responding and providing support to those who make a disclosure or where a safeguarding issue is suspected, which triggers the appropriate form of investigation.

The council is therefore also conscious that its approach is consistent with multi-agency procedures, safeguarding, social care and education legislation and guidance.

What also matters is that people have confidence in the safeguarding process. The council is determined to make sure every voice is heard and that anyone experiencing a safeguarding issue is supported. Focusing on a person-centred approach to safeguarding is the best way to encourage people to seek help.

The political leadership, executive management team and Designated Safeguarding Officer are accountable internally in the council for ensuring effective corporate safeguarding practices in line with agreed procedures, which are quality assured. This includes strategic responsibility for safeguarding planning, best practice and training management.

There is an important leadership role for the council to play in this area. A proactive stance on safeguarding strengthens the resilience of the communities that make up Harlow. Through a person-centred approach to safeguarding, it is hoped that everyone the council encounters feels that their wellbeing matters, and that they will be listened to if they need to make a disclosure.

Cllr Joel Charles, Cabinet Member for Public Protection, Harlow District Council

2. Introduction

2.1 This policy commits all Harlow Council employees, elected Members, volunteers and those working for and on behalf of the council, regardless of their role and responsibilities, to report any concerns they may have about the safety of any child or adult that is experiencing or at risk of experiencing abuse or neglect, by following internal and external reporting procedures. The policy further commits those people mentioned above to participate in a single or multi-agency working approach to provide support to children and adults at risk wherever possible and appropriate.

2.2 With regard to children, this policy is based on the council's responsibilities under Sections 17 and 47 of the Children Act 1989 and Sections 10, 11 and 13 of the Children Act 2004 which place a duty on public bodies, including District Councils, to make arrangements to promote co-operation between the authority and its partners in respect of safeguarding matters; to ensure that their functions are discharged with regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and to participate in the work of local Safeguarding Children Boards.

2.3 With regard to adults, this policy acknowledges requirements placed on a range of agencies following introduction of the Care Act 2014 and in particular recognises the introduction of the term 'adult with care and support needs' as opposed to the term 'vulnerable adult' which has been widely used in the past.

2.4 This policy should be read in conjunction with the Southend Essex and Thurrock (SET) Safeguarding and Child Protection Procedures and the SET Safeguarding Adult Guidelines.

2.5 For the purposes of this policy, children and adults that have been identified as being in need of care, support or protection will be referred to as 'children and adults at risk'.

2.6 This policy takes into consideration a range of legislation and guidance that can help us ensure that children and adults at risk will be protected, a list of which can be seen at Appendix A.

3. Policy Statement

3.1 Harlow Council believes that all children and adults at risk have the right to be safe, happy and healthy and that they deserve protection from abuse, neglect and exploitation. The council is committed to safeguarding from harm all children and adults at risk in receipt of its services and/or when involved in any of its activities and to treat them with respect during their dealings with the council.

3.2 We will:

- Take seriously, and respond appropriately and promptly to safeguarding concerns, incidents and allegations ensuring a consistent approach across all service areas.
- Ensure staff, elected members and those working for and on behalf of the council are trained in child and adult safeguarding at a level appropriate to their role and responsibility.
- Ensure that all staff, elected members and those people working for and on behalf of the council know how to report safeguarding concerns both internally and externally.

- Ensure that safer recruitment guidelines are in place and that these are implemented and monitored to prevent unsuitable people being recruited in to posts working with children and/or adults at risk.
- At all times have a Designated Safeguarding Officer in place.
- Where relevant and appropriate, work in partnership with both statutory and non-statutory agencies to ensure a robust and effective multi-agency approach to support children and adults that are experiencing, or are at risk of experiencing abuse, neglect or exploitation.
- We will support community safeguarding initiatives to help raise public awareness and understanding of safeguarding matters, focusing on prevention, early intervention and improving people's confidence to use existing referral and support pathways.
- Keep abreast of any changes to legislation and guidance to ensure we always demonstrate safe and best practice.

4. Aim of the Policy

4.1 The aim of the policy is to:

- Clarify the roles and responsibilities of all parties included in the scope of the policy – see 4 below.
- Support the promotion of a safe working environment and a culture of care in which the rights of all children and adults at risk are protected and respected.
- Promote and embed clear guidance and procedures for all employees, and in particular those working directly with children and adults at risk and ensure they are able to effectively implement them.
- Acknowledge the need for effective partnership working with relevant agencies based on shared aims and responsibilities and to ensure the policy consistently reflects legislation and best practice requirements in respect of safeguarding children and adults at risk.

4.2 Harlow Council takes its safeguarding duties seriously and acknowledges its responsibilities across the increasingly wide range of types of abuse mentioned in this policy including Child Exploitation (sexual, criminal and online), Forced Marriage, Female Genital Mutilation, Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking, Domestic Abuse, Financial and Organisational abuse.

4.3 While the council does not intend to introduce individual policies and procedures for each of these safeguarding themes there is a clear expectation that, through this policy and other associated activity and training and development opportunities, council staff and elected members should be aware of these themes and know how to recognise and report concerns appropriately. Additional information about these important safeguarding themes is available to all staff and elected members on Kaonet <https://www.harlow.gov.uk/kaonet/safeguarding>

and direct to members of the public via the council's external website at <https://www.harlow.gov.uk/safety-and-crime/safeguarding>

5. Scope of the Policy

5.1 The policy is in respect of the council's responsibility towards:

- Children, legally defined as any person under the age of 18, or up to the age of 25 where the person has a disability. The term 'child' or 'children' will be used to refer to this group. Reference will not be made to 'young people' as they are included within the definition of children.
- Adults with care and support needs (previously referred to as vulnerable adults) as defined by the Care Act 2014, includes any person aged 18 or over who has needs for care and support (regardless of the level of need and whether or not the local authority is meeting any of those needs); is experiencing, or at risk of, abuse or neglect and as a result of those needs is unable to protect themselves from either the risk of, or the experience of abuse or neglect.
- This policy, and any related procedures and guidance, applies to all Harlow Council employees (including casual staff, agency workers, interims, consultants and people working for and on behalf of the council), elected members and volunteers who have contact with children or adults at risk. It also applies to people working on behalf of the council where they are not bound to comply with their own organisation's safeguarding policies (children and adults) for example, sports coaches or alternative partner providers.

5.2 The policy covers all the functions and services of the council, its elected members, staff and those working for and on behalf of the council.

5.3 The policy should be read and implemented in conjunction with:

- Southend, Essex and Thurrock (SET) Safeguarding and Child Protection Procedures
- Southend, Essex and Thurrock (SET) Adult Safeguarding Guidelines
- Care Act 2014
- Children Act 1989 and 2004
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (March 2026)
- Online Safety Act (2023)
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act (2026)

and, the following Harlow Council Policies, procedures and guidance documents:

- Disciplinary Procedure, Grievance Procedure and Whistle Blowing Policy
- GDPR
- IT Acceptable Use Policy

- Equalities Framework
- Corporate complaints procedure
- Dignity at Work Policy
- Domestic Abuse Policy
- Domestic Violence and Abuse Policy (guidance for staff and managers)
- Health & Safety at Work guidance
- Officers' Code of Conduct
- Employee good practice in safeguarding can be found at Appendix B of this policy

5.4 The Southend Essex and Thurrock (SET) Safeguarding and Child Protection Procedures and SET Safeguarding Adult Guidelines are available to staff and elected members via Kaonet or the Essex safeguarding board websites www.escb.co.uk (children) and www.essexsab.org.uk (adults).

5.5 The policy does not cover health and safety issues related to safeguarding children such as use of play equipment in the community or the provision of food at events etc.

6. Roles and responsibilities

6.1 The responsibility for safeguarding children and adults at risk lies with all staff at all levels of the council regardless of their role within the organisation. This includes the identification of risk, reporting concerns via internal and external reporting pathways; signposting to support agencies and, where relevant, providing direct support.

6.2 Elected members have a responsibility to protect children and adults at risk of abuse, neglect or exploitation. This includes identifying risk; reporting concerns via internal and external pathways and signposting to relevant support agencies.

6.3 The council will have a Designated Safeguarding Officer and Child and Adult Safeguarding Policy in place at all times.

6.4 Executive Directors and Directors, in conjunction with service managers and Human Resources, are responsible for:

- Identifying those services and posts that are likely to have involvement with children and/or adults at risk and that employees appointed by them, whose normal duties involve caring for, training, supervising or being in sole charge of children or adults at risk are screened via the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) at the appropriate level prior to appointment and are appropriately qualified and/or trained in working with these groups.
- Ensuring that safer recruitment guidelines are always adhered to, and that employees and others do not undertake direct work with children or adults at risk without a DBS check at the relevant level; except under skilled supervision and where approval has been given by the Executive Director, Director, or Designated Safeguarding Officer prior to commencement of the role.

- Ensuring that all necessary procedures and practices are in place to provide adequate protection for children and adults at risk and that relevant policies and procedures are also in place to protect employees working with these groups.
- Ensuring that employees, volunteers and other workers dealing with these groups are adequately trained in safeguarding to a level appropriate to their role and responsibility within the organisation.
- Ensuring that external contractors and other bodies delivering council services are aware of this policy and abide by the same processes and standards of behaviour expected of council employees.
- Ensuring that parents/carers of children accessing council services are aware that in providing such services, staff are not acting in loco parentis (in the place of a parent).
- Ensuring that this policy is made available to parents/carers of children and adults at risk to whom the council is providing services. This may be via the organisation's website or in hard copy and, where relevant and possible, in large/easy read font and/or translated to another language.
- Ensuring that records are kept of any concerns or incidents occurring within their service and that these are held in line with General Data Protection Regulation and shared with the Designated Safeguarding Officer (and Human Resources if the concern or incident involves a member of staff).
- Working with partner agencies to ensure the safe and secure transfer of information relating to safeguarding concerns for children and adults at risk where necessary and ensuring appropriate officer attendance at multi-agency meetings, Child Protection Conferences and Core Group meetings etc.
- Where appropriate, service managers will aim to ensure that staff within their teams endeavour to support adults at risk, particularly adults living in council supported housing schemes, to make positive and informed choices about whom they might invite into their homes to provide direct support services such as domestic help and/or personal care. This support could include recommending that residents request references in writing and/or a DBS check before engaging such services.

6.5 Designated Safeguarding Person

The role of the Designated Safeguarding Person was specified in the Children Act 2004 and aims to ensure that every organisation has a named person for safeguarding children. The Designated Safeguarding Person has a responsibility at both a strategic level within the organisation as well as on a day-to-day operational basis. Harlow Council's Designated Safeguarding Person is responsible for both child and adult safeguarding.

Within Harlow Council the Designated Safeguarding Person is known as the Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO).

Key aspects of the council's DSO role include:

- Ensuring there is a safeguarding policy and internal reporting procedure in place.
- Ensuring staff know how to raise safeguarding concerns outside the organisation.

- Providing advice and guidance and supporting staff to refer concerns to child or adult social care.
- Maintaining an accurate and secure central child and adult safeguarding record.
- Responding to Essex Safeguarding Children Board (ESCB) and Essex Safeguarding Adult Board (ESAB) safeguarding audits, surveys or consultations.
- Promoting safeguarding training opportunities and assisting service managers to ensure their staff are trained at a level appropriate to their role and responsibility within the organisation.
- Providing assistance to ensure that elected members receive appropriate safeguarding training.
- Encouraging and supporting a workplace culture of listening to children and adults at risk and, wherever possible, taking in to account their wishes and feelings in any steps the council may take to help protect them.
- Leading on an internal service manager's safeguarding group and representing the council across a range of external multi-agency safeguarding meetings, forums and networks including the West Essex Children, Young People and Families Partnership Board and the West Essex Stay Safe Group.

6.6 Contractors

- In the event of the council entering into a contract for the delivery of services to children and/or adults with care and support needs, it is the designated contract manager's responsibility to ensure that the contracted agency has robust child and adult safeguarding policies and procedures in place. Alternatively, the contract manager should ensure that the contracted agency adopts Harlow Council's Child and Adult Safeguarding Policy and, as part of this arrangement, gives an undertaking to report concerns to relevant child and/or adult services in a timely and efficient manner.
- The council is committed to doing what it can to detect and prevent Modern Slavery within its business and supply chain and expects its contractors to share in this vision by declaring that 'they are not involved in modern slavery or human trafficking and have not been subject to any investigation in connection with any offences involving slavery and human trafficking'.
- It is the contract manager's responsibility to ensure that the arrangements for safeguarding and Modern Slavery are monitored and evaluated as part of the contract review process.

6.7 Essex Safeguarding Children Board (ESCB)

In Essex there are three organisations who are jointly responsible by law for the partnership arrangements for keeping children safe. These are known as the Statutory Safeguarding Partners and they are the key decision makers who are responsible for the direction of travel along with relevant agencies, who are identified by the lead safeguarding partners. These relevant agencies must act in accordance with local safeguarding arrangements.

- Essex County Council
- Essex Police
- Local NHS Integrated Care Boards (ICBs)
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The safeguarding partners have joint and equal duties and responsibilities to ensure:

- That agencies work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children across Essex.
- They include and develop the role of wider local organisations and agencies in the process.
- They have a clear line of sight in relation to the key and critical safeguarding issues across Essex.

More information about the ESCB can be found here: <https://www.escb.co.uk/about/>

6.8 Essex Safeguarding Adults Board (ESAB)

The Essex Safeguarding Adults Board (ESAB) is a statutory organisation that is committed to protecting an adult's right to live in safety, free from abuse and neglect. It is committed to ensuring that it has access to the views of adults with care and support needs as well as those that work with them. The overarching objective is to help and protect adults who have needs for care and support, who are experiencing or at risk of abuse or neglect. To promote and develop effective safeguarding systems for adults across a wide range of agencies in Essex.

ESAB works to assure itself that local safeguarding arrangements and partners act to help and protect adults in its local area. It collaborates with wider strategic partnerships in Essex to ensure that where safeguarding responsibilities spread across the organisations, there is a clear understanding of where responsibility lies or a robust joined-up approach.

More information about the ESAB can be found here: <https://www.essexsab.org.uk/about>

7. Definition and categories of child abuse

7.1 The definition of child abuse and neglect as defined in Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 and Keeping Children Safe in Education 2021 is -

'A form of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting by those known to them or, more rarely, by others. Abuse can take place wholly online, or technology may be used to facilitate offline abuse. Children may be abused by an adult or adults or by another child or children.'

There are several different categories of abuse, and it is important to understand that a child may suffer more than one type of abuse at the same time or on separate occasions.

Employees, elected members and members of the public should always consider the Southend Essex and Thurrock (SET) Safeguarding and Child Protection Procedures if they

have concerns that a child or young person is being abused. The most recent guidance can be found on the ESCB website at www.escb.co.uk

7.2 Categories of abuse

Physical abuse

Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child.

Physical harm may also be caused when a parent fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child.

Emotional abuse

The persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development and may involve:

- Conveying to a child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person.
- Not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate.
- Imposing age or developmentally inappropriate expectations on children. These may include interactions that are beyond a child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction.
- Seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another, for example where there is domestic violence and abuse.
- Serious bullying, causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, including online.
- Exploiting and corrupting children.

Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

Sexual abuse

Involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening.

The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. Penetrative sex where one of the partners is under the age of 16 is illegal, although prosecution of similar age, consenting partners is not usual. However, where a child is under the age of 13 it is classified as rape under S5 Sexual Offences Act 2003. See Part B, General Practice Guidance.

Sexual abuse includes non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, including online and with mobile phones, or in the production of pornographic materials, watching sexual activities or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including online).

Sexual abuse can take place online, and technology can be used to facilitate offline abuse and is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity in exchange for something the victim needs or wants and/or for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may be sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact, it can also occur through the use of technology.

Neglect

The persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development.

Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse, maternal mental ill health or learning difficulties or a cluster of such issues. Where there is domestic abuse and violence towards a carer, the needs of the child may be neglected.

Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent failing to:

- Provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment).
- Protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger.
- Ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-givers).
- Ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.

It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional, social, health and educational needs.

8. Definition and categories of adult abuse

8.1 Safeguarding is defined as 'protecting an adult's right to live in safety, free from abuse and neglect' (Care and Support Statutory Guidance, Chapter 14). It is not about holding anyone or organisation to account as there are other processes that exist for that.

8.2 The Care Act 2014 uses the definition below to who adult safeguarding duties apply to. These people are referred to as adults at risk.

1. Adult has care and support needs, and
2. Is experiencing, or is at risk of, abuse, neglect and
3. Is unable to protect themselves from either the risk of, or the experience of abuse or neglect, because of those needs.

8.3 The aims of adult safeguarding are to:

- Stop abuse or neglect wherever possible.

- Prevent harm and reduce the risk of abuse or neglect.
- Safeguard adults in a way that supports them in making choices and having control about how they want to live.
- Promote an approach that focuses on improving life for the adults concerned.
- Raise awareness so that communities play their part in preventing, identifying and responding to abuse and neglect.
- Provide information and support in accessible ways to help adults understand the different types of abuse, how to stay safe and how to raise a concern and
- Address what has caused the abuse.

8.4 All staff, elected members and those working for and on behalf of the council, are required to be aware of and observe the six guiding principles when working with adults that have been identified as having care and support needs.

Empowerment	Adults are encouraged to make their own decisions and are provided with support and information.	I am consulted about the outcomes I want from the safeguarding process, and these directly inform what happens.
Prevention	Strategies are developed to prevent abuse and neglect that promotes resilience and self-determination.	I am provided with easily understood information about what abuse is, how to recognise the signs and what I can do to seek help.
Proportionate	A proportionate and least intrusive response is made balanced with the level of risk.	I am confident that the professionals will work in my interest and only get involved as much as needed.
Protection	Adults are offered ways to protect themselves, and there is a coordinated response to adult.	I am provided with help and support to report abuse. I am supported to take part in the safeguarding process to the extent to which I want and to which I am able.
Partnerships	Local solutions through services working together within their communities.	I am confident that information will be appropriately shared in a way that takes into account its personal and sensitive nature. I am confident that organisations will work together to find the most effective responses for my own situation.
Accountable	Accountability and transparency in delivering a safeguarding response.	I am clear about the roles and responsibilities of all those involved in the solution to the problem.

8.5 Categories of adult abuse

Physical abuse

Assault, hitting, slapping, pushing, misuse of medication, restraint, inappropriate physical sanctions, unauthorised restraint, physical punishments, making someone purposefully uncomfortable, involuntary isolation and confinement.

Domestic violence

Physical or sexual abuse, violent or threatening behaviour, controlling or coercive behaviour, economic abuse, psychological, emotional or other abuse; so-called “honour” based violence and forced marriage.

Controlling behaviour is a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour.

Coercive behaviour is an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim (this is not a legal definition).

Note: We have a separate corporate Domestic Abuse Policy and Domestic Violence and Abuse Policy for employees which contains advice and guidance for service managers. Where domestic abuse is a factor, staff should also refer to these policies, depending on the individual circumstances.

Sexual abuse

Rape, sexual assault, indecent exposure, sexual harassment, inappropriate looking or touching, sexual teasing or innuendo, sexual photography, subjection to pornography or witnessing sexual acts, sexual act to which the adult has not consented or was pressured into consenting.

Psychological abuse

Emotional abuse, threats of harm or abandonment, deprivation of contact, humiliation, blaming, controlling, intimidation, coercion, harassment, verbal abuse, cyberbullying, enforced social isolation, unreasonable and unjustified withdrawal of services or supportive networks.

Financial or material abuse

Theft, fraud, internet scamming, coercion in relation to an adult’s financial affairs or arrangements, including in connection with wills, property, inheritance or financial transactions, or the misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits, misuse of power of attorney, rogue trading.

Modern slavery

Encompasses slavery, human trafficking, sex work, forced labour, sexual exploitation, debt bondage and domestic servitude.

Trafficking of people is a serious crime and is now referred to under the term “Modern Slavery.” It involves the recruitment and movement of adults and children to exploit them in degrading situations for financial rewards for their traffickers. Modern slavery consists of three elements:

- Action (transportation)
- Means (deception/threat) and
- Exploitation (slavery or sexual)

Child trafficking is always a child protection issue. If the identified victim of modern slavery is also an adult at risk, the concern should be responded to using local adult safeguarding process. For further details on modern slavery see:

<http://www.essexsab.org.uk/professionals/guidance-policies-protocols/>

The council’s Modern Slavery Act 2015 Statement can be seen here:

<http://www.harlow.gov.uk/modern-slavery>

Discriminatory abuse Harassment, verbal abuse, denial of basic needs, unequal treatment based on age, race, gender, and gender identity, married or civil partnership, pregnancy, disability, sex, sexual orientation or religion, protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/equality-act/protected-characteristics
Organisational abuse Neglect and poor care practice within an institution or specific care setting, such as a hospital or care home, or in relation to care provided in someone's own home.
Neglect and acts of omission Ignoring medical, emotional or physical care needs, failure to provide access to appropriate health, care and support or educational services, withholding of the necessities of life such as medication, adequate nutrition and heating.
Self-neglect A wide range of behaviour; neglecting to care for one's personal hygiene, health or surroundings and includes behaviour such as hoarding. Note: Harlow Council recognises that Hoarding is a complex problem and therefore requires a sensitive and appropriate response, most often by working with relevant partner agencies to ensure appropriate support is delivered. The council is informed in its response to Hoarding cases by the SET Hoarding Guidance. See also page 18 below.

8.6 Employees, elected members and members of the public should always consider the Southend Essex and Thurrock (SET) Safeguarding Adults Guidelines if they have concerns that a child or young person is being abused. The most recent guidance can be found on the ESCB website: www.essexsab.org.uk

9. Recognising and reporting signs of abuse

9.1 Although the number of roles within the council that require direct contact with children and/or adults at risk is limited, it is vital that all staff and elected members are aware of the potential indicators of abuse, as set out above, and know how to report concerns.

9.2 It is not the intention of this policy to list all possible indicators of child and adult abuse as these are covered comprehensively in the SET Safeguarding and Child Protection Procedures and SET Safeguarding Adult Guidelines. When staff or elected members have concerns about a child or adult at risk in relation to any of the categories of abuse above they should consult the SET documents for more information about signs, symptoms and indicators of abuse to inform a discussion with their manager about what action should be taken and/or to ensure a robust referral to children or adult services.

9.3 Staff working directly with children and families should also be aware of and consult the 'Effective Support for Children and Families in Essex' guidance document if they are unsure about the level of support and/or intervention a child or family may require. This guidance is available to staff via the ESCB website at <https://www.escb.co.uk/media/3322/effective-support-october-2024-final.pdf>

9.4 The council has an internal process for responding to safeguarding concerns which should be followed at all times unless a child or adult at risk is in immediate danger in which case the police should be called immediately by dialling 999 (or 101 internally). The council's safeguarding process chart can be seen at Appendix C and the 'Safeguarding Record Form' can be seen at Appendix D. Further Safeguarding resources are available to staff on the council's intranet (Kaonet) at <https://www.harlow.gov.uk/kaonet/safeguarding>

9.5 All staff and elected members have a responsibility to report safeguarding concerns, incidents or allegations but are not responsible for investigating individual cases – this is the responsibility of Essex County Council Children and Adults Social Care. Harlow Council employees and elected members are however required to assist the local authority with their enquiries and share relevant information appropriately in a secure and timely manner in order to support such enquiries.

9.6 All staff, elected members and those working for and on behalf of the council should be aware of the possibility of disclosures of non-recent abuse, sometimes known as historic abuse. The impact of abuse in childhood can last a lifetime and people may come forward many years after the abuse has taken place. Victims deserve to be believed and supported to get help if they want to. Our officers will signpost people to relevant support services and support anyone wanting to report non-recent abuse to the police if they choose to.

10. Additional areas of safeguarding responsibility

10.1 In addition to the above categories of abuse, council staff, elected members and those employed to work for and on behalf of the council should also be aware of the following types of abuse in which they are required to have at least a basic knowledge and understanding of how to identify and report concerns, or to know who to go to in the council or within their own organisation for advice and guidance in this respect. Where council staff require assistance in this respect, they should consult their line manager or the Designated Safeguarding Officer.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

FGM comprises all procedures that involve partial or total removal of the external female genitalia, or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons. It has no health benefits, and it harms girls and women in many ways. It involves removing and damaging healthy and normal female genital tissue and interferes with the natural functions of girls' and women's bodies. Procedures are mostly carried out on young girls sometime between infancy and adolescence, and occasionally on adult women. FGM has been a criminal offence in the UK since 1985. In 2003 it also became a criminal offence for UK nationals or permanent UK residents to take their child abroad to have FGM. Those found guilty of the offence face a maximum penalty of 14 years in prison. Regulated health and social care professionals and teachers in England and Wales must report 'known' cases of FGM in under 18s to the police.

Forced Marriage (FM)

Forced marriage is when there are physical pressures to marry (for example, threats, physical violence or sexual violence) or emotional and psychological pressure (for example if someone is made to feel like they are bringing shame on the family).

There is distinction between a forced marriage and an arranged marriage. In arranged marriages, the families of both spouses take a leading role in arranging the marriage but the choice whether to accept the arrangement remains with the prospective spouses.

Forced marriage is where one or both people do not agree or cannot consent to the marriage and pressure, or abuse is used to force them to marry.

Honour Based Abuse (HBA)

Honour based abuse is an international term used for the justification of abuse and violence. It is a crime or incident committed to protect or defend the family or community 'honour.' HBA will often go hand in hand with forced marriages, although this is not always the case.

PREVENT and CHANNEL

PREVENT is about safeguarding people and communities from the threat of terrorism and to stop people from becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism. The objectives of the strategy are to:

- Respond to the ideological challenge of terrorism and the threat we face from those who promote it.
- Prevent someone from being drawn into terrorism and ensure that they are given appropriate advice and support.
- 3. Work with sectors and institutions where there are risks of radicalisation which we need to address.

CHANNEL is a Home Office funded programme to utilise the existing partnership working and expertise between the police, local authority, other partner agencies and the local community in the form of a professional's panel to identify those at risk of being drawn into terrorism or violent extremism and to provide them with community-based safeguarding strategies and interventions.

For the full guidance see <http://www.essexsab.org.uk/professionals/guidance-policies-protocols/>

Hoarding

Hoarding behaviour can be described as:

- Accumulation of possessions due to excessive acquisition of or difficulty discarding possessions, regardless of their actual value.
- Excessive acquisition is characterised by repetitive urges or behaviours related to amassing or buying items.
- Difficulty discarding possessions is characterised by a perceived need to save items and distress associated with discarding them.
- Accumulation of possessions results in living spaces becoming cluttered to the point that their use or safety is compromised.
- The symptoms result in significant distress or significant impairment in personal, family, social, educational, occupational or other important areas of functioning".

The Southend Essex and Thurrock (SET) Multi-agency Hoarding Guidance can be found on the Essex Safeguarding Adult Board website:

https://www.essexsab.org.uk/sites/default/files/2024-06/set-hoarding-guidance-dec-21-pdf_0.pdf

Harlow Council promotes a multi-agency approach to engaging and supporting residents who display hoarding behaviour to ensure their needs are being met by relevant services and the hoarding behaviour is addressed in the longer term. As part of this work the council also takes into consideration the health, safety and wellbeing of neighbours that may be adversely affected by hoarding behaviour.

11. Safer Recruitment

11.1 The council aims to ensure that only the most suitable people are employed to work with children and adults with care and support needs and as such operates robust safer recruitment practices.

11.2 All managers with recruitment responsibilities must ensure that the following steps are taken during the recruitment process:

- Confirmation of work history since leaving education and clarification regarding any gaps in work history.
- Safeguarding questions are asked at interview to establish knowledge and understanding of the importance of safeguarding and any relevant prior experience.
- Receipt of satisfactory references in writing from the two most recent employers.
- Eligibility check of the applicant's right to work in the UK.
- Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check for posts where the council has identified a legal right to ask for the applicant's criminal history to be disclosed.

11.3 Where there are any queries or concerns during the recruitment process, particularly in relation to DBS checks, these should be discussed and resolved at the earliest opportunity with the recruiting manager's Director or Executive Director and/or the Human Resources Manager.

12. Training

12.1 Harlow Council will ensure that its employees are adequately trained in safeguarding at a level appropriate to their role and responsibility within the organisation. This will be achieved by:

- Ensuring the combined Child and Adult Safeguarding Policy is made available to all new staff by the recruiting manager on the first day of employment.
- All new employees completing mandatory child and adult safeguarding e-learning modules as part of their induction.
- Identification of training needs as part of annual staff Personal Performance Plan (PPP) interviews.
- Regular dissemination of safeguarding training opportunities across the organisation by the Designated Safeguarding Officer.

12.2 The Designated Safeguarding Officer will keep abreast of and engage in regular safeguarding training and development opportunities in order to ensure the council is aware of new guidance, legislation and good practice in safeguarding at all times.

13. Information sharing

In order to keep children and adults with care and support needs safe from harm, professionals may be required to share relevant information across geographical and professional boundaries.

When there is reasonable cause to believe that a child or adult at risk is experiencing, or without intervention, is likely to experience harm, consideration should always be given to referring these concerns to the relevant authorities.

Information about children and adults at risk should be shared appropriately in line with the council's internal information sharing policies and procedures, General Data Protection Guidelines and the Whole Essex Information Sharing Framework (WEISF) of which the council is a signatory. The framework emphasises the importance of adhering to legal requirements and safeguards when sharing information, especially regarding children and adults at risk.

Decisions about what information is shared and with who should be taken on a case-by-case basis. Information should be:

- Necessary for the purpose for which it is being shared.
- Shared only with those who have a need for it.
- Be up to date and shared in a timely fashion.
- Be shared accurately and securely.

Relevant information should also be shared appropriately upon request to Essex Safeguarding Adults and Safeguarding Children Boards, in line with requirements of the Care Act 2014 and the Children Act 1989 and 2004.

It is the service manager's responsibility to ensure his/her staff are adequately trained in information sharing and that appropriate information sharing protocols are in place. It is also the service manager's responsibility to ensure that the ROPA (Record of Processing Activities) is kept up to date and storage, retention and disposal of safeguarding information and data is in line with GDPR. Retention times may vary between services depending on what information is held.

14. Audit, Quality Assurance and Review

14.1 Safeguarding activity and performance against this policy will be audited as part of the council's internal audit programme.

14.2 The council will respond to safeguarding audits, self-assessments, practice surveys and/or consultation requests from the Essex Safeguarding Children Board (ESCB) and Essex Safeguarding Adult Board (ESAB) and continually strive to achieve high levels of compliance with ESCB and ESAB requirements across all service areas.

14.3 Service improvement in safeguarding matters is a continuous process and the Designated Safeguarding Officer along with the Director for Public Protection and Members Safeguarding Champion each have responsibility for this area of work.

14.4 This policy will be reviewed annually and updated when necessary to reflect changes in legislation, policy, procedure and good practice. This is the responsibility of the Designated Safeguarding Officer.

15. Useful sources of further information

Hourglass – Safer Aging / Stopping Abuse <https://wearehourglass.org/> 0808 808 8141

Age UK - www.ageuk.org.uk confidential information and advice – 0800 678 1602

Childline – www.childline.org.uk 0800 1111

Essex COMPASS - <https://www.essexcompass.org.uk/> 0330 333 7 444

Domestic Violence Helpline www.nationaldomesticviolencehelpline.org.uk 0800 2000 247

Essex Safeguarding Children Board - www.escb.co.uk

Essex Safeguarding Adults Board - www.essexsab.org.uk

NSPCC - www.nspcc.org.uk. Helpline: 0808 800 5000

Stop The Traffik - Metropolitan Police reporting hotline for victims or to report suspected trafficking 0800 783 2589 (24 hour hotline) www.stopthetraffik.org

Appendix A

Legislation and guidance

SET Safeguarding and Child Protection Procedures	Outlines the basic safeguarding procedures which should be followed by all local authorities in Essex.
Working Together to Safeguard Children	Statutory guidance that sets out how organisations and individuals should work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, and how practitioners should conduct the assessment of children. Working Together 2026 replaces the 2023 version to strengthen multi-agency child protection arrangements across England.
Children Act 1989	Places a statutory duty on local authorities to consider the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children across all of their services. (1989) Section 17 – Children in Need: The Local Authority has a general duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children within their area who are in need and to promote the upbringing of such children by their families. (1989) Section 47 – Children at Risk: The Local Authority shall make enquiries where there is reasonable cause to suspect that a child or young person living in the area is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm.
Children Act 2004	(2004) Section 11 places a statutory duty on district councils to make arrangements to ensure that in discharging their functions they consider the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.
Care Act 2014	Outlines the responsibility of local authorities to carry out safeguarding enquiries where it is suspected that someone is suffering or at risk of abuse or neglect and the obligation to create Safeguarding Adults Boards (SABs) in every area in order to bring together the key local partners to focus on safeguarding strategy and practice.
SET Safeguarding Adults Guidelines 2024	Sets out how concerns about adults at risk of abuse will be managed within the framework set out in the Care Act (2014) and associated statutory guidance.
Mental Capacity Act 2005	Provides a statutory framework to empower and protect those (aged 16 and over) who may lack mental capacity to make decisions for themselves; and establishes a framework for making decisions on their behalf. Puts arrangements in place for advocacy support and best-interest decision-making.
Care Standards Act 2000	Sets out a regulatory framework and standards for services people might receive. This applies to regulated services such as residential care, domiciliary care or adult placement schemes.

	Part 7 makes provision for the Protection of Vulnerable Adults (POVA) scheme to prevent abusers from working with adults at risk.
Protection of Freedoms Act 2012	Established the Disclosure and Barring Service (merging the functions previously carried out by the Criminal Records Bureau and the Independent Safeguarding Authority). The Disclosure and Barring Service process requests for criminal records checks; decide whether to place or remove an individual from a barred list; place or remove a person from the children's or adults barred lists for England, Wales and Northern Ireland.
Children and Social Work Act 2017	Intended to improve support for looked after children and care leavers; promote the welfare and safeguarding of children; and make provisions about the regulation of social workers.
Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006	Provides the legislative framework for a vetting and barring scheme for people who work with children and adults with care and support needs. Created the Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA), which aims to prevent unsuitable people working with children and adults with care and support needs. It includes social care services, as well as health, education, housing support and supporting people services.
Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014	Outlines forced marriage as a criminal offence in England and Wales, punished by up to seven years imprisonment. It also applies to UK nationals overseas who are at risk of becoming the victim of a forced marriage.
Sexual Offences Act 2003	Outlines that sexual activity with a child under 13 is never acceptable and that regardless of circumstances children of this age can never legally give their consent. Any sexual intercourse with a child under 13 will be treated as rape. Creates a new offence of meeting a child following sexual grooming. Which makes it a crime to befriend a child on the internet or by other means and meet or intend to meet the child with the intention of abusing them. Outlines 'abuse of a position of trust' and protects vulnerable 16-and 17-year-olds by prohibiting sexual contact between adults and children under 18 in schools, colleges and residential care.
Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003	Made FGM illegal in this country. It is an offence to undertake the operation (except on specific medical grounds); assist a girl to mutilate her own genitalia; and assist a non-UK national or UK national to undertake FGM of a UK national outside the UK (except on specific medical grounds).
Homelessness Act 2002 and Homelessness Reduction Act 2017	Housing Authorities are required to refer persons with dependent children who are ineligible for homelessness assistance or are homeless or threatened with homelessness intentionally to local authority children's social care, as long as the person consents. If unable to obtain consent, the council can disclose information

	to Social Services if they believe the child is, or will be, at risk of significant harm.
Human Rights Act 1998	Sets out the fundamental rights and freedoms that everyone in the UK is entitled to.
Domestic Abuse Act 2021	Created a statutory definition of domestic abuse, emphasising that domestic abuse is not just physical violence, but can also include emotional, controlling, coercive and economic abuse. Established in law the office of a Domestic Abuse Commissioner and set out the Commissioner's functions and powers.
Online Safety Act 2023	Forces social media companies, search engines, and websites to protect users from illegal and harmful content. It shifts the responsibility onto tech firms by requiring risk assessments, age checks, and rapid removal of dangerous material, all overseen by the regulator.

Appendix B

Employee Good Practice

Employees that have contact with, or provide services directly to, children or adults with care and support needs should be clear about what is expected of them and what might constitute unacceptable behaviour on their part. Observing strict professional boundaries will help staff protect themselves from false allegations being made against them and also helps to create a positive culture around children and adults with care and support needs.

This guidance regarding good practice is not exhaustive and staff should always consult their line manager or the Designated Safeguarding Officer if they have any doubt about the appropriateness of their own actions or that of their colleagues.

Employees should:

- Always work in an open environment and aim to avoid private or unobserved situations whenever possible.
- Notify a colleague or manager when, to work effectively with the child or adult the above point cannot be observed and ensure a risk assessment is undertaken.
- Always listen to what children and adults with care and support needs have to say as they are more likely to discuss issues of concern if they know that they will be listened to and taken seriously.
- Treat all children and adults with care and support needs equally and with respect and dignity at all times.
- Always put the welfare of the child/adult with care and support needs first and foremost.
- Ensure that assistance with any form of manual or physical support required is provided openly and appropriately - this applies particularly to children and adults with a disability.
- Aim to establish a good working relationship and communication with parents/carers/relatives wherever possible and appropriate.
- Always be prepared to act upon information which may indicate that a child or adult with care and support needs is being abused or is at risk of being abused and report concerns to the line Manager or the Designated Safeguarding Officer as soon as possible.
- Know how to appropriately record, store and share information regarding safeguarding concerns in line with General Data Protection Guidelines.

Employees should not:

- Divulge their personal details to a child or adult with care and support needs - including home address, personal telephone number and email address.
- Add or accept friend requests on social media networking sites from service users, in particular children and adults with care and support needs.

- Make arrangements to meet a child or adult with care and support needs socially outside of the working environment without their line manager's knowledge and agreement.
- Take a child or adult with care and support needs to their home unsupervised; without parental consent (children) or without the line managers knowledge and agreement.
- Use inappropriate language (swearing, sexual innuendo etc.) in the company of service users, in particular children or adults with care and support needs.
- Allow access to inappropriate literature or images via, books, magazines, television, video, DVD or IT.
- Use physical chastisement under any circumstances.
- Engage in rough, physical or sexually provocative games with children or make sexually suggestive comments to a child or adult with care and support needs even if it is thought to be in fun or good humour.
- Behave in such a way that their behaviour could make a child or adult with care and support needs feel, or actually be, vulnerable. Or behave in such a way that the behaviour could be misconstrued by a child, adult with care and support needs or other observer.
- Administer medication unless professionally trained to do so. In the case of a child in receipt of direct council services, you must have parental consent to do so and in the case of adults the administration of medication must be included in the individual's care plan.
- Take a child or adult with care and support needs to the toilet unsupervised or do things of a personal nature for them when s/he is capable of doing it for themselves.
- Transport children or adults with care and support needs without an escort. Where it is appropriate to provide transport, a risk assessment must be undertaken and, in the case of a child, parental consent should be obtained to transport the child.
- When transporting adults with care and support needs to and from council services, staff should not enter their home unless permission has been previously granted by management and a risk assessment has been undertaken - unless it is in the case of an emergency.
- Adults with care and support needs should not be deprived of their liberty even if it is thought to be for their own protection – for example being secured in their home to prevent wandering.
- Allow allegations made by a child or adult with care and support needs to go unrecorded or not acted upon.
- Take photographs of children or adults with care and support needs without consent from the subject or if it is a child, the parent/carer.
- Divulge confidential or other information about a child or adult with care and support needs to unauthorised personnel.

Appendix C

Harlow Council process for dealing with safeguarding concerns for children and adults at risk.
Applicable to staff, volunteers, elected members and those working for and on behalf of the council.



Step 1 - Initial action

Complete the council's 'Safeguarding Record Form' (can be found on Kaonet) and discuss your concerns with your line manager. If your line manager is unavailable contact the Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO) as soon as possible – see also Step 2 below for other sources of support/guidance.

If it is clear that the person (child or adult) is in immediate danger call the police straight away on 999.



Step 2 - Is further advice and guidance required?

No - Agree an appropriate course of action with your line manager or the DSO (See steps 3 and 4 below).

Yes – If your concern is for a child, refer to the 'Effective Support for Children and Families in Essex' booklet to assist you **or** speak to the DSO for advice and guidance **or** call the Children and Families Hub on 0345 603 7627 and ask for the Consultation Line – an Advisor will assist you.

If you have an urgent child safeguarding concern, contact the Children and Families Hub on 0345 603 7627 and ask for the **Priority Line**. Qualified advisors will assist you with your enquiry and advise you on next steps.

If your concern is about an adult at risk contact Social Care Direct on 0345 603 7630.

Be prepared to share whatever you know about the person you are concerned about i.e. **Who** are they? **Where** do they live? **Who** do they live with? **How** old are they? **Why** are you concerned? (be specific) **What** have you personally seen and/or heard that has led to you being concerned? Or, **What** information has been passed to you that has led to you being concerned and **when** and from **whom** did you receive the information?

Agree an appropriate course of action with the Advisor. Update your line manager and the DSO.



Step 3 – Do you need to submit a formal referral?

No – No further action need be taken but your concerns must still be recorded on the council's 'Safeguarding Record Form' and copied to the DSO (see step 4 below).

Yes - If the concern is for a child and is not urgent your referral should be made via the Essex Effective Support website at <https://www.essexeffectivesupport.org.uk> You will need the parent/carers consent to make a referral via the website. If consent is absent contact the Children and Families Hub for advice on next steps.

If the concern is for an adult at risk, submit a referral through the Essex County Council, Social Care Portal here: <https://www.essex.gov.uk/adult-social-care-and-health/report-concern-about-adult/report-concern-about-adult>

Referral forms and additional accompanying information should be copied to the DSO for inclusion on the Council's central safeguarding record. (See also step 4 below).

Note: If you do not receive acknowledgement of your referral within 7 days, follow this up with the Hub or Social Care Direct and request written acknowledgement of your referral as well as notification of what action is going to be taken (if any). Update your line manager and the DSO.



Step 4 - Recording concerns - keeping managers and the DSO updated

Always complete the council's 'Safeguarding Record Form' and send a copy to your line manager and the DSO regardless of whether you seek further advice and/or make a referral.

Note: All forms and guidance documents are available to Harlow Council staff on Kaonet. If you are a volunteer or contractor, guidance is available via the DSO. More information about safeguarding can be found on the Essex safeguarding board websites www.escb.co.uk (children) and www.essexsab.org.uk (adults)

Reviewed June 2025, August 2026

Appendix D

Harlow Council Safeguarding Record

To be completed immediately by staff, volunteers, elected members and those people working for and on behalf of the council when there are safeguarding concerns in relation to a child or adult at risk.

Date and time:	
Name and contact details of person reporting the concern:	
Manager/Supervisor's name and contact details:	
Service and location:	
Name, address and D.O.B of the person you are concerned about (if known):	
Is the address a council tenancy?	Yes / No
Reason for concern: To include source of information and contact details where relevant and possible. Continue on a separate sheet if necessary.	
Action taken: (To include names and contact numbers of anyone else you have spoken to in respect of your concerns.) N.B It is not an option to do nothing!	
Is a referral to Social Care required? Whenever possible this should be discussed and agreed with your line manager and/or the Designated Safeguarding Officer before referring.	Yes/No
If a referral is required please give details of when and how the referral was made:	
Date and time your Manager/Designated Safeguarding Officer was notified of concern/action:	

Reviewed June 2025, August 2026