Dinnington St John's Town Council

# LOST AND FOUND CHILDREN and VULNERABLE ADULTS

**October 2026**

## 1. Policy statement

This policy sets out the Council's approach where a child or a vulnerable adult is reported missing, found, separated from their responsible adult, or appears to be at risk while attending or visiting Council premises, events, or activities. The Council is committed to safeguarding, dignity, privacy, and prompt action in the interests of welfare and public safety.

## 2. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide a clear, calm, and consistent procedure for staff and anyone acting on behalf of the Council. The policy is designed to help prevent harm, support early intervention, and ensure that concerns are escalated without delay where a person may be at risk.

## 3. Scope

This policy applies to all Council-run events, activities, premises, staff, councillors, contractors, volunteers, and event partners where the Council has responsibility for safeguarding arrangements. For the purposes of this policy, a child means anyone under 18 years of age. A vulnerable adult means an adult who has care and support needs and who is unable to protect themselves from abuse, neglect, or exploitation.

## 4. Related policies and procedures

This policy should be read alongside the Council's safeguarding policy, health and safety arrangements, incident reporting procedure, emergency plan, and any venue or event-specific risk assessment.

## 5. Legal and guidance framework

This policy has been prepared with regard to the Children Act 1989, the Children Act 2004, the Care Act 2014, the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006, the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, the Occupiers' Liability Acts 1957 and 1984 where relevant, UK GDPR, the Data Protection Act 2018, and current safeguarding guidance including Working Together to Safeguard Children.

## 6. Responsibilities

**Council:** ensure suitable safeguarding arrangements are in place and that this policy is kept under review.
**Event lead or duty manager:** act as the first point of control, coordinate the response, and decide on escalation.
**All staff and volunteers:** remain alert, report concerns immediately, and follow instructions.
**Designated safeguarding lead or nominated officer:** provide advice, support referrals, and oversee post-incident review where required.

## 7. General principles

Any report that a child or vulnerable adult is missing must be treated as a priority. Staff must remain calm, act promptly, and follow the agreed escalation chain. The person's privacy and dignity must be protected at all times. Staff must not place themselves or others at unnecessary risk and should not work alone where this can be avoided.

## 8. Immediate action when a person is reported missing

Obtain and record as much information as possible, including name, age, description, clothing, location last seen, time last seen, likely direction of travel, known associates, communication needs, medical issues, mobility issues, and any other relevant vulnerability factors.

Notify control or the duty manager immediately.

Begin a coordinated search of agreed areas without delay.

Alert relevant staff, security, and event control in line with the event plan.

If there is immediate concern for welfare, risk of harm, vulnerability, suspicious circumstances, or a high-risk location, contact the police immediately by calling 999.

## 9. Escalation timescales

If the person is not located within 15 minutes, or sooner where risk is high, escalate in line with the event emergency plan. The duty manager should consider whether police, first aid, venue security, carers, or parents/guardians need to be contacted immediately.

## 10. Procedure for a found child or adult at risk

Stay with the person and reassure them.

Notify control or the duty manager immediately.

Do not leave the person alone unless this is necessary for immediate safety and another responsible adult is present.

Do not use physical contact unless it is necessary to prevent immediate harm.

Do not hand over a child or vulnerable adult to any person unless reasonable checks have been made and authority to collect the person has been confirmed.

If the person is distressed, confused, missing capacity, or medically unwell, seek assistance promptly and consider contacting emergency services.

## 11. Reunification and handover

A child or vulnerable adult should only be released to an authorised parent, carer, guardian, support worker, or other responsible adult after identity and authority have been checked where practicable.

Record the name of the person collecting them, the time, and any relevant observations.

If there is any doubt about the safety of release, contact the police or appropriate safeguarding authority for advice before handover.

## 12. Communication and confidentiality

Information should only be shared with those who need to know in order to protect the person and manage the incident. Where necessary, information may be shared with police, emergency services, carers, parents, guardians, or safeguarding agencies. The Council should avoid unnecessary disclosure of names or personal details when circulating descriptions.

## 13. Recording and retention

All incidents must be recorded on the Council's incident form as soon as practicable. Records must be stored securely and handled in accordance with data protection law. Information must be retained only for as long as is necessary for safeguarding, legal, insurance, or operational purposes.

## 14. Post-incident review

Each incident should be reviewed after the event, especially where the response was delayed, where police or emergency services were involved, or where lessons can be learned. The review should identify any corrective action, training need, or change required to procedures or risk assessments.

## 15. Training and awareness

Staff, councillors, and volunteers involved in events or premises management should be made aware of this policy and any event-specific procedures. Where appropriate, safeguarding and emergency response training should be refreshed periodically.

## 16. Review

This policy will be reviewed every three years, or earlier if there is any change in legislation, statutory guidance, safeguarding practice, or operational learning.

**Adopted date:** 12th October 2026

**Minute reference:** 98/27 (E)

**Review cycle:** Every 3 years