

Safeguarding Policy

At Home Catering Limited

Policy reference	AHC-POL-SFG
Status	Version 1.0 — approved 17 October 2026. Website publication and tender and buyer use authorised on 27 October 2026. Not yet in effect: approval and these authorisations do not make the policy operational
Version	Version 1.0 — approved 17 October 2026 by John Walker and Christophe Perrier
Prepared	Wording prepared 16 October 2026; release edition generated 29 October 2026
Replaces, once published	The legacy Policy on Safeguarding (policy date 2023-2024, review date April 2025), which remains the published document until this policy is published in its place
Policy owners and approvers	John Walker and Christophe Perrier, jointly
Safeguarding Officer	Georgie Butchart — the approved Safeguarding Officer (confirmed by the management approval of 17 October 2026)
Review	At least every 12 months once in effect, and earlier on a relevant change
Law and guidance checked	Against current official sources on 16 October 2026. Final legal review is still outstanding; no external legal advice has been obtained

1. Our commitment

Our work takes us into people's homes, into venues and into events where children and adults who may need protection are present. We take that seriously.

- We take genuine safeguarding concerns seriously, and we would rather hear a concern that turns out to be nothing than not hear one at all.
- We promote the safety and welfare of children and adults at risk whom our people encounter through our work.
- A disclosure is treated fairly, sensitively and without judgement of the person making it.
- Nobody is penalised for raising a genuine safeguarding concern, whatever the outcome.
- Safeguarding urgency comes first. No internal process, and no other policy, may delay an emergency call or an urgent protective step.
- An allegation is not proof, and nobody is presumed guilty.

2. What safeguarding means here — and what it does not

Safeguarding is about protecting children and adults at risk from abuse, neglect and exploitation, and promoting their welfare. It is not a general word for safety.

Not covered by this policy	Where it belongs
Food safety, allergens and hygiene	Our food safety and allergen arrangements
Ordinary health and safety — slips, burns, lifting, equipment	Our health and safety arrangements
Ordinary customer service problems and complaints	Our complaints procedure

Not covered by this policy	Where it belongs
Bullying, harassment or discrimination between adults at work	Our Bullying, Harassment and Dignity at Work Policy and our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
General staff misconduct	The applicable employment procedure
Wrongdoing in the public interest	Our Whistleblowing Policy – although a safeguarding concern must never wait for it

Those subjects are deliberately dealt with under their relevant policies, procedures or operational arrangements rather than under this safeguarding policy. Where a related document is not yet in effect, this policy does not make it operative. A safeguarding concern is different: it concerns harm, or risk of harm, to a child or an adult at risk, and it is urgent.

3. Who this policy applies to

It applies to everyone who works with us – employees, zero-hours, casual and bank staff, agency and freelance workers, managers and event leads, and contractors and suppliers working on our events. It protects children and adults at risk whom our people encounter through our work: guests at an event, people in a household where we are working, members of a client's or a venue's community, and anyone under 18 working with us.

4. The words we use

Term	What it means here
Child	Anyone under 18. A 16 or 17 year old is still a child for safeguarding purposes, whatever their job, independence or social situation.
Adult at risk	An adult who has needs for care and support, who is experiencing or at risk of abuse or neglect, and who as a result of those needs cannot protect themselves against it. All three parts matter – this mirrors the test that triggers a local authority safeguarding enquiry.
Abuse	Behaviour that harms someone or puts them at risk of harm. A single act or a pattern, deliberate or through ignorance, by anyone.
Neglect	Failing to meet someone's basic needs, or failing to act to protect them, where there is a duty to do so.
Exploitation	Using someone for another person's benefit – sexual, criminal, financial or labour exploitation, including modern slavery.
Grooming	Building trust or a relationship with a child or an adult at risk in order to manipulate, exploit or abuse them. It can happen in person or online and often looks friendly or generous.
Disclosure	What someone tells you about something that happened to them or to someone else. It is information to act on, not a proven fact.
Immediate danger	Someone is being harmed now, is about to be, needs urgent medical help, or a crime appears to be happening.

5. What we are, and what we are not

At Home Catering Limited is a catering and events business. It is not a school, a care provider, a childcare service, a health service, a statutory safeguarding authority or an investigating body, and it is not directly subject to the organisational duty in section 11 of the Children Act 2004, which falls on a defined list of public bodies.

That does not put the national guidance outside our scope. Working together to safeguard children 2026 is addressed to a wide audience that expressly includes private-sector organisations, and it applies to organisations and agencies with functions relating to children. We apply the provisions relevant to our activities, proportionately to what a catering and events business actually does.

What that means in practice is simple and important. Our people are there to notice, to protect immediately where they can, to report promptly and to cooperate fully. We do not investigate allegations that belong with the police, a local authority or another statutory body, and we do not claim to.

6. The kinds of concern this covers

- physical abuse — hitting, pushing, rough handling, restraint, misuse of medication;
- sexual abuse — any sexual act someone has not consented to or could not consent to, including sexual comments, images and online conduct;
- emotional or psychological abuse — threats, humiliation, intimidation, isolation, controlling behaviour;
- neglect, and failures to act to protect someone;
- domestic abuse, including coercive and controlling behaviour;
- financial or material abuse — theft, fraud, pressure over money, gifts or property;
- discriminatory abuse connected with who someone is;
- organisational abuse — practices, cultures or routines that harm the people in someone's care;
- exploitation, including modern slavery and sexual or criminal exploitation;
- self-neglect, where it concerns an adult at risk;
- grooming and online abuse.

This list is not exhaustive. What you may notice are indicators, not proof and not diagnoses, and an indicator can have an innocent explanation. Nobody is expected to be certain, to categorise a concern correctly, or to decide whether abuse has happened. The response to an indicator is to report it, not to test it.

7. Where risk arises in our work

Realistic situations for catering and events. These are illustrative and do not imply that any of them has occurred at At Home Catering Limited:

- children at an event who are unsupervised, lost or separated from the adult responsible for them;
- events in private homes, where the usual visibility of a workplace is absent;
- alcohol and intoxication — among guests, clients or staff;
- isolated areas: cellars, corridors, back-of-house, car parks, gardens and outbuildings;
- changing areas, toilets and rest areas;
- transport and accommodation arrangements, including late finishes and overnight or remote events;
- temporary teams who do not know each other, and may not know who to tell;
- photography, filming, work messaging groups and social media;
- the behaviour of a guest, client, venue or supplier towards our people, or towards someone else;
- an adult whose care and support needs may affect their ability to protect themselves;
- gifts, favouritism, secrecy or private contact between a member of staff and a child or an adult at risk;
- unclear or unsafe arrangements for collecting a child;
- a concern about one of our own people.

8. Professional boundaries

Everyone working with us is expected to:

- behave respectfully and professionally towards guests, clients and colleagues;
- never engage in sexualised, exploitative or humiliating conduct;
- never have private or secret contact with a child you meet through our work — no personal messaging, no social media, no private numbers;
- never arrange transport or accommodation for a child or an adult at risk outside an authorised arrangement;
- never give personal gifts, show favouritism, or ask a child or an adult at risk to keep a secret;
- never photograph or record guests for personal purposes, and never post about them;
- avoid unnecessary physical contact;
- do not take on childcare, supervision or personal-care responsibility — catering staff do not stand in place of a parent or carer;
- avoid one-to-one situations with a child or an adult at risk where that is reasonably possible. Ordinary service sometimes brings one member of staff into brief contact with a guest; what matters is that it is brief, visible where possible, not private, and never sought out;
- follow the venue's, the client's and the responsible adult's suitable arrangements for any children present.

9. If someone tells you something

Do

- listen carefully, and let the person speak in their own way;
- stay calm — do not show shock or disgust;
- take what they say seriously, and tell them they were right to tell you;
- ask only the minimum open clarification you need in order to understand and act — never lead, never suggest an answer, and never probe for detail;
- say honestly that you may have to pass it on to keep someone safe;
- write down what they said in their own words, as accurately as you can and as soon as you can, with the date, time, place and who was there;
- report it promptly through section 10;
- get help immediately if anyone is in immediate danger.

Do not

- do not promise to keep it secret — never promise confidentiality you cannot deliver;
- do not make the person go over their account again unnecessarily, and do not send them round to repeat it to other members of staff. Statutory safeguarding professionals or the police may need to speak to them later, and that is their job, not ours;
- do not confront, warn or question the person the concern is about;
- do not investigate, gather evidence or approach witnesses;
- do not delay because you are unsure, because the information is incomplete, or because you have no proof — proof is never required before reporting;
- do not discuss it with anyone who does not need to know.

10. How to report a concern

If anyone is in immediate danger, go straight to section 11.

Route	How it works
The normal route	Georgie Butchart, our Safeguarding Officer. Her contact route will be confirmed and communicated before this policy is brought into effect.
At an event	Tell the event manager or supervisor. They may take an immediate safeguarding concern and must escalate it promptly to the Safeguarding Officer or the appropriate senior route. They do not handle it alone and they do not decide the outcome.
If that route is not right – the Safeguarding Officer is involved in the concern, unavailable, or the route is unsuitable	Go to a senior manager. Where one named senior decision-maker is needed, that is John Walker. Christophe Perrier or another senior manager may also receive the concern and must pass it on. A direct route to John Walker is maintained internally and is not a shared mailbox; it will be made available internally before this policy is brought into effect. You do not need permission to use this route and you do not have to explain why first.
Immediate danger, serious injury, urgent medical help, or a crime appearing to happen	Call 999 and ask for the police, an ambulance, or both.
Outside the company	You may contact the police or the relevant local authority directly at any time. Nothing in this policy requires internal permission first, and nothing in it should make you wait.

Report promptly. A safeguarding concern does not wait for the end of an event, a shift or a week. Give the facts you actually have – complete proof is not required. Do not investigate, confront anyone or collect evidence, and do not access systems, devices or records you are not authorised to use.

A concern raised without a name will be considered where there is enough information to act. We do not operate a safeguarding hotline, an online reporting portal or an anonymous reporting platform, and we do not claim to; technical anonymity cannot be guaranteed.

11. Immediate danger

Where someone is in immediate danger, is seriously injured, needs urgent medical help, or a crime appears to be happening:

- call 999 and ask for the service you need – police, ambulance or both;
- take proportionate steps to reduce the danger where it is safe to do so, such as moving people away from a risk or staying with a child or adult at risk until help arrives;
- do not put yourself or anyone else at unnecessary risk, and do not attempt to restrain or detain anyone except where that is genuinely necessary, lawful and safe;
- tell the Safeguarding Officer, or the senior route in section 10, as soon as you reasonably can afterwards;
- preserve what may matter later, without ever delaying or obstructing the emergency response.

Nothing in this policy requires anyone to seek permission before calling the emergency services, and no internal route may be used to delay an emergency call.

12. Going outside the company

Depending on the circumstances, a concern may need to go to a body outside At Home Catering Limited. The routes include:

- the police — 999 in an emergency, and the non-emergency route otherwise;
- the children's social care service of the local authority for the area, where a child may be suffering or at risk of abuse or neglect;
- the local authority's adult safeguarding service, where an adult may meet the three-part test in section 4;
- the local authority designated officer, or the equivalent route where the authority operates one, where an allegation about someone who works or volunteers with children meets that authority's criteria. Where the route applies, the designated officer or team should be informed without delay and within one working day. Whether it applies in a given case is for the local authority to decide, not for us;
- another competent statutory body, depending on the subject.

Two practical points. Our events take place across many different local authority areas, so the right authority — and its current contact route — has to be checked at the time, for the area where the child or adult at risk is, or where the person works. This policy deliberately does not print local telephone numbers that would go out of date and could send an urgent concern to the wrong place. And there is no single statutory national safeguarding referral route that replaces the police or the relevant local authority: in an emergency it is 999, otherwise the police non-emergency route or the local authority.

For advice about a concern involving a child, GOV.UK also signposts the NSPCC helpline. It is an advice service — useful when you are unsure — and it does not replace an urgent call to the police or a referral to the relevant local authority.

A referral is not a criminal finding, and a decision by an external body not to act is not a finding that the concern was wrong.

13. Allegations about people who work with us

Where an allegation concerns one of our own people, or someone working on our events, handling will include:

- an immediate assessment of the safety of the child, adult at risk or other person affected;
- a conflict check, so that nobody handles an allegation about themselves, about someone close to them, or about someone they manage, where that would be inappropriate;
- an impartial handling route;
- no presumption of guilt, and no assumption that the allegation is either true or false;
- external referral where appropriate — including to the local authority designated officer or equivalent where the allegation meets that authority's criteria for a person who works with children, informing them without delay and within one working day where the route applies. Not every allegation about one of our people falls within that route, and the local authority decides whether it does;
- temporary protective steps where genuinely necessary, which are precautionary and not a finding;
- use of the applicable employment or contractual procedure where consequences of that kind may follow, with advice taken where needed.

14. A child who is lost, unaccompanied or unsafe at an event

- do not take on parental or supervisory responsibility for the child;
- alert the event manager, the venue's team and the client's responsible adult promptly — the venue or client usually holds the arrangements for guests;
- follow the venue's or client's lost-child arrangements where they exist and are suitable;

- stay where you can be seen and, where you can, do not remain alone with the child — ask a colleague to stay with you;
- do not take the child away from the venue, into a private area or into a vehicle, unless that is genuinely necessary for their immediate safety;
- keep the child safe and reassured while the responsible adults are found;
- call 999 if the child is in immediate danger, is seriously injured, or is a young child or otherwise vulnerable to harm and cannot be found or safely accounted for;
- where the situation is unresolved but there is no immediate danger, follow the venue's and client's arrangements and, where police assistance is needed, use the non-emergency route — 101 or online reporting. Acting promptly still matters; it is the route that changes, not the urgency;
- report it afterwards, even where the child was quickly reunited.

The venue's or client's arrangements are the starting point. Our own detailed protocol is being settled before this policy takes effect, and nothing here is presented as an operating lost-child procedure today.

15. Adults at risk, consent and capacity

Adult safeguarding is not the same as child safeguarding, and we treat it separately:

- adults should be involved in decisions about them, and their views and preferred outcome sought and respected wherever possible;
- consent to share information is normally sought — but it is not always needed, and sometimes should not be sought at all, for example where asking would alert an abuser or increase the risk;
- information may be shared without consent where there is a serious risk to the person or to others, where someone is being coerced, or where sharing is otherwise necessary and justified;
- capacity must be assumed. A person is assumed to be able to make their own decisions unless it is established otherwise, and an unwise decision is not the same as an inability to decide;
- our people do not attempt clinical, psychological or legal assessments of capacity, and do not record conclusions about it — that is beyond the competence of catering and events staff.

A common and damaging error is worth naming plainly:

- not every older person is an adult at risk;
- not every disabled person is an adult at risk;
- not every person who has been drinking is an adult at risk — intoxication at an event is common and is not by itself a safeguarding matter, though it may be a welfare, safety or conduct issue, and it becomes a safeguarding matter if the person is being exploited or cannot protect themselves;
- an adult in a difficult or distressing situation is not automatically an adult at risk in the legal sense — all three parts of the test must be present;
- where you are unsure, report it. It is not a member of staff's job to make that judgement.

16. Photography, phones and online conduct

- photography and filming must follow the client's and the venue's authorised arrangements and the applicable data-protection basis. Where children are included, appropriate permission must be in place and the child's own wishes respected, with parent or carer involvement where the circumstances and the agreed arrangements require it;
- our people do not photograph or film guests for personal purposes, and do not post about them;
- no private or secret online contact with a child met through our work, including messaging apps and social media;

- concerns about images, messages or online behaviour are reported in the same way as any other safeguarding concern.

17. Transport, accommodation and private homes

- any transport arrangement involving a child or an adult at risk must be authorised and appropriate — never informal, never improvised, never arranged privately between a member of staff and a guest;
- one-to-one transport with a child or an adult at risk is avoided wherever reasonably possible;
- collection and handover of a child is the responsibility of the parent, carer or responsible adult — our staff do not release, collect or hand over children, and an unclear or unsafe arrangement is escalated;
- at events in private homes, ordinary workplace visibility is absent: work in pairs where you reasonably can, stay within the areas you are working in, and raise anything that feels wrong;
- accommodation at overnight or remote events must be appropriate, and nobody should be put in an isolated or unsuitable arrangement.

18. Confidentiality and information sharing

- safeguarding information is shared only with the people and agencies who need it to keep someone safe, or where the law requires it;
- confidentiality is restricted, not absolute, and nobody should promise otherwise to a person making a disclosure;
- data protection is not a barrier to safeguarding. Where there is a risk to someone's safety, it can be more harmful not to share information than to share it;
- the identity of a person who raises a concern is protected so far as it reasonably can be, and they are told where that is not possible.

19. Records

When this policy is in effect, safeguarding records will be limited to what is necessary, kept accurate, held securely and separately from ordinary business records, with access restricted to those who need it, lawful sharing where safety requires it, and an appropriate retention period. Safeguarding information is highly sensitive and can include information about alleged criminal conduct; it will be handled with corresponding care. The detailed arrangements are being settled before the policy takes effect, and no live safeguarding case data has been evidenced in the policy programme record.

20. How this sits with our other policies

The same facts can engage more than one route — safeguarding, whistleblowing, harassment, a grievance, health and safety, fraud, modern slavery or a criminal matter. Nobody has to choose one, and where several apply we coordinate the handling so that nothing is lost.

One rule overrides the rest: where there is a safeguarding risk, safeguarding comes first. A safeguarding concern must never be routed through another policy before it is acted on, and no other process may delay an emergency call, an urgent protective step or an urgent referral.

21. Training and awareness

Before this policy takes effect, we will provide proportionate safeguarding awareness for the people who need it — covering recognition, boundaries and what to do — along with guidance for managers on receiving and escalating a concern, and we will test the reporting and urgent escalation routes. Safeguarding awareness is a short, practical thing to get right, not a qualification. No safeguarding training has yet been delivered against this policy, and none is claimed.

22. Safer recruitment and criminal record checks

- safeguarding risk informs recruitment proportionately to the role — identity, right to work, references, work history and suitability may all be relevant;
- a criminal record check may only be requested where the specific role is eligible for the level of check requested. The organisation is responsible for assessing eligibility in accordance with the legislation, and eligibility is a question about the role, not a general precaution;
- most catering and event-service work does not involve the activities that make up regulated activity with children. The statutory framework also turns on how often and in what setting an activity is carried out, and on specific exceptions — so the presence of children at an event does not by itself make an ordinary catering role eligible. Eligibility is assessed role by role against the current legislation and guidance, and this policy does not decide it;
- a check never proves that a person is safe. It records certain information held on the day it is issued, and says nothing about conduct never reported, and nothing about what happens afterwards;
- checks therefore never replace supervision, professional boundaries, working reporting routes or a culture in which people raise concerns.

23. Review

This policy is reviewed at least every 12 months once it is in effect, and earlier after a relevant change in the law or official guidance, in our operations, our people, our venues or our suppliers, or after an incident. A review looks at the concerns raised, how they were handled, what changed as a result and whether the routes still work. Any trend reporting uses aggregate, non-identifying information only. A low number of concerns does not prove that there is nothing to find — it can equally mean people do not know the route, do not trust it, or cannot reach it.

24. The law and guidance we work to

This section states the position as it stood when this draft was prepared on 16 October 2026, checked against the legislation and official guidance. It distinguishes the legal duties that apply directly to a business like ours, statutory functions that sit with public bodies, statutory guidance relevant to our activities, and the operational commitments we adopt as our own policy standard.

The framework

- A child is anyone under 18 — Children Act 1989, section 105(1).
- Children Act 2004, section 11 places a duty to make arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children on a defined list of public bodies — local authorities, NHS bodies, the police, probation and others. A private catering company is not on that list, so that organisational duty does not apply to us directly.
- Care Act 2014, section 42 sets the three-part test for adult safeguarding: needs for care and support; experiencing or at risk of abuse or neglect; and, as a result of those needs, unable to protect themselves. The duty to make enquiries sits with the local authority, not with us. Our job is to recognise a possible case and pass it on.
- Working together to safeguard children 2026 is the current statutory guidance, published by the Department for Education and last updated on 18 March 2026. Its stated audience expressly includes private-sector organisations, and it applies to all organisations and agencies that have functions relating to children — so it is not guidance for public bodies alone. We apply the provisions relevant to our activities. It also describes the local authority designated officer's role in overseeing allegations about people who work with children, and the expectation that such an allegation reaches that route without delay and within one working day.

- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006, Schedule 4 defines regulated activity relating to children through a combination of specified activities — teaching, training or instruction, care or supervision, advice or guidance about a child's well-being, moderating a children's online service, driving a vehicle used only to convey children — together with frequency or period conditions, specified establishments, certain roles and statutory exceptions. Teaching, care or supervision that is merely incidental to work with adults is excluded, and personal care and health care are treated differently from the frequency test. Eligibility must therefore be assessed role by role against the current legislation and DBS guidance, not inferred from the activity alone.
- Criminal record checks: GOV.UK eligibility guidance, last updated 13 October 2026, states that the recruiting organisation is responsible for deciding whether a check is needed and at what level, in accordance with the legislation, and that it is the organisation's duty to ensure the appropriate level is applied for.
- Mental Capacity Act 2005, section 1: a person must be assumed to have capacity unless it is established otherwise, and is not to be treated as unable to decide merely because the decision appears unwise.
- Data protection law does not prevent sharing personal data where that is appropriate. In an urgent situation it can be more harmful not to share than to share.

This section reflects official sources, not legal advice, and it must be re-checked when this policy is approved.

Who we are

Legal entity	AtHome Catering Limited
Company number	02763948 (registered in England and Wales)
Registered office	Kings House, 9-10 Haymarket, London, England, SW1Y 4BP
Trading and contact address	40 High Street, Cobham, Surrey, KT11 3EB, United Kingdom
Email	parties@athomecatering.co.uk
Telephone	+44 (0)1932 862026
Brands	AtHome Catering is our public business name. AtHome Events is a customer-facing events brand of AtHome Catering Limited. It is not a separate company and never the contracting party.