

# Safeguarding Policy

## Communication for All

May 2026

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Supporting the children and young people  
of Northamptonshire with power based AAC



## 1. Purpose of This Policy

This safeguarding policy outlines the responsibilities and expectations of the County AAC Team in promoting the safety, wellbeing, and communication rights of children and young people who use AAC. As a *secondary service*, the AAC team works alongside schools, families, health partners and social care but does not hold primary safeguarding responsibility. However, all team members must remain vigilant, report concerns appropriately, and ensure the young person's communication needs are protected.

## 2. Principles and Values

- Every child and young person has the right to communicate at all times.
- AAC devices constitute a young person's **voice** and must be treated with the same respect as spoken communication.
- Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility; concerns should never be ignored.
- Collaboration with families, education settings, and health/social care partners is essential to ensuring safety and communication access.

## 3. AAC Devices and Communication Access

### 3.1 Continuous Access to AAC

To safeguard the young person's communication rights:

- AAC devices must be **accessible at all times** during the day.
- Devices must **never be locked away**, restricted, or removed as a behavioural consequence.
- Devices should be charged and functional. Settings and home environments are responsible for ensuring:
  - Devices are put on charge daily.
  - Chargers remain accessible.
  - Alternative non powered AAC systems remain in place such as; paper based communication books and symbols. This is particularly important when the device is temporarily unavailable for repair.

### 3.2 Daily Transfer of Devices Between Home and School

To allow the child or young person to communicate across all environments:

- Devices should travel **between home and school daily**, unless a written agreement states otherwise.
- Families and schools should collaborate to ensure safe transport (e.g., protective cases, bags).

- Teams should provide guidance on:
  - Device care and practical handling.
  - Problem-solving when devices are not consistently sent.

### 3.3 Repairs, Damage, or Technical Issues

- Damaged or malfunctioning devices should be reported promptly to the AAC team.
- While repairs are underway, settings should use the young person's **agreed alternative AAC resources**, ensuring communication does not cease.
- Intentional damage should be investigated by the primary setting in line with their safeguarding and behaviour policies.

## 4. Safeguarding Responsibilities During Visits

### 4.1 Role of the AAC Team

Although the AAC team is not the primary safeguarding body:

- Team members must remain alert to signs of harm, neglect, or disclosures.
- Team members must follow the safeguarding procedures outlined in this policy whenever a concern arises.

### 4.2 Responding to Safeguarding Concerns

If any safeguarding concern emerges during a visit (in school, home, or community):

#### Immediate steps:

1. **Listen and observe** – do not question the young person beyond clarifying immediate safety.
2. **Do not promise confidentiality** — explain you may need to share information with someone who can help.
3. **Ensure immediate safety** – if a child is at risk of immediate harm, contact emergency services.

#### Reporting steps:

4. **Inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)** in the school or setting *as soon as possible* and before leaving the site.
5. If the concern arises in the home, inform:
  - The local authority children's services (following your team's internal policy), and/or
  - The child's allocated social worker, if known.
6. **Record the concern** factually and securely according to the service protocol and update WriteUpp profile.

7. Notify **team safeguarding lead (Lesley Elder) and service lead (Sophie Hill)** at the earliest opportunity.

#### 4.3 When a Disclosure Is Made Using an AAC Device

If a young person uses their AAC system to disclose information:

- Treat it with the same seriousness as a verbal disclosure.
- Capture the exact words/selection used (e.g., screenshots, written description).
- Save evidence securely following data protection standards.
- Follow the reporting steps above.

#### 5. Information Sharing and Confidentiality

- Information will only be shared with relevant professionals on a **need-to-know basis**.
- All team members must comply with data protection legislation.
- Notes, photos, screenshots or device logs used as evidence must be stored securely on authorised systems.

#### 6. Professional Conduct During Visits

AAC team members will:

- Wear visible identification.
- Work in line with safer working practice guidelines.
- Keep interactions focused on assessment, support, and communication needs.

#### 7. Training and Compliance

- All AAC team members will complete annual safeguarding training.

#### 8. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed annually, or earlier if:

- National guidance changes,
- Safeguarding procedures evolve,
- Incident reviews highlight a need.