

North Mymms Youth Project – Safeguarding Children Policy

I. BACKGROUND AND SCOPE OF POLICY

- I.1 This safeguarding children policy has been drafted and updated in response to requirements laid down by the Department of Health ([‘Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018’ \(last updated December 2023\)](#)). The requirements of that document form the basis of part 3 of this policy.
- I.2 Since the Project is also a registered Charity, this policy also takes account of the Charity Commission’s policy document [Strategy for dealing with safeguarding issues in charities](#) and the guidance at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/safeguarding-duties-for-charity-trustees>
- I.3 We aim to ensure that our work with children promotes their health, safety, welfare and development. We expect our volunteers to show respect for children’s welfare in all that they do. Our policy and procedures also protect our volunteers and the good reputation of the project. We support the aims and outcomes of the Every Child Matters agenda set by the government and endeavour to ensure that every child, whatever their background or their circumstances, has the support to enable them to:
- Be Healthy
 - Stay Safe
 - Enjoy and Achieve
 - Make a positive contribution
 - Achieve economic well-being
- I.4 In this policy the word ‘child’ refers to young people up to 18 years of age and in the context of this policy includes young helpers under 18.
- I.5 Responsibility for the adequacy of safeguarding arrangements within the Project rests ultimately with the Trustees.
- I.6 The obligations of this policy relate to all volunteers, as to any paid personnel working with the project. We recognise that the degree to which volunteers interact with children will vary according to the nature of their work but even those not directly working with children might have access to sensitive information or come across concerns. Those who work directly with children are subject to stringent selection and management procedures whilst those who might occasionally be asked to engage with children on behalf of the project will be expected to have a good knowledge of and adhere to this policy.

2. WHAT IS SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN ALL ABOUT?

- 2.1 Safeguarding children is about the avoidance of harm to children as a result of neglect or abuse.
- 2.2 Volunteers and members of the management committee and Trustees of the youth project should strive to prevent abuse or neglect occurring.
- 2.3 It is important that this is based on a firm partnership with the children’s parents, based on clear communication, respect, co-operation and involvement.
- 2.4 Every volunteer who works with children either on a regular or occasional basis needs to be aware of their roles and responsibilities and to have clear guidelines under which to operate.

This is achieved on a day to day basis by following this policy and other policies agreed by the club, particularly those listed below.

Topic	Covered in:
Adult-member ratios for activities Adult supervision of members	Health and Safety Policy
Risk assessment of club activities	Risk assessment procedure
Selection and vetting of leaders and helpers DBS checks Provision of training in safeguarding children issues	Recruitment Policy
Collection, use and storage of personal data relating to members, including images	Data Protection Policy
Smoking, alcohol and substance misuse	Smoking, alcohol and substance misuse policy
Fairness, access, avoidance of discrimination and bullying	Equal opportunities policy
Expectations of club leaders and helpers	Job descriptions

2.5 All of these documents are available from the Project website at www.nmyouth.org.uk.

What is abuse?

- 2.6 The Children's Act 1989 introduced the concept of significant harm as the threshold that justifies compulsory intervention in family life in the best interests of the child. Whilst the definition of significant harm is open to interpretation, it is most often a compilation of significant events, which interrupt, change or damage a child's physical and psychological development.
- 2.7 Safeguarding children professionals identify four categories of abuse, contributing to significant harm. In reality, the experience of many children who have suffered significant harm will include more than one aspect of abuse. The four main categories are:
- Physical abuse
 - Neglect
 - Sexual abuse
 - Emotional abuse
- 2.8 Physical: May include hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, scalding, drowning, suffocating. **Includes such abuse wherever it occurs, including at home.**
- 2.9 Emotional: May involve telling children they are worthless or unloved, inadequate or of limited value. Inappropriate expectations or behaviour leading to children feeling frightened, scared or being exploited or corrupted. **Also includes radicalisation; exposure of children to abuse of others, including family members**

- 2.10 Sexual: **includes harassment and sexualised bullying**, sexual activities, **forced marriage and exploitation**. Forcing or enticing children to take part in sexual activities, both penetrative and non-penetrative. It may include non-contact activities such as involving children in looking at pornographic or sexual activities. It also includes sexual exploitation, which occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual or occurs without physical contact, eg online.
- 2.11 Neglect: Failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs. May involve the failure to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing or protect from harm.

3. APPROACH OF THE PROJECT TO SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN

- 3.1 The project's approach is in line with the guidance set out in **chapter 2 paragraph 83 and Chapter 4 paragraph 31** **Off of Working Together To Safeguard Children 2024**), which covers the responsibilities of all organisations working with children, and [guidance from the Charity Commission](#). These documents make clear that any organisations providing activities or services for children must have each of the following in place

A clear policy and procedure in relation to safeguarding, which is in line with statutory guidance, is understood by all adults involved, and followed.

- 3.2 That requirement is met by this policy, subject to it being appropriately promulgated and followed within the Project

A culture of listening to children and taking account of their wishes and feelings, both in individual decisions and the development of services;

- 3.3 All volunteers are expected to show respect for children involved in the project, to listen to their views and to act in line with this policy in relation to any concerns that they raise. Members of the club have access to leaders at every event, who will seek to ensure that the activities meet their needs and that any concerns are acted upon. Children are regularly given opportunities to feed back to club leaders about club activities, arrangements and future developments.

Strong partnerships with parents

- 3.4 Parents are involved at every stage of the projects work, and all parents are actively engaged as partners, contributing to the work of the project.
- 3.5 Subject to 3.27 below, all concerns about children must be discussed first with the child's parents, and the child's parents must be actively involved in planning to address any concerns raised by or about the safeguarding of the child.

A clear line of accountability in relation to its activities, designed to safeguard and promote the welfare of children

- 3.6 All volunteers and leaders share responsibility for the issues covered in this policy.
- 3.7 Volunteers are expected to report any concerns to a Leader or to the Safeguarding Children officer. The Leader is responsible for briefing any new volunteer helpers and ensuring that they are aware of matters relevant to safeguarding children.
- 3.8 Leaders are responsible for ensuring that this policy is followed during any event or activity.

- 3.9 The Leaders and Safeguarding Children Officer will take action as required and escalate any concerns which cannot be immediately resolved to external agencies as appropriate
- 3.10 The Safeguarding Children Officer may discuss any concerns with the Chair and / or Management Committee and will in any case report to the Chair and Management Committee any referrals made and any significant actions taken under this policy.
- 3.11 In the absence of the Safeguarding Children Officer, any action which would otherwise be the responsibility of the Safeguarding Children Officer may be taken by the Chair or by a majority decision of the Management Committee.
- 3.12 All concerns raised under this policy, whether or not further action is taken, will be documented and information will be retained in the folder Dropbox\NMYP - confidential disclosures\Safeguarding to which the Chair, Safeguarding Officer and Secretary have access.

A senior board level lead to take leadership responsibility for the organisation's safeguarding arrangements;

- 3.13 The Trustees, Chair and Management Committee are jointly responsible for the governance of the Project, including Safeguarding arrangements. They will approve the Safeguarding Children Policy, regularly review it, agree job descriptions to ensure that Safeguarding issues are appropriately covered and will appoint a Safeguarding Children Officer.

A designated practitioner for safeguarding, whose role is explicitly defined in a job descriptions

- 3.14 The Safeguarding Children Officer has lead responsibility for promoting the effective implementation of this policy, addressing safeguarding concerns raised by any person in relation to the club, and where relevant for onward reporting of safeguarding concerns to other agencies. In any matter where the Safeguarding Children Officer requires advice from a qualified practitioner, the Local Authority Designated Officer will be consulted.

Clear whistleblowing procedures, which reflect the principles in Sir Robert Francis' Freedom to Speak Up Review and are suitably referenced in staff training and codes of conduct

Clear escalation policies for staff to follow when their child safeguarding concerns are not being addressed within their organisation or by other agencies

- 3.15 Any adult or child who has concerns about any issue relating to Safeguarding Children or the welfare of children associated with the Project is encouraged to raise these concerns directly with the leaders or with the Safeguarding Children Officer. If they prefer, they may raise the concern with the Chair or request that the matter be discussed at a meeting of the management committee. Exceptionally, any person may raise a concern about the safety of a child or children directly via social services or via the Local Safeguarding Children's Board

Contact Details:

Safeguarding Children Officer	Dr Hilary Carlen	01707 651448 (07572 864910) hilary@nmyouth.org.uk
Chair	Ian Milton	chair@nmyouth.org.uk
Hertfordshire Safeguarding Children Board	http://www.hertsdirect.org/services/healthsoc/childfam/childprotection/hertssafboard/	
Hertfordshire Social Services	Children Schools and Family	0300 123 4043
Police Safeguarding children Team	Joint Safeguarding children	01707 354000

	Investigation Team	
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Arrangements which set out clearly the processes for sharing information, with others in the organisation, with professionals and with the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB);

- 3.16 Any person who has concerns about a Safeguarding Issue is expected to share this concern immediately as set out in paragraphs 3.3 to 3.7 above. This obligation applies whether the concern arises from an incident, an observation or a disclosure by a child or adult.
- 3.17 It is not the responsibility of individual volunteers to investigate or to decide whether a child is being abused – merely to report discovery or suspicion of abuse, following the procedures given in this document.

Disclosures by children

- 3.18 It may happen that a child feels able to tell one of our volunteers about abuse they are suffering – this is known as ‘disclosure’. In cases of disclosure, the volunteer is expected to LISTEN/OBSERVE, REASSURE, REPORT, RECORD.
- 3.19 *Listen.* Do not interrogate. Accept the child’s disclosure calmly; listen closely and do not interrupt. Do not make false promises. At the outset, clarify that the information provided by the child cannot be kept secret and must be passed onto an appropriate person.
- 3.20 Other than this action however the information should be kept confidential and under on circumstances be discussed with others.
- 3.21 Be honest. Tell the child that they may need to repeat the disclosure within the course of a child protection investigation.
- 3.22 Take notes. Comprehensive notes should be taken either during or immediately following any conversation, using an incident reporting form, which can be found in the operations folder.
- 3.23 *Reassure* Where a child takes a volunteer into their confidence, they should be reassured calmly and gently that the confidence has been heard, and that s/he has done the right thing in speaking to someone. S/he should be told what will happen next i.e. that people who can help the child will be informed. Once again, no promise of confidentiality should be made.
- 3.24 *Report.* Action to report suspected abuse or disclosures should be taken immediately. The incident should be reported to the leader of any ongoing event or to the Safeguarding Children Officer.
- 3.25 *Record* A written record of what was said, heard and/or seen should be made right away. The actual words spoken by a third party of a child should be used as much as possible, rather than an interpretation of what was said. Specific facts relating to named people, dates, places etc should be recorded accurately. Records can be typed or handwritten but must be signed and dated by the person hearing the disclosure.

Onward sharing of information

- 3.26 Decisions about onward sharing of information are normally made by the Safeguarding Children Officer, but if that officer is not available may be made by the Chair. In a situation of urgency, any leader or member of the management committee may refer a matter of concern as set out here.
- 3.27 Where a concern is raised, this should be discussed with the parents, unless, exceptionally, there are concerns that this would not be in the best interests of the child. In that situation,

the issue must be discussed with the Local Authority Designated Officer for Safeguarding Children, and a decision taken about the way forward.

- 3.28 Where a concern is raised, the Safeguarding Children Officer will, after consultation with the Chair if appropriate, make the decision whether to raise a safeguarding alert with the social services department or local Safeguarding Children's Board. If a referral is made, the parents or carers will be informed, unless, after discussion with the social services department, it is concluded not to be in the best interests of the child to do so.
- 3.29 It may sometimes be appropriate for other agencies to be involved at this point, including the child's school or the police. Any such decision will be taken in consultation with the local Safeguarding Children Board.

Safe recruitment practices for individuals whom the organisation will permit to work regularly with children, including policies on when to obtain a disclosure and barring check;

- 3.30 The project has a careful procedure for recruiting leaders, assistant leaders and regular helpers.
- 3.31 It requires Disclosure and Barring Service checks for all leaders, regular helpers or helpers staying at overnight events (later than "lights out" or before 7 am) to have a disclosure and barring certificate.
- 3.32 Further details, including details of induction arrangements for new volunteers, are given in the Recruitment and Training Policy.

Clear policies in line with those from the LSCB for dealing with allegations against people who work with children. Such policies should make a clear distinction between an allegation, a concern about the quality of care or practice or a complaint.

- 3.33 Parents, carers, children, and volunteers are advised of the organisation's safeguarding procedures including details of how to report any concerns
- 3.34 *Allegations:* an allegation is a statement by any adult or child who asserts that abuse has occurred or is at risk of occurring due to some failing on the part of the club or its personnel. Any such allegation will be passed to the Safeguarding Children's Officer, who will take action on the same basis as set out for disclosures, above, including discussion with the child's parents. In the event of an allegation relating to the Safeguarding Officer or Chair, the matter will be directly referred to Social Services for advice on how best to proceed.
- 3.35 In any other case, the Safeguarding Officer may decide, in consultation with the Chair, that the matter is of such seriousness that it must be referred immediately to Social Services, prior to any local investigation taking place. In such cases, advice about further investigation will be taken from Social Services. If the situation does not appear to be of such seriousness, a local investigation may be undertaken. At any stage in that investigation, a decision may be taken to refer the matter to Social Services.
- 3.36 Where a local investigation is to be undertaken, the person against whom allegations have been made must be informed of the allegations and interviewed by the Safeguarding Officer or another suitably trained and briefed person agreed by the Chair, within 7 days of the allegation. The person against whom allegations have been made should be given the opportunity to have a supporter present during this interview, and offered the support of a member of the management committee, not involved in the investigation, if they so wish. It may also be necessary to interview parents, other adults or children in order to clarify the facts. If it is proposed to interview a child, their parent or carer must be informed and invited to be present during the interview. No interview will be undertaken by a child unless at least two adults are present.

- 3.37 Any local investigation should be completed and the outcome and recommendations reported to the Chair within 14 days. The Chair will determine what if any action is then required. This decision will be documented, and shared with Trustees and Management Committee, with personal information anonymised or disclosed on a need-to-know basis.
- 3.38 In any case where a decision has been taken that it is not appropriate for a particular volunteer or other individual to have contact with children on safeguarding grounds, the Chair of the Management Committee will inform the Local Authority Designated Officer for Safeguarding with a view to determining whether a referral should be made to the Disclosure and Barring Service, to consider whether to add the individual to the barred list, and will make such a referral if so advised by the Designated Officer.
- 3.39 In any other case the Chair will determine whether a referral to the local authority should be made.
- 3.40 *Concern or complaint about the quality of care or practice:* such issues may arise without any suggestion of abuse. In these cases, an immediate attempt will be made to rectify any problem identified. If this is not possible, the matter will be escalated to the Chair or management committee for further action.

Appropriate supervision and support for staff and volunteers, including safeguarding training; arrangements for ensuring that their staff or volunteers are competent to carry out their responsibilities for safeguarding children and creating an environment where individuals can raise concerns about safeguarding; arrangements to familiarise staff and volunteers with safeguarding children responsibilities and procedures

- 3.41 Leaders are supervised by the Management Committee and are expected to attend management committee meetings.
- 3.42 Assistant leaders and helpers are supervised by leaders, and are briefed in the requirement to report any concerns to leaders.
- 3.43 All leaders and assistant leaders are required to complete formal Safeguarding Children Training. This training is available via Pro-Action or other umbrella organisations to which the project is affiliated and is provided free of charge to leaders, assistant leaders and to regular volunteers who wish to undertake it. Formal training undertaken in other settings is acceptable providing that it is suitably evidenced and can be shown to cover the issues raised in this policy.
- 3.44 All volunteers who have contact with children must be advised by a Leader of their general safeguarding responsibilities as part of their immediate induction when they first undertake this role.

4. OVERSIGHT OF THIS POLICY

- 4.1 This policy will be reviewed every three years, or sooner in the event of particular concerns arising or new national guidance being published.
- 4.2 Each review and/or proposal to revise the policy must be reported to the Trustees for approval.
- 4.3 It will periodically be brought to the attention of all new and existing volunteers and members of the management committee regardless of whether or not they hold or are applying for roles that are identified as having regular contact with children.

4.4 The policy will be published on the Project website and made available to any person on request.

Signed:

Date:

First approved by Management Committee August 2010

Last reviewed and updated Management Committee April 2024

Next Review September 2027