

Committee: FINANCE AND RESOURCES

Date: 9 May 2008

Report: POLICY ON THE PROTECTION OF PEOPLE FROM VULNERABLE GROUPS

Purpose of the report

1. To seek agreement to the proposed Policy on the protection of people from vulnerable Groups.

Strategic Planning Framework

2. The information and recommendation(s) contained in this report are consistent with the Authority's statutory purposes and it's approved strategic planning framework:

"Each year, develop and implement at least one new programme of formal or informal education or training to encourage schools and groups to get involved in conserving the special qualities of the Yorkshire Dales National Park" (National Park Management Plan, UE5)

"To plan and manage all aspects of the Authority's business so as to make the most effective use of our resources" (Corporate Plan).

Background

3. The following extract from North Yorkshire Safeguarding Children Board's 'Guidance on Child Protection Policies' is self explanatory:

'The North Yorkshire Safeguarding Children Board would recommend that every organisation whose members come directly in contact with children have a Child Protection Policy. Each policy will need to reflect the activities of the organisation and the individuals involved. It is therefore important that each organisation design its own policy. It is impossible for the North Yorkshire Safeguarding Children Board to be prescriptive in respect of a policy.'

4. In addition to the above, the absence of a current policy leaves the Authority exposed to a significant potential risk with regard to allegations of abusive practice, while carrying out its 'duty of care' to staff under the Health & Safety at Work Act (1974).

5. The proposed policy (**Appendix**) is intended to support work across the Authority, in particular in the outreach, events, education and work experience programmes. Supplementary 'safe practice' guidance notes have also been written to support staff working within these various areas, and these guidance notes are listed as background documents to the policy. The policy itself is intended to safeguard people from all potentially vulnerable groups: the most obvious groups include children, young people and the disabled, but people may be vulnerable for other reasons, depending on particular circumstances.
6. The introduction of this policy and accompanying guidelines will be reinforced through training for those staff directly involved in delivering services which involve the vulnerable groups covered.

RECOMMENDATION

7. That Members approve the policy as set out in the **Appendix**.

Bill Wood
Outreach and Education Manager
21 April 2008

Background Documents:

Safe practice: General Guidelines
Safe practice: Outreach, Events and Education activities
Safe practice: Work Experience Placements

Policy on the protection of people from vulnerable groups: children and vulnerable adults.

1 Overview

- 1.1 This policy covers the protection of children and vulnerable adults. It policy applies to all staff, members and volunteers working for the organisation. For the purposes of this document: 'child /children' refers to any person(s) under the age of 18; 'vulnerable adults' are adults with substantial learning, sensory and / or physical difficulties.
- 1.2 The Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority provides a variety of services for people from vulnerable groups, to promote awareness, understanding and enjoyment of the National Park and its special qualities, in particular through the outreach, events, education and work experience programmes. The Authority is committed to ensuring that everyone involved receives the highest standards of protection from harm.

2 Policy statement

- 2.1 The Authority is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of people from vulnerable groups, so that they can be healthy, stay safe and enjoy and learn from their experience of the National Park and the Authority. The Authority provides all appropriate staff with clear and practical guidance to achieve this and in doing so, also ensures that officers are not exposed to the risk of unfounded allegations of abusive, illegal or improper conduct being made against them.

3 Principles

- 3.1 The following principles are based on procedures set out by the local Safeguarding Children Board and take account of guidance from the Department for Children, Young People and Families and other appropriate bodies.
 - Staff should understand their responsibility to safeguard and protect people from vulnerable groups (H&S at Work Act 1974, Duty of Care)
 - Safe recruitment practice, in checking the suitability of staff and volunteers to work with people from vulnerable groups, should always be followed.
 - Effective links with relevant protection agencies should be developed and maintained.
 - Staff should work and be seen to work openly and transparently, avoiding any conduct which would lead any reasonable person to question their motivations and intentions.

- In accordance with the Authority's Equality Policy, staff should maintain professional standards at all times when working with people from vulnerable groups, regardless of race, religion or belief, disability, gender or sexual orientation.
- All staff should know who the designated officer for protection of children and people from vulnerable groups is and take advice promptly from them, over any incident giving cause for concern. The designated officer is the Outreach and Education Manager.
- A record should be made of any incident giving rise to concern, along with decisions made and any further actions agreed, in accordance with NPA policies.
- Staff should be aware that breaches of the law or professional guidelines could result in criminal and / or disciplinary action being taken against them.