Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority **Item 6**

Finance and Resources Committee

30 September 2025

Safeguarding Policy

Purpose of the Report

1. To seek approval of the Authority's Safeguarding Policy, previously titled the 'Policy on the Protection of People from Vulnerable Groups'.

Recommendation

2. That Members approve the revised Safeguarding Policy, as set out in **Appendix A**.

Strategic Framework

3. The information and recommendation(s) in this report are consistent with the Authority's statutory purposes and its approved strategic planning framework;
    - Corporate Action Plan Objective 31: Ensure that we have HR policies, procedures, terms and conditions to attract and support the right people with the right skills to deliver the Authority work effectively.

Background

4. The current policy was last reviewed in 2019. Regular updates to policy are necessary to ensure continued compliance with legislation, reflect best practice and address evolving organisational priorities. These updates contribute to improved staff awareness and operational efficiency. The revised policy, now titled 'Safeguarding Policy,' reflects a broader scope and aligns with national safeguarding terminology and best practice.

5. Kiri Wood, the Authority's Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO) has been involved with the development of the policy and the updates incorporated.

6. The revised draft policy was shared with the Member Champion for Corporate Management, UNISON representatives and the Senior Management Team for feedback.

7. The Authority engages with children, young people and vulnerable adults through various programmes, including Access and Engagement outdoor activity programmes, the Dales Countryside Museum, the Ranger Service, volunteering, apprenticeship schemes and work experience placements.

8. Several staff members across the Authority lead on these programmes, all are DBS checked and with up-to-date Safeguarding training.

9. There are over 40 active Learning and Engagement volunteers who work across all programmes, with DBS check and up to date Safeguarding training.

10. Through the Authority's Access and Engagement Programmes from April 2024 to March 2025, the below children, young people and vulnerable adults have attended visits:
    a. 1786 children
        i. Always accompanied by visiting school staff and YDNPA volunteers
        ii. Includes colleges, 16-17 year olds
    b. 510 children accompanied by parents/carers in family groups
        i. Visiting group leaders always in attendance
    c. 71 young people aged 18 – 30
        i. Acting as group leader, no visiting group leader attending. Extra Safeguarding measures in place e.g. Emergency contacts, medical conditions; anything that may affect their ability to participate.
    d. 124 vulnerable adults (SEND and/or Autism, Mental & Physical impairments)
        i. 454 total adults
        ii. Visiting group leaders always in attendance

11. Young Ranger programmes, for young people aged 11-17 was paused recently, however this will re-commence later this year. No visiting group leaders, parents or carers attend and staff act in loco-parentis with extra safeguarding measures in place e.g. parental consent, details of emergency contacts, details of any medical conditions and anything that may affect their ability to participate, staff wait with young people until they are picked up after the session.

12. Seven school-age work experience placements were arranged this year. The school, or the authorising organisation on their behalf, provide the Authority with any relevant information, (having sought parent/guardian approval) related to the work experience student in order that we can make any adjustments to the activities planned and to safeguard their health, safety and wellbeing.

Summary of key changes

13. The main amendments to the policy include:
    - **Expanded scope** to include contractors and online engagement;
    - **Alignment** with current statutory guidance;
    - **Defined roles** for Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO), SMT, Section Heads, HR Team and all staff;
    - **Structured four-step process:** Recognise, Respond, Report, Record;
    - **Clearer allegations management** procedures; and
    - **New section** on wellbeing support (EAP, mental health first aiders, NSPCC Childline).

14. These changes are expected to strengthen the Authority's safeguarding culture by improving clarity, consistency and confidence among staff, volunteers and Members. The revised policy also supports proactive risk management and reinforces the Authority's reputation as a safe and responsible organisation.

Financial Implications

15. The proposed changes are not expected to incur significant additional costs. Training and implementation will be delivered through existing operational budgets.

Legal Implications

16. The revised policy ensures continued alignment with current legislation and legal obligations.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Implications

17. The revised policy promotes inclusive safeguarding practices, recognising that individuals may face additional vulnerabilities due to protected characteristics.

Conclusion

18. The updated Safeguarding Policy reinforces the Authority's commitment to creating a safe, inclusive and responsive environment for all individuals engaging with our services. It also strengthens support for staff, volunteers and Members by providing clearer guidance, improved reporting procedures, and access to wellbeing resources, helping ensure they feel confident and well-equipped to fulfil their safeguarding responsibilities.

19. The Authority will continue to monitor safeguarding practices through regular policy reviews, incident reporting analysis and feedback from staff and volunteers, ensuring the policy remains robust, responsive and fit for purpose.

Vikki Thomas
Head of HR

Kiri Wood
Education, Engagement and Wellbeing Manager

Appendix A

Safeguarding Policy

1. Introduction

1.1 The Authority is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all children, young people and vulnerable adults who engage with our services and activities.

1.2 The Authority provides a range of in-person and online services, to children, young people and vulnerable adults. Safeguarding means protecting their health, wellbeing and human rights – enabling them to live free from harm, abuse and neglect.

1.4 It is a shared responsibility. Staff, volunteers, Members and contractors may themselves be vulnerable to allegations of misconduct.

1.5 This policy provides clear and practical guidance to help safeguard the welfare of those they engage with, while minimising the risk of allegations.

1.6 The Authority has a duty to report safeguarding concerns and cannot guarantee complete confidentiality. However, all concerns will be handled sensitively and individuals will be kept informed of actions taken.

1.7 This policy is informed by relevant legislation, including the Children Acts 1989 and 2004, the Care Act 2014, and the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012; and relevant statutory guidance including Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all staff, volunteers and Members who come into direct contact with children, young people and/or vulnerable adults. It also applies to anyone acting on behalf of the Authority.

3. Safeguarding Roles

3.1 **Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO)**:

Kiri Wood, Education, Engagement and Wellbeing Manager
kiri.wood@yorkshiredales.org.uk or 01756 751623

3.2 **Secondary Safeguarding Contact**:

Vikki Thomas, Head of HR
vikki.thomas@yorkshiredales.org.uk or 01969 652331

3.3 The Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO) is responsible for:

- Ensuring safeguarding arrangements are in place across the Authority.
- Promoting the safety and welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults.
- Ensuring concerns are appropriately managed and reported to the relevant authorities.

4. Vulnerable people

4.1 A vulnerable person is someone who, due to their circumstances, is unable to protect themselves from abuse or neglect.

4.2 This includes:

- **Children:** Anyone under 18 is automatically considered vulnerable.
- **Adult:** As defined by the Care Act 2014, a vulnerable adult is someone aged 18 or over who:
  - Has care and support needs;
  - Is experiencing or at risk of abuse or neglect; and
  - Is unable to protect themselves due to those needs.

5. Commitment and responsibilities

5.1 **The Authority will**:

- Maintain robust recruitment policies and procedures, ensuring all necessary pre-employment checks are completed for staff and volunteers.
- Share safeguarding information and good practice with staff, volunteers, Members parents/guardians and partner organisations.
- Respond promptly to all suspicions or allegations of abuse.
- Provide effective supervision, support and training to staff, volunteers and Members.
- Maintain links with relevant Local Education Authorities and statutory childcare services.
- Regularly review this policy and associated procedures.

5.2 **The Senior Management Team (SMT) will:**

- Ensure the Authority meets its safeguarding obligations.
- Provide a safe environment for children, young people and vulnerable adults.
- Stay informed of safeguarding matters and compliance.

5.3 **Section Heads will:**

- Ensure their teams operate in line with safeguarding commitments.
- Identify roles involving contact with vulnerable groups.
- Ensuring appropriate screening, qualifications and training.
- Include safeguarding provisions in contracts where appropriate.

- Ensure risk assessments are completed and reviewed.

5.4 **Managers will:**

- Support staff and volunteers in safeguarding responsibilities.
- Identify roles requiring criminal records disclosures.
- Ensure appropriate recruitment and training.
- Report concerns promptly.
- Document concerns accurately.
- Seek advice from the DSO or the HR Team when necessary.

5.5 **Human Resources (HR) Team will:**

- Maintain records of roles involving contact with vulnerable groups.
- Ensure thorough recruitment and safeguarding checks.
- Keep records of staff safeguarding training.
- Support appraisals and disciplinary procedures.
- Refer individuals to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS). as appropriate. A DBS check is a criminal record check used in England and Wales to help employers make safer recruitment decisions

5.6 **All staff, volunteers and Members will:**

- Act appropriately and follow safe Practice Guidance.
- Keep clear, factual records of concerns.
- Discuss concerns with appropriate contacts.
- Report concerns promptly and accurately.
- Contact emergency services in serious cases.

6. Reporting Procedures

6.1 **Recognise**

- Stay calm, listen carefully, and offer support.
- Use open and encouraging body language.
- Show compassion and reassure the individual.
- Affirm that speaking up was the right thing to do.
- Avoid putting yourself at risk.
- Be clear that the concern will be shared.
- Repeat back what was said to confirm understanding.
- Ask only clarifying questions.
- Allow the person to speak at their own pace.
- Provide communication support if needed.
- Record the information promptly and accurately.

6.2 **Respond**

If someone is at immediate risk, call 999 and request police assistance.

If there is no immediate danger:

- Inform you manager as soon as possible.
- Contact the DSO if unsure how to proceed.
- If the DSO or secondary contact is unavailable the NSPCC Helpline (0808 800 500 or help@nspcc.org.uk) can provide guidance

6.3 Report

Complete the Safeguarding Incident Reporting Form (**Appendix A)**. Include:

- Name, age, address (if known) of the person at risk.
- A detailed account of what happened or was said.
- Information about an alleged perpetrator.

The DSO will review all reports and determine further action. Concerns should be reported to the authority where the individual resides.

Examples of local authority reporting pages:

- North Yorkshire - https://www.northyorks.gov.uk/adult-social-care/protecting-adult-harm/report-adult-abuse-safeguarding
- Westmorland and Furness - https://www.westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk/health-and-social-care/adult-social-care/safeguarding-adults
- Lancashire - https://www.lancashire.gov.uk/health-and-social-care/safeguarding/

6.4 Record

The DSO will ensure:

- All records are signed, dated and stored securely.
- Reports are not amended after submission.
- Information is shared only with appropriate staff or professionals.
- Records must also be kept where a decision not to report is made, with a clear rationale documented.

Records will be retained for at least 6 years or until the individual reaches the age of 25.

7. Allegations against Authority staff, volunteers and Members

7.1 Conduct

Staff, volunteers and Members should maintain high standards of conduct and professionalism, in accordance with the relevant code of conduct, to minimise the risk of false allegations.

7.2 Concerning behaviour

It is essential to act swiftly and appropriately if an allegation is made or there are concerns about behaviour toward a vulnerable person. Has an individual:

- Behaved in a way that has harmed or may harm a vulnerable person.
- Possibly committed a criminal offence.
- Demonstrated behaviour suggesting unsuitability to work with vulnerable groups.

Staff, volunteers and Members must also remain alert to the risk of colleagues being drawn into promoting terrorism or engaging in violent or non-violent extremism.

7.3 Confidential reporting

Concerns raised in good faith will be supported and protected under the Confidential Reporting Policy.

7.4 Reporting procedures

- If concerns involve a manager or volunteer supervisor, report to their Director, or DSO.
- Do not inform the person subject to the allegation until advised.
- If the allegation involves the DSO, report to the Director of Corporate Services.
- Report poor practice concerns to the DSO for guidance.

7.5 Types of investigation

- Safeguarding investigation - led by local authority services.
- Criminal Investigation - led by the Police.
- Internal disciplinary investigation - led by the Authority.

The HR Team coordinates internal investigations. DBS will be notified if an individual is removed due to safeguarding concerns.

8. Support available for staff, volunteers and Members

8.1 General support

Each safeguarding situation is unique and may impact individuals differently. The Authority is committed to supporting staff, volunteers and Members by ensuring:

- A prompt and supportive response from their manager, the DSO or a member of the HR Team.
- Access to someone they feel comfortable speaking with.

- That concerns are taken seriously.
- Access to appropriate mental health or other support services.

Where relevant staff and volunteers are offered training appropriate to their role.

8.2 Immediate action

If there is an immediate concern for someone's safety, contact the police or social care services directly. The DSO should be informed as soon as possible after such action is taken.

8.3 Discussing concerns

In many cases, it is appropriate to discuss concerns with a manager. Addressing low-level concerns early contribute to a culture of good safeguarding practice.

The DSO must be informed of any concerns so they can assess whether a referral is needed.

8.4 Accessing support and advocacy

Handling safeguarding concerns can be emotionally challenging. The following support services are available:

Support provider	How to access	Examples of when to access
Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)	Health Assured **use the code MHA288292** Helpline 0800 028 0199 Online support wisdom.healthassured.org	For personal stress, emotional wellbeing, or life difficulties. Confidential, 24/7 support.
Mental health first aiders	Current list of staff trained to support mental health matters Mental-Health-First-Aiders-Team	For support with wellbeing, stress, or mental health concerns
NSPCC	**0808 800 5000**	For adults concerned about a child
Childline	0800 1111 childline.org.uk	For children and young people up to age 19 seeking help or advice

Appendix A

Safeguarding Incident Reporting Form

This form should be used to report suspicions, disclosures or concerns relating to the safety or wellbeing of a child, young person or vulnerable adult. Not all sections may be applicable- please complete as fully as possible.

Confidential Notice: This form will be treated in the strictest confidence. However, the information may be shared with appropriate agencies or authorities where necessary.

Once completed send securely to Kiri Wood, Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO) kiri.wood@yorkshiredales.org.uk. If Kiri is not available, please send to Vikki Thomas, vikki.thomas@yorkshiredales.org.uk.

Person at risk

This report concerns (tick all that apply):

A child (under 18 years)	☐
A young person (exact age unknown)	☐
A vulnerable adult (18+ years, with care/support needs)	☐
An adult (18+ years, not considered vulnerable)	☐

Your details	
Name	Click or tap here to enter text.
Job Title	Click or tap here to enter text.
Details of incident/disclosure	
Date of concern/incident	Click or tap to enter a date.
Name of person raising the concern	Click or tap here to enter text.
Contact details of person raising concern	Click or tap here to enter text.
Details of person at risk(name, age and address if known)	Click or tap here to enter text.
Location and time of incident/disclosure	Click or tap here to enter text.
Description of what happened (use exact works if disclosed verbally)	Click or tap here to enter text.
Witnesses	
Where there any witnesses to the incident?	Choose an item.

If yes, provide names, ages and contact details (if known)	Click or tap here to enter text.
Where there any witnesses to the disclosure	
If yes, provide names, ages, and contact details (if known)	
Follow-up	
Have you spoken to anyone else about this?	Choose an item.
If yes, provide names, job titles and date/time of discussion	Click or tap here to enter text.
Additional information	
Please include any other relevant details that may assist in understanding the situation	Click or tap here to enter text.

Appendix B

Safe Practice Guidelines for Staff, Volunteers and Members

Group visits

- Visiting group leaders are responsible for supervising and managing behaviour of children, young people and vulnerable adults in their care. See Code of Practice B4: YDNPA Group Activities.
- Maintain appropriate staff/volunteer-to-group ratios.
- Treat all individuals with respect and dignity; corporal punishment is unlawful.
- Staff may intervene to prevent harm or disorder (Education Act 1996). Record and report incidents.
- Act as a reasonable adult to ensure a safe and positive experience.

Professional Judgement

- Use integrity and reasonable judgement when situations fall outside guidance.
- Act in the best interests of individuals.

Confidentiality

- Share confidential information only on a legal/professional need-to-know basis.
- Use anonymity where possible and report suspected abuse promptly.

Conduct and Behaviour

- Maintain high standards and avoid being alone with vulnerable individuals.
- Model respectful behaviour and avoid personal comments.
- Be aware of, and do not misuse, positions of trust.
- Private conduct can impact professional trust.

Appropriate dress

- Dress appropriately for your role, especially when working with vulnerable groups.

Communication and Technology Use

- Avoid social contact outside professional contexts.
- Do not share personal contact details unless necessary for work.
- Keep communication transparent and report concerns.
- Set personal social media to private; do not connect with young people.
- Use only Authority-provided devices for communication.
- Avoid personal messaging platforms.

Infatuations and 'Crushes'

- Adolescents and vulnerable adults may develop crushes. These situations can lead to misinterpretation or allegations. Report signs of crushes to a Manager.
- Sexual behaviour towards children or vulnerable adults is illegal.

Physical Contact

- Ensure contact is appropriate to the role and avoid rough play.
- Be aware of potential misinterpretation.

First Aid, Medication and Intimate Care

- Use reasonable judgement and follow the duty of care.
- Agree Intimate care arrangements with carers.
- First aid should ideally be administered by visiting group leaders, teachers or carers. If this is not possible, a qualified staff member or volunteer may take on the role.
- Try to have another adult present when administering first aid.

Photography and Audio-Visual Recording

- Obtain consent before taking or using images. Use the Media Release Form.
- Explain the purpose and respect anyone who is uncomfortable.
- Crowd shots may be used without consent If individuals cannot be identified.
- Do not include names or personal details unless consent is explicitly given, even when saving images.
- Further consent is required for new uses.
- Store images and consent records securely. Delete images when no longer needed. Only store images where consent has been obtained.
- Avoid personal devices and one-to-one photography.

Gifts

- Follow the Authority's Guide on Officer Declaration of Interests Gifts and Outside Work.
- Give rewards only as part of recognised activities (e.g. competition prizes).