



Safeguarding Policy

This policy is in line with the Mission Statement of the Organisation

Document Control

This policy has been approved for operation within Youth Action.

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Youth Action

SAFEGUARDING POLICY

INTRODUCTION – WHAT IS SAFEGUARDING?

Youth Action recognises that everyone has a right to be protected from all forms of abuse and discrimination and to be treated equally regardless of gender, racial origin, culture, religious belief, language, disability or sexual identity. This is an approach we aim to adopt in all our activities and is one, which is clearly stated in the group Equal Opportunities Policy.

Youth Action exists for young people from across Blackburn with Darwen to develop projects and ideas that enable them to exercise their rights and make a positive impact on their community. Youth Action is run on a voluntary basis and is a young people led project.

The group believes it is the responsibility of everybody in the group to develop participation and a genuinely inclusive environment for all of our members hence, our commitment to creating an environment in which all of our members – young and old are safe. All members of Youth Action are all vetted by the group and are made aware of our Safeguarding Protection Policy. In order to have an effective policy, which protects everybody set procedures are in place and are clearly stated in this document.

RATIONALE BEHIND HAVING A SAFEGUARDING PROTECTION POLICY

Abuse can and does occur within many situations. Some individuals seek employment or voluntary work with young people in order to do them harm. Everyone involved in Youth Action, in whatever capacity, has a role to play in safeguarding the welfare of young people and preventing abuse.

It is everybody's responsibility to protect young people from abuse. Our role is **not** to investigate but to report suspected cases of abuse. In order to have an effective policy it is essential it is easy to understand and that everybody in the group is both aware and understands fully what group procedures are in the event of any alleged abuse-taking place. For this reason the group has a Code of Conduct stated below specifically to deal with Safeguarding Protection issues.

FRAMEWORK OF OUR SAFEGUARDING PROTECTION POLICY

There is always a commitment to work in partnership with parents or carers where there are concerns about their young people. Therefore in most situations it would be important to talk to parents or carers to help clarify any initial concerns. Abuse can and does occur outside the family setting. It is crucial that those all adults working with group members are aware of this possibility. All allegations are taken seriously and the appropriate action is taken. The group is committed to assuring all parents/carers, staff and volunteers that it would fully support and protect anyone who, in good faith, reports his or her concerns that a colleague is or may be abusing a young person.

Young people are defined as anyone under the age of 18 years old, or adults with a learning disability. Youth Action recognises that we have a responsibility to safeguard and promote the interests and well being of young people with whom we are working. The group will take all reasonable practical steps to protect young people from harm, discrimination or degrading

treatment. Furthermore we will respect the rights, wishes and feelings of each other in the group. All suspicions and allegations of abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately. This policy statement is clearly underpinned in our Safeguarding Protection Policy Aim, which is:

Our Aim:

“ To offer a safe, positive, and happy environment that is professional and of the highest possible standard at all times for all of our members whether they be young people, adults, partner organisations, volunteers or members of staff who work with or for Youth Action”

Furthermore, all partner organisations that have young people or special needs members as defined in this document as members should have a group policy that should be made available to the Youth Action Management Team on request.

Youth Action has designated 2 persons – a male and female adult who will be responsible for dealing with concerns around Safeguarding Protection in relationship to Youth Action. These individuals will be well known to volunteers, parents and group members and will make him or herself readily available to handle any enquiries of any nature concerning the personnel or the activities at Youth Action.

Youth Action has the right to suspend or withdraw membership from members during or following investigations.

GROUP COMMUNICATION

Youth Action encourages communications between everybody in the group irrespective of level of involvement in the group. The very fact that we are a young people led group means that our core values dictate that all young people listen to each other and take the lead in influencing positive action on all matters affecting them as young people and the development of our group.

All members and their parents/guardians are made aware of the availability of Board Members to speak to in relation to all the activities that take place in Youth Action. Contact details are readily available in our ‘Membership Welcome Pack’ and if need be a meeting can be arranged.

RECRUITMENT OF ADULT STAFF/MANGEMENT/VOLUNTEERS FOR THE GROUP

While the vast majority of people who work with young people are well motivated there is a need to be careful in the selection procedure to screen out those who are not suitable. Anyone may have the potential to abuse young people in some way and it is important that all reasonable steps are taken to ensure that unsuitable people are prevented from working with our young people.

The group designated Safeguarding Protection Officers have a responsibility to ensure proper supervision of people working with young people. When undertaking pre-selection checks for volunteers or paid staff who will work with young people under 18 years old or adults with Special Needs the following should be included:

- Confirm their identity

- Ask how they think they can contribute to the development of the group
- Ask them to supply in writing any relevant skills or qualifications that maybe of benefit to their specific role within the group
- Ask for references - at least two references should be taken up, including where possible one regarding previous work with young people
- All volunteers and staff should complete an application form enabling the group to gain consent for police and social services checks to be made to ensure their suitability of working with young people
- Successful applicants will be appointed at the discretion of the Group Management Team.
- Applicants must be made aware of the Safeguarding Protection Policy and conduct code and running procedures of the group

WHAT TO DO IF A YOUNG PERSON WANTS TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT ALLEGED ABUSE

- Arrange a time and place where you can talk confidentially as soon as possible
- Stay calm and reassuring
- Explain to the young person that if the complaint is of a serious nature that it may be necessary to inform others
- Listen to everything the young person has to say - do not stop them from talking
- Under no circumstance's interrogate the young person
- Be clear in your mind what the young person has related to you
- Ask if he/she has told anyone else and if not, who would be a good person to contact
- Explain that there are other people who will help them and it maybe necessary to contact them
- Don't make any promises to the young person
- Thank the young person for informing you and reassure him/her that they were right to do so.

ACTION FOLLOWING A SAFEGUARDING ABUSE ALLEGATION

- Record the discussions accurately and as soon as possible after the event
- The group has designated two Safeguarding Protection Officers. They are:

1. Employee CPO Lead
2. Trustee CPO Lead

The group Safeguarding Protection Policy Officers should be informed of all allegations. Contact the designated person within the group immediately and seek guidance in relation to the complaint. Some allegations may be about poor practice rather than abuse. However advice can be sought from the social services. All allegations should be recorded and passed to one of Safeguarding Protection Policy Officers who will take the appropriate action.

There may be instances of abuse where suspicion, allegation or incident may be directed at a parent or carer who is responsible for a young person. In this event report to the designated group Safeguarding Protection Officer as soon as possible. The group Safeguarding Protection Policy Officers however, will record any incident. It is the responsibility of our Safeguarding Protection Officers to inform the Social Services Safeguarding Protection Unit without delay if deemed appropriate. If our officers are not available, contact Social Services. (The telephone number is at the 'Information & Reference Point' section of this document – see page 10).

- It is important to keep a record of ALL actions taken i.e. letters and telephone calls.
- While this procedure should be followed the designated officer may consider that complaints of a lesser nature i.e. bullying, cheating and that in these cases he/she may decide that the matter may be handled internally without outside involvement. However it must be emphasized that each case will be thoroughly investigated and remedied to the satisfaction of the young person/reporting person concerned.
- If a Youth Action Safeguarding Protection Officer is the subject of the suspicion/allegation the report must be made to the Chairperson of Youth Action or the second group Safeguarding Protection Officer. They are then responsible for taking the appropriate action.
- Where there is a complaint of abuse against a member of staff there may be three types of investigation.
 - A criminal investigation
 - A Safeguarding protection investigation
 - A disciplinary or misconduct investigation

Results of the police and social services investigation may well influence the disciplinary investigation, but not necessarily.

Issues of misconduct will be dealt with by a committee comprising of both Safeguarding Protection Officers and the Chairperson of Youth Action (on the assumption that none of these individuals are under suspicion). The group will ensure appropriate action is taken and that at all times we recognise the importance of maintaining confidentiality where this is required in a legal context.

SAFEGUARDING PROTECTION CODE OF CONDUCT

It is essential for everyone involved in the group activities to be made aware of the Youth Action 'Safeguarding Protection Code of Conduct'. We can reduce situations for the abuse of young people and help protect staff and volunteers by promoting good practice. On membership of the group all new members are given a written brief on the general code of conduct which, comprises of the following:

- Foul, abusive language and untoward behaviour are not acceptable
 - No Bullying
 - Respect for each other
 - Encourage an open environment - no secrets
1. Adult Volunteers are advised not to spend excessive time alone with young people. All adults in Youth Action should always be publicly open, when working with young people. Adults should avoid situations where they are completely unobserved. Do not go into the toilet alone with young people.
 2. Individual meetings with young people should take place as openly as possible. Avoid making arrangements to meet a young person alone in your home outside organised activities, unless it is with the full knowledge and consent of the parents and that the group management are aware of the meeting.
 3. If on occasion privacy is required, one of the group Safeguarding Protection Officers should be informed and at least one should be within earshot of the conversation. The door should be left open.
 4. When working with mixed groups in an outdoor environment with young people there should be a male and female adult. If this is not possible parents should be requested to stay to help supervise.
 5. Adults should avoid unnecessary physical contact with young people. On occasion when an injury occurs or a young person is distressed the involved adult should explain to the young person what he or she is doing but only with the consent of the injured party and in full view of as many persons as possible. Some parents/guardians are sensitive about physical contact (manual support) and their views should always be carefully considered.
 6. All adults should be careful of extending hugs and be in situations where bodily contact is involved. This is important not only for adult protection but for the protection of the young person also.
 7. If a young person touches an adult in an inappropriate place record the incident and report it to the group Safeguarding Protection Officer. While an incident could be purely innocent efforts should be made to inform the young person concerned that this behaviour is not acceptable in a manner that does not intimidate the young person involved.
 8. Car journeys, however short should be with the full knowledge and consent of the parent/guardian of young person and should always be provided by an adult volunteer or management member who is a member of Youth Action. It is not good practice to be

alone with a young person in the car and if possible make your pickup point or drop-off point with at least two young people.

9. Never engage with any young person in the group in a sexually provocative manner or indulge in horseplay, which may be construed in the wrong manner.
10. Do not make sexually suggestive comments about, or to a young person, even in fun.
11. Never let any allegations made by a young person go without being addressed and recorded.
12. Never let the use of foul language go unchallenged

If a complaint is made one of the Safeguarding Protection Officers or one of the Board of Directors (this being the Chair/Vice Chair in the first instance) should be informed immediately and a record of that meeting logged.

Never keep suspicions of abuse by a colleague to yourself. If there is an attempt to cover up you could be implicated by your silence. Inform the appropriate person at the club of your suspicions.

The above rules are designed to be observed for general day-to-day, routine and normal group activities that take place at part of the group's normal activities. In addition to the above procedures additional rules apply to different settings. These are clearly marked out in clear sections of this document on the following pages.

GROUP TRIPS

All group trips/outings should be well organised by ensuring:

- Parents are informed in writing at least 7 days in advance of the date of the trip, where it will take place and of times of departure and return to and from the trip.
- All trips must be authorised by the Management Group of the group – for this to happen a full plan of the day and satisfaction that all legal, insurance and adult supervision requirements meet the Safeguarding Protection Policy and can be verified by one of the group SAFEGUARDING Protection Policy Officers will need to take place
- An appropriate number of adults who are subject to the procedures outlined in the document are involved in the supervision of young people in the group whilst out on a trip
- The ratio for trips is 1 adult for every 5 young people for a local event, and 1 adult per 3 young people national/ international event.

If a trip is overnight the following must be observed by the responsible adults co-ordinating the trip:

- Never ask a young person on your own to your room.

- Two adults – one male (and one female – when female participants are taken) must attend all trips.
- As responsible adults for young people if you are checking rooms make sure you do so in pairs.
- Ensure the young people are aware of the availability of telephones to contact home.
- Young People’s Parents/Guardians should be aware of contact telephone numbers in the case of an emergency.

In the unfortunate event of emergency responsible adults must have access to consent form and contact details for a Safeguarding Officer. In the unfortunate event of an emergency in a trip the following people MUST be informed:

- The parent/guardian of the young person(s)
- One of the Safeguarding Protection Officers – in the event of a major incident a SAFEGUARDING Protection Officer MUST alert the Chair of the group within 24 hours.
- Ensure you get the relevant help from the local authorities/emergency services

INFORMATION REFERENCE POINTS

Abuse is a problem that affects all people whether they are young people or adults. Any type of bullying can prove to be an extremely upsetting experience for everyone involved at school or in the workplace. As with any problem it can be solved only if brought into the open and talked about. If you are being bullied you should not keep it to yourself. Let a responsible Youth Action adult know what is going on. Help is also available on the web at the following web address:

www.bullying.com

The web site <http://www.bullying.com/> was created by a schoolboy who was him self bullied and now offers help and support to young people and parents, including guidance on ways of dealing with bullying. There is also an e-mail help link that will answer any questions that you may have.

Further information can be gained from organisations such as the NSPCC or Safeguarding Line.

Remember any allegations suspicions of abuse must be reported to one of the Group Safeguarding Protection Officers, Chair who will contact both or either:

SOCIAL SERVICES OFFICE ON:

01254 585 585

(OPEN 24 HOURS A DAY – EVEN ON PUBLIC HOLIDAYS)

POLICE ON:

01254 51212/ 999

(OPEN 24 HOURS A DAY – EVEN ON PUBLIC HOLIDAYS)

MAKING SURE THE SYSTEM WORKS

The procedures in this document are to be observed by all group members at all times. Additionally the group is committed to ensure:

- Sharing information about Safeguarding protection and to encourage all members in Youth Action to develop awareness and have access to information in relationship to Safeguarding Protection issues
- We will ensure that at least one of our Safeguarding Protection Policy Officers is one of the group Board of Management
- The group will ensure everybody is clear about our policy and know who our Safeguarding Protection Officers are
- Our Safeguarding Protection Policy Officers will be thoroughly vetted via a process of police checking and will require two written character references ideally with some evidence of having worked with young people before – although due to the nature of many of our young members becoming adults who manage the group this will not always be possible – the group however will ensure rigorous checking does take place before anybody is given Safeguarding Protection responsibilities
- The group will ensure our Safeguarding Protection Officers are regularly monitored both overt and covertly at the discretion of the Chair to ensure the group policy is upheld and that wherever possible our officers are given access to current training, procedures and courses with recognised qualifications in the field of Safeguarding Protection.
- The group is committed to reviewing our policy and what constitutes good practice at regular intervals on an 18 month basis.