



Neighbourhood  
Watch **SCOTLAND**

Safer Neighbourhoods Stronger Communities



# Safeguarding Policy

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## 1. Introduction

Neighbourhood Watch Scotland (NWS) is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people, and vulnerable individuals who come onto its premises or who are involved in NWS activity. This policy outlines NWS's commitment to providing a safe and supportive environment, ensuring that all individuals involved with the organisation feel protected and respected.

Safeguarding is the responsibility of us all, irrespective of position or role. As such, NWS recognises that it is the responsibility of each one of its staff members, trustees and volunteers to prevent the neglect, physical, sexually or emotional abuse of children and vulnerable adults and to report any abuse suspected or discovered.

This document does not form part of a contract of employment and may be changed from time to time in line with current best practice and statutory requirements, and to ensure business needs are met. Staff will be consulted and advised of any changes as far in advance as possible of the change being made, unless the change is required by law.

## 2. Purpose

**'Safeguarding'** is the process of protecting individuals from abuse, neglect, exploitation, or harm and ensuring their well-being. The purpose of this Safeguarding policy is to:

- Protect children, young people, and vulnerable individuals from harm.
- Provide staff, volunteers, and partners with clear guidelines on how to act if safeguarding concerns arise.
- Ensure compliance with relevant legislation and best practices in safeguarding.

## 3. Scope

This policy applies to all employees, volunteers, trustees, and anyone involved in NWS activities, including external partners, consultants and collaborators.

Any reference to 'volunteer' includes:

- Neighbourhood Watch members (as per the constitution)
- Neighbourhood Watch coordinators, registered on the NWS database
- Any designated deputy acting on behalf of a NW coordinator
- Anyone undertaking a voluntary role supporting NWS activity as instructed by a NWS coordinator, designated deputy or member of NWS staff, at the material time.

#### 4. Legal Framework

This policy is guided by the following legislation and guidelines:

- The Children (Scotland) Act 1995
- The Protection of Vulnerable Groups (Scotland) Act 2007
- Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) framework
- National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland
- Adults with Incapacity (Scotland) Act 2000
- The Equalities Act 2010

#### 5. Safeguarding Lead

The Safeguarding Lead for NWS is the Director. NWS staff members must immediately report any issue arising from this policy to the NWS Director. The NWS Director will inform the NWS Board of Trustees as soon as practicable thereafter. The deputy Director should be contacted if the Director is unavailable.

#### 6. Reporting Concerns

All NWS staff members, trustees and volunteers must report safeguarding concerns to Police Scotland and /or the relevant Local Authority (Social Work Department) as soon as they become aware of the concerns. This is because safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and vulnerable adults, and protecting them from significant harm, depends upon effective joint working between agencies and professionals that have different roles and expertise. For those children or vulnerable adults who are suffering, or at risk of suffering significant harm, joint working is essential to safeguard and promote welfare of the child(ren) or vulnerable adult(s) and, where necessary, to help bring the perpetrators of crimes to justice.

Furthermore, the NWS Lead should also be informed as quickly as possible thereafter.

#### 7. Definitions: Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults

In Scotland, a

- **'child'** includes any young person up to the age of eighteen years.
- **'Young Person'** is an individual aged 16–18, depending on their circumstances.

In addition to children, all vulnerable adults in Scotland at risk of harm have the right to be safe and protected. A **'Vulnerable Adult'** is any person who may be at increased risk of harm due to age, disability, mental or physical health issues, or other factors. The Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Act 2007 is designed to protect those adults who are unable to safeguard their own interests and are at risk of harm (including self-harm and neglect) because they are affected by:

- Disability
- Mental disorder
- Illness
- Physical or mental infirmity

All vulnerable adults will be afforded the same protection as afforded to children as detailed within this document.

## 8. Recognising signs of abuse

**'Child abuse'** is when someone causes (or doesn't prevent) significant harm to a child and it can be physical, emotional or sexual and includes child neglect, sexual exploitation, child trafficking, online abuse and being witness to domestic abuse.

The Police Scotland website defines the terms 'Physical Abuse, Emotional Abuse, Sexual Abuse and Neglect – please see the website for up to date information: [What is child abuse? - Police Scotland:](https://www.scotland.police.uk/advice-and-information/child-abuse/what-is-child-abuse/) <https://www.scotland.police.uk/advice-and-information/child-abuse/what-is-child-abuse/>.

## 9. NWS responsibilities and wider awareness

All NWS staff, trustees, and volunteers must:

- Treat everyone with respect and dignity
- Be Alert to potential indicators of abuse or neglect
- Be Alert to the risks which individual abusers, or potential abusers, may pose to children or vulnerable adults
- Act in a way that protects the safety and well-being of children, young people, and vulnerable individuals
- Avoid behaviour or actions that could be misinterpreted or lead to allegations of harm.
- Immediately report any concerns or incidents following the procedures outlined in this policy
- Contribute to whatever actions are needed to safeguard and promote the child or vulnerable adult's welfare

All NWS staff and trustees will be made aware of this policy as part of their initial induction process. Instructions for accessing the policy will be included in the staff handbook and coordinator information pack. The NWS lead or NWS Team can provide further one to one training if this need is identified or requested.

Volunteers who choose to work on local (independent) NWS projects with young people or vulnerable adults are expected to have an elevated awareness of the policy and must undergo Protecting Vulnerable Groups (PVG) vetting checks administered by Disclosure Scotland (see section 13 below).

## 10. Reporting concerns to statutory agencies

It is important that NWS staff members, trustees and volunteers report safeguarding concerns to Police Scotland or the relevant Local Authority (Health and Social Care Team) as soon as they become aware of the concerns. NWS staff, trustees or volunteers are asked to report any concerns arising through the following channels:

- Call **999** to report a crime in progress or if a child or young person is in immediate danger
- Call Police Scotland on **101** if you think a crime has been committed, but it is not in progress at the time, or immediate danger is not present. Child abuse and neglects concerns can also be reported to your Local Authority (Social Work Department).
- Report online abuse to the Child Exploitation and Online Protection (CEOP) centre.

More information is available from the Police Scotland website.

## 11. General advice on responding to a disclosure.

You may have concerns about a child or vulnerable adult because of something you have seen or heard, or a child or vulnerable adult may choose to disclose something to you. If a child or vulnerable adult discloses information to you:

- ✓ Do not promise confidentiality. You have a duty to share this information with the police and / or social work department.
- ✓ Listen to what is being said, without displaying shock or disbelief.
- ✓ Accept what is being said.
- ✓ Reassure the child or vulnerable person, but only as far as is honest. Do not make promises you may not be able to keep e.g., 'Everything will be alright now' or 'You'll never have to see that person again'.
- ✓ Do reassure and alleviate guilt if the child or vulnerable adult refers to it. For example, you could say, 'You're not to blame'.
- ✓ Do not question the information or try to investigate the child or vulnerable adult; it is not your responsibility to investigate.
- ✓ Do not ask leading questions (e.g., Did he touch your private parts?), ask open questions such as 'Is there anything else you want to tell me?'

- ✓ Do not ask the child or vulnerable adult to repeat the information for another member of staff or volunteer.
- ✓ Explain what you must do next and who you must talk to.
- ✓ Take notes if possible or write up your conversation as soon as possible afterwards. Record the date, time, place, any non-verbal behaviour and the words used by the child or vulnerable adult (do not paraphrase).
- ✓ Record statements and observable things rather than interpretations or assumptions. Whatever the nature of your concerns, discuss them with the NWS Safeguarding Lead (or the NWS core team).

The matter should be immediately referred to Police Scotland and/or the Social Work Department (see section 10 above).

## **12. What information will you need when making a referral?**

You will be asked to provide as much information as possible. This will include the child or vulnerable adult's full name, date of birth, address, GP, languages spoken, any disabilities they may have, including school and details of the parents of a child. Do not be concerned if you do not have all these details, you should still make the call or referral.

## **13. Protecting Vulnerable Groups (PVG checks by Disclose Scotland)**

Where NWS staff, Board members or volunteers are involved in regulated NWS activities or events with children or vulnerable adults, they must first undergo a satisfactory PVG vetting check before commencing work. PVG checks involve a check of police databases and criminal records and are carried out by Disclosure Scotland. A 'satisfactory' check is defined as having no criminal convictions (including cautions, reprimands and final warnings) relevant to the role.

Local NW coordinators are responsible for ensuring that any volunteers who support them on any local NW led projects working with young people or vulnerable adults are PVG checked before undertaking that activity.

Any NWS staff, Board members or volunteers engaged in such a role must report any subsequent criminal convictions to the NWS Safeguarding lead.

All associated costs involved for Disclosure Scotland checks will to be met by the individual concerned.

## **14. Allegation involving an NWS staff member, trustee, or volunteer**

Allegations against those who engage with or work with or care for children or vulnerable adults, whether in a paid or unpaid capacity, cover a wide range of circumstances. All allegations of abuse or suspicions of abuse of children or

vulnerable adults by NWS staff, trustees or volunteers will be taken seriously. It is important to ensure that even apparently less serious allegations must be followed up and examined by safeguarding experts.

The following procedure should be applied in all situations where it is alleged that an NWS staff member, trustee or volunteer has:

- Behaved in a way which has or may have harmed a child or vulnerable adult
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child or vulnerable adult
- Behaved towards a child, children or vulnerable adult(s) in a way which indicates that he/she is unsuitable to work with children or vulnerable adults. The allegations may relate to the person's behaviour at work, at home, as a volunteer or in another setting.

All reports of allegations must be submitted within as soon as reasonably practicable, to the local Social Work Department and / or Police Scotland, as well as the NWS Safeguarding Lead.

The Safeguarding Lead (or deputy) will immediately refer any matters reported to them, to Police Scotland and/or Social Work Department (unless there is clear evidence that the matter has already been referred to those agencies by the local NWS group or volunteer involved).

Such allegations may result in a police investigation of a possible criminal offence and / or enquiries or assessment by the Social Work Department as to whether the child or vulnerable adult needs protection or access to support services.

An NWS staff member, trustee or volunteer, who is subject of a safeguarding allegation that is being investigated by police or being dealt with by social workers, may be suspended from their paid or unpaid role with NWS, until the outcome of the investigation is complete.

Should the outcome of the investigation indicate that the staff member, trustee or volunteer is guilty of abuse or a child or vulnerable adult, then disciplinary action may be taken by NWS in accordance with the Grievance, Disciplinary and/or Complaints policies.

## **15. Recruitment**

The organisation will carry out safe recruitment checks on everyone successfully recruited. All roles require a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) or Disclosure Scotland check and references before the individual joins the organisation. Some staff may be subject to an enhanced DBS check and a check of social media if their role may bring them into regular contact with children and vulnerable adults.

Candidates interviewed for a post, either internally or from outside the organisation, will need to show an understanding of safeguarding which is relevant to the role they are applying for.

## 16. Training and Awareness

The organisation is committed to ensuring all staff understand their safeguarding responsibilities and keeps their knowledge up to date. All staff must complete safeguarding training which will be arranged by the organisation. There will also be regular refresher training on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults, including on specific areas of risk and safeguarding practice.

The organisation will treat all personal data in line with obligations under the current data protection regulations.

## 17. Confidentiality and Data Protection

NWS will handle all safeguarding information in accordance with the **Data Protection Act 2018**. Information will only be shared on a need-to-know basis to protect individuals or prevent harm.

## 18. Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Board of Trustees to ensure it remains current and effective. Any necessary amendments will be made to reflect changes in legislation, best practices, or organisational priorities.

## 19. Breach of Policy

Failure to comply with this safeguarding policy may result in disciplinary action, including dismissal or termination of partnership.

## 20. Contact Information

For questions or clarifications regarding this policy, please contact the NWS Team at:

**Office:** Neighbourhood Watch Scotland, 21 Claylands Road, Newbridge, Edinburgh EH28 8LF.

**Tel:** 01786 463732

**Email:** [info@neighbourhoodwatchscotland.co.uk](mailto:info@neighbourhoodwatchscotland.co.uk)

**Website link:** <https://www.neighbourhoodwatchscotland.co.uk>