



SAFEGUARDING POLICY

1. POLICY STATEMENT

- 1.1 We are committed to protecting all children and vulnerable adults against all forms of abuse and we expect everyone who works in our organisation to share this commitment.
- 1.2 This policy sets out how the organisation will manage recruitment for job roles that involve regulated activity and working with vulnerable groups, and how it will manage matters arising during employment where it is believed that vulnerable groups could be, or have been, placed at risk.
- 1.3 The policy also explains the responsibilities of all staff in relation to the safeguarding of vulnerable groups and the procedure that should be followed when reporting an allegation of abuse.
- 1.4 This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and it may be amended at any time. We may also vary elements, such as any time limits, as appropriate in any case.

2. WHO IS COVERED BY THIS POLICY?

- 2.1 This policy applies to all employees, directors and other officers, workers, agency workers and volunteers.
- 2.2 We also require in any contracts with self-employed consultants or contractors that they comply with the relevant parts of this policy. We will ensure they are given access to a copy.
- 2.3 All individuals covered in sections 2.1 and 2.2 are referred to as 'staff' in this policy.

3. WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS POLICY?

- 3.1 While we ask all managers to take responsibility for making sure this policy is complied with, it is the responsibility of all staff to report any alleged or suspected abuse to your manager or a Director.
- 3.2 Please take the time to read and understand this policy and to go back to your manager with any questions you may have. References to Directors in this policy mean the most senior people within our organisation.

4. RECRUITMENT FOR REGULATED ACTIVITY

- 4.1 We will make it clear to candidates when advertising a job role if the work involved is regarded as a regulated activity, and will determine this in accordance with the provisions of the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006.
- 4.2 Before we can employ a candidate for a role in a regulated activity, we will

require receipt of a satisfactory Enhanced Disclosure certificate with a relevant barred list check from the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS).

- 4.3 The DBS helps us make safer recruitment decisions and prevent unsuitable people from working with vulnerable groups. We will ensure that the correct level of DBS certificate is sought. The purpose of this check is to confirm that the candidate is suitable to perform this work and is not barred from doing so.
- 4.4 All Enhanced Disclosure certificates will be issued to you directly by the DBS. As a consequence, we require you to provide the original DBS certificate to your manager or a Director upon receipt.
- 4.5 We will make any offer of employment in a regulated activity conditional upon receiving a satisfactory Enhanced Disclosure certificate with a barred list check.

5. EXISTING STAFF CHANGING TO REGULATED ACTIVITY

- 5.1 If your work either becomes a regulated activity, or if you are asked to perform work that is a regulated activity, we will require you to provide a satisfactory Enhanced Disclosure certificate with a relevant barred list check from the DBS. The purpose of this check is to confirm that you are suitable to perform this work and are not barred from doing so.
- 5.2 If you refuse to undertake these checks, or if a check confirms that you have a relevant criminal conviction or have been placed on a relevant barred list, we will investigate the circumstances further and will fully consider the effect of this on any continued employment.
- 5.3 Where you are not legally permitted to perform a regulated activity, or where we otherwise have reason to believe that this will be inappropriate, we may consider if there are any other non-regulated activities in which you can be deployed.
- 5.4 We reserve the right to dismiss you where continued employment cannot be supported.

6. CHANGES TO YOUR DBS STATUS

- 6.1 You must inform us immediately of any change to your DBS Enhanced Disclosure status, or if you are investigated, cautioned or convicted of a criminal offence while working for us.
- 6.2 If you are added to a barred list, we cannot legally allow you to continue to engage in a regulated activity.
- 6.3 Where you are not permitted to perform a regulated activity, we may investigate if there are any other non-regulated activities in which you can be deployed.
- 6.4 We reserve the right to dismiss you where continued employment cannot be supported.

7. WHAT IS ABUSE OF VULNERABLE GROUPS?

- 7.1 Abuse may be a single incident or something that occurs over a long period of time. It can take many forms including, but not limited to:
 - a) financial or material abuse
 - b) physical abuse
 - c) mental abuse
 - d) neglect and failures to act

- e) sexual abuse
- f) threats of abuse or harm
- g) controlling or intimidating conduct
- h) self-neglect
- i) domestic abuse
- j) poor practices within an organisation providing care
- k) modern slavery.

7.2 The abuse may come from anyone coming into contact with the child or vulnerable adult, including but not limited to staff, personal assistants, service users, relatives, neighbours, social workers or providers of support services.

8. REPORTING ALLEGED OR SUSPECTED ABUSE

- 8.1 All staff must always be vigilant to risks of abuse towards vulnerable groups.
- 8.2 If you believe or suspect that abuse is occurring, you must refer the matter to your manager or a Director immediately. We will treat all complaints, allegations, or suspicions of abuse with the utmost seriousness.
- 8.3 When reporting an allegation of abuse, it is important to provide as much detail as possible, including the names of the people involved, the nature of the abuse, the dates and times of any specific incidents (if known) and details of any evidence or other witnesses that may be available.
- 8.4 We may ask you to refrain from discussing alleged abuse with fellow colleagues, other than those specified by your manager, to avoid the spread of potentially harmful misinformation and to protect the validity of any investigation.

9. INVESTIGATION

- 9.1 We will investigate all complaints of alleged or suspected abuse fully. The investigation will be conducted in a discreet and timely manner, and will involve the collation of evidence typically derived from witness statements and surveillance footage where possible.
- 9.2 We may be required to refer information to the DBS and may also consider it necessary to inform the police of allegations under investigation

10. SUSPENSION

- 10.1 If you are an employee suspected of abuse, you may be suspended on full pay pending a full investigation of the complaints. It should be noted that this suspension is not an indication of your guilt, but rather a necessity given the circumstances. We appreciate the impact prolonged suspension can have on your reputation, even when allegations are later found to be incorrect, and do not take the decision to suspend lightly.

11. DISCIPLINARY ACTION

- 11.1 If we have reason to believe that an allegation of abuse has foundation, we will arrange a disciplinary meeting with the individual. Abuse is regarded as an act of gross misconduct and therefore may result in summary dismissal, in accordance with our Disciplinary Procedure.

12. DUTY TO REFER INFORMATION

- 12.1 We will discuss any safeguarding concerns with the local safeguarding team and would encourage any staff member with concerns to do the same.
- 12.2 Please remember that it is not for you to decide a child or vulnerable adult is or may be at risk of harm or abuse, but it is for you to refer that information to the relevant professional bodies who can assess risk and act as required.
- 12.3 The relevant bodies are:
 - a) The Local Children's Social Care Agency
 - b) The Local Adults Safeguarding Authority
 - c) The Police (Child Protection or Adult Protection) Investigation Unit
 - d) The NSPCC
 - e) The Care Quality Commission
- 12.4 We are legally required to refer certain information about an individual to the DBS .
- 12.5 This duty applies where:
 - a) you are dismissed or removed from working in a regulated activity because you have harmed or may harm a child or vulnerable adult.
 - b) we have suspended you and have reason to believe that you have engaged in relevant conduct or have harmed or may harm a child or vulnerable adult, or have received a caution or a conviction for a relevant criminal offence.
 - c) you resign in circumstances where there is a suspicion that you harmed, or may harm, a child or vulnerable adult. This may, for example, arise where an employee resigns before disciplinary action is taken by the organisation.

13. RETENTION OF RECORDS AND STORAGE PERIODS

- 13.1 We will ensure that all safeguarding records are retained and stored in accordance with data protection principles, any statutory requirements and any relevant guidance of our relevant professional body and/or local safeguarding team.

14. SAFEGUARDING TRAINING

- 14.1 Training is provided by Northumberland County Council via a range of e-learning modules. This offer includes modules on a wide range of safeguarding and child protection topics which can be accessed via ncc.learningpool. This training is mandatory for all staff and volunteers that work with vulnerable adults and children.

15. MONITORING AND REVIEW OF THE POLICY

- 15.1 We will continue to review the effectiveness of this policy to ensure it is achieving its stated objectives.