

Guidance - How do we ensure Safer Working Practice and Standards?

Safe working practice means working professionally and together to create a safe space.

What is a safe space? It's where:

- we offer young people a transparent and open environment where they can develop, learn and explore
- they can be confident that the Code of Conduct/Policing ethics are embedded within the culture and challenge is accepted
- the building of an open and strong professional relationship, is encouraged

Safeguarding practice is not just about having a Child/Adult protection process, but a way of working that is embedded in everything we do and the way that we do it. As such, all of us must ensure the following happens, whatever part of VPC we work in:

- that all cadets, adults and parents/carers have all the information they need to make an **informed decision** before choosing whether to take part in activities, events, trips and overseas visits.
- that electronic communication between adults and young people follows strict guidelines so that we don't place anyone at risk of harm.
- that when **working with partner organisations (schools, colleges and councils)**, a term of our agreement will be that they state: "*We confirm that we have read and understood VPC's Safeguarding Policy and agree to abide by it.*"
- that we encourage volunteers and staff to discuss **their concerns** with their named person, Force Co-ordinator or through supervision.
- that cadets **have access** to adults that they trust or are clear on how to report their concerns.
- that you **familiarise** yourself as leaders with all our policies and procedures, which are updated from time to time

It is important that we understand how to manage effectively any risks associated with any activity, event or project involving young people by:

- Completing a risk assessment
- Implementing the required actions identified by the risk assessment
- Ensuring that appropriate DBS or basic disclosures checks are conducted depending on the eligibility of the role

- Requiring all workers, and/or individuals involved in working with young people and adults at risk familiarise themselves with the content of this policy and the associated code of behaviour and relevant training

Ensure at all times, the correct ratio between child: adult is actively enforced (see our Ratios guidance) . VPC has defined the correct ratio as 1:10 at weekly meetings, 1:8 for outdoor activities for 13–18-year-olds unless there are additional considerations such as disability, behaviour, environment, age mix, or any other variance identified.

However, at all times groups of young people should be supervised and **2 adults** should be present this is to ensure the safety of all staff and volunteers as well as the cadets.

Sometimes adults have their own needs that may affect their behaviour, and their ability to look after the safety and welfare of others. It is our policy to make every effort to safeguard leaders from physical, sexual, emotional harm and neglect while participating in activities.

The National (Safeguarding) Hub Team take all reasonable steps to ensure that, through relevant procedures and training, young people, staff and volunteers taking part in activities, do so in a safe environment. If you have a concern about the safety and welfare of any cadet, or you have concern about the behaviour of a member of staff, you must tell your named person or Force Co-ordinator.

However, we expect you to ensure you are working as safely as possible so here is a list of good practice when working with young people and adults at risk:

Leaders MUST not:

Give cadets lifts except in emergency and never without prior knowledge of both the parents/carers and the named person. If this situation arises leaders should wherever possible arrange for another leader to accompany them.

Work alone with cadets on a regular but non-planned basis unless they have discussed and agreed this with the named person.

Use of social media – Communication with cadets, for police cadet purposes, should always be made using your cadet management tool (Marshall or similar platform). Social media **MUST NOT** be used for communication between adult volunteers and police cadets.

You must not contact cadets under the age of 14years directly – communication should be with the parents/carers. When you contact parents/carers or cadets over 14 years by email or online you should:

- Use language that is suitable. Try to avoid any words or phrases that could be misinterpreted or misconstrued
- Ensure that any images you send are appropriate and that external hyperlinks you include do not lead to inappropriate content
- Always copy a parent/carer into any messages you send to a cadet. Individual instant messaging between young people and leaders is discouraged.

Cadets going home unescorted - This applies primarily to “junior” cadets but may also apply to some younger “senior” cadets or those with specific needs.

Consideration needs to be given to which cadets are allowed to go home unescorted and those that must be collected by a parent/carer.

Good Practice

- Send a letter home at the beginning of the year to establish if the cadet can go home unescorted
- Keep a list of approved people for picking up cadets
- Keep cadets who are to be picked up in a separate area within the weekly meeting premises at the end of the session until they are collected

General Dos and Don'ts for Leaders

Do not:

- Spend excessive amounts of time with one child/young person away from the others.
- Take children/young people to your home or other place where you will be alone with them.
- Allow or engage in rough, physical or sexually provocative games, including horseplay.
- Allow or engage in any form of sexual innuendo, flirting or inappropriate gestures and terms.
- Allow or engage in any form of inappropriate touching.
- Allow children or young people to use inappropriate language unchallenged.
- Make sexually suggestive comments to either a child/young person, or to someone else in the child/young person's presence, even in fun.
- Do things of a personal nature for children or young people that they can do for themselves.
- Allow allegations made by a child or young person to go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon.
- Show favouritism to anyone.
- Allow abusive peer group activities such as initiations or bullying.

Do:

- Provide a good example of acceptable behaviour.
- Always be public and open when working with children/young people.
- Avoid situations where a leader and a cadet are completely unobserved.
- Make sure there are separate sleeping accommodations for young people.
- Avoid situations that compromise your relationship with young people and are unacceptable within a relationship of trust (e.g. a personal relationship between a cadet Leader and a young person over the age of consent).
- Recognise the boundaries between personal and professional life.
- Respect everyone's right to personal privacy.

- Respect everyone as an individual.
- Make sure your actions cannot be misunderstood or cause offence.
- Promote and ensure the welfare of young people.
- Recognise that you are accountable to the girls/boys, their parents/carers and the VPC.
- Conduct any first aid or treatment of a cadet in the presence of an appropriate adult or other leader or person of the same sex as the casualty, obtaining verbal consent, if possible, from them. (Signed, informed, parental consent must be obtained before the planned event or activity).

Safe to operate Standards

This document sets out the UK Youth Safe Spaces, enabling forces assess their performance against the standards, while providing tips and guidance.

This reference document will be of benefit to all forces as they implement the standards. It aims to complement the Citizens in Policing, Valuing Volunteer Framework which clearly sets out the need for senior leaders to oversee an appropriate, supportive culture for the delivery of the VPC.

To maximise the benefits of this document, it is vital that the implementation process is viewed as a learning journey, rather a rush to implement the policies as a one-off piece of work. This approach will ensure lessons are learnt and shared and long-term change can be affected. It is organisational culture that sets the context and expectations of all behaviour in any organisation, and a positive culture where concerns can be identified and spoken about openly, is a key element of a strong safeguarding system.

Creating a culture in which all doubts and concerns, including allegations that do not meet the harm threshold, are shared responsibly and with the right person, is crucial. This requires early identification and recording to encourage an open and transparent culture, enabling forces to identify problematic or inappropriate behaviour.

It is essential that we minimise the risk of abuse and ensure adults working in or on behalf of the police service are clear about professional boundaries and act within them. Behaviour which is not consistent with our standards and values, and which does not meet the expectations encapsulated in VPC and Police codes of conduct, needs to be addressed to promote a healthy, informed and more effective protective culture for our young people and leaders.

Standards are divided into the following core areas -

1. Health and Safety
2. Safeguarding
3. Staff and Volunteers
4. Focus on Young People
5. Data
6. Leadership and Governance
7. Diversity, Equality and Inclusion