



**Volunteer  
Police  
Cadets**

# National Volunteer Police Cadets Safeguarding & Wellbeing Policy



## Our statement

Providing a safe and secure environment where young people can meet with others, learn about policing and policing issues, contribute to community initiatives and have fun is at the heart of the experience provided through the volunteer police cadets. The public expect and deserve to have trust and confidence in their police, and this is even more so when this comes to protecting children and young people in our care when participating in activities organised by the police service.

Whilst being a national movement, individual police cadet units are operated by local forces and each of these own and manage their own risk in relation to the safety of their cadets and leaders. The police officers, police staff and adult volunteers who support cadet units are expected, to uphold the highest standards in child safeguarding, protection and supervision. And as part of this, all adult volunteers are DBS checked and vetted by their local forces prior to being able to participate and support cadet unit activities.

In collaboration with police forces in England, Wales and Scotland, and with the involvement of national youth groups like the Scouts and Girl Guides, we have created a national safeguarding framework that has been agreed by National Police Chiefs' Council and all Chief Constables have signed up to adopting. This offers a streamlined and consistent approach to the reporting and managing of safeguarding concerns, the recruitment of leaders, training, organising activities and beyond. This will ensure that everyone involved in VPC knows what is expected of them at a local and national level and that confidential reporting and investigation is done in a consistent manner.

We also have a National Safeguarding Manager who is responsible for maintaining contact with police forces about this critical responsibility and about the standards and codes of conduct expected at a national level so that we can continue to work towards providing the safest and highest level of standards of youth safeguarding available nationally.



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The following can be found via external links -

Personal and Professional Boundaries

Positional Statements

Child Sexual Exploitation

Bullying

Radicalisation

Sexual Harassment (Please refer to your force policy)

# The Safeguarding, Wellbeing and Security Policy

## 1 Introduction

We acknowledge our responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare and wellbeing of all children, young people, and adult volunteers/employees. We also recognise and accept our responsibility to act in loco parentis during organised events and activities and our 'duty of care' to volunteers and staff.

We are committed to ensuring all our activities and engagement within the wider community is held to the highest standards of safeguarding practice; is compliant with current legislation; is child and young person centred; and that we are fully accountable. These standards are set out in our mission and values as well as our policies and procedures.

We are invested in making sure our safeguarding practice places the views of children, young people and where required adults at risk at the centre of our policy planning and implementation processes. This approach ensures that their welfare remains paramount in all we do.

Establishing a culture of honesty and openness helps us to know and understand what issues children and young people consider likely to affect them and their safety. This is particularly important when working with diverse communities or those who have additional vulnerabilities.

The Safeguarding, Wellbeing and Security Policy is for all young people, staff and volunteers who receive an allegation, disclosure or are concerned about the welfare or wellbeing of any member of staff, volunteer or cadet

The purpose of the policy is to:

- a) ensure you are clear about your safeguarding responsibility as a member of VPC, in terms of recognising, responding to and referring any reported allegations, disclosures or concerns, in accordance with the child/adult protection process
- b) ensure you are clear about your responsibility to follow the correct procedures laid out to protect children, young people and adult volunteers/employees from harm and to create a safe space for children and young people to have fun, be challenged and develop skills for life. The policy applies to those who hold both an employed and volunteer role and who wish to raise a safeguarding concern in either capacity.

### 1.1 Relevant Legislation and Guidance in the UK

The UK's four nations – England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales – each have their own framework of child protection legislation, guidance and practice to:

- identify children who are at risk of harm
- take action to protect those children
- prevent further abuse occurring.

Although the child protection systems are different in each nation, they are all based on similar principles. Each UK nation is responsible for its own policies and laws for education, health and social welfare. This covers most aspects of safeguarding and child protection.

In **England and Wales**, child safeguarding legislation is covered by three main acts:

- Children Act 1989
- Children Act 2004
- Children and Social Work Act 2017

Together, these provide the framework for child protection and safeguarding.

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### Key Guidance - Working together to safeguard children

The Department for Education (DfE) published the latest version of [Working together to safeguard children](#), the key statutory guidance for anyone working with children in England, in December 2023. The guidance sets out how organisations and individuals should work together to protect children. It highlights the importance of implementing a child-centred approach while considering the needs of the whole family. This latest guidance updates the previous version which was published in 2018 and updated in 2023.

#### Scotland

**Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014** - This act created new requirements to support children and young people in Scotland

The national approach to improving outcomes for children and young people in [Scotland is Getting it right for every child \(GIRFEC\)](#) (Scottish Government, 2022a). This provides a framework for those working with children and their families to provide the right support at the right time.

The key guidance for anyone working with children in Scotland is the [National guidance for child protection in Scotland](#) (Scottish Government, 2023a).

The following legislation is relevant to this policy, either because it has influenced its introduction and/or its content:

- Health, Safety and Welfare at Work Act 1974
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006
- The Police Act 1997
- Equality Act 2010
- Protection of Freedoms Act 2012
- Regulations 1999
- Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003 (amended in 2015)
- Online Safety Act 2025 (tbc)
- GDPR and data protection act 2018
- The Human Rights Act 1998 and the United Nations Convention the Rights of the Child
- The Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014
- Sexual Offences Act 2003
- Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014

## 1.2 Key definitions

**Child** – Has a specific legal meaning of anyone below the age of 18 years.

**Young Person** – Has no specific legal definition. However, 12-18 years is the standard age associated with the term.

NB: In Scotland, the definition of a child varies in different legal contexts, but statutory guidance which supports the [Children and Young People \(Scotland\) Act 2014](#), includes all children and young people up to the age of 18.

Where a young person between the age of 16 and 18 requires support and protection, services will need to consider which legal framework best fits each persons' needs and circumstances. The [National guidance for child protection in Scotland](#) gives more detail about this and explains how professionals should act to protect young people from harm in different circumstances (Scottish Government, 2023a).

**Adult** – Has a specific legal meaning of anyone above the age of 18 years.

**Safeguarding** – For the purposes of this policy, we are using the terms 'safeguarding' and 'to safeguard' to describe the prevention and precautionary approach to planning and procedures needed to protect children, young people and adults from any potential harm.

**Child Protection** - Child protection is a process within the Safeguarding Policy and refers to the activity undertaken to protect children suffering from, or at risk of, significant harm (Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018)

**Child and young person focused** - our safeguarding practice places the views of children and young people at the centre of our policy planning and implementation processes. This approach ensures that their welfare remains paramount in all we do.

**Adult Protection** - Adult protection is part of safeguarding and refers to the activity undertaken to protect adults suffering from, or at risk of significant harm (No Secrets – Statutory guidance (2000), and Social Care Institute for Excellence (2011): Safeguarding Adults at Risk of Harm.

**Adult at risk** – An adult, who is, or may be, in need of community care services i.e. adult social services, because of mental health, disability, age or illness, and/or who is unable to care for themselves or unable to protect themselves from significant harm or exploitation

**Safety** - Safety is about being protected from and not causing, danger, risk, injury, loss or harm. Safety can be a feeling, a physical object or place, and an action, and sometimes refers to the laws, rules, and principles that are intended to keep people safe. Safety is not just about what happens inside the meeting place, it is also about outside it, including days out, and may be about something that is happening at home.

**Wellbeing** - Wellbeing refers to a person's sense of contentment and satisfaction with their conditions in life and their current circumstances. It is closely linked to emotional balance and mental health, but it also affected by an individual's attitude, values and perspective.

**Grooming** – is the planned and deliberate act of manoeuvring an individual into a position of isolation to ensure they become a key influencer or 'trusted person'.

**Radicalisation** - refers to the process by which a person comes to support terrorism and extremist ideologies associated with terrorist groups.

**Extremism** – In the UK this is defined as “vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs.

**LSCB** - Local Safeguarding Children’s Board. These have been replaced in most areas by a Safeguarding Partnership (Working Together to Safeguard Children rev 2023) Regional Safeguarding Board (Wales)

**LADO** – Local Designated Safeguarding Officer Not all areas have them however the function must be completed. They will be involved in the management of allegations against people who work with children and have oversight. The VPC has been identified as a **Regulated Activity provider** we MUST ensure that any concerns or allegations made about any Leader or adult associated with Cadets MUST go to the LADO – Each Force will have a reporting process – please ensure YOU are clear on how this is done. This is a legal requirement – called a ‘duty to refer’.

**MASH** – Multi Agency Support/Safeguarding Hubs are structures designed to facilitate information sharing and decision-making on a multi-agency basis, commonly through co-locating staff from the local authority, health agencies and the police in one facility.

**Safeguarding Partnership**- A Safeguarding Partnership with the Local Authority, Police and Health. They hold all the money, set the strategy, and are tasked with leading safeguarding in the area. This makes them more accountable and streamlines decision making protocols.

**NB: In Scotland**

They have Child Protection Committees (CPCs) who are responsible for multi-agency child protection policy, procedure, guidance and practice.  
Within each local authority, CPCs work with local agencies, such as children’s social work, health services and the police, to protect children.  
Each local authority and its relevant health board are required to jointly prepare a Children's Services Plan for each three-year period. This relates to services which have a significant effect on the wellbeing of, or are of benefit to, children and young people.  
The Scottish Government has provided [statutory guidance on children's services planning](#) (Scottish Government, 2020).

**Risk Assessment** - Risk assessment is a term used to describe the overall process or method where you: Identify hazards and risk factors that have the potential to cause harm (hazard identification). ... Determine appropriate ways to eliminate the hazard or control the risk when the hazard cannot be eliminated (risk control) Informed decision-making is the two-way communication process between a young person (cadet) and one or more Leaders that is central to being young-person centred when managing safeguarding concern. This includes the right to accept or to decline the offer of certain advice and guidance and to change that decision. This MUST never be a deciding factor if the concern raised requires referral to statutory services.

**Information Sharing Protocol** - An Information Sharing Protocol (ISP) assures safe and lawful information sharing. They are also called Data Sharing Agreements (DSA) and Information Sharing Agreements (ISA). The protocol details how and what data partners share. It also explains the legal basis for the sharing.



**Joint Controller Agreement** – The sharing of information for safeguarding purposes between forces and the National VPC Safeguarding and Standards Hub is covered by the NPCC Joint Controller Agreement, which is an agreement between all forces and national portfolios.

**Supervision** -: A process of critical reflection in which people who work with youth people or youth workers discuss ongoing work and development issues with another Leader, or a peer in order to identify clarity about roles, and the relationship between values, ethics and in some cases child protection issues.

## 2. Roles and Responsibilities

### 1.3 National Safeguarding and Standards Manager

Our Safeguarding and Standards Manager interprets legislation and makes sure we are legally compliant and demonstrating good safeguarding practice.

The National safeguarding and Standards Manager ensures that the Safe to Operate Standards remain relevant and up to date with current legislation, risks and youth sector good practice.

The National Safeguarding and Standards Manager has a remit to provide support to all VPC leaders; engage in a supportive/guidance role in the event of a suspicion or allegation of abuse occurring at Force/Unit level.

The National Safeguarding Manager will assist Force Coordinators with implementing safeguarding changes, will engage with force coordinators in relation to lessons learned and will assist with force self-assessments and action plans in relation to the UK Youth Safe Spaces and VPC Safe to Operate Standards.

The National Safeguarding Manager has certain legal and regulatory obligations that all members of VPC must assist in meeting, as required. For example, we are required to provide information on a regular basis to the IOPC, in response to Freedom of Information requests and also to the DBS and in some instances the Charity Commission.

### 2.2 Local Management Committee *(if applicable)*.

Are responsible for ensuring that their VPC units are being managed correctly, are complying with policy and aspiring to achieve the UK Youth Safe Space requirements. They are accountable to their DRO's (Designated Responsible Officer).

### 2.3 DRO's (Designated Responsible Officer)

This may be an ACC, Chief Superintendent (or another rank with additional authority). This role is the main communication link between the Regional CIP/VPC Lead and the Force Cadet Coordinators.

They should meet on a Tri-year basis to review good practice; lessons learnt and support National (Safeguarding) Hub Team in defining needs in training and development.

This role also oversees or has oversight of the quality assurance of delivery of the VPC in terms of governance and enabling leaders to operate safely by ensuring their force schemes meet the VPC Safe to Operate Standards.

The role is ultimately responsible for their force VPC scheme on behalf of the Chief Constable. In cases where there is an allegation or suspicion of abuse from a member of VPC the DRO MUST immediately be informed, and it will be their responsibility to liaise with the ongoing Police investigation. This liaising role must continue and involve the management of the safeguarding concern with parents/carers; any



communication with the VPC National Hub Team; and/or more specifically the National Safeguarding Manager.

#### **2.4 Force Cadet Coordinators/Leads**

This role is to be the main conduit for communication from Unit level to DROs. They have overall responsibility for ensuring any request for guidance and support is met by either Strategic Lead or National VPC Hub Team.

They are responsible for undertaking quarterly reports for all Units and Forces. They have responsibility for supporting DROs in maintaining compliance to the VPC Safe to Operate Standards and ongoing guidance.

This role MUST be satisfied that all those who become Leaders (staff and volunteers) in the VPC are correctly appointed and are:

- (a) appropriate persons to carry out the responsibilities of the appointment,
- (b) maintain a current valid DBS disclosure check at the appropriate level for their role.

They must ensure that all applicants demonstrate an understanding of, and a commitment to the principles and procedures supporting the VPC's Safeguarding Policy, and such on-going continual safeguarding procedures, which have been approved by the National Safeguarding and Standards Manager or VPC Hub Team, such as additional training or CPD.

#### **2.5 Named Person**

This role exists for every leader aged 18 years and above.

Every Leader will receive the appropriate training (National VPC Introduction to Safeguarding in the VPC and Managing a Safeguarding Concern) to be a 'Named Person'. This person is identified in units on a rota basis for standard meetings.

If the unit attend an event or run an activity external to the usual meeting place, this person will be named on the appropriate documentation. This role can be held by both staff and volunteers and there must be a clear adherence to the process. This role is to ensure all allegations, disclosures and concerns are raised, actioned and recorded appropriately at unit level.

They also ensure that the Leader involved directly with the young person is free to support them. Whilst this is happening, the named person is free to co-ordinate an appropriate response and ensures that all other young people are not impacted upon. They are the key communication channel in the early days between the Leader directly involved with supporting the young person, and the Duty Inspector/Force co-ordinator, depending on the nature of the report.

#### Specific Duties of this role:

- As a Named Person if a leader leaves VPC and you believe they have done so to avoid being investigated, or if you believe they are not appropriate to be with children and young people (CYP) then you have a duty to refer to DBS via your Force referral process. Notify your Force VPC Coordinator
- As a Named Person you have a duty to refer if you believe a young person or adult is at risk of radicalisation or expounding extremist views to the Prevent team via your Force referral process. Notify your Force VPC Coordinator. This also applies to CSE and FGM. (NB: Police Officers' have a separate duty under Prevent, to refer, but volunteers do not)
- As a SG Lead, if you are aware of any allegations, disclosures or concerns about an adult (18 plus) you MUST report to the LADO through your Force referral process. Notify your Force VPC Co-ordinator.

#### 2.6 All Leaders (Inclusive of Young Leaders 16 plus)

Safeguarding is the responsibility of all, and it is important that all understand their role and responsibility not only when they receive an allegation, disclosure or have a concern but in the whole way in which a 'Safe Space' is maintained. All Leaders (staff and volunteers) MUST attend training appropriate to their role and unit requirements, to enable them to do this and follow the Code of Conduct and Policing's' Code of Ethics.

### 3. The Safeguarding, and Wellbeing Framework

VPC seeks to provide an environment where everyone can work safely, and children, young people and adults at risk can engage with and enjoy the activities and sessions provided. It is the policy of VPC to safeguard the welfare of children, young people and adults at risk involved in the work we do by protecting them from neglect, physical, sexual, or emotional abuse and harm.

It is also VPC policy to provide those working for or volunteering with VPC with a framework to operate within to keep everyone who is engaged in VPC activities safe. It is therefore VPC policy to:

- a) Ensure that all staff and volunteers (legally responsible adults) working with children, young people, or adults at risk: are carefully selected, are checked by the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS); have two appropriate references; a check is undertaken on their social presence (if appropriate) and understand and accept their responsibility for the safety of children, young people, and adults at risk in their care.
- b) Ensure that children, young people, and adults at risk's, know that their welfare is of paramount importance, regardless of age, gender, ability, or race, when planning, organising, advising on, and delivering programmes.
- c) Ensure that all children, young people, 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.
- d) Ensure that when working with partner organisations, we place into any SLA a term of our agreement, the statement: "We confirm that we have read and understood VPC's Safeguarding and Wellbeing Policy and agree to abide by it."

- e) Ensure that electronic communication between adults and young people follows strict guidelines so that we don't place anyone at risk of harm. (See guidance document in relation to social media best practice)
- f) Ensure that we encourage volunteers and staff to discuss their concerns with their Named Person, Force Coordinator or through supervision.
- g) Ensure that children and young people have access to adults that they trust or are clear on how to report their concerns.
- h) Respond swiftly and appropriately to all suspicions or allegations of abuse, and to ensure confidential information is restricted to the appropriate external agencies.
- i) Raise the awareness of relevant staff and volunteers of child and adult protection issues alongside wider wellbeing and mental health concerns through the provision of training and regular updates.
- j) Monitor and review the effectiveness of this policy on a yearly basis and that leaders and coordinators regularly refresh and review their understanding of this and all associated policies.
- k) Ensure that the principles of this policy are adopted by all Forces operating VPC and individuals supporting the VPC programme. This should be monitored by the DRO in partnership with the National Hub team. For example a detailed ISP should be place around Safeguarding and Child Protection procedures.
- l) The Child protection and the protection of adults at risk procedures also seek to manage effectively the risks associated with activities and events involving children, young people and adults at risk by:
  - m) Completing a risk assessment process which involves identifying risks and means of reducing or eliminating these; all activities should be properly risk-assessed, insured and have appropriate adult to cadet ratios.
  - n) Implementing the required actions identified by the risk assessment process and reviewing the effectiveness of these on an appropriate basis.
  - o) Ensuring that the appropriate DBS checks are conducted, depending on eligibility, for any individuals starting or moving into work which involves working or volunteering with children or vulnerable adults.
  - p) Requiring new employees and individuals involved in working or volunteering with children, young people and adults at risk to familiarise themselves with the content of this policy and the associated code of conduct and receive appropriate training.

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.

## 4. Safeguarding Behaviours

As Leaders you must uphold our values and adhere to our Code of Conduct, as outlined in the Blue Card, which sets out the standards of behaviour expected of you alongside the College of Policing (code of ethics), VPC Code of Conduct and ensures a safe space for all of us. In addition, all Leaders need to follow the following Safeguarding Behaviours which help ensure a safe space for all of us:

**Vigilance and Understanding:** take time to understand situations and be alert so that you notice when something is wrong.

**Early Help:** take action and provide support as soon as a problem emerges and before it gets any worse.

- **Inclusion:** safeguard every individual because everyone is equally important and valuable. Everyone involved in the VPC has a right to equal protection from all types of harm and abuse.
- **Resilience:** support individuals to develop the knowledge, ability and the confidence to be actively involved in and responsible for their own safety and wellbeing and to cope with life's challenges.
- **Stability:** develop on-going stable relationships of trust with all those you work with. This means you are more likely to notice if something is wrong.
- **Respect:** treat everyone with the expectation that they are responsible and accountable rather than not.
- **Advocacy:** help others to put forward their own point of view.
- **Accountability:** always respond if you are concerned; never assume someone else has or someone else will. Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility within VPC, but what does this mean? It is the responsibility of all adults to ensure that:
  - Your behaviour is appropriate at all times as laid out in the Code of Behaviour and reflective of the VPC Code of Conduct and Police Code of Ethics
  - You observe the rules established for the safety and security of young people through processes, procedures and guidance provided.
  - You follow the procedures laid out following an allegation, disclosure or the raising of a concern.
  - You recognise the position of trust in which you have been placed and do not abuse this position. If you feel that this is not happening in your unit then please follow the Child Protection Process in the guidance document or report confidentially to the National VPC safeguarding line. [vpc.safeguarding@vpc.police.uk](mailto:vpc.safeguarding@vpc.police.uk)

## 5. Security

Police Cadets takes place in all sorts of settings and often in shared spaces with other users in mind. The primary goal of our sessions is to create safe, friendly and inviting environments which are designed to make young people feel at home.

We have a role and responsibility to ensure that all our activities are run in a safe space and ensure all in our charge are safe at all times. Recent incidents have led to increased concern and awareness of what to do in uncertain or threatening situations, it's therefore crucial to remember that such incidents, like those in Southport, are incredibly rare. So rare are these types of incidences that it's almost impossible to fully prepare for them. Nonetheless, young people, parents/carers or guardians, and the public have a heightened sense of concern.

We recommend that all Forces undertake risk assessments in terms of the safety and security of the building they are in and the activities they will be undertaking. This is in addition to the standard risk assessment you currently undertake.

## 6. Personal and Professional Boundaries ([External link](#))

## 7. Positional Statements ([External link](#))

## 8. Child Sexual Exploitation ([External link](#))

## 9. Bullying ([External link](#))

## 10. Radicalisation ([External link](#))

## 11. Sexual Harassment (Please refer to your Force policy)

## 12. Health and Safety

To ensure we create a safe space for our children and young people to learn, grow and thrive and our Leaders we must ensure that ‘we’ as the VPC are correctly identifying and mitigating risk in all activities associated with VPC.

We MUST ALL ensure our activities are correctly risk assessed, mitigated and insured and that the staffing ratios are appropriate for the activity and the requirements of the group. (See the VPC Gateway for further Policy, guidance, and practice)

## 13. Working in Partnerships

Working in partnership with other professionals and agencies is essential to keeping children safe. Here are some tips for working in partnership to keep children safe:

- **Involve children and parents:** Keep the child's needs at the centre and involve them as much as possible.
- **Share information:** Share concerns and information with other professionals and agencies.
- **Understand risks:** Understand the risks a child may be exposed to and take action to keep them safe.
- **Follow guidelines:** Follow safeguarding guidelines when gaining permissions from parents for information sharing.
- **Have clear policies:** Ensure all staff understand the policies and procedures, and their key responsibilities.
- **Build relationships:** Work to build positive professional relationships.
- **Be prepared with evidence:** Be prepared with evidence-based assessments when discussing children's needs.
- **Hold each other accountable:** Hold each other accountable and take collective responsibility for helping and protecting all involved.
- **Respect everyone:** Respect and treat everyone justly, according to their individuality, unique circumstances, and barriers.

The government's statutory guidance, [Working Together to Safeguard Children](#), outlines how practitioners should work together to keep children safe.

## 14. Supporting our Leaders

**How do we ensure adults are safe to work with children and young people?** Ensure all leaders who work with young people or adults at risk, are carefully selected. (See Safer Recruitment Policy)

**How do we train our volunteers to meet their responsibilities?** Raise awareness of relevant child/adult protection issues through the provision of training and regular updates. The National VPC will provide relevant VPC specific safeguarding training and forces are responsible for any further training needs of their leaders, however National VPC will help wherever possible. (See Learning and Development Policy for current offer)

**How do we transport children and young people?** (See Marshall: A-Z of Guidance) How to we interact with young people using social media? (See Marshall: A-Z of Guidance)

**How to recognise, respond and refer any reported allegations, disclosures, or concerns** (See Child Protection Process in guidance document)

**What Support is available to our Leaders?** (See Marshall: A-Z of Guidance)

**How do we support Leaders' knowledge of mental and emotional health?** (Marshall: A-Z of Guidance).



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