



Safeguarding Children & Young People Policy & procedures

V 3.7 January 2026

Contents

1.1 Document Control.....	4
1.2 Safeguarding Statement	5
1.3 Application of Policy and Procedures	5
1.3.1 Associated Documents	6
1.3.2 Safeguarding Responsibilities at YHA	6
1.3.3 Key Definitions.....	8
1.4 Responding to a Concern or Disclosure	10
1.4.1 Dos and Don'ts when responding to a disclosure:.....	10
1.4.2 Process for responding to a concern or disclosure	10
1.5 Information sharing, confidentiality and seeking consent.....	12
1.5.1 Handling children's data	12
1.6 Compliance	13
1.7. Ownership and Authority.....	13
1.7.1. Accountabilities.....	14
1.7.2 Managing Policy Breaches.....	14
1.8 Review and changes to this policy	14
1.9 Management of policy records	14
2.1 Managing A Safeguarding Concern or Disclosure	16
2.2 Managing Allegations of Harm or Poor Practice Against Staff & Volunteers	17
2.3 Safeguarding Requirements for Third Parties and Subcontractors	22
2.3.1 Third Party Services (Activity Providers)	22
2.3.2 Third Party Visitors (School, Youth and Residential Groups).....	22
Responsibilities Summary Table.....	23
2.3.3 Subcontractors and Visiting Workers	24
2.4 Children and Young People Staying in YHA Accommodation	25
2.4.1 Under 16s	25
2.4.2 16–17 Year Olds.....	25
Duke of Edinburgh (D of E) Award Participants (Aged 16–17)	25
2.4.3 Supervision and Safeguarding	26
2.4.4 Adults Sharing Rooms with Children	26
2.4.5 Allocation of Shared Beds	26
2.4.6 Transparency for Groups	27
2.4.7 Child-on-Child Abuse (including Bullying, Harassment and Harmful Sexual Behaviour)	28
2.4.8 Transporting young people in YHA vehicles	28
2.4.9 Missing or Lost Child	29
2.4.10 Online Presence and Social Media	29

2.4.11 Youth Voice Panel (Young People aged 18 to 26)	30
2.4.12 Volunteer Correspondence	31
2.5 Actions and Considerations for Operations Managers & Regional Safety Managers	31
3.1 Appendix 1 – Safeguarding Contacts.....	36
3.2 Appendix 2 – Types of Harm	38
General Indicators of Possible Abuse or Neglect	38
Physical Abuse	38
Emotional Abuse	39
Sexual Abuse and Exploitation	39
Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE).....	39
Accommodation-Based Risks (e.g. hostels, temporary stays).....	40
Neglect	40
Grooming	41
Child Criminal Exploitation (Including County Lines Activity)	41
Child Trafficking	42
Children and Families Who Go Missing.....	43
Online Abuse and Social Media.....	44
Domestic Abuse or Violence	45
Honour Based Abuse (HBA).....	46
Forced Marriage	46
Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)	47
Spirit Possession, Witchcraft and Ritualistic Abuse or Child Abuse Linked to Faith or Belief	48
Radicalisation Extremism and The Prevent Duty	49
Increased Vulnerabilities	50
3.3 Appendix 3 – Staff and Volunteer Code of Conduct.....	52
3.4 Appendix 4 - Safeguarding Panel Terms of Reference.....	56

Part 1 – Safeguarding Policy

1.1 Document Control

Document Control	
Author/s Designated Safeguarding Lead	Contact email safeguarding@yha.org.uk

Version	Comments	Reviewed by	Date
3.5	Annual review – updated following internal consultation and review of external guidance. Update of roles/responsibilities following organisational changes.	AD Impact and Interim Designated Safeguarding Lead	March 2024
3.6	Full review and refresh. • Merged definitions of abuse and indicators of abuse appendices into one appendix. • Managing employee/volunteer allegations flowchart introduced • Addition of information regarding adult safeguarding • Merging of code of conduct in the appendix and in section 4 • Restructure of reporting procedures to avoid duplication	Eleanor Butterfield	October 2024
3.7	General Review Inclusion of unaccompanied under 18s guidance Removal of Adult at Risk – newly created policy Expansion of Service Level Agreement Requirements for third-party visitors (schools)	Consultant	December 2025

1.2 Safeguarding Statement

YHA (England and Wales) is committed to providing a safe environment for all who come into contact with our activities or services. By the very nature of our work, many employees and volunteers have contact with children and adults at risk visiting our sites.

YHA will ensure that safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and adults at risk is embedded across our network. We believe that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and will strive to deliver a safe and trusted environment.

YHA believes that abuse or neglect of any kind is unacceptable and we recognise our responsibility to safeguard the welfare of all children and adults at risk, by committing to policy, procedures and practices that seek to prevent and protect them from harm.

1.3 Application of Policy and Procedures

Anyone encountering children in our setting, no matter what position they hold, or whether they are paid or voluntary, must abide by this policy. This includes third parties and sub-contractors. **Further information on how safeguarding procedures will be managed when engaging with third parties and subcontractors can be found in Part 2 of this document (2.3 Safeguarding Requirements for Third Parties and Subcontractors)**

Failure to follow the principles and requirements of these policies may lead to formal action, which could include disciplinary procedures, investigation, or where a child has been harmed or is at risk of harm, referral to statutory agencies such as the police or local authority teams.

Everyone in our organisation, including the Board of Trustees, has a duty to uphold the highest standards of safer working practice. This means modelling safe behaviours, challenging poor or unsafe practice, and always acting in the best interests of children.

A full list of contacts can be found in **3.1 Appendix 1 – Safeguarding Contacts**. **If you have an immediate concern about the safety or welfare of a child, contact the Designated Safeguarding Lead:**

Nicky Smith	07977 635663 or 01629 702483 safeguarding@yha.org.uk
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This document is structured in **three parts**:

1. **Safeguarding Policy** – defines our organisational commitment to protecting children and promoting their welfare.
2. **Safeguarding Procedures** – outlines the required actions when responding to safeguarding concerns, disclosures, and specific situations.
3. **Appendices**- provides additional guidance, definitions and detailed operational procedures relevant to safeguarding within YHA.

1.3.1 Associated Documents

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is wide-ranging. To make sure we keep children safe, we operate a number of policies and procedures which are to be read alongside this document.

Document title	Version	Date
Whistleblowing policy	1.3	May 2024
Safeguarding Adults at Risk Policy	1.0	January 2026
Safer Recruitment Policy	2.3	June 2024
Employee Handbook	1.3	May 2024
Volunteering Policy		
OHS 31 Event Lost Child Procedure	Unknown	2017
Exclusion Register Policy	3.0	May 2023
YHA Use of Fleet Vehicles Policy	1.1	July 2024
Use of Private Vehicles Policy	1.0	July 2024
HK001 How to Clean a Bedroom	-	-
Use of images (film and photograph)	Unknown	Unknown
DBS Policy & Code of Practice	-	November 2015
OHS 15 Admissions guidance	TBC	TBC
OHS 14a Security Procedure	TBC	TBC
Social Media Policy	1.1	March 2023
YHA ICT Acceptable Usage Policy	1.2	September 2024
Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy	1.3	May 2024
Managing Performance Policy	1.5	August 2024
Risk Management Policy	5.2	March 2024
Volunteering policy	1	March 2016

1.3.2 Safeguarding Responsibilities at YHA

At YHA, safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. Formal safeguarding duties are built into every role so that all sites, services and activities are prepared to recognise and respond appropriately to any concerns relating to safeguarding or welfare. This ensures that all employees and volunteers, no matter their role, work in line with best practice and strict expectations for behaviour and conduct.

Safeguarding is considered at both a **governance** and **operational level**. The Board of Trustees and Executive Team provide oversight, resources and a clear strategy to ensure safeguarding remains a key organisational priority. Designated safeguarding staff are in place across the organisation to provide specialist guidance, advice and operational support.

To strengthen this, YHA operates a **Safeguarding Panel** which brings together representation from the sites, as well as from key organisational functions including but not limited to safety, operations, volunteering and youth development and directors. This panel reviews practice, shares learning, monitors risks and ensures safeguarding remains embedded across all areas of our work.

This structure ensures that safeguarding is consistently embedded in decision-making, service delivery and daily practice, and that the welfare of children is always at the centre of our activities.

Role / Group	Key responsibilities
Board of Trustees	• Ultimate accountability for safeguarding and compliance with <u>Charity Commission</u> requirements • Appointed 'Lead' to act as board champion for safeguarding • Provide strategic oversight and ensure safeguarding is adequately resourced and prioritised by executive team • Promote a positive, open culture where concerns can be raised safely • Review & endorse safeguarding policies, procedures, and practice regularly • Receive and act on outcomes from audits and safeguarding reports • Ensure statutory notification and review requirements are met
Director Responsible for Safeguarding	• Holds strategic leadership for safeguarding across the organisation • Ensures policies and procedures are up to date and robust • Appoints and supports the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and deputies • Alerts senior leaders to safeguarding risks, issues, or developments • Oversees safeguarding audits and reports findings to the Board of Trustees
Executive Team & Heads of Department	• Implement safeguarding policies and procedures within their operational areas • Ensure safer recruitment, vetting & workforce management procedures are applied • Support staff and volunteers through supervision, training, and guidance • Promote a culture where concerns can be raised safely • Consider safeguarding in planning, development and review of services, programmes, and activities
Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) & Regional Safety Managers (Deputy DSLs)	• Lead day-to-day safeguarding practice and oversight of safeguarding concerns and allegations • Chair the Safeguarding Panel and ensure policy dissemination and understanding • Provide advice, guidance, and training to staff and volunteers • Maintain accurate records and report serious incidents to the Director responsible for Safeguarding • Stay up to date with legislation and best practice

Safeguarding Panel	• Provide expert advice and oversight on safeguarding practice and strategy • Monitor and review safeguarding across the organisation, including audits and serious incident • Advise on safeguarding implications of new projects or identified gaps in policy/practice See 3.4 Appendix 4 for the Safeguarding Panel Terms of Reference.
Operations Managers & Hostel Managers	• Ensure safeguarding policies are implemented in operational setting • Supervise and support staff and volunteers in safeguarding practice • Manage and report concerns, allegations, and incidents appropriately • Ensure staff and volunteers understand their safeguarding responsibilities and complete regular training
Third-Party Providers (Activity Providers)	• Responsible for assessing reasonable adjustments and supporting inclusion in line with YHA's Inclusion Policy • Operate within the organisation's safeguarding framework and report concerns appropriately

1.3.3 Key Definitions

For the purpose of this policy the following definitions apply:

A child	Defined in law (Children Act 1989) as a person who has not yet reached their 18 th Birthday. The fact that a child has reached 16 years of age, is living independently or is in further education, is a member of the armed forces, is in hospital or in custody, does not change their status or entitlement to protection.
Abuse & Neglect	A form of harm or maltreatment. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting, by those known to them or, more rarely, by a stranger. Abuse can be perpetrated by adults and children (e.g. peer on peer abuse). They may be abused offline, online or a combination of both. Anyone, regardless of gender or sexuality, can be involved in abuse.
Contextual Safeguarding	An approach to safeguarding that responds to children & young people's experiences of harm outside of the home, for example, with other children, in schools and in neighbourhoods.
Safeguarding/Promoting the welfare of children	Safeguarding is the action you take to promote the welfare of children and protect them from harm. Safeguarding means: - protecting children from abuse and maltreatment - preventing harm to children's health and development - providing support to meet children's needs when problems emerge

	ensuring children grow up with safe and effective care, within their family where possible taking action to make sure that all babies, children and young people have the best outcomes.
Child protection	This is part of safeguarding and promoting welfare. It refers to the activity that is undertaken to protect specific children who are suffering, or at risk of suffering, significant harm. Different types of abuse may constitute significant harm including as physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse and neglect.
Types of abuse	There are different types of abuse although, in reality, more than one type of abuse may be occurring simultaneously or sequentially. See Appendices for further information to help you recognise different types of harm:
Historical abuse	Any disclosure or concerns that relate to abuse that happened more than a year ago. Whether it involves anyone working within or outside of the YHA it must still be taken seriously and acted upon in line with the procedures in this document. Often victims of abuse take many years to come forward due to shame and a fear of being disbelieved, however the alleged perpetrator may remain a risk to others and therefore all non-recent historic allegations have to be examined. YHA will report such cases and concerns to the local authorities and/or the police.
Additional vulnerabilities including safeguarding disabled children	Some groups of are particularly vulnerable to abuse either due to impairment and/or life experiences. For example, research shows that disabled people are more likely to be a target for abuse. Equally, children who are in the looked after system, or those that have already experienced harm, may be more vulnerable.
Local Safeguarding Children Partners	Multi-agency bodies set up to coordinate local procedures and work to safeguard and promote the welfare of children or adults at risk, and to ensure the effectiveness of what the member organisations do individually and together in every local authority. Local safeguarding partners are responsible for child and adult protection policy, procedure and guidance at a local level. There are separate boards for adults and for children. Working together with other relevant agencies, they must co-ordinate and ensure the effectiveness of work to protect and promote the welfare of children and adults, including making arrangements to identify and support those at risk of harm.
Local Authority Designated Officer	Local Authority Designated Officer. A key position employed within Social Care Services with the specific role of examining allegations made against volunteers or staff who work with children.
Third Parties	External organisations contracted by YHA to provide services on site (e.g. activity providers or contractors).
Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) / Deputies	The appropriate and named individual responsible for overseeing proper adherence to safeguarding policies and procedures and responsible for the management of concerns in line with local and national procedures. The team of Regional Safety Managers deputise the role of DSL at YHA to adequately cover the wide remit.

1.4 Responding to a Concern or Disclosure

Employees and volunteers working within the YHA network are prepared to recognise and respond to safeguarding and welfare concerns arising in a number of different ways through continuous learning and development tailored to their role. The indicators of harm are highlighted via policy, training, reflection and learning from individual incidents and cases and through regular support sessions, including team meetings and one-to-one sessions. **An extensive list of the types of risks faced by children and young people and the associated indicators can be found in 3.3 Appendix 3.**

Safeguarding and welfare issues are most commonly brought to the attention of YHA employees and volunteers through recognising these indicators, however, children can at times disclose issues directly, and YHA is committed to ensuring all employees and volunteers are prepared to respond appropriately to support the individual in a person-centred way and achieve the best possible outcome.

1.4.1 Dos and Don'ts when responding to a disclosure:

Do	Don't
✓ Be accessible and receptive ✓ Listen carefully ✓ Take it seriously ✓ Reassure the person that they are right to tell you ✓ Say what will happen next ✓ Notify your hostel or line manager ✓ Make a careful record of what was said ✓ Where appropriate, signpost the individual to support services	✗ React strongly ✗ Jump to conclusions, especially about the abuser ✗ Speculate or accuse anybody ✗ Tell the person you will keep their secret ✗ Ask leading questions ✗ Make promises you cannot keep ✗ Stop a person who is speaking freely

1.4.2 Process for responding to a concern or disclosure

Whether a disclosure has been made or an employee or volunteer has recognised a potential safeguarding or welfare issue in any other way, they must report to their hostel manager or line manager immediately and make a record of the concern at the earliest possible opportunity. Where the concern is of a serious nature, or where advice is needed, the hostel manager or line manager will seek support from a DSL immediately.

It is not the role of YHA employees or volunteers to decide if a child has been abused. It is our role to identify and pass on concerns to the relevant authorities to investigate.

YHA employees and volunteers must guard against making a decision not to report any issues in the belief that they are protecting a person's cultural or religious beliefs or through fear that their action might be interpreted as being prejudiced.

In this document, Part 2 – Procedures outlines the specific actions to be taken in the event of a safeguarding concern or disclosure.

1. Respond

- Take appropriate and immediate action if the individual requires urgent medical attention or protection (call 999 for the relevant emergency service).
- Where appropriate, signpost the individual to relevant support services.

2. Report

- Notify the hostel manager or line manager as priority. Where the hostel manager or line manager is unavailable, notify the individual in charge.
- The hostel or line manager will seek advice from the regional safety manager (DSL) as required.

3. Record

- Collect information about the situation and make a thorough and accurate record. Records should include the date and time of the incident or disclosure, parties who were involved, what was said or done and by whom and any further actions taken.
- All concerns, whether minor or significant will be recorded on an OSHENS safeguarding form at the earliest possible convenience, and before the end of the shift.
- Where further action is taken by either hostel staff or the regional safety manager (DSL) the record will be update as appropriate.

4. Refer

The regional safety manager (DSL) will consider the appropriate action to take, taking the following into account:

- The individual's wishes and preferred outcome.
- The safety or wellbeing of other young people or adults with care and support needs.
- Whether an employee, volunteer or third party is involved.
- Whether a crime has been committed.
- Whether the concern meets the threshold for the intervention of Local Authorities.

The regional safety manager (DSL) will use their expertise and experience to decide upon the relevant action to take to achieve the best possible outcome for the child. Actions decided upon can range from assisting hostel staff to signpost the individual to the appropriate support services in the case of more minor events, to making a referral to their Local Safeguarding Partners/or other statutory agencies such as the police in the event of more significant concerns. **Specific guidance for operations managers and regional safety managers (deputy DSLs), including steps to take if the concern relates to the conduct of an employee, volunteer or third party employee can be found in Part 2 - 2.5 Actions and Considerations for Operations Managers & Regional Safety Managers.**

1.5 Information sharing, confidentiality and seeking consent

All employees and volunteers working on behalf of YHA have a professional duty to share information about safeguarding disclosures or concerns and cannot promise any child that they will keep information confidential. All safeguarding or welfare issues relating to children must be recorded on OSHENS and reported to the relevant line manager (or, where this is not possible, directly to the DSL) **following Part 2 – 2.1 Managing A Concern or Disclosure.**

The DSL will use their professional judgement to decide whether a concern meets the threshold for referral to statutory agencies, such as the local safeguarding partners, the police or to the local authority designated officer (LADO).

YHA is committed to sharing information responsibly and in line with data protection law and statutory safeguarding guidance. When concerns arise about a child the DSL the follow the principles set out in the [Department for Education's Seven Golden Rules for Information Sharing:](#)

1. **Seek consent where appropriate** – Wherever possible, the child and/or their parent or carer's consent should be sought before sharing personal information.
2. **Remember: data protection is not a barrier** – The Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR do not prevent the sharing of information for safeguarding purposes.
3. **Be open and honest** – Be clear with individuals (and families where appropriate) about why information may need to be shared, how it will be used, and with whom.
4. **Seek advice if unsure** – If uncertain about whether to share information, staff should seek guidance from an appropriate manager or safeguarding professional.
5. **Share without consent if necessary** – Information should be shared without consent if seeking it would place a child or vulnerable adult at increased risk of harm.
6. **Prioritise safety** – Always consider the safety and wellbeing of the individual. For example, assess whether informing parents could place a child at further risk.
7. **Ensure information shared is appropriate** – Only share what is **necessary, proportionate, relevant, accurate, timely and secure.**

All decisions and actions taken regarding information sharing, including whether consent was sought and the rationale for doing so, must be recorded on **OSHENS**.

1.5.1 Handling children's data

All children's information is securely stored, accessed and managed in line with UK GDPR. A limited number of approved YHA employees have access to the data and the process of approval will be managed through the **Director of Technology and Transformation**.

Children's data must be used for YHA business purposes only. Children's data must not be printed off or shared with others (internal or external) unless it's for a clear work purpose and has formal documented line management approval in line with YHA data sharing protocols.

1.6 Compliance

This policy has been developed to ensure the organisation complies with applicable English and Welsh legislation, regulations, and statutory and non-statutory guidance including:

- UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
- Data Protection Act 2018 and GDPR regulations 2018
- Children Act 1989 and 2004
- Sexual Offences Act 2003
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023 (HM Government)
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Children and Families Act 2014 (for young adults 18-25)
- Protection of Freedoms Act 2012
- Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015
- Serious Crime Act 2015
- Keeping children safe in education 2024
- Online Safety Act 2024
- After-school clubs, community activities, and tuition. Safeguarding guidance for providers (2023)
- Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, Working Together to Safeguard People, Volume 1
- Wales Accord on the Sharing of Personal Information (WASPI) 2013
- Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

1.7. Ownership and Authority

This policy has been authorised by the Designated Safeguarding Lead who is the owner of this policy.

1.7.1. Accountabilities

The Safeguarding Policy is ultimately the responsibility of the Designated Safeguarding Lead in conjunction with the Safeguarding Panel, Executive Director responsible for Safeguarding and the Board of Trustees.

All employees, relevant volunteers, franchise hostels and managers of all business functions are required to comply with this Safeguarding Policy.

1.7.2 Managing Policy Breaches

YHA is committed to taking all appropriate action, including disciplinary, legal or other action in response to any breaches of its safeguarding policy and procedures.

It is the responsibility of our employees and volunteers to act if there is a cause for concern about a child or adult at risk, or the behaviour of an adult towards a child or adult at risk, but it is not their responsibility to determine if abuse has occurred or what action is required to protect them.

Responsibility for deciding whether to escalate a concern to the appropriate authority lies with the Designated Safeguarding Lead in conjunction with the Safeguarding Panel, Executive Director responsible for Safeguarding and the Board of Trustees.

1.8 Review and changes to this policy

This policy and any related risk assessments will be reviewed annually and when there is a significant change in the organisation's business activities or in the regulatory environment (e.g. new legislation or revised regulatory guidelines).

Proposed changes to this policy should be notified to the Designated Safeguarding Lead, who will be responsible for issuing updated policies.

1.9 Management of policy records

All YHA Policies are published on the YHA Intranet in the Policies area.

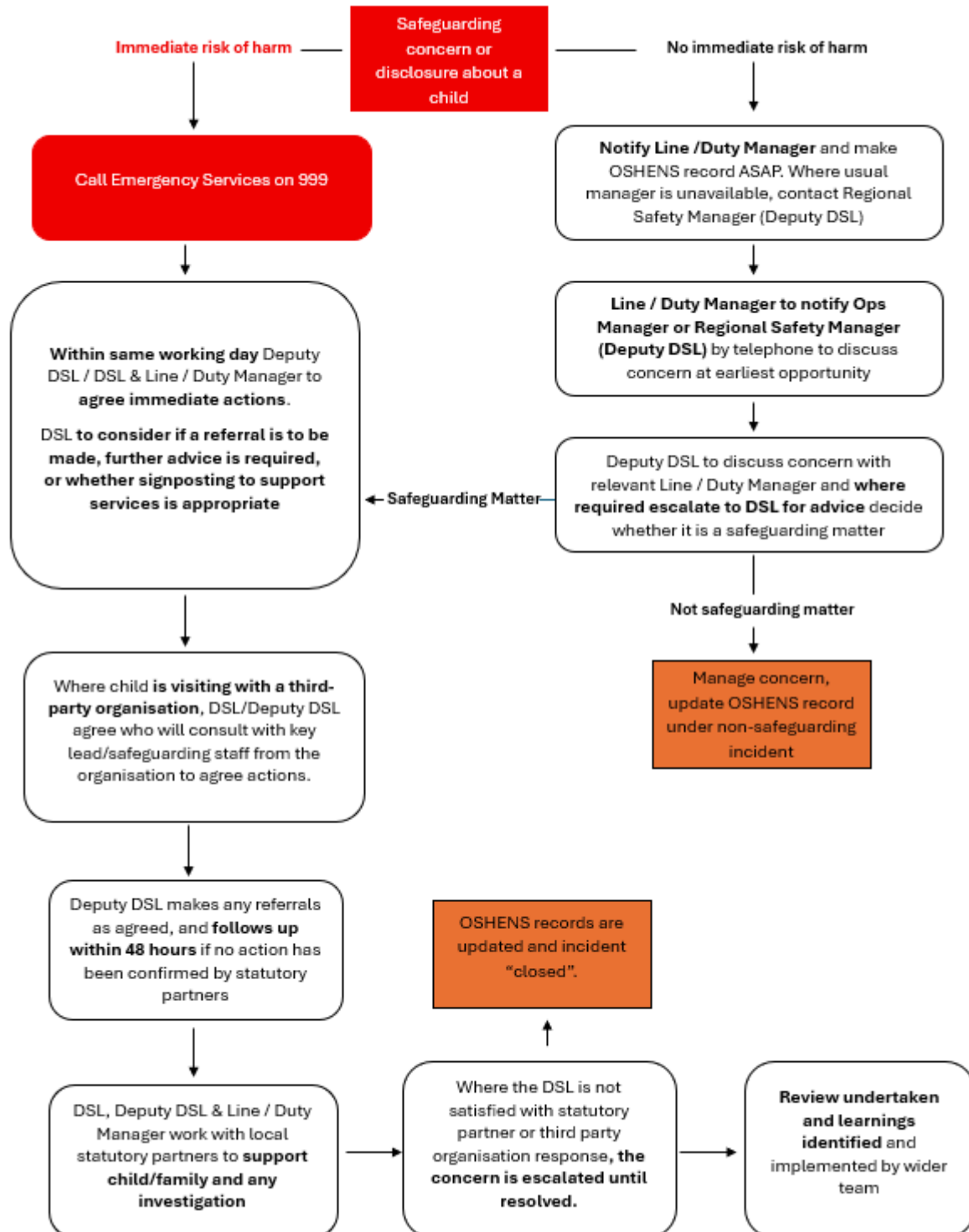
A repository of all policy master copies is held along with a record of all policies, their owners, approval process and review dates. For more information on this policy email policies@yha.org.uk.

Policy authors are responsible for ensuring that policies are published and stored in line with this guidance.

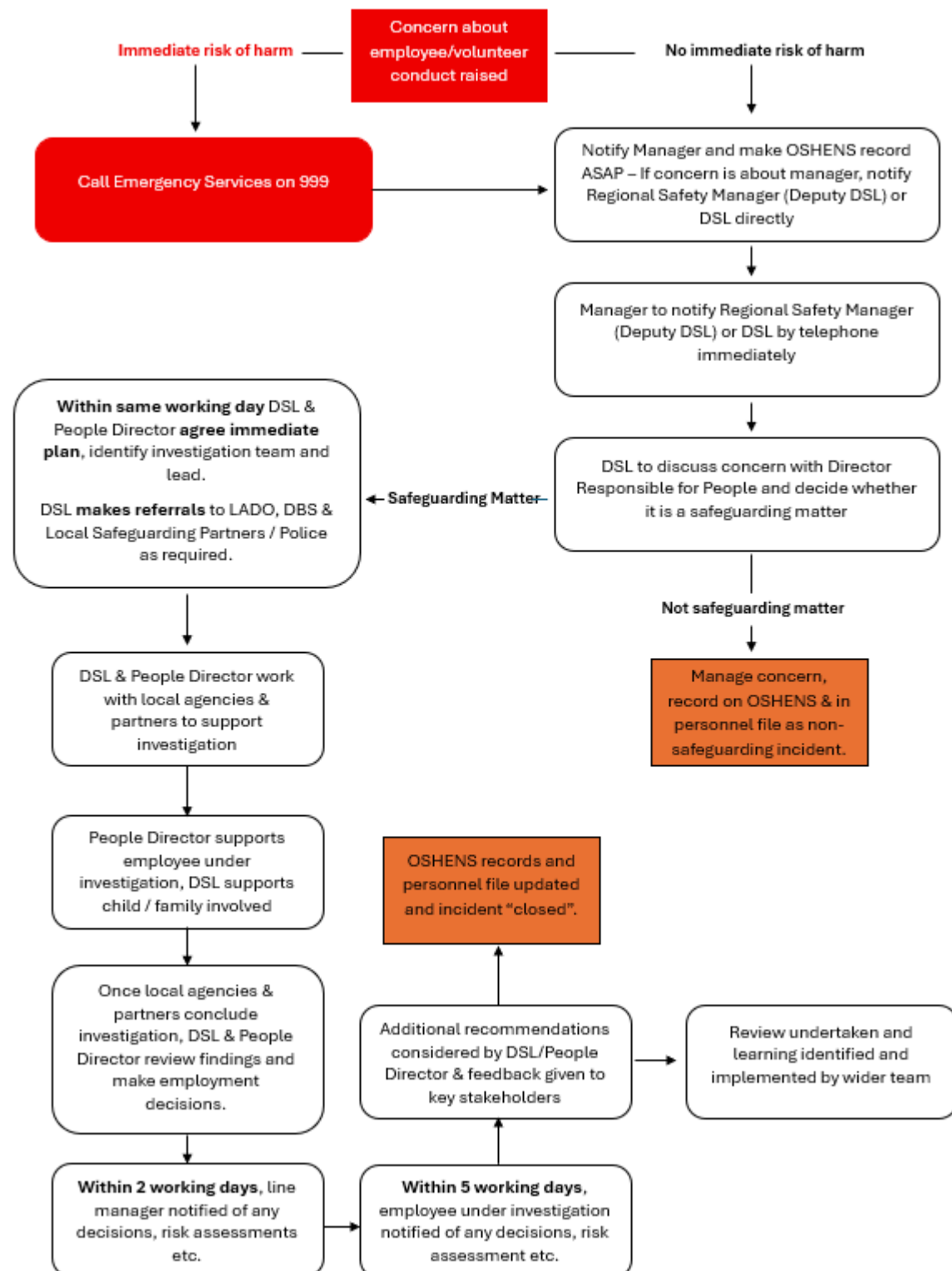
CEO / Chair of Trustee endorsement here (Sign & Date).

Part 2 – Safeguarding Procedures

2.1 Managing A Safeguarding Concern or Disclosure



2.2 Managing Allegations of Harm or Poor Practice Against Staff & Volunteers



Managing Safeguarding Concerns and Allegations About Employees or Volunteers

All employees and volunteers undergo a robust safer recruitment process ahead of appointment, including a formal induction, as well as introduction and ongoing training and supervision to ensure safer working practices and conduct expectations are maintained. Employees are subject to a period of probation. Any safeguarding concern about an employee or volunteer must always be taken seriously and managed in line with this procedure. Concerns may arise through any form of communication and must be dealt with promptly, confidentially and fairly.

Where a concern relates to an employee or volunteer working for a third party or subcontracted organisation, YHA will use the principals of this procedure to raise this formally with the organisation and ensure that the appropriate action is taken to keep children safe.

Definitions

Low-Level Concern

Behaviour that is inconsistent with the Code of Conduct but does *not* meet the threshold for an allegation of abuse. Examples: boundary issues, unprofessional language, poor judgment, or repeated low-grade concerns.

Poor Practice

Behaviour below expected standards or procedures, with **no indication of harm**.
Examples: incomplete records, poor supervision, policy breaches.

Safeguarding Allegation

Where it is alleged that a person has:

- harmed a child or adult at risk (or may have)
- committed a possible criminal offence
- behaved in a way indicating risk of harm
- behaved in a way (inside or outside work) that suggests unsuitability to work with children/adults at risk

This threshold triggers statutory involvement (LADO/police).

Responding to a Concern or Allegation

- Remain calm, take the concern seriously, and **do not** ignore it, confront the individual, or discuss it outside the identified management structure.
- Report immediately to your line manager (or next senior manager if the concern is about them).
- Record the basic details on OSHENS.
- If police raise the concern, record badge and reference details and escalate to the Regional Safety Manager within 30 minutes.
- If a child is at immediate risk or requires urgent medical help, contact emergency services.

All concerns must be passed to the **DSL** without delay.

Initial Consideration

The DSL and Director responsible for People will decide whether the concern is:

- a low-level concern
- poor practice
- a safeguarding allegation

If *not* a safeguarding allegation, it will be addressed through internal management, performance or disciplinary processes. If it *is* a safeguarding allegation, an initial plan will be agreed within one working day, including:

- immediate safety actions
- securing records/equipment
- communication with statutory partners
- support for those involved
- whether suspension needs to be considered
- whether to notify the CEO or Charity Commission

All decisions must be recorded.

Suspension

Suspension is a **neutral act** and considered only when:

- a child/adult may be at risk
- there is a potential criminal investigation
- behaviour may amount to gross misconduct
- there is a risk of evidence being compromised

Suspension decisions are made by the DSL and Director responsible for People, taking account of police/local authority advice.

Support

Support will be offered to:

- the person raising the concern
- the individual subject to the allegation
- any child or family involved

The individual subject to the allegation will be kept informed, signposted to support, and provided with written information about the process.

Concluding the Investigation

At the end of external investigations, the DSL and Director for Safeguarding will review outcomes and confirm any further action. Options may include reinstatement, performance or disciplinary

action, or DBS referral. A conclusion will be reached even if the individual resigns or refuses to cooperate.

Outcome Categories

- **Substantiated** – evidence proves the allegation
- **False** – evidence disproves it
- **Malicious** – deliberate fabrication
- **Unsubstantiated** – insufficient evidence
- **Unfounded** – no basis for the allegation

The DSL will consider any further actions where allegations are unfounded or malicious and will provide appropriate feedback to relevant individuals in line with confidentiality requirements.

Notifications and Referrals to Statutory Bodies

YHA is committed to ensuring that all allegations of abuse or serious poor practice are managed promptly, fairly, and in line with statutory requirements.

- **Referral to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)**
Any allegation of abuse or serious poor practice involving a YHA employee or volunteer will be referred by the **DSL** to the **Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)** without delay.
- **Where a crime has been, or may have been committed, the Police will also be notified.**
- **Post-investigation considerations**
Once the allegation management process is concluded, the **DSL**, in conjunction with the **Director responsible for People and EDI**, will review the outcome and determine next steps, including:
 - Where the allegation is upheld, or there is a concern about the individual's suitability to work in regulated activity with children, YHA will **refer the case to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)** for consideration of barring.
 - This referral duty applies even if the person leaves their position before the allegation management process is completed.
 - Guidance on the referral process can be found on the **DBS website**.
- **Referral to professional bodies**
If the person is registered with a professional or regulatory body (e.g., the **Health and Care Professions Council**), YHA will consider whether a referral should also be made to that organisation.
- **Serious incident reporting**
Where the incident meets the **Charity Commission's serious incident reporting criteria**, a report will be made in conjunction with the **Directorate of External Affairs**. The **Executive Team** will then follow internal escalation processes to ensure the matter is handled transparently and appropriately.
- **Record-keeping and documentation**
All decisions, actions, referrals, and communications relating to the allegation will be

recorded in detail by the DSL. Records will be stored securely, in line with **data protection legislation**, and accessible only to those who need to know. This ensures that all safeguarding activity is **auditable, transparent, and consistent** with statutory guidance and organisational policy.

Review of any learnings

At the end of the process of managing an allegation and its conclusions, the Director for Safeguarding, in consultation with the DSL, is responsible for the identification of any lessons to be learned about the procedure, the actions taken, and the support offered. This learning should feed into policy and procedural revisions as well as the safeguarding training strategy.

If you feel your safeguarding concern/report has not been adequately resolved

If any employee or volunteer considers that the concern they have raised has not been taken seriously or remains unresolved, then they should contact the DSL in the first instance.

If they are still unhappy with the response and/or action taken following discussion with the DSL, the following channels can be used to escalate:

- Contact the Director responsible for Safeguarding
- Use the Whistleblowing line: Safecall Tel **0800 915 1571** or **www.safecall.co.uk/report**
- Contact the **NSPCC Helpline: 0808 800 5000**
- Report the matter directly to the local children's social care team

2.2.1 Relationship of Trust and Position of Trust

YHA staff and volunteers work in a **relationship of trust** with guests. This means they are expected to act professionally, always maintain appropriate boundaries, and never misuse their role, authority, or access to individuals for personal gain or to form inappropriate relationships.

This **relationship of trust is distinct from, but related to, the legally defined *Position of Trust*** under the Sexual Offences Act 2003. While YHA roles don't meet the legal definition, all staff and volunteers must recognise the **inherent power imbalance** that exists between adults and young people, particularly those aged **16–17**, and the heightened safeguarding risks this creates.

Any sexualised, romantic, or otherwise inappropriate relationship with a young person is **strictly prohibited**, regardless of the young person's age or apparent consent. Such behaviour is a serious breach of this Code of Conduct and will result in disciplinary action, which may include **dismissal**, and where appropriate, **referral to statutory agencies**.

Visiting organisations also operate in a **relationship of trust** with their participants, and many of their staff and volunteers hold a **legally defined Position of Trust** (for example teachers and sports coaches). YHA expects all visiting organisations to manage these responsibilities in line with their safeguarding policies and legal duties.

2.3 Safeguarding Requirements for Third Parties and Subcontractors

2.3.1 Third Party Services (Activity Providers)

YHA regularly contracts with third party organisations to provide services on site (e.g. activity providers) and we are committed to our responsibilities to ensure that those who work with, or for us, can deliver safe and quality services and have robust safeguarding arrangements in place. To achieve this, we outline our expectations and agree terms within a formal contract or Service Level Agreement. As a minimum, we expect that all third party services operate:

- A safeguarding policy and reporting procedures
- A safer recruitment policy and procedures
- A policy and procedure for managing low-level concerns and allegations of poor practice / abuse
- Safer working practice procedures, outlining their expectations of employees and volunteers working for them. This is to include a code of conduct and stance on safe supervision ratios and lone working arrangements
- A formal procedure for conducting safeguarding Inductions and ongoing training
- Risk assessment procedures for activities and supporting individual participant needs

Responsibility for ensuring these requirements have been shared with third party activity providers, and that assurances are in provided by a person with relevant authority rests with the Director of Operations and Impact. Responsibility for other service providers resides with the department or team commissioning the service.

2.3.2 Third Party Visitors (School, Youth and Residential Groups)

A significant number of guests visit YHA as part of residentials, educational trips, and other organised activities arranged by third parties such as schools, youth organisations, Duke of Edinburgh and children's residential settings.

YHA is committed to maintaining the highest standards of safety for everyone staying on our sites, including the safeguarding and welfare of children and young people. However, where children are visiting as part of a group organised and supervised by another organisation, **the safeguarding and supervision of those children remains the full responsibility of the visiting organisation** at all times.

To support safe and positive experiences for all guests, YHA sets out clear safeguarding expectations as part of our booking arrangements and, where relevant, within formal contracts or Service Level Agreements. Visiting organisations are expected to operate and uphold the following as a minimum standard:

- A safeguarding policy and reporting procedure, including arrangements for managing concerns, child-on-child abuse, and harmful sexual behaviour

- Safer recruitment policy and procedures
- A procedure for managing low-level concerns and allegations of poor practice or abuse
- Safer working practice guidance, including a code of conduct, supervision ratios, and lone working expectations
- Safeguarding induction and ongoing training for all accompanying adults
- Risk assessments for activities and for individual participant needs
- A mechanism for collecting and holding parental/carer consent, emergency contact and medical information
- Appropriate supervision arrangements at all times during travel, overnight stays, and on-site activity
- An information-sharing agreement with YHA to ensure relevant safety information is provided prior to arrival

YHA expects visiting organisations to conduct their own due diligence and to take full responsibility for ensuring their staff and volunteers understand and follow these arrangements.

YHA reserves the right to request evidence of safeguarding documentation where it is deemed necessary to support the safety of visitors and may refuse or withdraw bookings if appropriate standards are not met or assurances cannot be provided.

YHA receives bookings through **Travel Trade Partners for groups visiting from the UK and overseas**. These requirements are shared with Travel Trade Partners and must be adhered to and incorporated into the Partner's own booking processes. YHA reserves the right to refuse or cease accepting bookings from a Partner where safety concerns are identified.

Responsibilities Summary Table

Area of Responsibility	YHA	Visiting Organisation (e.g. School, Youth Group, Children's Home)
Overall Safeguarding Responsibility	Maintains a safe environment and upholds safeguarding standards on site.	Holds full safeguarding responsibility for the children and staff within their group.
Policies & Procedures	Ensures YHA policies and expectations are communicated.	Ensures robust safeguarding, safer recruitment, and conduct policies are in place and followed.
Supervision	Provides safe accommodation and oversight of YHA staff.	Provides active supervision of children at all times, including overnight.
Room & Bed Allocation	Allocates beds safely and reserves right to refuse unsafe arrangements.	Ensures children are placed safely in rooms, following their own safeguarding and consent processes.

Information Sharing	Requests relevant information to support site safety.	Provides required participant, medical, and emergency contact details prior to arrival.
Incident Reporting	Manages and reports any site-related incidents involving YHA staff or environment.	Manages and reports any incidents involving their group, and informs YHA of any serious occurrences during the stay.
Training & Induction	Ensures YHA staff complete safeguarding training.	Ensures all accompanying adults are trained and briefed in their safeguarding responsibilities.

2.3.3 Subcontractors and Visiting Workers

From time to time, YHA engages subcontractors and other visiting workers to undertake work at our sites, such as maintenance, building, cleaning, catering, or specialist consultancy. While these individuals and organisations are not directly responsible for children or guest supervision, YHA recognises its duty to ensure that anyone working on our premises upholds our standards of safety and conduct.

To achieve this, we require that all subcontractors and visiting workers:

- Are engaged through approved procurement or commissioning processes that include **appropriate due diligence and vetting checks**, proportionate to the nature of the work being carried out.
- Have read and agreed to comply with YHA's **Safeguarding Policy, Code of Conduct**, and **Health and Safety procedures** prior to beginning work on site.
- Are supervised by YHA staff or an appointed responsible person where work takes place in operational areas of a hostel, or where children or vulnerable adults may be present.
- Wear visible identification at all times while on site.
- Report any safeguarding, health and safety, or security concerns immediately to the Duty Manager or Site Manager.

Where subcontractors are engaged by a third-party provider (for example, as part of a larger works contract), YHA expects the lead contractor to ensure that:

- All personnel deployed to YHA sites have undergone **relevant background and identity checks**.
- Safeguarding and Health & Safety expectations are clearly communicated and contractually binding.
- A designated point of contact is provided for YHA to raise concerns or request information regarding compliance.

YHA reserves the right to request evidence of vetting and training, to restrict access to certain areas, or to remove any subcontractor from site where safety, conduct, or safeguarding standards are not met.

2.4 Children and Young People Staying in YHA Accommodation

YHA is committed to providing safe, inclusive and suitable accommodation for all guests. All stays must comply with YHA's **Admissions Guidance**, available on the YHA intranet and website.

To uphold our safeguarding standards, the following conditions apply:

2.4.1 Under 16s

- Children under 16 must always be accompanied by a responsible adult aged 18 or over.
- They must not be left unsupervised in shared areas such as the self-catering kitchen.
- Children aged 12–15 may only stay in shared dormitory accommodation when accompanied by the adult who checked in with them.
- Families with children under 12, or mixed-gender private groups including children, must book private rooms.

2.4.2 16–17 Year Olds

- Young people aged **16 or 17** may stay at YHA **without an accompanying adult** under the following conditions:
 - A **parental consent form** must be completed and submitted prior to arrival.
 - Stays are permitted **only in hostels that are staffed 24/7**.
 - Accommodation must be in a **private room – camping or Alternative Accommodation** options (such as pods or cabins) are **not permitted**.
 - **Shared bathrooms** may be used; ensuite rooms are not required.
 - The young person must show valid **photo ID** in line with YHA Admissions Guidance at check-in.

Duke of Edinburgh (D of E) Award Participants (Aged 16–17)

- Exemptions apply to groups or individuals aged 16 or 17 **who are formally visiting as part of a Duke of Edinburgh (D of E) Award, where this has been pre-arranged and agreed with the D of E organisation**. D of E are treated as visiting organisation and operate under their own safeguarding policies, with accountability remaining with the DofE organisation. YHA collaborates with D of E on Safeguarding policies sharing best practice.

- 16–17-year-old participants may staff YHA sites where 24/7 staffing is not available and may stay in camping or other agreed alternative accommodation as part of completing their award.
- **All other safeguarding responsibilities and procedures apply in full and without exception.** Staff and volunteers must continue to follow all organisational safeguarding policies, codes of conduct, reporting procedures, and risk management processes when working with or supporting D of E groups or individuals.

2.4.3 Supervision and Safeguarding

- YHA employees are encouraged to **decline bookings** where there is reasonable cause to believe a child or young person may be at risk of harm from the person they are travelling with.
- Staff receive safeguarding training, including how to identify concerning behaviour or potential safeguarding risks at check-in, and the appropriate steps to take.
- Where a **vulnerable young person (aged 18 or under)** arrives without safe accommodation available elsewhere, the duty manager may approve a **one-night private room stay at dormitory rates**, for safety reasons. **The Operations Manager or Regional Safety Manager must be notified of this decision immediately**, and a record made. Formal follow up with guest will be made the following day.

2.4.4 Adults Sharing Rooms with Children

- Adults from schools, youth groups, or other educational establishments must **not** share bedrooms with children.
- Exceptions may only be made when essential for the child's health or wellbeing (e.g. where a carer is required). In these cases:
 - **Written consent** must be obtained from the child's parent or guardian which must name the adult who will share with the child.
 - Written confirmation must be stored with the group's booking details.

2.4.5 Allocation of Shared Beds

YHA works collaboratively with all third parties to ensure room and bed allocations are made safely and appropriately. While the supervision and safeguarding of visiting children rests with the visiting organisation, YHA retains the right to make final decisions about bed allocations to ensure the safety and comfort of all guests.

- **Secondary school groups:** YHA prohibits the allocation of double beds to be shared by pupils.

- **Primary school groups:** Where a request is made for pupils to share double beds, YHA will require the organisation to confirm that they have:
 - Formal safeguarding policies and procedures.
 - Formal risk assessment and mitigation measures.
 - Written parental/carer consent for shared sleeping arrangements.
 - Confirmation of how supervision and safeguarding risks will be mitigated.

If this information is not confirmed prior to the visit, or if arrangements are deemed to present unacceptable safeguarding risks, **YHA reserves the right to decline or cancel the booking.**

2.4.6 Mixed-Age or Mixed-Gender Groups

Where visiting organisations request accommodation for **mixed-age and/or mixed-gender groups**, the responsibility for ensuring that room allocations are safe, appropriate, and compliant with safeguarding requirements rests with the visiting organisation.

Visiting organisations must ensure that:

- Room allocations are made in line with their **own safeguarding policies and procedures.**
- Appropriate **risk assessments** have been completed, identifying potential safeguarding risks associated with mixed-age or mixed-gender sleeping arrangements.
- **Risk mitigation measures** are in place and clearly communicated to supervising staff.
- Arrangements reflect the age, developmental stage, needs, and vulnerabilities of the individuals within the group.

YHA requires visiting organisations to confirm, upon request, that these arrangements have been considered and managed through their established safeguarding and risk assessment processes.

If YHA is not satisfied that mixed-age or mixed-gender room allocations have been planned and managed safely, or if proposed arrangements are assessed as presenting unacceptable safeguarding risks, **YHA reserves the right to refuse, amend, or cancel the booking.**

2.4.7 Transparency for Groups

Hostel Managers must ensure all group leaders understand:

- The presence of other guests or groups in the hostel.
- The availability and opening hours of shared spaces such as cafés or meeting rooms.
- Any sole-use or mixed-use arrangements relevant to their stay.

YHA will always provide transparency about the **hostel's make-up** to group organisers, including the presence of other guests or activities on site. A pre-stay for group leaders is available for the purpose of carrying out risk assessments of the environment, this is to be actively encouraged by YHA staff members managing bookings.

2.4.8 Child-on-Child Abuse (including Bullying, Harassment and Harmful Sexual Behaviour)

Refer to **Appendix 2** for definitions and indicators.

Child-on-child abuse includes any form of physical, emotional, sexual or online harm caused by children or young people towards each other. This includes bullying, harassment and harmful sexual behaviour. All incidents must be taken seriously, and all staff have a responsibility to recognise, respond and report concerns.

Bullying may include:

Physical harm: hitting, kicking, pushing, theft.

Verbal abuse: derogatory, racist, sexist or homophobic remarks; insults; threats.

Emotional harm: isolating a child, humiliation, exclusion from activities or peer groups.

Online bullying: abusive messages, threats, harassment or harmful content shared via social media, messaging platforms or mobile devices.

Bullying can cause significant distress and may impact a child's health, wellbeing and development. In some cases, it may amount to significant harm, including self-harm.

Increased risk within YHA settings:

Children may be together for extended periods, including overnight.

Some children may be more vulnerable, including those from marginalised or care-experienced backgrounds.

Required actions for staff:

Do not ignore any signs or reports of bullying or harmful behaviour.

Take proportionate steps to address the behaviour, involving group leaders where appropriate.

Report the concern to your line manager and record it in line with safeguarding procedures.

When behaviour may be illegal:

The following must be reported immediately to the Hostel Manager, who will in turn report to the Operations Manager, and the Regional Safety Manager, who will determine whether police involvement is required:

- Physical violence or assault.
- Theft.
- Repeated harassment or intimidation, including abusive calls, emails or messages.
- Hate-related incidents or crimes.

The Regional Safety Manager will lead on liaison with the police and the group leader where appropriate, in collaboration with the DSL.

2.4.9 Transporting young people in YHA vehicles

If children are to be transported by YHA vehicles the following should be considered:

- Ensure group leaders are present.
- All participants have a seat and seat belt regulations are adhered to.
- All supervisors are issued with all relevant information of passengers e.g. Name/contact number, pick-up/drop-off point, name of parent/ carer to collect, emergency telephone number.
- Participants are not to be left unsupervised.
- If private cars are used for transport, you should ensure parental consent has been obtained.
- If YHA is arranging transport on behalf of a group, this should be through a reputable company providing the necessary insurances and procedures.

Please refer to YHA's Use of YHA Fleet Vehicles Policy for more details.

2.4.10 Online Presence and Social Media

YHA does not currently engage directly with children or young people through its online channels. Should this position change, no online activity involving children will take place without a **formal risk assessment, implementation plan**, and appropriate **safeguarding oversight**.

YHA actively monitors all official social media platforms to ensure they remain safe, respectful spaces, free from inappropriate, offensive, or harmful content. Any concerning posts or interactions relating to behaviour or wellbeing are reported promptly to the **Health & Safety Team**, in line with existing procedures.

Where comments or content are deemed unsuitable:

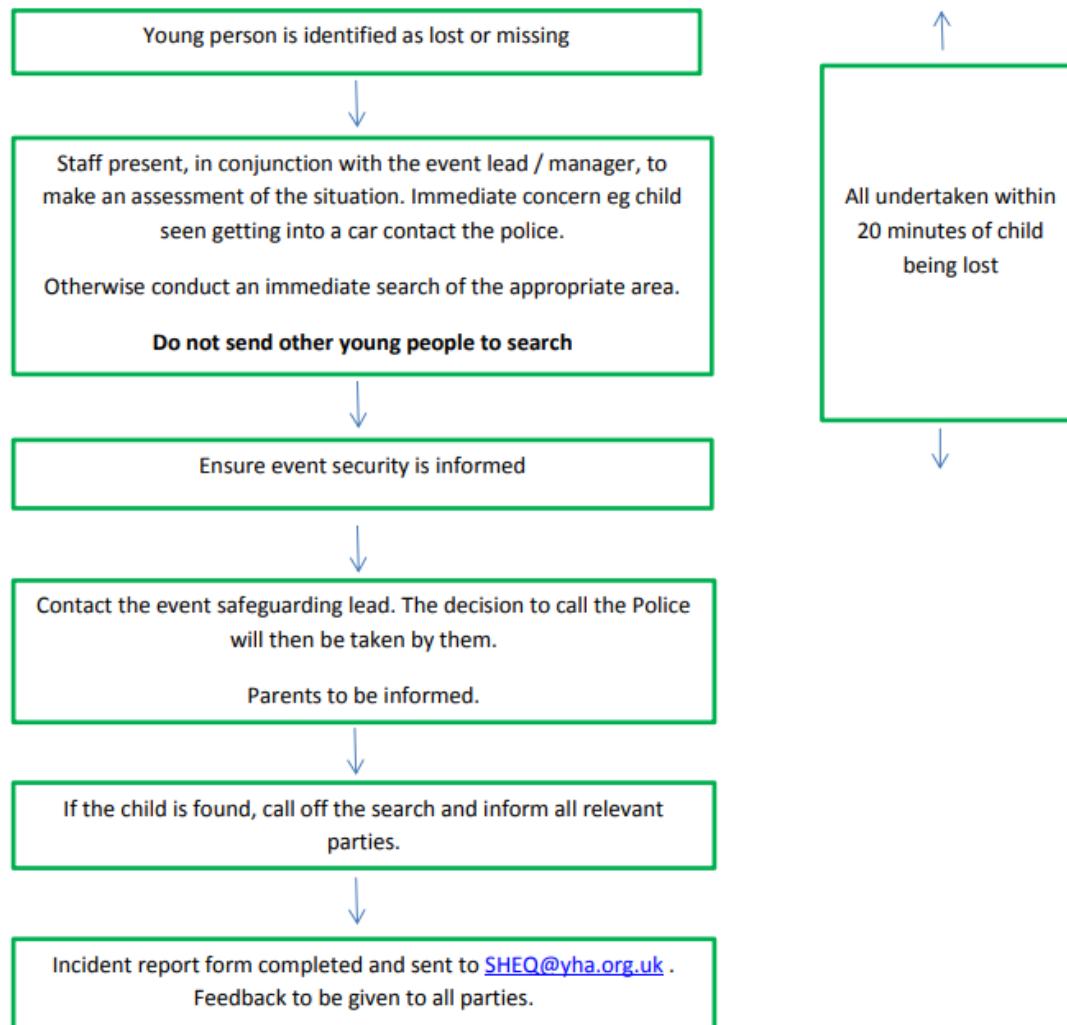
- A **screenshot** is taken and recorded for audit purposes.
- The issue is **reported to a line manager**.
- The content is then **hidden or deleted**, depending on platform functionality and moderation guidelines.

2.4.11 Missing or Lost Child

The Process to follow in the event of a missing or lost child is detailed below.

Missing child / young person procedure

If a child or young person appears to be missing, the flow chart below identifies the process to be followed.



2.4.12 Youth Voice Panel (Young People aged 18 to 26)

YHA recognises that young people aged 18 to 25 have increasing independence, rights, and freedoms, and we are committed to balancing this with our duty of care to ensure their safety and wellbeing.

As part of this commitment, members of the **Youth Voice Panel** may have one-to-one or group contact with YHA staff in virtual settings. To maintain transparency and safeguard both young people and staff, the following protocols apply to all online interactions:

- **Booking and scheduling** – All virtual meetings or calls with Youth Voice Panel members must be arranged through the shared **youthvoicepanel@yha.org.uk** calendar. Meetings should not be booked privately or informally by individual staff.
- **No ad hoc or unscheduled contact** – Unplanned or informal calls (e.g. direct messages or spontaneous online meetings) must not take place without being logged and booked through the shared calendar.
- **Recording of sessions** – All meetings must be recorded using the **MS Teams recording function**. Recordings are used solely for safeguarding and monitoring purposes unless a different, clearly stated purpose (e.g. to share updates with absent members) is agreed at the time.
- **Breach reporting** – If a meeting occurs without proper booking or recording, the YHA staff member present (or the Head of Education, Youth and Impact if no staff were in attendance) must complete a written report explaining the deviation from procedure.
- **Secure storage and review** – All recordings and related reports are stored securely and reviewed periodically by a YHA staff member outside of the Impact Team to ensure impartial oversight.
- **Data retention** – Recordings are retained only for the maximum period permitted under **UK GDPR** and YHA's internal data management policies.

2.4.13 Volunteer Correspondence

YHA is committed to ensuring that all communication with volunteers, particularly those under 18, is safe, transparent, and appropriate. To support this, the following procedures apply to all volunteer correspondence:

- **Centralised communication** – All correspondence with volunteers must be managed via shared inboxes:
 - **communitysupport@yha.org.uk** for programme-related communication
 - **volunteers@yha.org.uk** for general volunteering queries
- **Accidental use of personal accounts** – If correspondence is initiated from, or replies are received in, an individual staff member's email account, the full email thread must be forwarded to the relevant shared inbox and correctly filed.

2.5 Actions and Considerations for Operations Managers & Regional Safety Managers

Immediate actions when a concern is escalated via telephone call or on receipt of report

- Consider the information provided and decide whether it appears to be a safeguarding concern.
- If you are unsure, contact the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) to discuss.

- If it is **not** a safeguarding concern, ensure record is made on OSHENS under the appropriate incident type and manage it through normal operational processes. Close the record when complete.
- If the matter **is** a safeguarding concern, act without delay. Some concerns must be acted on immediately; others must be addressed within the same working day.
- From the moment the report is received, **ensure the time, date and full details of all actions and decisions are recorded on OSHENS** as the situation develops.

Consult the DSL and decide next steps

- Contact the DSL to discuss whether a referral to the local authority, police or other support services is required.
- If you and the DSL agree a referral is required immediately, proceed to the referral steps below.
- If it is unclear whether a referral is required, gather further information first (see below) and keep the DSL informed.

Gathering further information (if required)

If further information is needed to make a decision, consider the following proportionate actions:

- Ask the person/team who reported the concern for any additional information or clarification. Collect the child's name, age, (or DOB if known) and home address where possible.
- Ask the onsite team to monitor the situation and to escalate immediately if anything changes.
- Ask the onsite team to—where appropriate and safe—obtain further context from the guest/individual involved (only where this will not prejudice safeguarding enquiries).
- If the concern relates to a group, inform the group leader and, where relevant, the group/school safeguarding lead if concerns remain.

If the alleged perpetrator is a group leader

- Where appropriate, discuss the concern with **another group leader who is not implicated**.
- It is likely the Regional Safety Manager will need to **contact the organisation's DSL or senior leadership** unless they are implicated.
- Record all actions on **OSHENS** and follow up to record the outcome.

If the alleged perpetrator or person of concern is a guest

- The Regional Safety Manager and Operations Manager (or senior manager for central services teams) must decide whether the behaviour warrants the individual being added to the **Exclusion Register**.
- Follow the Exclusion Register process and record decisions and follow-up on **OSHENS**.

Seeking external advice

- Consider consulting the NSPCC helpline, local authority safeguarding team, or other relevant service where appropriate.

If, after gathering additional information and advice, you decide that a referral is **not** required, update OSHENS with:

- all relevant details and investigation notes
- the decision not to refer and the rationale
- any local actions taken (e.g. supervision, support)

Then close the incident when all actions are complete.

Making a referral

If a referral to the local authority, police or other statutory service is required, the Regional Safety Manager (or delegated person) must:

- Make the referral to the relevant authority promptly (same day where required).
- If requested by the authority, complete any local safeguarding report form.
- If no written confirmation is received, follow up within 48 hours by telephone and email to verify receipt. Record all names, times, advice and reference numbers on OSHENS.

Notifying those involved

- Consider whether the child and/or their parent or guardian should be made aware of the concern and intent to share with statutory agencies, or whether sharing this would put the child or any other party at further risk of harm. Where it is safe to do so, details of what will be shared and with who should be communicated to both the child and their parent or guardian.
- Decide who is best placed to share information with the child and their parent or guardian and take action to ensure this happens appropriately and in good time.
- Record decision to share or to not share details of referrals to statutory agencies with the child and the parent or guardian and any justifications.
- Consider the advice of statutory partners before sharing details if they intend to carry out enquiries.
- **Do not** share information that might compromise a police or statutory investigation.
- Notify the Operations Manager/Head of Region and Hostel Manager (or relevant reporter) of the referral outcome and any next steps.

Follow up and escalation

- Monitor responses from statutory agencies. If the local authority or police have not taken appropriate next steps:
 - Notify the DSL immediately.
 - The DSL and Director responsible for Safeguarding will consider whether escalation is required within the local authority or to safeguarding boards.
- Record all escalation actions, decisions and outcomes on OSHENS.

Finalising the record

- Keep the incident record up to date (decision log, actions, investigation notes, referrals, communications).
- When all actions are complete and any required partner responses have been finalised, update OSHENS with a final summary and close the incident.

Additional Points for Consideration

Indecent Images of Children (IIOC)

- **Inadvertent exposure online:**
 - Report **URLs only** to the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF).
 - **Do not** send or store images.
- **Images stored on a device:**
 - Report immediately to the police.
 - If police request copies, store securely with restricted access.
 - If unsure whether the images are criminal, discuss with police before transferring any files.
 - Seek police advice on whether to quarantine the device or check other devices.

Grooming or Online Sexual Abuse

- See 3.2 **Appendix 2 for definition and indicators.**
- Use the **CEOP** website for advice and reporting.

Forced Marriage

- See 3.2 **Appendix 2 for definition and indicators.**
- Seek advice **prior to discussing with the young person or family.**
- Contact the **Forced Marriage Unit:**
 - 0207 008 0151 (office hours)
 - 0207 008 1500 (out of hours – ask for Global Response Centre)

Modern Slavery or Human Trafficking

- See 3.2 **Appendix 2 for definition and indicators.**
- Referral and advice options:
 - **Salvation Army 24-hour Referral Helpline:** 0300 303 8151
 - **Modern Slavery National Helpline:** 0800 121 700 (or online form)
 - **Crimestoppers:** 0800 555 111 (anonymous, accepts self-referrals)

General principles

- Always prioritise immediate safety; call emergency services if there is urgent risk.
- Maintain confidentiality and share information only on a need-to-know basis.

- Provide appropriate support and signposting to those affected.
- Ensure staff involved in significant incidents receive debrief and supervision.

Part 3 - Appendices

3.1 Appendix 1 – Safeguarding Contacts

Name & Title	Safeguarding Role	Contact details
Jane Price Executive Director of Income, Impact, Operation & People	Executive Director responsible for Safeguarding	07850515050
Nicky Smith Head of Health, Safety & Compliance (HOHSC)	Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)	07977 635663
Will Brown Regional Safety Manager	Deputy DSL	07841341908
Nicola Baker Regional Safety Manager	Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO)	07966 903212
Out of Hours H+S Support – Weekends and 18.00 - 08.00 Monday - Friday		01629 702483
YHA Whistleblowing Helpline	Confidential reporting route for staff to raise concerns about wrongdoing, unsafe practice, or breaches of policy within the organisation, without fear of reprisal.	0800 915 1571 www.safecall.co.uk/report
External Agencies		
Local Authority Children’s Social Care England	Report concerns of a child or young person at risk of being abused or neglected in England.	Access local authority database here.
Local Safeguarding Boards Wales	Report concerns of a child or young person at risk of being abused or neglected in Wales.	Access local authority database here.
NSPCC Whistleblowing Helpline	Advice can be sought from NSPCC if using the YHA whistleblowing procedure has not resolved the concern	0800 028 0285
NSPCC Helpline	24-hour helpline for advice on child protection matters for professionals and adults	0808 800 5000
ChildLine	24-hour helpline for children and young people	0800 1111
Supportline	Helpline for people who are isolated, experiencing or at risk of abuse. Only open Tuesdays, Wednesdays or Thursdays 6pm- 8pm.	01708 765200 info@supportline.org.uk
UK Safer Internet Centre	Provides advice for professionals and responds to reports about	0844 381 4772

	sexual abuse images of children online	
Child Exploitation & Online Protection Centre (CEOP)	Investigates inappropriate online behaviour such as grooming and sexual exploitation. Can be used to report concerns.	Report here .
Internet Watch Foundation	Investigates and removes images of child sexual abuse content and criminally obscene content online. Can be used to report concerns.	Report here .
Samaritans	24 hours a day helpline for mental health concerns. www.samaritans.org.uk	116 123
National Domestic Violence Helpline.	24 hours a day helpline. For survivors, friends and families and professionals in contact with DV survivors	0808 2000 247
Salvation Army	24 hours a day – referrals and advice for modern slavery and human trafficking.	0300 3038151
Modern Slavery National Helpline	24 hours a day – advice for modern slavery and human trafficking.	08000 121 700 File a report
Hourglass	To discuss concerns and get advice for older people who are at risk of, experiencing or recovering from any form of abuse or neglect.	0808 808 8141 helpline@wearehourglass.org
Metropolitan Police Anti-Terrorism Hotline	If you're suspicious of something that could identify a terrorist threat anywhere in the UK, report it online or call the Anti-Terrorism Hotline.	0800 789 321 online tool to report possible terrorist activity
Karma Nirvana	Support for victims of Honour Based Violence or Forced Marriage.	0800 5 999 247 www.karmanirvana.org
Hub of Hope	The UK's largest mental health support directory.	www.hubofhope.co.uk
National FGM centre	Resources and training for organisations, and signposting support for those who have undergone female genital mutilation.	www.nationalfgmcentre.co.uk
Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS)	Advice line for criminal records checks & to make barring referrals.	03000 200 190

The Charity Commission	The regulator for charities in England and Wales.	Make a notification here .
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3.2 Appendix 2 – Types of Harm

The definitions and indicators have been adapted from DfE's Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023 Statutory Guidance, the NSPCC and other national support charities.

Children can experience abuse in many forms. Harm often occurs across multiple categories at once. Everyone working with children must be alert to signs that may indicate a child is experiencing, or is at risk of, abuse, neglect or exploitation.

General Indicators of Possible Abuse or Neglect

- Sudden or unexplained changes in behaviour, such as aggression, disruption, withdrawal, clinginess or regression (e.g. bedwetting).
- Consistently poor hygiene, dirty or ill-fitting clothing.
- Avoiding specific people with no clear reason.
- Describing being left alone, with inappropriate carers or with strangers.
- Developmental delays without medical explanation.
- Reluctance to go home or being regularly missing from school.
- Parents/carers who are dismissive of concerns or appear intoxicated when collecting the child.
- Early alcohol misuse.
- Taking on responsibilities for younger siblings.
- Talking about running away.
- Flinching when touched or reacting fearfully to sudden movements.

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse includes hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm. It also includes fabricated or induced illness. Children may be at greater risk where adults misuse substances, experience mental ill-health or domestic abuse. Babies and disabled children are particularly vulnerable.

Possible indicators:

- Frequent injuries or unexplained bruises, cuts, burns, bite marks or fractures.
- Injuries with inconsistent explanations.
- Multiple injuries in different stages of healing.
- Covering up of injuries.

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is the persistent maltreatment of a child and can seriously impact emotional development. It includes conveying worthlessness, humiliation, restricting normal social interaction, inappropriate expectations, and making children witness ill-treatment of others. Emotional abuse is present in all forms of maltreatment but can also occur alone. Emotional abuse can also include coercion and exploitation of children.

Possible indicators:

- Excessive withdrawal, fearfulness or anxiety.
- Parents/carers withdrawing affection or using the “cold shoulder”.
- Parents blaming the child for their own problems.
- Humiliation, name-calling, or persistent negative comparisons.

Sexual Abuse and Exploitation

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child to participate in sexual activities, with or without physical contact. Children may not understand the nature of the abuse and may believe they are in a relationship. Offenders can be adults or other children.

Forms include:

- Physical contact (penetrative and non-penetrative).
- Non-contact abuse, including exposure to sexual images, encouraging sexualised behaviour, or online grooming.

Possible indicators:

- Sexual knowledge or behaviour inappropriate to their age.
- Using explicit sexual language beyond developmental norms.
- Sexualised behaviour towards others.
- Genital pain, infections, or under-age pregnancy.
- Increased visits to the toilet and bedwetting.
- Adults presenting an unusual interest in a child / children.

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

CSE occurs where an imbalance of power is used to coerce or manipulate a child into sexual activity in exchange for something (e.g. money, gifts, status) or for someone else’s financial advantage. It may involve physical contact or be entirely online.

Possible indicators:

- Unexplained gifts or possessions.
- Associating with peers or adults involved in exploitation.
- Older boyfriends or girlfriends.
- STI symptoms or pregnancy.
- Missing episodes, emotional changes, substance misuse and disengagement from education.

Accommodation-Based Risks (e.g. hostels, temporary stays)

Accommodation settings can be targeted for grooming or exploitation.

Warning signs at check-in or within accommodation:

- Late-night, last-minute, cash bookings.
- Guests only wanting a room for a short period.
- No ID or incomplete contact details. Reluctance to share details or absence of ANY guest names including children.
- No luggage.
- Local address given without explanation.
- Adult–child relationship appears secretive, coerced or romantic.
- Child appears distressed or reluctant.
- Something feels “not right”.

In such situations, staff should keep the guests in reception, contact a senior manager, and if urgent concerns exist, contact the police. Do not allow access to a room until concerns are assessed.

Neglect

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child’s basic physical or emotional needs and can result in significant impairment. It may involve lack of food, clothing, shelter, supervision, hygiene, medical care or emotional responsiveness. It may occur prenatally due to parental substance misuse.

Possible indicators:

- Consistently dirty or unsafe living conditions.
- Persistent hunger or poor hygiene.
- Inadequate clothing.
- Living around drugs, alcohol or violence.
- Aggression, self-harm, or persistent lack of supervision.

- Failure to seek medical care.
- Exposure to unsafe adults.

Grooming

Grooming is the process by which individuals build trust with a child (and often with adults around them) to enable later exploitation or abuse. It can happen anywhere, including online or in organisational settings.

Possible indicators:

- Inappropriate attire or behaviour around children.
- Spending excessive time with children instead of peers.
- Favouritism or giving gifts without reason.
- Isolating a child from others or finding opportunities to be alone.
- Physical contact that is unnecessary or secretive.
- Sharing sexual content or asking a child about sexual feelings.
- Encouraging secrecy, breaking rules, providing alcohol/drugs.
- Viewing abusive imagery or seeking sexualised conversations.

Child Criminal Exploitation (Including County Lines Activity)

Criminal exploitation is child abuse where children and young people are manipulated and coerced into committing crimes. This can happen through their peer groups, street gangs or organised crime gangs. It's not illegal for a young person to be in a gang – there are different types of ‘gang’ and not every ‘gang’ is criminal or dangerous. However, gang membership can be linked to illegal activity, particularly organised criminal gangs involved in trafficking, drug dealing and violent crime.

County Lines is the police term for urban gangs exploiting young people into moving drugs from a hub, normally a large city, into other markets - suburban areas and market and coastal towns - using dedicated mobile phone lines or “deal lines”. Children as young as 12 years old have been exploited into carrying drugs for gangs. This can involve children being trafficked away from their home area, staying in accommodation and selling and manufacturing drugs. This can include:

- Airbnb and short term private rental properties
- budget hotels
- the home of a drug user, or other vulnerable person, that is taken over by a criminal gang- this may be referred to as cuckooing.

Studies show that **children may be more likely to be recruited into criminal activity if:**

- They have a special educational need

- They are experiencing abuse or neglect
- They have been excluded from school
- They have poor mental health
- They live in a area where gang activity is present

Signs that a child is being criminally exploited may include:

- Frequently absent from and doing badly in school.
- Going missing from home, staying out late and travelling for unexplained reasons.
- In a relationship or hanging out with someone older than them.
- Being angry, aggressive or violent.
- Being isolated or withdrawn.
- Having unexplained money and buying new things.
- Wearing clothes or accessories in gang colours or getting tattoos.
- Using new slang words.
- Spending more time on social media and being secretive about time online.
- Making more calls or sending more texts, possibly on a new phone or phones.
- Self-harming and feeling emotionally unwell.
- Taking drugs and abusing alcohol.
- Committing petty crimes like shop lifting or vandalism.
- Unexplained injuries and refusing to seek medical help.
- Carrying weapons or having a dangerous breed of dog

Child Trafficking

Child trafficking is where children and young people are tricked, forced or persuaded to leave their homes and are moved or transported and then exploited, forced to work or sold. Children are trafficked for:

- sexual exploitation
- benefit fraud
- forced marriage
- domestic slavery like cleaning, cooking and childcare
- forced labour in factories or agriculture
- committing crimes, like begging, theft, working on cannabis farms or moving drugs.

Trafficked children experience many types of abuse and neglect. Traffickers use physical, sexual and emotional abuse as a form of control. Children and young people are also likely to be physically and emotionally neglected and may be sexually exploited. Signs of child trafficking may include:

- spend a lot of time doing household chores
- rarely leave their house or have no time for playing
- be orphaned or living apart from their family
- live in low-standard accommodation
- be unsure which country, city or town they're in
- can't or are reluctant to share personal information or where they live
- not be registered with a school or a GP practice
- have no access to their parents or guardians
- be seen in inappropriate places like brothels or factories
- have money or things you wouldn't expect them to
- have injuries from workplace accidents
- give a prepared story which is very similar to stories given by other children.

Children and Families Who Go Missing

Patterns of missed appointments or unexplained moves may indicate risk. Looked-after children may go missing and require immediate action. Children missing from home or education may be vulnerable to criminal or sexual exploitation.

Child-on-Child Abuse (Including bullying, harassment, Problematic or Harmful Sexual Behaviour)

Child-on-child abuse (sometimes referred to as peer-on-peer abuse) describes any form **of physical, emotional, sexual or online harm** caused by children or young people to others under the age of 18. Such behaviour may be targeted towards perceived vulnerabilities or differences, including factors such as disability, race, religion, sexual orientation or social status.

- Harmful sexual behaviour (HSB) is developmentally inappropriate sexual behaviour displayed by children and young people which is harmful or abusive¹.
- Peer-on-peer sexual abuse is a form of HSB where sexual abuse takes place between children of a similar age or stage of development. Child-on-child sexual abuse is a form of HSB that takes place between children of any age or stage of development.

Children who harm other children may also be experiencing adversity or abuse in their own lives; however, this does not excuse the behaviour. All forms of child-on-child abuse are unacceptable and must be recognised, addressed and reported in line with safeguarding procedures.

Children may be reluctant or unable to disclose abuse, so it is important that staff remain alert to possible indicators. The following signs may suggest a child is experiencing harm from another young person:

- being bullied, harassed or targeted by peers
- unexplained marks, injuries or bruising
- appearing unusually withdrawn, anxious or frightened
- displaying knowledge or behaviour that is sexually inappropriate for their age
- changes in mood, behaviour or presentation
- difficulties sleeping
- deterioration in mental health or emotional wellbeing
- becoming angry, aggressive or reactive without clear explanation
- going missing, avoiding activities or failing to meet curfews
- misuse of alcohol or other substances

Online Abuse and Social Media

Online abuse is any type of abuse that happens on the internet. It can happen across any device that's connected to the web, like computers, tablets and mobile phones. And it can happen anywhere online, including:

- social media
- text messages and messaging apps
- emails
- online chats
- online gaming
- live-streaming sites.

Children can be at risk of online abuse from people they know or from strangers. It might be part of other abuse which is taking place offline, like bullying or grooming. Or the abuse might only happen online.

A child or young person experiencing abuse online might:

- spend a lot more or a lot less time than usual online, texting, gaming or using social media
- seem distant, upset or angry after using the internet or texting
- be secretive about who they're talking to and what they're doing online or on their mobile phone

- have lots of new phone numbers, texts or email addresses on their mobile phone, laptop or tablet.

Some of the signs of online abuse are similar to other abuse types:

- cyberbullying
- grooming
- sexual abuse
- child sexual exploitation.

Domestic Abuse or Violence

Domestic abuse is any type of controlling, bullying, threatening or violent behaviour between people who are or have been in a relationship. It can also happen between adults related to one another. It can seriously harm children and young people, and experiencing domestic abuse is child abuse. Domestic abuse can be emotional, physical, sexual, economic, coercive or psychological, such as:

- kicking, hitting, punching, cutting or throwing objects
- rape (including in a relationship)
- controlling someone's finances by withholding money or stopping someone earning
- controlling behaviour, like telling someone where they can go and what they can wear
- not letting someone leave the house
- reading emails, text messages or letters
- threatening to kill someone or harm them
- threatening to another family member or pet.

Signs that a child has experienced domestic abuse can include:

- aggression or bullying
- anti-social behaviour, like vandalism
- anxiety, depression or suicidal thoughts
- attention seeking
- bed-wetting, nightmares or insomnia
- constant or regular sickness, like colds, headaches and mouth ulcers
- drug or alcohol use
- eating disorders

- problems in school or trouble learning
- tantrums
- withdrawal.

Honour Based Abuse (HBA)

There currently isn't a statutory definition for HBA, but Karma Nirvana's campaign, #Push4Change, which is backed by the sector, advocates for the following definition:

- An incident or pattern of violence, threats of violence, intimidation, coercion, control or abuse (including but not limited to psychological, physical, sexual, economic, spiritual, faith-related or emotional abuse) motivated by the perpetrator's perception that an individual has shamed, or may shame, the perpetrator, the family, or community or has otherwise broken, or may break, the perceived norms of the community's accepted behaviours, including by speaking out about the abuse and where the perception of shame may also prevent a victim from accessing support or help.

Recognising HBA can be difficult, but there are some warning signs you can look for:

- **Sudden withdrawal or isolation** from friends, school, or work
- **Restrictions on their freedom**, such as not being allowed to leave the house without supervision
- **Intense family pressure** or talk of a forced marriage
- **Unexplained injuries** or signs of physical harm
- **Extreme control** over their social life, finances, or education
- **Fearful behaviour**, particularly around family members

This is often accompanied by a **trigger**, such as family finding out about a partner, their sexuality or certain choices they've made e.g. career or education choices.

Forced Marriage

A forced marriage is one in which **one or both people do not, or cannot consent to the marriage**, but are coerced into it by their families or community. **If the person or persons are under 18, this is automatically considered to be forced.**

Forced Marriage is often confused with arranged marriages. While a marriage can be both forced and arranged, **it's important to recognise that they are not the same**. Here's how to tell the difference:

- In an arranged marriage, **both adults give their full consent** to get married and enter the marriage willingly. They are based on mutual consent, often with the families involved in the introduction or planning, but the **individuals have the freedom to accept or reject** the arrangement. Many arranged marriages are not forced, as both adults give full consent.

- In a forced marriage, one or both participants enter the marriage **without giving their consent**. They may go through with the wedding under duress from their families, which may be in the form of physical, emotional or coercive control.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

FGM is when a female's genitals are deliberately altered or removed for non-medical reasons. It's also known as 'female circumcision' or 'cutting', but has many other names.

FGM is a form of child abuse. It's dangerous and a criminal offence in the UK. We know:

- there are no medical reasons to carry out FGM
- it's often performed by someone with no medical training, using instruments such as knives, scalpels, scissors, glass or razor blades
- children are rarely given anaesthetic or antiseptic treatment and are often forcibly restrained
- it's used to control female sexuality and can cause long-lasting damage to physical and emotional health.

Signs FGM might happen

- A relative or someone known as a 'cutter' visiting from abroad.
- A special occasion or ceremony takes place where a girl 'becomes a woman' or is 'prepared for marriage'.
- A female relative, like a mother, sister or aunt has undergone FGM.
- A family arranges a long holiday overseas or visits a family abroad during the summer holidays.
- A girl has an unexpected or long absence from school.
- A girl struggles to keep up in school.
- A girl runs away – or plans to run away - from home.

Signs FGM might have taken place

- Having difficulty walking, standing or sitting.
- Spending longer in the bathroom or toilet.
- Appearing quiet, anxious or depressed.
- Acting differently after an absence from school or college.
- Reluctance to go to the doctors or have routine medical examinations.
- Asking for help – though they might not be explicit about the problem because they're scared or embarrassed.

Spirit Possession, Witchcraft and Ritualistic Abuse or Child Abuse Linked to Faith or Belief

Though rare, such beliefs can lead to severe physical and emotional harm. Cultural sensitivity must never override safeguarding.

There are various definitions associated with Spirit Possession, Witchcraft, and Ritualistic Abuse, including:

Belief in concepts of:

- witchcraft and spirit possession, demons or the devil acting through children or leading them astray (traditionally seen in some Christian beliefs),
- the evil eye or djinns (traditionally known in some Islamic faith contexts) and
- dakini (in the Hindu context);
- ritual or muti murders where the killing of children is believed to bring supernatural benefits or the use of their body parts is believed to produce potent magical remedies;
- use of belief in magic or witchcraft to create fear in children to make them more compliant when they are being trafficked for domestic slavery or sexual exploitation.

This is **not an exhaustive list**. There will be other examples where children have been harmed because adults believe their actions have brought bad fortune, such as telephoning a wrong number, which some believe allows malevolent spirits to enter the home.

Spirit possession, witchcraft, and ritualistic abuse is not confined to one faith, nationality, ethnic group, or community. Cases have been recorded worldwide across various religions, including Christianity, Islam, and Hinduism. Not everyone who holds these beliefs goes on to harm children. The number of known cases suggests that only a small minority of people who believe in witchcraft or spirit possession engage in abusive behaviour.

While abuse can happen anywhere, it most commonly takes place within the child's home.

- Children with disabilities, including autism, epilepsy, Down's syndrome, dyslexia, etc
- Albino children
- Children living away from home in private fostering or domestic servitude
- Children living with a step-parent, with one of the natural parents absent or dead
- Children whose parents have been branded as witches
- Children who are perceived as "naughty" or exhibit challenging behaviour
- Precocious children and left-handed children
- Children who are living within complex family structures, such as a polygamous household or reconstituted family

(Source: MET Police, [Online](#))

Radicalisation Extremism and The Prevent Duty

Radicalisation is the process through which a person comes to support or be involved in extremist ideologies. It is in itself a form of harm.

Extremism was defined by the Home Office in 2011 as a 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 (HM Government, 2011).

In 2024, the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities published a new definition of extremism for England (DLHC, 2024). Extremism is defined as the support or promotion of an ideology based on violence, hatred or intolerance that aims to:

- deny or destroy the fundamental rights and freedoms of others
- undermine or overturn the UK's system of democracy and democratic rights
- intentionally create an environment that permits or enables others to achieve either of the above.
- The new definition also set out types of behaviour which could constitute extremism, including:
 - using or excusing violence towards a group of people to stop them from using their legally defined rights and freedoms
 - seeking to overthrow or change the political system outside of lawful means
 - using or excusing violence towards public officials, including British armed forces and police forces, to stop them carrying out their duties
 - attempting to radicalise and recruit others, including young people, to an extremist ideology.

Challenging and tackling extremism needs to be a shared effort (HM Government, 2013). For this reason, the Government has given some types of organisations in England, Scotland and Wales a duty to identify vulnerable children and young people and prevent them from being drawn into terrorism.

Most extremist materials and activities do not meet a terrorism threshold. All organisations that work with children and young people have a responsibility to protect children from being harmed by radicalisation and exposure to extremist views.

The process of radicalisation may involve:

- being groomed online or in person
- exploitation, including sexual exploitation
- psychological manipulation
- exposure to violent material and other inappropriate information
- the risk of physical harm or death through extremist acts.

It happens gradually so children and young people who are affected may not realise what it is that they are being drawn into.

Vulnerability factors

Anyone can be radicalised but there are some factors which may make a young person more vulnerable. These include:

- being easily influenced or impressionable
- having low self-esteem or being isolated
- feeling that rejection, discrimination or injustice is taking place in society
- experiencing community tension amongst different groups
- being disrespectful or angry towards family and peers
- having a strong need for acceptance or belonging
- experiencing grief such as loss of a loved one.

These factors will not always lead to radicalisation.

Indicators of radicalisation

If a child or young person is being radicalised their day-to-day behaviour may become increasingly centred around an extremist ideology, group or cause. For example, they may:

- spend increasing amounts of time talking to people with extreme views (this includes online and offline communication)
- change their style of dress or personal appearance
- lose interest in friends and activities that are not associated with the extremist ideology, group or cause
- have material or symbols associated with an extreme cause
- try to recruit others to join the cause

(Home Office, 2020).

If you think a child or the people around them are involved in radicalisation and there is an immediate risk of harm, call 999 straight away.

If it isn't an emergency, follow safeguarding reporting procedures, outlined in **2.1 Managing A Safeguarding Concern or Disclosure**.

Increased Vulnerabilities

Some circumstances may lead to children being more vulnerable to harm, abuse and neglect, including exploration.

- **Babies and Toddlers** – often most vulnerable due to complete reliance on a parent or caregiver, often in isolation and where parents / caregivers may have impaired parenting capacity or their own vulnerabilities.
- **Disabled Children** - experience higher risk due to impaired communication, increased intimate care, isolation, and reliance on multiple adults.
- **Parental Adversity** - substance misuse, mental ill-health or domestic abuse can significantly compromise parenting and increase risk.
- **Racism and Discrimination** - can affect how children engage with services and how professionals assess concerns. Fear of being viewed as racist must not delay protection.
- **LGBTQIA+ Children** – though not inherently at greater risk, may face bullying, secrecy, lack of trusted adults or discrimination, increasing their vulnerability.
- **Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC)** - often isolated and without support networks. Increased risk of trafficking and exploitation.
- **Young Carers** - increased responsibilities for children and young people can impact their health, wellbeing and development. Some may be experiencing abuse from the person they care for.

3.3 Appendix 3 – Staff and Volunteer Code of Conduct

(for employees and volunteers – Children, Adults, and Adults at Risk)

This Code of Conduct sets out the standards of behaviour expected from everyone working or volunteering with YHA. It exists to:

- Safeguard and protect all guests, particularly children and adults at risk.
- Create safe, respectful, and inclusive environments.
- Protect employees and volunteers from situations that could lead to misunderstandings or false allegations.

By following this Code, you help maintain the safety, reputation, and values of YHA.

General Principles

All employees and volunteers must:

- Treat all guests with dignity, fairness, and respect.
- Always maintain professional boundaries. Remember, **you are acting in a ‘relationship of trust’** as defined within YHA’s safeguarding policies.
- Act responsibly and avoid behaviour that could harm YHA’s reputation.
- **Report concerns or disclosures about abuse or neglect to your line manager immediately**, including concerns of abuse, poor practice or inappropriate **behaviour relating to staff members or volunteers** working for YHA or any visiting organisation.
- Immediately report any concerns about the **poor conduct or inappropriate behaviour of guests**, including where there is a concern that their behaviour is causing harm, or a risk of harm to other guests, both inside or outside of their group.
- Report any **inappropriate or overly familiar behaviour from guests or staff/volunteers from visiting organisation** towards YHA staff or volunteers, to your line manager (e.g. giving gifts, asking for number, asking for a date etc.) without delay.
- Recognise that **safeguarding is everyone’s responsibility** – both on and off duty.

Expected Standards of Behaviour

Respect and Inclusion

- Promote an environment that is safe, welcoming, and free from discrimination.
- Listen to and respect the wishes, choices, and feelings of children and adults, including adults at risk.
- Respect privacy and confidentiality, sharing information only when necessary to protect someone from harm.

Professional Relationships

- Keep **relationships with guests professional**. Avoid over-familiarity, gifts, or personal contact outside of work.
- **Avoid situations where you are alone with a guest** whenever possible. If unavoidable, ensure others are aware. Plan activities that involve more than one other adult present, or at least within sight of others. **1-2-1 working with a child is against YHA policy.**
- Be mindful that **guests (both children and adults) may develop inappropriate attachments**. If this happens, inform your manager immediately and respond in a way that protects dignity.
- **Report any concerning or boundary-crossing behaviour from guests** (e.g., gifts, personal contact requests, invitations).

Conduct and Behaviour

- Act as **positive role models in behaviour and appearance**, including when off duty on YHA premises. Ensure that any dangerous or otherwise unacceptable behaviour, including bullying by children, is challenged, addressed and reported
- **Avoid unnecessary physical contact**. If comfort or assistance is required, seek consent and ensure it is appropriate, respectful, and in view of others.
- **Challenge unacceptable behaviour** such as bullying, harassment, or discriminatory remarks.
- Only access or **move guest belongings** when absolutely necessary and in the presence of someone else or with others.
- **Respect guest and colleague privacy**. Do not search online or share personal information without a safeguarding or operational reason.
- To protect guests and employees from false accusation, **individual members of staff should generally not enter bedrooms when in use**. Room entry should be carried out in line with guidance HK001 How to Clean a bedroom.
- When bedrooms are in use, **employees must only enter unaccompanied in the case of medical emergency**.
- Employees who must enter bedrooms during the day **for cleaning/maintenance purposes may access any room after ensuring that it is unoccupied**.
- **In case of only one employee being available** to attend an alleged maintenance issue in a room (or other physical standards item), the employee should **politely ask the guest to vacate the room and wait in reception** wherever reasonable to do so until the issue can be resolved.
- Should an **emergency require access to a bedroom**, especially at night, an **employee of the same sex as that of the occupants of the room** should knock on the door first. If this is not possible, employees of the opposite sex should get assistance from another employee or other adult before entering.

Health, Safety, and Safeguarding

- Follow all **safeguarding procedures and risk assessments** for activities involving children and adults at risk.
- Record and **report incidents, disclosures, concerns, or allegations** without delay.
- **Never promise to keep information about harm confidential.**
- **Use social media responsibly.** Never post or share images, details, or opinions about guests or colleagues, or opinions which may be considered as extreme or against the principals of safeguarding.

Unacceptable Behaviour

It is **never acceptable** for YHA employees or volunteers to:

- **Abuse, neglect, exploit, or mistreat any guest or colleague.**
- **Engage in sexual or intimate relationships with guests**, in particular, children and adults at risk.
- Use offensive, **discriminatory, threatening, or sexually suggestive** language or gestures.
- Work or volunteer under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
- **Drink alcohol, smoke, or vape in non-designated areas**, or in ways that undermine professionalism.
- **Give or accept gifts, substances, or personal favours from guests.**
- Share **inappropriate personal information** or have intimate conversations with guests.
- **Take or post photographs of guests** without appropriate written consent.
- Invite or allow guests into **staff-only or private areas**.
- **Enter a bedroom, including shower spaces**, where you will then be alone with a child or children.
- **Assume responsibility for the discipline or ongoing management of children or young people's behaviour**, as this is the responsibility of the visiting organisation's group leader or line manager. YHA staff should avoid shouting at children and young people; raising your voice should only occur where it is necessary to gain immediate attention to prevent harm or respond to an emergency.
- **Play any audio and/or visual material** (CDs, DVDs, videos, photos, films, computer or games etc.) that has **inappropriate content for children**.
- **Use any job title or role**, at any level of the organisation, to **gain access to children** when not in the presence of a parent, teacher, guardian, group leader or carer.
- Meet or socialise with guests **outside of work duties**.
- **Steal or condone theft.**

- Allow or **encourage behaviour that supports extremism, radicalisation, or terrorism.**

Your Responsibility

Every employee and volunteer has a duty to:

- Act in line with this Code of Conduct.
- Report any breaches, concerns, or allegations immediately.
- Seek guidance from a manager if unsure how to act.

By working together, we create a safe, respectful, and positive environment for all children, adults, and adults at risk.

3.4 Appendix 4 - Safeguarding Panel Terms of Reference

1. Introduction

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and adults at risk, requires effective coordination. For this reason, the YHA have established this specific Panel.

Effective Safeguarding arrangements in the YHA are underpinned by the three key principles which will equally apply to the activities of the Panel:

- Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility
- All activities must ensure that the welfare of children and adults at risk are at the centre of any decisions that are made.
- All Services need to seek the views of children and young people so that they are able to tailor support for prevention and intervention.

2. Role and Scope of the YHA Safeguarding Panel

The work of the YHA Safeguarding Panel fits within the wider context of all YHA services and our clear mission, to inspire all, especially young people, to broaden their horizons gaining knowledge and independence through new experiences of adventure and discovery. Our particular focus however is that of the 'Staying Safe' outcome with our aim to reach 1 million young people.

A key role of the YHA Safeguarding Panel will be to gain the agreement of the relevant stakeholders, to protocols and methods of working that will ensure that safeguarding activity is conducted in a consistent and integrated manner across the entire network and represented on the panel.

3. Objectives and Functions

3.1 Panel Objectives

The Panel will:

- Function primarily as a scrutiny and support function – supporting the organisation with best practice in safeguarding in line with law and current regulations,
- Ensure communication of lessons learned throughout the network, with the ultimate objective of preventing reoccurrence of any safeguarding incidents wherever possible
- Ensure YHA has Safeguarding policies and procedures in place which are regularly reviewed and revised as necessary
- Develop, monitor and review the organisation's approach and plans for safeguarding children and adults across the network
- Monitor compliance with a safeguarding training strategy

- Develop a safeguarding improvement plan which identifies its work and which will be reported against on an annual basis
- Advise/act on the safeguarding implications of any new organisational projects/development
- Review the findings of serious incidents and agree on any remedial actions proposed

4. Panel meetings

Meetings will take place four times a year but can also be convened at short notice if there is a serious incident that warrants it.

An annual timetable for Panel meetings will be published no less than four weeks before the commencement of the year indicating the date, time and venue for all meetings. All panel members have responsibility for identifying items for the agenda at each Panel meeting.

The Chair may call an extraordinary meeting at any time.

All Panel meetings will create minutes; draft minutes will be distributed within 15 working days and submitted for approval to the next meeting.

Autumn Panel will review the Safeguarding Policy and suggest amendments or improvements following a review of law and practices.

Autumn Panel will review all of the training provided by YHA in relation to safeguarding and suggest amendments or possible improvements.

5. Panel Membership

Members will have a strategic role in relation to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and adults within the organisation.

If a panel member misses two consecutive meetings without sending apologies or an appropriate representative, then the Chair, on behalf of the panel, will write to that member. If non-attendance continues, the Chair will write to individual requesting termination from the panel and an alternative representative be sought.

The Chair of the Panel will be appointed by the Chief Executive Officer of the YHA. The Chair will be held to account by the CEO in the performance of their functions relating to the Panel.

Wherever possible the Panel will seek to establish a consensus on any decisions made, however where there is impact on other Directorates, the Executive employees will be consulted as part of an escalation process.

Panel membership will include representations across the Directorates, but will always have the following:

- Designated Safeguarding Lead - Chair
- Regional Safety Manager
- Head of Region
- People directorate representative
- Hostel Manager representation
- Representative for Enterprise Network
- Interim Associate Director of Groups
- Head of Maintenance & Development
- Hospitality Resources Manager

6. Accountability

The Panel will report to the following groups in order:

- Risk Management Group
- Executive employees
- Audit and Risk committee
- The Board

7. Roles and Responsibilities of Members

The key roles of a member are to contribute to the effective working of the Panel, in promoting high standards of safeguarding practice and to foster a culture of continuous improvement. This will require each member to:

- Be objective in undertaking assessments and scrutinise functions of the YHA safeguarding process in an unbiased manner.
- Identify, communicate and liaise as appropriate with employees within their area of responsibility about safeguarding.
- Attend all safeguarding committee meetings and where this is not possible, to ensure the committee is kept updated of any issues or risks within their area of responsibility that may influence safeguarding across the network
- Advise, contribute, and actively take part in decision making processes at Panel meetings
- Prepare for meetings and complete actions when required to agreed timescales.

8. Review

The panel will review its activity on an annual basis and determine at each review whether any changes are required to the terms of reference.

Every person involved in the operation of YHA should embrace their duty to our guests, team members, contractors and themselves so that the organisation as a whole can bring to life the commitments above. It is important that we remember to watch out for each other at every level and take responsibility for our own actions and behaviour.



James Blake – Chief Executive Officer for YHA - February 2026

