

North Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Service

Vulnerable Persons Policy

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Document Change History

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This is an electronic version of the approved version and paper copies are only valid as of the last update. Please refer to the master copy or the document author if you are in any doubt about the document content.

Policy Superseding:

This policy supersedes the following policies from the date adopted date in the information panel:

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Contributors:

Development of this policy was assisted through information provided by the following organisations:

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The policy statement establishes the position and expectations of the Authority in relation to the protection of all persons that staff come into contact with, or have substantial access to in the course of their duties. These instructions set out the actions that must be taken to safeguard children and adults. This policy applies to all staff. This code sets out guidelines for North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service employees, who are working with young people and adults; and clarifies appropriate conduct, and offers suggestions of good practice.
- 1.2 A person may, in exceptional circumstances, feel justified in taking a course of action which conflicts with this code. However, before so doing, employees must seek approval from the SM Prevention, who in turn may wish to clear such a departure with the Personnel Department at Service Headquarters.

2. PURPOSE

- 2.1 The purpose of the policy is to ensure the overall welfare and safety of the person within the care of the North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service.
- 2.2 All activities undertaken involving any risk to children and adults must be properly risk assessed and appropriate control measures recorded and implemented.
- 2.3 The value of activities undertaken must always be proportionate to any degree of risk caused.

3. SCOPE

- 3.1 This policy applies to all members of North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service. This policy applies to all equipment that is owned or leased by North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service.

4. POLICY

4.1 WORKING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES

North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service employees should be aware that their work provides them with privileged access to the lives of young people, vulnerable adults and their families.

Employees must be very careful to establish and maintain clear boundaries to relationships with any person they are working with . This involves ensuring that a proper professional distance is maintained in the relationship between employees and the person with whom they work. Relationships which encourage “friendship” or “dependency” are to be avoided.

4.2 THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF INDIVIDUALS

North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service employees must recognise that they have a responsibility to minimise the risks to which they and the people with whom they are working are exposed. With respect to Health and Safety Legislation in particular employees have a legal responsibility for the safety of themselves, their colleagues and the people with whom they are working.

In these circumstances employees have a responsibility to minimise the risk of harm to people during organised activities. This responsibility may, in some circumstances, override other professional considerations such as confidentiality. For example with respect to social issues employees may need to refer to other professionals whose level of expertise is more suitable

4.3 PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

Line Managers have a responsibility to ensure that employees are trained and made familiar with appropriate policies, guidelines, procedures and regulations. If in any doubt employees should ask “Is there a set of procedures which affect this element of my work?”

Policies and other guidelines will be referred to in any training for new members of employees likely to be working with children or vulnerable persons. They are available from Prevention & Protection Department or under service documents on the intranet. Training is available, or can be made available, on issues highlighted in this code, via your Station Manager.

Where there are no policies to determine practice or guidance, employees must ensure that they are aware of the rights and safety of young people’ , adults and the need to protect themselves and North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service before taking decisions and/or actions which affect them.

4.4 GENERAL PROFESSIONAL ISSUES

The Fire Service's role is developing all the time. It is the responsibility of Line Managers to ensure that employees constantly evaluate their own practice and keep themselves informed of developments and improve their practice through training.

Employees should take all reasonable steps to be aware of current areas of the law affecting their work. Ignorance of the law is no defense against legal liability.

Employees must be aware of the sensitivity associated with certain situations and the appropriate professional conduct required in order to maintain proper professional standards. Employees are advised to contact their Line Manager, Station Manger Prevention or Group Manger at the earliest opportunity if they feel they have compromised themselves with regard to any of the following areas.

There are several key areas:-

- Being "on duty"
- Appropriate working relationships
- Discussions with people with whom we work
- Working with people with specific needs
- Lone working
- Illegal or inappropriate activities
- Working with other employees
- Appropriate working places
- Using appropriate resources
- Notes, records and files
- Changes to programmes/courses

These are dealt with in detail in the following section.

4.5 BEING ON DUTY

Employees should be aware that visiting work places or areas outside their usual working hours will automatically place them "on duty". Meeting young people or members of the community, even outside the locality, may also put employees in that role. Even if the employee does not intend this, for example on casual contact in the street or supermarket, young people and adults will have expectations of workers and their role.

The venue may be one where a worker is compromised, for example a pub where young people are drinking under age.

- Outside working hours wherever practical, employees must avoid work related or lengthy conversations with people with whom they have a professional relationship.

Employees should obviously remain approachable and friendly in these circumstances, but where necessary arrange an appropriate time and place to meet within work hours.

- Social networking web sites, e-mails and text messages.

A venue does not have to be a physical place, electronic systems allow communication and meetings in a number of formats.

Where NYFRS employees have worked with or built a professional relationship with, a person through the Service's eg youth intervention programmes they **must not under any circumstances**, become involved in communications with those people via social networking sites or other electronic communication methods such as text messaging. In such circumstances an approach from a young person (under the age of 18) should be rejected and deleted and where necessary the contact should be recorded or referred to your manager or the safeguarding team and the appropriate agency where necessary.

E-mail can be used to send work related information to such as forms and details of course changes etc but under no circumstances should personal conversations be entered into at any time.

Employees should only use their brigade e-mail address for this purpose to avoid personal e-mail addresses becoming available to the persons involved.

- Employees must withdraw from the situation if their role is compromised

Such incidents may give rise to local comment. Employees should report any issues to line managers that are likely to have repercussions.

At all times when working with young/vulnerable people or members of the community, the employee is on duty, and should be aware they represent North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service at those times. Particular care should be taken if visiting people's homes.

4.6 APPROPRIATE WORKING RELATIONSHIPS

Employees should ensure that their relationships with young people and members of the community are appropriate to the age and gender of the people involved. They should take care that their conduct does not give rise to comment or speculation. Attitudes, demeanour and language all require care and thought, particularly when employees of either sex are dealing with adolescent young people or vulnerable adults.

- Employees must avoid unnecessary physical contact that may be misinterpreted .

Such contact can include well-intentioned informal and formal gestures such as putting a hand on the shoulder or arm, which if repeated with an individual could lead

to serious questions being raised. It is unwise to justify touching as a working style or as a way of relating to young/vulnerable people.

There may be occasions when a distressed person needs comfort and reassurance that may include physical comforting such as a caring parent or adult would give. Employees should use their discretion in such cases to ensure that what is, and what is seen to be by others present, as normal and natural does not become unnecessary and unjustified contact; particularly with the same person over a period of time. Where a member of North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service has a particular concern about the need to provide this type of care and reassurance they should seek the advice of their line manager or the Equality and Safeguarding Officer.

Employees should be aware that some actions might be interpreted as sexual harassment.

- Employees must not develop physical or sexual relationships with young people or vulnerable adults with whom they are working.

Employees must not develop “friendships”, outside working time, with young people with whom they are working. There is a fine line between being friendly, and an inappropriate relationship. It is inappropriate to behave in a manner that is disrespectful of the physical or emotional rights/needs of young people or vulnerable adult.

- Where the physical contact is unavoidable, employees must use restraint

Employees are likely to come into physical contact with people from time to time in the course of their duties. Employees should be aware of the context within which such contact should properly take place and the possibility of such contact being misinterpreted.

There may be occasions where it is necessary for employees to restrain people physically to prevent them from inflicting damage on either themselves, others or property. In such cases only the minimum force necessary should be used.

Physical force must not be used as a punishment, or to modify behaviour, or to make a person comply with an instruction. Employees are advised that physical force, or verbal threats, may in law be regarded as assault.

- Employees must not behave in a manner that could be misinterpreted by young people or members of the community.

Employees should be aware that how they behave and promote themselves as individuals carries messages to others. In any discussions of their personal lives, employees should take care not to condone illegal, oppressive or unsuitable behaviour. Care should be taken that dress is appropriate to the activity and that slogans on clothing or badges do not conflict with their professional role. Employees should not use language which is inappropriate or could be misinterpreted

Professional practice should exclude swearing, offensive jokes and oppressive anti-equal opportunities comments.

Although employees may resist the idea, young people and members of the community often see them as role models. Employees should not conduct themselves in their work-related activities in ways that undermine public confidence.

- Employees must also consider their personal competence in relation to their responsibilities. Employees should not allow personal or emotional difficulties to interfere with their work. If they think that may be the case then their line manager, Station Manager Prevention or the Equality and Safeguarding Officer should be consulted as a matter of urgency.

4.7 DISCUSSIONS WITH PEOPLE WITH WHOM WE WORK

As with physical contact, comments by employees to people, either individually or in groups, can be misinterpreted. Many employees have close relationship with people and there will be occasions where conversations will cover particularly sensitive matters.

- Where a conversation of a sensitive nature is appropriate, employees must use their discretion to ensure that, for example, any probing for details cannot be construed as unjustifiable intrusion into people's privacy.
- Employees must not make unnecessary comments to or about people that could be interpreted as having a sexual connotation.

It is unacceptable for employees to introduce or to encourage debates that could be interpreted to have a sexual connotation that is unnecessary within the context of the work. At the same time it is recognised that a topic raised by a young/vulnerable person or member of the community should be addressed rather than ignored.

- Employees must not use disparaging or sarcastic comments

Employees should beware of insensitive or ill-judged comments to, or about, young people, members of the community or other employees.

Professional conduct requires a positive regard for the people with whom we work.

4.8 WORKING WITH PEOPLE WITH SPECIFIC NEEDS

It is accepted that there will be some situations where people will present particular issues for employees. The emphasis should be on what is reasonable in all circumstances and what is appropriate to the person's age and needs.

- Employees must take steps to protect themselves, the person they are working with and North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service from possible allegations.

Employees should be particularly careful when supervising or working with people in a residential setting.

Employees who have to administer first aid should ensure, wherever possible, that other people or another adult are present if they are in any doubt as to whether necessary physical contact could be misinterpreted.

Employees should always ensure that the male-female employees ratio is appropriate for the effective supervision of both sexes, and particularly when dealing with a group of young people.

- Unless specifically employed in that role, employees must not offer advice

Employees should be aware that many day-to-day conversations may be interpreted by young people or members of the local community as advice. Phrases such as “why don’t you.....” and “if I were you.....” should be avoided. North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service provide legal liability insurance providing employees are acting in the course of their employment and/or within the terms of their contract.

Employees can offer information or access to information. It is the employee’s professional responsibility to ensure information is accurate and current, and that a range of options is made available. Employees must be aware of their own limitations.

4.9 [LONE WORKING](#)

Employees should be aware of the dangers that may arise from working in isolation with an individual, whether inside a building or not.

- Employees must avoid private interviews with individual young people without taking some precautions.

It is recognised that there will be occasions when confidential interviews may be necessary, but, where possible, such interviews should be conducted in a room with visual access, or with the door open, or in a room or area which is likely to be frequented by other people.

Where possible, another person should be present or nearby during the interview.

- Employees must avoid working with individuals in private, especially at night and in non-public places.

North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service employees must ensure that another member knows of their activities and timescales.

North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service employees will where possible work in pairs in people’s homes if they are alone with one individual. Working with Fire setters etc should be undertaken in pairs, showing identity cards as a matter of course.

In certain circumstances employees may work with other agencies/parents in a controlled environment. In these circumstances they may deal with children/vulnerable people on a one to one basis.

- Employees must ensure their whereabouts are always recorded

To protect the employee, logging in and out with Control should be used so that a supervisor or colleague knows of your proposed location and an estimated time of return. Where possible leave a contact telephone number. In some circumstances employees may wish to consider carrying a personal alarm. If the anticipated working conditions suggest that this would be a wise precaution employees are advised to consult with the Station Manager Prevention.

Employees should always carry an identity card.

- Employees must not offer lifts to individual young people or members of the community with whom they are working.

If employees intend to transport small groups of young people they must check with their Station Manager Prevention and obtain approval. Parental consent will also be required if a young person is under the age of 16.

If transporting a single person is unavoidable another person should travel with them – another employee, or responsible adult. A further colleague should know of the journey. Seat belts must be worn.

4.10 ILLEGAL OR INAPPROPRIATE ACTIVITIES

- Employees must not condone, or participate in, behaviour which is either illegal or would not receive official sanction, for example truanting or under-age sexual activity.

This does not mean that employees cannot work with young people who have engaged in such activities.

Under normal circumstances the referring organisation will deal with such problems. However, employees may need to remove dangerous or illegal items from young people or members of the community for their own safety, or that of others. A written receipt should be given, and, unless it is illegal, every attempt should be made to return the item safely to the responsible person, parent or guardian.

Under the Misuse of Drugs Act illegal substances must be handed over as soon as possible to the police. The same applies to illegal weapons. Other objects that are being used or may be used as weapons should be dealt with in the same way.

All benefits such as accommodation, travel, entertainment, presents, gifts or bequests must be refused, please consult the Gifts, Hospitality and Discounts policy. These rules must be strictly observed. Line managers must be informed of any such gifts and a record should be kept. Small gifts such as diaries, calendars etc are excepted.

Employees should inform their line manager or colleagues when they are concerned about a person's or their own safety. Records of difficult and potentially difficult situations, or issues of concern, should be kept.

- Employees should consider the termination of any activity if subjected to any of the above.
- Employees must make their legal position clear to the people with whom they work at a relevant and appropriate time.

NB Employees working with young/vulnerable people have no privileges as to confidentiality as do some professionals. If called to court, youth and community/support workers are obliged to give evidence and cannot, under questioning, refuse to do so on the grounds of "confidentiality". It is only right that the people with whom we work know of this.

4.11 WORKING WITH OTHER EMPLOYEES

When working with staff from other agencies or Organisations, employees should ensure that there is a shared understanding of professional practice. Staff of other agencies may need to become familiar with North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service guidelines and practices. Employees should take extra care where the activity provides personal access to individuals.

It is the responsibility of the employee to ensure that workers, including volunteers or temporary helpers, are suitable for the activity and the needs of the group.

In any cases of doubt, employees should consult line managers, Station Manager Prevention or Equality and Safeguarding Officer.

- Employees who suspect misconduct by another worker must refer it to a line manager and not approach the individual directly.

4.12 APPROPRIATE WORK PLACES

- Employees should not continue to work in a building which poses an immediate danger to them and the people with whom they work.

4.13 USING APPROPRIATE RESOURCES

- Employees must ensure that equipment, resources and materials they use, or allow to be used are suitable.

When using materials of a particularly sensitive nature employees should be aware of the danger that their selection could be misinterpreted and may be criticised after the event. Resources should promote equality of opportunity.

4.14 NOTES, RECORDS AND FILES

- Employees must store notes and records of individuals securely, and should not disclose personal information inappropriately.

Personal details such as addresses and phone numbers should be stored in a secure location.

4.15 CHANGES TO PROGRAMMES

- Employees must notify line managers of any significant changes to programmes agreed previously between the young person/parent/guardian etc, and inform other relevant adult, parents and guardians of changes, including early or late finishes.

4.16 TAKING PHOTOGRAPHS INCLUDING THE RELEASE OF MEDIA INFORMATION

- Employees must not take or use photographs of people without the written consent of the person, parents / school / guardians (If under 18). This includes video footage and any other digital imaging device.
- Reference to a young/vulnerable persons name, address or school must not be made unless specific consent is gained from parent/carers.
- Images/film taken should only be used for the following purposes
 1. Electronic and printed information, displays and exhibitions relating to activity shown in the picture.
 2. Any similar campaign or related area.
 3. Any promotional activity to publicise the Service's work to the public.

4.17 DATA PROTECTION / SHARING

The Service has arrangements registered with the Data Protection Commissioner to share pertinent information with other agencies dealing with child/adult protection or the reduction of crime. Data sharing will only be undertaken with the express permission of the Station Manager Prevention.

- A data protection consent form will be used wherever personal details about young people are to be stored in any data storage format. The form must be signed by the person's parent or guardian in all cases.
- Employees must record the details of any personal involvement with young/vulnerable people in a Case File for this purpose. Personal involvement is defined as an activity aimed solely at one individual. The Case File must be secured from other people at all times and should contain an Activity log which summarises the date, times, people involved and actions taken. Once the Case File is complete / closed, then the file must be sent to the Equality and Safeguarding Officer, under Confidential Cover, for secure storage.

- Electronic records will be kept until the person who has been dealt with has reached the age of 25. Personal information will then be deleted and records securely destroyed.

4.18 SCHOOL / AGENCY RESPONSIBILITIES

- During school visits – a teacher must be present at all times. The School not our employees have responsibility for the children.
- Where a partnership initiative has been arranged with other agencies involved in working with young people then the same principle as above applies.
- This must be made clear in writing, as follows:

“The North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service must make it clear that it is the (Schools / Agencies) responsibility to ensure that a member of their staff is present at all times, both for the safety and supervision of the young people involved. This also facilitates the communication to our employees of any of their actions that, in the opinion of your (School / Agency) are unsafe or inappropriate.”

4.19 DISCLOSURE AND BARRING SCHEME

Employees involved in activities involving substantial access to children and vulnerable adults are required to undergo a mandatory enhanced disclosure and barring check. The service will check to ensure their suitability for working with children and vulnerable adults. All personal information collected in the course of such arrangements will be treated with the utmost confidence.

All checks funded by North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service will be at the enhanced level and checking that the person is not on any barring list

The enhanced Disclosure also identifies whether the person is barred from working in regulated activity with the group they are applying to work for, for example, whether they are barred from working with children.

Under DBS regulations, DBS disclosure certificates/notifications can usually only be kept for 6 months, but a record should be kept of the date the disclosure was obtained and who by, the level of the disclosure and the unique reference number.

Checks will be carried out in the following circumstances

All activities that involve working with children will be designed so as to eliminate unnecessary substantial access to children. This is defined as;

- An opportunity at which regular contact exists over a period of time with the same children during an activity or series of activities.
- An opportunity exists to develop a relationship with a child over a period of time.

Substantial access is not;

- Single visits to different school classes, groups of children, or children making single visits to fire stations. In these circumstances this is defined as 'coming into contact' with children.
- The presence of an independent responsible person at all times whilst the activity takes place, e.g. a supervising teacher, may also support a conclusion that substantial access has not occurred.

Strict confidentiality will be established and maintained throughout the entire process and all fees incurred in obtaining a disclosure will be met by the Service.

NYFRS will require a renewed Disclosure Notification to be sought from the Disclosure Service every 5 years.

4.20 RESPONSIBILITIES WITHIN THE PROTECTION POLICY

All employees of North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service are responsible for the operation of North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service Protection Policy.

Enshrined in this policy are two key principles:

- The welfare of the child/vulnerable adult is the paramount consideration
- All persons, regardless of age, disability, gender, racial or ethnic origin, religious belief and sexual identity have a right to protection from harm or abuse

It is the responsibility of all employees to ensure that:

- Their behaviour is appropriate at all times;
- They observe the rules established for the safety and security of young people and vulnerable adults;
- They follow the procedures following suspicion, disclosure or allegation of child abuse.
- They recognise the position of trust in which they have been placed; and,
- In every respect, the relationships they form with the young people and vulnerable adults under their care are appropriate.

Note: the guidelines Young People First, sets out a code of behaviour.

It is not expected that staff will act as child/adult protection workers or that they will be trained to intervene in cases of suspected abuse.

The Equality and Safeguarding Officer will have the responsibility of advising employees on the implementation of the Protection Policy within the Service area and assist employees and others involved in projects with young/vulnerable people, in operating the policy and its procedures.

The Group Manager must be satisfied that all those who wish to take part in activities which involve young people are fit and proper persons and must ensure that all such employees demonstrate an understanding of, and a commitment to, the principles and procedures supporting the Service's Protection Policy.

All employees must be satisfied that all those whom they invite to assist them in working with young people are fit and proper persons to carry out the tasks to be given to them and are aware of their responsibilities under the Protection Policy.

In cases where there is an allegation or suspicion of abuse the line manager, Equality and Safeguarding Officer, Station Manager Prevention, as appropriate, must immediately take steps to ensure that no situation arises which could cause further concern and that no employee is placed in a position which could cause further compromise.

Where urgent issues of protection are involved the Group Manager has the authority to withdraw the employee concerned from further activities involving young people/vulnerable adults.

4.21 CHILD ABUSE

It is important to remember, that it is not your responsibility to decide whether a child is being, or has been, abused or whether or not someone poses a "real" risk to the welfare of a child. You are not suddenly expected to be an expert on child abuse. It is, however, your moral responsibility to take action to prevent the suffering of a child or children and it is your duty under these instructions as an employee of North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service.

You may become aware of the possibility of abuse through any number of means. Staff who for any reason become concerned that a child may be at risk, is being or has been abused either by:

- A member of staff;
- A member of their family;
- Any other person, including another child;
- Themselves - self abuse;
- Or is told by a child that they are being, or have been abused;

Must report that concern to a designated person at the earliest opportunity.

Note:

Should the situation require an immediate response, e.g. the child is in need of urgent medical treatment or in the case of on-going violence, or the threat of violence, Police assistance being required, the necessary actions should be taken without delay and these instructions then followed. The police will be informed whenever an emergency intervention has occurred by the person making the emergency intervention. The conflicts that may exist as regards to Fire and Rescue Service neutrality are secondary to the well being and safety of the child

The North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service designated persons consist of the Station Manager Prevention or the Equality and Safeguarding Officer. They can be reached via the contact numbers in the attached appendix or out of hours through Fire and Rescue Service Control. Staff making a referral in either instance should initially request to speak to the designated officer on a "child protection matter." Such a referral will always be treated within the Service as a priority issue. The designated person's role will be to give advice and determine the appropriate follow-up action to be taken. This is seen as a filter to ensure that any action taken are appropriate according to the nature of the concerns raised. If any doubt exists regarding the actual or potential harming of a child, that action will include the notification of the relevant Social Services Department (contact numbers are listed in appendix 1). This procedure applies irrespective of whether that harm is perceived to come from a member of their family, another person including another child, or from a member of staff. Where those concerns relate to a member of North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service staff the designated person/s will also ensure that the relevant internal procedures are initiated.

4.22 WHAT YOU SHOULD DO IF YOU SUSPECT ABUSE

- You must report concerns as soon as possible to the Equality and Safeguarding Officer on 01609 788574 or 07740301430 who is the Safeguarding Officer nominated by North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service to act on their behalf in referring allegations of suspicions of neglect or abuse to the statutory authorities. In the absence of the designated person the matter should be brought to the attention of the Station Manager Prevention on 01609 780150 or 07824695216 who is the Deputy Safeguarding Officer. If it is an emergency and the designated persons cannot be contacted then social services or the police should be contacted on the numbers stated in the contact list.
- If the suspicions relates to the designated persons, then Social Services should be contacted.
- Suspicions should not be discussed with anyone, other than those named above.
- It is the right of any individual to make direct referrals to the child protection or Adult service. We would hope that an individual would use this procedure. However, if you feel that the organisation has not responded appropriately to your concerns, it is open to you to contact the relevant agencies direct.

4.22 ALLEGATIONS OF PHYSICAL INJURY, EMOTIONAL ABUSE OR NEGLECT

If a person has an injury which may be a non-accidental injury, or symptoms of neglect and a referral is to be made then:

- The designated person should contact Social Services. If there has been a deliberate injury or where there are concerns about the persons safety the

persons next of kin should not be contacted before first consulting with social services.

- Where emergency medical attention is necessary it should be sought immediately. The designated person should inform the doctor of any suspicions of abuse.
- If a referral is being made without the parent's knowledge and non urgent medical treatment is required, Social Services should be informed. Otherwise. Speak to the parent/carer and suggest medical attention be sought for the child.
- If appropriate the parent/carer should be encouraged to seek help from the Social Services Department prior to a referral being made. If they fail to do so in situations of real concern the designated persons will contact Social Care Department direct for advice.

4.23 ALLEGATIONS OF SEXUAL ABUSE

In the event of allegations of sexual abuse the designated person will:

- Contact Social Care Department or Police Child Protection Team direct. The designated person will not speak to the parents.
- Under no circumstances should the designated person, or any other member of the organisation, attempt to carry out any investigation into the allegations or suspicious of sexual abuse. The role of the designated person is to collect the exact details of the allegations or suspicion and to provide this information to the protection agencies that will investigate the matter.

4.24 WHAT TO DO ONCE ABUSE HAS BEEN DISCLOSED

- Make a note immediately of what has been said, writing down exactly what the person has said, write down what you said in reply, when they said it and what was happening immediately beforehand. Record dates and times of the events and when the record was made. Keep all notes secure.
 - Report your discussion as soon as possible to the designated person.
 - In the absence of the designated person the matter should be brought to the attention of the senior officer on duty. If it is an emergency and the designated persons cannot be contacted then social services or the police should be contacted.

Send a full written record within 24 hours to the designated person marked "Urgent, Protection Issue – Confidential".

- Once a child/vulnerable adult has talked about abuse the designated person must consider if it is safe for that person to return home to a potentially abusive situation. On a rare occasion it might be necessary to take

immediate action to contact Social Care Department and/or the police to discuss putting into effect safety measures for the person so that they do not return home.

- It is generally accepted that 12 years old is the age a child is deemed responsible enough to make decisions for themselves regarding information sharing, however if a child supplies you with information and you have concerns that a criminal act has occurred, the child is at risk or likely to be at risk or there is a detrimental effect on the wellbeing, of that child, you have a duty to report these concerns.
- Under the Children's Act the legal definition of a child is any young person under 18 years of age.

4.25 DEALING WITH COMPLAINTS AND ALLEGATIONS AGAINST STAFF INVOLVED WITH CHILDREN/VULNERABLE ADULTS

Complaints should be dealt with in accordance with the Complaints Procedure. Allegations against staff or volunteers will be investigated. All allegations or complaints about staff should be referred to the Head of Central Administration Office at Service Headquarters. If the complaint is specific to safeguarding then a copy of the complaint should also be sent to the designated person. If the allegation concerns the designated person it must be reported directly to the Head of Central Administration Office. As necessary the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) will be notified in accordance with Government guidance. The LADO will take overall responsibility for ensuring The Service operates procedures for dealing with allegations against an individual.

It is appreciated that there may be times when an employee of the Service feels unable to use the set procedures, in these circumstances the Chief Fire Officers confidential hotline (telephone number 01609 780132) is available. Please refer to the Whistleblowing Policy which can be located in Sharepoint, Document Centre.

Where there are concerns that a person has been put in danger of abuse or suffered abuse owing to the actions of a member of staff or volunteer, Children's Social Care or Adult Social Care or the Police will be contacted. Details of any allegation which has not resulted in a referral will be kept securely in the same way.

When making the referral the following information should be provided where known: Your own details i.e. name, designation, contact number.

- Information about the PERSON such as their name, date of birth, gender, ethnic origin, religion and any disability.
- The name of the school the child attends where appropriate.
- The names of the primary carers if known.
- Any other names may be known by.
- Their address and any previous known addresses where the child or family may have lived.
- The name of the GP where known/appropriate.

- Details of the concern (if an incident, the time, place and any persons present).
- The source of the information.
- Whether the person/family are aware of the referral, and if they were made aware their response to the concerns.

Before ending this conversation the social worker should be asked to clarify:

- What actions, if any, will be taken and by whom.
- What the person seeking advice should do if there are further concerns.

This information passed and the name and designation of the social worker to which the details have been passed should always be taken and recorded. The referral must be confirmed in writing by the person making the referral within 48 hours to the Social Services Department.

The initial reporting person must always record details of all information given/received in writing. (The form attached to this Guidance Note may be used for this purpose). Where applicable the child's own words should always be noted. Any notes taken must be signed and dated. The report must be sent in a sealed envelope by hand clearly marked "Urgent Confidential Protection Issue" to the designated officer dealing with the matter within 24 hours of the initial referral being made. Receipt of this information should be confirmed to the reporting person.

Where there are concerns but doubt exists as to whether a child is suffering, likely to suffer significant harm or whether behavior may be abusive and it is uncertain whether a full referral could be made, the Social Services Duty Officer can be contacted via the designated person as outlined above to seek advice.

If concerns are raised by something staff become aware of while in a school, through a school related activity undertaken in the course of their work, or whilst interacting with another agency or body they must immediately ask for and inform the schools or Organisations Child Protection 'designated teacher'/person, and then follow the instructions as outlined above. A letter will be sent to the school/organisation by the North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service designated person, confirming that concerns have been passed to the appropriate person within that school/organisation

It is recognised that fire and rescue service staff do, on occasions, visit, or assist in schools or other youth organisations in their own time for other purposes. These instructions therefore cannot necessarily apply to non-fire and rescue service or external voluntary activities. However, it is strongly recommended, that you ensure that the organisation is aware of the need for a Protection Policy and that where one exists you work within its parameters at all times.

If no Protection Policy exists then the principles contained within this Policy should be followed.

Best practice in protection does not depend on whether or not you are acting in an official capacity. Nor does the lack of a policy allow best practice to be ignored.

4.26 GOOD PRACTICE INFORMATION GUIDE

This guide provides advice which will help to identify and implement good practices when working with, or coming into contact with children and young people. It has been developed to protect children and all members of the Fire and Rescue Service in their involvement in this valuable work. It is based on the principle of the Fire and Rescue Service being open and transparent in all of its dealings. As such, it follows advice received from professional bodies with the aim that this should be applied utilising practical common sense.

4.27 PREVENT

Prevent is part of the National counter-terrorist strategy. Its aim is to stop people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism. Terrorism, it's less obvious, sometimes hidden activity that builds, leading to the attack itself.

The Prevent strategy has three specific strategic objectives:

- respond to the ideological challenge of terrorism and the threat we face from those who promote it;
- prevent people from being drawn into terrorism and ensure that they are given appropriate advice and support; and
- work with sectors and institutions where there are risks of radicalisation that we need to address.

The Government remains absolutely committed to protecting freedom of speech in England and Wales. But preventing terrorism will mean challenging extremist (and non-violent) ideas that are also part of a terrorist ideology. Prevent will also mean intervening to stop people moving from extremist groups or from extremism into terrorist-related activity.

We define 'extremism' as vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs. We also include in our definition of extremism calls for death of members of our armed forces, whether in this country or overseas.

A wide range of sectors in this country are helping to prevent people becoming terrorists or supporting extremist activities. The way Government works with particular sectors will vary. Priority areas include education, faith, health, criminal justice and charities. The internet is also included here as a sector in its own right.

During the course of your work there may be occasions when you see or believe a person is involved or becoming involved in extremist activities.

Signs of this could be a change in a person's behaviour, leaflets or posters in a house, words or phrases a person uses, flags hung on walls or unusual products in a house (large amounts of chemicals).

If you see any of these warning signs a referral should be made to the Safeguarding Team as soon as possible. safeguarding@northyorkshire.gov.uk

All referrals should be made on the Referral Form located in the Forms Directory in SharePoint.

The form should contain as much information as possible regarding the issues which have raised your concerns.

The form will then automatically be forwarded to the Safeguarding Team. They will ensure that the correct authorities are made aware of the information.

If you have any concerns about making a referral, or if you have any questions or feel you require some advice call the Equality and Safeguarding Officer or the Station Manager Prevention.

The Government remains absolutely committed to protecting freedom of speech in England and Wales. But preventing terrorism will mean challenging extremist (and non-violent) ideas that are also part of a terrorist ideology.

Prevent will also mean intervening to stop people moving from extremist groups or from extremism into terrorist-related activity.

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Prevent will also mean intervening to stop people moving from extremist groups or from extremism into terrorist-related activity.

Channel

Channel is a programme which focuses on providing support at an early stage to people who are identified as being vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism. The programme uses a multi-agency approach to protect vulnerable people by:

- identifying individuals at risk;
- assessing the nature and extent of that risk; and
- developing the most appropriate support plan for the individuals concerned.

Channel may be appropriate for anyone who is vulnerable to being drawn into any form of terrorism. Channel is about ensuring that vulnerable children and adults of any faith, ethnicity or background receive support before their vulnerabilities are

exploited by those that would want them to embrace terrorism, and before they become involved in criminal terrorist related activity.

PART 1 GENERAL GOOD PRACTICE

- 1.1 Remember at all times to provide an example you wish others to follow. Always treat everyone with respect and try to develop a culture in which everyone feels comfortable enough to point out inappropriate attitudes and behaviour to each other.
- 1.2 The principles of Risk Assessment should be applied to all activities undertaken to ensure that a satisfactory balance is achieved between the value of the activity undertaken and the risk involved.
- 1.3 There may be other considerations that have to be taken into account, for example, when undertaking 'adventure' type activities. Full consideration should be given to any additional measures that may be required depending upon the type of activity to be undertaken. For example, activities involving overnight accommodation will need special considerations relating to sleeping and washing facilities, additional to those same activities undertaken during a normal daytime training session.
- 1.4 Do not permit abusive peer activities (e.g. initiation ceremonies, ridiculing, bullying) to take place. Do not engage in or allow physical contact games with young people or make suggestive remarks or gestures and never show favoritism to any individual. Personal favoritism or special treatment, for instance rewards, and in particular 'known in advance' reward schemes should be avoided. Rewards must never be used to gain an individual's or groups confidence or trust.
- 1.5 Always respect a person's right to personal privacy. Never enter a room where a person may be changing their clothes or not be fully dressed. Adequate provision must also be made to ensure that children cannot enter areas where adults are changing/showering etc.
- 1.6 There should be a process for people to talk about any concerns they may have. Recognise that caution is required particularly in sensitive moments of support, such as when dealing with bullying, bereavement or abuse.

Always be mindful that:

- You may not be the appropriate person to deal with the situation.
- You should never promise to keep what a person tells you completely confidential, as you may need to take it further.
- Young people/vulnerable people undertaking Fire Service activities i.e. Young Firefighter schemes etc, should be informed of any alternative counseling advice available to them via the Fire Service.

- 1.7 Plan to always work with a minimum of two adults present (see also 1.11). Consideration must be given to ensuring mixed gender teams as appropriate. Always avoid unobserved situations of one-to-one contact with a child. If it is unavoidable, keep a door open and ensure you are within the hearing of others. Alternatively, consider using open spaces i.e. drill yards where you are in clear view of others, but a degree of privacy from being overheard can still be achieved. Wherever possible work in pairs utilising 'other' professional people or responsible adults where necessary.
- 1.8 Never transport or offer to transport children alone, in your car or a Fire Service vehicle. In exceptional circumstances the **Station Manager Prevention or Watch Manager Prevention must** be contacted for advice.
- 1.9 Never allow yourself to be drawn into inappropriate attention seeking behaviour.
- 1.10 Remember that someone else might misinterpret your actions, no matter how well intentioned.
- 1.11 Never exaggerate or trivialise abuse issues and never let allegations by a child go unreported, including any made against you.

PART 2 ADVICE ON PHYSICAL CONTACT

- 2.12 Staff are likely to come into physical contact with people from time to time in the course of their duties. Examples include showing a person how to use a piece of apparatus, equipment or demonstrating a move or exercise during an activity. Staff should be aware of the limits within which such contact should properly take place, and of the possibility of such contact being misinterpreted.

It is unacceptable to use repeated touching as a style of working or as a way of relating to individuals.

Any form of physical punishment of young people is unlawful.

- 2.13 In certain circumstances a person's behaviour or their actions may endanger themselves or other people. If such an incident were to occur the following procedure must be followed:
 - Draw the attention of the young person to their behaviour and make it clear that this needs to stop.
 - If this is unsuccessful the activity must be stopped immediately, taking into account safety requirements.
 - Physical intervention should not normally be carried out by Fire and Rescue Service personnel.
 - However, Fire and Rescue Service personnel are allowed to physically intervene in such emergency situations where, if they were not to intervene, there would be real and actual risk to person/s. Such intervention must only be sufficient and appropriate to contain the situation and prevent further injury or damage. All

instances of physical intervention must be reported to the designated responsible person. Personnel undertaking work with persons where the risk assessment prior to the activity reveals the possibility of conflict, will undertake appropriate and where necessary specialised training in conflict resolution or a similar training programme, before undertaking the activity.

PART 3 INFORMATION AND ADVICE ON CHILD ABUSE

IF A CHILD TELLS YOU THEY ARE BEING ABUSED

Children/vulnerable adults will occasionally disclose abuse to an adult they have come to feel they can trust. This happens for many reasons, but the important thing to remember is that if they do tell you they are doing so in the hope that you will act to stop it happening, even if they ask you not to do anything with the information. Tell them that you will have to inform the designated person and that the statutory authorities will also have to be informed.

They may feel as if they are betraying someone they are close to and whom they love. It is not unusual for an abused child/ vulnerable adult to love the abuser but want the abuse to stop, especially when that person is a parent or carer. Equally it may be someone they fear, e.g. an adult whom they perceive to be able to influence decisions concerning their future. Either way, it takes great courage to talk to someone about abuse and your response can be crucial.

If abuse is disclosed to you in the course of your work it is important to react appropriately.

Do:

Remain calm and receptive.

Listen without interrupting; only ask questions of clarification if you are unclear what the person is saying.

Make it clear you take them seriously.

Acknowledge their courage in telling you.

Tell them they are not responsible for the abuse.

Let them know you will do what you can to help them.

Do not:

Allow your shock or distaste to show.

Probe for more information/ask other questions.

Make assumptions or speculate.

Make negative comments about the abuser.

Make promises you cannot keep.

Agree to keep the information secret.

It is important to remember too that it can be more difficult for some people to tell than for others. People who have experienced prejudice and discrimination through racism may well believe that people from other ethnic groups or backgrounds don't

really care about them. They may have little reason to trust those they see as authority figures and may wonder whether you will be any different.

People with a disability may also have to overcome additional barriers before disclosing abuse. They may well rely on the abuser for their daily care and have no knowledge of alternative sources. They may have come to believe they are of little worth and simply comply with the instructions of adults.

Therefore, it is essential that everything possible is done to protect the person who places their trust in us.

If a child/vulnerable adult tells you that they are being or have been abused you must:

- Make an immediate record of what the child has said, if possible using their own words.
- Follow the instructions for reporting to a designated person.

AIDE MEMOIRE - REFERRAL PROCEDURE

The Service's Protection Policy "Designated Person" is the Equality and Safeguarding Officer

The role of the "Designated Person" is to:

1. Act as an official contact with Children's Social Care Department and any other involved Statutory Authority in the matter of a Protection referral.
2. To instigate any internal actions that may be necessary following a referral being made.

The referral procedure set down requires members of staff in the case of a referral to contact the Service's designated person. This is done directly in office hours, and out of office hours via Control using the statement - "This is a protection matter".

Where available set information should be provided by the member of staff to the Equality and Safeguarding Officer. A check proforma, copy included overleaf, is provided for ease of use.

The designated person's role will be to give initial advice and determine the appropriate follow-up action to be taken. If any doubt exists regarding the actual or potential harming of a child/vulnerable adult, that follow-up action will always include the notification of the relevant Social Services Department (contact numbers are listed below). This procedure applies irrespective of whether that harm is perceived to come from a member of their family, another person, including another child, or from a member of staff.

It is not strictly necessary for the designated person to make the referral themselves. It is, however, their responsibility to ensure the referral is made without delay whilst maintaining appropriate confidentiality. It must also be ensured that:

The relevant Social Worker receiving the call clarifies what actions, if any, will be taken and what the person seeking advice should do if there are further concerns. The nature of the information passed and the name and designation of the Social Worker to whom the details have been passed is taken and recorded.

Telephone contact numbers are as attached

Please state initially that you wish to make a referral

North Yorkshir Fire and Rescue Service Safeguarding Procedures

If a child/vulnerable adult tells they are or have been abused you must:

- Listen and do not promise confidentiality
- Keep calm, reassure and do not ask leading questions.
- Allow the child to finish and tell them what you will do.
- Make an immediate record of what the person has said, if possible using their own words. Record dates and times.
- Inform the designated person without delay.
- If the designated person/s are unavailable contact Children's Social Care Dept direct on 0845 034 9410 or Adult Social care as appropriate.
- Send out a full written record within 24 hours to the designated person marked "Urgent Protection Issue– Confidential".
- The designated person when making a referral to Children's Social Care Dept or Adult social care as appropriate must confirm the referral in writing within 48 hours.

Abuse requiring an immediate response

- Make immediate Children/Adult Social Care Dept, Police or medical referral.
- Inform the designated person without delay
- Send a full written statement within 24 hours to the designated person marked "Urgent Protection Issue – Confidential".

If you suspect a child/vulnerable person is the subject of abuse or neglect you must:

- Determine whether you suspect the child to be in immediate danger of harm and if so respond as outlined above.
- If you feel the child appears not to be in immediate danger of harm you must inform the designated person without delay.
- Send a full written statement within 24 hours to the designated person marked "Urgent Child Protection – Confidential"
- The designated person when making a referral to Children's Social Care or Adult Social Care must confirm the referral in writing within 48 hours.

YOUNG PEOPLE FIRST

The following is a Code of behaviour for adults involved in such activities and provides advice on handling matters of suspected or alleged abuse.

YOUNG PEOPLE FIRST

A CODE OF GOOD PRACTICE FOR NORTH YORKSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE EMPLOYEES WORKING WITH YOUNG or VULNERABLE PEOPLE

It is the policy of the North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service to safeguard the welfare of all young/vulnerable people by protecting them from physical, sexual, and emotional harm.

CODE OF BEHAVIOUR

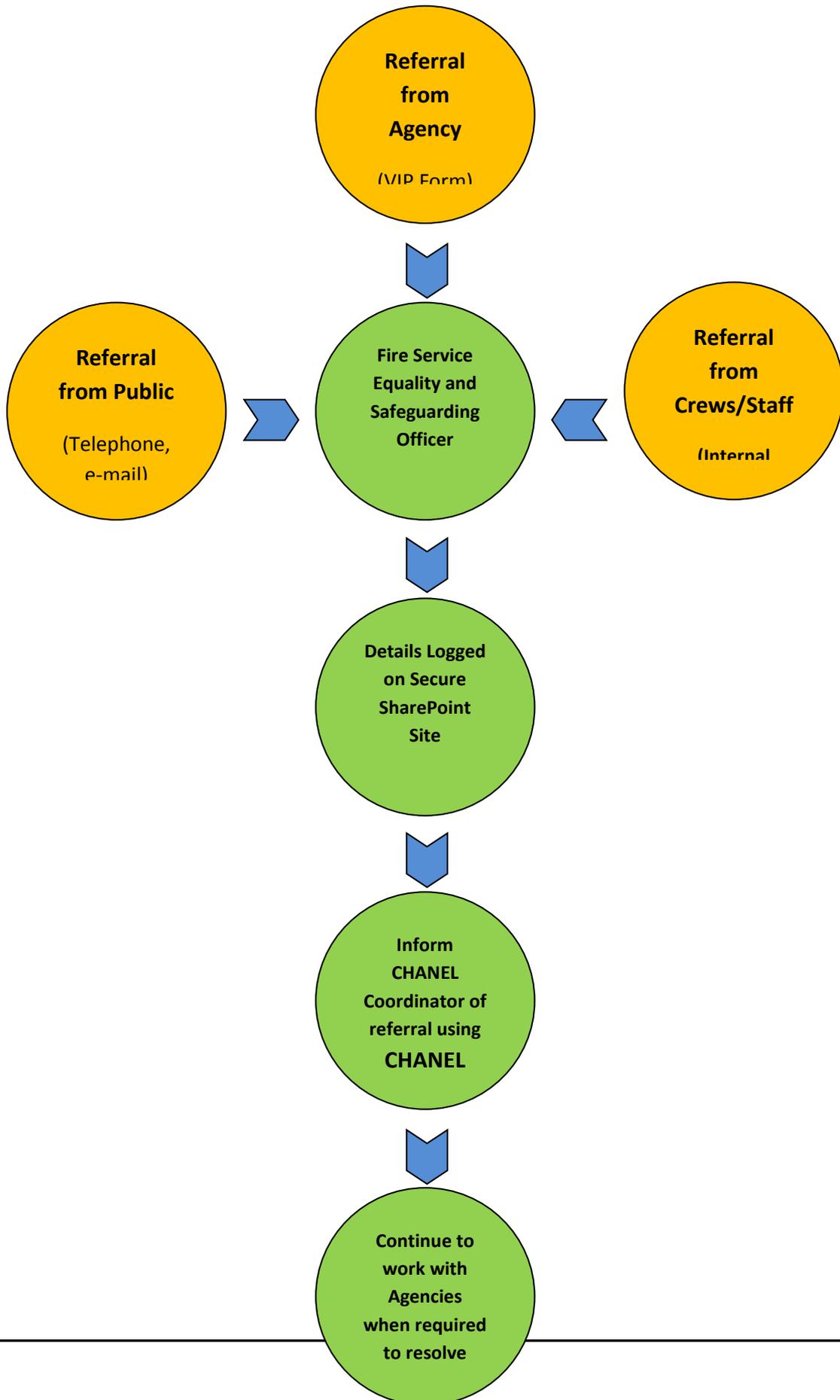
- DO put the “Young People First” guidance into practice.
 - DO treat everyone with respect
 - DO provide an example you would wish others to follow.
 - DO plan activities which involve more than one other person being present, and/or are within sight or hearing of others.
 - DO respect a young person’s right to personal privacy.
 - DO provide access for younger people to talk to others about any concerns they have.
 - DO encourage young people and adults to feel comfortable and able to discuss attitudes or behaviour they do not like.
 - DO avoid situations that compromise your professional relationship with young people. Encourage a relationship of trust.
 - DO remember that someone else might misinterpret your action, no matter how well intentioned.
 - DO recognise that caution is required when dealing with allegations of bullying, bereavement or abuse.
-
- DO NOT play physical contact games with young/vulnerable people
 - DO NOT have any inappropriate physical or verbal contact with others
 - DO NOT jump to conclusions about others without checking facts
 - DO NOT allow yourself to be drawn into inappropriate attention seeking behaviour, tantrums or crushes.
 - DO NOT exaggerate or trivialise child-abuse issues.
 - DO NOT show favoritism to any individual.
 - DO NOT make suggestive remarks or gestures, even in fun.
 - DO NOT let suspicion, disclosure or allegation of abuse, go unrecorded or unreported
 - DO NOT rely on just your good name to protect you
 - DO NOT believe “it could never happen to me”.
 - DO NOT take photographs of young/vulnerable people – without their parents / guardians WRITTEN permission

USEFUL NUMBERS

North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service		
Station Manager Prevention	01609 788546	07824695216
Equality and Safeguarding Officer	01609 788574	07740301430
Control	01609 788595	

Other Organisations	
Adult Social Care	North Yorkshire 08450349410 York 01904 555111
York and North Yorkshire Children's Social Care Department	Open Monday to Friday 8.30am to 6.00pm; Saturday 9.00am to 12.00pm. 0845 034 9410 Emergency Duty Team (all other hours) 0845 034 9417
North Yorkshire Police	Family Protection Unit Central 01904 669303 East 01609 789464 West 01423 539365 Out of hours 01609 783131

Referral Map



APPENDIX
STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL
Record of referral

SECTION A: NORTH YORKSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE DETAILS

Name:

Designation:

Department:
(I.e. Children's Services)
Contact Number

Person Receiving Referral

SECTION B: INFORMATION ABOUT THE CHILD

First name
Surname
Date of birth
Age
Any other name child / family known by
Gender
Ethnic origin
Disability (if any)
Current address, including post code

Name of primary carers
Child's GP (if known)

Please turn over

SECTION C: DETAILS OF CASE

Details of concern
(If an fire incident, include time, place and any persons present)

Source of information
(If different from above)
Is child aware of referral?
Is child/family aware of referral?
Parents/carers response if aware
Name/number
Name of Social Worker
Action to be taken

Date

SECTION D: GENERAL NOTES/FOLLOW UP ACTION

File Reference Number
File Location CFN Team

Referral made: YES / NO

Referral
made by (Signed).....Time.....

Name (please print)..... No.Date.....

5. POLICY GOVERNANCE

The following table identifies who within North Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Service is Accountable, Responsible, Informed or Consulted with regards to this policy. The following definitions apply:

- **Responsible** – the person(s) responsible for developing and implementing the policy.
- **Accountable** – the person who has ultimate accountability and authority for the policy.
N.B Only **one** role is held accountable.
- **Consulted** – the person(s) or groups to be consulted prior to final policy implementation or amendment.
- **Informed** – the person(s) or groups to be informed after policy implementation or amendment.

Responsible	Station Manager Prevention e.g. Head of Information Services, Head of Human Resources etc.
Accountable	Group Manager Prevention and Protection e.g. Chief Executive, Director of Finance etc.
Consulted	North Yorkshire Safeguarding Board e.g. Policy Department, Employee Panels, Unions etc.
Informed	All Employees e.g. All Employees, All Temporary Staff, All Contractors etc.

6. REFERENCES

The following North Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Service policy documents are directly relevant to this policy, and are referenced within this:

- Young Persons Diversionary Schemes Policy
- Child Fire setter Network Policy
- LIFE Policy
- Young Fire-fighters Policy

The following North Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Service policy documents are indirectly relevant to this policy:

- Whistle Blowing Policy
- Gifts and Hospitality Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Equality Policy
- Code of Conduct
- Disclosusre and Barring Service Policy
- Harrasment and Bullying Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Lone Working Policy

* * * * *

If you have any questions concerning this policy or your obligations under it, you may direct them to either your line manager or Station Manager Prevention

contact details:

 07824695216

 bob.hoskins@northyorksfire.gov.uk

North Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Service

Thurston Road

Northallerton

North Yorkshire

DL6 2ND

www.northyorksfire.gov.uk