

7. REVIEW OF SAFEGUARDING POLICY, ANNUAL REPORT (2025-26) AND 2026-27 ACTION PLAN

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to seek approval of the revised Safeguarding Policy for 2026. The report also provides the annual safeguarding overview for the 2025/26 period, offering assurance that satisfactory safeguarding measures remain in place to ensure our legal duty of care in providing a safe environment for children and vulnerable adults who access our services. In addition, the report seeks approval of the proposed Safeguarding Action Plan for 2026/27.

2. Context

- 2.1** Public bodies are required to have due regard to making arrangements to safeguard children and vulnerable adults when delivering their work. The Authority has had a Safeguarding Policy and procedures in place for some time, with the current version ratified at the former Programmes and Resources Committee meeting on 24 January 2025 (Minute reference 5/25).
- 2.2** The Authority's Safeguarding Policy is reviewed annually to ensure that it remains up to date with both the Authority structure and arrangements to protect children and vulnerable adults who receive our services. Any changed circumstances are taken into account and improvements made wherever possible.
- 2.3** This year, the policy has been updated to reflect changes to the overall reporting arrangements to the Resources Committee, which will now take place once per year in April. The amendments also incorporate revised role and team names to ensure consistency with the current structure.
- 2.4** In 2025/26, a more systematic approach to assessing the safeguarding measures in place at the Authority was implemented. The Safeguarding Working Group used the National Society for the Protection of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) safety check standards checklist to review compliance with legislation and best practice and developed an action plan for the year.
- 2.5** The annual report summarises the work undertaken and the actions completed. The Safeguarding Working Group (SWG) agreed the report provides reassurance that the Authority has appropriate mechanisms in place and in a state of readiness to respond to any suspicions or allegations made.

3. Proposals

- 3.1** The new Safeguarding Policy (2026) should be ratified as Authority policy for adoption from 24 April 2026.
- 3.2** The work undertaken by the Safeguarding Working Group during 2025-26, and summarised in the annual report, which provides protection for children and vulnerable adults who receive our services, is recognised.
- 3.3** Proposals for specific matters to be addressed, as set out in the draft Safeguarding Action Plan 2026-27, are approved.

4. Recommendations

- 1. That the revised Safeguarding Policy (Appendix 1) be approved as Authority policy from 24 April 2026.**
- 2. The Safeguarding annual report 2025-26 (Appendix 2), is noted.**

3. The draft Action Plan for 2026-27 (Appendix 3), is approved.

5. Corporate Implications

a. Legal

Maintaining a safeguarding policy and having effective safeguarding procedures in place aligns with the range of legislation that requires various bodies to ensure that functions are discharged considering the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and vulnerable adults. Establishing awareness and knowledge throughout the Authority will also ensure co-operation and collaboration with other organisations to ensure an effective multi-agency approach.

b. Financial

There are no additional financial implications, as funds are already available.

c. National Park Management Plan and Authority Plan

Safeguarding supports the National Park Management Plan Objectives 8 and 9, and the Authority Plan Objective C, by ensuring the Peak District is a safe, welcoming, and inclusive place for all. Strong safeguarding practice protects vulnerable people engaging with our services, underpins confident and responsible use of the National Park, and enables staff and volunteers to carry out their roles in a secure and supportive environment.

d. Risk Management

The risks are managed according to the responsibilities set out in the Safeguarding Policy 2026 with the Safeguarding Working Group implementing the action plan.

e. Net Zero

No issues.

f. Equality

The Authority's policies and procedures must be compliant with the Authority's legal duty in relation to equality, and include the additional protections provided for children and vulnerable adults who access our services. All risk assessments must identify and address any specific adverse safeguarding impacts on a case-by-case basis.

6. Background papers (not previously published)

None

7. Appendices

Appendix 1 - Safeguarding Policy (2026)

Appendix 2 - Safeguarding Annual report 2025-26

Appendix 3 - Safeguarding Action Plan 2026-27

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