

SAFEGUARDING POLICY

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Drafted/amended by	Deirdre McCarthy	Approved by Board on	25 March 2026
Owner (role)	Chair/CEO	Scheduled review date	September 2026

SCOPE

The NWR Safeguarding Policy applies to all Staff, the Trustees, Volunteers or anyone working or volunteering for or on behalf of the organisation and Members.

Safeguarding is the responsibility of everyone, either within or acting on behalf of the organisation and all need to be alert to the potential of abuse.

WHAT IS SAFEGUARDING

Safeguarding means protecting someone's health, well-being and human rights enabling them to live free from harm, abuse and neglect.

The Government introduced new legislation - including the Care Act 2014 - to improve working between various agencies such as the Police, Social Services, the Health Service and other health and social care providers. Statutory Safeguarding Boards were established and formal case review processes introduced.

Whilst primary statutory responsibility for safeguarding rests with these bodies, Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. We all have a responsibility to look out for each other, especially those who are vulnerable because of their age, sex, ethnicity, religion or beliefs, physical and mental health capacity or financial circumstances.

Such individuals can become easy targets for abuse, bullying, discrimination, neglect and coercive behaviour by others thus preventing them from taking part in everyday life, making their own decisions or having access to what they need.

We expect everyone to treat each other with dignity and respect and we will not accept or condone any actions that undermine these principles or show discriminatory behaviour.

Many of our members are older adults and some will have disabilities and personal circumstances that could make them become vulnerable over time.

In this policy we set out the key Safeguarding principles that we will aim to follow:

- Empowerment - to focus on the individual being able to make their own decisions
- Prevention - to take steps to avoid matters escalating
- Proportionality - responding in a way that's proportionate to the situation
- Protection - keeping members safe and protection for those at risk

- Partnership - liaising with the statutory bodies and liaising with National Office for advice
- Accountability - recording information of incidents and reporting them as required to Statutory bodies

NWR has a duty of care to its members in relation to Safeguarding but it does not have any statutory authority. However, in accordance with good practice the CEO has been appointed as Safeguarding Officer.

SAFEGUARDING PROCEDURE

Instances and concerns about potential abuse and discriminatory behaviour are varied and may arise in different ways within the NWR membership. Our members may be perpetrators of abuse or victims of abuse. Issues can arise face to face, on-line in emails or on social media. For example, members may fall out about their behaviour and treatment of each other. Others may have concerns that a vulnerable member may be experiencing abuse in their life outside of NWR. Some members may not be aware their behaviour is causing offence and distress and others may not be aware of their rights or are too afraid to raise their concerns

Incidents will vary from matters of mild concern without any further risk to individuals to potentially criminal instances where there is significant risk to individuals and the wider membership. For these reasons it's important that issues are dealt with fairly, promptly and proportionately.

Where concerns and incidents about potential abuse and inappropriate behaviour cannot be resolved within a group, these should be made known to the Safeguarding Officer.

The Safeguarding Officer should be impartial and the wishes of victims respected regarding any further action. However in serious cases it may be necessary to override matters of confidentiality, Data Protection and the wishes of victims particularly where it is felt that they are at risk to either themselves or to others, and share information/report matters to the statutory authorities.

They will carry out a risk assessment to determine the level of harm and risk to the individual concerned, the wider membership, the reputation of NWR and the local community. This risk assessment will be recorded.

Next steps might range from having an informal word with individuals about behaviours, suspending a member from a group or NWR as a whole, accepting or requiring a carer or companion appropriate for the group, or signposting a member to other sources of help and support. A member lacking mental capacity might be excluded from activities where a risk assessment has deemed it unsafe. In serious cases, matters may need to be referred for formal investigation by the statutory authorities.

The outcome - not the detail - of cases and any action taken will be made known to the individuals concerned. In some situations it may be necessary to pursue the incident through the NWR complaints, disciplinary and grievance procedure.

GOVERNANCE

This policy and procedure will be reviewed in the light of experience of dealing with such cases and to take account of new legal requirements and best practice.

The Safeguarding Officer will raise awareness of their role amongst the wider membership. They will keep up to date with changes to Safeguarding legislation.

Document version history

Version	Description of changes	Date
2	Deirdre McCarthy, Marion Watts (Trustees) Jan Hayes (Member)	September 2024
3	Deirdre McCarthy – no changes to policy wording. Format changes	25 March 2026