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CHILD SAFEGUARDING POLICY

Key Contacts and Reporting Pathways

When a safeguarding concern arises, it is essential that staff, volunteers, parents, and external providers know exactly **who to speak to** and **how to get help quickly**. This section outlines the key individuals and services responsible for responding to child protection concerns within North Merchiston Club and across the wider safeguarding system in Edinburgh.

North Merchiston Club Safeguarding Contacts

Designated Child Protection Officer (DCPO):

Name: Caroline Roberts

Role: Club Manager

Email: caroline@northmerchiston.co.uk

Club Landline: 0131 622 1757

Deputy Safeguarding Contact (if DCPO unavailable):

Name: Iain Thomson

Role: Club Assistant

Email: iain.thomson@northmerchiston.co.uk

Club Landline: 0131 622 1757

If a child is in immediate danger, always call 999. If the concern does not require immediate police response but may indicate risk of harm, then below are contacts to consider.

- **Children and Families Social Care Direct (office hours):** 0131 200 2324, **Out of Hours (emergencies only):** 0800 731 6969. **Email:** socialcaredirect@edinburgh.gov.uk .

Police Scotland

- **Non-emergency (101)** For advice or to report a concern where there is no immediate danger. **Emergency (999)** - if a child is at risk of immediate significant harm.

National Safeguarding Helplines and Advice. NSPCC Helpline For professionals or adults with concerns about a child **Tel:** 0808 800 5000 (24/7). **Online advice and webchat:** www.nspcc.org.uk

Childline For children and young people seeking help. **Tel:** 0800 1111 (free and confidential). **Website:** www.childline.org.uk

Information for Parents and Carers

Parents who have a safeguarding concern involving their child or another child at North Merchiston Club can contact, The DCPO directly (Caroline Roberts), or raise it in writing for confidential follow-up

Disclosure Scotland – PVG Referrals

For referral of individuals removed from regulated work due to safeguarding concerns. **Website:** www.mygov.scot/disclosure-types We take all concerns seriously and will follow appropriate procedures, including referring to statutory agencies if necessary.

Signed: Kev Orme

Board Trustee Date: 1st November 2025

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1. Introduction and Commitment

1.1 Statement of Purpose

The North Merchiston Club (NMC), founded in 1921, provides community-based sporting and recreational facilities, services and activities for adults, children and families living within the boundaries of the City of Edinburgh Council. For over 100

years, the NMC has been working collaboratively within and across communities to identify needs that lead to new and improved initiatives. To this end, we currently support a programme of NMC run services and activities and provide facilities for a wide range of special interest groups delivered by specialists within our member community. We are open seven days a week, including the NMC Café 48. Having been a presence in our local community for over one hundred years we continue to be dedicated to:

- Providing a relaxed, affordable, inclusive and accessible environment.
- Giving people somewhere on their doorstep that can offer fun and respite.
- Advancing education and participation in sport and recreation.
- Promoting services that enhance the wellbeing of all ages.
- Working with authorities & voluntary organisations with similar objectives.

This Child Protection Policy outlines North Merchiston Club's commitment to safeguarding children and young people who participate in activities run by us. Its purpose is to ensure we;

- Promote the well-being, dignity and rights of every child.
- Prevent harm, abuse, neglect and exploitation.
- Respond swiftly and appropriately to concerns or allegations.
- Support children to feel heard, included, and protected.

This policy applies to all Trustees, Staff, Volunteers, Coaches, Officials, and Members of the Club. Please note that all Third-party hirers must have their own Safeguarding Policy and Disclosure Verification in place as a condition of the rental of our facilities, or undertake to follow the Club Policy.

1.2 Guiding Principles

Our **Principles** inform all safeguarding decisions at North Merchiston, namely that,

- The safety and well-being of children is our top priority.
- Children have the right to be protected from harm, regardless of age, gender,

- ability, background, or beliefs.
- All concerns about a child's welfare will be taken seriously and responded to promptly.
- Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.

This policy provides a framework for safe practice and outlines how we create a safe environment through robust procedures, shared responsibilities, and a community-wide safeguarding culture. Our approach to child safeguarding is underpinned by Scottish Government frameworks, in particular:

- **Getting It Right for Every Child (GIRFEC):** ensuring every child's wellbeing is central to decision-making.
- **The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC):** particularly Article 19 – the right to be protected from all forms of harm.
- **The National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland (2021):** the main Framework for recognising, responding to, and preventing child abuse in Scotland.

1.3 Definitions and Terminology

- **Child or young person:** Anyone under the age of 18, in line with the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014.
- **Child protection:** The process of protecting a child who may be at risk of, or is experiencing, significant harm.
- **Safeguarding:** Wider activity to promote the well-being of children and prevent harm from occurring in the first place.
- **Staff:** employees and, coaches contracted to North Merchiston Club.
- **Volunteers:** Individuals who contribute time to the club in an unpaid capacity.
- **Third-party Hirers :** Any individual or organisation that hires space from North Merchiston to deliver activities for children, not directly run by the Club., including Trustees.
- **Designated Child Protection Officer (DCPO):** The named individual responsible for leading child protection procedures at North Merchiston Club.

2. Scope of the Policy

2.1 Who the Policy Applies To

This policy applies to **everyone** who is involved in delivering, managing, or supporting any activity for children and young people in the Club, including: Trustees, Employees, Volunteers, Contractors, Freelancer, External or third-party activity providers who use the Club's facilities to run their own events for children, Visitors, Guests, or other adults engaging directly with children on our premises. Whether individuals are working full-time, part-time, paid, or unpaid, if they are engaging with children at the Club, they are expected to follow this policy and uphold the North Merchiston club's safeguarding standards.

2.2 Activities and Settings Covered

This policy covers all activities hosted by North Merchiston that involve children or young people under the age of 18, as well as activities held by external hirers (third-party providers) on our premises where children are present. Or with the agreement of the Club, they provide and adhere to their own Safeguarding Policy.

2.3 Safeguarding Responsibilities Across Roles

All individuals covered by this policy are expected to,

- Prioritise the safety and well-being of every child.
- Understand and follow the procedures outlined in this policy.
- Be alert to signs of abuse, harm, or neglect and know how to respond.
- Uphold professional boundaries and adhere to our Code of Conduct.
- Report any concerns or breaches of policy to the Designated Child Protection Officer (DCPO) or their deputy.

While North Merchiston club retains overall responsibility for safeguarding and will provide leadership through our DCPO and management team, safeguarding is a shared responsibility. Every adult working with or around children at the Club has a duty to keep them safe.

This policy applies equally when the child is attending a North Merchiston Club activity, the child is attending a session run by a third party hiring our venue. In either scenario, the adult(s) delivering the activity must be appropriately vetted, trained, and responsible for implementing safeguarding procedures in line with this policy or an approved equivalent.

3. Legal and Policy Framework

North Merchiston Club operates in full alignment with Scotland's national safeguarding guidance and local child protection arrangements. This section outlines the legislation, frameworks, and inter-agency protocols that form the legal and professional basis for our policy. These frameworks guide how we recognise, prevent, and respond to harm.

3.1 National Guidance and Legislation

Our child protection policy is informed by the following key frameworks and legislation:

Getting It Right for Every Child (GIRFEC)

GIRFEC is the national approach to improving the well-being of children and young people in Scotland. It defines wellbeing through eight indicators: **Safe, Healthy, Achieving, Nurtured, Active, Respected, Responsible, and Included (SHANARRI)**.

The Club adopts GIRFEC as a guiding framework, ensuring that all safeguarding decisions and interactions with children aim to promote their overall wellbeing, not just respond to risks. Under GIRFEC, information sharing must be lawful, necessary, and proportionate to support a child's wellbeing. The Club ensures that:

- Information is only shared when there is a legitimate purpose related to promoting or safeguarding a child's wellbeing.
- The minimum necessary information is shared to achieve the intended outcome.
- Sharing complies with data protection legislation (UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018).

- Children, young people, and families are informed about what information will be shared and why, unless doing so would place the child at risk.
- All decisions to share information are recorded, including the rationale for sharing, what was shared, with whom, and when.
- Staff document the legal basis for sharing (e.g., consent, legitimate interests, or protection of vital interests).
- records demonstrate how the decision supports the child's wellbeing and is proportionate to the identified need or concern.

This approach ensures transparency, accountability, and that information sharing genuinely serves the best interests of children and young people while respecting their rights and those of their families.

National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland (2021, updated 2023)

This is the core document outlining how to identify and respond to child protection concerns. It defines key terms, thresholds for intervention, and roles of organisations. Our procedures reflect the principles of this guidance, particularly the emphasis on early identification, multi-agency working, and placing the child's best interests at the centre of all action.

Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014

This Act enhances children's rights in Scotland and provides the legislative foundation for GIRFEC. It affirms that a child is anyone under 18 and places duties on services to support children's wellbeing.

Protection of Vulnerable Groups (Scotland) Act 2007

This Act introduced the PVG Scheme, operated by Disclosure Scotland. It is illegal to knowingly allow a barred person to work with children. North Merchiston Club ensures all those doing regulated work are PVG-checked before they begin.

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

We are committed to upholding the UNCRC in our work, particularly:

Article 3 – The best interests of the child must be a primary consideration.

Article 12 – the child's right to be heard.

Article 19 – the right to be protected from violence, abuse and neglect.

Human Rights Act 1998

We respect children's rights to safety, dignity, privacy, and fair treatment. These rights underpin our commitment to safeguarding all children equally and without discrimination.

Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR

We process and store safeguarding data in line with data protection law. Child protection concerns override the normal presumption of confidentiality when there is risk of harm — a principle clarified in national guidance and ICO advice.

3.2 Working Within a Rights-Based Framework

Children's rights are not optional. Our policy embeds the belief that every child has the right to **protection** and **participation**, safeguarding must respect each child's dignity and voice, discrimination, prejudice or assumptions must never interfere with decisions about risk or safety

3.3 Responsibility to Keep Up to Date

This policy will be reviewed at least annually, or sooner following any incident, legislative change, or learning point.

4. Designated Safeguarding Roles

At north Merchiston Club safeguarding is a shared responsibility — but some individuals and groups have specific leadership and operational roles in ensuring child protection is consistently implemented and upheld. This section defines who holds which responsibilities, helping ensure accountability and clarity across our setting.

4.1 Designated Child Protection Officer (DCPO) and Deputy Responsibilities

North Merchiston club has a named **Designated Child Protection Officer (DCPO)** responsible for leading and coordinating our child protection response. The DCPO is supported by a deputy, where needed, and they act as the first point of contact for any concerns about a child's welfare.

Designated Child Protection Officer (DCPO)

Name: Caroline Roberts

Position: Club Manager

Contact: caroline@northmerchiston.co.uk

Club Landline: 0131 622 1757

Deputy Safeguarding Contact (if DCPO unavailable):

Name: Iain Thomson

Role: Club Assistant

Email: iain.thomson@northmerchiston.co.uk

Club Landline: 0131 622 1757

Their key responsibilities include:

- Receiving and acting upon reports of safeguarding concerns or disclosures.
- Deciding whether a concern meets the threshold for referral to Children's Social Work or Police Scotland.
- Liaising with relevant external agencies and attending strategy meetings where appropriate.
- Maintaining accurate, confidential records of concerns and actions taken.
- Advising and supporting staff on child protection matters.
- Leading on training, policy review and implementation.
- Ensuring all safeguarding procedures align with current national and local guidance.

4.2 Trustees and Management

North Merchiston Club are legally accountable for ensuring that the organisation complies with its safeguarding responsibilities. Their role includes:

- Formally approving and annually reviewing the child protection policy,
- Ensuring a safeguarding culture is embedded at the governance level.
- Providing oversight of recruitment and safeguarding processes.
- Reviewing any serious incidents and ensuring learning is actioned.
- Ensuring the Charity meets all relevant regulatory and legal standards.
- Supporting the Club Manager in the implementation and monitoring of the policy at an operational level.

4.3 Staff and Volunteers

All adults working directly or indirectly with children must:

- Understand and follow the child protection policy and Code of Conduct.
- Undertake safeguarding training and refreshers as required.
- Be alert to signs of abuse or neglect and respond appropriately.
- Immediately report any concerns, disclosures, or unsafe behaviours to the DCPO.
- Maintain appropriate boundaries with children.
- Never promise confidentiality to a child, but always offer reassurance and take appropriate action.

4.4 Parents and Carers

We work in partnership with parents and carers to promote the safety and well-being of all children. Parents and carers should;

- Be aware of this policy and our safeguarding ethos.
- Inform the club of any changes in a child's needs, circumstances, or well-being.
- Raise concerns if they believe a child is at risk or if they observe inappropriate behaviour by any adult at North Merchiston.
- Supervise their child before and after drop-off at any activity.

Where concerns involve a parent or carer, we will liaise sensitively with social work or police on how and when to share information with them, guided by national protocols.

4.5 Third-Party Providers and Hirers

External providers using The Club premises to run their own activities with children (e.g. clubs, workshops, or community sessions) hold primary safeguarding responsibility during their activities.

They are expected to:

- have their own Child Safeguarding policy, or agree to adopt the Club Policy.
- Ensure all their Staff or Volunteers are PVG-checked and appropriately trained.
- Designate a named safeguarding lead for their organisation or group.
- Inform North Merchiston Club immediately of any safeguarding concerns, incidents, or allegations occurring during their session.
- Cooperate with the Club staff and safeguarding procedures, including responding to issues raised by parents or children.

North Merchiston Club retains an overarching duty of care and reserves the right to suspend or terminate hire agreements where safeguarding standards are not met.

5. Code of Conduct for Working with Children

Our Code of Conduct sets clear expectations for how adults should behave when working with or around children. It applies to all Trustees Staff, Coaches, Volunteers, and third-party providers, and is central to creating a safe, respectful, and confidence-building environment. This Code is not only a guide for best practice — it is also a protective measure for both children and adults. It aligns with the values of the **UNCRC**, the **GIRFEC framework**, and the **National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland**.

5.1 Behaviour Expectations

All adults must:

- Treat all children and young people with respect, dignity and fairness.
- Prioritise the best interests and well-being of children.
- Model positive behaviour, including active listening and calm conflict resolution.
- Use inclusive language and avoid discriminatory, shaming or sarcastic comments.
- Encourage children's voices, opinions and participation in decisions affecting them.
- Maintain appropriate adult-to-child ratios during activities.
- be familiar with and follow the safeguarding procedures in this policy.

5.2 Maintaining Appropriate Boundaries

Professional boundaries are essential for safeguarding and adults must:

- Never develop inappropriate personal relationships with children (including romantic or sexual relationships, which are illegal).
- Never initiate physical contact that is unnecessary, invasive, or not child-led,
- Avoid being alone with a child unless necessary and risk-assessed.
- Always inform another adult when working 1:1 with a child and ensure visibility (e.g. door open, window panels).
- Never exchange private contact information with a child (email, phone number, social media) unless formally approved and with parent/carer knowledge.
- Never give gifts or money to individual children without management approval.
- If physical contact is required (e.g. first aid, assistance), it must be appropriate, consent-based, and recorded where necessary.

5.3 Safe Use of Technology and Social Media

To protect children and staff. personal devices must **never** be used to take photographs or videos of children. Any use of images or recordings must be:

- Pre-approved by North Merchiston management.
- Covered by signed photo consent from a parent/carer.
- Stored and shared via secure systems only.
- Online sessions must follow safety protocols (e.g. waiting room enabled, professional background, session recording where appropriate).

- Staff and volunteers must not “friend”, follow or message children via personal social media accounts.
- Communication with children must only occur through authorised channels, with management and parent/carer awareness.

5.4 Managing Allegations against Staff or Others

If any adult acts inappropriately or unprofessionally, breaches our Code of Conduct, or puts a child at risk (intentionally or unintentionally) then other adults must take action immediately. This may include challenging the behaviour if safe to do so, reporting the incident to the DCPO and documenting what was observed or disclosed.

Reporting and Response Procedures Depending on the severity and nature of the incident, immediate action may include:

- Referral to Police and/or Children's Panel Court (CPC) where criminal activity or significant harm is suspected.
- Reporting to OSCR (Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator) where required.
- Implementation of neutral suspension pending investigation to ensure child safety.
- Activation of separate HR and safeguarding processes, which will run independently to ensure thorough investigation of both employment and child protection concerns.

Any breach of the Code of Conduct may result in disciplinary action, referral to Disclosure Scotland, or immediate removal from the premises. Throughout any investigation process, appropriate support will be provided to both affected children and staff members involved. All adults involved with children at the club must sign a statement confirming they have read, understood, and will adhere to this Code of Conduct. This is covered by the signature of their employment contract and/or employee handbook, and/or onboarding training confirmation.

6. Safe Recruitment and Selection

At North Merchiston Club we recognise that safeguarding begins before a child ever walks through the door. By recruiting safely and thoroughly, we reduce the risk of harm

and create a culture where only those suitable to work with children are trusted to do so.

This section outlines how The Club ensures that Trustees Staff, caches, volunteers, and third-party providers are selected and vetted in line with best practice, Scottish law, and national guidance.

6.1 Safer Recruitment Process

All roles involving direct or indirect contact with children require a structured recruitment process, which includes:

- A clear role description and person specification that states safeguarding Responsibilities.
- Inclusion of a safeguarding statement in all adverts and recruitment materials.
- Completion of an application form or submission of a CV and cover letter.
- Scrutiny of employment and education history, with explanation of any gaps.

6.2 Interviews and Reference Checks

Applicants selected for interview will:

- Be asked about their motivation for working with children.
- Be given safeguarding-related scenario questions to assess their awareness and judgment.
- Be interviewed by at least two people, wherever possible.

We will obtain and verify two references, including one from a recent employer or someone who has seen the applicant work with children and one character or secondary reference if the applicant is new to the field. References will include a safeguarding declaration and will be followed up if concerns arise.

6.3 PVG Scheme and Legal Vetting

North Merchiston Club complies with the **Protection of Vulnerable Groups (Scotland) Act 2007** by ensuring that:

- All individuals carrying out regulated work with children are members of the PVG Scheme for the children's workforce.
- No person barred from working with children will ever be permitted to do so.

- PVG certificates or updates are seen and verified before work begins.
- Periodic re-checks or updates are requested, especially if concerns arise.
- PVG requirements are also extended to directors and other adults with access to sensitive information.
- Third-party providers must demonstrate that their own staff or facilitators are PVG-checked and fit for purpose. We reserve the right to request copies or confirmation before hire or rehire.

6.4 Induction and Probation

All new Trustees, Staff, Coaches, and Volunteers working with children must complete a safeguarding induction within 4 weeks of starting that includes:

- The full Child Safeguarding Policy.
- The Code of Conduct.
- Reporting procedures and key contacts.
- An initial safeguarding awareness session.

A probation period applies to all new appointments, during which performance and suitability is monitored, including conduct around children.

6.5 Ongoing Suitability and Supervision

Safeguarding is a continuous obligation, not a one-off check. All staff and volunteers are required to report if they are charged with or investigated for any offence related to children and disclose any changes in circumstances that may affect their suitability.

6.6 Duty to Refer to Disclosure Scotland

If North Merchiston Club dismisses or removes someone from regulated work with children due to harm or risk of harm, or learns that someone has resigned during such an investigation then we will fulfil our legal duty to make a referral to Disclosure Scotland.

7. Recognising and Responding to Concerns

We believe that all adults working with children must know how to recognise the signs of abuse and respond appropriately. A child who is being harmed may not always speak up, but they will often show signs, or tell someone they trust.

This section outlines how to spot concerns, how to respond to a child who discloses harm, and the reporting procedures to follow. It reflects the expectations in the **National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland (2021)**.

7.1 Types and Indicators of Abuse

We use the national definitions of abuse:

- **Physical abuse:** causing physical harm or injury (e.g. hitting, shaking, choking, burning).
- **Emotional abuse:** persistent ill-treatment which impacts a child's emotional development (e.g. humiliation, threats, rejection).
- **Sexual abuse:** forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activity, whether or not the child is aware it is happening.
- **Neglect:** persistent failure to meet a child's basic needs, likely to impair development or cause harm.

Signs to be aware of may include:

- Unexplained bruises or injuries.
- Sudden changes in behaviour or mood.
- Avoidance of certain people or places.
- Inappropriate language or sexual behaviour.
- Poor hygiene, hunger, or fatigue.
- Frequent absences or lateness.
- Disclosures (spoken or written).

No single sign proves abuse is taking place — but multiple indicators or something that just doesn't feel right must not be ignored.

7.2 Responding to a Disclosure

If a child tells you something concerning:

Stay calm and listen carefully

- Don't interrupt or ask leading questions.
- Let the child speak at their own pace.

Reassure the child

- Acknowledge that telling someone was the right thing to do.
- Never promise to keep it secret — explain that you may need to tell someone to help them.

Don't investigate or make assumptions

- Your role is not to determine the truth, but to pass on what the child says.

Record exactly what was said

- Use the child's own words wherever possible.
- Include the date, time, who was present, and what action you took.

Report it immediately to the Designated Child Protection Officer

- If the child is at immediate risk of harm, call 999 or Edinburgh Social Care Direct.

7.3 Reporting Procedures at North Merchiston Club

All concerns whether arising from observation, a disclosure, a third party, or a gut feeling must be reported.

Step-by-step:

- **Recognise** that something is wrong.
- **Respond** calmly and supportively to the child
- **Report** the concern to the DCPO (Caroline Roberts).
- **Record** the concern using the Safeguarding Concern Form.
- **Refer:** The DCPO will decide whether to refer the concern to social work, police, or another agency. If you're unsure whether something is a safeguarding concern, report it anyway. You do not need proof to raise a concern.

7.4 Information Sharing and Confidentiality

Safeguarding concerns are shared only on a **need-to-know basis**. Information will be stored securely and only accessible to those managing the concern. **Child protection overrides data protection** where there is risk of harm. Staff must not discuss safeguarding issues casually or with unauthorised individuals

7.5 Support for the Child and Others Affected

North Merchiston Club will:

- Ensure the child is supported emotionally and practically during any safeguarding concern.
- Work with families (where safe and appropriate) to promote the child's wellbeing.
- Provide debrief and support to staff or volunteers involved in handling a concern.
- Ensure any children affected by an incident or allegation are given space to ask questions and receive reassurance.

8. Information Sharing, Confidentiality and Data Protection

In safeguarding, the responsible sharing of information can be the difference between protection and continued harm. North Merchiston is committed to respecting children's and families' privacy, while also acting decisively when a child may be at risk.

This section outlines when and how information can be shared, how confidentiality is handled, and how we comply with data protection law in the context of child protection.

8.1 Legal Basis for Sharing Safeguarding Information

North Merchiston complies with:

- The **Data Protection Act 2018**.
- The **UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)**.
- The **National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland (2021)**.
- Guidance from the **Information Commissioner's Office (ICO)** on safeguarding and public interest.

Under these laws and frameworks: Child protection concerns override data protection when there is a risk of significant harm. You do not need consent to share information if ;

- The child may be at risk of abuse, neglect or exploitation.
- It is necessary to prevent harm.
- The information is being shared with statutory services (social work or police).

8.2 When and How to Share Information

An adult should share safeguarding information if:

- They witness or suspect abuse or neglect.
- A child discloses something concerning.
- They receive a third-party allegation.
- A child's behaviour or circumstances raise concern.

In such cases:

- Share the concern immediately with the Designated Child Protection Officer (DCPO).
- The DCPO will decide what to share further, with whom, and when.

Information may be shared with:

- Social Work (Children and Families).
- Police Scotland.
- Child's Named Person or Lead Professional (under GIRFEC).
- Other professionals, if there is a safeguarding reason to do so.

We will always aim to be open with children and families, but we may share without informing them if doing so would:

- Place a child at greater risk.
- Interfere with a criminal investigation.
- Lead to tampering with evidence or collusion.

8.3 Confidentiality and Internal Boundaries

Information about a safeguarding concern is only shared on a strict need-to-know Basis. Staff must not discuss concerns casually or outside appropriate channels. Discussions must only take place in private spaces or via secure digital systems.

Written records must be factual, timely, and respectful.

8.4 Secure Record Keeping and Retention

All safeguarding records are managed in accordance with data protection legislation and best practice guidance to ensure confidentiality, security, and appropriate retention.

Secure Storage

- Physical records are stored in locked, fireproof cabinets within a secure area with restricted access.
- Digital records are stored in password-protected, encrypted folders or databases with multi-factor authentication where available.
- All storage systems comply with UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018 requirements.

Access Restrictions

- Access is limited to the DCPO, their deputy, and designated Trustees on a need-to-know basis.
- All access to records is logged, including date, time, person accessing, and reason.
- Records are never removed from secure storage without authorization and a documented audit trail.
- Records are not used for any purpose other than safeguarding, unless required by law.

Retention Timeframes

- Safeguarding records are retained until the child reaches 25 years of age, in line with Scottish Government guidance.
- Records relating to serious incidents or ongoing concerns may be retained longer where there is a legitimate safeguarding reason.
- Disposal of records is conducted securely (shredding of physical documents, secure deletion of digital files) and is documented.

Access Requests and Annual Audits

- Any request for access to safeguarding records (e.g., from families, inspectors, regulatory bodies, or legal representatives) is managed by the DCPO and Trustees, with legal advice sought where appropriate.
- An annual audit of safeguarding records is conducted to ensure compliance with storage, access, and retention policies.
- The audit reviews record completeness, security measures, access logs, and adherence to retention schedules, with findings reported to Trustees.

8.5 Sharing Information with Parents/Carers

Parents/carers will usually be informed of safeguarding concerns involving their child unless there is a reason to believe this would place the child at further risk or Statutory services have advised that informing them could compromise an Investigation.

9 Training, Induction and Safeguarding Culture

This section outlines how we train staff, inform partners, and build a community where safeguarding is embedded in everyday practice.

9.1 Staff and Volunteer Training Expectations

All Staff, Coaches, and Volunteers who work directly or indirectly with children must:

- Complete initial safeguarding training as part of their induction within four weeks.
- Read and understand this Child Safeguarding Policy and the Code of Conduct.
- Receive refresher training at least every two years, or more often if required.
- Be updated promptly on any changes in legislation or internal procedures.

Training includes:

- Recognising the signs and indicators of abuse.
- Responding to disclosures and concerns.
- Reporting procedures at North Merchiston Club.
- Understanding legal frameworks such as GIRFEC, PVG, and UNCRC.
- Maintaining professional boundaries.

Training is delivered through a combination of In-house sessions. And online safeguarding modules.

9.2 Training for Trustees and Staff

All Trustees and Staff are expected to:

- Attend basic safeguarding training appropriate to their governance role within four weeks of starting.
- Understand their responsibilities under Scottish charity law and OSCR expectations.
- Receive regular updates on safeguarding practices, incidents, and policy reviews.

Designated Child Protection Officers (DCPOs):

- Complete enhanced child protection training.
- Stay up to date on local referral processes and multi-agency working.
- Attend any inter-agency or refresher training provided by Edinburgh CPC or Equivalent.

9.3 Educating Children and Families

North Merchiston promotes child awareness by;

- Creating a culture where children know they have the right to be safe.
- Displaying posters and contact details for trusted adults, Childline and NSPCC.
- Embedding messages of respect, rights, and self-advocacy in our confidence-first approach.
- Encouraging children to speak up if they feel uncomfortable or unsafe.

Parents and carers are also engaged through:

- Clear communication about our safeguarding policy.
- Invitations to raise concerns or provide feedback.
- Signposting to relevant support services if needed.

9.4 Creating a Culture of Vigilance

We maintain a culture of vigilance by:

- Making safeguarding a regular item in staff meetings.
- Encouraging open discussion of difficult issues.
- Ensuring all concerns are taken seriously, no matter how small.
Reviewing safeguarding practices annually and after any incident.
- Supporting staff wellbeing and supervision, particularly after disclosures or incidents.

9.5. Whistleblowing Policy

North Merchiston Club expects adults working with children and young people, contractor to express any concerns that they may have with regards to the conduct of any individual(s). The club will ensure that they can raise their concerns without fear of victimisation or discrimination. All concerns will be treated in confidence, however, there may be a need for the whistle blower to give evidence for example if they have witnessed a crime. If a person raises a concern in good faith, which is not confirmed by an investigation, no action will be taken. However, if a concern is raised maliciously, disciplinary action may be taken.

10. Policy Review, Oversight and Improvement

Safeguarding is never “done”. It is a living, evolving responsibility — and to maintain the highest standards, our Child Protection Policy must be reviewed, improved, and upheld with rigour. This section outlines how North Merchiston Club ensures that our safeguarding practices remain current, effective, and reflective of real-world needs.

10.1 Annual Policy Review and Approval

North Merchiston will conduct a **formal review of this policy every 12 months**. This review will be led by the Designated Child Protection Officer (DCPO), in consultation with Trustees, Management, staff, coaches, Volunteers and Third-party providers (where appropriate) The annual review considers:

- Changes to national guidance or legislation (e.g. updates to the National Guidance or PVG Scheme).
- Feedback from staff, families, or children.
- Outcomes of any safeguarding incidents or referrals.
- Learning from training, supervision, or audits.

- Any required amendments will be presented to the Board of Trustees for approval and then disseminated to all relevant stakeholders.

10.2 Interim Updates and Revisions

If significant safeguarding developments occur **before the next scheduled review**, the Club will:

- Issue a policy addendum or interim update.
- Provide staff with a briefing and summary of the changes.
- Update published versions of the policy on our website and internal platforms
- Examples of triggers for interim review:
 - New statutory guidance (e.g. changes to GIRFEC, mandatory reporting requirements).
 - Emerging risks (e.g. online safety threats or community safeguarding alerts).
 - Changes in staffing structures or centre operations that affect safeguarding responsibilities.

10.3 Oversight by Trustees

The Board of Trustees holds overarching responsibility for ensuring that safeguarding at North Merchiston Club is:

- Legally compliant.
- Embedded in the organisation's culture and operations.
- Effectively monitored and resourced.

Trustees will:

- Receive regular safeguarding updates from the DCPO.
- Be notified of any serious incidents, allegations, or referrals.
- Review annual safeguarding reports.
- Ratify any major changes to the policy or safeguarding structure.

This governance oversight ensures that safeguarding is championed from the top and aligned with the values of the organisation.

10.4 Continuous Improvement and Learning Culture

To maintain high standards, North Merchiston club commits to a cycle of reflection, learning and improvement. This includes:

- Reviewing how incidents were handled and identifying any gaps.
- Updating forms, training or reporting processes as needed.
- Celebrating examples of good practice within the team.
- Consulting with children and parents, where appropriate, on how safe they feel.
- Staff are encouraged to raise suggestions for improvement and are supported in professional development relating to child protection.

10.5 Document Control and Accessibility

The policy is issued with a version number and date superseded versions are archived securely. The current version is:

- Stored securely at the Club.
- Shared digitally with all staff and providers.
- Available to families via our website or on request.
- All staff, volunteers, and providers are expected to read and acknowledge the policy upon joining North Merchiston Club, and again following each significant update.

Signed: Kev Orme

Board Trustee

Date: 1st November 2025

11. Appendices

These appendices are designed to provide additional clarity, templates, and resources to support the effective implementation of the North Merchiston Club Child Protection Policy. They are available in printed format on site and via secure staff access online.

Appendix A: Key Definitions and Glossary

A reference guide to key safeguarding terms used throughout the policy, including:

- Abuse (physical, emotional, sexual, neglect).
- Regulated work.
- PVG Scheme.
- Designated Child Protection Officer (DCPO).
- Significant harm.
- Third-party provider.
- Duty to refer.

Appendix B: Safeguarding Concern Reporting Form

A template form for staff, tutors, volunteers, and providers to use when recording:

- Observations of concern.
- Disclosures by children.
- Third-party reports.
- Actions taken and date/time logged.

This form must be passed to the DCPO as soon as possible after completion.

Appendix C: Code of Conduct Acknowledgement Form

A declaration form signed by all North Merchiston Club staff, volunteers, and external providers confirming they have:

- Read and understood the Code of Conduct.
- Agreed to adhere to its principles in all interactions with children.
- Understood the consequences of any breach.

Appendix D: Safeguarding Compliance Checklist for Third-Party Providers

A checklist issued to all external organisations or individuals hiring North Merchiston Club premises, covering:

- Confirmation of PVG status of facilitators.
- Submission of own safeguarding policy or agreement to adopt North Merchiston Club policy.
- Named safeguarding contact.
- Emergency and contact protocols.
- Insurance and supervision responsibilities.

This must be completed and approved before a hire is confirmed.

Appendix E: Quick Guide – What to Do If You’re Worried About a Child

A simplified visual flowchart for immediate staff reference, posted in key staff areas which is deal for volunteers, new starters, and quick refreshers during sessions. It includes:

- How to recognise a concern.
- How to respond to a child.
- Who to report to.
- When to call emergency services.
- Do’s and Don’ts in handling disclosures.

North Merchiston Club Child Protection Policy Appendices

Appendix A: Key Definitions and Glossary

Abuse: Any action or lack of action that causes harm to a child. Includes physical, emotional, sexual abuse and neglect.

Regulated Work: Work that involves caring for, teaching, or supervising children, requiring PVG Scheme membership.

PVG Scheme: The Protection of Vulnerable Groups (Scotland) Scheme is run by Disclosure Scotland. It helps ensure people who are unsuitable to work with children cannot do so.

Designated Child Protection Officer (DCPO): The person responsible for leading safeguarding procedures within North Merchiston Club.

Significant Harm: A legal threshold for intervention by statutory services. Includes harm that affects a child’s health, development or well-being.

Third-Party Provider: Any external individual or organisation using North Merchiston Club facilities to deliver activities to children.

Duty to Refer: A legal obligation to notify Disclosure Scotland if a person is removed from regulated work due to harmful behaviour.

Appendix B: Safeguarding Concern Reporting Form

- **Name of Person Completing Form:**
- **Role:**
- **Date of Concern:**
- **Time Concern Noticed/Disclosed:**
- **Child's Name (if known):**
- **Age (if known):**
- **Description of Concern:** (Include as much detail as possible. If it was a disclosure, use the child's own words.)
- **Immediate Action Taken:**
- **Person Reported To:**
- **Date and Time Reported:**
- **Signature:**
- **Date:**

(To be given to the DCPO immediately and stored securely.)

Appendix C: Code of Conduct Acknowledgement Form

I confirm that I have:

- Read and understood the North Merchiston Club Child Protection Policy.
- Read and understood the Code of Conduct for Working with Children.
- Agreed to follow the standards and expectations set out in both documents.
- Understood the consequences of breaching the policy or Code of Conduct.
- **Name:**
- **Role:**
- **Signature:**
- **Date:**

Appendix D: Safeguarding Compliance Checklist for Third-Party Providers

Organisation/Provider Name:

Main Contact:

Session(s) Delivered:

Please confirm the following:

Signature:

Date:

(Completed checklist must be submitted and approved before any session delivery.)

Appendix E: Quick Guide – What to Do If You're Worried About a Child

- **Recognise** : Is the child showing signs of harm, disclosing something, or behaving unusually?
- **Respond** : Stay calm. Listen. Don't promise confidentiality. Reassure them
- **Report** : Tell the DCPO (Caroline Roberts) immediately. If there is immediate danger, call 999.
- **Record** : Use the Safeguarding Concern Reporting Form. Write down what was said or observed. Sign and date it.
- **Refer** The DCPO will decide whether to contact Social Work or Police Scotland.

F. Child-friendly Poster.

Our Promise to You

- You have the right to feel safe and respected.
- We listen to you and believe what you say.
- We will never ignore a problem.
- We will take action to help keep you safe.

Who Can You Talk To?

If you're worried about anything, you can speak to any adult at North Merchiston Club.

Here are two people who are always here to help:

Caroline– Safeguarding Lead

Iain – Deputy Safeguarding Lead

What Should you Talk About?

You can talk to us if:

- Someone is hurting you or someone else.
- Someone says something that makes you feel scared or uncomfortable.
- You're being bullied — online or in person.
- You're worried about something outside of North Merchiston Club
- You're not sure, but something doesn't feel right

What Will Happen?

- We will **listen** and take you seriously
- We may need to tell another adult who can help
- We will keep you updated and make sure you feel safe
- We won't share what you say unless we need to help you

You're Never Alone

Everyone at North Merchiston Club is here to support you, respect you, and help you grow with confidence. You are part of our community — and confidence starts with feeling safe.

Need to talk to someone outside North Merchiston Club?

Childline Call 0800 1111 – free and open 24/7 Visit www.childline.org.uk

OUR PROMISE TO YOU

Who Can You Talk To?

If you're worried about anything, you can speak to any adult at North Merchiston Club.

Caroline – Safeguarding Lead

Claudio – Deputy Safeguarding Lead



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