



Ministry of Defence

# MOD Cadet Forces Safeguarding Framework

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# Foreword

**This framework sets out the Ministry of Defence's commitment to safeguarding young people, and what it expects each Ministry of Defence (MOD) Cadet Force to do to ensure the safety and welfare of cadets in their care.**



The MOD sponsors five Cadet Forces – military-themed voluntary youth organisations. The Cadet Forces are the Sea Cadet Corps<sup>1</sup>, the Volunteer Cadet Corps, the Army Cadet Force, the Air Training Corps and the school-based Combined Cadet Force. The MOD sponsored Cadet Forces aim to provide young people with a challenging and stimulating cadet experience that develops and inspires them within a safe environment.

The MOD's sponsorship of the Cadet Forces involves supporting over 135,000 cadets and nearly 26,000 adult volunteers in over 3,500 units across the UK through the provision of equipment, uniforms, training, transport, and rations. The MOD also provides some facilities and funding of activities such as sailing and gliding and indemnifies the Cadet Forces' activities. All the Cadet Forces have regional support structures dedicated to the cadets and maintain, directly or indirectly, hundreds of cadet huts and adventure training centres.

The Safeguarding Framework is an overarching approach to safeguarding children in the MOD Cadet Forces. It consists of eight standards that each of the MOD Cadet Forces are expected to demonstrate as part of their own safeguarding arrangements. The Framework sets out a benchmark of good practice; it draws heavily on material from the NSPCC, and advice from the MOD's Armed Forces Families and Safeguarding team, and reflects current legislation, Government guidance, and evidence from research.

By monitoring compliance with the Safeguarding Framework, the MOD will ensure that safe environments for children are in place where young people can get the very best from their involvement in the Cadet Forces and will provide parents and carers with increased confidence and peace of mind regarding the MOD's approach.

**Vice Admiral Phil Hally**  
Chief of Defence People  
Ministry of Defence

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<sup>1</sup> The Sea Cadet Corps (SCC) is an MOD Sponsored Cadet Force run for the Royal Navy by an independent charity, the Marine Society & Sea Cadets (MSSC), under a Memorandum of Understanding. The MSSC receives a Grant in Aid from the Royal Navy which covers around half the cost of operating the SCC.



# 1. Policy

**Any organisation which provides services or activities for children and young people should have a safeguarding policy which demonstrates a commitment to safeguard them from harm.**

Each Cadet Force should publish its own safeguarding policy. This policy should make it clear to everyone what is needed to protect cadets from harm<sup>2</sup>. It helps create a positive and safe environment for the cadets and also shows that the organisation takes its responsibilities seriously.

A safeguarding policy has several essential requirements. It must state the identity of the organisation, who the policy applies to, the date the policy was endorsed/adopted, and by whom, and when it will next be reviewed. It must be made clear that all children and young people have a right to protection and that their welfare is paramount.

The policy should identify an organisational lead safeguarding officer and provide guidance on what constitutes abuse and poor practice. The policy must set out how to respond to a child who says they or another child is being abused, and how to respond to allegations against a member of staff/volunteer or another young person.

The policy should also set out how to respond to concerns about a child's welfare arising outside cadets, or where there is no specific disclosure or allegation.

## Principles

- 1.1 Each Cadet Force to have its own safeguarding policy.
- 1.2 The policy is written clearly and is easily understandable.
- 1.3 The policy is published, publicised, and promoted to relevant audiences.
- 1.4 The policy is approved and endorsed by the senior responsible person in the Cadet Force.
- 1.5 The policy is mandatory for everyone – staff, volunteers and cadets.
- 1.6 The policy is reviewed ideally annually, or whenever there is a major change in the organisation or in relevant legislation.
- 1.7 Each Cadet Force has a code of conduct for adults and cadets, which is published, publicised, and promoted to all cadets, staff and volunteers, and it is recommended that it should also contain guidance for parents and carers.

<sup>2</sup> In England, Northern Ireland and Wales, a child is someone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday. In Scotland the definition of a child varies; in most situations, a child is someone who is under 18 but, in some limited and specific contexts, a child is defined as a person under 16 years of age.

## 2. Leadership and Management

**For safeguarding arrangements to be effective, they must be child-centred, and supported and owned at a senior level in the organisation.**

It is important that senior managers and trustees promote a culture of taking safeguarding seriously, making it clear that ultimate responsibility for child protection rests with them and that safeguarding is part of their duty of care to their organisation. There must be a clear commitment by senior management at all levels to the importance of safeguarding and promoting cadets' welfare.

Leadership and management of the MOD Cadet Forces rests with the heads of the separate single Service cadet organisations at military one-star level (e.g. Commodore, Brigadier, Air Commodore) or civilian equivalent. The Army and the Royal Air Force manage their Cadet Forces directly; the Sea Cadet Corps is managed by the Marine Society & Sea Cadets (MSSC) with the Royal Navy ensuring oversight through a Memorandum of Understanding between the MSSC and MOD.

The heads of the single Service cadet organisations are members of the MOD one-star Youth & Cadet Steering Group (YCSG) which meets three times a year, with Safeguarding as a standing agenda item. The YCSG is supported by the Cadet Safeguarding Working Group, whose members are the Cadet Forces' safeguarding subject matter experts.

The Reserve Forces & Cadets Directorate (RF&C) represents the Cadet Forces at the MOD's two-star Defence Safeguarding Partnership Board (SPB) and at the Safeguarding, Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee (SARAC).



### Principles

- 2.1 A senior board-level lead to take leadership responsibility for the organisation's safeguarding arrangements.
- 2.2 Clear whistleblowing procedures, which are suitably referenced in staff training and codes of conduct, and a culture that enables issues about safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children to be addressed.
- 2.3 Those in leadership positions undertake appropriate training for the levels they occupy to demonstrate that safeguarding is of central importance to delivering effective policies and practice, and to promote a culture of a child-centred approach to safeguarding.

# 3. Safer Recruitment

**Safer recruitment consists of a set of safe practices to help organisations recruit staff and volunteers who are suitable to work with children and young people.**

On their own, vetting and official checks are not enough to protect children – these checks need to be carried out in the context of a wider set of policies and practices and an organisational culture that supports safe practice.

Safer recruitment practices help to show staff, volunteers and those interested in joining the organisation, how much the organisation values the wellbeing of cadets.



## Principles

- 3.1 Each Cadet Force has written policies and procedures for recruiting staff and volunteers, and for assessing their suitability to work with children.
- 3.2 There are documented and consistently applied application processes and safe recruitment standards for both volunteers and employees.
- 3.3 Applicants are asked to complete a separate self-declaration listing any previous concerns over safeguarding children.
- 3.4 Each applicant has a face-to-face interview with an interview panel comprising more than one person.
- 3.5 Applicants are required to provide at least two satisfactory references before appointment, and the references are checked for authenticity.
- 3.6 Applicants are required to provide satisfactory proof of identity and original copies of documents (including qualifications).
- 3.7 Each applicant is required to undertake an Enhanced Disclosure with Barred List check<sup>3</sup> before being allowed unsupervised access to cadets.
- 3.8 Each Cadet Force has robust processes to risk-assess concerns from self-declarations and from adverse disclosure checks, and to make informed decisions on whether to appoint such individuals.

<sup>3</sup> Through the Disclosure and Barring Service in England and Wales, through Disclosure Scotland in Scotland, and through Access NI in Northern Ireland. Cadet units operating outside the UK as part of the MOD sponsored Cadet Forces will use the relevant local processes for obtaining information from the local criminal justice system.

# 4. Education and Training

**Everyone who comes into contact with cadets has a role to play in safeguarding them.**

They can do this confidently and effectively only if they have the necessary understanding and skills.

Each Cadet Force is responsible for providing effective safeguarding training and development opportunities for staff and volunteers.

## Principles

- 4.1 All staff and volunteers undertake safeguarding training at the appropriate level as part of the induction process.
- 4.2 All staff and volunteers undertake regular refresher training to update their knowledge and understanding.
- 4.3 Each Cadet Force has a code of practice or code of conduct to which staff and volunteers are required to sign up.
- 4.4 Designated Safeguarding Leads undertake appropriate training to enable them to fulfil their role and have regular opportunities to update their knowledge and understanding.
- 4.5 Designated Safeguarding Leads have access to specialist advice, support and information.
- 4.6 Cadets and parents or carers are provided with safeguarding information and details of who to contact if they have concerns.





# 5. Prevention

**The safer recruitment principles set out in this Framework are key measures aimed at preventing unsuitable people volunteering to work with children.**

Other measures will also reduce the safeguarding risk to children. These relate to effective planning and arrangements for transport, events, away trips, supervision, photography, mobile phones and the use of social media.

New digital and information technologies and social media platforms place additional responsibilities on the Cadet Forces to ensure that individual rights are respected, and that young people are protected from exploitation



## Principles

- 5.1 All those in Regulated Activity (in Scotland, Regulated Work) and who have significant contact with children are subject to safer recruitment processes, and only those adults who are properly cleared and appointed may have regular unsupervised access to cadets (see 3. Safer Recruitment).
- 5.2 Safeguarding plans and guidance are in place covering transporting children or taking them on camps, to courses, and to other events.
- 5.3 There is clear guidance about the safe and appropriate use of photography, mobile phones, and social media.
- 5.4 Where there is direct Cadet Force responsibility for running or providing activities, operating standards are set out and followed to ensure that a pre-event risk assessment is undertaken and that children are supervised adequately at all times.
- 5.5 The MOD also aims to protect Cadet Force Adult Volunteers and staff by ensuring, where possible, that they are not placed in situations where their conduct could be misconstrued.



# 6. Reporting a Concern

**It is essential that organisations have clear processes for reporting any safeguarding concerns.**

This is to enable appropriate and effective action to be taken both promptly and correctly.

## Principles

- 6.1 Each Cadet Force has Designated Safeguarding Leads with clearly-defined roles and responsibilities in relation to safeguarding, which are appropriate to the level at which they operate.
- 6.2 Designated Safeguarding Leads have clear links with relevant statutory authorities (e.g. police, local authorities, children's social services).
- 6.3 Investigations and responses to safeguarding and child protection concerns should take account of local inter-agency child protection protocols.
- 6.4 Everyone in each Cadet Force knows who the Designated Safeguarding Lead is and how to contact them.
- 6.5 Each Cadet Force has well-publicised ways to raise concerns about unacceptable behaviour by staff or volunteers (complaints procedures and whistleblowing).
- 6.6 Everyone in each Cadet Force knows who to contact in the event of concern about a cadet.
- 6.7 Each Cadet Force has clear escalation policies for staff and volunteers to follow when their child safeguarding concerns are not being addressed within their organisation or by other agencies



# 7. Recording, Storing and Sharing Information

**Clear and accurate records are absolutely necessary if a Cadet Force has to make a referral to a child protection or safeguarding agency because they believe a cadet may be at risk of abuse or may be in need.**

Information sharing is essential for effective safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people. It is a key factor identified in many Serious Case Reviews where poor information sharing has resulted in missed opportunities to take action that keeps children and young people safe.

The Data Protection Act 2018 lists 'safeguarding of children and individuals at risk' as a processing condition that allows practitioners to share information.

This includes allowing practitioners to share information without consent, if it is not possible to gain consent, if it cannot be reasonably expected that a practitioner gains consent, or if to gain consent would place a child at risk.

## Principles

- 7.1 Each Cadet Force has a process for recording incidents, concerns and referrals and storing these securely in compliance with relevant legislation.
- 7.2 Each Cadet Force has written guidance on confidentiality and information sharing.
- 7.3 Applicants for adult roles (and existing adult staff and volunteers) are made aware that their information may be shared lawfully with other Cadet Forces or outside agencies in the interests of safeguarding cadets.
- 7.4 Each Designated Safeguarding Lead has clear lines of contact with local safeguarding partners (e.g. police, local authorities, children's social services).



# 8. Monitoring and Assurance

**Policies and processes must be implemented and assured throughout Cadet Force organisations.**

It is essential that actions are taken to ensure that the Cadet Forces' intentions relating to safeguarding children are taking place effectively, by monitoring and evaluating the steps being undertaken.



## Principles

- 8.1 All incidents or allegations of abuse and complaints are investigated, recorded, monitored, and followed through to completion taking account of local inter-agency child protection protocols.
- 8.2 There is a written plan showing the steps which will be taken to safeguard children, who is responsible for what actions, and when these will be completed.
- 8.3 Policies and plans are reviewed at stated intervals, ideally annually, and revised in line with changing needs, changes to legislation and guidance as well as experience.
- 8.4 Processes and mechanisms to consult with cadets and their parents are in place as part of any review of safeguarding policies and practices.
- 8.5 The single Services monitor compliance with safeguarding policies and procedures.
- 8.6 Each Cadet Force has First, Second and Third Lines of Assurance (LoA) in place to ensure effective oversight of its safeguarding policies and processes (see page 12).



# Lines of Assurance

**Each Cadet Force has First, Second and Third Lines of Assurance<sup>4</sup> in place to ensure effective oversight of its safeguarding policies and processes**

## First Line

First line assurance comes direct from those responsible for delivering specific outputs. It provides assurance that policy is being adhered to, risks are being identified and addressed, and objectives are being achieved. This type of assurance may lack independence and objectivity, but its value is that it comes from those who know the business, culture, and day-to-day challenges.

## Second line

Second line assurance is concerned with the oversight of management activity. It is separate from those responsible for delivery but is not independent of the organisation's management chain. The assurance provides valuable management insight into whether work is being carried out in line with policy and regulatory considerations. It is distinct from and more objective than first line assurance.

## Third line

Third line assurance concerns the production of independent and objective opinion on the overall framework of governance, risk management and control. It draws on the first and second lines of defence to enable it to direct its resources effectively at areas of highest risk or where there are obvious gaps or weaknesses in other assurance arrangements. It is a role usually performed by an organisation's internal audit function, sometimes in combination with other independent assurance providers such as those provided by independent regulators.



<sup>4</sup> Definitions based on The Orange Book; Management of Risk – Principles and Concepts, HM Government, 2020.





