



Safeguarding Policy

September 2026

Last Reviewed: September 2026

Approved HST Board Meeting 24 September 2026

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to protect people, particularly children, at risk adults and beneficiaries of assistance, from any harm that may be caused due to their coming into contact with Holywood Shared Town (HST) or any groups associated or affiliated with Holywood Shared Town. This includes harm arising from:

- The conduct of persons associated with HST or associated groups.
- The design and implementation of HST's programmes and activities

The policy lays out the commitments made by HST, and informs Trustees and any other associated persons¹ of their responsibilities in relation to safeguarding.

This policy does not cover safeguarding concerns in the wider community not perpetrated by HST or associated personnel, or associated with HST activities or projects.

What is safeguarding?

Safeguarding means protecting the health, wellbeing and human rights of adults and children, and enabling those persons to live free from harm, abuse and neglect².

In our sector, we understand it to mean protecting people, including children and at risk adults, from harm that arises from coming into contact with our Trustees, associated people or programmes.

¹ See 'Scope' for definition of associated personnel

² NHS 'What is Safeguarding? Easy Read' 2011

Scope

- This policy applies to anyone working in any capacity (voluntary or employed) on behalf of HST including the board of trustees, any paid staff, volunteers, sessional workers, agency staff and students.
- Associated personnel whilst engaged with work or visits related to HST, including but not limited to the following: consultants; volunteers; contractors; programme visitors including journalists, celebrities and politicians.

Legal Framework

This policy has been drawn up on the basis of legislation, policy and guidance that seeks to protect children and adults in Northern Ireland.

Policy Statement

HST believes that everyone we come into contact with, regardless of age, gender identity, disability, sexual orientation or ethnic origin has the right to be protected from all forms of harm, abuse, neglect and exploitation.

HST will not tolerate abuse and exploitation by any person associated with HST.

We have a responsibility to promote the welfare of all children and young people, and all adults at risk³, to keep them safe and to practise in a way that protects them.

This policy will address child safeguarding and adult safeguarding.

HST commits to addressing safeguarding throughout its work, through the three pillars of prevention, reporting and response.

Prevention

HST responsibilities

HST will:

- Ensure all associated persons have access to, are familiar with, and know their responsibilities within this policy.

³ **At risk adult** - Sometimes also referred to as vulnerable adult. A person who is or may be in need of care or support by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness, or personal specific circumstances (including refugees, asylum seekers and displaced persons); and who is or may be unable to take care of him or herself, or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation.

- Design and undertake all its programmes and activities in a way that protects people from any risk of harm that may arise from their coming into contact with HST. This includes the way in which information about individuals in our programmes is gathered and communicated. Avoid producing photographs, video or any other media involving or identifying individuals for use as promotional material for HST (or otherwise) without their consent.
- Implement stringent safeguarding procedures when recruiting, managing and deploying any associated personnel.
- Ensure staff receive training on safeguarding at a level commensurate with their role in the organization.
- Follow up on reports of safeguarding concerns promptly and according to due process.
- Seek to keep adults at risk and children and young people safe by:
 - valuing, listening to and respecting them
 - appointing a nominated, lead trustee/board member for safeguarding
 - adopting safeguarding best practice through our policies, procedures and code of conduct
 - providing effective management for all associated persons (as required) by way of supervision, support, training and quality assurance measures so that all staff and volunteers know about and follow our policies, procedures and behaviour codes confidently and competently
 - recruiting and selecting any staff and/or volunteers safely, ensuring all necessary checks are made
 - recording, storing and using information professionally and securely, in line with data protection legislation and guidance
 - sharing information about safeguarding and good practice
 - making sure that adults at risk and/or children, young people and their families know where to go for help if they have a concern
 - using our safeguarding procedures to share concerns and relevant information with agencies who need to know, and involving adults at risk, children, young people, parents, families and carers appropriately
 - using our procedures to manage any allegations against staff and volunteers appropriately
 - ensuring that we have effective complaints and whistleblowing measures in place
 - ensuring that we provide a safe physical environment for all persons (adults and children) by applying health and safety measures in accordance with the law and regulatory guidance
 - building a safeguarding culture where all people treat each other with respect and are comfortable about sharing concerns.

Reporting

HST will ensure that safe, appropriate, accessible means of reporting safeguarding concerns are made available to any associated persons and the communities we work with.

HST will also accept complaints from external sources such as members of the public, partners and official bodies where they relate to HST associated persons, groups or activities.

HST will take serious any safeguarding concern and respond appropriately should any concern be raised.

How to report a safeguarding concern

Anyone who has a complaint or concern relating to safeguarding should report it immediately to HST Safeguarding Lead [name] [email] or the Project / Activity Manager.

Response

HST will follow up safeguarding reports and concerns according to policy and procedure, and legal and statutory obligations. The Safeguarding Lead (or Project/Activity Manager) will immediately make a safeguarding referral to the South Easter Health & Social Care Trust Children's Social Services if they identify a child who is at risk of abuse, has come to actual harm or needs professional care or support. The PSNI will always be contacted first in an emergency or where a crime has taken place.

HST will apply appropriate measures to act to remove any member of HST or member of any HST associated organisation who is found in breach of the safeguarding policy.

HST and any person associated with HST will comply with any investigation requirements as raised by PSNI or by a person duly appointed to act to investigated safeguarding concerns on behalf of an official statutory body (i.e. Health Trust designated safeguarding officer).

Confidentiality

It is essential that confidentiality is maintained at all stages of the process when dealing with safeguarding concerns. Information relating to the concern and subsequent case management will only be shared on a need to know basis only, and should be kept secure at all times.

Signed: Rachel Woods



Chair

Date: 24 September 2026

Appendix 1 – How to deal with a safeguarding concern

Procedures

General guidance

If an HST trustee or associated person hears something in an informal discussion or chat that they think is a safeguarding concern, they should report this.

Due to the sensitive nature of safeguarding concerns, confidentiality must be maintained during all stages of the reporting process, and information shared on a limited 'need to know' basis only. This includes with other Trustees who might otherwise be appraised of the occurrence of a serious incident.

Procedure where a concern is shared with a person associated with HST:

1. Report/concern is received

Reports can reach the organisation through various routes.

- This may be in a structured format such as a letter, e-mail, text or message on social media.
- A report may also be in the form of informal discussion or rumour.

If a safeguarding concern is disclosed directly to an HST trustee or associated member, the person receiving the report should bear the following in mind:

- Listen
- Empathise with the person
- Ask who, when, where, what but not why
- Repeat/ check your understanding of the situation
- Report to the Project/Activity Manager (or, if the HST trustee is the Project/Activity Manager to the HST Chair)
- Do not investigate yourself, or press anyone for further details and information that they do not share with you voluntarily.

2. The person receiving the report/concern should document the following information:

- Name of person making report
- Name(s) of alleged victim(s) of safeguarding incident(s) if different from above
- Name(s) of alleged abuser/perpetrator(s)
- Description of incident(s)
- Dates(s), times(s) and location(s) of incident

3. The person receiving the report should then forward this information to the Safeguarding Lead or Project/Activity Manager within 24 hours. Where the Safeguarding Lead or Project/Activity Manager is the subject of the report, the report should be forward to the HST Chair

4. The Safeguarding Lead or Project/Activity Manager (or HST Chair as appropriate) assesses how to proceed with the report, they will:

- 4.1. Ensure that you have the relevant expertise and capacity to manage a safeguarding case. If you do not have this expertise seek immediate assistance, through external capacity from a suitably qualified person or body if necessary.
- 4.2. Determine whether it is possible to take this report forward

- If the report raises any concerns relating to children under the age of 18, or during the process it becomes apparent that anyone involved is a child under the age of 18, seek expert advice immediately.
 - If the reported incident represents a safeguarding risk to adults at risk or others, the report should be referred through the appropriate channel. Reports can/may be made where appropriate to the following:
 1. PSNI
 2. Safeguarding team at local Health and Social Care Trust
 3. Social Worker (if known)
 - Where a concern has been raised regarding the welfare of an individual but the person is an adult and is not deemed to be at risk of harm or in need of protection under safeguarding, signposting to an organisation such as Lifeline, Samaritans, Cruse etc. may be appropriate.
- 4.3. Clarify what, how and with whom information will be shared relating to this case. Confidentiality should be maintained at all times, and information shared on a need-to-know basis only.
- 4.4. Decide which information needs to be shared with the person who raised the concern – information needs may be different.
- 4.5. Check HST obligations on informing relevant bodies. These can include (but are not limited to):
- Funding organisations
 - Umbrella bodies/networks
 - Statutory bodies (i.e. the Charity Commission)
- 4.6. Appoint roles and responsibilities for case management
- 4.7. Provide support to victim where needed/requested and as led by the person as appropriate - support could include (but its not limited to):
- Medical assistance
 - Security assistance i.e. moving the person to a safe location
- 4.8. Undertake risk assessment
- For reports relating to serious incidents undertake an immediate risk assessment to determine whether there are any current or potential risks to any persons, and develop a mitigation plan if required. Continue to update the risk assessment and plan on a regular basis throughout and after the case as required. Serious incidents must be reported promptly to the other HST trustees (either immediately if deemed sufficiently serious or at next meeting of trustees)
- 4.9. If there is insufficient information to follow up the report, and no way to ascertain this information (for example if the person making the report did not leave contact details), the report should be filed in case it can be of use in the future
- 4.10. The Safeguarding Lead or Project/Activity Manager should consider:
- Any wider lesson learning that can be taken forward to the Board of HST trustees
 - Is a risk assessment required
- 4.11. Follow all advice given by the relevant authority and comply with all information.
- 4.12. Document all decisions made/actions taken clearly and confidentially
- 4.13.

Date:	Version:	Comments:
August 2021	1	
June 2025	2	Reviewed and updated Prevention and Response sections, definition of 'at risk adult' and paras 1,3 and 4.1, 4.2,4,8 and 4.10 of Appendix 1
Sept 2026	3	No Changes