



Safeguarding Policy

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PREVENTING PROTECTING RESPONDING

Version: 3.0

Issue Date: 13/10/2023

Next Review: 13/10/2026

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1 Introduction

1.1 Policy Statement

The purpose of this policy is to detail the commitments Avon Fire and Rescue Service (AF&RS) will make to work proactively to protect every member of the communities we serve from experiencing abuse, harm, or neglect and to enable those who do, to be able to access appropriate support and intervention.

AF&RS commit to ensuring our employees and volunteers are trained, supported, and empowered to respond to safeguarding needs, appropriate to their roles. All personnel have an obligation to ensure they fully understand their safeguarding responsibilities and that their work and actions promote the protection of vulnerable people as a priority.

To support our staff, we will provide everyone with mandatory, robust, role-specific safeguarding training on an annual basis and supplement this policy with additional guidance on internal processes and best working practices within safeguarding.

1.2 Scope

This policy impacts every member of AF&RS staff.

Additionally, AF&RS expect the same commitment to these safeguarding principles from any external organisation working in partnership or collaboration with AF&RS.

The policy will impact areas of the organisation not under the direct remit of designated Safeguarding Lead(s) (SGLs); however, those managing these areas must seek the advice and support from SGLs to ensure the Service consistently adheres to best practice.

The scope of this policy does not cover any concern that an AF&RS staff member has become aware of outside of their working practices over a member of the public who they know personally, however support would be available to make an appropriate personal referral.

2 Policy Principles

AF&RS has a responsibility as a public authority to ensure that the adults and children it interacts with are kept safe from harm. Core to this must be an acceptance by all members of the Service that:

“Safeguarding is everyone’s responsibility.”

It is not the responsibility of any AF&RS personnel to decide whether an individual has been neglected, deliberately harmed, or subjected to any other form of abuse. However, it

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is their responsibility to report their concerns and to seek support in the protection of any individual whom they feel is at risk.

2.1 Key Safeguarding Principles

To ensure that we fulfill our commitment to Safeguarding, AF&RS will:

- Provide mandatory role-specific, annual training and additional information from accredited sources to support our staff in understanding their responsibilities and internal processes.
- Educate, train, and support all staff working for or in partnership with AF&RS on how to report safeguarding concerns through the appropriate referral process to promote the welfare of children, young people, and adults at risk of harm.
- Triage all referrals made and action them on an individual basis, involving other agencies as appropriate, to try and secure positive outcomes for the individuals involved.
- Have agreed systems, standards, and protocols in place to maintain information sharing in accordance with national and local guidelines when there is sufficient evidence of actual or likely harm to an individual / individuals. We will not allow lack of consent to share information to be deemed a barrier to this.
- Embed safeguarding across all departments/areas of the Service so that safeguarding principles are considered when planning work to ensure it promotes the protection of vulnerable people as a priority.
- Act on any Safeguarding allegation made against a member of AF&RS staff and ensure that every allegation will be taken seriously and dealt with via the 'Managing Allegations' process.
- Apply a 'safer recruitment' approach to the hiring of all new staff to minimise the risk of recruiting people who may be unsuitable to work with those who are at risk of harm.
- Require staff in relevant roles to obtain an enhanced level DBS check.
- Demonstrate inclusivity by recognising the diversity of our community and providing equality of access.

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2.2 PREVENT Duty

AF&RS will fulfil our obligations under the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 and ensure that all staff complete the Government's annual PREVENT training package. We will have an internal process for referral into the National Referral Mechanism.

2.2.1 Training Packages

- PREVENT Awareness Course – all staff, annually.
- PREVENT Referrals Course – Safeguarding Leads and Strategic Lead, bi-annually.
- Channel Course - Safeguarding Leads and Strategic Lead, bi-annually.

3 Responsibilities

3.1 All Staff

Every member of AF&RS staff has a responsibility to adhere to this policy and to promote safeguarding practices in all areas of their work.

All staff must:

- Report any safeguarding concerns through the internal process.
- Complete all required training within the given timeframe.
- Have read and understood this policy and supporting guidance.
- Maintain awareness and knowledge of safeguarding areas of concern.
- Adhere to best-practice procedures when working with vulnerable people.
- Seek support if unsure of safeguarding responsibilities.

3.2 Supervisory Managers

All Supervisory Managers have additional responsibilities in relation to safeguarding including:

- Communicate updates and information to teams in a timely manner.
- Be a point of contact to help support staff understand their safeguarding responsibilities.
- Direct staff to contact the designated SGLs for support when needed.

3.3 Safeguarding Triage Team

The Safeguarding Triage Team are responsible for processing internal referrals to determine the relevant course of action. This may include referral to unitary authority safeguarding, or signposting / onward referral to other organisations for support.

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3.4 Designated SGLs (VA & CYP Managers)

The designated SGLs will:

- Ensure that the Service's safeguarding procedures are robust and aligned with both national and regional best practice by monitoring national legislative changes and representing on Local Authority Safeguarding Boards/Partnerships.
- Work effectively with others (including cross-border collaboration) and actively participate in and contribute to the various workstreams undertaken by these forums, including completing relevant audit returns and implementing and monitoring the internal actions that these generate.
- Provide subject matter expertise, advice and guidance to staff and managers across the organisation.
- Contribute to the continuous improvement of safeguarding adults and children at risk of harm by communicating, sharing learning and experiences with the National Fire Chief Council (NFCC) network of fire and rescue service safeguarding leads. SGLs will:
 - Engage with NFCC forums.
 - Support the NFCC Safeguarding Workstream through national and regional structures.
 - Consider appropriate representation at relevant national events and conferences.

3.5 Strategic Lead (Area Manager: Service Delivery – Prevention and Protection)

The Strategic Lead will:

- Provide assurances to the senior leadership team with relevant updates around changes and developments regarding safeguarding arrangements within AF&RS.
- Represent the Service at executive level at safeguarding boards throughout all four unitary authorities.
- Provide strategic leadership and be a source of support and guidance at an appropriate level to ensure the Service is and remains compliant with legislation and follows relevant guidance.
- Monitor action plans and holding staff to account for their delivery of work within these.
- Ensure the Service designated SGLs are appropriately qualified and suitably trained in accordance with legislation and the requirement of Local Safeguarding Adults and Children's Boards.

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3.6 Service Leadership Team (SLT)

SLT must offer a level of scrutiny of the safeguarding arrangements of the Service and provide challenge where appropriate to ensure these principles are fully embedded across all areas.

3.7 Chief Fire Officer (CFO)

The CFO should consider updates, seek assurance, and offer challenge where necessary to ensure that safeguarding is embedded across the Service.

The CFO must provide the Avon Fire Authority with relevant updates around changes and developments in compliance and safeguarding arrangements within AF&RS.

3.8 The Avon Fire Authority

The Avon Fire Authority should consider updates, seek assurance, and offer challenge where necessary to ensure that safeguarding is embedded across the Service, within their remit of holding AF&RS to account for delivery of the Service Plan.


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