

## **Coquet River Action Group Safeguarding Policy**

Adopted 3 December 2024, amended 24 September 2025

### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 The Coquet River Action Group (CRAG) is a not-for-profit community group bringing together several independent community groups. The aim of CRAG is to contribute to the maintenance and improvement of the water quality, health and biodiversity of the River Coquet and its catchment area.
- 1.2 All of the community groups affiliated to CRAG and whose members volunteer for CRAG will also have a safeguarding policy. This policy does not replace those of other organisations. This policy only will cover activities organised directly by CRAG.

### **2. Policy Statement**

- 2.1 Safeguarding refers to the activities undertaken to protect children and vulnerable adults who are suffering or are at risk of suffering significant harm.
- 2.2 As CRAG's activities are based in England, this policy is written to comply with the UK government guidance and legislation as it relates to England.
- 2.3 This policy covers the safeguarding of children and young people, and vulnerable adults from harm. The main differences relate to capacity and consent, the different forms of harm that could be involved and the different agencies who may be able to assist.
- 2.4 For the purposes of this policy a child is anyone under the age of eighteen. CRAG welcomes children of any age taking part in its activities but children under the age of eighteen must be accompanied by a parent or carer.
- 2.5 CRAG is committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of everyone who participates in its activities, particularly those who may be more vulnerable. In order to do this, we will:
  - a) appoint a Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO) who will lead on this, while also recognising that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.
  - b) include safeguarding considerations in risk assessments connected with CRAG's activities.
  - c) include risk-based safeguarding considerations when recruiting staff and volunteers who will work with children and vulnerable adults. The following steps will form the basis of CRAG's process of safer recruitment and best practice:
    - Use of application forms that require applicants to demonstrate an awareness of safeguarding issues
    - Self-disclosure of any past involvement with children or vulnerable adults

- Robust interviews that cover safeguarding, equality, and diversity knowledge and skills
  - Reference checks
  - A thorough induction process
  - Verification of qualifications and experience
- d) provide access to safeguarding training for each Committee Member, volunteer and employee, to be repeated yearly, and keep a record of training completed (see references section 12.4).

### **3. Implementing this policy**

#### **3.1 The role of the CRAG DSO is to:**

- a) act as a central point to whom any safeguarding concern would be reported.
- b) decide what action (if any) is required, including whether or not to share any information with the parent or carer of the individual concerned, or with another organisation or agency. If the DSO is unsure what action to take, they will follow advice from the NSPCC Helpline in the case of a child or young person, or from the relevant local authority in the case of an adult.
- c) keep an accurate record of any concerns raised and any action taken, and to store records securely and confidentially.

#### **3.2 The DSO for CRAG is Committee Member Jane Davis. All Group delegates have her phone number (Mobile No: 07950 848008) so that they can contact her as required.**

#### **3.3 If the DSO is not present at a CRAG event, then another person will be identified and notified to Group delegates in advance as the point of contact for any concerns, and the DSO will be informed as soon as possible if anything arises.**

### **4. Safe working practice & code of conduct**

- 4.1 Avoid working alone. Ensure that you are never in an enclosed or isolated space alone with children and young people or vulnerable adults. Work in pairs if possible or take your activity into a shared or public space.
- 4.2 Maintain appropriate boundaries. Physical contact with young people should be of the kind that they can initiate or cease whenever they wish (high fives rather than hugs). Do not single out a young person for special treatment or individual attention. Do not give a young person gifts or money, even to access transport or buy food at your event.
- 4.3 Do not arrange to meet a young person alone outside of the event or activity. Do not offer a young person a lift in a private car.
- 4.4 Do not give out or accept personal contact details from someone under 18. This includes “friending” on social media through personal accounts.

- 4.5 Especially if working with a group of people on more than one occasion, establish a clear code of conduct that will ensure a safe non-threatening environment and provides a basis for challenging unwanted behaviours or attitudes.

## **5. Risk assessment**

- 5.1 In preparing for any activity, it is important to anticipate and take steps to mitigate any risks. From a safeguarding perspective the following questions should be considered:
- a) What factors might make some participants more vulnerable (e.g. age, disability etc.)?
  - b) Does the environment present any additional risks (e.g. physical hazards, opportunity for interactions with vulnerable participants in private)?
  - c) How will participants know who they should speak to if they have any concerns?
  - d) If working with another organisation e.g. a school, are you aware of their safeguarding arrangements (e.g. who is their DSO or equivalent)

## **6. Reporting concerns**

- 6.1 It is essential that any concerns about the safety or wellbeing of a child, young person, or vulnerable adult are responded to promptly and reported to the DSO or other designated person for that event or activity. (See also section 3.1 and 3.2)
- 6.2 The DSO will inform the committee of the actions they have taken within a reasonable period of any incident and also provide a summary report on all safeguarding activities within the annual report to be submitted at the CRAG AGM.

## **7. Record keeping**

- 7.1 When there are concerns about the welfare or safety of a vulnerable individual, it's vital that all relevant details are recorded. This must be done regardless of whether the concerns are shared with the police, relevant local authority or another agency.
- 7.2 Keep an accurate record of:
- a) the date and time of the incident/disclosure
  - b) the date and time of the report
  - c) the name and role of the person to whom the concern was originally reported and their contact details
  - d) the name and role of the person making the report (if this is different to the above) and their contact details
  - e) the names of all parties who were involved in the incident, including any witnesses

- f) the name, age and any other relevant information about the person who is the subject of the concern (if a child, including information about their parents or carers and any siblings)
- g) what was said or done and by whom
- h) any action taken to look into the matter
- i) any further action taken (such as a referral being made)
- j) the reasons why the group decided not to refer those concerns to a statutory agency (if relevant).

7.3 All records will be kept securely and confidentially

## **8. Photography**

8.1 Sharing photographs and films of our activities can help us celebrate the achievements of our work, provide a record of our activities and raise awareness of our group. In order to do this safely, and to comply with Data Protection legislation, we will:

- a) always ask for consent from an adult to have their photograph taken, and a photograph will not be taken if they are unable to give consent.
- b) always ask for written consent from a child and their parents or carers before taking and using a child's image.
- c) always explain what images will be used for, how they will be stored and what potential risks are associated with sharing images.
- d) make it clear that if an individual or their parent or carer later withdraws consent for an image to be shared, it may not be possible to delete images that have already been shared or published.
- e) not show the names of vulnerable individuals whose images are in our published material and only use first names if we do need to identify them.
- f) never publish personal information about vulnerable individuals and disguise or blur any identifying information (for example the name of their school or a school uniform with a logo).

## **9. Definitions of abuse and neglect**

Abuse or neglect of a child or vulnerable adult can be caused by inflicting harm or by failing to prevent harm. This abuse or neglect can occur within a family, or within an institutional or community setting; by those they know, or more rarely, by a stranger.

As required by the DPA 2018 and the UK GDPR, CRAG will ensure that its Privacy Statement is easy to access, read and understand in a way that is appropriate to the intended audience.

There are four main categories of abuse and neglect affecting children and vulnerable adults.

### 9.1 Physical abuse

- a) Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to the individual.
- b) Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of or deliberately induces illness in a child.

### 9.2 Emotional Abuse

- a) Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child or vulnerable adult such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on emotional development or wellbeing.
- b) It may involve conveying to children and vulnerable adults that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person.
- c) It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on the individual. These may include interactions that are beyond their developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child or vulnerable adult participating in normal social interaction.
- d) It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying causing children and vulnerable adults frequently to feel frightened or in danger.
- e) Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment, though it may occur alone.

### 9.3 Sexual Abuse

- a) Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or vulnerable adult or young person to take part in sexual activities, including prostitution, whether or not the child or vulnerable adult is aware of what is happening.
- b) The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative (e.g. rape, buggery or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts. They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children and vulnerable adults in looking at, or in the production of, pornographic material or watching sexual activities, or encouraging children and vulnerable adults to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

### 9.4 Neglect

- a) Neglect is the persistent failure to meet an individual's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of health or development.
- b) Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse.
- c) Neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food and clothing, shelter including exclusion from home or abandonment, failing to protect a child or vulnerable adult from physical and emotional harm or danger, failure to ensure

adequate supervision including the use of inadequate care- takers, or the failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.

- d) It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, an individual's basic emotional needs.
- e) Self-neglect also occurs in young people and adults

## **10. What to do if a child or vulnerable adult discloses something of concern**

10.1 You may have concerns about a child or vulnerable adult because of something you have seen or heard, or an individual may disclose something to you.

10.2 If a child or vulnerable adult discloses something of concern to you:

- a) Do not promise confidentiality, you have a duty to share this information and refer it to the local authority.
- b) Listen to what is being said, without displaying shock or disbelief.
- c) Accept what is said.
- d) Reassure the individual, but only as far as is honest, do not make promises you may not be able to keep e.g.: 'Everything will be alright now', 'You'll never have to see that person again'.
- e) Do reassure and alleviate guilt, if the child or vulnerable adult refers to it. For example, you could say, 'You're not to blame'.
- f) Do not interrogate the individual; it is not your responsibility to investigate.
- g) Do not ask leading questions (e.g.: Did he touch your private parts?), ask open questions such as 'Anything else to tell me?'
- h) Do not ask the child or vulnerable adult to repeat the information for another person present.
- i) Explain what you have to do next and who you have to talk to.
- j) Take notes if possible or write up your conversation as soon as possible afterwards. Record the date, time, place any non-verbal behaviour and the words used by the child or vulnerable adult (do not paraphrase).
- k) Record statements and observable things rather than interpretation or assumptions.

10.3 Whatever the nature of your concerns, discuss them with the CRAG DSO, designated person for an event, who will decide what to do, taking advice if required.

## **11. Reference**

11.1 For children the main guidance document issued by the government is "Working together to safeguard children":

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children>

11.2 For adults, there is no one document but topics are covered in the following:

- a) The Office of the Public Guardian's policy on protecting vulnerable adults of abuse or neglect is very useful:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safeguarding-policy-protecting-vulnerable-adults>

- b) The Ann Craft Trust provides a helpful summary of guidance available.

<https://www.anncrafttrust.org>

11.3 Contact Details

- a) For children, young people or adults, the Local Authority can be contacted via Northumberland County Council's Safeguarding Team 01670 536400 at any time.

- b) The NSPCC Helpline (0808 800 5000) is available 365 days a year, 24 hours a day.

- c) In an emergency ring 999

11.4 CRAG committee, staff and volunteers use the following online training and guidance:

- a) <https://elementstraining.teachable.com/p/safeguarding>



- b) [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qWO\\_WfnRW\\_U](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qWO_WfnRW_U)

- c) <https://www.anncrafttrust.org/resources/safe-recruitment-process/>

## 12. Review of this Safeguarding Policy

12.1 CRAG will revise this Policy as often as may be appropriate to ensure the contents remain accurate and valid in light of changing circumstances, practices and statutory requirements.

12.2 At a minimum, this Policy will be reviewed annually. The next review is due in December 2025.

Approved and adopted:		
	First signatory	Second signatory
Name:	Jane Davis	Jamie Day
Position:	CRAG Chair and DSO	CRAG Treasurer
Signature:		
Date:	3 December 2024	3 December 2024