

5 November 2020**SAFEGUARDING****Purpose**

1. To seek agreement on new Safeguarding policy, practice and guidance for FC (PPG16).
2. To note the immediate next steps towards implementation and commit to embedding the policy and practice in daily activities throughout the FC.

Background

3. Internal Audit completed a Safeguarding and Compliance Review in 2018/19. One recommendation of the review and agreed action was to “Ensure adequate arrangements are in place for transferring the governance of HR policies and procedures to England and a project plan is established to review policies, prioritising those that represent the highest risk.”
4. One high priority area for review was Safeguarding; specifically, to fully refresh Operational Guidance Booklet 16 (OGB16) following the separation of the Scottish and English parts of former FC GB.
5. Forestry England colleagues, Volunteer Manager - England and Head of Health, Safety & Technical Training, have led the work necessary to create a new Safeguarding PPG for the FC. In doing so they have received input from FR, FS, and CO colleagues and benefitted from Forestry Commissioner Jennie Price’s perspective and comments during drafting. External expert advice, to help shape the policy and guidance, was also obtained.
6. A draft PPG16 was circulated for comment as per usual process for PPGs, and the comments received used to create the attached final draft.

Proposal

7. The Forestry Commission has a legal and moral duty to identify, so far as reasonably practicable, instances where the safeguarding of vulnerable children and adults is at risk and report these instances to the relevant members of staff or regulatory authorities.
8. PPG16 identifies the process for the identification of such instances, as well as the process to be followed to escalate these to relevant staff for a decision to be taken on action required.

9. The policy set within PPG16 should apply throughout all parts of FC and is applicable to staff, volunteers, agency workers, contractors, third parties, tenants and members of public.
10. The EB is asked to approve the new Safeguarding policy, practice and guidance (PPG16).

Next Steps

11. To enable the effective rollout and implementation of the Safeguarding PPG16, the following next steps are required. These will be taken forward by Volunteer Manager and Head of Health, Safety & Technical Training but will require support of specific people and teams across FC.
 - a. Rollout out of the Safeguarding PPG across the business and ensure clear awareness of the organisation's responsibilities with regards to safeguarding for our staff, volunteers, contractors, third party businesses and the public. Supporting all principal management units (Districts, Areas, Business Units, FR) to review the Safeguarding PPG and to appoint an appropriate individual as the Safeguarding lead for their business unit.
 - b. Safeguarding Awareness Training. Working alongside Technical Training to identify appropriate safeguarding training which can be rolled out at the same time as the launch of the PPG. This will look to provide an overarching understanding for all staff about what Safeguarding is, our responsibilities when working with colleagues, volunteers, contractors and the public. This awareness training would be mandatory for all staff.
 - c. Safeguarding Level 2 Training. There is also a need for a more comprehensive, mandatory training course for staff who will be working in roles which are public facing or for staff within a safeguarding lead role. To be developed as point b.
 - d. Executive Safeguarding Training. This would be mandatory for senior staff i.e. Executive Board and senior leadership teams. To be developed as point b.
 - e. Development of operational guidance to support specific areas of the business to implement the Safeguarding Policy effectively. This in part is underway, such as updates to commercial services contract documentation, permission templates and volunteer processes. This will be further expanded to ensure a safeguarding tool box is available linked with the PPG pages with resources to support our learning, community and wider recreation business.

- f. Recording and monitoring. Through the development of the new Airsweb system, the ability for the organisation to record all safeguarding concerns and incidents securely and effectively has been implemented. This will enable us to develop a baseline of data over the coming 12 to 18 months to ensure we recognise and act appropriately to safeguarding concerns and incidents across our workforce, our externally facing business (events, learning, volunteering) contractors, 3rd Party Businesses, and public via Airsweb. This will enable us to review our PPG, operational tools and training to ensure they are meeting our requirements.

Resource implications

12. Implementation of the policy requirements will require leadership and staff time, both on a one-off basis to roll the new policy out, plus an ongoing basis to embed practice on a recurrent basis. This will specifically require time from the SRO and individuals in the National Safeguarding Team plus local Safeguarding Leads.
13. Development of the various levels of training needs to take place and can be afforded from existing resources. Subsequent deployment is anticipated to be via remote workshops or e-learning incurring low levels of recurrent cost.

Risk Assessment

14. Risks of not adopting this proposal is that the FC is at significant risk of failing its legal and moral duty to safeguard children and vulnerable adults. Adopting Safeguarding PPG16 throughout FC and implementing it, mitigates these risks.

Equality Impact Assessment

15. An Equality Impact Assessment is not required at this stage.

Communications

16. An internal communication plan is required to support the rollout and implementation of PPG16.
17. Following Board approval, the completion of this policy review should be reported to GIAA to close the audit action, plus the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee who have taken an interest in this work.

Recommendations

18. The Board is invited to approve PPG16; note the immediate next steps towards implementation and commit to embedding the policy and practice in daily activities throughout the FC.

Mike Seddon
Chief Executive, Forestry England
October 2020