

Harpenden Society Youth Collective

Risk assessment, safeguarding and safe working practices

1. Purpose

The Harpenden Society Youth Collective (HSYC) is a youth engagement and leadership programme for young people in Year 12 (ages 16-17) who wish to contribute to the civic, environmental, heritage, planning and community life of Harpenden. The purpose of this appendix is to ensure that all Youth Collective activities are conducted safely, transparently and respectfully, and that both young people and adult volunteers are protected from harm, abuse, exploitation, inappropriate conduct or misunderstanding.

This appendix should be read alongside the Harpenden Society Governance, Financial Controls and Safeguarding Manual and applies to all trustees, committee members, mentors, volunteers, contractors and partner organisations involved in Youth Collective activities.

2. Principles

The Harpenden Society believes that young people should be encouraged to develop confidence, leadership, civic awareness and practical skills within a safe and supportive environment.

All adults working with Youth Collective members will:

- place the welfare of young people first
- treat young people with dignity and respect
- maintain appropriate professional boundaries
- act as positive role models
- avoid behaviour that could be misinterpreted
- ensure transparency and accountability in all interactions
- recognise that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility

3. Youth Collective Structure

The Youth Collective will normally consist of 8–12 members aged 16–17 from schools and colleges across Harpenden and the surrounding area. All members will be Harpenden residents.

Activities may include:

- committee and project meetings
- heritage and planning research
- environmental and biodiversity projects
- community volunteering
- public events
- site visits
- consultation exercises
- mentoring and leadership development
- digital and social media projects
- presentations and campaigning activities

A Youth Collective Lead Trustee will be appointed by the Committee and will be responsible for the overall oversight of Youth Collective activities.

4. Designated Safeguarding Lead

The Harpenden Society will appoint a Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and Deputy DSL.

For all Youth Collective activities:

- the DSL will be informed of programme activities
- mentors and volunteers will know how to contact the DSL
- safeguarding concerns will be reported immediately in accordance with the main safeguarding policy

5. Recruitment and Suitability of Adult Volunteers

Adults working regularly with the Youth Collective will be approved by the Committee.

Where appropriate and legally permissible, adults undertaking regular mentoring or supervisory roles with young people will hold a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check.

Safer recruitment includes:

- committee approval
- reference checks where appropriate
- safeguarding induction
- agreement to the Harpenden Society Code of Conduct
- agreement to this appendix

The Society recognises that safer recruitment is not solely about DBS checks; it also requires careful selection, training, supervision and ongoing oversight of volunteers working with young people.

6. Working with Young People Aged 16–18

Young people aged 16–18 are still legally children and must be safeguarded appropriately.

However, the Society recognises that members of the Youth Collective are older teenagers who following agreement from parents/guardians may:

- travel independently
- undertake research projects
- meet adult mentors
- participate in civic events
- represent the Society publicly

Safeguarding arrangements will therefore be proportionate, recognising both the independence and the legal safeguarding status of participants.

7. Meetings

The Youth Collective includes meetings and project work.

Group meetings between young people will be unsupervised and typically with two DBS-checked adult and are permitted where necessary, provided that:

- the meeting has a clear educational, mentoring or project purpose
- the young person has voluntarily agreed to the meeting
- the young persons parent/guardian adult is aware of:
 - the date
 - time
 - location
 - and expected duration
- Brief records of all meetings will be retained.

Appropriate meeting locations include:

- libraries
- cafés
- community venues
- Harpenden Society meeting spaces or meeting venues
- outdoor public locations during project work

Meetings will not take place in a private home.

Where a virtual meeting is used, another responsible adult should be aware that the meeting is taking place.

8. Limited Unsupervised Project Work

Because Youth Collective members are aged 16–17, the Society may permit unsupervised project work.

Examples may include:

- photography projects
- heritage research
- planning observation
- biodiversity surveys
- attending public exhibitions or consultations
- preparing presentations or campaign materials

Such activities are permitted only when:

- a risk assessment has been completed
- the young person has received appropriate guidance
- contact arrangements have been agreed
- emergency contact information is available
- the activity is appropriate for the young person's age and experience

Young people should never be asked to enter private property, isolated areas or potentially hazardous environments without appropriate supervision.

9. Supervision Ratios

For organised group activities involving young people, the Society will normally ensure:

- at least two responsible adults are involved in organising the activity
- activities are planned and risk assessed
- emergency contact details are available
- young people know who the responsible adults are

The Society recognises that it is not always possible to avoid all risk; however, risks should be minimised through planning, appropriate supervision and written risk assessment.

10. Communication with Young People

Communication should be professional, respectful and transparent.

Approved communication methods include:

- official Society email accounts
- occasional use of personal email when required, e.g. for Google Forms
- approved group messaging platforms
- official Youth Collective WhatsApp groups
- Harpenden Society social media accounts

Where practical, communications should be visible to more than one responsible adult.

Adults should not:

- engage in flirtatious or intimate communication
- send inappropriate images or content
- use disappearing message functions
- communicate excessively or in a manner that creates dependency
- communicate late at night except for genuine operational or emergency reasons

If individual communication is necessary, it should relate only to Society activities and remain courteous and professional.

11. WhatsApp and Group Messaging

The Society may operate an official Youth Collective messaging group.

The group will:

- have at least two adult administrators
- be used only for Society-related communication
- be monitored regularly
- not be used for inappropriate humour, offensive content or bullying

Concerns arising within digital communications must be reported to the DSL.

12. Social Media

Adults working with the Youth Collective should not normally use personal social media accounts to communicate individually with participants.

Where young people engage with Society social media:

- interactions should remain public and appropriate
- comments should be moderated
- inappropriate content should be removed promptly
- safeguarding concerns should be reported immediately

13. Photography, Video and Media

The Society frequently undertakes publicity and community engagement.

For Youth Collective members:

- written consent will be obtained from the participant and, where appropriate, a parent or guardian
- images will be used respectfully
- full names will not normally be published alongside photographs
- consent records will be stored securely

Young people may withdraw consent at any time.

14. Transport

Adults should avoid transporting a young person alone where reasonably possible.

Where a single adult transport arrangement is unavoidable:

- the journey must be authorised in advance
- another responsible adult must be informed
- the young person (and, where appropriate, a parent/guardian) must know the arrangements
- the journey should be recorded
- seat belts must be worn
- the vehicle must be roadworthy and appropriately insured

Young people may travel independently to agreed meeting locations where appropriate.

15. Site Visits, Walks and Environmental Activities

Before any site visit, walk or environmental activity:

- a written risk assessment will be completed
- weather conditions will be considered
- meeting and finish points will be agreed
- emergency contact information will be available
- first aid arrangements will be identified

Young people should not be required to work alone in isolated areas.

16. Physical Contact

Physical contact should be:

- appropriate
- non-intrusive
- responsive to the young person's needs
- never secretive

Examples of acceptable contact may include:

- a handshake
- a congratulatory pat on the shoulder
- assisting someone who has fallen

Any contact that could be interpreted as intimate, unnecessary or coercive must be avoided.

17. Gifts and Favouritism

Adults should not:

- give expensive personal gifts to individual young people
- lend significant amounts of money
- show favouritism
- create exclusive relationships

Small tokens of appreciation approved by the Society (for example, books, certificates or refreshments) may be appropriate.

18. Mental Health and Wellbeing

Youth Collective members may experience stress, anxiety, low mood, academic pressure or other wellbeing concerns.

Volunteers should:

- listen without judgement
- avoid offering counselling unless appropriately qualified
- encourage the young person to seek appropriate support
- report concerns where there is a risk of harm

Any concern involving:

- self-harm
- suicidal thoughts
- exploitation
- abuse
- neglect
- coercion
- or significant mental health risk

must be referred immediately to the DSL.

19. Safeguarding Disclosures

If a young person discloses abuse or another safeguarding concern:

- remain calm
- listen carefully
- do not investigate
- do not ask leading questions
- do not promise confidentiality
- explain that the information must be shared with the DSL
- make a factual written record as soon as possible

The record should include:

- date and time
- location
- who was present
- exactly what was said
- actions taken

20. Managing Concerns About an Adult

If a concern arises about a mentor, volunteer, trustee or another adult involved with the Youth Collective:

- report immediately to the DSL
- if the concern involves the DSL, report to the Chair of Trustees
- preserve confidentiality
- avoid discussing the allegation with others unnecessarily
- follow the Harpenden Society safeguarding procedures

21. Training and Induction

All adults working regularly with the Youth Collective will receive:

- safeguarding induction
- a copy of the Safeguarding Policy
- this Youth Appendix
- guidance on safer working practices
- online safety guidance
- reporting procedures

Refresher safeguarding training will be provided periodically.

22. Code of Conduct for Youth Collective Members

Youth Collective members are expected to:

- treat others with respect
- avoid bullying, harassment or discrimination
- behave responsibly at Society events
- follow safety instructions
- use digital communications respectfully
- report concerns to a trusted adult
- represent the Harpenden Society positively

Serious or repeated breaches may result in suspension or removal from the Youth Collective.

23. Review

This appendix will be reviewed annually by the Harpenden Society Committee and whenever:

- safeguarding guidance changes
- Youth Collective activities change significantly
- a safeguarding incident or near miss occurs

Approved by a trustee of the Harpenden Society:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Reed', is written over a faint, light blue circular stamp. The stamp contains some illegible text, possibly a date or reference number.

30th September 2026

Next review date: September 2027