

# RISBOROUGH & DISTRICT MODEL RAILWAY CLUB



## POSITION PAPER – JUNIOR MEMBERSHIP/SAFEGUARDING POLICY

### **Introduction**

The club has recently been approached by a potential junior member. Current Club rules only allow attendance by junior members aged 12 to 17 if they are accompanied by a parent, guardian or responsible person appointed by the parent or guardian. In consideration that this policy may be too restrictive, the trustees have instructed a review of Club rules and policies with respect to junior membership and safeguarding (Appendix A).

### **Benchmarking**

To understand how the Club's rules and policies compare with comparable organisations, the current junior membership criteria for both the Quanton Railway Society (QRS) and the High Wycombe and District Model Railway Society were researched.

QRS allow junior members from the age of 16, without being accompanied by a parent and/or guardian. Whilst QRS do have Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) qualified staff, this is not a requirement with respect to safeguarding junior members or vulnerable persons.

The High Wycombe and District Model Railway Society (HWDMRS) has a specific Junior Section for children aged between 12 and 17. Once again the society does not have specific DBS qualified staff to oversee their junior members.

Both QRS and the HWDMRS have agreed to share their safeguarding policy to enable the Club to benchmark their entry and supervision criteria. However, both organisations are currently reviewing their policies considering the recent government report on child sexual abuse in England and Wales. Once their reviews are complete, both organisations will share their revised policies with R&DMRC. It is important that the Club's policies on safeguarding are aligned with QRS's policies when the Club moves to Quanton.

There are specific threads on RMWeb regarding safeguarding, with some good links to template policies. According to the respondents of the thread, most Clubs operate a child/vulnerable adult accompanied policy. Some however, have a policy to ensure that children/vulnerable adults are not left alone either at or travelling to and from the Club. The key learning point from the thread, was to have robust policies in place which are understood and applied by all Club members.

### **Legislation**

Safeguarding guidance on the Gov.uk website states that charities must have robust safeguarding policies, which everyone in that organisation understands and uses. Furthermore, the guidance states that organisations have clear policies on bullying and harassment, and whistleblowing. Any incidents or allegations of abuse must be handled and recorded in a secure and responsible way. Mitigating actions must be

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taken quickly to stop or minimise further harm or damage and if required, the incident or allegation must be reported to all relevant agencies. The Charity Commission will hold trustees to account if things go wrong and will check that trustees have followed guidance and the law.

The Charity Commission expects all trustees to ensure their charity:

- has appropriate policies and procedures in place, which are followed by all trustees, volunteers, and beneficiaries
- checks that people are suitable to act in their roles
- knows how to spot and handle concerns in a full and open manner
- has a clear system of referring or reporting to relevant agencies as soon as concerns are suspected or identified
- sets out risks and how they will be managed in a risk register which is regularly reviewed
- follows statutory guidance, good practice guidance and legislation relevant to their charity: this guidance links to the main sources of information
- is quick to respond to concerns and carry out appropriate investigations
- does not ignore harm or downplays failures
- has a balanced trustee board and does not let one trustee dominate its work – trustees should work together
- makes sure protecting people from harm is central to its culture
- has enough resources, including trained staff/volunteers/trustees for safeguarding and protecting people
- conducts periodic reviews of safeguarding policies, procedures, and practice

The charity's policies and procedures for protecting people and safeguarding should be:

- put into practice
- responsive to change
- reviewed as necessary, always following a serious incident and at least once a year
- available to the public
- compliant with all relevant legislation, noting this can vary depending on who you work with
- made aware to all trustees, staff, volunteers, partners, and beneficiaries.

The policies should make clear how the charity will:

- protect people from harm
- make sure people can raise safeguarding concerns
- handle allegations or incidents
- respond, including reporting to the relevant authorities

Whilst the guidance does not mandate DBS checks for organisations like the R&DMRC, it does state that organisations must make sure that trustees, staff, and volunteers are suitable and legally able to act in their positions.

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## Recommendations

1. Review both QRS and HWDMRS junior membership and safeguarding policies, with a view to enhancing the Club's documentation. Ensure that revised R&DMRC policies and rules on junior membership and safeguarding align with QRS prior to the move to Quainton.
2. Revise the Club's Vulnerable Person Policy (Appendix A) to include to key criteria detailed in the Charities Commission guidance above notably,
  - a) Reporting and investigation of incidents and allegations.
  - b) The appointment of trustees.
  - c) Risk registers.
  - d) The annual review of policies.
  - e) Make policies available to public on website.
3. Develop and implement policies on bullying, harassment, and whistleblowing.

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## APPENDIX A

### **R&DMRC Vulnerable Person Policy**

This policy applies to all club members.

The Risborough & District Model Railway Club is open to all above the age of 12 years. Club membership is based on a hobby interest and membership is not restricted except that the applicant has professed an interest in joining the club and agrees to meet a requirement to comply with the rules and constitution of the club. The application and confirmation of membership process does not lend itself to any vetting process.

The club recognises that there is a need to ensure that no individual, adult or child is treated any less favourably than others. The club recognises that people, without exception, have the right to protection from abuse regardless of gender, ethnicity, disability, sexuality or beliefs.

Therefore, the club has adopted rules and procedures for the safeguarding of vulnerable people and where appropriate has included these in the club rules.

The club membership is not static, people join and leave as they wish and unlike a business or workplace there is no expectation that a person will remain a member for a long period of time, although this is encouraged; nor can there be any expectation of notice to leave. It is therefore not practical for the club to appoint particular members to positions where that individual has a responsibility for protection issues. The Trustees and Club Committee have an overall responsibility for monitoring membership applications, protection issues, maintaining an overview of safeguarding issues and reviewing those as may be necessary.

Children or young people may join the club at the age of 12. There is a requirement that when they attend the club they are accompanied at all times by a parent/guardian or responsible adult appointed by the parent/guardian. That person has a responsibility for that young person whilst on the club premises or partaking in club activities. The child and parent/guardian are informed of the policy and procedures as part of the application process and have to agree to these rules.

Where a club member makes the club aware they have particular qualifications for the safeguarding of children the club will seek to utilise those qualifications if the member is willing to put his expertise at the disposal of the club, for example by being responsible for the young person's section of the club, although it is recognised that although qualified the member may not wish to undertake these duties.

On access to Club premises, the club recognises that it is impossible to meet the needs of everyone, however we will continue to review access and make reasonable and practicable adjustments where we can. The club also recognises that this policy cannot take account of all vulnerable people and where not otherwise provided for, the club will consider the individual and how we can assist that person to become a member of the club.

All concerns and allegations of abuse will be taken seriously by trustees and members and will be responded to appropriately. A response may include referral to the appropriate body or the Police. The club will adopt a whistle blowing policy.

This policy is reviewed annually on or near the anniversary of its last review or when relevant legislation changes.

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