

## Understanding and Embracing Safeguarding at K&ESR: It's Everyone's Responsibility

In this issue of the Newsletter, we address a topic of utmost importance - safeguarding. There seems to be a misconception among some of our volunteers that safeguarding is a 'pink and fluffy' subject, perhaps not worthy of serious consideration. However, safeguarding is neither an optional extra nor a trivial matter. It's a fundamental aspect of our operations and a critical responsibility that we all share.



*Safeguarding is not something just pink and fluffy!*



*Safeguarding means ensuring that our environment is not only safe but also inclusive, respectful, and nurturing for everyone.*

### **What is Safeguarding?**

Safeguarding is the action we take to promote the welfare of children and vulnerable adults and protect them from harm. It means ensuring that our environment is not only safe but also inclusive, respectful, and nurturing for everyone. This encompasses protection from physical, emotional, and sexual harm, and extends to preventing the risk of radicalisation and fighting against discrimination and bullying.





*Bullying an apprentice or young volunteer is never acceptable.*



*Regardless of who it is.*

Why is Safeguarding Important?

- **Legal and Ethical Obligation:** We have a legal duty to protect children and vulnerable adults who interact with our railway. Beyond legalities, it's an ethical imperative to ensure that everyone feels safe and respected in our environment.

- **Ensuring Safety and Well-being:** Our primary goal is to provide a secure space where everyone, irrespective of age or ability, can enjoy their experience without fear of harm or discomfort.
- **Building Trust and Reputation:** Effective safeguarding practices help in building trust with our passengers, volunteers, staff, and the wider community. It's vital for maintaining our reputation as a safe and responsible organization.
- **Creating an Inclusive Environment:** Safeguarding ensures that our railway is welcoming and accessible to all, fostering an environment of inclusivity and respect.



*Unwanted attention is equally unacceptable.*

### **It's Not a Choice - It's a Must**

Adhering to safeguarding protocols is not optional; it's a fundamental part of our duty as members of the K&ESR community. Ignorance of these practices is not just detrimental;

it's potentially dangerous. Therefore, it's essential that every member, regardless of their role or seniority, understands and commits to these principles.



*Online grooming is something we all need to be vigilant to.*

### **Moving Forward: Training and Awareness**

To ensure everyone is on the same page, we will be rolling out training sessions and resources to help our volunteers understand and implement safeguarding measures effectively. These sessions will be mandatory, and we expect full participation. We are also planning to introduce regular refreshers and updates to keep everyone informed.

Let's all remember, safeguarding is about creating a culture where everyone feels secure, valued, and respected. It's about protecting the most vulnerable among us and ensuring that K&ESR remains a beacon of safety and inclusivity.





*We will run an online training course.*

Together, let's commit to this vital aspect of our responsibility and ensure that K&ESR continues to be a place where everyone, regardless of their background, can thrive and enjoy the unique experiences our railway offers.

The story of James below, though fictional, touches a raw nerve and brings into sharp focus the vital importance of safeguarding within our railway operations. This narrative, while thankfully imaginary, could have been (and almost was) a real incident, underscoring a profound truth: the wellbeing and safety of every individual, especially children, is paramount.

**IMAGINE.....**

*James was not just a nine-year-old boy; he was the light of his parents' lives, a loving brother, and a bright spark in the Tenterden community. His infectious laugh and boundless curiosity made him a favourite among his friends and family. But in one tragic night, that light was extinguished, leaving an indelible mark of sorrow.*

*On that fateful evening, James, was part of local youth group walking along the railway line. It was an adventure for him, a night under the stars with his friends, unaware of the danger that lay ahead.*



*It all started as a great adventure.*

*The impact of the train was sudden and devastating. In an instant, the joy and laughter that James brought into the world were replaced by a deafening silence.*

*His parents, John and Emily, were inconsolable. They had lost their youngest son, their baby. John kept murmuring, "He was just going for a walk, he was just a boy." Emily's*

*tears were a constant stream, a visual testament to a mother's broken heart. Their older son, Michael, only fifteen, grappled with a mix of anger and loss, unable to comprehend a world without his little brother.*

*The ripples of this tragedy extended far beyond James' family. The other families, who had also lost their children or were praying in hospitals, shared this inconsolable grief. They were united in their sorrow, a bond forged in the worst circumstances.*

*The train crew, though not at fault, were deeply traumatised. The driver, a father himself, couldn't shake the image of the children on the tracks. The haunting question of "What if?" lingered in his mind. His colleagues, who had witnessed the aftermath, sought counselling to cope with the scenes they couldn't unsee.*



*But ended it tragedy.*



*Emergency service workers, who are no strangers to tragedy, found this incident particularly heart-wrenching. The sight of young, lifeless bodies in uniforms, much like their own children might wear, was a harsh reminder of the fragility of life.*

*The railway, a symbol of Tenterden's heritage and pride, was now a site of sorrow. The staff, who had known these tracks as a place of joy and history, now walked them with a heavy heart. The community's trust in the safety of their cherished railway was deeply shaken.*

*Tenterden, a town known for its tight-knit community and scenic beauty, was plunged into mourning. The streets, usually bustling with life, were sombre. Schools where these children once laughed and played held vigils, and local businesses displayed signs of condolence.*

*The heritage sector, of which the Kent and East Sussex Railway was a proud part, felt a collective grief. This incident was a grim reminder of the responsibilities that come with preserving history. It brought to light the crucial need for safety in preserving the past for future generations.*

*James' story, a life cut tragically short, became a poignant reminder of the consequences of a single decision. It was a wake-up call to always assess risks, especially where the young and vulnerable are involved.*

*In the midst of this tragedy, James' memory became a catalyst for change. Safety measures were re-evaluated and reinforced, not just in Tenterden, but in communities everywhere. His name became synonymous with the importance of vigilance and care in all activities involving children.*

*But for those who knew and loved James, no amount of change could fill the void his passing left. His room, still adorned with posters of his favourite superheroes and the model trains he adored, remained untouched. A testament to a life that was, and the potential that was never to be realised.*

*James, a nine-year-old with a bright future, became a symbol of a lesson learned too late. His loss, a heart-breaking reminder of the preciousness of life, and the impact one small decision can have on so many.*

### **Why Safeguarding Matters: A Reflection on 'James' Story'**

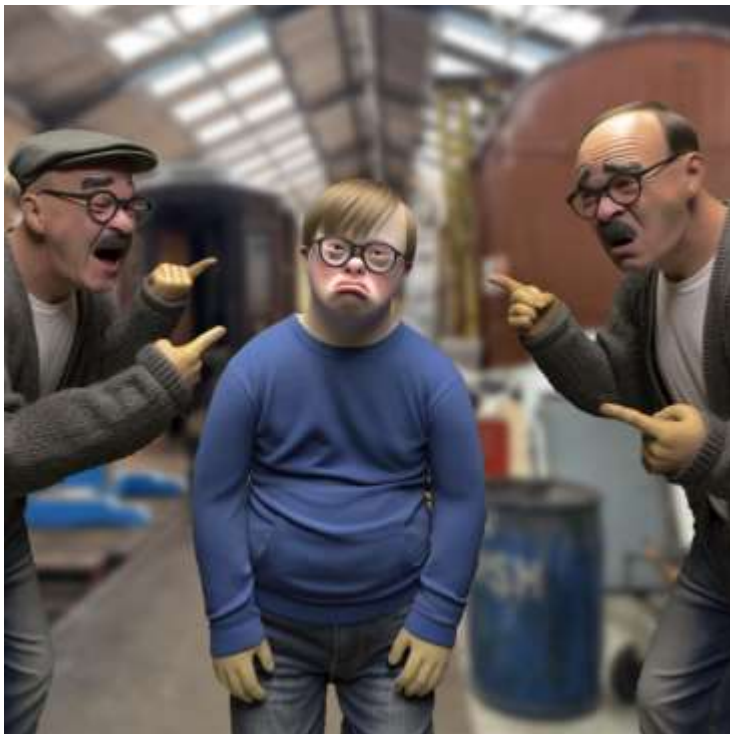
Fortunately, this is a fictional story but could have very easily have been real. It is a poignant reflection on the far-reaching consequences of a tragic event, and the profound impact of loss on a community and beyond. It serves as a reminder of the importance of safety and responsible decision-making, especially when it involves the wellbeing of children.

How did it nearly happen it was because the children's wellbeing was not properly considered and risk assessed, they were exposed to real danger, that is what safeguarding is all about.

James' story is a haunting reminder of the potential consequences when the wellbeing of the young and vulnerable is not thoroughly considered or risk-assessed. The impact of such a tragedy is far-reaching:

- **Irreversible Loss for Families:** The unimaginable grief of losing a child, as portrayed in the lives of James' parents and brother, is a heartbreak no family should ever endure.
- **Trauma for Train Crew and First Responders:** The psychological impact on those directly involved, like the train crew and emergency service workers, is profound and long-lasting.
- **Community Grief:** A tragedy of this magnitude sends shockwaves through the entire community, turning places of joy and pride into sites of sorrow.
- **Reputation of the Railway:** Incidents like these can shake public trust in the railway's safety, impacting its reputation and future.
- **Broader Implications:** Such events resonate beyond the immediate community, affecting the heritage sector and raising awareness of safety responsibilities.

In my tenure as General Manager, we have encountered numerous incidents, some of which are now legal matters. This includes disturbing revelations about individuals with past criminal convictions involving children. These incidents underscore why we are earnestly focusing on safeguarding.



*Everyone should have a positive experience.*



*Visitors should feel safe.*



*Everyone at some time can be vulnerable to a bully*





*Who is on our property and what is their purpose.*

### **Safeguarding: Not Just a Policy, But a Commitment**

Safeguarding is about making thoughtful, well-informed decisions that consider the safety and wellbeing of all, particularly the most vulnerable. It involves:

- **Risk Assessment:** Identifying potential dangers and taking steps to mitigate them.
- **Vigilance:** Being alert to signs of abuse or neglect.
- **Education:** Training staff and volunteers to recognize and respond to safeguarding concerns.
- **Strict Recruitment Processes:** Ensuring thorough background checks for anyone who joins our team.
- **Creating a Safe Environment:** Cultivating a culture where everyone feels secure and valued.

In light of these realities, safeguarding is not an optional aspect of our operations; it's a non-negotiable, integral part of our responsibility to each other and to our community. We must remember that every decision we make, every protocol we follow, can have a significant impact.



*What holds can someone have over another?*

### **A Commitment to Change and Vigilance**

As we move forward, we are committed to reinforcing our safeguarding measures. We will not only comply with legal requirements but also go above and beyond to ensure a safe, inclusive, and nurturing environment for all.

James' story, though fictional, serves as a powerful catalyst for change. It reminds us of the gravity of our responsibilities and the profound impact our actions can have. Let us

honour this lesson by reaffirming our commitment to safeguarding, ensuring that such a tragedy never becomes our reality.

Thank you for your continued support and commitment to safety and wellbeing at K&ESR.