Safeguarding Policy

Purpose of Policy

This policy is intended to protect children who receive any service from us, including those who are the children of adults who may receive services from us. Under this policy, the term children shall mean any person who is under eighteen years of age.

The organisation believes that no child or young person should experience abuse or harm and is committed to the protection of children and young people. This policy is intended to provide guidance and overarching principles to those who represent us as volunteers or staff, to guide our approach to child protection and safeguarding.

The Risks to Children

Children can be vulnerable to different forms of abuse and harm. It is important to recognise that abuse and harm of children can cover a wide range of circumstances and behaviours. For example, children can be at risk of:

* physical or emotional abuse
* neglect
* sexual abuse
* female genital mutilation (FGM)
* grooming and exploitation
* trafficking and modern slavery
* exposure to or infliction of domestic abuse
* bullying or cyber bullying
* exposure to other inappropriate content or behaviour, such as violence or criminal behaviour
* self-harm
* physical harm when engaging with activities without adequate supervision

The causal factors of any such harm and/or abuse can also be wide-ranging. For example, children can be placed at risk by family members or by members of the community.

Safeguarding Principles

Safeguarding children from harm and abuse is an essential responsibility for our organisation. We are committed to ensuring that any child who comes into contact with our services is properly safeguarded. Every person under this policy must ensure that they play an active role in ensuring that children are properly safeguarded.

We shall be responsibility for:

* remaining alert and aware of possible safeguarding risks to children
* guarding children against harmful environments with appropriate actions (for example, adequate supervision or ensuring safe environments)
* taking positive steps to maintain the safety and wellbeing of children engaging with us as a Company
* reporting concerns expeditiously and appropriately, in line with child protection procedures
* understanding the duty to report specific concerns (and understanding how this interplays with confidentiality)
* challenging any inappropriate or harmful behaviour of any other adult and reporting this accordingly
* acting appropriately in the presence of children
* not taking any inappropriate risks
* not smoking, drinking or taking any form of illicit substances in the presence of children

Safeguarding Officer

Any question, report or concern in relation to the safeguarding of children should be shared with our Safeguarding Officer:

Name: Nicola Townsend

Email: [NatureNickiFS@gmail.com](mailto:NatureNickiFS@gmail.com)

Telephone: 07828728820

Responding to a safeguarding concern

Where a child is at immediate risk of serious harm, any adult present should call 999. Where there is a safeguarding concern but no immediate risk of serious harm, the adult who has heard or witnessed this concern should consult with the Safeguarding Officer as soon as practicable and by no later than the end of that same day.

Where any child makes a disclosure relating to harm or abuse to an adult, it is important for that adult to:

* listen calmly and carefully, showing that their views are taken seriously
* provide an appropriate and honest level of reassurance
* avoid interrogating children and asking probing, intrusive and/or leading questions
* avoid making false promises regarding secrets and confidentiality with the child (because any concern of abuse/harm must be shared with the Safeguarding Officer and any subsequent safeguarding referral)
* make a confidential written record of the discussion either during the discussion or immediately afterwards. The record should include the key details of the disclosure together with any relevant times, dates, places and people concerned. Audio and video recordings of children making disclosures should be avoided
* refer all relevant information to the Safeguarding Officer as soon as practicable afterwards, and by no later than the end of the day

Upon receipt of any safeguarding concern, the Safeguarding Officer shall consult with any other relevant persons and will make any appropriate referrals to the relevant authorities, such as the applicable Local Authority Children's Services department.

Reporting concerns about other adults

Where any person has a concern regarding the conduct of an adult connected to the organisation, which poses or may pose a safeguarding risk to children such as:

* harming a child either physically or emotionally
* exposing a child to behaviour which may cause physical or emotional harm
* engaging in criminal activity concerning a child

this must be raised in the first instance with the Safeguarding Officer so that the next appropriate steps may be agreed and actioned. If this is not appropriate then the Local Authority Children’s Service department and/or police should be contacted. We recognise that there could be circumstances where a person may need to report a matter that has taken place in a setting outside of the person's engagement with the organisation.

Disclosure and barring service (DBS checks)

Nicola Townsend has been DBS checked. All volunteers will also hold a DBS check.

Managing Risks Posed by Other Children

It is important for all adults engaged by us to recognise that children can face harm from their peers. This can commonly take the form of bullying. Bullying can be defined as any behaviour which is repeated and has the intention of hurting somebody either physically or emotionally. Bulling can sometimes be motivated by prejudices based on certain groups, for example gender, race, religion or sexual orientation. Bullying can often include:

* physical harm perpetrated against another child
* name calling and threats
* cyberbullying (threats and abusive comments made via technology)

Any instance of bullying or concern relating to possible bullying between children at any event or activities arranged by us will be dealt with following our behaviour management policy. In the event that bullying behaviour continues, it may be necessary to ban the child or children found to be responsible for persistent bullying from attending sessions.

Safeguarding Children at Forest School Sessions and Events

Nicola Townsend holds overall responsibility for the safety and appropriateness of sessions and events, ensuring that planning has been made which takes into account the numbers, ages, abilities and any Special Educational Needs (SEN) of participants. Children will always attend sessions with a parent or carer who remains responsible for their child including behaviour.

We will follow the following policies during sessions:

* Safe use of Fire and tools
* Behaviour management
* Privacy
* Food
* Weather
* Health and safety
* Emergency evacuation

A risk assessment will be carried out for the site and activities as well as an ecological impact assessment.

Photographs

On some occasions, we may take photographs featuring children. We recognise that photography of children carries risks, such as:

* the potential for images to be re-used,  shared or adapted in a damaging or inappropriate manner
* the general risk of sharing images and the impact this could have on child's public image as they grow older

In view of these risks, we will:

* always ask for written permission from a child’s parent/guardian before taking and sharing any image of them
* always ask for verbal permission from a child before taking a photo
* always ensure that a child and their parent/guardian are properly informed how an image will be used and shared
* always ensure that a child's identity is protected by not posting names alongside any images
* ask that parents, guardians, children and any other person connected to them who may wish to share any of our published images which features other children to refrain from doing so unless they have the permission of the other children and their parent/guardian
* always store photos in accordance with our data protection policy.

We do also recognise that members of the public may take photographs when they are attending sessions or are on site.

We ask that any parents, guardians and other members of the public seek permission from any children and their parent/guardian who feature in an image before taking an image or sharing on social media.

Created on 01/01/25 by Nicola Townsend

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