

Safeguarding Children & Young People Policy (HR_P1)

1. Named Safeguarding Leads

Designated Safeguarding Lead	Becky Vernon-Clinch (Head of Business Support) (Tel) 01727 858901 x256 (e) Becky.Vernon-Clinch@hmwt.org
Deputy Safeguarding Lead	Lea Ellis (Engagement Manager) (Tel) 01727 858901 x320 (m) 07345 252242 (e) lea.ellis@hmwt.org
Trustee Lead for Safeguarding	Jackie Hunter (e) Jackie.hunter@hmwt.org
Out of hours Herts & Middlesex -	Please refer to our <u>Safeguarding Procedures</u> for contact details

2. Accompanying Documents

HMWT Safeguarding Procedure
The Wildlife Trusts Safeguarding Commitment Statement
Online Safety Guidance
Safer Recruitment Policy
Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy
Bullying and Harassment Policy
Complaints Policy
Data Protection Policy
Disciplinary, Grievance & Mediation Policy

Health and Safety Policy

Lone Working Policy

Staff Training & Development Policy

Whistleblowing Policy

3. Introduction

This policy outlines Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust's ("the Trust") commitment to safeguarding children and young people from abuse, neglect, exploitation and maltreatment. The Trust is committed to enabling safe, inclusive and supported access to our sites, activities and programmes across a range of settings, including nature reserves, community spaces, educational activities and work undertaken on private land.

The Trust is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all children and young people. We recognise that every child has the right to protection from harm, regardless of their age, disability, race, ethnicity, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, socio-economic background, or any other characteristic. We are committed to creating an environment in which all children and young people feel respected, valued, listened to and safe.

The Wildlife Trusts movement believes that everyone has a responsibility to safeguard children, young people and adults at risk. As a movement, we are committed to ensuring that their safety and wellbeing are at the heart of our engagement with people and communities. We expect all staff, volunteers, trustees and partners acting on behalf of the Trust to share this commitment and to work in accordance with this policy and associated safeguarding procedures.

Further information can be found in The Wildlife Trust's Safeguarding Commitment Statement.

4. Definition of a child / young person

In England, a child is defined as anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday. Child protection guidance points out that even if a child has reached 16 years of age and is:

- living independently
- in further education
- a member of the armed forces
- in hospital; or
- in custody in the secure estate

They are still legally children and should be given the same protection and entitlements as any other child (Department for Education, 2018).

A young person is also defined as anyone under the age of 18, but who prefers to be recognised as a young person rather than a child. This is usually someone between the ages of 13-17, and someone who considers themselves able to form their own opinions. Legally, a young person has the same rights and safeguards as a child.

A separate "Safeguarding Adults at Risk Policy" exists and should be referred to for all safeguarding for over 18s.

5. Context

In England, where the Trust operate, there are child protection systems, laws and guidance to help keep children and young people safe. These are the Children Act of 1989, 2004 and subsequent Working Together to Safeguard Children Guidance 2018.

In their simplest forms the laws and guidance are there to:

- ensure children's voices are heard
- set out when a child can take part in various activities
- make sure children have access to education
- provide for children having a safe home
- provide support for children who need to leave home
- make sure children are safe if they decide to get a job
- make sure children's personal information is safe

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children means:

- protecting children from maltreatment
- preventing impairment of children's mental and physical health or development
- ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of
- safe and effective care
- taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes

All of the legislation and guidance across the UK is very clear that as a charity working with under 18's, we have a duty to work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people.

This responsibility is two-fold. We will:

- ensure our staff, volunteers and trustees can recognise the signs of abuse, neglect and maltreatment and understand when we need to share these concerns with professionals to help keep children and young people safe
- through safer recruitment, training and governance structures we will take all reasonable steps to have the appropriate and trained people in place to keep the children and young people in our care safe from harm.

At the Trust we engage with children and young people in the following situations including:

- Events
- Engagement activities
- Work Parties
- Work placements / work experience
- School visits

In line with the purpose of this policy we are committed to providing a safe and friendly environment that protects children and young people. Each activity is carefully planned and risk assessed to consider both the safety of our beneficiaries as well as our staff and volunteers.

Many of these activities are supported by youth workers or school staff, or children attend with their parents. Those activities whereby the Trust has direct supervision of a child or young person, consent is required ahead of the activity taking place as well as completion of thorough risk assessments.

6. Purpose

The purpose of this Policy and the associated Safeguarding Procedure is to provide clear guidance to all employees, volunteers, trustees and members of the public on Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust's approach to safeguarding children and young people.

The Trust is committed to the highest standards of safeguarding and charity governance. This Policy forms the foundation of an organisation-wide approach that places the safety, welfare and wellbeing of children and young people at the heart of our work and engagement with communities.

The Trust has a duty of care to all children and young people, and to their parents, carers and families who participate in, attend or are affected by our activities. We are committed to providing a safe, inclusive and welcoming environment in which children and young people can participate and enjoy positive experiences. We will achieve this by ensuring that employees, volunteers and trustees understand and fulfil their safeguarding responsibilities, comply with all relevant legal, regulatory and professional requirements, and are equipped with the knowledge and skills needed to safeguard children effectively.

This Policy applies to all employees, volunteers and trustees acting on behalf of Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust. Where the Trust works in partnership with third-party organisations, staff must have due regard to the safeguarding arrangements of those organisations, and reasonable assurance must be obtained that their safeguarding standards meet the Trust's minimum requirements.

All employees, trustees and volunteers are required to:

1. Read and comply with this Policy and the associated Safeguarding Procedure.
2. Confirm that they have read and understood the Policy as part of their induction and whenever significant updates are made.
3. Complete safeguarding training appropriate to their role before undertaking relevant activities.

4. Complete refresher safeguarding training at intervals determined by the Trust, or sooner where required by changes in legislation, guidance, role responsibilities or identified organisational needs.

This Policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner in response to changes in legislation, guidance or organisational requirements. The Trust will promote awareness of this Policy through recruitment, induction, training, supervision and ongoing support to ensure safeguarding remains everyone's responsibility

7. Principles

The Trust is committed to a child-centred approach to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people. We recognise that every child has the right to be protected from harm and to have their views, wishes and feelings listened to and taken seriously. When making decisions that affect children and young people, the Trust will put their safety, wellbeing and best interests at the centre of decision-making.

The Trust is committed to working collaboratively with children, parents, carers, staff, volunteers, trustees and partner organisations to create safe environments. We recognise the importance of early help and early intervention, and where concerns are identified we will take timely and appropriate action. We will share information responsibly and lawfully where it is necessary to safeguard a child, and will work in partnership with statutory agencies and other organisations to promote the welfare of children and young people.

8. Safer Recruitment

The Trust want to ensure that we choose the best people for our roles and our *Safer Recruitment Policy* helps us to ensure we recruit people who care for wildlife and nature as well as being committed to protecting children and adults at risk from harm. Please refer to the Trust's *Safer Recruitment Policy* for guidance on DBS checks and safeguarding training.

9. Recognising the signs of abuse in Children and Young People

It is important to be alert to the signs of abuse and maltreatment. The Trust supports a culture whereby if anyone feels something isn't right, or they question the behaviour of children, staff, volunteers, trustees or parents/carers, they are encouraged and supported to speak up and discuss concerns with the Trust's safeguarding lead or their Primary Contact.

The Trust recognises that children and young people can abuse other children and young people. Child-on-child abuse can occur in any setting and may take place both in person and online. Such behaviour will be taken seriously and will never be dismissed as banter, teasing, growing up or part of normal childhood behaviour.

Further details regarding conduct and recognising the signs of abuse in children and young people can be found in the *Safeguarding Procedure*.

10. Terrorism and Radicalisation

The Prevent Duty was created under the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 and requires certain organisations 'to have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism'. Whilst The Trust are not bound by the Prevent duty legislation, partner agencies such as Local Authority, Health and Social Care will carry this responsibility and we must be in a position to recognise warning signs in children and young people and notify the appropriate agencies if we have concerns regarding terrorism or extremism.

11. Bullying

The Trust will not tolerate any form of bullying between children and young people who are part of our organisation or access our sites to take part in groups or activities. Bullying can become serious enough to be a child protection issue and, if so, it should be dealt with under the Trust's *Safeguarding Procedure*.

12. Child-on-Child Abuse

Any concerns regarding child-on-child abuse will be reported and managed in accordance with the Trust's Safeguarding Procedure and, where appropriate, shared with relevant statutory agencies.

13. Online Safety

Just as the Trust take the safety of children and young people face to face extremely seriously, we also consider how to keep them safe engaging online too. The Trust recognises that children and young people face a range of safeguarding risks when engaging with digital technologies and online platforms. Online risks continue to evolve and may include bullying, harassment, grooming, exploitation, radicalisation, inappropriate content, privacy breaches and exposure to harmful or misleading information.

The Trust is aware of emerging risks associated with social media, online gaming, messaging platforms and artificial intelligence technologies, including the creation and sharing of AI-generated images, manipulated content and misinformation. Staff, volunteers and trustees must remain vigilant to these risks and take appropriate steps to promote safe online engagement during Trust activities. Please refer to the Trust's *Online Safety Guidance* and *Safeguarding Procedure* for more information and guidance regarding online safety.

All concerns relating to online safety, including suspected grooming, exploitation, inappropriate online communication or the sharing of harmful content, must be recorded and reported in accordance with the Safeguarding Procedure.

14. Low-Level Concerns

The Trust is committed to creating an open and transparent safeguarding culture in which concerns can be raised at the earliest opportunity. A low-level concern is any concern, doubt or sense of unease, no matter how small, that a member of staff, volunteer or trustee may have acted in a manner that is

inconsistent with the Trust's Code of Conduct, safeguarding expectations or professional boundaries, but where the behaviour does not meet the threshold for a formal safeguarding allegation.

Examples may include:

Inappropriate or unprofessional communication with a child.

Poor judgement relating to professional boundaries.

Behaviour that could be perceived as favouritism.

Failure to follow safeguarding procedures or safe working practices.

All low-level concerns should be reported promptly to the Designated Safeguarding Lead or Deputy Safeguarding Lead. Concerns will be recorded, reviewed and managed appropriately. The Trust encourages the reporting of concerns in good faith and recognises that early identification of issues helps to safeguard children and young people and maintain professional standards.

15. Photography and Filming

The Trust will not permit photographs, videos or other images of children or young people to be taken, stored, shared or retained without consent. If the child is under 16, consent must be obtained from a parent/carer. Please refer to the Trust's *Safeguarding Procedure* for further guidance and a photography consent form.

16. Duty to Refer

All UK legislation states that professionals or organisations with contact with children and members of their families must make a referral to the Local Authority Children's Social Care if there are signs that a child, young person, or unborn baby has suffered significant harm through abuse or maltreatment, or is likely to suffer significant harm in the future.

Further details on making a referral and the information required can be found in the Trust's *Safeguarding Procedure*.

17. Allegations against Staff, Volunteers or Trustees

Despite every effort to recruit safely there may be occasions when allegations of child abuse are made against staff, volunteers or trustees. Please refer to the *Safeguarding Procedure* for further information and guidance.

18. Whistleblowing and Raising Concerns

The Trust is committed to fostering a culture where employees, volunteers and trustees feel able to raise safeguarding concerns without fear of intimidation, disadvantage or retaliation. Any person who has concerns about safeguarding practices, the conduct of staff, volunteers or trustees, or the way in which safeguarding concerns have been handled, is encouraged to speak up.

Safeguarding concerns may be raised through the Trust's Whistleblowing Policy where an individual feels unable to report through normal management or safeguarding channels. Reports made in good faith will be treated seriously, investigated appropriately and handled confidentially wherever possible.

Where concerns relate to the behaviour of an employee, volunteer, trustee or other adult working on behalf of the Trust towards a child or young person, the Designated Safeguarding Lead will consider whether the concern meets the threshold for referral to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) and will seek advice or make a referral as appropriate in accordance with local safeguarding procedures.

No employee, volunteer or trustee will suffer detriment for raising a genuine safeguarding concern. The Trust will take all reports seriously and ensure that concerns are considered fairly, safely and in line with relevant policies and procedures.

19. Serious Incidents and Charity Regulators

In England and Wales the Charity Commission requires charities to report serious incidents. The responsibility for this lies with the Trustees, however operationally this may be delegated to the Chief Executive. The Safeguarding Lead must also be notified before any incident is reported.

Please refer to the *Safeguarding Procedure* for more information and guidance.

20. Roles and Responsibilities for Safeguarding within the Trust

Role	Responsibilities
Trustee lead for Safeguarding	• Take an overall lead in this area on behalf of the Board of Trustees. • Promote awareness and culture of safeguarding at Board level. • Work with the Safeguarding group to ensure effective implementation and regular review of safeguarding policies. • Bring to the attention of all Trustees, any strategic decisions which might adversely affect employee wellbeing. • With the CEO, report serious incidents as necessary to the Charity Commission.
All Trustees	• Support the lead trustee in creating a positive safeguarding culture that works to protect children and adults at risk within the wildlife trusts

	• Approve safeguarding policy and procedures and ensure that safeguarding is considered at every stage of decision making within the movement
CEO of The Trust	• Ensure that safeguarding is embedded within all decisions made by the Senior Management Team by: - maintaining a clear strategic and operational focus on safeguarding children and adults at risk - ensure Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust meet the required legislative standards - making sure everyone in the organisation is aware of their safeguarding responsibilities and knows how to respond to concerns - reporting serious incidents as necessary to the Charity Commission
Senior Management Team	• Meet weekly where safeguarding concerns and incidents can be reported, and outcomes tracked • Ensure Managers complete new starter inductions including safeguarding film viewed, policy read and training records maintained.
Designated Safeguarding Leads	• Safeguarding subject expert and the point of advice throughout the Trust • Responsible for developing policy, procedure, training and reporting mechanisms as well as being a support for the safeguarding point of contacts • Responsible for ensuring that staff complete regular training appropriate to their roles • Responsible for making referrals and overall safeguarding case management • They will be the point of contact for concerns for all staff and trustees and will be responsible for liaising with the local authority when referrals are necessary • They will offer support and advice
Safeguarding Team	• Review safeguarding policies and procedures • Support the DSLs • Discuss and consider changes in legislation
All Trust staff, volunteers and trustees	Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. Everyone has a duty to understand and act upon any concerns they may have regarding children and adults at risk

The People Committee, and the Board of the Trust, meet quarterly where Safeguarding is a standing agenda item. The Head of Business Support and Designated Trustee take an annual review of Safeguarding to the Committee and to the Board.