

This policy applies to all staff, including senior managers, the board of trustees, other volunteers, sessional workers, agency staff, students or anyone working on behalf of Shropshire Wildlife Trust. Child refers to all young people who have not yet reached their 18th birthday.

The purpose of this policy:

- to protect children and young people who receive Shropshire Wildlife Trust's services.
- to provide staff and volunteers with the overarching principles that guide our approach to child protection.

Shropshire Wildlife Trust believes that a child or young person should never experience abuse of any kind. We have a responsibility to promote the welfare of all children and young people and to keep them safe. We are committed to practice in a way that protects them.

Legal framework:

This policy has been drawn up on the basis of law and guidance that seeks to protect children, namely:

- Children Act 1989
- United Convention of the Rights of the Child 1991
- Data Protection Act 1998
- Sexual Offences Act 2003
- Children Act 2004
- Protection of Freedoms Act 2012
- Government guidance on safeguarding children.

We recognise that:

- the welfare of the child is paramount, as enshrined in the Children Act 1989
- all children, regardless of age, disability, gender, racial heritage, religious belief, sexual orientation or identity, have a right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse
- some children are additionally vulnerable because of the impact of previous experiences, their level of dependency, communication needs or other issues
- working in partnership with children, young people, their parents, carers and other agencies is essential in promoting young people's welfare.

Shropshire Wildlife Trust actively seeks to:

- create a safe and welcoming environment, where children can have fun and develop their skills and confidence
- support and encourage local branches and affiliated groups to implement our policies

- recognise that safeguarding is the responsibility of everyone, not just those who work with children
- ensure that Shropshire Wildlife Trust activities are run to the highest possible safety standards
- be prepared to review its ways of working to incorporate best practice.

We will seek to keep children and young people safe by:

- valuing them, listening to, respecting them and celebrating their achievements
- adopting child protection practices through procedures and a code of conduct for staff and volunteers
- developing and implementing an effective social media policy and related procedures
- providing effective management for staff and volunteers through supervision, support and training
- recruiting staff, contractors and volunteers safely, ensuring all necessary checks are made
- sharing information about child protection and good practice with children, parents, staff and volunteers
- responding swiftly and appropriately to all complaints and concerns about poor practice or suspected or actual child abuse
- sharing concerns with agencies who need to know, and involving parents and children appropriately.

We are committed to reviewing our policy and good practice annually.

This policy was last reviewed on: January 2021

Signed:

(this should be the most senior person in your organisation eg the safeguarding lead on your board of trustees)

Our procedures

Key principles

Effective safeguarding arrangements at Shropshire Wildlife Trust are underpinned by two key principles:

- safeguarding is everyone's responsibility: everyone who comes into contact with children and families has a role to play
- a child-centered approach: for services to be effective they should be based on a clear understanding of the needs and views of children.

Defining child protection and safeguarding

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is defined as:

- protecting children from maltreatment;
- preventing impairment of children's 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.

Child protection is a part of safeguarding and promoting welfare. It refers to the activity that is undertaken to protect specific children who are suffering, or are likely to suffer, significant harm.

Paid staff and volunteers must be aware of their responsibilities for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children; how they should respond to child protection concerns.

The Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO)

Although everyone has a role to play in ensuring that children are safe, every organisation should have a "named person" for safeguarding children and young people. The DSO has a responsibility at both a strategic level within the organisation and on a day to day basis.

Key aspects of the DSO role:

- maintaining up to date policy and procedures
- ensuring that relevant staff and/or volunteers are aware of and follow the procedures, including ongoing training and implementing safe recruitment procedures
- advising the senior management team and trustees on safeguarding and child protection issues
- maintaining contact details for local Children's Services and Police
- maintaining accurate and secure child protection records.

If there is a concern, the DSO would:

- be the first point of contact for any concerns or allegations, from children or adults, ensuring that confidentiality is maintained in all cases
- decide on the appropriate action to be taken, in line with Shropshire Wildlife Trust's procedures and in conjunction with the person in charge (eg. CEO)
- If the DSO is not available the second contact should be the deputy DSO.

Everyone in the organisation should know who the DSO is and how to contact them:

Lead DSO: Ellie Larkham elliel@shropshirewildlifetrust.org.uk or 01743 284290 / 07432455104
Deputy: Bryony Carter bryonyc@shropshirewildlifetrust.org.uk or 01743 284290 / 07947873166

The lead and deputy DSO also have support available from Kirsten Mould who is the named trustee safeguarding lead.

Safeguarding children & young people

This section outlines the safeguarding measures which have been designed to safeguard children and young people from harm.

1. Establishing a safe and welcoming environment in which children can learn and develop

Shropshire Wildlife Trust will promote a culture of listening to children and taking account of their wishes and feelings, both in individual decisions and the development of services. We will raise awareness of child protection issues with young people and help to equip children with the skills needed to keep them safe.

Computers

Children and young people are supervised whilst using the internet and webcams whilst at the Trust or our events. All children and young people required to use computers with the Trust will be given guidance about use of the internet, including appropriate use of social networking sites.

Bullying

Bullying will not be accepted or condoned. All forms of bullying will be addressed. Everybody has the responsibility to work together to stop bullying.

Children from ethnic minorities, disabled children, young people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender, or those with learning difficulties are more vulnerable to this form of abuse and may well be targeted.

Anyone who reports an incident of bullying will be listened to carefully and be supported, whether it's the child being bullied or the child who is bullying. Any reported incident of bullying will be investigated objectively and will involve listening carefully to all those involved. Children being bullied will be supported and assistance given to uphold their right to play and live in a safe environment which allows their healthy development. Those who bully will be supported and encouraged to stop bullying.

Complaints policy

We have a written complaints policy and procedure so that children and young people and staff and volunteers can make any necessary complaint.

2. Safe recruitment & selection

We will ensure that all potential paid staff and volunteers:

- complete an application form or a letter of application. This includes: address, evidence of relevant qualifications, paid work and voluntary work experience
- undergo an interview (formal or informal) ideally this should be with at least two interviewers.

Those paid staff and volunteers who apply for roles that involve regularly working with children and young people will also be asked to:

- declare in their written application all criminal convictions and state the reasons why they want to work with children and young people
- provide at least two references which are followed up before a post is offered. One of these references should be from an employer or organisation that has knowledge of the applicant's work or volunteering with children or young people. If the applicant has not worked with children or young people before, then they should confirm this and give an alternative referee

- consent to a Disclosure and Barring Service check (formally CRB check) at the appropriate level. This will necessitate providing two pieces of identification which confirm both identity and address.

Furthermore, Shropshire Wildlife Trust complies with all other safeguarding regulations:

- we understand that a person who is barred from working with children is breaking the law if they work or volunteer, or try to work or volunteer with them
- we understand that an organisation which knowingly employs someone who is barred to work with children will also be breaking the law
- we understand that if our organisation dismisses a member of staff or volunteer because they have harmed a child, or would have done so if they had not left, we must complete a DBS referral form.

3. Management & support of paid staff & volunteers

- All staff and volunteers are provided with a job description (paid staff) or a role profile (volunteers) outlining their main responsibilities. This includes a requirement to comply with our safeguarding policy and procedures and code of practice for appropriate behaviour
- All paid staff and relevant volunteers receive an induction, which includes familiarisation with child protection responsibilities and procedures to be followed if anyone has any concerns about a child's safety or welfare
- All paid staff and volunteers working with children complete a role review at the end of their probationary period before being confirmed in post. Inductions will be completed within 6 months
- All paid staff have their competency assessed by their line manager at least once per year
- All volunteers are given regular support sessions. (This may include one to one or group support, mentoring or shadowing opportunities)
- All paid staff and relevant volunteers attend regular (every 3 years as a minimum) ongoing safeguarding training appropriate to their role.

4. Running safe activities and trips

- People whose suitability has not been checked, including through a DBS check must not be allowed to have unsupervised contact with children
- All paid staff and volunteers undertaking specialist roles (e.g. taking children and young people on trips) are provided with appropriate training and are suitably qualified and/or experienced to supervise and deliver the activities they undertake
- All adults involved in running an activity have clear roles and responsibilities; this applies equally to teachers, TA's or leaders attending with schools or other visiting groups
- All activities are risk assessed to ensure that all reasonable steps are taken to prevent children and young people being harmed whilst participating in the Trust's activities
- All activities being provided are properly planned and organised. Planning ensures that the activities are: age-appropriate, appropriately supervised, take account of staff ratio etc.
- Children under 18 can be left to take part in an appropriate event or activity without their parent or responsible adult being present but in this case the Trust requires parental consent and emergency contact information
- A code of practice is available for all staff and volunteers organising and delivering activities with children (see: 'A Code of Practice for Staff and Volunteers Working with Children')
- Employer's liability and/or public liability insurance has been taken out to ensure that all activities and services and all people taking part, are covered
- Any third-party individual or organisation involved in delivering activities as part of a Trust event has appropriate experience and where relevant holds the appropriate qualifications and/or accreditation and insurance (see: 'approved contractor' form)

- Where the Trust is involved with delivering activities for any residential groups of under 18's then the primary organisation (eg. the scout group, school or youth club) will take full responsibility for the children's welfare and behaviour
- The Trust has clear guidelines about taking and using photographs of children and young people and a consent form for the use of photographs and filming (see: 'Photography Consent Form' document)
- All SWT Branches that offer events or activities which may be attended by under 18's have a designated safeguarding contact who has been appropriately trained and will liaise with the DSO if necessary.

Transport

Staff or volunteers regularly transporting children should be using Trust vehicles. They should ensure that they are never one on one with a child in the vehicle (with the exception of emergency situations).

We always ensure that our transport has:

- appropriate insurance cover
- tax & MOT
- appropriate seats (including booster seats and seatbelts)
- a first aid box
- drivers hold the correct driving license and have been assessed as competent to drive that type of vehicle.

Parental consent or that of the responsible organisation is needed prior to taking children in Trust vehicles. This can be verbal. Work experience students are slightly different and are covered by the same rules as employees. Please refer to our 'work experience code of conduct' for clarification. (see also our '*code of practice for staff and volunteers working with children*').

Behaviour

We make it clear at all Trust activities what we expect in terms of appropriate behaviour for children and young people, staff, volunteers, parents / carers and teachers. For school visits this is sent as part of the school information pack prior to the visit. At Wildlife Watch events all attending adults are given a code of conduct. Dangerous or unacceptable behaviours are dealt with immediately (see below). Any behaviour issues arising from a school session or event are recorded as part of our ongoing quality control system and will be used to review best practice or be followed up as necessary by the DSO.

Dealing with dangerous or unacceptable behaviour:

In a group with an external leader

The group leader is ultimately responsible. SWT will support the adult in charge in line with their policies, without putting anyone else at risk.

In a group of unaccompanied young people

SWT staff's first responsibility is to keep the rest of the group safe. We will seek another responsible adult to supervise the remaining children before attempting to deal with the situation. It is ok to give the child space to calm down but if you suspect that they may harm themselves imminently, call 999 whilst staying with the rest of the group.

From external adults

Get the group away from the adults as quickly as possible to a public place or building. Seek help from other adults if possible. Diffuse the situation if possible but do not put yourself at risk. If you see or suspect a weapon, call 999 immediately and make the group as safe as possible. The police number 101 can be used to report or discuss criminal behaviour that is not immediately dangerous.

Radicalisation

Radicalisation is defined as the act or process of making a person more radical or favouring extreme or fundamental changes in political, economic or social conditions, institutions or habits of the mind. Extremism is defined as the holding of extreme political or religious views.

As an organisation we recognise that safeguarding against radicalisation is no different from safeguarding against any other vulnerability. All staff are expected to uphold and promote the fundamental principles of British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect, and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. Any suspicions of radicalisation should be reported to the DSO.

Hate Incidents

A hate incident is legally defined as: *“any incident, which may or may not constitute a criminal offence, which is perceived by the victim or any other person, as being motivated by prejudice or hate.”* (National Offenders Management Service, 2007)

Hate incidents may be based upon: homophobic/sexual orientation, race/ethnicity, religion/belief, disability / SEN, gender identity. Hate incidents can consist of: verbal abuse or insults for example. detrimental comments, abusive language and “jokes” relating to race, religion, disability/learning difficulties, sexual orientation, gender identity; insulting gestures, abusive telephone calls, offensive messages.

All hate incidents towards children should be reported to the adult in charge of the group or if the group is unaccompanied to the DSO as soon as possible after they are witnessed or reported. More serious hate crime should be reported directly to the police. The underpinning rationale behind any hate incident is perception. It is the perception of the victim or any other person (e.g. a witness) that is the determining factor.

Child Protection Procedures

Immediate action to ensure safety

- if emergency medical attention is required this can be secured by calling an ambulance (dial 999)
- if a child is in immediate danger the police should be contacted (dial 999) as they alone have the power to remove a child immediately if protection is necessary, via their powers to use police protection.

Recognition of abuse

Abuse is defined as a form of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting, by those known to them or, more rarely, by others (e.g. via the internet). They may be abused by an adult or adults, or another child or children.

Staff and volunteers should be aware of the different types of abuse and what to do if they encounter them. An exhaustive list is not appropriate here therefore staff and volunteers should familiarise themselves using this website:

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/child-abuse-and-neglect/>

If a member of staff has significant concerns about any child they should make them known to the DSO.

Abuse: what to do

No individual member of staff or volunteer should take it upon themselves to investigate and resolve a suspected or disclosed case of abuse; most of us do not have the skills or back-up to deal with it effectively, and importantly, you may inadvertently prejudice any future legal case. It is your responsibility to keep accurate records of your observations and of anything said to you by the child or others in connection with the suspected abuse.

It is important to remember:

- your primary responsibility is to protect the child
- you have a duty to take action
- your action at an early stage could stop a deteriorating situation becoming a crisis
- you may never have to face a suspected case of child abuse, but you must be aware of and recognise the signs and symptoms of it.

In the event of any allegations or suspicions of child abuse it is important to avoid unnecessary delay. Always inform the DSO immediately.

It is good practice to be as open and honest as possible with parents/carers about any concerns. However, you **must not** discuss your concerns with parents/carers in the following circumstances:

- where sexual abuse or sexual exploitation is suspected
- where organised or multiple abuse is suspected
- where fabricated or induced illness (previously known as Munchausen Syndrome by proxy) is suspected
- where Female Genital Mutilation is the concern
- in cases of suspected Forced Marriage
- where contacting parents / carers would place a child, yourself or others at immediate risk.

These decisions should not be taken in isolation. Consult with the DSO or if you are unable to reach them, with the deputy DSO.

1. How to respond to signs or suspicions of abuse

On occasions staff and volunteers meet with the same children on a regular basis, e.g. through Watch groups or Forest School sessions. Because of your observations of a child, or information received you may become concerned about a child.

Don't be afraid to ask a child why they are upset or how a cut or bruise was caused, or respond to a child wanting to talk to you. This practice can help clarify vague concerns and result in appropriate action. It is important to make a note of such occurrences and you may wish to mention your concerns to the parent – more often than not there will be a simple explanation. It is still important however, to record these observations and explanations, in the unlikely event that repeat observations of such instances lead to serious concerns about the child's well-being (please use the SWT incident or disclosure form).

If you are concerned about a child you must share your concerns. Initially you should talk to the DSO or the Deputy DSO.

If you suspect abuse: Immediately inform the DSO.

Record the facts as you know them which may include:

- Date
- Name and address of child
- Relevant telephone numbers

- Time and place of incident
- Who else was present at this time
- Details of incident (what was said, physical / behavioural observations)
- Child's explanation
- Parent / carer's explanation
- Who has been made aware of the incident
- Decision taken.

Ensure that no further situation arises which could cause further concern. Even if this means cancelling or postponing planned activities.

2. How to respond to allegations of abuse against a member of staff, another worker or volunteer

If you have information which suggests an adult who works with children (in a paid or unpaid capacity) has:

- behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child;
- possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child;
- behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children;

You should speak immediately with the DSO. The DSO will consult with/make a referral to the Local Authority Designated Officer (see contact details below). Record the facts as you know them and give the DSO a copy. Shropshire Wildlife Trust will ensure that this person is not given further access to children at work until the matter is resolved.

If the DSO is one of those people implicated in the concerns you should discuss your concerns with the deputy DSO or directly with the Local Authority Designated Officer for Shropshire or Telford and Wrekin Council as appropriate.

3. How to respond to a child telling you about abuse

If a child discloses abuse, remember that this may be the beginning of a legal process, as well as a process of recovery for the child. Legal action against a perpetrator can be seriously damaged by any suggestion that the child has been led in any way.

Contact your DSO as soon as possible. If a child is in immediate danger of being harmed, the police should be called on 999.

The following guidance should be followed as far as possible:

1. Rather than directly questioning the child, just listen and be supportive. Do not investigate, e.g. ask to see other bruises.
2. Never stop a child who is freely recalling significant events, but don't push the child to tell you more than s/he wishes.
3. Write an account of the conversation immediately using the Trust's incident or disclosure form. Put the date and timings on it, and mention anyone else who was present. Then sign it, and hand your record in to your DSO, who should contact the local children's social care office where appropriate.
4. All subsequent events affecting the child need to be recorded.

Other important things to consider:

- children need to know that they will be listened to and their concerns will be taken seriously
- children will talk about their concerns and problems to people they feel they can trust
- the person a child talks to will not necessarily be a senior staff member
- any member of staff or volunteer who is approached by a child wanting to talk should listen positively and reassure the child

- the way a staff member or volunteer talks to a child in such situations may have an effect on the evidence that is put forward if the case goes to court. It is important that staff do not jump to conclusions, ask leading questions, or put words in a child's mouth
- staff and volunteers should not promise a child complete confidentiality – they must explain that they may need to pass information to other professionals to help keep the child or other children safe
- any information should only be discussed on a 'need to know' basis with appropriate individuals to protect the child, the organisation and other parties involved.

A suggested form of words that may help when talking to children about confidentiality is as follows:

"I will keep our conversation confidential and agree with you what information I can share, unless you tell me something that will affect your personal safety or that is illegal, but I will tell you if I am going to pass information on and to whom."

4. It's not child protection but I am still concerned

Sometimes concerns about a child may not be about abuse. You may be concerned that a child or family need some help in making sure all the child's needs are met to address a particular problem. Examples of this might be where a child is suffering because of poverty, getting into trouble in the community, or has a disability and needs extra help. In these instances, you can get them help by using the Early Help Service, speak to the DSO for more details.

5. Concerns around misuse of imagery and online platforms

If you have any concerns regarding abuse of a child in the online environment, whether this is potential through misuse of imagery or direct activity you've observed remotely, the same disclosure procedures apply. Follow the same procedure as an 'in person' incident. Contact the DSO or Deputy DSO with any initial concerns or if you're not sure.

How information will be recorded

Any disclosures or concerns should be recorded as soon as possible using the Trust's incident or disclosure form. The DSO will ensure that any records made in relation to a child protection matter are kept confidentially and in a secure place.

(See policy statement: 'Child protection records: retention and storage')

Confidentiality policy

The legal principle is that the "welfare of the child is paramount". Privacy and confidentiality should be respected where possible but if doing this leaves a child at risk of harm then the child's safety has to come first. Information in relation to child protection concerns should be shared on a "need to know" basis. However, the sharing of information is vital to child protection and, therefore, the issue of confidentiality is secondary to a child's need for protection.

Remember:

- legally, it is fine to share information if someone is worried about the safety of a child
- not everyone needs to know when a concern or worry is raised. This respects the child's, families and/or staff's rights to privacy. So only people who need to know should be told about it. Otherwise there might be gossip and rumours or other people may be genuinely concerned
- it is fine to say that a concern has been raised and it is being dealt with following the Trust's procedures
- staff or volunteers who require support after being involved with a child protection issue should speak to the DSO who will signpost them to available counselling or support services.

Useful Contacts

First Point of Contact (FPOC) safeguarding concerns- 0345 678 9021

Shropshire Council Children Services 0345 678 9008

Out of office hours phone - the Emergency Social Work Duty Team 0345 678 9040

Telford and Wrekin: 01952 385385 (or 01952 676500 out of office hours)

West Mercia Police 101

Public Protection Unit (West Mercia Police) 0300 333 3000

NSPCC helpline 0800 800 5000 or Childline 0800 1111

LADO for Shropshire Council (Ellie Jones): lado@shropshire.gov.uk phone: 0345 678 9021

Telford and Wrekin Council LADO referrals go through: Family Connect on 01952 385385