



## **Safeguarding Children & Vulnerable Adults and Child Protection Procedures**

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## Purpose

This procedure sits within a suite of arrangements which cover all aspects of safeguarding vulnerable adults and child protection. It should be read in conjunction with the Safeguarding vulnerable adults and Child Protection policy, which outlines your responsibilities.

The purpose of this procedure is to document all the processes involved in Safeguarding vulnerable adults and Child Protection, including:

- Provide information to all staff, volunteers, children and their families about what we should all do to prevent and deal with abuse, neglect and bullying.
- Preventing abuse, neglect and bullying from happening between vulnerable adults, children and young people who are part of our organisation or take part in our activities.
- Stopping abuse and bullying as soon as possible and ensuring if it does happen, those involved receive the support they need.
- Promote the safety and well-being of children, young people, and vulnerable adults when mobile devices under our control.

Whenever staff or volunteers have suspicions, knowledge or evidence that a child, young person or vulnerable adult is suffering or has suffered abuse, neglect or bullying, information must be brought to the attention of the Session Leader. The Session Leader is responsible for ensuring any concerns are passed onto the DSL. DSL is Sarah Holdway. Deputy DSL is Tiff Lovedale. A written report must then be made as soon as practical using our Safeguarding reporting form.

The procedure applies to anyone working on behalf of Neroche Woodlanders Limited (NWL) with children, young people, families and vulnerable adults during activities including:

- Woodland Wellbeing work
- Forest school activities
- Woodland management

It reflects the needs of these vulnerable groups and works with and aligns with current safeguarding principles. This procedure has been drawn up based on legislation, policy and guidance that seeks to protect children in England and includes:

- Forms of abuse.
- Staff Responsibilities.
- Our Arrangements including:
  - Specific actions for staff and volunteers
  - Safer recruitment.
  - Disclosure and Barring Checks.
  - Staff Induction and training.
  - Ratios.
  - Standard (Low-Level) Concerns.
  - Major Concern or multiple Minor concerns
  - Records
  - Secrecy
  - Things to remember
  - When sharing information
  - Responsibilities of DSL
  - Allegations against staff/volunteers.
  - Whistleblowing
  - LADOs for Somerset Council
  - Relevant contacts.
  - Further guidance.

Separate procedures have been written, and all refer to the Safeguarding procedures.

Code of Conduct, Encouraging Positive Behaviour, Safeguarding, Incident Report form, Photography and Filming procedure, GDPR Policy, and Volunteer/Staff Handbook

### **Types of Abuse**

Abuse, neglect and bullying cause real distress and affect a person's health and development, in some instances causing significant harm. All children (under the age of 18 years) and vulnerable adults regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion, belief, sex or sexual orientation, have the right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse.

Everyone has a role to play in preventing all forms of abuse and bullying (including online; see below) and putting a stop to it.

Abuse is a form of maltreatment. Somebody may abuse or neglect a by inflicting harm or failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused in a family or an institutional or community setting by those known to them or, more rarely, by others.

Abuse can also take place wholly online, or technology may be used to facilitate offline abuse (see below). Children may be abused by an adult(s) or by another child or children (Peer on Peer)

Child abuse is any form of physical, emotional or sexual mistreatment or lack of care that leads to injury or harm to a child under the age of 18 years. An individual may abuse or neglect a child directly or by failing to protect a child from harm.

This can also happen to vulnerable adults. The following are some signs often associated with particular types of child abuse and neglect, but can also be seen with vulnerable adults. These types of abuse are more often found in combination than alone.

### **Emotional Abuse**

The persistent emotional maltreatment can cause severe and persistent adverse effects on emotional development. It may involve making the person feel that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving the person opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or “making fun” of what they say or how they communicate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children.

These may include interactions beyond a child’s developmental capability, overprotection, limitations in exploration and learning, or preventing the child from participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve severe bullying (including cyberbullying), causing them frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of a child/children or vulnerable adult. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment, although it may occur alone.

### **Physical Abuse**

It can involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child/children or vulnerable adults. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer feigns the symptoms of or deliberately causing ill health.

## **Sexual Abuse**

It can involve forcing or enticing a child or vulnerable adults to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the person is aware of what is happening. This can involve physical contact, including penetrative (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing.

They may include non-contact activities such as showing a child/children or vulnerable adults and getting them involved in pornographic materials, sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways. Sexual abuse can take place online, and technology can be used to facilitate abuse. Adult males do not solely perpetrate sexual abuse; women and other children (peer on peer) can also commit such abuse.

## **Neglect**

Is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and emotional needs likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. This can also happen to vulnerable adults

Neglect can involve a failure to:

- Provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment)
- Protect a child from physical and emotional harm
- Ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-givers)
- Allow access to medical treatment
- Neglect of or unresponsiveness to a person's basic emotional needs.
- Neglect can occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse.

## **Other Types of Abuse**

### **Bullying**

Bullying occurs when individuals or groups seek to harm, intimidate, or coerce someone who is perceived to be vulnerable (Oxford English Dictionary, 2021). It can involve people of any age and can happen anywhere—at home, school, or using online platforms and technologies (Cyberbullying). This means it can happen anywhere.

Bullying encompasses a range of behaviours that may be combined and may include the behaviours and actions we have set out below.

### **Verbal Abuse**

This includes name-calling and saying nasty things to or about a person or their family. It can involve physical abuse/assault, including hitting or pushing a child. It can also be

emotional abuse, making threats, undermining a child, or excluding a child from a friendship group or activities. Or cyberbullying/online bullying – see below;

Bullying can be a form of discrimination, particularly if it is based on a person's disability, race, religion or belief, gender identity or sexuality.

Children, young people, and vulnerable adults may experience several types of abuse or grooming online:

- Grooming
- County Lines
- Online Abuse
- Online Bullying/Cyberbullying
- Relationships and Sex Education

### Grooming

This is when the perpetrators use online platforms to build a trusting relationship with the child or vulnerable adult in order to abuse them. This abuse may happen online, or the perpetrator may arrange to meet them in person with the intention of abusing them.

### County Lines

County Lines refers to the illegal transportation of drugs across different areas, often crossing police and local authority boundaries, though not always. This activity frequently involves children or vulnerable individuals who are coerced into it by gangs. The term 'County Line' specifically relates to the mobile phone line used by gangs to take drug orders. Areas where these drugs are imported are experiencing a rise in violence and weapons-related crimes due to this trend.

### Online Abuse

Online Abuse is any type of abuse that happens on the internet, facilitated through technology like computers, tablets, mobile phones and other internet-enabled devices. It can happen anywhere that allows digital communications, such as:

- Social networks
- Text messages and messaging apps
- Email and private messaging
- Online chats
- Comments on live-streaming sites
- Voice chat in games

### Online Bulling/ Cyberbullying

The online world provides everyone with many opportunities, including education and personal development. However, it can also present risks and challenges – many of which are identified above. We have a duty to ensure that everyone (regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation) involved in our organisation are protected from potential harm online.

This is discrimination/bullying behaviour against a person online rather than in person, including:

- Excluding from online games, activities or friendship groups
- Sending threatening, upsetting or abusive messages
- Creating and sharing embarrassing or malicious images or videos “trolling.”
- Sending menacing or upsetting messages on social networks, chat rooms or online games
- Voting for or against someone in an abusive poll
- Setting up hate sites or groups about a particular child  
Creating fake accounts, hijacking or stealing online identities to embarrass a person or cause trouble using their name.

Children, young and vulnerable adults can be victimised (experience further abuse) when abusive content is recorded, uploaded or shared by others online. This can happen even if the original abuse occurred offline.

If online abuse occurs, we will report this in the same way as other safeguarding issues.

### Relationships and Sex Education

We are introducing age limits in line with the DoFE guidance. This is to ensure staff and volunteers are aware of sensitive and complex subjects before children are ready to understand them fully.

What are the age limits? In primary school, subjects such as the risks about online gaming, social media and scams should not be taught before year 3.

Puberty should not be taught before year 4, whilst sex education should not be taught before year 5, in line with what pupils learn about conception and birth as part of the national curriculum for science.

In secondary school, issues regarding sexual harassment should not be taught before year 7, direct references to suicide before year 8 and any explicit discussion of sexual activity before year 9.

### **Staff and Volunteer Responsibilities**

Everyone must be aware of potential safeguarding risks to children, young people, and vulnerable adults. Examples include:

- Bullying, physical assault, or abusive behavior.
- Unexplained bruises, marks, or sudden reluctance to go home or to school.
- Suspicion or allegations of abuse by adults involved in care.
- Online abuse.

### **Key points:**

- Bullying or abuse in our activities is not acceptable.
- Everyone should follow our code of conduct.
- At the start of events, we explain our four principles: look after yourself, others, nature, and things.
- Staff, volunteers, and participants discuss responsibilities and expected behavior regularly.

### **Specific actions for staff and volunteers:**

- Do **not** share personal phone numbers, addresses, or social media with participants.
- Use Neroche Woodlanders emails for contact.
- Do not respond to threatening or abusive messages.
- Must attend required safeguarding training.
- Respect differences, help everyone feel included, and deal with problems positively.

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

- Providing clear and specific directions to staff and volunteers on how to behave online through our Code of Conduct.
- We should support and encouraging the young people using our service to use the internet, social media and mobile phones in a way that keeps them safe and shows respect for others.
- We should also support and encouraging parents and carers to do what they can to keep their children safe online

- Reviewing and updating the security of our information systems regularly, ensuring that user names, logins, email accounts and passwords are used effectively
- Ensuring personal information about the adults and children who are involved in our organisation is held securely and shared only as appropriate
- Ensuring that images of children, young people and families are used only after their permission has been obtained, and only for the purpose for which consent has been given – see photography and filming procedure;
- Providing supervision, support and training for staff and volunteers about online safety
- Examining and risk assessing any social media platforms and new technologies before they are used within the organisation.

### **Recruitment of Staff and Volunteers**

- Neroche Woodlanders are committed to safeguarding children and vulnerable adults. Staff and volunteers must be suitable for working with children, young people, and vulnerable adults.
- We follow NSPCC Safer Recruitment guidance.
- Interviews are conducted by at least one (preferably two) Directors; one must have NSPCC Safer Recruitment training.
- Confirm willingness to follow Forest School approach and Code of Conduct.
- References will sort and checked, along with DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) clearance.
- New staff and volunteers will join up with a buddy for a while, to ensure safe working.

### **DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) Checks**

- All adults working regularly with children, young people, or vulnerable adults must have an up-to-date DBS check.
- Session leaders require an **enhanced DBS**.
- DBS checks are renewed every three years or verified annually if subscribed to the update service.
- Records are stored securely on Dropbox.

### **Induction and Training**

- The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) is fully trained, attends relevant local training, and shares key points with staff and volunteers.
- A designated deputy safeguarding lead will also be fully trained and work with the DSL to cover absences.

- All staff/volunteers must have basic safeguarding awareness and understand child protection procedures.
- Everyone signs to confirm they have read and understood the Safeguarding policy.
- Training and inductions are recorded. This record is held by admin on Google Sheet.
- Staff/volunteers discuss bullying, abuse, and prevention regularly, including how to support each other.

## **Ratios**

There should always be at least **two** others with you either staff or volunteer together with any clients when working away from the main camp. You must not put yourself at risk from any situations when working with potentially vulnerable children and adults. The Session Leader is responsible for ensuring there are sufficient trained staff/volunteers. Other ratios will be determined based on the activities and participants involved.

## **Standard (Low Level) Concerns**

Standard concerns in safeguarding are concerns about the behaviour of an adult towards a child that do not meet the threshold for harm. They can include any behaviour that is inconsistent with our code of conduct. Examples of low-level concerns are:

- Being over-friendly with children
- Taking photos of children on a personal device
- Using inappropriate language
- Intimidating or humiliating a child
- Inappropriate touching or hugging
- Showing favouritism
- Engaging with a child in a secluded area

A standard concern should be reported and recorded, progressed when repetition occurs.

## **Major Concern or multiple Minor concerns**

A major concern is when there is evidence of a safeguarding issue and should be reported as soon as practical to the appropriate authority – see contacts list below. The contact should be made by the DSL or deputy DSL if necessary.. As for all concerns a report must be written. See confidentiality of reports below.

In the unlikely event that the concern is so severe such that the child should not be sent home, then the police must be informed and they will deal with the matter. DSL will contact Somerset Safeguarding Partnership- Through the Front Door 0300 123 307 for advice

## **Records**

Session Leaders must ensure that staff **record appropriately detailed** written records of any situation, discussion, or observation, which they feel, may need to be investigated within the Safeguarding and Child Protection Procedures. All such material must be recorded on our Safeguarding Incident Report or as a minimum on paper. The Incident Report must be sent to the DSL to be forwarded to the relevant agency / parent or to the school.

Standard concerns not passed onto the authorities, are to be stored in the main camp container. The paper records are to be retained in a secure cabinet in the container along with other confidential information about any participants. Access to the cabinet is restricted to directors and board members only.

Any electronic copies used to pass the information onwards should be copied into the secure records in Dropbox and then deleted from your personal devices. WhatsApp can be used to send photos of written reports rather than using the less secure messaging systems or emails.

## **Secrecy**

If a client seeks to tell any staff about their circumstances or experiences that are abusive, the member of staff **must not give** absolute guarantees of confidentiality, for information may have implications for the safety of the young person concerned, the protection of others, or evidential relevance in respect of a criminal offence.

If a child, young person or adults request for “nothing to be done” should not bring the matter to a close, e.g. they will often decline the opportunity to refer assaults to the police, or give instruction that they do not wish this to happen. In the case of a child it is for the child protection process to examine, investigate and make the necessary conclusions about any situation, which falls within its remit. If in doubt, discuss with Session leader; other staff members without delay.

## Things to remember

When you are talking to a potential abuse, neglect or bullied person are:

- Try and attract someone else's attention so you have another person's interpretation as well as your own on what was said as you write the report, preferably the session leader or DSL to witness what is being said.
- You should not, at any time, agree to keep the information a secret or guarantee confidentiality – see below on secrecy.
- You must as soon as possible tell the person, that you will have to tell someone about what has happened, this is to give the person the chance not to tell you.
- You should not use leading questions, but be supportive.
- Ask things like:
  - When did it happen?
  - How?
  - What happened?
  - How did it make you feel?
  - Repeat statements made back to get clarification and help you remember
  - Use open questions.

Even if the concern does not warrant taking the matter further a written report should be retained for future reference if needed – see minor and major concerns below. There is a good practice guide to investigations in the references which gives more information on more formal investigations and reporting.

## When sharing information:

You need to consider the following and ask questions about why you need to share:

- Is there a clear and legitimate purpose for sharing information? In a safeguarding context the answer to this is yes
  - Do you have consent to share? – possibly not
- Does the information enable an individual to be identified?
  - Using abbreviations;
  - initials can make sharing the information easier.
  - However the report onto social services etc. will need all this information to be able to follow up the concern.
- Distinguish fact from opinion
  - Ensure that you are giving the right information to the right individual
- Ensure where possible that you are sharing the information securely

- Where possible, be transparent with the individual, informing them that the information has been shared. As long as doing so does not create or increase the risk of harm to the individual.
- All information sharing decisions and reasons must be recorded in line with GDPR Policy.
- If at any stage you are unsure about how or when to share information, you should seek advice on this. You should also ensure that the outcome of the discussion is recorded.

### **Responsibilities of Designated Safeguarding Lead**

The Designated Safeguarding Lead ensures that reviewing and updating our information systems regularly, updating policies and procedures, ensuring that user names, logins, email accounts and passwords are used effectively. They should also ensure personal information about the adults and children who are involved in our organisation is held securely and shared only as appropriate.

DSL Sarah Holdway. DSL - deputy - Tif fLovedale will initiate the consultation with the appropriate agency / school / parents / social services.

### **Allegations against staff/volunteers including**

If anyone makes an allegation of child abuse against a member of staff/volunteer it must be followed up as follows:

- The allegation will be recorded on our safeguarding incident report.
- Any witnesses to the incident should sign and date the entry to confirm it.
- The report should be sent to the DSL who will act upon the findings and report to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO).
- The allegation must be reported to the LADO. The LADO will advise if other agencies (e.g. police), and we will act upon the advice.
- Following advice from the LADO, it may be necessary to suspend the member of staff pending full investigation of the allegation.

### **Whistleblowing.**

Every local authority has a statutory responsibility to have a **Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)** who is responsible for co-ordinating the response to concerns that an adult who works with children may have caused them, or could cause, harm. The Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) works within Children's Services and provides advice and guidance to employers, organisations, agencies, and other

individuals who have concerns about the behaviour of an adult who works with children and young people. Included in this group are volunteers, agency staff and foster carers as well as people who are in a position of authority and have regular contact with children, such as religious leaders, political figures, or school governors.

**LADOs for Somerset Council: If you have concerns about a professional working with a child:**

Anthony Goble and Stacey Davis. - LADO

To notify the LADO of an allegation, an **Allegations Reporting Form** (ARF) will need to be completed and forwarded to Somerset Direct: [sdinputters@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:sdinputters@somerset.gov.uk)

Alternatively, you can phone Somerset Direct on **0300 123 2224** and request an ARF.

Any member of staff/volunteer who has raised a safeguarding or child protection concern which has not been taken forward can contact any of the agencies listed. There is also a Whistleblowing process on the NSPCC website.

Within Neroche Woodlanders a Non-Exec Director (Sue Farrell ) is nominated as a deputy for Safeguarding and is able to assist in raising any concerns you may have.

Contacts

Neroche Woodlanders

The DSL is Sarah Holdway 07784 800641

The Deputy DSL is Tiff Lovedale 07355 232306

Deputy is Non-Exec Director Sue Farrell 07495452916

Emergency Services

You can contact the police directly by dialling 101 and they will discuss with Children's Social Care what action should be taken. **In an emergency always contact the police by dialling 999.**

Designated Safeguarding Lead ONLY - The Family Front Door Consultation Line

Contact the Family Front Door if you are a **Designated Safeguarding Lead or GP** and you require real time advice about a child/ren/family you are supporting, or if you are

considering making a referral to Children Services but are unsure and want guidance, or to sound out your thinking in a safe space.

To contact the Family Front Door call: **0300 123 3078**

**If you are a member of the public you can contact the Family Front Door on 03001232224 for advice and support.**

### Somerset Council

For up to date Somerset County Council Safeguarding contacts go to: <https://sscb.safeguardingsomerset.org.uk>

If you would like to speak to a social worker outside of office hours please phone the Emergency Duty Team (EDT) **Somerset Direct 0300 122 2224**

To make a NON-URGENT referral to Children's Social Care- Complete an Early Help Assessment and send to SD Inputters - [SDinputters@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:SDinputters@somerset.gov.uk)

If there is a concern that an adult is at risk, being harmed or exploited call the SCC Adult Social Care on 0300 123 2224

LADO: 0300 123 2224 - Local Authority Designated Officer - (LADO) Anthony Goble/Stacey Davis

To notify the LADO of an allegation, an **Allegations Reporting Form (ARF)** will need to be completed and forwarded to Somerset Direct: **[sdinputters@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:sdinputters@somerset.gov.uk)** Alternatively, you can phone Somerset Direct on **0300 123 2224** and request an ARF.

### References and Resources

All references downloadable - check for the latest versions.

- 1 Somerset Safeguarding children website : <https://somensetsafeguardingchildren.org.uk>
- 2 Department for Education (DofE) there are lots of documents and toolkits here as well including advice on neglect and how to recognize it.

- 3 Keeping children safe – lots of resources -  
<https://www.gov.uk/topic/schools-colleges-childrens-services/safeguarding-children>
- 4 Effective support for Children and Families  
[https://somensetsafeguardingchildren.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Effective-Support-for-Children-and-Families\\_2023\\_DECEMBER.pdf](https://somensetsafeguardingchildren.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Effective-Support-for-Children-and-Families_2023_DECEMBER.pdf)
- 5 Keeping children safe in education – Statutory guidance for schools and colleges– DofE publication.  
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66d7301b9084b18b95709f75/Keeping\\_children\\_safe\\_in\\_education\\_2024.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66d7301b9084b18b95709f75/Keeping_children_safe_in_education_2024.pdf)
- 6 Working together to safeguard children  
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65cb4349a7ded0000c79e4e1/Working\\_together\\_to\\_safeguard\\_children\\_2023\\_-\\_statutory\\_guidance.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65cb4349a7ded0000c79e4e1/Working_together_to_safeguard_children_2023_-_statutory_guidance.pdf)
- 7 NSPCC – there are lots of documents and advice on this webpage along with reporting toolkits and the safeguarding standard (in Dropbox folder)  
<https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/media/1079/safeguarding-standards-and-guidance.pdf>
- 8 The process for raising concerns and managing allegations – (LADO Leaflet, by Somerset) Safeguarding Children Partnership.  
<https://somensetsafeguardingchildren.org.uk/report-a-concern/>
- 9 Strengths and needs toolkit:  
<https://somensetsafeguardingchildren.org.uk/publication/family-strengths-and-needs-toolkit/>
- 10 Good Practice Guide to investigations, May 2018; HR & OD Services, Somerset county council – in Dropbox folder
- 11 Adult safeguarding <https://somensetsafeguardingadults.org.uk>