

# SAFEGUARDING POLICY

**Benson Area Nature Group** has been established to progress a local nature recovery programme and build strong community engagement with that objective. This involves the recruiting of volunteers from all walks of life to contribute according to their skills and interests in a number of ways but also on a variety of sites across the area served by the Nature Group. Work sessions will be led but work leaders are also volunteers with the Group. The policy makes reference to staff to reflect the possibility of one or two paid roles in the near future, and is also used as a shorthand for Committee officers and members.

**Safeguarding** is everyone's responsibility; that is all staff, every volunteer and every adult. There are particular accountabilities for staff and for volunteers in a leadership role but everybody working or volunteering on site needs to read, or have access to, this policy.

**Safeguarding is** the prevention of abuse or harm to children and vulnerable adults but also the active promotion of safe working practices and environments for them. Thus the policy sets out a clear direction about expected codes of behaviour by all on site.

**Definitions.** In this policy, a child is anyone under the age of 18, a parent is a parent or guardian or adult with temporary care of a child, e.g. grandparent, and a vulnerable person or adult is someone with additional needs for reason such as disability, learning difficulty, mental health or infirmity. Adults with poor English language skills could also be considered vulnerable.

**Health and Safety.** Other risk issues such as those presented by the use of equipment or working outdoors are covered by both risk assessment and health and safety procedures.

Benson Area Nature Group will

- Establish / maintain an ethos where all feel secure when they are working for us.
- Ensure children and vulnerable adults know who to approach if they are worried.
- Endeavour to ensure that children and vulnerable adults who undertake work / activities with us do so in a safe, enjoyable and rewarding way.

**All activities should be risk assessed in advance**, and planning and mitigation put in place accordingly. **The risk assessments should be written and should be available for all volunteers to consult.** Volunteers should be encouraged to read them before starting work.

Benson Area Nature Group is not currently in a position to work or hold activities with any vulnerable persons, including under 18s, unless accompanied by a parent / guardian or other adult.

Generally, on work parties we will only be able to accept active involvement for children 8 years and above, and again only if accompanied by a parent / guardian. The responsibility for all aspects of the care of any child remains with the parent / guardian at all times.

### **Code of Conduct regarding Children on site.**

The group will not undertake activities whereby any staff member or volunteer has direct supervision of any child under 18.

Staff or volunteers should never accept or assume responsibility for the welfare or conduct of someone else's child/ren, unless there is an emergency such as a parent taken ill, or child lost on site.

As a volunteer / staff member you must not take a child or children off on their own. Parents should always know where their children are and be with them.

A single adult must never be left in the company of a single child, unless in an absolute emergency.

Children on organised visits – from schools, Brownies etc - to any work site must be accompanied by an appropriate number of adults from the organisation. They will be the responsibility of those adults at all times, and those adults must supervise and accompany them throughout the visit.

### **Photos**

Never take pictures or film children without written or verbal permission. If pictures are to be used for publicity get written permission first.

The Nature Group will provide a template for a photography / filming consent form.

When planning or filming an event, there should be an event notice about filming to advise parents / allow them to opt out.

### **Vulnerable Adults**

A wide range of illness, disability, frailty, social and emotional problems and behaviours may make an adult vulnerable.

The Nature Group aims to be as inclusive as possible / appropriate. This must allow for the safety of all concerned, not only the volunteer but also the other volunteers on site.

The limitations of volunteer work leader numbers and training mean that opportunities and work with vulnerable adults can only be undertaken if the adult concerned is accompanied by a parent / guardian or carer who will be responsible for them at all times. Any activities will need to be risk assessed to take account of the vulnerable adult's needs alongside any more general risks.

It is recognised that some adults with vulnerabilities or disabilities might live alone, arrive alone and may have vulnerabilities that are not readily identified. Potential volunteers can only be assessed on a case by case basis. If there are any doubts about their suitability perhaps offer a trial period and / or allocate a "buddy" to work with them.

### **Dealing with abuse alleged, disclosed or discovered.**

Appropriate action must be taken without delay. Do not assume that someone else will act.

If any member or volunteer with Benson Area Nature Group is involved in any allegation, they must be removed from the activity straight away.

Listen to what is being said. Be clear you cannot keep information confidential and will need to pass it on to the chair of the Nature Group and to relevant social care agencies.

Do not investigate by asking questions other than to clarify or confirm what is being said.

If the child is with an organised group, tell the group leader.

Tell the Nature Group session leader or organiser so that relevant information can be passed on to the safeguarding team in the Local Authority.

The session leader will need to be clear as to what is being said and report without delay to the Group's chair.

### **Responsibilities of staff and volunteers.**

- Do all you can to ensure children working with or undertaking activities with the Nature Group do so in a safe and enjoyable way.
- Understand the policy and work to the Code of Conduct and other guidance.
- Be vigilant to any protection issues.
- If there are any concerns, discuss with the session leader or organiser.
- Be mindful of confidentiality and only report names and identifying details on a need to know basis.

- **For staff, committee members and volunteer work and session leaders:**
- Ensure there are risk assessments up to date and available to read for all volunteer activities.
- Ensure that there is compatibility between Health and Safety procedures and child protection and vulnerable adult protection procedures and issues.
- Be prepared for the need to refer to the statutory authorities if any concern raised suggests the possibility of harm and / or criminal behaviour.
- Maintain written records of any concerns raised.
- Ensure safe and confidential storage of any such written records and share them only on a need to know basis.
- Review this policy annually and amend as necessary.

Benson Area Nature Group

May 2024.