



Safeguarding Children Policy

Version	2.2 (based on The Wildlife Trusts' 2023 template)
Approval Authority	Board of Trustees
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Authored by	Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)
Shared with	All staff, Trustees and volunteer leaders
This policy should be read in conjunction with the following associated documents	Safeguarding Adults at Risk Policy Safeguarding Procedures



This policy outlines Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust's commitment to Safeguarding Children from abuse and maltreatment or neglect.

Definition of a child

England

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, 2018a).

Purpose

The purpose of this policy and the associated procedures is to provide clarity to all staff, trustees, volunteers, and members of the public on Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust's approach to Safeguarding Children. A separate "Safeguarding adults at risk" policy exists and should be referred to for all safeguarding for those aged 18 and over.

Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust is committed to the highest standards of charity governance for Safeguarding and this policy is the foundation of a universal approach across the organisation that puts Safeguarding at the heart of Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust's engagement with children.

Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust has a duty of care to children and their parents, carers and/or families that take part in our activities. We endeavour to provide a safe and friendly environment that celebrates all achievements. We will achieve this by ensuring that staff, volunteers and trustees comply with all legal, contractual and professional standards and responsibilities in their work with children – whether within a group situation or one to one.

This policy will be reviewed every three years in line with key legislation updates or changes and will be promoted through induction, training and ongoing supervision and support.



Context

In England where Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust operates there are child protection systems, laws and guidance to help keep children safe. 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 18s, we have a duty to work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

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 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 in our care safe from harm.

At Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust we engage with children in various situations including:

- School Visits
- Family Activities
- Visitor Centres
- Nature Friendly Schools Programme
- Watch Groups
- Work Parties
- Work placements/work experience
- Youth Advisory Group



In line with the purpose of this policy we are committed to providing a safe and friendly environment that protects children. 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 school staff or children attending with their parents. Those activities whereby Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust has direct supervision of a child, consent is required from a parent or legal guardian ahead of the activity taking place as well as completion of thorough risk assessments and safeguarding procedures adhered to.

The Wildlife Trusts' Safeguarding Commitment

The Wildlife Trusts believe that everyone has a responsibility to Safeguard children and adults at risk; as a movement we are committed to ensuring their safety and wellbeing is at the heart of our engagement with people.

We will:

- Not tolerate any form of abuse or neglect within The Wildlife Trusts
- Take all reasonable steps to protect children and adults at risk who visit our sites, take part in our activities or engage with us online
- Give equal priority to keeping all children and adults at risk safe from harm, regardless of their age, disability, gender, race, beliefs, sex, or sexual orientation
- Provide our staff, volunteers and trustees with the knowledge and tools to guide them in protecting children and adults at risk from abuse and neglect

We will achieve this by:

- Supporting staff and volunteers by establishing a clear policy and procedural framework, transparent reporting and by promoting a culture of learning throughout the movement
- Encouraging staff and volunteers to discuss any concerns immediately or as soon as practically possible with their line manager/supervisor or designated safeguarding lead
- Listening to and hearing the voice of children and adults at risk and respecting their views
- Recruiting our staff and volunteers safely including references, disclosure and barring checks as appropriate
- Recording and storing information safely and in accordance with the UK General Data Protection Regulation
- Recognising the position of trust in which staff and volunteers are regularly placed and use our procedures and work with our local authorities to manage any allegations against staff and volunteers appropriately
- Adhering to Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust's Online Safety guidelines to keep children adults at risk and staff safe when using any device over the internet
- Ensuring that we provide a safe physical environment for children and adults at risk, staff and volunteers, by adhering to health and safety measures in accordance with the law and regulatory guidance and our own codes of practice.
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- Working in partnership with the statutory agencies responsible for the Safeguarding of children and adults at risk
- Ensuring that any third-party individual or organisation involved in delivering activities on behalf of The Wildlife Trusts has appropriate experience, qualifications and/or accreditation and insurance.

Safeguarding Contacts

Designated Safeguarding Team

Phone – 01452 383333

Email - safeguarding@gloucestershirewildlifetrust.co.uk

Safer Recruitment

Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust want to ensure that we choose the best people for our roles and our Safer Recruitment Statement helps us to ensure we recruit like-minded people who care for wildlife and nature as well as being committed to protecting children and adults at risk from harm. Our recruitment process includes thorough background checks and references, as well as adherence to our strict code of conduct (in production). We take our responsibility for safeguarding seriously. Ensuring that if the role involves working with adults at risk/children they have the appropriate level of DBS check.

How to recognise the signs of abuse in Children

It is important to be alert to the signs of abuse and maltreatment. If you feel something isn't right, question the behaviour of children, staff, volunteers, trustees or parents/carers – don't be afraid to speak up and discuss concerns with your Safeguarding lead or team leader.

You may become aware of a safeguarding issue through noticing a change in the behaviour of a child or perhaps observing bruising or another sign of physical abuse. A child could tell you about a situation that is happening in their life, this is called a disclosure.

Consideration should be given to staff and volunteer's conduct when interacting with children such as not taking part in physical games, trying to avoid being alone with a child (staying within sight and hearing of others whenever possible) and maintaining professional boundaries including any contact over digital devices. Further details regarding conduct can be found in the Safeguarding Procedure.

There are four main categories of types and indicators of abuse for children. You should be aware of the warning indicators for each of these.



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Category of abuse	Description	Indicators and what to look out for in Children
Neglect	<p>The persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. This can occur during pregnancy through substance abuse.</p>	<p>Children who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • are living in a home that is indisputably dirty or unsafe • are left hungry or dirty • are left without adequate clothing, e.g. not having a winter coat or warm clothes • are often angry, aggressive or self-harm • fail to receive basic health care; and • parents who fail to seek medical treatment when their children are ill or are injured.
Physical Abuse	<p>May involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child.</p>	<p>Children with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • frequent injuries • unexplained or unusual fractures or broken bones; and • unexplained: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - bruises or cuts - bruising in non-mobile babies - burns or scalds; or - bite marks <p>You may wish to use a body map referral sheet to record physical injuries observed or disclosed (please see Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust's procedures).</p>
Emotional abuse	<p>Is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • children who are excessively withdrawn, fearful, or anxious about doing something wrong • parents or carers who withdraw their attention from their child, giving the child the 'cold shoulder' • parents or carers blaming their problems on their child; and • parents or carers who humiliate their child, for example, by name-calling or making negative comparisons.
Sexual abuse	<p>Involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • children who display knowledge or interest in sexual acts inappropriate to their age • use sexual language or have sexual knowledge that you wouldn't expect them to have





	<p>penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing.</p> <p>They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse. Sexual abuse can take place online, and technology can be used to facilitate offline abuse.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ask others to behave sexually or play sexual games; and have physical sexual health problems, including soreness in the genital and anal areas, sexually transmitted infections or underage pregnancy.
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Contextual Safeguarding

Safeguarding risks may also come from outside of the home environment, these are called Contextual Safeguarding Risks. These are indicators covered by this policy and that all staff should be aware of.

Contextual Safeguarding is an approach to understanding, and responding to, children's experiences of significant harm beyond their families. It recognises that the different relationships that children form in their neighbourhoods, schools and online can feature violence and abuse.

Parents and carers have little influence over these contexts, and children's experiences of extra-familial abuse can undermine parent-child relationships.

The following examples are all types of Contextual Safeguarding Risks.

<p>Sexual Exploitation (often referred to as Child Sexual Exploitation or CSE)</p>	<p>This occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can</p>	<p>Children who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> appear with unexplained gifts or new possessions associate with other children involved in exploitation have older boyfriends or girlfriends suffer from sexually transmitted infections or become pregnant suffer from changes in emotional well-being misuse drugs and alcohol go missing for periods of time or regularly come home late; and
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	also occur using technology.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> regularly miss school or education or don't take part in education.
Harmful sexual behaviour	Is developmentally inappropriate sexual behaviour which is displayed by children and which may be harmful or abusive.	<p>There are no formal indicators for this area, however research has shown that children may:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> display attachment disorders have previous sexual victimization – a younger age at the onset of the abuse is more likely to lead to sexualized behaviour have poor empathy skills.
Child criminal exploitation	<p>Is typified by a power imbalance in favour of those perpetrating the exploitation and usually involves some form of exchange (e.g. carrying drugs in return for something). The exchange can include both tangible (such as money, drugs or clothes) and intangible rewards (such as status, protection or perceived friendship or affection).</p> <p>Children who are criminally exploited are at a high risk of experiencing violence and intimidation and threats to family members may also be made.</p>	<p>Signs that a child is being groomed or exploited into criminal activity or county lines include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> persistently going missing from school or home and/or being found out-of-area unexplained acquisition of money, clothes, jewellery, or mobile phones excessive receipt of texts or phone calls spending more time online or on their devices using more than one phone suddenly acquiring expensive gifts such as mobile phones, jewellery – even drugs – and not being able to explain how they came by them having hotel cards or keys to unknown places being secretive about who they are talking to and where they are going relationships with controlling older individuals or groups
Serious youth violence	Children involved in crime, whether exploitatively or not, may be at risk of being seriously harmed or of causing serious physical injury to another. This could be a weapon-enabled violence (stabbing, shooting or hit and run type incidents) or through aggravated assault. The risk of serious youth violence may increase when the child is gang-affiliated.	<p>Signs to be aware of may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> child seems to withdraw from family life sudden loss of interest in school or change in behaviour. decline in attendance or academic achievement being emotionally 'switched off', but also containing frustration / rage starting to use new or unknown slang words





		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • holding unexplained money or possessions • sudden change in appearance – dressing in a particular style or 'uniform' similar to that of other children they hang around with, including a particular colour
Radicalisation	<p>Is defined as the process by which people come to support an extreme ideology which advocates violence. This ideology may be religious or political in nature but can also include a fascination with a person (such as someone who has been involved in murders or torture) or a social movement, for example animal rights activism.</p> <p>The Government's Prevent strategy/intervention programme aims to stop people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism. While it remains rare for children to become involved in terrorist activity, children from an early age can be exposed to terrorist and extremist influences or prejudiced views. Referrals for Prevent can be made via your Designated Safeguarding Lead.</p>	<p>There are no standard indicators for radicalisation, but issues that may make a child vulnerable to radicalisation can include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identity crisis - distance from cultural / religious heritage and uncomfortable with their place in the society around them • personal Crisis - family tensions; sense of isolation; adolescence; low self-esteem; disassociating from existing friendship group and becoming involved with a new and different group of friends; • searching for answers to questions about identity, faith and belonging.

The Charity Commission specifies that it requires all charities to prevent abuse for extremist purposes and refer any instances of concern to the Local Authority.

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'. The aim of this is to reduce the threat to the UK from terrorism by stopping people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism, and in particular to prevent people being exposed to extremist ideology and being radicalised in the first place. Whilst The Wildlife Trusts 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 recognize warning signs in children and notify the appropriate agencies if we have concerns regarding terrorism or extremism.



Bullying

Bullying can occur between children, adults or between adults and children. Bullying can take many different forms and be physical, verbal or non-verbal. Mobile phones, social media and digital platforms such as online communities can be used to bully.

Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust will not tolerate any form of bullying between adults or children 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 Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust's Safeguarding procedures. Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust will endeavour to intervene at the earliest point, working with schools, leaders and parents/carers.

Signs that a child is experiencing bullying may be:

- A change in behaviour and resistance to take part in usual activities
- Becoming distressed or worried
- Loss of confidence and appearing withdrawn
- Having problems eating or perhaps sleeping
- Unexplained injuries
- Changes in appearance

Online Safety

Just as Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust takes the safety of children face to face extremely seriously, we must consider how we keep them safe engaging online too.

Children can be exposed to upsetting or inappropriate content online, or may even be at risk from being groomed if they have an online profile that enables the private messaging function.

Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust has a responsibility to ensure that children using Trust online communities or communication platforms do not share personal information that makes them identifiable and could potentially put them at risk.

Perpetrators of abuse create fake profiles to try and contact children so it's essential new users are verified before they are added to the Trust's private pages or groups. In the same way Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust must utilise safer recruitment practices such as references and DBS checks to ensure staff, trustees and volunteers engaging online are safe to be doing so.

Everyone must be vigilant in this area and report any concerns to the Trust's Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Please refer to Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust's Online Safety Guidance and Safeguarding Procedures for more information and guidance regarding online safety.



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 (or unborn baby) has suffered significant harm through abuse or maltreatment or is likely to suffer significant harm in the future.

A referral is when there are serious concerns about a child and Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust contacts and shares information with other agencies such as Children's Social Care or the Police in order for them to establish what is happening in the child's life and whether services need to take further steps to help keep them safe or support the family.

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

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.

In conjunction with the Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust Designated Safeguarding Lead and RSWT Strategic Safeguarding Lead, individual's line manager (or equivalent) must investigate any allegations. The Safeguarding lead must also contact the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) for an initial discussion to determine if the LADO threshold has been met.

The LADO is in place to be contacted for any concerns and advice regarding an adult who is working (paid or in a voluntary capacity) with a child and may have:

- 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
- Behaved or may behave in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children

The LADO will also advise if a referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) is required. Please see Safeguarding Procedures for further information about the role of the LADO.

If your concerns relate to a member of the Safeguarding team, or you have concerns regarding the way a Safeguarding case is being managed, please consult Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust's Whistleblowing Policy/Guidance or equivalent.

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 Officer, and the Compliance Manager and Safeguarding Lead must also be notified before any incident is reported.





A serious incident amounts to a situation whereby harm has occurred to Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust beneficiaries, staff, volunteers, or others who encounter Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust through our work. The incident needs to be reported and importantly, let the Commission know how we are dealing with it, even if we have also reported it to the police, donors or another regulator. Advice on how to report a serious incident can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/how-to-report-a-serious-incident-in-your-charity>.

Roles and Responsibilities for Safeguarding within The Trust.

Role	Responsibilities
Trustee lead for Safeguarding Safeguarding@gloucestershirewildlifetrust.co.uk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • taking an overall lead in this area on behalf of the Board of Trustees • challenging any strategic decisions which adversely affect anyone's wellbeing
All Trustees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • supporting the lead trustee in creating a positive safeguarding culture that works to protect children and adults at risk within Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust • approving safeguarding policy and ensuring that safeguarding is considered at every stage of decision making within the movement
CEO of The Trust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensuring that safeguarding is embedded within all decisions made by the Senior Management Team by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • maintaining a clear strategic and operational focus on safeguarding children and adults at risk • ensuring Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust meets 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
Designated Safeguarding Lead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • safeguarding subject expert and the point of advice throughout the Trust • developing policy, procedure, training and reporting mechanisms as well as being a support for the Safeguarding point of contacts • ensuring that staff complete regular training appropriate to their roles • making referrals and overall safeguarding case management
Designated Safeguarding Officers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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
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



Signatories



Signed:

CEO, Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust

Date 23 April 2025.....



Signed:

Trustee Lead for Safeguarding, Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust

Date 17 June 2025.....



