



Safeguarding children policy

Wilderness Adventures Community Interest Company

Introduction:

Wilderness Adventures CIC is a Not For Profit community interest company, primarily operating as a forest school from private woodland in Kippax (Leeds), Great Preston Parish woodland, Fryston community trails (in collaboration with the Land Trust) and delivering school sessions to settings throughout Leeds and Wakefield. We provide parent & toddler early years sessions, sessions tailored for home educated young people, community family forest school sessions, heritage crafts and art workshops and well being sessions, primarily for women.

Our home base woodland is:

Park Lane woodlands, Kippax, Leeds, LS25 7AP.

Company number: 12593738

It is the policy of Wilderness Adventures CIC to safeguard all children and young people from physical, sexual and emotional harm while participating in all our activities under our care.

This policy shall apply to all staff, managers, committee members, directors, volunteers, students and adults working on behalf of the Wilderness Adventures CIC.

The purpose of this policy:

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. All staff and volunteers who, during their employment have direct or indirect contact with children, families and vulnerable adults, or who have access to information about them, have a responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults.

Forest School is a valuable educational experience that encourages children to learn through outdoor exploration and play. As with any educational setting, a Safeguarding Policy ensures the safety and well-being of all participants.

There is a duty on organisations to make appropriate arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults. Government guidance is clear that this is a shared responsibility and relies upon effective joined up working between agencies and professionals with different roles and expertise, as outlined in 'Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018' where the definition of safeguarding is: 'Protecting children from maltreatment, preventing impairment of children's health or development, ensuring that children are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care, taking action to enable all children have the best outcomes.'

The Wilderness Adventures CIC Safeguarding Policy will outline the procedures and protocols in place to ensure that no act or omission on the part of the organisation, or that of its staff or volunteers puts a child, young person or vulnerable adult directly or inadvertently at risk and that rigorous and comprehensive systems are in place to proactively safeguard and promote the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults and support staff in fulfilling their obligations. This policy has been developed in consultation with all stakeholders, including parents, staff, and other relevant professionals.

Disclosure and Barring service (DBS) Checks and Reporting:

- Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service disclosures will be undertaken on staff working directly with children.
- Staff and volunteers who do not have disclosures will not work alone with children, young people and vulnerable adults and will be supervised by a manager.
- Staff and volunteers will be trained appropriately to recognise the signs and possible signs of neglect, physical, emotional or sexual abuse.
- If necessary to remove any individual from a position of employment, Wilderness Adventures CIC are obliged to make a referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service under the relevant legislation.

Reporting a concern:

Any question, report or concern in relation to the Safeguarding of children, young people or vulnerable adult under the care of Wilderness Adventures CIC should be shared in the first instance with our Designated Safeguarding Lead Officer or Designated Safeguarding Lead Committee Member:

Designated Safeguarding Lead Officer

Name: Nicola Cowell (DSL)

Email: Nicki5pl@hotmail.com

Telephone: 07432703594

Designated Safeguarding Lead Committee Member – Prevent & FGM referrals

Name: Michele Dixon (DSL)

Email: michelelouisedixon@gmail.com

Telephone: 07494171927

Relevant organisations:

Leeds Children's Social Work Services - 0113 222 4403

Wakefield Social Care Direct Integrated Front Door - 0345 8 503 503

NSPCC Helpline - 0808 800 5000

Definition of child abuse:

Children (defined as everyone under the age of 18) and vulnerable adults can be vulnerable to many forms of abuse and harm. It is important to recognise that abuse and harm of children can cover a wide range of circumstances and behaviours. For example, children can be at risk of:

- Physical abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Neglect
- Sexual abuse
- Child on child abuse
- Bullying
- Domestic abuse
- Child Criminal Exploitation
- Child Sexual Exploitation or grooming
- Self-harm or suicidal ideation
- Physical harm when engaging with activities without adequate supervision
- Female genital mutilation (FGM)
- Trafficking and modern slavery

Child abuse can be carried out by ANYONE who has contact with the child. This could be friends, family, other children, a stranger or someone who is known or trusted.

Key Safeguarding Principles

Empowerment:

The principle of empowerment means enabling individuals to make their own decisions and have control over their lives. This can be achieved by providing information, support, and advocacy.

Prevention:

The principle of prevention means taking action to prevent harm from occurring in the first place. This can involve identifying potential risks and taking steps to reduce or eliminate them following the child protection procedures in place.

Proportionality:

The principle of proportionality means that any action taken to safeguard an individual should be proportionate to the level of risk involved. This means that the response should be appropriate to the situation.

Protection:

The principle of protection means taking action to intervene when harm has occurred or is likely to occur. This can involve removing the individual from the situation or providing support to help them stay safe.

Partnership:

The principle of partnership means working together with other agencies and professionals to

safeguard individuals. This includes sharing information and coordinating actions to ensure that the individual receives the best possible support and protection.

Identifying Abuse:

The signs of child abuse will vary between individuals but common signs of abuse include:

- Unexplained changes in behaviour or personality
- Becoming withdrawn
- Seeming anxious
- Becoming uncharacteristically aggressive
- Lacking in social skills and having few friends
- A poor bond or relationship with a parent
- Knowledge of adult issues inappropriate for their age

Disclosures:

Children, young people and vulnerable adults may disclose abuse in a variety of ways, including:

- Directly by making specific verbal statements about what has happened to them
- Indirectly by making ambiguous verbal statements which suggest something is wrong
- Behaviourally by displaying behaviour that signals something is wrong (this may or may not be deliberate)
- Non-verbally by writing letters, drawing pictures or trying to communicate in other ways

Children may be reluctant to disclose their experiences of abuse or neglect. The reasons why may include:

- They blame themselves for the abuse or feel shame or guilt - feelings which can be made worse through the use of 'victim-blaming' language or labelling.
- Experiencing feelings of isolation.
- They may be afraid of negative reactions from parents, caregivers, peers and professionals.
- They may worry they will be causing trouble and making the situation worse.
- They may be concerned about confidentiality.
- They may feel too embarrassed to talk to an adult about a private or personal problem
- They feel that they will not be taken seriously
- They lack trust in the people around them (including parents) and in the services provided to help them
- They find formal procedures overwhelming
- They may not know about the support services available to them, or be unable to access these services

The nature of Forest Schools and outdoor education means that children may feel safer and more able and freer to disclose.

If a child, young person or vulnerable adult does choose to disclose to an adult or another child at Wilderness Adventures CIC, the following procedures are in place for all staff and volunteers to adhere to:

- **Listen** to what is being disclosed and accept it
- Do not display shock or disbelief
- Take detailed notes where possible taking care to document the time of the abuse, location, perpetrator and details of the event
- **Reassure** the young person that they were right to disclose, point out that they were not to blame
- **Do not promise confidentiality, you have a duty to refer**
- Do not interrogate or press the young person for further details
- Use TED questions - Tell, Explain, Describe
- Ask open questions - Is there anything else you want to tell me?
- Explain to them what you must do next
- **Record** the disclosure and keep original notes
- Take care to record the child's voice - the actual words the child says
- Record what is said rather than your assumptions
- **Remember** to follow the guidelines in this policy
- Consult the DSL as soon as possible

Guidelines on the behaviour and roles of staff:

The aim of these guidelines is to identify appropriate behaviour and encourage safer working practices to protect children and young people and to safeguard adults.

- Activities involving close contact should take place in a group situation.
- Adults should monitor each other in the area of physical contact and feel free to help each other by pointing out actions that could be misunderstood eg; comforting an upset child with a hug if the child doesn't appear comfortable or the child didn't instigate the contact.
- Where a child requires physical support to carry out an activity, staff must be mindful of safe areas of touch and only engage in this behaviour if the child requests it, and only for as long as they require it.
- Staff who do not have disclosure checks will not spend time alone with children.
- No staff or volunteer should transport a child in their personal vehicle without explicit permission from the parent/guardian and without another adult present.
- Staff who do have disclosure check will minimise time alone with children and tell the DSL/other adults if the situation occurs.
- Children who require support with changing clothing or require support with toileting should receive this support from two members of staff at all times.
- Remember - children and young people have the right to decide how much physical contact they have with others. Touch should be related to the child's needs and not dictated by staff.

Allegations against staff, volunteers or adults associated with Wilderness Adventures CIC:

It is important that allegations made by children, young people or their parents/carers are dealt with straight away.

Any person concerned regarding the conduct of a staff member or volunteer employed by

Wilderness Adventures CIC must raise their concern immediately with the Designated Safeguarding Officer, the Designated Safeguarding Lead Committee Member or a member of senior staff. Concerns may include, but are not limited to,

- harming a child directly, either physically, emotionally or sexually
- exhibiting neglectful behaviours that may endanger a child in their care
- exposing a child to behaviour which may cause physical or emotional harm
- engaging in criminal activity concerning a child

We recognise that there could be circumstances where an individual may need to report a concern that has taken place in a setting outside of the person's engagement with Wilderness Adventures CIC.

Wilderness Adventures CIC assure that the following will take place:

- Any allegation will be taken seriously and reported to the relevant authorities (Police, Social Services) who will investigate.
- If the reporting party is a member of staff or volunteer of Wilderness Adventures CIC, they will be offered support from another member of the organisation.
- Any member of staff or volunteer who has had an allegation made against them will be suspended immediately and remain suspended until all allegations have been investigated. The Designated Safeguarding Lead Officer/Committee Member will formally meet with the member of staff to inform of the above, taking advice from local authorities.
- Confidentiality will be assured to all involved parties.
- Depending on the outcome of investigations from local authorities, the instigation of appropriate formal investigation processes and potentially disciplinary action/termination of employment will apply. Any decisions will be made in the best interests of the child/young people.
- A referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service and any other relevant regulatory bodies will be made, if applicable.

Safeguarding Children at Events and Activities:

Responsibilities and Planning:

Wilderness Adventures offer the following types of events and/or activities which could involve children:

- Holiday camps
- Parties
- School sessions
- Home Education groups
- Babies and toddler groups
- After school clubs

The Designated Safeguarding Lead Officer holds ultimate responsibility for the safety of all involved and for appropriateness of the event. They may however appoint a delegate to some responsibilities for the purpose of a specific event.

For certain types of events or activities, Wilderness Adventures CIC may issue an additional code of conduct, policy, or other specific requirements which is relevant to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all children involved. Any such additional documentation will be made publicly available in advance and will be adhered to by all staff and volunteers.

Policy updated: 8th December 2023

Nicola Cowell - Level 3 Safeguarding Children and Young People

Voluntary Action Leeds

Michele Dixon - Level 3 Designated Safeguarding Lead