



## **Child and Vulnerable Person Safety and Welfare Policy**

This document outlines the Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust's policy and working practices for adults working with children and other vulnerable people. It addresses the need to protect, as far as possible, such individuals from harm, whether by accident, or injury, or by abuse, physical or otherwise.

A *Child* is defined as anyone under the age of 18

A *Vulnerable Person* is defined as someone aged 18 or over who is unable to care independently for themselves. This may be because they have a disability, experience mental health issues including dementia, have learning disabilities or due to illness, injury or old age have become severely frail. All of which could be either a permanent or temporary state.

This document complements Wildlife Watch child welfare and safety guidance and procedures as outlined in The Essential Guide to being a Wildlife Watch Leader plus The Wildlife Watch Organisers Handbook.

### **Policy statement**

The Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust (The Trust) is committed to safeguarding the well-being of children and vulnerable people.

The Trust follows legislation and advice from various agencies, including the Leicestershire and Rutland Local Safeguarding Children Board (see [www.lrlscb.org/](http://www.lrlscb.org/)) and the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS - see [www.gov.uk/government/organisations/disclosure-and-barring-service/](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/disclosure-and-barring-service/)), to ensure that policies and procedures, based on best practice, are put in place for staff and volunteers to follow.

All Trust staff and volunteers have a duty to do everything reasonably in their power to ensure the safety and welfare of children and vulnerable people, regardless of gender, ethnicity, disability, sexuality or beliefs, whilst they are in our care and to report any concerns about a child or vulnerable person so these can be addressed in an appropriate way. Any such concerns should be reported to the Trust's Director – see separate Disclosure Procedure attached.

### **Implementation**

The Trust will safeguard children and vulnerable adults by:

- Ensuring staff and volunteers, who work with children and vulnerable people on a regular basis, are carefully selected by following the appropriate recruitment procedure (including satisfactory independent references plus DBS check which is periodically reviewed)
- Ensuring our Equality and Diversity Policy is followed
- Nominating the Trust's Director as the Designated Child and Vulnerable Person Representative
- Encouraging staff and volunteers to take responsibility and report any concerns, suspicions or allegations of abuse to the Trust Director, following the Trust's disclosure procedure, so that appropriate action can be taken
- Ensuring that all events and activities undertaken with children and vulnerable people are properly planned and are appropriate to their age and ability
- Ensuring that all staff and key volunteers are properly trained in a three year cycle, informed, supported and managed

- Adopting appropriate guidelines and procedures for staff and volunteers to follow, including a requirement for all staff and key volunteers to annually read the policy and sign that they have done so.

## **Working Practices**

### **Planning**

Good management and careful planning go a long way to make the Trust's activities safe for everyone.

The Trust does not generally assume direct responsibility for the supervision of children and vulnerable people attending its events and activities, this responsibility remaining with the relevant adult(s) (eg parents, teachers, youth leaders, carer etc). Therefore, unless specifically agreed otherwise the Trust will not accept the participation of children and vulnerable people at events and activities unless they are accompanied throughout by such responsible adults.

The responsibility of the relevant adults will be made clear before the event/activity starts.

Notwithstanding the continued responsibility of the relevant adults, the Trust will plan to minimise any risk to the safety or welfare of the child/vulnerable person, assess the suitability of staff and volunteers whose work will involve contact with children and vulnerable people and provide appropriate guidance and training.

For events and activities involving children and vulnerable people Trust staff and volunteers will:

- Ensure they know which children/vulnerable people are in their charge, the extent of their responsibility, where they are and what they are doing.
- Organise activities carefully and be alert to potential harm, both as regards physical safety and protection from abuse.
- Ensure sufficient adult helpers (preferably both male and female) are present for the activity to take place safely and effectively and that wherever possible at least two adult helpers are present at all times.

Adult helpers should be in the ratios outlined below:

- 1 adult to 3 children under the age of 5
- 1 adult to 5 children aged 5 to 8
- 1 adult to 8 children age 9 to 15
- 1 adult to 10 children aged 16 up to 18

These are minimum ratios and may need to be increased according to factors such as the nature of the activity taking place or any special needs of the young people (eg greater supervision would be needed for an activity involving skilled tool use.)

- Carry out risk assessment and attend to health and safety requirements, with particular attention to the requirements for work with children and other vulnerable people
- Make sure first aid is available and that the first aider knows about treating children and vulnerable people
- Know how to get help and ensure supervision in an emergency
- Avoid situations where a single adult is in the company of a lone child and where there is little or no possibility of the activity being supervised or observed by others.

## **Direct supervision**

Where specifically agreed, the Trust may assume responsibility for the direct supervision of a child or vulnerable person, for example, young people placed with the Trust in work experience arrangements or with Duke of Edinburgh Scheme activities.

Wildlife Watch Groups have their own operating instructions and guidelines.

Cases where direct responsibility is assumed may only occur with the clear approval of the Director, Head of Conservation or the Manager of Rutland Water Nature Reserve. The arrangements for each individual must be set out in writing and agreed with the relevant agency involved (eg school, college, youth group etc) **before** the arrangements commence and should include:

- details of their presence/placement with the Trust
- a clear explanation of the type and nature of activity to be undertaken including an appropriate risk assessment
- agreement for emergency medical treatment
- a contact number for the parent or guardian
- arrangements for collecting the child or vulnerable person at the end of the activity.

For children written consent must be obtained from a parent or guardian and should cover the above elements.

The Trust expects the responsible adult/agency placing the child/vulnerable person to disclose to the Trust all information about the child's/vulnerable person's character and behaviour which is relevant for the Trust's safe planning of its work.

The Trust reserves the right to exclude an individual from participating in Trust events or activities if that individual's behaviour puts at risk their own safety and well being or the safety and well being of others.

## **Recognising Abuse**

Recognising abuse is not easy. It may be;

- Physical
- Emotional
- Psychological
- Sexual
- Neglect

Staff and volunteers are not responsible for deciding whether or not abuse has taken place. Instead they are responsible for acting on any concerns they may have about potential abuse by accurately reporting, without delay, such concerns or incidents to the Trust's Director as the Designated Child and Vulnerable Person Representative.

The Trust has a separate Disclosure Procedure to guide the reporting of any potential abuse (attached).

## **Code of Behaviour**

The Trust expects the behaviour of its staff and volunteers towards children and vulnerable people to be above reproach.

All staff and volunteers

*Will:*

- set a good example and adopt an approach that encourages mutual respect
- ensure participants are aware of who is responsible for an activity
- respond sensitively to individuals anxious or unsure about participation in any activities
- respect an individual's right to privacy and personal space
- be alert to inappropriate or potentially harmful behaviours within a group
- always seek the consent of a child or vulnerable adult if they need to touch them in order to provide assistance such as help with clothing or administering first aid
- challenge unacceptable behaviour and report any concerns they have about the safety and welfare of children / vulnerable people, or seek further advice from the Trust's Director

*Will not:*

- permit abusive activities between children, eg initiation ceremonies, ridiculing or bullying
- allow or engage in language, gestures, behaviour or contact which is inappropriate or could be misunderstood
- take photographs without consent both from the individual(s) concerned and any adult or carer responsible for them
- do anything to undermine the Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust's reputation for providing children and vulnerable people with a safe environment

## **Review**

To ensure that the policy remains practical and up to date it will be reviewed on a regular basis.