

5.2 Safeguarding Childrenⁱ and Vulnerable Adultsⁱⁱ

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. Gwent Wildlife Trust employs and engages with people from a wide range of backgrounds and circumstances. This policy defines the approaches we adopt in our work with children and vulnerable adults to safeguard them from harm resulting from accident or abuse.
- 1.2. It also seeks to protect our organisation, our staff and volunteers from accusations of misconduct.
- 1.3. This policy will be implemented through a framework of recommended best practice.
- 1.4. This policy was updated in January 2014 and is next due for review in February 2015

2 POLICY

2.1 Gwent Wildlife Trust is committed to taking all reasonable steps to ensure the health, safety and welfare of everyone involved in its activities, regardless of their age, ability, gender, sexual preference, health status, socio-economic, ethnic or cultural background.

2.2 As part of this commitment it recognises that children and some defined groups of adults are particularly vulnerable to accident or abuse, and that within these sectors, there are individuals who are additionally at risk through other factors, such as belonging to a minority group.

3 AIMS

3.1 The policy aims to:

- Underpin the standards of our work with children and vulnerable adults;
- Keep children and vulnerable adults safe from abuse, or any kind of harm or distress as a result of their contact with us;
- Protect individual staff and volunteers from accusations of misconduct;
- Protect Gwent Wildlife Trust and demonstrate our moral and procedural integrity in this area;
- Ensure that children and vulnerable adults continue to be included within Gwent Wildlife Trust's programmes meeting the needs and aspirations of a range of audiences.

4 IMPLEMENTATION

- 4.1 Our policy of safeguarding children and vulnerable adults will be achieved through:
 1. Keeping policies and procedural guidelines for this area appropriate, up to date and accessible;
 2. Having clear processes for reporting and addressing any concerns or allegations relating to safeguarding children and vulnerable adults from abuse;
 3. Adhering to consistent and appropriate recruitment processes for staff and volunteers working with children and vulnerable adults;
 4. Ensuring that all staff and volunteers are properly informed, supported, managed and trained;
 5. Ensuring that our events and activities are appropriate to their audience, well planned, responsibly supervised and within the law.
- 4.2 This policy should be read in conjunction with the position statement on 'Working with Children and Young People' that defines the overarching values and beliefs we bring

to our work with them (Policy 5.2 in the Gwent Wildlife Trust Handbook). It replaces the 1996 Wildlife Trusts' Child Welfare and Safety Policy.

- 4.3 The Policy is supported by: procedural guidelines allied to points 1-5 above (Annex 1 below) and by:
- A Code of Practice for staff and volunteers working with children and vulnerable adults;
 - A Code of Practice for Watch leaders;
 - A Code of Practice for parents, guests and other adults attending Watch activities;
 - An Independent Person Procedure for Wildlife Watch.
- The above four documents form Codes of Practice to Gwent Wildlife Trust's Health & Safety Policy.

5 BACKGROUND

- 5.1 The Wildlife Trusts introduced its first Child Welfare and Safety Policy in 1996 following consultation with the Wildlife Watch network and partnership working with RSPB. The policy was produced in response to Guidelines issued across the four countries of the UK, by the Home Office (1993), by Volunteer Development Scotland (1995) and by Child Care Northern Ireland (1995).
- 5.2 UKO translated the Policy into detailed guidelines for Watch groups and developed a system of 'support' visits to monitor adherence to these. The Child Welfare and Safety Policy become formally incorporated into local Trusts' own practices either as it stood or adapted and expanded to suit local circumstances and capacity. Appendices were added to the original policy in 2000.
- 5.3 Because the 1996 policy was largely Watch oriented and incorporated a lot of information relating to running events and activities in this context, it was not always perceived as relevant to Trusts' wider work with young people. Whilst the new policy is still relevant to Trusts' work with Watch, it seeks to address this issue of broad relevance by emphasising the principles and management protocols that enable organisational 'fitness' in all and any work with young people (rather than describing detailed activity). Much of the original 'policy' has been incorporated into procedural guidance specifically for Watch leaders.
- 5.4 There is a considerable amount of government guidance and legislation about keeping young people safe from harm. Recognising that many organisations struggled to keep up to date with this, in 2002 National Council Voluntary Youth Services (NCVYS) published 'Keeping it Safe – a young person-centred approach to safety and child protection'. This brings together key themes and has been written to support voluntary organisations in establishing working practice that minimises the chance of young people coming to harm whilst in their care. This revised policy is based on this guidance which was endorsed by the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Young People and Learning, The National Council for Voluntary Child Care Organisations and the Community and Youth Workers Union.
- 5.5 This policy is under continual review and is formally reviewed annually by RSWT council. Gwent Wildlife Trust will incorporate any reviews in this Handbook as appropriate.

i In this context children are defined as any individuals aged under eighteen years of age.

ii In accordance with The Police Act 1997 vulnerable adults are defined as anyone aged eighteen or over who could be described as having:

- a substantial learning or physical disability;
- a physical or mental illness, chronic or otherwise, including addiction to alcohol or drugs;
- a substantial reduction in physical or mental capacity due to advanced age; or who is in receipt of:
- accommodation, nursing or personal care in a care home;
- personal care or nursing support in their own home;
- health care services provided through either NHS or other medical agencies or institutions;

- services provided in an establishment catering for a person with learning difficulties.

SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AND VULNERABLE ADULTS - ANNEX 1

These guidelines on recommended practice support Gwent Wildlife Trust's Policy on Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable adults and should be read in conjunction with it.

The annex clarifies the processes required to implement the policy. Detailed procedural guidance, including allocation of specific roles and responsibilities, will be provided to staff and volunteers at a local level although if circumstances dictate, shared or facilitated development of more detailed guidance may be appropriate.

1. Keeping policies and procedural guidelines appropriate, up to date and accessible

- 1.1. All Trusts to include commitment to the welfare and safety of children and vulnerable adults in their local policies and procedures.
- 1.2. RSWT policy to be continually monitored against emerging legislation and evolving best practice and revised and disseminated as necessary. The policy should be formally revisited and redated by RSWT Council annually, and any revisions should be considered and adopted by Gwent Wildlife Trust.
- 1.3. All staff and volunteers must be familiar with the organisational procedures relating to child protection and the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults.
- 1.4. Relevant staff and volunteers should additionally be aware of the policies that underpin procedural guidelines. In particular, all staff and volunteers working with children should be aware of the All Wales Child Protection Procedures issued by Welsh Government in 2008.
- 1.5. Procedural guidelines will include both general codes of conduct for work with young people (including specified age groups such as under 8s) and vulnerable adults and those appropriate to particular described circumstances (such as what to do if approached by a lost child).
- 1.6. A written comments and complaints procedure should be in place to ensure all feedback concerning the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults can be responded to appropriately.
- 1.7. Appropriate risk management processes will be applied to all contact with children and vulnerable adults.

2. Having clear processes for addressing any concerns or allegations relating to safeguarding children and vulnerable adults

- 2.1. Staff and volunteers aware of how to react in the event of a young person disclosing information relating to possible abuse.
- 2.2. Written guidelines for addressing concerns available, and made familiar to any staff or volunteers who may be asked to manage this area.
- 2.3. Encouraging a culture which is vigilant and aware of the issues surrounding the protection and safety of children and vulnerable adults and where suspicions or allegations can be made in good faith without fear of reprisal.
- 2.4. An independent person procedure is in place and its availability promoted to young people and vulnerable adults in contact with us.
- 2.5. The police will be notified as soon as possible if it is suspected that a criminal offence has been committed against a child.

3. Adhering to consistent and appropriate recruitment processes for staff and volunteers with responsibility for children and vulnerable adults

- 3.1. Ensuring that all people involved in recruitment are made aware of the whole process before it commences.
- 3.2. Ensuring that applicants are made fully aware of the responsibilities and policies to

which they will be expected to adhere if successful.

- 3.3 All applicants should submit a written application, including personal contact details and details of relevant experience and/or qualifications.
- 3.4 All applicants should be personally interviewed and given the opportunity to ask questions. Ideally there should be at least two interviewers.
- 3.5 All applicants should provide two referees, at least one of whom should be in a position to comment on their suitability to engage with young people.
- 3.6 All references should be taken up and assessed before a post is confirmed.
- 3.7 All paid staff and volunteers should receive a satisfactory criminal records Disclosure or pre-employment check before commencing unsupervised work with young people or vulnerable adults.

4 Ensuring that all staff and volunteers are properly supported and managed

- 4.1 All staff and volunteers have a clear role and literature that supports this.
- 4.2 All staff and volunteers are given information or training to enable them to become familiar with the application of procedures and policies relating to safeguarding children and vulnerable adults, and to further develop their skills and confidence in this area as necessary.
- 4.3 All staff and volunteers working with children and vulnerable adults to be made aware of issues of particular vulnerability arising from an individual's background or abilities e.g. those facing barriers in communication or who are dependent on others for personal care.
- 4.4 Newly recruited staff and volunteers should be subject to a probationary period in a role to enable appraisal of suitability before an ongoing appointment is confirmed.
- 4.5 Staff and volunteers have supervision and management contact appropriate to their own expertise, experience and need.
- 4.6 Disciplinary procedures should be in place to address grievances on either side. All staff should be made aware of these.
- 4.7 Staff and volunteers should be appropriately insured against personal injury and public liability during Trust activity.

5 Running safe activities

- 5.1 Striving to maintain a safe environment for our activities.
- 5.2 All adults involved in running an activity have clear roles and responsibilities; this applies to equally to 'external' staff or assistants attending with school or other visiting groups.
- 5.3 Risk management for activities targeting children and/or vulnerable adults recognises the specific needs of each group.
- 5.4 There are clear guidelines available to all staff and volunteers organising and delivering events with children or vulnerable adults.
- 5.5 Staff and volunteers are suitably qualified and/or experienced to supervise and deliver the activities they undertake.
- 1.6. Any third party individual or organisation involved in delivering activities as part of a Trust event has appropriate experience and where relevant holds the appropriate qualifications and/or accreditation and insurance. If they are operating with any degree of autonomy i.e. not under the close supervision of Trust staff or volunteers, they should have child and vulnerable adult protection procedures at least equivalent to ours.