

Child Protection Policy

Introduction

This policy makes provision for children and young people to ensure that:

- The welfare of the child is paramount;
- All children, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin religious beliefs and/or sexual identity have the right to protection from abuse;
- All suspicions and allegations of abuse and poor practice will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately;
- Staff and volunteers are not trained to deal with situations of abuse or to decide if abuse has occurred, however, all staff and volunteers have a responsibility to report concerns to Natural World Fund.

Natural World Fund acknowledges its duty of care to protect all children in its activities from harm and is committed to implementing child protection guidelines to ensure their safety. All children have a right to protection, and the needs of disabled children and others who may be particularly vulnerable must be taken into account. Natural World Fund will ensure the safety and protection of all children involved through adherence to the Child Protection guidelines adopted by Natural World Fund.

For the purposes of this policy, a child is defined as anyone under the age of 18, in accordance with the Children Act 1989.

Policy aims

The aim of Natural World Fund Child Protection Policy is to promote good practice:

- Providing children and young people with appropriate safety and protection whilst in its care;
- Allow all staff and volunteers to make informed and confident responses to specific child protection issues.

Good practice guidelines

All staff and volunteers should be encouraged to demonstrate exemplary behaviour to support the well-being of children and minimise the risk of misunderstandings or allegations. The following guidelines offer practical, common-sense ways to help foster a safe, respectful, and positive environment.

Good practice means:

- Always working in an open and transparent environment—avoid private or unobserved interactions and encourage honest, open communication without secrecy.
- Treating all children and young people equally, with dignity and respect, regardless of background or ability.
- Prioritising the welfare and well-being of each young person above all else, including performance outcomes or personal achievements.
- Maintaining safe and appropriate boundaries with children—it is inappropriate for staff and volunteers to form intimate relationships with children or share accommodation with them.
- Fostering balanced relationships built on mutual trust, empowering children, where appropriate, to participate in the decision-making process.
- Making the activities fun, enjoyable, and promoting values such as fairness and teamwork.
- Being an excellent role model, including refraining from smoking or consuming alcohol in the presence of children or young people.
- Giving enthusiastic and constructive feedback and avoiding using negative or harmful criticism.
- Recognising the developmental needs and capacity of children and young people.
- Avoiding excessive training or competition, and refraining from pushing them against their will.
- Obtaining written parental consent to act in loco parentis if emergency first aid or medical treatment is required.
- Keeping accurate written records of any injuries sustained and any treatment administered.
- Seeking written parental consent if staff or volunteers need to transport children or young people in their vehicles.

Practices to be avoided

The following situations should be **avoided** unless absolutely necessary. In cases where they cannot be avoided—such as when a child is injured and requires hospital treatment, or when a parent fails to collect their child—staff or volunteers must ensure that the incident is handled with the full knowledge and consent of a senior staff or the child's parent/guardian.

- Avoid spending time alone with children away from others

The guiding principle is to ensure safety in numbers—adults should avoid being in one-to-one situations with children whenever possible.

- Avoid being alone when transporting a child to or from an event or activity.

Practices never to be sanctioned

The following should **never** be sanctioned. You should never:

- Engage in rough or physical play, or participate in sexually provocative games, including horseplay.
- Share a room with a child
- Allow or participate in any form of inappropriate physical contact.
- Permit children to use inappropriate language unchallenged
- Make sexually suggestive comments to a child, even if intended as a joke.
- Reduce a child to tears as a means of control.
- Fail to act upon and document any allegations made by a child.
- Do things of a personal nature for children that they can do for themselves
- Invite or allow children to stay at your home without supervision.

Incidents that must be reported/recorded

If any of the following occur, you should report it immediately and record the incident. Additionally, you should ensure that the child's parents and/or guardians are informed:

- If you accidentally cause harm to a child.
- If a child appears distressed in any way.
- If a child misinterprets or misunderstands something you have done.

Recruitment and training of staff and volunteers

Natural World Fund is committed to taking all reasonable measures to ensure that individuals who are unsuitable to work with children are prevented from working with children. As part of this commitment, the following pre-selection checks must be carried out:

- All staff and volunteers who may have direct contact with children must complete a formal application form.

The application form will elicit information about an applicant's past and a self disclosure regarding any relevant criminal convictions.

- Evidence of identity (passport or driving licence with photo).

Interview and Induction

All staff and volunteers will undergo an induction process, during which the following must be completed:

- Verification that the application form is fully completed, including sections on criminal history and self-disclosure.
- A clear and full explanation of the role, including duties and responsibilities.
- An explanation of the child protection procedures and expectations.

Responding to allegations or suspicions

It is not the role of any staff member or volunteer at Natural World Fund—whether paid or unpaid—to determine whether abuse has occurred. However, all individuals have a duty to act on any concerns by reporting them to the appropriate officer or appropriate external authorities.

Natural World Fund is committed to supporting and protecting any staff member or volunteer who, in good faith, raises a concern about the potential abuse of a child by a colleague or any other individual.

Action if there are concerns

- Any suspicion or allegation of child abuse must be reported immediately to Natural World Fund. The organisation will take all necessary steps to ensure the safety and well-being of the child involved, as well as any other children who may be at risk.
- Natural World Fund will refer the allegation to the social services department who may involve the police.
- The parents or carers of the child will be informed as soon as it is appropriate to do so, following guidance from social services.
- All related media enquiries will be handled by Natural World Fund

Confidentiality

Every effort should be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned. Information should be handled and disseminated on a need-to-know basis only. This may include the following people:

- The activity or event organisers
- The parents or guardians of the person who is alleged to have been abused
- The individual making the allegation
- Social services

- The police

Guidance from social services should be sought regarding who should approach the alleged abuser or, if the alleged abuser is a child, their parents or carers.

All records and sensitive information must be stored securely, with access restricted to designated personnel only. This must be done in accordance with data protection legislation, ensuring that information is accurate, relevant, kept up to date, and safeguarded from unauthorised access.

Internal Enquiries and Suspension

- Natural World Fund reserves the right to make an immediate decision to temporarily suspend any individual accused of abuse, pending the outcome of investigations by the police or social services.
- Regardless of the outcomes of external investigations, Natural World Fund will conduct its own assessment of each case to determine whether it is appropriate for the individual to be reinstated. This decision will take into account all available information and will be guided by the principle of safeguarding children. In situations where there is insufficient evidence for legal action, Natural World Fund must reach a decision based upon the available information which could suggest that on a balance of probability, it is more likely than not that the allegation is true, and take appropriate action.

Throughout the process, the welfare and best interests of the child will remain of paramount importance.

Support to deal with the aftermath of abuse:

Consideration should be given to the emotional and practical support required by children, parents, and staff in the aftermath of a safeguarding concern. Appropriate support services should be identified and offered to help individuals cope with the effects of abuse or the stress of an investigation.

Abuse may be reported long after the event—for example, by an adult disclosing experiences from childhood or by a current staff member who is still currently working with children. All such allegations must be taken seriously and handled with sensitivity, following established reporting procedures.

When such an allegation is made, Natural World Fund will follow the established safeguarding procedures and refer the matter to social services or the police. This is essential, as other children—either within or beyond the organisation's activities—may be at risk. Any individual with a previous criminal conviction for offences related to abuse is strictly prohibited from

working with children. This exclusion is supported by the provisions of the Protection of Children Act 1999.

Action if bullying is suspected

If bullying is suspected, the same procedure outlined in the section 'Responding to suspicions or allegations' should be followed.

Action to help the victim and prevent bullying:

- Treat all signs of bullying with utmost seriousness.
- Encourage all children to express their concerns. Support the victim in speaking up and reporting to someone in authority.
- Foster an open, supportive environment.
- Investigate all allegations thoroughly and take necessary steps to ensure the victim's safety. Speak with the victim and the alleged bully(ies) separately.
- Reassure the victim that you can be trusted to assist them, though explain that you cannot promise to tell no one else.
- Document what is said (including details of the incident, who was involved, and when it occurred).
- Report any concerns to Natural World Fund.

Action towards the bully(ies):

- Speak with the bully(ies), explain the situation, and try to help them understand the consequences of their actions. Request an apology to the victim(s).
- Inform the bully's parents.
- Insist on the return of 'borrowed' items and that the bully(ies) compensate the victim.
- Apply appropriate sanctions where necessary.
- Encourage and support the bully(ies) in changing their behavior.
- Notify all relevant organisation members of the actions taken.
- Keep a written record of action taken.

Most minor incidents will be dealt with at the time by staff and volunteers. However, if the bullying is severe (e.g., a serious assault), or if it persists despite efforts to resolve it, the incident should be referred to the Natural World Fund as outlined in "Responding to suspicions or allegations" above.

Concerns outside the immediate environment (e.g. a parent or carer):

- Report any concerns to the Natural World Fund, who will then contact social services or the police promptly.
- Social Services will determine how to involve the parents or carers.
- Ensure confidentiality is maintained on a **need-to-know** basis only.

Information for social services or the police about suspected abuse

To ensure this information is as useful as possible, a thorough record should always be made at the time of the disclosure or concern, including the following:

- The child's name, age, and date of birth.
- The child's home address and telephone number.
- Whether the report reflects the concerns of the person making the report or someone else.
- The nature of the allegation, including dates, times, relevant factors, and any other pertinent information.
- A clear distinction between facts, opinions, and hearsay.
- A description of any visible injuries, such as bruising, as well as any indirect signs, like changes in behaviour.
- Details of any witnesses to the incident.
- The child's account (if available) of what happened and how any injuries occurred.
- Whether the parents have been contacted, and what was said.
- Whether anyone else has been consulted, and if so, a record of their details.
- If the child did not report the incident, has the child been spoken to? If so, what was communicated?
- If anyone is accused of being the abuser, a record of their details.
- If applicable, confirmation of a referral to the police or social services should be made in writing within 24 hours, and the name of the contact who received the referral should be recorded.

If you are worried about sharing concerns about abuse with a senior colleague, you can contact social services or the police directly, or reach out to the NSPCC Child Protection Helpline at 0808 800 5000, or Childline at 0800 1111.

For additional information and advice, please visit the NSPCC at <https://www.nspcc.org.uk> and Childline at <https://www.childline.org.uk>.

Natural World Fund Child Protection Policy
Annex
Online Safety & Social Media 2025

This section outlines how we expect Natural World Fund staff and volunteers to behave online. It is important for everyone to understand what constitutes acceptable and unacceptable behaviour when using websites, social media, apps, and other digital communication platforms to ensure that no online actions cause concern or discomfort to a child or young person.

Online behaviours should follow the principles of avoiding activity which may cause discomfort or allow for misinterpreted actions, by maintaining a safe and respectful distance, and, where possible, avoiding unsupervised one-on-one online interactions between adults and children or young people.

The following guidelines must be complied with:

- You should not 'friend' or 'follow' children or young people from personal social media accounts.
- Ensure that any content you post is accurate and appropriate, as young people may follow you on social media.
- You should not communicate with young people through personal accounts or private messages.
- Instead of using personal social media accounts to contact parents, reach out via more formal means, such as email or written communication (or, for staff, via official Natural World Fund accounts).
- Do not post identifying details such as a child's home address, school name, or telephone number on social media platforms.
- Do not post photographs or videos of children on social media without obtaining parental approval/releases.
- Any inappropriate posts on Natural World Fund social media pages will be removed, with an explanation and notification to those affected (including the parents of any children involved).
- Avoid communicating with children or young people via email outside of normal office hours.
- Emails should be signed off professionally, without the use of emojis or symbols like 'kisses' ('x').
- Smartphone users should respect others' privacy and not take or share pictures that could invade someone's privacy.
- Do not engage in 'sexting' or send obscene, indecent, or threatening pictures or messages.
- Whenever possible, avoid having children's or young people's personal mobile numbers; instead, seek contact through a parent or guardian.
- Text messages may be used by Natural World Fund to communicate information, such as reminders about upcoming events, but not for general conversation.

If anyone has concerns about activities, content, messaging on the internet, social media, or other digital communications, please contact our confidential helpline at cphelpline@naturalworldfund.org.uk.

All concerns can be reported confidentially and with discretion, and if further assistance or guidance is needed, it will be provided.

Regardless of the device being used—whether a computer, mobile phone, tablet, or any future technology—the same safety principles apply for any app, programme, or website involved.

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G. Howes', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Date:

05/04/2025

Name: Glenn Howes

Position: Trustee

Next review date: 3/5/2027