



## **SAFEGUARDING POLICY**

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This policy must be read in conjunction with the following NWCSG Policies:-

Intimate Care policy, Health and Safety Policy, Moving and Handling Policy, Volunteer Code of Conduct, Whistle Blowing Policy

Last Review Date: April 2025

Next Review: April 2026

## **POLICY STATEMENT**

The North West Children's Support Group recognises the vulnerability of children and believes that the welfare of the child is paramount. The NWCSG also recognises that children with disabilities are at increased risk of abuse. As a charity we have both a legal and moral responsibility to safeguard the children in our care and to ensure that all volunteers are aware of what to do if they suspect that a child is being abused.

"Children" are persons under the age of 18 years. However, the information and advice in this Policy also applies, in spirit, to vulnerable young adults over the age of 18 years whilst they have contact with NWCSG. For those young adults, this Policy should be read in conjunction with the NWCSG Guidelines for the Protection of Vulnerable Adults from Abuse (Safeguarding Adults).

All people who volunteer directly or indirectly for NWCSG, including Trustees, Holiday leaders and helpers are required to adhere to this Policy. This Policy applies to all children using NWCSG services regardless of ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, disability or religion. All necessary steps will be taken to ensure that the rights of children are respected and that opportunities for abuse to occur are minimised.

### **Safeguarding is everybody's responsibility.**

NWCSG will endeavour to safeguard children by:-

- Ensuring that all volunteers read and understand this Policy.
- Providing regular child protection training to volunteers.
- Adopting safe volunteer recruitment and vetting procedures
- Sharing information about child protection and good practice with volunteers, parents, and relevant agencies.
- Requiring all helpers to follow the reporting and recording procedures in every case of suspected or disclosed abuse.
- Providing an effective support system for all volunteers.
- Working within the Children's Safeguarding Assurance Partnership (CSAP) guidelines

## **REFERENCES**

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 ([www.legislation.gov.uk](http://www.legislation.gov.uk))

What to do if you're worried a child is being abused 2015 ([www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk))

Working together to Safeguard Children 2023 ([www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) )

Safeguarding Disabled Children 2009 ([www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk))

Children's Safeguarding Assurance Partnership ([www.safeguardingpartnership.org.uk](http://www.safeguardingpartnership.org.uk))

NSPCC ([www.nspcc.org.uk](http://www.nspcc.org.uk))

## PROCEDURES

### The NWCSG designated Safeguarding Officers are

Name: Dave Flanagan  
Contact Details: 07847521291

Or

Name: Cath Coffey  
Contact Details: [cathvcoffey@gmail.com](mailto:cathvcoffey@gmail.com)

### The role of the designated Safeguarding Officer is to:

- Receive and record information from anyone who has concerns
- Assess the information promptly and carefully, clarifying or obtaining more information when they need to
- If necessary, consult with a statutory child protection agency, such as the local children's social care teams or the NSPCC Helpline 0808 800 5000, to talk about any doubts
- If necessary, make a formal referral to a statutory child protection agency or the police.

It is, however, everybody's responsibility to ensure that concerns are shared with the appropriate persons and appropriate action is taken.

## Child Abuse

The term *child abuse and neglect* describe a range of ways in which people, often known and trusted by children, harm them knowingly or by failing to act to prevent harm.

### Categories of Child Abuse.

#### Physical Abuse

Physical abuse 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 feigns the symptoms of, or deliberately causes ill health to a child whom they are looking after.

#### Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional ill-treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. It may involve causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill-treatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

## **Sexual Abuse**

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative (e.g. rape or buggery) or non-penetrative acts. They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, pornographic material or watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

## **Neglect**

Neglect is 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. It may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, failing to protect a child from physical harm or danger, or the failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

## **Recognising Child Abuse**

The indicators of abuse in disabled or learning-disabled children, or those on the autistic continuum, may be confused, open to misinterpretation, or masked by the disability. For example, self-harm, or some neurotic behaviours, would be strong indicators of abuse in most children, but they can be non-abuse related facets of behaviour in a child with autism. It is important, however, that helpers do not use the child's disability to "explain away" possible indicators of abuse.

The information contained within the Child Protection Guidelines will assist helpers to be more alert to the signs of possible abuse

## **If helpers suspect a child in their care is being or has been abused they must:**

- Report their concerns to the holiday leaders or to the NWCSG Safeguarding Officer
- When asked to do so write down what they observed or were told.
- Professionals trained in identifying child abuse will make many more checks
- No one will be blamed if it turns out abuse has not taken place
- It is better to be alerted unnecessarily than to fail to protect a child

## **How helpers should respond if a child confides in them.**

- DO remain calm
- DO listen carefully
- DO be aware of non verbal messages including facial expressions
- DO make it clear you are taking them seriously
- DO acknowledge their courage and reassure them they are right to tell
- DO tell them they have no reason to feel guilty
- DO tell them you are going to do all you can to help them and what may happen as a result
- DO record what was said using the child's actual words and who was present

## **How not to respond**

- DO NOT show shock or distaste
- DO NOT probe for more information than is offered
- DO NOT speculate or make assumptions
- DO NOT make negative comments about the abuser
- DO NOT make promises you cannot keep e.g. “everything will be alright”
- DO NOT agree not to tell anyone

## **What to do next.**

- Report your concerns to the holiday leaders or to the NWCSG designated Safeguarding Officer
- Write down what you observed or were told, using the child’s words
- Professionals trained in identifying child abuse will make many more checks
- No one will be blamed if it turns out abuse has not taken place
- It is better to be alerted unnecessarily than to fail to protect a child

## **The holiday leaders and NWCSG Safeguarding Officer will:**

- Decide whether it is appropriate to discuss the concerns with the child’s parents
- If it is not appropriate to talk to the parents or if, after doing so, we are still concerned we will contact social services or the NSPCC
- Social services will then take responsibility for further action

## **What should you do if an allegation is made against yourself or another helper?**

- Report your concerns to the holiday leaders or to the NWCSG designated Safeguarding Officer
- Write down what you were told
- Professionals trained in identifying child abuse will make many more checks
- No one will blame you if it turns out abuse has not taken place
- It is better to be alerted unnecessarily than to fail to protect a child

## **How information will be recorded**

A Safeguarding Incident Report form (Appendix IV) will be completed by the Holiday Leader and /or the NWCSG Safeguarding Officer. If a referral is made to Social Services this must be followed up in writing within 24 hours. The Incident Report form will be kept with the child’s medical form for twenty years.

## CONFIDENTIALITY

The legal principle is that the “welfare of the child is paramount”. Privacy and confidentiality should be respected where possible but if doing this leaves a child at risk of harm then the child’s safety has to come first

Legally, it is fine to share information if someone is worried about the safety of a child. **However not everyone needs to know when a concern or worry is raised.** This respects the child’s, family’s and helpers’ rights to privacy. So only people who need to know should be told about it. Otherwise there might be gossip and rumours or other people may be genuinely concerned.

It is fine to say that a concern has been raised and it is being dealt with following the group’s procedures.

## GOOD PRACTICE

All NWCSG Trustees, holiday leaders and volunteer helpers should:-

- Ensure that the child’s welfare is paramount
- Respect the rights of all our children whatever their age, ability, culture, gender or sexual orientation
- Respect each child as an individual and respond to their individual needs
- Be aware of the relative powerlessness of children, especially disabled children, compared to adults
- Be committed to actively preventing the exploitation and abuse of children
- Be familiar with the charity’s Safeguarding Policy and Code of Conduct and follow the Guidelines to Safeguarding at all times

## IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

1. All new helpers irrespective of their background will receive training on Safeguarding.
2. All helpers will receive a copy of the Safeguarding Guidelines for All Helpers at the start of every holiday.
3. Copies of the full Child Protection Guidelines or Protection of Vulnerable Adult Guidelines (whichever applies) will be available at all times on all the holidays.
4. All helpers will be required to complete the mandatory training each year – which will be Safeguarding Children for Volunteers, Health and Safety for Volunteers, Equality and Diversity for Volunteers, Roles and Responsibilities for Volunteers, Moving and Handling for Volunteers and certificates sent to the holiday leaders.

## **APPENDICES**

Ax I – Safeguarding Guidelines for all helpers

Ax II – Child Protection Guidelines

Ax III – Protection of Vulnerable Adults

Ax IV – Child Safeguarding Alert Form

Ax V – Young Adult Safeguarding Alert Form

Ax VI – Safeguarding Guidelines for Holiday Leaders