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**Child Protection Policy**

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**Wilderness Schooling Child Protection Policy**

**Section 1: Policy and Statutory Framework**

1. Scope

This policy deals with the protection of children. Children are those under 18 years of age.

2. Policy Statement

Wilderness Schooling holds as its highest priorities the health, safety and welfare of all children.

Wilderness Schooling has a duty to ensure that its staff and volunteers fulfill their responsibilities to prevent child abuse and report any abuse discovered or suspected.

Wilderness Schooling will work with all appropriate agencies to ensure that children are safeguarded through the effective operation of Wilderness Schooling Child Protection/ Procedures.

Wilderness Schooling recognises that any child can be subject to abuse and all allegations of abuse will be taken seriously (no matter how small or trivial they may seem).

Wilderness Schooling recognises its responsibilities to implement, maintain and regularly review the procedures that are designed to prevent or notify suspected abuse.

All staff and volunteers of Wilderness Schooling must adhere to the code of behaviour on Child Protection, which is appended to this policy document.

Wilderness Schooling is committed to supporting, resourcing and training those staff and volunteers who come in contact with children and providing appropriate supervision.

3. Statutory Framework

1. The Children Act 1989 provided the legal framework for the protection of children in the UK. Under the Children Act, a child is defined as someone less than 18 years of age.
2. The Protection of Children Act 1999 requires employees to carry out Criminal Record Checks before employees are allowed into contact with children. Wilderness Schooling is required under the legislation to apply for enhanced disclosure from the Criminal Records Bureau for staff working with such children.

Wilderness Schooling will keep its policy and procedures on Child Protection under review to take into account any new Government legislation, regulations and best practice documents to ensure that staff are kept fully up to date with their responsibilities and duties with regard to the safety and well being of children.

**Section 2: Procedures**

These procedures should be read in conjunction with the Department of Health Document ‘What to do if you’re worried a child is being abused (Summary) 19th May 2003

Purpose of Guidelines

The purpose of these guidelines is to ensure that the rights of children are protected through staff awareness of the issues and the following statutory guidelines in the reporting of concerns.

It is the responsibility of all staff and volunteers working with the organisation to record and report Child Protection concerns. I.e. where they believe a child has been at risk of abuse, neglect, or significant harm. This responsibility extends to all staff and volunteers and not just those specifically working with fewer than 18s

Categories of Abuse

* + **Physical Abuse**

May involve hitting, shaking, throwing, burning or scalding, drowning or suffocating.   
Or otherwise causing physical harm to a child

Physical harm may also be when a parent or carer feigns the symptoms of, or deliberately causes ill health to a child who they are looking after. This is commonly described using terms such as ‘fictitious illness’ by proxy ‘or Munchausen’s syndrome by proxy’

* + **Emotional Abuse**

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

* + **Sexual Abuse**

Involves forcing or enticing a child 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 a non-penetrative act. They may include non contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of pornographic materials, watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in a sexually explicit way.

* + **Neglect**

Is the persistent failure to meet the need of the 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 or shelter and clothing, failure to protect a child from physical harm or danger, failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care and treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to a child’s basic emotional need

* + **Significant Harm**

Some children may be in need because they are suffering or likely to suffer significant harm. The Children’s Act V section 47 (1) introduced the concept of significant harm a threshold that justifies compulsory intervention in family life in the best interest of the children

Designated Child Protection Manager

There should be at least one designated member of staff, who is assigned to act upon child protection concerns.

The Child Protection Manager, (CPM) is responsible for coordinating the action within the organisation and liaising with other agencies. Wilderness Schooling Child Protection Manager is:

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THIS PERSON IS REQUIRED TO KNOW:

* + How to identify the signs and symptoms of abuse and how to make a referral
  + The Local Area Child Protection Committee child protection procedures.
  + The role and responsibilities of the investigating agencies and how to liaise with them
  + The requirements and record keeping
  + The conduct of a child protection conference and how the Child Protection Manager or other members of staff can make a contribution to it

5. Advice to staff on when to take action and How

Once you suspect or know of any abuse of any child you should immediately inform the organization’s Child Protection Manger in person or by telephone. Even if you have only heard rumours of abuse or have suspicion but do not have firm evidence, you should still contact the Child Protection Manager to discuss your concerns.

You should also contact the Child Protection Manager if you know or suspect that a member of staff or volunteer has previous history of abuse of children or vulnerable adults.

If the Child Protection Manager is not immediately available you should then contact the Director directly and if they are not available contact The chair of the Board of Trustees of Wilderness Schooling.

You must not try to investigate the matter on your own. Staff are not equipped or qualified to do so.

If following your initial contact with the CPM it is decided to take the matter further, a written report must be prepared. A written report is essential to prevent misinterpretation of your findings, and should be sent to the CPM within 24 hours of the suspicion arising. The report should be factual and should not include opinions or personal interpretations of the facts presented. The report should include as much detail as possible, including as far as possible:

* Name(s) of the child
* Date of Birth
* Parent/carer’s details
* The Childs address
* Relevant phone numbers
* What is said to have happened or what was seen
* When it occurred
* Who else was there?
* What was said by those involved
* Who was concerned?
* Was the child able to say what happened
* Whether the parents have been advised

The report should be signed, dated and a copy stored in a secure place. If you are unsure about what to write you can get advice from the CPM

How to treat a child who makes a disclosure of abuse

If a child comes to you with a report of apparent abuse, you should listen carefully to the child using the following guidelines. When listening to a child staff must:

* Try to remain calm, remember this is not an easy thing for them to do
* Do not show your emotions -if you feel anger or disgust or disbelief they may stop talking. This may be because they think they are upsetting you

or they may feel your negative feelings are directed towards them

* Let the child know you are taking the matter seriously
* Make the child feel secure and safe without causing them any further anxiety
* Allow the child to speak without interruption
* Never trivialise or exaggerate the issue
* Never make suggestions
* Never coach or lead a child in any way
* Reassure the child, let them know you are glad they have spoken to you and that they are right to do so
* Always ask enough questions to clarify your understanding, do not probe or interrogate no matter how well you know the child – spare them having to repeat themselves over and over
* Be honest, let the child know you cannot keep this secret, and that you will need to tell someone else

The CPM will be responsible for recording essential information about each case and for collecting reports and notes as appropriate.

In order to maintain confidentiality staff reporting the allegations will be kept informed of the progress of the case on a need to know basis.

6. What happens next?

Taking into account all the information available the CPM will decide the next steps, which may include taking no further action. Where the CPM decides that further action is necessary, this may be to:

* Seek further advice from Social Services
* Make a referral to Social Services
* Report the matter to the police if a crime has been committed

If a referral is made this must be confirmed in writing to the appropriate agency within 24 hours.

7. Confidentiality

Confidentiality and trust should be maintained as far as possible, but staff must act on the basis that the safety of the child is the overriding concern. The degree of confidentiality will be governed by the need to protect the child. The child should be informed at the earliest possible stage of the disclosure that the information will be passed on. All conversations regarding the child should always be in private.

Wilderness Schooling complies with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998, which allows for the disclosure of personal data where this is necessary to protect vital interests of the child.

Whatever happens, you should always be open and honest with the child if you intend to discuss the case further.

Staff must not discuss the case with anyone other than those involved in the case. If staff have any concerns about the progress of the case or have any other concerns these must be discussed with the CPM

8. Allegations against staff or volunteers

The primary concern of Wilderness Schooling is to ensure the safety of the child. It is essential in all cases of suspected abuse by a member of staff, that action is taken quickly and professionally whatever the validity.

There are occasions where a child will accuse a member of staff or volunteer of physically or sexually abusing them. In some cases this may be false or unfounded. However in some cases the allegations may be true.

Any instance of a child being abused by a member of staff or volunteers is particularly serious. On the other hand for an innocent person to be accused of such as an assault is a serious ordeal which may result in long term damage to their health or career.

In the event that any member of staff suspects any other member of staff of abusing a child, it is their responsibility to bring these concerns to the CPM who will discuss it with the Director. In addition to following the normal procedures of Child Protection as defined by the ACPC Guidelines.

The member of staff will be advised to:

* Contact their Union Representative
* Keep records of all conversations, meetings attended and letters received ands telephone calls relating to the allegations

If a decision is made to pursue the allegation of abuse against a member of staff, this will be dealt with under Wilderness Schooling’s Disciplinary procedures.

**Code of Behaviour on Child Protection for Wilderness Schooling Staff, Consultants and Trustees**

Wilderness Schooling recognises that it is not practical to provide definitive instructions that apply to all situations at all times whereby staff come into contact with children and to guarantee the protection of children and staff. However below are the standards of behaviour required of staff in order to fulfil their roles within the organisation. This code should assist in the protection of both children and members of staff. These guidelines also apply to Volunteers who work in an unpaid capacity and to Members of the Board of Trustees.

**Staff must:**

Implement the policy at all times

**Staff must never:**

* Engage in rough, physical games including horseplay with children or vulnerable adults
* Allow or engage in inappropriate touching of any kind. The main principles of touch are:

Touch should be in response to a child’s need  
Touch should always be appropriate to the age and stage of development of the child

Touch should always be with the child’s permission

* Do things for a personal nature for children they can do for themselves or that their parent and carer can do for them.
* Physically restrain a child unless the restraint is to prevent physical injury of the child/other visitors/staff/yourself. In all circumstances physical restraint must be appropriate and reasonable otherwise the action can be defined as assault
* Make sexually suggestive comments within earshot of a child.
* Have children on their own in a vehicle, another member of staff or volunteer must travel in the vehicle
* Take a child to the toilet.
* Spend time alone with a child on his or her own unless you can be observed by others.
* Engage in personal relationships with a child or vulnerable adult

**Implications for Staff**

Staff who breach any of the above may be subject to the disciplinary procedure. If an allegation against a member of staff has occurred then an investigation will be carried out in accordance with the procedure for dealing with such allegations against staff. The investigating officer will be required to liaise with the CPM to clarify if she/he has any relevant records or any child protection information in relation to the individual.

Code of practice for taking, using and storing images of children and vulnerable adults

Wilderness Schooling and its related projects legitimately use images of children and young people to promote its activities, both in printed publications and on its website, however it recognises that there have been growing concerns about the risks posed directly and indirectly to children through the use of photography, video imaging and the internet.

Even the most innocent of images can be manipulated to exploit vulnerable children.

In order to minimise the potential risks of the misuse of images Wilderness Schooling has clear policies and procedures which all staff must follow:

* Wherever possible staff should consider using models or stock photographs to illustrate general activities
* Avoid using a child’s full name in photograph captions
* If a child is named avoid using their photograph
* Seek the child’s and parent/carers permission to use an image of a child and ensure parents /guardians/teachers complete and sign the appropriate consent forms
* Only use images of children in suitable dress and pose to reduce the risk of inappropriate manipulation of the image
* Ensure that all images are stored securely
* Spectators at events should be asked to register at an event if they wish to use photographic equipment for personal use.
* Only authorised staff and volunteers should take pictures of children on behalf of Wilderness Schooling.
* Concerns regarding inappropriate or intrusive photography should be relayed to the event organisers and recorded in the same manner as other child protection concerns.

Date Approved: 28.03.2017

Signed:



Position: Executive Director

Date for Review: January 2018