

Nature Rangers

SAFEGUARDING (children and at-risk adults)

The United Nations convention on the Rights of the Child states that “Children have the right to be protected from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation including sexual abuse by those looking after them” (Article 19). It also states that “When organisations make decisions which affect children, the best interests of the child must be a primary consideration (Article 3).

Nature Rangers agree that ‘the well-being of children, young people, and adults at risk is paramount’ (The Children’s Society, 2019). Nature Rangers recognise that they have a primary duty of care on all occasions where children, young people and adults at risk are participating in, engaging with or availing of their services.

All educational facilities have a pastoral responsibility towards children, young people and at-risk adults and we at Nature Rangers take all reasonable steps to ensure that the welfare of the children, young people and at-risk adults in our care is safeguarded and that their safety is preserved. Children, young people and at-risk adults are individuals whose rights, needs and welfare are paramount. Every child, young person and at-risk adult is valued as an individual, is treated with dignity and respect and their right to personal privacy is respected. Every child, young person and at-risk adult has the right to be involved and consulted on their own intimate care to the best of their abilities and their views should be taken into account.

All staff will be given guidelines to follow as to how to:

- 1) become aware of what constitutes abuse
- 2) identify possible signs of abuse
- 3) contact the designated officers if required
- 4) follow the correct procedures
- 5) follow the correct procedure when an allegation has been made against a member of Staff.
- 6) Promote the relationship and partnership with parents.

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Guidelines

1) What constitutes abuse?

Children, young people and at-risk adults may be abused by a parent, a sibling, partner or other relative, a carer, an acquaintance or a stranger. The abuse may be the result of a deliberate act or of a failure to provide proper care”

This may take different forms-

- **Neglect**- the actual or likely persistent or significant neglect of a child, young person or at-risk adult, or failure to protect them from danger, from cold or starvation. This includes the persistent failure to carry out important aspects of care, resulting in the significant impairment of the child, young person or at-risk adults health or development, including non-organic failure to thrive.
- **Physical injury** - the actual or likely deliberate physical injury to a child, young person or at-risk adult or wilful or neglectful failure to prevent physical injury or suffering.
- **Sexual abuse** - actual or likely sexual exploitation of a child, young person or at-risk adult. The involvement of children, young people or at-risk adults in sexual activities which they do not truly comprehend, to which they are unable to give informed consent or that violate the social taboos of family roles.
- **Emotional abuse** - actual or likely persistent or significant emotional ill-treatment or rejection resulting in severe adverse effects on the emotional, physical and/or behavioural development of a child, young person or at-risk adult. All abuse involves some emotional ill-treatment. This is where it is the main or only form of abuse.
- **Exploitation** - the intentional ill-treatment, manipulation or abuse of power and control over a child, young person or at-risk adult; to take selfish or unfair advantage of their situation, for personal gain. It may manifest itself in many forms such as child labour, slavery, servitude, engagement in criminal activity, begging, benefit or other financial fraud or child trafficking. It extends to the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of child, young person or at-risk adult for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation can be sexual in nature.

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These types of abuse apply equally to children with disabilities but the abuse may take slightly different forms, for example, lack of supervision, or the use of physical restraints such as being confined to a wheelchair or bed.

2) Identifying possible signs of abuse

It is preferable to prevent abuse or intervention from taking place at the earliest possible stage. Staff should observe any change in appearance of a child, young person or at-risk adult or changes in behaviour etc. Care must be taken as there can be other causes for this – bereavement, domestic violence, drug, alcohol or solvent abuse.

Possible signs of abuse could be:-

Bruises, particularly bruises of a regular shape which may be made by strap or hand, also bite marks, cuts or burns.

Indications of physical neglect, such as inadequate clothing, poor growth, hunger or apparent deficient nutrition.

Indications of emotional abuse, such as excessive dependence or attention-seeking.

Indications of sexual abuse, such as inappropriate sexual behaviour, precociousness and withdrawal.

Indications of exploitation, such as unexplained gifts or money, mood swings, going missing for periods of time.

Notice should also be taken of marked deterioration in performance and / or increased absenteeism.

3) Designated officers and other contacts (See Flow Chart)

GATEWAY **0300 1000 300 / 08001979995 (out of hours)**

PSNI **Non- Emergency 101 Emergency 999**

SOCIAL SERVICES

Early Years Team **02844513807 / (out of hours)**

4) Following the Correct Procedures

Staff should be vigilant. All concerns regarding a child, young person or at-risk adult must be recorded in the incident book and reported to the Manager. Complete

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confidentiality must be observed and no member of staff may discuss possible signs of abuse outside Nature Rangers. All staff members, students and parent volunteers will be vetted and made fully aware of safeguarding procedures and issues.

Where staff see signs which cause them concern, they should, as a first step, seek some clarification from the child, young person or at-risk adult with tact and understanding. These concerns should be reported immediately to the manager or, in their absence, the deputy. Care must be taken when asking questions and when interpreting their response. One must not ask leading questions which may be later interpreted as putting ideas into the child's mind. Staff must not try to investigate.

Staff should initiate the conversation by saying "Tell me what happened" and staff should listen to the child, young person or at-risk adult response without interrupting. Staff should make detailed notes recording time, date, place, people present, **actual words** used and any signs of physical injury, which can be sketched if necessary but never photographed. Under no circumstances should a child's clothing be removed.

Staff should not promise confidentiality as it may be necessary to disclose information to other professionals if the child is to receive appropriate help.

ROLE OF DESIGNATED OFFICERS

Nature Rangers Manager and in some cases the Deputy will liaise with outside agencies. All members of staff will report any relevant information to the Manager who will then if necessary consult other designated officers.

If any child, young person or at-risk adult makes a disclosure to a staff member which gives rise to concerns about possible abuse, or if a staff member has their own concerns about a child, they must report it promptly to the Manager, without investigating the incident. Advice will be sought from Gateway. If there are concerns that the child, young person or at-risk adult may be at risk, Nature Rangers are obliged to make a referral. Unless there are concerns that a parent or carer may be the possible abuser, they will be informed immediately.

The Manager may seek advice and consult with Gateway before a referral is made. No decision to refer a case to Social Services will be made without the fullest consideration and on appropriate advice from Gateway. The safety of the child, young person or at-risk adult is our **first priority**.

Proper records should be kept. They should be clear and concise. Written records should be kept from members of Staff who received the information, set out as follows: -

- the nature of the information
- who gave it

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- the time, date and circumstances
- a description of signs and symptoms if possible
- detail of any advice sought, from whom and when
- decision reached as to whether case should be referred to Social Services
- how, when and by whom this was done
- otherwise, reasons for not referring to Social Services.

Child records, progress reports etc., will be kept in a secure location and the group will maintain sound policies on confidentiality and providing information to other professionals

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR STAFF, STUDENTS AND PARENT VOLUNTEERS

- If a child, young person or at-risk adult requires changing, only a staff member may help him / her with the minimum of physical contact. The staff member concerned should always inform another staff member before beginning their task. With the exception of the child's parents or their teachers, only staff members are to toilet children on trips.
- Access NI screening forms are to be completed by prospective volunteers/students and the applicants must pass this and vetting by Social Services before the placement takes place.
- All members of staff should ensure that their relationships with and behaviour toward the children, young people or at-risk adults in their care should be appropriate and beyond reproach.
- Staff are advised not to make unnecessary physical contact with any child, young person or at-risk adult in their care although this should not discourage them from providing physical comfort to someone in distress in line with what a caring parent/carer would do.
- All staff are advised that physical response to misbehaviour is illegal unless it is by way of necessary restraint to avoid injury to themselves or others.
- Where a child, young person or at-risk adult indicates that he / she is uncomfortable with physical contact, staff should respect their wishes, unless contact becomes necessary in order to protect the themselves, property or others from harm.
- All staff must ensure that when required to administer first aid they are in full view of another member of staff.
- All visitors to Nature Rangers must report to the Manager/Deputy on entering the building. Other professionals working with a child, young person or at-risk adult will do so under staff supervision.

5) follow the correct procedure when an allegation has been made against a member of Staff.

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Should a complaint about possible child abuse be made against a member of staff the Manager must be informed immediately. If the matter is referred to Social Services the member of staff will be removed from duties involving children, young people or at-risk adults and may be suspended from duty pending investigation by Social Services. The CEO Brian Poots will be informed immediately.

If a complaint is made against the Manager, the deputy must be informed immediately. They will then inform the CEO and together they will ensure the necessary action is taken.

- a) The Manager and / or CEO will always seek advice from Gateway if any allegations are made against a member of staff.
- b) A written record is kept of every stage of the procedure, whether a referral is made or not.
- c) Where a complaint is made directly to the Manager, the issue will be thoroughly investigated, if Safeguarding issue the complaint will be given to Social Services.
- d) The Designated Officer must then be informed (if he/she is not the subject of the complaint) who will begin to record.
- e) Advice from Gateway is sought by the Manager (if he/she is not the subject of the complaint), who will make an initial assessment to establish if there is sufficient substance in the allegation to warrant further action
- f) The CEO Mr Brian Poots will be consulted.
- g) The Manager and CEO (providing neither are the subject of the complaint) will decide consult with Gateway .

6) Promote the relationship and partnership with parents.

It is essential to foster trust and good relationships with the parents or carers of Nature Rangers. Staff and parents must constantly communicate with each other, particularly if they are worried about the child, young person or at-risk adult seeming withdrawn, ill or worried about something. The collection arrangements for each child, young person or at-risk adult as initially agreed between parent(s)/carer(s) and staff must be respected and must not be changed without the express permission of child's parents/carers who should give adequate warning (see Health and Safety Policy re. drop off/collection)

It is the policy of Nature Rangers that the child's, young persons or at-risk adults' safety is paramount and staff will refuse to hand a them over to an unauthorised person or to a person under eighteen years of age unless they are the parent of the child.

Covid 19 Response

This Response will be updated regularly in line with Public Health Agency and Government advice

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During the current Covid 19 Pandemic extra measures will be taken to ensure the safety of both participants and staff at Nature Rangers when dealing with an accident.

- If a child, young person or at-risk adult feels unwell and showing symptoms of Covid 19 (may have temperature over 37.80C, a new continuous cough and loss of or change in sense of smell or taste) they should be separated from all other children immediately, and their parents phoned. The staff member will wear full PPE when dealing with them.
- If a child or member of staff needs close medical help eg dealing with cuts, then PPE should also be worn and all equipment used should be thoroughly cleaned or disposed of.
- All staff/participants/visitors must sanitize hands on arrival, before eating, before and after an activity and after coughing/ sneezing using the sanitizer provided.
- Parents/carers will be encouraged to remain outside the building with dropping off and collecting.
- Cars used on school pickups will be sanitised daily. Drivers must wear a face mask and open the window to aid ventilation.
- Children's hands must be sanitized before entering the car and seating to be spread out where possible.
- Staff meetings to be held via zoom or in a well ventilated area abiding to social distancing.
- Full PPE will be provided if needed
- All tools and equipment used will be thoroughly sanitized and left for 72 hours where possible.

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This policy was adopted at a meeting by Nature Rangers on:

Date: 29/6/24

Name: Brian Poots

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'BPoots', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.