



Safeguarding - Child and Vulnerable People Protection Policy

The Ecology Centre has a responsibility to protect our staff, volunteers and beneficiaries in general. It's important that we consider how to promote the wellbeing and welfare of all the individuals we work with. However, this policy focuses on the safeguarding of vulnerable beneficiaries¹.

Definition of 'vulnerable beneficiaries'

- A child is anyone under 18 years of age.
- A vulnerable person is anyone over 16 years of age who is unable to safeguard themselves, their property and their rights

What is 'Safeguarding?'

Safeguarding is the action The Ecology Centre is taking to promote the welfare of children and vulnerable people and to protect them from harm.

The Ecology Centre aims to ensure that children and vulnerable people are protected and kept safe from harm while they are taking part in our activities both at the Centre and elsewhere.

The Ecology Centre

- is committed to the protection of children and vulnerable people and regards the safeguarding and promoting of their interests and wellbeing as of paramount concern. We are also committed to the protection of children and vulnerable people from exploitative relationships.
- considers it the duty of all those employed or involved with the organisation, to prevent the physical, sexual or emotional abuse or neglect of all children and vulnerable people with whom they come into contact, including reporting any abuse discovered or suspected.
- acknowledges the duty of care to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and vulnerable people.
- is committed to ensuring safeguarding practice reflects statutory responsibilities, government guidance and complies with best practice and OSCR requirements.

1. Principles

The policy recognises that the welfare and interests of children and vulnerable people are paramount in all circumstances. It aims to ensure that regardless of

¹ See page 3 for signposting to TEC staff Policies



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age, ability or disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation, socio-economic background, all children and vulnerable people:

- have a positive and enjoyable experience at The Ecology Centre in a safe environment
- are protected from abuse.

The Ecology Centre acknowledges that some children and vulnerable people, including people with disabilities or those from ethnic minority communities, can be particularly vulnerable to abuse and we accept the responsibility to take reasonable and appropriate steps to ensure their welfare.

2. Policy

This policy covers children and vulnerable people and applies to all Ecology Centre staff and volunteers, including members of the Executive Committee.

With this safeguarding policy The Ecology Centre will:

- promote and priorities the safety and wellbeing of children and vulnerable people
- ensure everyone understands their roles and responsibilities in respect of safeguarding and is provided with appropriate learning opportunities to recognize, identify and respond to signs of abuse, neglect and other safeguarding concerns relating to children and vulnerable people
- ensure appropriate action is taken in the event of incidents/concerns of abuse and support provided to the individual/s who raise or disclose the concern
- ensure that confidential, detailed and accurate records of all safeguarding concerns are maintained and securely stored
- prevent the employment/deployment of unsuitable individuals
- ensure robust safeguarding arrangements and procedures are in operation.

The policy and procedures will be widely promoted and are mandatory for everyone involved in The Ecology Centre. Failure to comply with the policy and procedures will be addressed without delay and may ultimately result in dismissal/exclusion from the organisation.

The policy will be reviewed annually or in the following circumstances:

- changes in legislation and/or government guidance



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- as required by the Fife Child Protection Committee or Fife Adult Support and Protection Committee, and OSCR
- as a result of any other significant change or event.

Other relevant policies:

- Dignity at Work Policies (esp. Bullying, Harassment & Victimisation, Standards of Behaviour and Computer Use)
- Disciplinary and Grievance Policy
- Recruitment, Retention and Reward Policy
- Volunteer Policy
- Recruitment of Ex Offenders Policy

3. Responsibility

The Executive Committee of The Ecology Centre is responsible for ensuring that they create a safe environment for staff, beneficiaries and volunteers and that all staff members are aware of, and understand the importance of, implementing these procedures. On a day-to-day basis this responsibility is delegated to the Safeguarding Lead who must ensure the Executive Committee is promptly appraised of any concerns or incidents and the actions taken.

The Ecology Centre has appointed three Safeguarding Leads, Sarah Low (Committee Member) Liz Corke (Education Manager) and Errin Anderson (General Manager, to whom concerns should be raised and who will initiate action.

4. Practice

Ecology Centre staff will be carefully selected, screened, trained and supervised and know how to report and deal with any concerns. Volunteers will also have an induction and will be supervised.

Staff recruitment and selection

- All job applicants will complete an application form.
- Short listed applicants will be asked to attend interview.
- Short listed applicants will be asked to provide references and these will always be taken up for successful candidates.



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Volunteer recruitment

- On application for a volunteering position at The Ecology Centre, volunteers discuss with Ecology Centre staff their expectations and interests in the Centre.
- The Centre's staff member will give an overview of volunteering tasks and what The Ecology Centre expects from volunteers. All volunteers will be interviewed through an informal interview/first visit. All volunteers will fill in a registration form.
- Volunteers, including Committee members, are not to be left alone with a child or vulnerable person. Should the need arise for a volunteer to be in that position then a Disclosure Scotland check will be carried out before work of this nature commences.
- Volunteers may be members of a vulnerable group themselves and attend The Ecology Centre accompanied by a support worker. Support workers are employed by care agencies and the agency is responsible for screening.

Screening²

Where relevant to the post, the successful applicant will be asked to agree to an appropriate disclosure. All applicants working with children or vulnerable people will have Disclosure Scotland checks carried out prior to engagement. New recruits can commence their employment whilst a disclosure is being sought but will not be able to work alone with children or vulnerable people until it comes through.

Training

- Successful applicants will receive induction training which will give an overview of the organisation and ensure they know its purpose, values, services and structure. There will be specific attention to this policy and the post holder's responsibilities.
- Relevant training and support will be provided on an ongoing basis, and will cover information about their role and opportunities for practising skills needed for the work.
- Training on specific areas such as health & safety procedures, reporting abuse and confidentiality will be given as a priority to new staff and volunteers and will be regularly reviewed.

² For the purpose of this policy, PVG Scheme Records, PVG Scheme Record Updates, Standard and Enhanced disclosures will be referred to as Disclosure Scotland checks

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- A programme of training on safeguarding will be provided to staff members and Executive Committee members with priority given to posts working closely with children and vulnerable people:
 - Executive Committee members – copy of OSCR Safeguarding Guidance presentation from Safeguarding Leads and access to online Child and Adult Protection training.
 - Safeguarding Leads – 1 day Child and Adult Protection training + Mental Health First Aid
 - Education staff – 1 day Child Protection training
 - Staff who oversee volunteers – 1 day Child and Adult Protection training + Mental Health First Aid
 - Other staff – online Child and Adult Protection training

Supervision and management of staff

- All staff will have a designated supervisor who will provide regular feedback and support.
- If safeguarding concerns are raised about a staff member these will be dealt with under the Disciplinary Policy. This is likely to entail suspension while an investigation takes place. If proven this will be viewed as gross misconduct resulting in summary dismissal.

Confidentiality.

In operating this policy, staff must also be aware that, in order to protect children and vulnerable people, in some circumstances it will be necessary to share what might normally be regarded as confidential information. The following principles should be adhered to:

- Information will only be shared on a need to know basis
- Information will only be shared when it is in best interests of the service users.
- Confidentiality must not be confused with secrecy
- Informed consent should be obtained but if this is not possible and other children or vulnerable people are at risk it may be necessary to override it.

Breach of this policy

- Breach of this policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal. Any member of staff suspected of committing a breach of this policy will be required to co-operate with our investigation, which may involve handing over relevant passwords and login details.

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- You may be required to remove any social media content that we consider to constitute a breach of this policy. Failure to comply with such a request may in itself result in disciplinary action

Reporting Concerns³

The overwhelming majority of children and vulnerable people with whom you will come into contact with through your work will experience a perfectly safe and happy life.

It is recognised however, that a percentage of the children and vulnerable people that you come into contact with will, through the nature of their experiences, demonstrate behaviours that might be indicators of abuse. Many factors associated with disadvantage can also result in behaviour being affected, thereby making the identification of abuse even more difficult. You are not expected to suddenly become expert in child and vulnerable people protection nor are you expected to investigate abuse. You are, however, expected to comply with these procedures.

Children and vulnerable people will occasionally disclose abuse to an adult they have come to feel they can trust. This happens for many reasons but the important thing to remember is that if they do tell you, they are doing so in the hope that you will act to stop it happening, even if they tell you not to tell anyone.

In any cases of disclosure when working with schools The Ecology Centre will work closely with the school in question so reports made should be communicated to the staff member's manager and also passed to the relevant person within the school. An Ecology Centre staff member should fill out one of the school's Care and welfare forms themselves or see that a school staff member does. On communicating this to the Safeguarding Lead s/he will follow up the concern with the school. If there is cause to believe the school hasn't followed up the concern appropriately the Safeguarding Lead will contact Social Work directly.

Children and vulnerable people may feel as if they are betraying someone they are close to and whom they love. It is not unusual for a child / vulnerable person to love the abuser but want the abuse to stop, especially when that person is a parent or carer. Equally, it may be someone they fear e.g. an adult whom they

³ See Appendix 3 for Flowchart

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perceive to be able to influence decisions concerning their future. Either way, it takes great courage for a child / vulnerable person to talk to an adult about abuse and your response can be crucial.

Do	Do not
Remain calm and receptive	Allow your shock or distaste to show
Listen without interrupting	Probe for more information/ask other questions (a major problem can occur with innocently asking leading questions which can contaminate evidence in a prosecution that may lead to no conviction)
Only ask questions of clarification if you are unclear what they are saying	Make assumptions or speculate
Make it clear you take them seriously	Make negative comments about the abuser
Acknowledge their courage in telling you	Make promises you cannot keep
Tell them they are not responsible for the abuse	Agree to keep the information secret
Let them know you will do what you can to help them. If it is an adult get their consent to inform the Ecology Centre Safeguarding Lead and local social work service.	

It is important to remember too, that it can be more difficult for some children/vulnerable people to tell than for others. Children/vulnerable people who have experienced prejudice and discrimination through racism may well believe that people from other ethnic groups or backgrounds don't really care about them. They may have little reason to trust those they see as authority figures and may wonder whether you will be any different.

Children/vulnerable people with a disability will have to overcome barriers before disclosing abuse. They may well rely on the abuser for their daily care and have no knowledge of alternative sources. They may have come to believe they are of little worth and simply comply with the instructions of adults. If a child/



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vulnerable person discloses abuse to you in the course of your work it is important to react appropriately.

It is, therefore, essential that everything possible is done to protect the children/vulnerable people who place their trust in us. If a child/vulnerable person tells you that they are being, or have been, abused you must:

- Make an immediate record of what the child/vulnerable person has said, using their own words. Remember to sign and date your notes.
- Tell them that you will have to inform our Safeguarding Lead and that the relevant authorities will also have to be informed.
- Follow the instructions for reporting to the Safeguarding Lead. Do not delay in reporting your concerns. Where possible, advise the Safeguarding Lead on the same day the concern arises.
- If you for any reason you are unable to advise the Safeguarding Lead you should contact the local Social Work Services Office and outline your concerns and the basis for them.

Procedure to be followed if you think a child or vulnerable person may be at risk of abuse, is being or has been, abused either by:

- a member of staff or a volunteer
- a member of their family
- any other person, including another child or vulnerable person

Staff who for any reason become concerned that a child or vulnerable person may be at risk of abuse, is being, or has been, abused must immediately report that concern to the Safeguarding Lead.

The Safeguarding Lead will discuss your concerns with you to clarify their cause and obtain all the known relevant information. This will then be forwarded to the Social Work Contact Centre (Tel. 03451 551503) stating that it concerns child/vulnerable people protection.

In the absence of the Safeguarding Lead or your line manager you should report the concerns directly to the Social Work Contact Centre and then inform the manager as soon as possible.

Should the concern relate to the manager you should contact the Social Work Contact Centre directly.



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If your concerns are raised by something you become aware of while in a school, or through a school related activity undertaken in the course of your work you must immediately inform the school's designated Child Protection Teacher or Head Teacher, and then follow the instruction as outlined above.

The Ecology Centre has a responsibility to share information with other agencies to prevent individuals who target charities in order to abuse children and vulnerable adults from doing so. In addition to making referrals to Social Work and reports to Police Scotland, The Ecology Centre has a duty to report harmful behaviour that might affect whether a person is allowed to work with children or vulnerable people.

By law, The Ecology Centre must report harmful behaviour even if it takes place outside of work, or we only find out about it after the employee or volunteer has left. The Ecology Centre must make a referral to Disclosure Scotland⁴ explaining what has happened. This only has to be done if the harmful behaviour meant that the person involved:

- was dismissed as a result
- would have been dismissed but left before they could be
- was transferred permanently away from work with children or protected adults

The Ecology Centre's Trustees must also report Safeguarding incidents to OSCR, the Scottish Charity Regulator, under the Notifiable Events Scheme⁵.

5. Appendices

List of Appendices

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Appendix 2 - Safeguarding Policy Code of good practice (inc. Social Media)

Appendix 3 - Definitions of abuse and neglect

Appendix 4 - Flowcharts

⁴ See Appendix 2

⁵ See Appendix 2



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Appendix 1 - Important contacts:

1. Ecology Centre Safeguarding Leads:
2. Liz Corke - 01592 891567
Sarah Low –
Errin Anderson – 01592 891567
3. Social Work Contact Centre - 03451 551503
4. Disclosure Scotland
Employer referral form: <https://www.mygov.scot/pvg-employer-referral/>Email to pucorrespondence@disclosurescotland.gov.scot or post to Disclosure Scotland PVG Referrals, PO 7412, Glasgow, G51 9DX
5. OSCR Notifiable Events scheme
OSCR 01382 220446 (will advise on whether an incident should be reported under this scheme).
Reports should be sent to notifiable@oscr.org.uk

Appendix 2 - Safeguarding Policy Code of good practice

This Code has been developed to provide you with advice that not only will help to protect children and vulnerable people, but will also help you and your colleagues identify any practices which could be mistakenly interpreted and perhaps lead to false allegations of abuse.

Good practice will also protect The Ecology Centre through reducing the possibility of anyone using their role to gain access to children / vulnerable people, in order to abuse.

While it is not intended that this code should restrict staff from normal ways of working, e.g. comforting a distressed child through providing a hug, there is much they can do to avoid situations that may give rise to misinterpretation, which will also work to protect children and vulnerable people. If in doubt, consider how an action or activity may be perceived as opposed to how it is intended.

Wherever possible, you should be guided by the following advice.

If it is necessary to carry out practices contrary to it, you should only do so after discussion with, and the approval of, your line manager.

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Code of good practice

- avoid unobserved situations of one - to - one contact with a child / vulnerable person. If it is unavoidable, always keep a door open and ensure you are within the hearing of other adults.
- never invite a child / vulnerable person to your home without the knowledge and consent of the parents/carers and your line manager.
- never offer to or take a child / vulnerable person alone in your own vehicle without the knowledge and consent of the parents/carers and your line manager.
- do not carry out activities of a 'personal nature for a child / vulnerable person, e g, nappy changing or toileting, this is the responsibility of the person/s accompanying them.
- develop a culture in which staff feel comfortable enough to point out inappropriate attitudes and behaviours to each other.
- don't engage in or allow any sexually provocative games involving or observed by children / vulnerable person, whether based on talking or touching.
- never make suggestive remarks or discriminatory comments to a child / vulnerable person.
- don't engage in or tolerate any bullying of a child / vulnerable person, either by adults or other children.
- don't engage in or tolerate inappropriate physical activity involving children / vulnerable people.
- never enter a room where a child / vulnerable person may be changing their clothes or not be fully dressed, without first clearly getting their consent to enter.
- respect all children / vulnerable people, regardless of their age, gender, ethnicity, disability or sexual identity.
- avoid 'favouritism' and singling-out 'troublemakers'.
- never trivialise abuse.
- never let allegations by a child / vulnerable person go unreported, including any made against you.

Social Media

The Ecology Centre has a Social Media Policy in our Dignity at Work Policy. This policy deals with the use of all forms of social media, including Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Google+, Wikipedia, Instagram and all other social networking



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sites, internet postings and blogs. It applies to use of social media for legitimate purposes as well as personal use that may affect our organisation in any way.

In the context of Safeguarding, the principal points of the Social Media Policy are:

- You must avoid making any social media communications that could damage our charitable/organisational interests or reputation, even indirectly.
- You must not use social media to make negative comments about us, our staff or any third party; to harass, bully or unlawfully discriminate against staff, volunteers or third parties; to make false or misleading statements; or to impersonate others.
- You must not express opinions on our behalf via social media, unless expressly authorised to do so by your manager.
- You must not post comments about sensitive topics relating to our organisation, such as our performance, or do anything to jeopardise our relationship with volunteers, sponsors, donors, partner organisations or disclose our confidential information. You must not include our logos or other trademarks in any social media posting or in your profile on any social media.
- You are not permitted to add contacts with children or vulnerable people made during the course of your employment to personal social networking accounts.
- You are not permitted to directly contact children or vulnerable people who use our services through social media.

Guidelines for responsible use of social media

- Be respectful to others when making any statement on social media and be aware that you are personally responsible for all communications which will be published on the internet for anyone to see.
- You should ensure that your profile and any content you post are consistent with the professional image you present to clients and colleagues.
- If you are uncertain or concerned about the appropriateness of any statement or posting, refrain from posting it until you have discussed it with your manager.
- If you see social media content that breaches this policy, disparages or reflects poorly on us, you should contact your manager.

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Appendix 3 - Definitions of abuse and neglect

Abuse is any action that violates a person's human or civil rights. It can take many forms and involve a number of factors. It can occur anywhere and the abuser could be a stranger, a carer, a family member or someone else in a position of trust. There are many forms of abuse and neglect:

Sexual abuse

This includes:

- indecent exposure
- sexual harassment
- inappropriate looking or touching
- sexual teasing or innuendo
- sexual photography
- being forced to watch pornography or sexual acts
- being forced or pressured to take part in sexual acts
- rape

Physical abuse

This includes:

- being hit, slapped, pushed or restrained
- being denied food or water
- not being helped to go to the bathroom when you need to
- misuse of your medicines

Psychological abuse

This includes:

- emotional abuse
- threats to hurt or abandon you
- stopping you from seeing people
- humiliating, blaming, controlling, intimidating or harassing you
- verbal abuse
- cyberbullying and isolation
- an unreasonable and unjustified withdrawal of services or support networks



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Domestic abuse

- This is typically an incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse by someone who is, or has been, an intimate partner or family member.

Discriminatory abuse

This includes some forms of harassment, slurs or unfair treatment relating to your:

- race
- gender and gender identity
- age
- disability
- sexual orientation
- religion

Financial abuse

- This could be someone stealing money or other valuables from you. Or it might be that someone appointed to look after your money on your behalf is using it inappropriately or coercing you to spend it in a way you're not happy with.
- Internet scams and doorstep crime are also common forms of financial abuse.

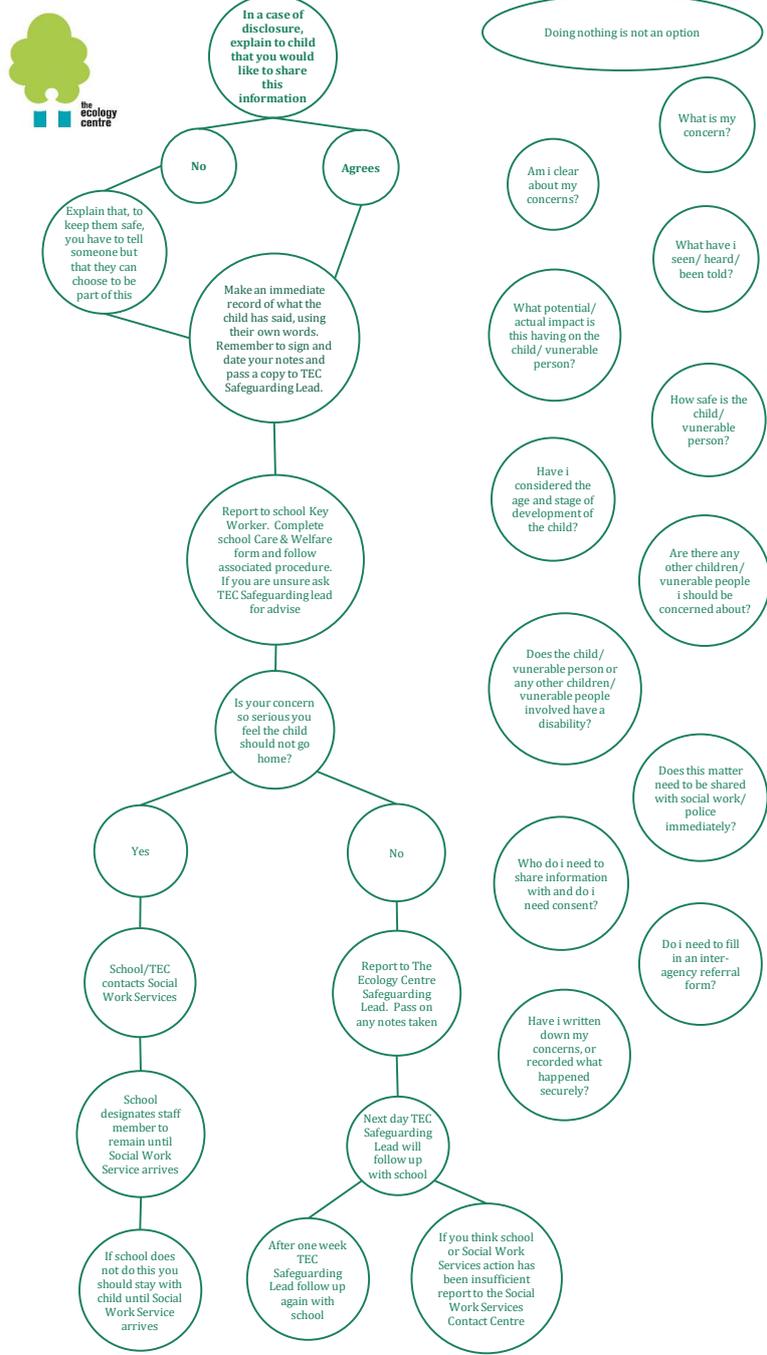
Neglect

- Neglect includes not being provided with enough food or with the right kind of food, or not being taken proper care of.
- Leaving you without help to wash or change dirty or wet clothes, not getting you to a doctor when you need one or not making sure you have the right medicines all count as neglect.

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Appendix 4

The Ecology Centre
Safeguarding flowchart - Children
This procedure should be followed everytime you have a concern even if it is similar to one you have previously raised
Procedure to follow when a child discloses or shows signs of abuse



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Safeguarding flowchart - Vulnerable people (wether or not the person attends The Ecology Centre with a Support Worker)

This procedure should be followed everytime you have a concern even if it is similar to one you have previously raised

Vulnerable person discloses or shows signs of abuse

