



## CHILD SAFEGUARDING POLICY

### INTRODUCTION

For the purpose of this policy and procedures, the terms 'child' and 'children' refer to anyone up to the age of 18 years (Child Protection Act 1989).

AFC is an environmental education charity that runs workshops, residential camps and events for children inside and outside of school environments across the UK. AFC believes that a child should never experience abuse of any kind. We have a responsibility to promote the welfare of all children and to keep them safe. We are committed to working in a way that protects them. The Action for Conservation Child Safeguarding Policy shall be made available to all partner organisations, volunteers, employers and employees of AFC.

### SCOPE

This policy applies to all organisations we work with, staff, including senior managers and the board of trustees, volunteers and sessional workers, students or anyone working on behalf of AFC.

### PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

Our main policy objective is to ensure that we will, with our partner organisations and schools, promote child safeguarding as the moral norm so that it becomes everybody's business. By everybody's business we mean that AFC staff, volunteers, trustees, schools, partner organisations and individuals working with children and families, including adults, understand their safeguarding responsibilities and their active role in working together to safeguard children from harm. For this policy to be effective it is essential that all AFC staff, volunteers, trustees, schools, and partner organisations and individuals have an understanding of what child safeguarding means, know that child safeguarding is everyone's responsibility, know the signs and symptoms of potential harm, how to access child safeguarding information, advice and guidance, and are committed to making an informed contribution to safeguarding children.

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Demonstrate how AFC will protect children who receive our services.
- Provide staff, volunteers and partner organisations with the overarching principles that guide our approach to child protection.

## LEGAL FRAMEWORK

This policy has been drawn up on the basis of law and guidance that seeks to protect children, namely:

- Children Act 1989
- United Convention of the Rights of the Child 1991
- Data Protection Act 1998
- Sexual Offences Act 2003
- Children Act 2004
- Equality Act 2010
- Protection of Freedoms Act 2012
- Working Together to Safeguard Children Guidance 2018

## RELATED POLICIES

This policy should be used in conjunction with other policies developed by AFC, including:

- Child E-safety Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Equality and Diversity Policy
- Data Protection and Privacy Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Disciplinary Procedure

## WE RECOGNISE THAT:

- The welfare of the child is paramount, as enshrined in the Children Act 2004.
- All children, regardless of age, disability, sex, gender, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, or sexual orientation, have a right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse and a right to equal opportunities (for further details please see our Equality and Diversity Policy).
- Some children are additionally vulnerable because of the impact of previous experiences, their level of dependency, communication needs or other issues.
- Working in partnership with children, their parents, carers and other agencies is essential in promoting child welfare.

## WE WILL SEEK TO KEEP CHILDREN SAFE BY:

- Valuing, listening to and respecting them.
- Adopting child safeguarding practices through procedures and a code of conduct for staff and volunteers.
- Providing young people with AFC's [Code of Conduct for Young People](#) and ensuring it is followed by all young people in our programmes.
- Implementing an effective Child E-safety Policy and related procedures.
- Providing effective management for staff and volunteers through supervision, support and training.
- Following staff and volunteer recruitment processes that help to keep children safe

(referred to as 'safe recruitment'), ensuring all necessary checks are made.

- Sharing information about child protection and good practice with children, parents, staff, and volunteers.
- Ensuring our Child Safeguarding Policy is shared with schools and partner organisations involved directly with our work.
- Recognising that our network includes young people who are under 18 and over 18, and that this has implications for how we run our programmes and the safeguards we must have in place.
- Ensuring that all concerns and allegations of abuse are taken seriously by trustees, staff and volunteers and responded to appropriately - this may require involving parents and children, referral to children's social care services, the independent Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) for all allegations against staff, trustees and volunteers, and in emergencies, the Police.

We are committed to reviewing this policy and procedures annually.

Policy	Child Safeguarding Policy
Review dates	03/12/2015, 16/05/2016, 09/05/2017, 04/10/2017, 10/01/2019, 11/02/2020, 14/12/2020, 1/04/2022, 19/01/2023; 18/04/2023; 23/01/2024
Next review due	23/01/2025



## AFC SAFEGUARDING PROCEDURE

### DESIGNATED SAFEGUARDING OFFICER (DSO)

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### DESIGNATED SAFEGUARDING OFFICER (DSO)

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### DESIGNATED TRUSTEE

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## 1 ROLE OF DESIGNATED SAFEGUARDING OFFICER (DSO)

- The DSO is responsible for managing all aspects of the referral process, including:
  - Referring cases of suspected abuse to the local authorities as required and supporting staff who make referrals.
  - Referring cases where a person is dismissed or has left due to risk/harm to a child to the Disclosure and Barring Services as required.
  - Referring cases where a crime may have been committed to the police as required.
  - Keeping secure records of all referrals.
- In the event of a referral, the DSO is responsible for liaising with parents, teachers, case managers and designated officers at the local authority.
- The DSO should act as a source of support, advice and expertise for all staff and volunteers with regards to matters of safety and safeguarding. The DSO should be available for team members to discuss any safeguarding concerns.
- The DSO should undergo training to provide them with the knowledge and skills required to carry out the role. This training should be updated at least every two years.
- The DSO should encourage a workplace culture where child safeguarding is a top priority,

and is responsible for ensuring the organisation's safeguarding policies and procedures are known, understood, used appropriately and revised annually.

## 2 RECRUITMENT AND INDUCTION

### 2.1.1 RECRUITMENT

- All AFC staff and volunteers are required to have an up-to-date relevant DBS check where their post is eligible for this (including a check against the relevant barred list if the post involves regulated activity). We use the Disclosure and Barring Service's Eligibility tool to determine the level of check required. More information can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/dbs-eligibility-guidance>
- All prospective AFC staff and volunteers are subject to comprehensive interviews, must provide a CV, two references from previous employers and account for any gaps in employment.
- All prospective AFC staff and volunteers are required to share any record of cases of child abuse made against them at any time.

### 2.1.2 INDUCTION

- As part of their induction, all AFC staff and volunteers are required to read this policy, and sign to confirm they have read it and will act in accordance with it.
- All AFC staff and volunteers will receive safeguarding training and be made aware of all relevant policies and procedures and AFC's mission and commitment to safeguarding.
- Staff and volunteers will be able to recognise signs of abuse and know the appropriate reporting systems for this.
- Staff will receive guidance on how to respond to disclosures of abuse.
- All new staff and volunteers will be adequately supervised and their progress reviewed on a regular basis.

## 3 SUPERVISION/EMPLOYER INPUT

- All organisations working directly with AFC will be sent a copy of AFC's Child Safeguarding Policy.
- All responsibility for child safeguarding where children are volunteering or undertaking work experience placements with third party organisations, where AFC is playing no supervisory role, will be the responsibility of that third-party organisation.
- Full risk assessments will be completed prior to all activities involving children outside of school premises in accordance with AFC's Visits Policy and shared with the DSO.
- All visits to schools will be supervised either by a teacher or an AFC staff member with the appropriate level of DBS clearance.
- Prior to visiting a school, AFC will request a copy of a school's safeguarding policy and the contact information for the school's safeguarding officer.

## 4 CODE OF CONDUCT

### Good practice

- Treat colleagues, children, school staff and staff from partner organisations with respect at all times.
- When planning events with young people, include a reminder of AFC's [Code of Conduct for Young People](#) in information packs, reminder emails and at the start of events.
- Ensuring that relationships between over 18-year-olds and under 18-year-olds in our network remain professional in nature.
- Arrive at the required time as specified by the AFC's supervising staff member and dress in comfortable and appropriate clothing that isn't 'revealing'.
- Report any inappropriate questioning or behaviour to AFC's supervising staff member or a supervising teacher.
- Maintain a safe and appropriate distance with children.
- Build balanced relationships based on mutual trust, which empower children to share in the decision-making process.
- Always work in an open environment, encouraging open communication with no secrets.
- Be an excellent role model - this includes not smoking or drinking alcohol in the company of young people.
- Give enthusiastic and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism.
- Ensure that a supervising teacher or AFC staff member is present at all times when interacting with children.
- Ensure that relationships formed with children while working with AFC remain professional at all times and are not considered personal relationships by school staff, AFC staff or by the children.
- Read and follow AFC's E-safety Policy.

### Practices to be avoided except in emergencies

- Spending time alone with a child away from others. Where this situation is unavoidable, this should be with the full knowledge and consent of AFC's supervising staff member, the teacher in charge and/or the child's parents.

### Practices never to be sanctioned:

- Swearing/aggressive behaviour or referencing material that is not age appropriate in conversation.
- Engaging in rough, physical or sexually provocative games, including horseplay.
- Sharing a room with a child.
- Allowing young people over the age of 18 to sleep in the same bedroom as a young person under the age of 18 during residentials, unless we have consent from the young person's parent/guardian.
- Allowing or engaging in any form of inappropriate touching.
- Allowing children to use inappropriate language unchallenged.
- Making sexually suggestive comments to a child, even as a joke.
- Reducing a child to tears as a form of control.
- Allowing allegations made by a child to go unrecorded or not acted upon.
- Doing things of a personal nature for children or disabled adults that they can do for themselves.

- Inviting or allowing children to stay with you at your home.
- Sharing photos of a child on your personal social media platform. Always retweet/share AFC's original content.
- Sharing personal information with a child or contacting a child online. Please see our E-safety Policy.
- Taking photos of a child on a personal mobile phone or camera or storing photos of a child on your personal computer.
- Sharing personal or identifiable information about a child, such as their name, school or address without permission.

## 5 ANTI-BULLYING

- All reasonable steps should be taken to ensure that every young person we work with feels safe, happy and supported and protected at all times. Bullying and cyberbullying incidents will always be taken seriously and treated as a safeguarding issue.
- AFC will not tolerate unkind actions or remarks, or stand by when someone is being bullied or supporting bullying. It should be noted that abusive comments and interactions should not be passed off as mere 'banter'. Such comments referring to a person's race, religion, ethnicity, sexuality, culture, special educational needs are not acceptable and will be treated as bullying and therefore considered a safeguarding issue.
- Any AFC staff member or volunteer who is made aware of or witnesses bullying behaviour should report the incident.



## 6 RECOGNITION OF ABUSE

Type of abuse	Description	Physical Indicators	Behavioural indicators
Physical	<p>Where someone physically hurts or injures children.</p> <p>Giving children alcohol or drugs.</p> <p>In sports situations, physical abuse can occur when the nature and intensity of training exceeds the capacity of the child's immature and growing body or predisposes the child to injury resulting from fatigue or exercise.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unexplained bruising</li> <li>• Bruises which reflect hand marks</li> <li>• Cigarette burns</li> <li>• Bite marks</li> <li>• Broken bones</li> <li>• Scalds</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fear of parent being contacted</li> <li>• Aggression or anger</li> <li>• Keeping body covered</li> <li>• Flinching</li> <li>• Depression</li> <li>• Withdrawn behaviour</li> </ul>
Sexual	<p>Sexual abuse can take the form of sexual intercourse, masturbation, oral sex, fondling, photography and inappropriate sexual conversation.</p> <p>Refers to actual and intended abuse.</p> <p>Showing children pornographic material.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pain or itching in genital area</li> <li>• STD</li> <li>• Vaginal discharge</li> <li>• Stomach pains</li> <li>• Discomfort when walking or sitting</li> <li>• Pregnancy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sudden changes in behaviour</li> <li>• Advanced sexual knowledge</li> <li>• Self harm</li> <li>• Keeping 'secrets'</li> <li>• Fear of certain people</li> <li>• Talking about abuse</li> </ul>
Emotional	<p>This can include emotional ill treatment, bullying, deliberate rejection and lack of love and affection, constantly shouting at a child, threats and taunts, constant over-protection.</p> <p>Failure to put a stop to racism.</p> <p>In workshops, emotional abuse may refer to constant criticism, bullying and unrealistic pressure.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developmentally delayed</li> <li>• Sudden speech disorder</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Neurotic or paranoid</li> <li>• Unable to take part or play</li> <li>• Fear of making mistakes</li> <li>• Self harm or mutilation</li> <li>• Fear of parents being contacted</li> </ul>



Neglect	<p>Neglect occurs when a person fails to meet a child's basic needs such as warm clothing and provision of food.</p> <p>Children are constantly left alone and unsupervised.</p> <p>Lack of love, attention and affection.</p> <p>Failure to ensure a child's safety.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Constant hunger</li> <li>• Unkempt state</li> <li>• Weight loss/ underweight</li> <li>• Inappropriate dress</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Missing appointments at doctors/ hospitals</li> <li>• Truancy/ late for school</li> <li>• Tiredness or fatigue</li> <li>• Few friends</li> <li>• Regularly alone or unsupervised</li> </ul>
Self-harm	<p>Self-harm can take lots of physical forms, including cutting, burning, bruising, scratching, hair-pulling, poisoning and overdosing.</p> <p>There are many reasons why children and young people try to hurt themselves. And once they start, it can become a compulsion. That's why it's so important to spot it as soon as possible and do everything you can to help.</p> <p>Self-harm isn't usually a suicide attempt or a cry for attention. Instead, it's often a way for young people to release overwhelming emotions. It's a way of coping. So whatever the reason, it should be taken seriously.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cuts</li> <li>• Bruises</li> <li>• Burns</li> <li>• Bald patches from pulling out hair</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Depression, tearfulness and low motivation</li> <li>• Becoming withdrawn and isolated, for example wanting to be alone in their bedroom for long periods</li> <li>• Unusual eating habits; sudden weight loss or gain</li> <li>• Low self-esteem and self-blame</li> <li>• Drinking or taking drugs</li> <li>• Wearing clothing to conceal physical indicators of self-harm</li> </ul>
Bullying & cyberbullying	<p>Bullying is behaviour that hurts someone else – such as name calling, hitting, pushing, spreading rumours, threatening or undermining someone.</p> <p>It can happen anywhere – at school, at home or online. It's usually repeated over a long period of time and can hurt a child both physically and emotionally.</p> <p>Bullying that happens online, using social networks, games and mobile phones, is often called cyberbullying.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Belongings getting "lost" or damaged.</li> <li>• Physical injuries such as unexplained bruises.</li> <li>• Problems with eating or sleeping.</li> <li>• Spending significantly more/less time online</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being afraid to go to school, being mysteriously 'ill' each morning, or skipping school.</li> <li>• Not doing as well at school</li> <li>• Being nervous, losing confidence, or becoming distressed and withdrawn</li> <li>• Asking for, or stealing, money (to give to a bully)</li> <li>• Bullying others.</li> </ul>

Online grooming	Grooming is when someone builds an emotional connection with a child to gain their trust for the purposes of sexual abuse, sexual exploitation or trafficking.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unexplained physical injuries</li> <li>• Changed physical appearance, for example lost weight.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being very secretive, including about what they are doing online.</li> <li>• Having older boyfriends or girlfriends.</li> <li>• Going to unusual places to meet friends.</li> <li>• Having new things such as clothes or mobile phones that they can't or won't explain.</li> <li>• Having access to drugs and alcohol.</li> </ul>
Child sexual exploitation	Child sexual exploitation is a type of sexual abuse. Children in exploitative situations and relationships receive something such as gifts, money or affection as a result of performing sexual activities or others performing sexual activities on them. Some children and young people are trafficked into or within the UK for the purpose of sexual exploitation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unexplained physical injuries</li> <li>• Changed physical appearance, for example weight loss.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Going missing from home, care or education.</li> <li>• Being involved in abusive relationships, intimidated and fearful of certain people or situations.</li> <li>• Hanging out with groups of older people, or antisocial groups, or with other vulnerable peers.</li> <li>• Associating with other young people involved in sexual exploitation.</li> <li>• Having older boyfriends or girlfriends.</li> <li>• Spending time at places of concern, such as hotels or known brothels.</li> </ul>



### **7 REPORTING SUSPECTED ABUSE**

- A disclosure may come from any child who has participated in AFC's work, an advocate acting on their behalf, such as a person with parental responsibility for the child or the child's solicitor, or from any other child or adult. A disclosure by or on behalf of a child may be made verbally, by phone, email or in writing to AFC's DSO, Deputy DSO or the designated trustee.
- Staff or volunteers with a concern about child welfare or risk of harm should complete an Action for Conservation Child Safeguarding Report Form as soon as possible. The template for this form can be found at the end of this document. Completed forms and any written information regarding issues concerning individuals are kept on file in a safe locked place to ensure confidentiality.
- Where we are on school premises, we are required to work within the child protection guidelines of that school. Concerns about the welfare of children or risk of harm are to be reported to the school's safeguarding officer and a written Action for Conservation Child Safeguarding Report outlining concerns should be shared with AFC's DSO. AFC's DSO will communicate with the school's safeguarding officer and agree appropriate action.
- In circumstances not involving a school, concerns about child welfare or risk of harm should be reported directly to AFC's DSO using the Action for Conservation Child Safeguarding Report template, who will then refer this information to the local social services department where necessary, who may then go to the police, or go directly to the police where appropriate. The parents or carers will be contacted as soon as possible following advice from the social services department or police.
- In all cases, any suspicion that a child has been abused by an AFC member of staff or volunteer should be reported to the DSO, who will take the necessary steps to ensure the safety of the child in question and any other children who may be at risk, in line with the Discipline/Complaints Procedure outlined below.
- If the DSO is the subject of the suspicion/allegation, the report must be made to the Deputy DSO or the designated trustee.
- If AFC staff are not available, allegations or disclosures can be reported to the police, social services or the NSPCC helpline (see Section 11 below).

### **8 DISCIPLINE/COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE**

Please see AFC's Disciplinary Procedure for detailed information.

### **9 INFORMATION SHARING**

- Everyone, including children, has a right to confidentiality (see Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights). The individual level of a child's maturity will affect their ability to express a view or take decisions about issues of confidentiality and sharing information, but AFC staff members and volunteers should always have regard to a child's right under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) to express their views freely in all matters affecting them, and to have those views given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity.

- Sharing confidential information without consent will normally be justified in the public interest in the following circumstances:
  - When there is evidence that the child is suffering or is at risk of suffering significant harm.
  - Where there is reasonable cause to believe that the child is suffering or is at risk of suffering significant harm.
  - To prevent serious crime, i.e. significant harm arising to children or adults, including through the prevention, detection and prosecution of serious crime.
  
- There are eight golden rules for information sharing as outlined below:
  1. The protection of the child is the most important consideration in information sharing issues.
  2. The Data Protection Act is not a barrier to sharing information but provides a framework to ensure that personal information about living persons is shared appropriately.
  3. Be open and honest with the person (and/or their family where appropriate) from the outset about why, what, how and with whom information will, or could be shared, and seek their agreement, unless it is unsafe or inappropriate to do so.
  4. Seek advice if in any doubt, without disclosing the identity of the person where possible.
  5. Share with consent where appropriate and, where possible, respect the wishes of those who do not consent to share confidential information. You may still share information without consent if, in your judgement, that lack of consent can be overridden in the public interest. You will need to base your judgement on the facts of the case.
  6. Consider safety and wellbeing: Base your information sharing decisions on considerations of the safety and wellbeing of the person and others who may be affected by their actions.
  7. Necessary, proportionate, relevant, accurate, timely and secure: Ensure that the information you share is necessary for the purpose for which you are sharing it, is shared only with those people who need to have it, is accurate and up-to-date, is shared in a timely fashion, and is shared securely.
  8. Keep a record of your decision and the reasons for it - whether it is to share information or not. If you decide to share, then record what you have shared, with whom and for what purpose.

## 10 WHISTLE BLOWING

- It is the responsibility of all trustees, staff, volunteers and individuals from organisations we work with to raise concerns about the attitudes or actions of AFC staff and volunteers.
- If you find that any member of staff or volunteer is behaving in a way that does not adhere to our organisational policies, procedures or values, please report your concern by following the procedures outlined in AFC's Whistle Blowing Policy.

## 11 USEFUL CONTACTS FOR REPORTING

- Child Exploitation Online Protection Command (CEOP COMMAND) reporting guide and form: <https://www.ceop.police.uk/Contact-Us/What-are-you-reporting/>
- In an emergency or if you feel that a child is in immediate danger call emergency services on 999 or the NSPCC Helpline on 0808 800 5000.

## 12 CONFIRMATION

- Information will be handled sensitively, telling only those who need to know and following all relevant data protection requirements.
- Overall responsibility for this policy and its implementation lies with the board of trustees.