

Nature Awaken UK Safeguarding and Protection Policy and Procedures

Purpose

Nature Awaken makes a positive contribution to a strong and safe community and recognises the right of every individual to stay safe. Nature Awaken has both a duty of care and a duty to act appropriately to any allegations, reports or suspicions of harm, abuse or coercion.

We are committed to ensuring safeguarding practice reflects statutory responsibilities, government guidance, complies with best practice and is kept up-to-date.

The purpose of this policy is:

- To protect children, young people and vulnerable people who receive Nature Awaken services.
- To provide staff and volunteers with the overarching principles that guides our approach to safeguarding and child protection.

We believe all children and vulnerable adults, regardless of age, ability or disability, gender, race, religion, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, marital or gender status have the right to be protected from abuse and poor practice and to participate in an enjoyable and safe environment. Nature Awaken has a commitment to deliver services to children and vulnerable adults in a non-discriminatory manner.

Nature Awaken may come into contact with children and / or vulnerable adults through the delivery of its services. The types of contact with children and / or vulnerable adults will be regular contact with young people in a small group, with occasional contact to talk individually.

Review and Safeguarding Officers

This policy came into place on 31st March 2025 and will be reviewed on a regular basis.

On the last reviewed date the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) was:

Stefan Chmelik

Email: stefan@newmedicinegroup.com

Phone: +44 (0)7956 448085

Deputy (DDSL): David Peters

All staff and volunteers of Nature Awaken must be aware that when working with other organisations, such as schools or groups that work with vulnerable adults, their safeguarding policy and procedures are to be followed in addition to this policy.

Legal Framework

The principal pieces of legislation governing this policy are:

- The Children Act 1989, 2004, 2014
- United Convention of the Rights of the Child 1991
- Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998
- The Human Rights Act 1998
- Sexual Offences Act 2003
- Mental Capacity Act 2005
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006, 2012
- The Equality Act 2010
- The Protection of Freedoms Act 2012
- Children and Families Act 2014
- Care Act 2014
- Information sharing: Advice for practitioners providing safeguarding services to children, young people, parents and carers 2015
- Working together to safeguarding children 2015, 2018, 2023
- UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018

Definitions

Safeguarding is about embedding practices throughout the organisation to ensure the protection of children and / or vulnerable adults wherever possible.

Abuse is a selfish act of oppression and injustice, exploitation and manipulation of power by those in a position of authority. Abuse is not restricted to any socio-economic group, gender or culture.

It can take a number of forms, including the following:

- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Bullying
- Neglect
- Financial (or material) abuse
- Coercion

Definition of a child:

A child is under the age of 18 (as defined in the United Nations convention on the Rights of a Child 1991).

Definition of Vulnerable Adults:

A vulnerable adult, as defined by the Care Act (2014), is a person:

- Who is 18 years and over
- Who has needs for care and support (whether or not the local authority is meeting any of those needs)
- Is experiencing, or at risk of abuse or neglect

- Who as a result of those care and support needs is unable to protect themselves from either the risk of or the experience of abuse or neglect

Child safeguarding involves:

- protecting children from maltreatment
- preventing impairment of children's health or development
- ensuring children are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care
- the protection of children who may be at risk of significant harm due to emotional, physical or sexual abuse or neglect.

Adult safeguarding aims to:

- prevent harm and reduce the risk of abuse or neglect to adults with care and support needs;
- stop abuse or neglect wherever possible;
- safeguard adults in a way that supports them in making choices and having control about how they want to live;
- promote an approach that concentrates on improving life for the adults concerned;
- raise public awareness so that communities as a whole, alongside professionals, play their part in preventing, identifying and responding to abuse and neglect;
- provide information and support in accessible ways to help people understand the different types of abuse, how to stay safe and what to do to raise a concern about the safety or well-being of an adult, and; address what has caused the abuse or neglect

In contrast, child and adult protection is about responding to circumstances that arise, see reporting below.

Our definition of abuse includes abuse that occurs during and after the formal relationship between the professional or volunteer and the vulnerable individual has ended. Examples include:

- Exploitation of trust or dependency established during the relationship.
- Entering into a personal, romantic, or sexual relationship with a vulnerable individual who attended services, as this exploits the power imbalance inherent in the prior professional relationship. This can be caused by those inflicting harm or those who fail to act to prevent harm.

Responsibilities

All staff, associates and volunteers have responsibility to follow the guidance laid out in this policy and related policies, and to pass on any welfare concerns using the required procedures outlined.

We expect all staff (paid or unpaid) to promote good practice by being an excellent role model, contribute to discussions about safeguarding and to positively involve people in developing safe practices.

We will aim to keep children, young people and vulnerable adults safe by:

- valuing, listening to and respecting them
- appointing a nominated child protection and Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and a deputy (DDSL)
- adopting child protection and safeguarding best practice through our policies, procedures and code of conduct for staff and volunteers
- providing effective management for staff and volunteers through supervision, support, training and quality assurance measures so that all staff and volunteers know about and follow our policies, procedures and behaviour codes confidently and competently
- recruiting and selecting staff and volunteers safely, ensuring all necessary checks are made
- recording and storing and using information professionally and securely, in line with data protection legislation and guidance
- making sure that everyone we work with know where to go for help if they have a concern
- using our safeguarding and child protection procedures to share concerns and relevant information with agencies who need to know, and involving children, young people, parents, families and carers appropriately
- using our procedures to manage any allegations against staff and volunteers appropriately
- ensuring that we have effective complaints and whistleblowing measures in place
- ensuring that we provide a safe physical environment for our children, young people, staff and volunteers, by applying health and safety measures in accordance with the law and regulatory guidance
- building a safeguarding culture where staff and volunteers, children, young people and their families, treat each other with respect and are comfortable about sharing concerns
- acknowledging the importance of understanding and respecting cultural diversity while ensuring safeguarding practices are maintained
- Ensuring staff and volunteers understand that entering into personal, romantic, or sexual relationships with vulnerable individuals they have supported is inappropriate and constitutes an abuse of power, even if initiated after the formal professional relationship ends.

Additional specific responsibilities

In addition to the above the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) (and Deputy when required) must ensure:

- The policy is in place and appropriate
- The policy is accessible
- The policy is implemented
- The policy is monitored and reviewed
- Sufficient resources (time and money) are allocated to ensure that the policy can be effectively implemented
- Staff (paid and unpaid) have access to appropriate training/information

- Receive staff concerns about safeguarding and respond to all seriously, swiftly and appropriately
- Keep up to date with local arrangements for safeguarding and DBS
- Develop and maintain effective links with relevant agencies.
- Take forward concerns and 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
- If anyone in the organisation fails to comply with the policy and procedures this will be addressed without delay and may ultimately result in dismissal/exclusion from the organisation.

Implementation

The scope of this Safeguarding Policy is broad ranging and in practice it will be implemented via a range of policies and procedures within the organisation. These include: Health and Safety policy, Data Protection, Confidentiality, Equal Opportunities, Staff Induction and Training.

Recruitment

Nature Awaken UK Safeguarding and Protection ensures safe recruitment through the following processes:

- Providing the following safeguarding statement in recruitment adverts or application details – ‘recruitment is done in line with safe recruitment practices.’
- Job or role descriptions for all roles involving contact with children and / or vulnerable adults will contain reference to safeguarding responsibilities.
- There are person specifications for roles which contain a statement on core competency with regard to child/ vulnerable adult protection/ safeguarding
- DBS checks will be conducted for specific roles for all staff (paid or unpaid) working with children and vulnerable adults. It is a criminal offence for individuals barred by the ISA to work or apply to work with children or vulnerable adults in a wide range of posts.
- Interviews for roles involving vulnerable individuals will assess safeguarding attitudes and understanding
- No formal job offers are made until after checks for suitability are completed (including DBS and 2 references which will be checked for safeguarding-related concerns).

Disclosure and Barring Service Gap Management

Nature Awaken UK does not currently provide services to children or require DBS.

If at some future date the organisation provides services to children, it will commit resources to providing Disclosure and Barring Service check on staff and volunteers whose roles involve contact with children and /or vulnerable adults.

In addition to checks on recruitment for roles involving contact with children/ vulnerable adults, for established staff the following processes are in place:

- A 3-year rolling programme of re-checking DBS's is in place for holders of all identified posts.
- Existing staff who transfer from a role which does not require a DBS check to one which involves contact with children / vulnerable adults will be subject to a DBS check.
- There will be systematic checking of safeguarding arrangements of partner organisations
- Safeguarding will be a fixed agenda item on any partnership reporting meetings.
- Contracts and memorandums of agreement for partnership delivery work will include clear minimum requirements, arrangements for safeguarding and non-compliance procedures.

For staff and volunteers

Nature Awaken UK will commit at an appropriate future date resources for induction, training of staff (paid and unpaid) and support mechanisms in relation to Safeguarding Induction will include:

- Discussion of the Safeguarding Policy (and confirmation of understanding)
- Discussion of other relevant policies including equality and diversity
- Ensure familiarity with reporting processes, especially the roles of Designated Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) (DSL)

Training

All staff who, through their role, are in contact with children and /or vulnerable adults will have access to safeguarding training at an appropriate level. Including learning opportunities to recognise, identify and respond to signs of abuse, neglect and other safeguarding concerns relating to children, young people and vulnerable adults. This will be refreshed periodically.

Support

We recognise that involvement in situations where there is risk or actual harm can be stressful for staff concerned. The mechanisms in place to support staff include:

- Debriefing support for paid and unpaid staff so that they can reflect on the issues they have dealt with.
- Seeking further support as appropriate e.g. access to counselling and supervision.
- Staff who have initiated protection concerns will be contacted by Designated Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) (DSL) within one week.

If a staff member, volunteer, or participant becomes aware of inappropriate relationships or abuse of power involving vulnerable individuals, they are required to report their concerns to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or Deputy DSL

The process outlined below details the stages involved in raising and reporting safeguarding concerns at Nature Awaken UK:

1. Make a note of what the person has said using his or her own words as soon as practicable.
2. Complete a report and submit to the Designated Safeguarding Lead or Deputy if required.
3. As long as it does not increase the risk to the individual, you should explain to them that it is your duty to share your concern with your Designated Safeguarding Lead.
4. Describe the circumstances in which the disclosure came about.
5. Take care to distinguish between fact, observation, allegation and opinion. It is important that the information you have is accurate.
6. Be mindful of the need to be confidential at all times, this information must only be shared with your Designated Safeguarding Lead and others on a need to know basis.

If the matter is urgent and relates to the immediate safety of an adult at risk then contact the police immediately.

Below details what the NSPCC recommend recording:

What to report

You need to report the following information:

Name and information about the child – age, gender, ethnic identity, religion, any disability.

Nature of concern – what the child said, what someone told you, physical signs and behavioural indicators.

Your name and your role or the name and role of the person who told you.

When and where this happened.

Who else was present.

What the child said and **what you observed** about the child if they were telling you directly.

Any relevant observations about the child in the past, eg has their behaviour changed?

What you said to the child about confidentiality and their response.

The name and address (if known) of the alleged abuser.

Your response to the child and what you said.

Your opinion if this is relevant and useful – but make sure you say when something is your opinion and/or when it is fact.

Who you have told, any advice received or action taken.

It is the responsibility of the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) to pass on your concerns, the simplest way to do this is to contact the:

Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) on 0345 155 1071 or email mashsecure@devon.gov.uk and give as much information as possible.

Any concern/allegation made against a member of staff or volunteer will be reported to:

The Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) for Wales and can be contacted on <https://www.safeguarding.wales/en/adu-i/adu-i-a5/a5-p2/>

In an emergency safeguarding situation if you cannot reach the DSL nor the DDSL within 24 hours (or less if serious risk to life), you must contact MASH above yourself to pass on your concern, sharing that you have done this with the DSL as soon as they are available, who will then follow up with yourself and MASH.

Allegations Management

Nature Awaken UK recognises its duty to report concerns or allegations against its staff (paid or unpaid) within the organisation or by a professional from another organisation.

The process for raising and dealing with allegations is as follows:

Any member of staff or volunteer from Nature Awaken UK

1. is required to report any concerns in the first instance to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) (or Deputy if the concern is about the Lead). A written record of the concern will be completed by them.
2. Contact MASH as above for advice and what to do next.

Monitoring

In principle, the policy will be reviewed a year after development and then every three years, or in the following circumstances:

- changes in legislation and/or government guidance
- as required by Local Safeguarding Children Boards and Local Safeguarding Adults Boards
- as a result of any other significant change or event.

We will also conduct: annual reviews of safeguarding incidents and responses to improve practices, surveys or opportunities to feedback from staff, volunteers, and service users about safeguarding effectiveness.

Managing Information

Information will be gathered, recorded and stored in accordance with the following policies Data Protection Policy, Confidentiality Policy.

All staff must be aware that they have a professional duty to share information with other agencies in order to safeguard children and vulnerable adults. The public interest in safeguarding children and vulnerable adults may override confidentiality interests. However, information will be shared on a need to know basis only, as judged by the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).

All staff must be aware that they cannot promise service users or their families/ carers that they will keep secrets.