



## Safeguarding Policy

Heritage | Environment | Community

### Applicability

This policy applies to all Trustees, volunteers and others connected with The Oakham Canal Green Corridor Project (the Project).

### General

As a voluntary organisation, the Project accepts it is the responsibility of all adults to safeguard the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults by protecting them from physical, emotional, sexual abuse or neglect.

The Project ensures that children, young people and vulnerable adults are kept safe from harm by adhering to the following principles:

- Ensuring that the Project's Trustees and volunteers are made aware of this document and the policies and procedures contained within it, including issues of confidentiality and information sharing;
- Ensuring that children and young people volunteering on the Project are supervised at all times by a parent, guardian or appropriate adult (e.g. teacher);
- Ensuring that no Trustee or volunteer is ever in an inappropriate situation i.e. left alone with a child or young person;
- Ensuring that effective procedures are in place for responding to complaints and allegations of abuse against the Project's Trustees or volunteers;
- Ensuring that the Project's Trustees and volunteers understand and feel confident in their responsibility for reporting areas of concern that may come to their notice;
- Ensuring that Trustees and volunteers are conversant with the Project's reporting procedures;
- Monitoring and reviewing the Project's Safeguarding Policy annually and taking any measures required to improve it;
- Developing a culture of appropriate behaviour and language; and
- Providing a practical and accessible network of support and consultation for volunteers.

### Designated Person

The name of the person responsible for safeguarding, and who acts as the Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO), is given in Appendix A of this Policy.

### Statement of Intent

The Project believes that everyone who comes into contact with children, young people or vulnerable adults has a responsibility to safeguard and promote their welfare and protect them from abuse. In order to ensure that welfare is paramount, the Project is committed to maintaining an open culture and to address poor practice.

The Project believes that work with children, young people and vulnerable adults is an essential part of the aims of the Project and can be mutually beneficial and of value to the organisation.

The Project is committed to developing and maintaining a thorough and transparent safeguarding strategy to afford children, young people and vulnerable adults who access the Project, or are involved in its work, maximum safeguards.

The Project recognises that in protecting and safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults it is also providing a framework that identifies and promotes best practice and minimises uncertainty for volunteers working with them regarding appropriate behaviours and conduct.

It is essential that all Trustees, volunteers and others connected with the Project are aware of its central messages and any duties / responsibilities it places on them. It will be publicised and promoted in the Project's material to relevant audiences.

### **Aims and Objectives**

The aim of this document is to provide clarity for the Project's Trustees and volunteers to enable them to respond to concerns and promote the safeguarding and welfare of any child, young person or vulnerable adult who has contact with the Project.

This document is intended to:

- Promote the safety and welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults;
- Identify conduct that is inappropriate and ensure it is addressed through the safeguarding procedures;
- Recognise that good practice promotes safeguarding for children, young people, vulnerable adults and all our volunteers; and
- Emphasise that all volunteers and others connected with the Project must demonstrate personal responsibility in their conduct towards the safeguarding of children, young people and vulnerable adults.

### **Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults Statement**

The Project strives to ensure that all the children, young people and vulnerable adults who engage with the Project do so in safety. It is committed to providing volunteers with the highest attainable standards of safeguarding and protection. It ensures that all Trustees, volunteers and others connected with the Project understand the duties that this policy places upon them and that they know how to respond appropriately when they have concerns about the welfare of a child, young person or vulnerable adult.

The Safeguarding Policy and safeguarding procedures will be applied to all children, young people and vulnerable adults without discrimination.

The rights of children to be protected from abuse and exploitation are enshrined in a number of guidance documents and legislation e.g. The Children Act (1989), The Human Rights Act (1998) and in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Encountering abuse can be distressing and stressful. However, the duties of Trustees and volunteers in respect of child protection and safeguarding are not complex or onerous. All need to be alert to the potential signs and indicators of abuse and know how to report any concerns they might have via the Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO). It is the responsibility of the authorities, social services and police, to investigate concerns, not the responsibility of the Project Trustees or volunteers.

For the purposes of this policy, "vulnerable adults" are defined as adults who:

- Are unable to safeguard their own well-being, property, rights or other interests; or
- Are at risk of harm because they are affected by disability, mental disorder, illness or physical or mental infirmity and are more at risk of being harmed than adults who are not so affected.

Adults are at risk if:

- Another person's conduct is causing (or is likely to cause) the adult to be harmed; or
- The adult is engaging (or is likely to engage) in conduct which causes (or is likely to cause) self-harm.

In order to feel competent and confident in the use of the Safeguarding Policy and procedures Trustees and the Project's volunteer supervisors receive training in their use, have the chance to discuss them, and have access to support and consultation at least annually with the DSO.

## **Compliance**

The Project ensures compliance with the policy and procedures by:

- Ensuring that Trustees and volunteer supervisors are informed about the importance the Project gives to children, young people and adult safeguarding;
- Ensuring that all volunteers have access to the policy and procedures, are kept up to date with amendments, and acknowledge their responsibilities;
- Ensuring that all reports are forwarded immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO).

## **Safeguarding Procedures**

### **Aim**

The principal aim of these procedures is to inform volunteers of what they must do if they have a concern that a child, young person or adult is being abused. However, the procedures are also intended to give volunteers some basic information to help them understand what abuse is, how it might come to their attention and what some of the barriers are. The first section provides this basic information and the following part states how volunteers must respond to a concern.

### **Categories of abuse**

In the UK there are four generally accepted categories of abuse. These are briefly defined as:

- Physical abuse – causing physical harm by e.g. hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, scalding, drowning or suffocating.
- Emotional abuse – persistent emotional ill-treatment e.g. conveying that a child or person is unloved or worthless.
- Sexual abuse – forcing or enticing a child or person to take part in sexual activities which may include physical contact or not e.g. exposure to pornography.
- Neglect – the persistent failure to meet a child or person's basic physical and/or psychological needs e.g. lack of food, shelter, clothing or medical care.

Abuse does not necessarily fit neatly into the above categories. For instance, it is common for some children and young people to suffer more than one category of abuse e.g. physical and neglect.

Abuse can take the form of single incidents or an accumulation of events. It is precisely because abuse can take the form of a sequence of events that apparently trivial information can be very significant when viewed as part of a pattern of maltreatment.

Bullying and harassment (e.g. racial or homophobic) are not formal categories of abuse. However, they can be very damaging to children, young people and adults. Volunteers have a duty of care to anyone suffering such experiences which means that they must discuss with a Trustee, senior member of the Project, or leader of a group who is accessing the Project as to what steps can be taken to stop such incidents and support the victim.

### **Recognising Abuse**

There are a number of ways in which volunteers might have a concern that a child, young person or adult is being abused. These may include:

- A child or person 'disclosing' abuse;
- A child or person having an injury for which there is no satisfactory explanation;

- A child or person behaving or appearing in such a way as to give rise to concern; or
- Information being given that suggests concern about a volunteer, Trustee or someone connected with the Project.

There are also some established indicators of abuse i.e. things which a person may do which might give rise to concern. These are a few examples of indicators:

Sudden unexplained changes in behaviour;

- Becoming aggressive or withdrawn;
- Running away;
- Self-harming; and
- Age-inappropriate sexual knowledge or behaviour.

The 'best' predictor of abuse is previous abuse. Volunteers should be particularly alert to risk when a child, young person or adult is known to have been previously maltreated.

This list of indicators is not exhaustive. The presence of one or more of these does not necessarily indicate abuse, but volunteers need to be aware that this might be the case, particularly if no other explanation is forthcoming. **Barriers**

There are a number of potential barriers to a child or person telling someone that they have suffered abuse. These include:

- Being anxious about the consequences for themselves or others;
- Being physically threatened and/or put under psychological pressure not to tell;
- Protecting a parent, sibling or others;
- Not having access to a trusted adult; or
- Having a disability, which impedes communication.

There are also a number of potential barriers to adults believing that a child or young person has been abused. These include:

- Fear of being mistaken;
- Concerns that reporting might have an adverse effect upon themselves and/or the child;
- Ignorance as to what might happen next;
- Anxiety that the matter is trivial;
- A belief that abuse does not take place in 'nice' families; or
- Cultural myths that abuse is acceptable or normal in some cultures.

### **Confidentiality**

There are limits to rights to confidentiality within the context of safeguarding. It is important that information about a child, young person or vulnerable adult is confidential in the sense that only those who need to know are informed. Otherwise, however, the right to confidentiality is superseded by his/her right to protection. This means that information suggesting someone is at risk (whether given by the child, a parent or anyone else) must be shared with the authorities. It also means that absolute promises of secrecy or confidentiality should never be given to a child, young person or vulnerable adult.

### **Safeguarding Procedures**

#### **Responding to a Concern**

On becoming aware that a child or person has a concern, volunteers must:

- Listen carefully to what the child or person has to say;

- Stay calm;
- Allow the child or person to say whatever s/he wishes in his/her own words and at his/her own pace;
- Reassure the child or person that s/he has done nothing wrong and was right to tell someone about the abuse;
- Try to elicit enough information to be able to decide what to do next - no more than this;
- Consider the welfare of others who might be at risk, including siblings;
- Consult the child or person (according to age and understanding) as to what s/he would like to happen next, but do not allow this to override the responsibility to report abuse;
- Keep the child or person informed as to what steps the Project and other agencies are taking; and
- Make an accurate record as soon as possible.

The volunteer must record as much information as possible at the earliest opportunity. This must include:

- Basic information about the child or person insofar as this is known – name, address, date of birth, ethnicity, disability etc;
- Who the child or person lives with (if known);
- Name of the child or young person's educational establishment;
- The precise nature of the concern; and
- Anything the child or person has said about the concern / incident.

In such circumstances volunteers should not:

- Panic;
- Inquire into the details of the abuse;
- Push the child or person too hard to speak if s/he is reluctant;
- Promise to keep secrets; and
- Fail to report their concern.

### **Reporting Lines**

Volunteers must report their concerns to the Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO), at the earliest opportunity, but in any event within the same working day. Contact details for the DSO are given in Appendix A of this Policy. If the DSO is unavailable volunteers must contact one of the Trustees. If it is not possible to make contact with either the DSO or one of the Trustees then the MCPC Child Protection Helpline on 0808 800 5000 (24 hour service) must be contacted.

The DSO is responsible for deciding whether the concern expressed by the volunteer is referred to social services or police. If in doubt, the DSO must consult with local social services informally and/or seek advice from the NSPCC child protection helpline on 0808 800 5000.

A referral about a safeguarding concern is generally made to the duty officer, children and families team of the local social services department. In an emergency the police must be called as well. Outside of normal working hours social services operates an emergency duty service to which referrals are made.

The DSO must ensure that the written record of the concern is sent to social services within 24 hours of the concern arising.

In the event of referral being made to the local social services, a decision will need to be taken as to whether to notify any parents or carers. The guiding principle on this matter is that parents or carers should be informed unless doing this places the child or person at further risk. In practice, the child or person is generally only at further risk if the parent, guardian or carer is implicated in the abuse and is likely to subject the child or person to physical chastisement or psychological pressure (to retract what s/he has said). If in doubt the DSO must seek the advice of social services.

It is possible further involvement and attendance of Project volunteers at meetings may be requested by the Social Services Department (SSD).

Medical attention should only be sought if the child or person is in need of urgent medical care. Social services or the police would generally arrange for a medical to be conducted to gain evidence of abuse.

### **Concerns About a Project Volunteer**

Concerns that a volunteer has abused a child, young person or adult should be referred to the DSO who will in turn notify the Project's Trustees. The DSO will instigate a meeting of the Trustees to agree investigation and action.

If the concern is about the DSO, then the volunteer should report directly to one of the other Project Trustees.

Anyone reporting bona fide concerns will be supported by the Project and not suffer adverse consequences.

A decision as to whether to suspend the volunteer (in his/her own interests or the interests of others) will be made by the Trustees.

An internal inquiry will follow which might have one or more of the following consequences:

- Referral to police if a crime is suspected;
- Referral to social services if it appears a specific child has been abused;
- Disciplinary action;
- Remedial action (for example: training or supervision); or
- No further action.

### **Abuse of Trust**

This relates to Sexual Offences (Amendments) Act 2000 (UK wide), where it is a criminal offence for any person aged 18 years or over, who is in a position of trust (i.e. a professional or volunteer or student), developing a sexual relationship with a person under 18 years.

A sexual relationship within a relationship of trust in this context is unequal and is unacceptable. The Home Office guidance should not be interpreted to mean that no genuine relationship can start between two people within a relationship of trust, but that the relationship of trust should end before any sexual relationship begins.

### **Recruitment and Vetting**

It is a requirement that the DSO holds a Disclosure Barring Service (DBS) enhanced check.

### **Risk Assessments**

The DSO will carry out regular risk assessments to ensure children, young people and vulnerable adults are safe.

### **Training**

It is a requirement that all Project Trustees and volunteer supervisors attend appropriate initial training and refresher training as appropriate. This training will be carried out by the DSO.

### **Code of Practice**

Project Trustees and volunteers should be appropriately dressed when working and avoid wearing clothing or using language that could be construed as offensive.

Project Trustees and volunteers represent the Project and their behaviour should reflect the professional standards expected by the Project. For example do not engage in inappropriate behaviour or contact that could be construed as offensive.

**Review**

This policy is reviewed annually by the Trustees or sooner if required by legislation or changes to best practice.

## **Safeguarding Policy – Appendix A**

### **Designated Safeguarding Officer**

The person responsible for safeguarding is Paul Dadford, Trustee and Project Manager, who has the role of Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO).

Paul Dadford can be contacted on 07870 238688.