



Safeguarding Policy & Procedure

Safeguarding policy

Bioregional Development Group is an environmental charity that works with all sections of the community but does not specifically work with unsupervised children or vulnerable adults. Bioregional has a zero-tolerance approach towards any kind of abuse, exploitation, bullying or harassment. We expect all staff, volunteers, partners, interns, and consultants to conduct themselves in a way that preserves the dignity and respect of every individual. We are all expected to follow this policy accordingly.

Everyone associated with or representing Bioregional Development Group must protect children and vulnerable adults from harm and abuse and be aware that any child or adult at risk may be at risk of harm or abuse. We have a duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and vulnerable adults through identifying any welfare concern and taking action to address them in partnership with families and other agencies where appropriate.

In addition to our Safeguarding policy, we have policies to cover the roles of staff, health and safety, and equal opportunities.

Our policy applies to all staff, trustees, management committees and volunteers working within Bioregional Development Group.

Definition

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people relates to any child or young person (i.e. under 18 years of age) who has suffered from, or may be at risk of physical injury, neglect, emotional abuse or sexual abuse.

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of vulnerable adults relates to any adult aged 18 years or over 'who is or may be in need of community care services by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness; and who is or may be unable to take care of him or herself, or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation' (as defined by the Department of Health's current guidance to local partnerships, 2000).

Abuse is a violation of an individual's human and civil rights by any other person or persons which results in significant harm and may include: physical abuse; sexual abuse; psychological abuse; financial or material abuse; neglect and acts of omission for medical and physical care needs; discriminatory abuse. See appendix 1 for further details.

Objective

The objective of this Safeguarding policy is to commit to protecting the personal safety of all children and vulnerable adults attending our service/activities by promoting safeguarding awareness, good practice, and sound procedures.

Policy Statement

In our public engagement work some staff at Bioregional Development Group may at times work with children and vulnerable adults, but only where they have an appropriate and responsible carer with them.

We believe that children and vulnerable adults have the right to be treated equally in a safe and friendly environment.

This policy is based on the following principles:

- the welfare of the child/young person/adult at risk is paramount;
- all children/young people/vulnerable adults, whatever their race, colour, ethnic or national origin, religion, belief, sex, marital status, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, age, or disability, have the right to protection from abuse;
- all suspicions and allegations of abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly through the established reporting mechanisms detailed in the point below (also refer to 'what to do if you suspect that abuse may have occurred' below);

- all staff/volunteers working in this organisation have a responsibility to report concerns to the safeguarding point of contact at the organisation and/or to the Chair of the Senior Management Team; and
- staff/volunteers who work with children/vulnerable adults will attend relevant training courses and will be informed about the nature of abuse and advised to be alert to matters of concern through this safeguarding policy.

We aim to safeguard children/young people/vulnerable adults by:

- making sure the safeguarding and protection of any potential victim is paramount;
- ensuring appropriate and responsible carers are always present to supervise children and vulnerable adults at all Bioregional events and activities;
- sharing information appropriately about safeguarding with children/vulnerable adults, parents and carers and staff/volunteers;
- reporting concerns to the relevant agencies;
- following the procedures for recruitment and selection of staff/volunteers; and
- providing effective management for staff/volunteers through support, supervision and training
- reviewing our policy and good practice regularly.

The Role of the Safeguarding Point of Contact

The safeguarding point of contact is the Head of Finance and Resources.

The role of the safeguarding point of contact includes:

- ensuring that this policy is implemented throughout the organisation and that all relevant staff/volunteers are familiar with this policy and procedure;
- ensuring that all necessary enquiries, procedures, and investigations relating to safeguarding are taken seriously, dealt with on a timely basis in line with published procedures and confidentiality maintained;
- reporting allegations and suspicion of abuse to the appropriate authorities;
- ensuring that there is adequate induction and training relating to safeguarding matters;
- ensuring that each activity carried out by the organisation is sound in terms of safeguarding as regards personnel, practices, and premises; and
- checking all incident reports made by staff/volunteers, countersigning them and making such reference to the appropriate authority as is appropriate.

The Role of Staff Working with Children and Vulnerable adults

All staff in the organisation working with children/vulnerable adults must be alert to the possibility that any child/young person/adult at risk, regardless of race, colour, ethnic or national origin, religion, belief, sex, marital status, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, age, or disability, could be the victim of abuse or neglect and must be familiar with these procedures. Concern about a child/young person/adult at risk must be discussed with the safeguarding point of contact immediately so that if necessary, a referral can be made without delay.

Good Practice

Before any activity starts, the safeguarding point of contact shall ensure that adequate safeguarding procedures are in place, as follows:

- An appropriate or responsible carer must be present at all times for each child/young person/adult at risk attending any Bioregional activities;
- A daily diary or signing-in book must be kept for all adults on the premises (staff members, volunteers, parents and visitors);
- Staff will record any unusual events on the accident/incident form or in the daily diary, unless this includes anything confidential;

- Bioregional staff/volunteers should not be alone with a child/young person/adult at risk, although it is recognised that there may be times when this is unavoidable. However, we will ensure all reasonable procedures are followed;
- Staff/volunteers are to avoid any physical contact with children or vulnerable adults; and
- All staff/volunteers should treat all children/young people/adult at risk with dignity and respect in their attitude, language and actions.

Safe Recruitment, Selection, Training, and Supervision of Staff and Volunteers

In our recruitment and selection of staff and volunteers working with children/vulnerable adults we will ensure that we conduct face to face interviews, undertake reference checks and, where relevant, the appropriate conduct Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) disclosure and Independent Safeguards Authority (ISA) Registration checks.

We keep a central record of all staff working with children/vulnerable adults with the date and outcome of their CRB check so that at all times children/vulnerable adults, carers and partner organisations can be assured this has been done.

When working with children/vulnerable adults, staff and all volunteers will work in teams or in open environments where the appropriate and responsible carers are present and where staff/volunteers are not alone with children/vulnerable adults.

All staff/volunteers will:

- be given a clear job description or role description, setting out expectations for their work and conduct;
- show that they meet the person specification for the post or role;
- supply the names of two referees, who will be contacted personally;
- where required, complete an enhanced Criminal Records Bureau check on appointment, and every three years thereafter, giving photographic and other evidence of identity and including a formal declaration of any criminal convictions;
- where required, be taken through safeguarding policy and procedure on induction and attend the training programme provided by Havio (Bioregional's competent source for health and safety advice); and
- be supervised by a named manager;

Risk Assessment

Bioregional recognises that there are potential risks to children or vulnerable adults arising from delivery of some of our public engagement projects. A safeguarding risk assessment must be complete for these projects (see appendix 2). Appropriate control measures should be put in place to reduce any risks.

Responding to Allegations of Abuse

Bioregional takes a victim centred approach and confidentiality of all parties will be maintained.

Allegations against a member of staff/volunteer

The organisation will fully support and protect anyone who, in good faith, reports their concern that a colleague is, or may be, abusing a child/young person/adult at risk. If allegations of sexual abuse are raised, then the relevant authorities will be notified. Once reported, the action taken will depend on the nature of the incident. Some incidents may be resolved promptly after an initial review whilst others may require a formal investigation. Any formal investigation will be managed in accordance with the Bioregional disciplinary policy.

Concerns about poor practice

If, following consideration, the allegation is not a safeguarding issue but a compliant regarding behaviour or practice this will be dealt with as a misconduct issue.

If the allegation has been handled inadequately and concerns remain, it should be reported to either the chair of the management committee or the HR trustee, who will advise how to deal with the allegation and whether or not the organisation should initiate disciplinary proceedings.

Internal enquiries and suspension

The safeguarding point of contact will make an immediate decision about whether any individual accused of abuse should be temporarily suspended and pending an internal investigation, police, and social services inquiries. Suspension is not a disciplinary sanction and by no means indicates that any decision has been made.

Irrespective of the findings of the social services or police inquiries, the organisation will assess all individual cases to decide whether a member of staff or volunteer can be reinstated and how this can be handled sensitively. This may be a difficult decision, particularly where there is insufficient evidence to uphold any action by the police or substantiate the complaint. In such cases, the organisation must reach a decision based upon the available information. This might suggest that, on a balance of probability, it is more likely than not that the allegation is true. The welfare of the child/young person/adult at risk must remain of paramount importance throughout. We will ensure all reasonable steps are followed prior to making a decision on the evidence received.

Whistleblowing

(London Child Protection Procedures 4th Edition)

The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 places a legal responsibility on employers to provide protection for employees who raise concerns about specific activities in the workplace.

It is essential to the safety of children that we have in place a whistle-blowing policy which provides a method for staff, volunteers or service users to make known any concerns that they may have about the behaviour of any other person within the agency/group.

If a member of staff or volunteer has concerns with regard to practice in the employer's workplace they should raise their concerns with their manager, or any other manager designated within the organisation. If they feel unable to raise their concerns, for example if the line manager is implicated in the concern or has failed to act on the concerns raised previously, then the member of staff or volunteer has the right to protection if they take their concerns outside the organisation.

If a member of staff or volunteer is concerned that someone is being abused or that poor standards of care are creating conditions in which there is a risk of abuse to vulnerable adults using the service, then they have a duty to report their concerns about this directly to Children Social Services in their area or the Police in an emergency.

A "whistleblower" who wishes to remain anonymous will have their wishes recorded and respected. However, while respecting their right to confidentiality, they must be informed that they cannot be given an absolute undertaking that they will not be identified at a later date especially if legal action is indicated.

In the case of a serious crime being reported the whistle blower will be informed that the matter will need to be reported to the police. If the whistleblower chooses to go through an intermediary that person has a duty to inform their local Children Social Services, or to the police if they think that a criminal offence has been committed.

The member of staff or volunteer can also follow the Whistleblowing Procedures in their own organisation.

What to do if You Suspect That Abuse May Have Occurred

1 You must report your concerns immediately to the safeguarding point of contact at your organisation.

The point of contact will:

- Record the facts of what you witnessed, heard, or were told (see appendix)

- recognise that staff are not trained or equipped to interview potential victims, this must be done by an expert.
- consult with a statutory child protection agency such as the local social services department or the NSPCC on how to best to address any allegation;
- ensure that the parents/carers of the child/young person/vulnerable adults are contacted as soon as possible, **following advice from the social services department; and**
- make a referral to a statutory child protection or adult social services agency or to the police without delay.

If the organisations point of contact is the subject of the suspicion/allegation, the report must be made to the chair of the management committee, who will refer the allegation to social services.

2 Suspicions will not be discussed with anyone other than those named above.

3 It is the right of any individual to make direct referrals to the child protection agencies. If, for any reason, you believe that the point of contact has not responded appropriately to your concerns, then it is up to you to contact the child protection or adult social service agencies directly.

4 If a child/adult at risk makes a disclosure of abuse:

- make notes as soon as possible (ideally within one hour of being told)
- record dates, times and when you made the record
- report your discussion to the point of contact as soon as possible
- if the point of contact is implicated, you need to report to your manager
- if both are implicated, report to social services

Remember

- If in doubt, consult;
- Do not ignore concerns, even if these are vague;
- It is your duty to report – do not investigate and
- Your first responsibility is to the child/young person/vulnerable adult

Support for Dealing with the Aftermath of Abuse

Consideration should be given to the kind of support that children/young people/vulnerable adults, parents/carers and members of staff/volunteers may need. Use of helplines, support groups and open meetings will maintain an open culture and help the healing process. The Directory of the British Association for Counselling is available from the British Association for Counselling, 1 Regent Place, Rugby CV21 2PJ, tel: 01788 550 899, fax: 01788 562189.

Appendix 1

Definitions of Abuse

Abuse is defined as:

“a violation of an individual’s human and civil rights by any other person or persons which results in significant harm. (DH 2000).

Abuse may consist of a single act or repeated acts. It may be physical, verbal, or psychological, it may be an act of neglect or an omission to act, or it may occur when a vulnerable person is persuaded to enter into a financial or sexual transaction to which he or she has not consented or cannot consent. Abuse can occur in any relationship and it may result in significant harm to, or exploitation of, the person subjected to it.

Children and Young People

With regard to Children and Young People the following definitions are based on those from ***Working together to safeguard children*** (Department of Health, Home Office, Department for Education and Employment, 1999).

Physical abuse

- Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing harm to a child/young person.
- Physical harm may also be caused when a parent/carer feigns the symptoms of, or deliberately causes, ill health to a child/young person whom they are looking after.
- Physical abuse, as well as being the result of a deliberate act, can also be caused through omission or the failure to act to protect.

Emotional abuse

- Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional ill treatment of a child/young person, such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child’s/young person’s emotional development. It may involve making a child/young person feel or believe that they are worthless, unloved, and inadequate or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of the other person.
- It may feature expectations being imposed on a child/young person that are inappropriate for their age or stage of development. It may also involve causing a child/young person to feel frequently frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of a child/young person.
- Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill treatment of a child/young person, though it may occur alone.

Sexual abuse

- Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child/young person to take part in sexual activities.
- Sexual abuse may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children/young people in looking at, or in the production of, pornographic material, or watching sexual activities, or encouraging children/young people to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.
- Boys and girls can be sexually abused by both males and females, whether adults or other children/young people.

Neglect

- Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child’s/young person’s basic physical and/or psychological needs, which is likely to result in the serious impairment of the child’s/young person’s health or development. It may involve a parent or a carer failing to provide adequate food, shelter or clothing, leaving a child/young person at home alone or failing to ensure that a child/young person gets appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child’s/young person’s basic emotional needs.

- It is accepted that, in all forms of abuse, there are elements of emotional abuse and that some children/young people are subjected to more than one form of abuse at any time.

These four definitions do not minimise other forms of maltreatment.

Vulnerable adults

With regard to Vulnerable adults, the Department of Health 2000 in its '*No Secrets*' report suggests the following as the main types of abuse:

Physical

- including hitting, slapping, pushing, kicking, misuse of medication, restraint, or inappropriate sanctions.

Sexual

- including rape and sexual assault or sexual acts to which the vulnerable adult has not consented or could not consent or was pressured into consenting.

Psychological

- including emotional abuse, threats of harm or abandonment, deprivation of contact, humiliation, blaming, controlling, intimidation, coercion, harassment, verbal abuse, isolation or withdrawal from services or supportive networks.

Financial or material

- including theft, fraud, exploitation, pressure in connection with wills, property or inheritance or financial transactions, or the misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits.

Neglect and acts of omission

- including ignoring medical or physical care needs, failure to provide access to appropriate health, social care or educational services, the withholding of the necessities of life, such as medication, adequate nutrition and heating.

Discriminatory

- including racist, sexist, that based on a person's disability, age or sexuality and other forms of harassment, slurs or similar treatment.

Appendix 2

Risk assessment template

Risk Assessment					Risk Management			
Step 1: Activity areas (break down into different activity areas)	Step 2: Who is at risk? <small>(Think about the factors which put them at risk)</small>	Step 3: What are the risks?	Step 4: What are the control measures currently in place?	Step 5: Risk calculation			Stage 6: What are the agreed additional controls / actions to be put in place – by who and when - to mitigate the risk?	Step 7: Risk level after identifying additional controls/actions
				Probability	Impact	Risk level		

Risk assessment prepared by (print name):

Signature:

Date:

Management sign off (print name):

Signature:

Date:

Appendix 3

Reporting Allegations or Suspicions of Abuse

If you have any concerns about a child/young person/adult at risk being abused, you should inform the safeguarding point of contact in the first instance.

Important contacts outside the organisation

Local Safeguarding Children Board: 020 8770 4534

London Borough of Social Services:

Children's Social Care: 020 8770 6001 (office hours)

020 8770 5000 (out of hours)

Children & Families Emergency Duty Social Work Team - the automated message may tell you that the office is closed but there are staff there to take your call. Please hold on until they answer.

Adult Social Services: 020 8770 4565 (office hours)

020 8770 5000 (out of hours)

Emergency number: 999

Sutton Police: 0300 123 1212 (please ask for your local police station)

NSPCC Child Protection Helpline: 0808 800 5000

Confidential recording sheet

Organisation:

Name of person reporting:

Name of child/young person/adult at risk:

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Age and date of birth:

Ethnicity:

Religion: First language:

Disability:

Parent's/carer's name(s):

Home address:

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Postcode: Tel:

Are you reporting your own concerns or someone else's? Please give details.

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Give a brief description of what has prompted the concerns – include date, time and an outline of specific incidents.

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Any physical signs? Behaviour signs? Indirect signs?

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Have you spoken to the child/adult at risk? If so, what was said?

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Have you spoken to the parent(s)/carer(s)? If so, what was said?

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.....

Has a specific person been alleged to be the abuser? If so, please give details.

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Have you consulted anyone else? Please give details.

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Name of person reported to:

Date of reporting:

Signature of person reporting:

Today's date:

Action taken:

Notes

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