

Nailsea Environment and Wildlife Trust (NEWT) – Safeguarding of children
February 2025

Policy statement

NEWT has adopted this safeguarding children policy and expects every adult working or helping at the NEWT site to support to and comply with it. Consequently this policy shall apply to all trustees, volunteers or anyone working on behalf of NEWT.

Safeguarding legislation and government guidance says that safeguarding means:

- Protecting children from maltreatment;
- Preventing impairment of children’s health or development;
- Ensuring that children are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care;
- Taking action to enable all children and young people to have the best outcome.

Children and adults have a right to be safe in any activity that they take part in and NEWT has a responsibility to safeguard and promote children’s welfare at all times.

NEWT is keen that children and young people should benefit and learn from its nature reserve but also recognises that children are particularly vulnerable to accident or abuse. NEWT aims to take all reasonable steps to ensure the health, safety and welfare of children who are attending the site to take part in voluntary work or who are attending another event on NEWT’s land.

NEWT agrees that the welfare of the child is paramount, and all children have the right to protection from abuse regardless of gender, ethnicity, disability, sexuality or beliefs. It will ensure that any activities undertaken with children are properly planned and appropriate to their age and ability. All trustees and volunteers must accept their commitment to safeguard children involved with the charity from harm.

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Safeguarding procedures

Trustees and volunteers are not required to undergo Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks since any activities with children at the site will be infrequent and of limited duration.

Should it come to the attention of a trustee that a volunteer or trustee has a criminal record, that volunteer or trustee will be asked to undertake a DBS check at their own cost and will be suspended from working with NEWT until the check is complete. Should this check indicate a conviction relating to abuse of a child or vulnerable adult, that volunteer or trustee will immediately be banned from taking part in any NEWT activities at which a child or vulnerable adult may be in attendance. Should the conviction be unrelated to abuse of a child or vulnerable adult, the NEWT trustees will determine whether it is appropriate to permit that person to attend events at the site.

Safeguarding lead

NEWT's designated safeguarding lead is Helen Iorwerth. This is the person to whom queries about safeguarding should be addressed.

Children on NEWT's land

There is no permanent staffing of the site. The nature reserve is private land with a public right of way (footpath) running through the site, but members of the public, including children, are able to access the land at any time.

NEWT accepts children to attend its organised workdays on the following basis:

- Children under the age of 12 must be supervised throughout the event by their parent, guardian or other supervising adult over the age of 18, who not only brings the child to the event but also takes the child home again afterwards. If that lone adult brings more than one child, then the children will have to stay together, so that the one adult can supervise them.
- Children aged 13 to 17 may attend alone, including arriving and departing the site alone. Contact details for their parent or guardian will be requested and recorded, in order to inform this person in the event of accident or injury at the site.

Working with children

There should be a minimum of two adults (volunteers/parents) at every session.

One adult should never be alone with only one child (with the exception of the child's parent, guardian or supervising adult). Always ensure there are either at least two adults to one child, or one adult with more than one child.

A child should never be allowed to leave the group without adult supervision. This includes going anywhere else on the reserve, even if they know the reserve or are related to another member or volunteer.

A child should never be physically punished.

There should be no smoking in the presence of children.

Health and safety

All activities undertaken on site during workdays are risk assessed. Consideration of the attendance of children is included where appropriate within these risk assessments.

Children aged 15 or younger will not be permitted to use bladed equipment such as saws or scythes. Children aged 16 or 17 will be permitted to use this equipment and will be provided with suitable induction training on how to use tools safely.

NEWT's nature reserve includes areas of water. Children of all ages will not be permitted to work in the shallow water areas adjacent to the carr without supervision. Children will not be permitted in any circumstances to work in the deep pond at the eastern end of the site (and any future ponds in the meadow) or the boundary rivers and carrs within the site.

Visits by groups of children

On occasion, NEWT may be asked if a group of young people can attend the site outside of workdays and if an adult guide to the site can be provided – for example youth groups wishing to learn about wildlife on the site. In these cases, these groups will only be accepted if accompanied by their normal youth group leaders, who will also retain responsibility for safeguarding of these children.

Responsibility for the group remains with the nominated person in charge of the party.

All groups must be met by a nominated trustee or volunteer of NEWT.

The group organiser should be reminded of any specific hazards on the reserve or in the area.

The nominated person should know the details of the group's itinerary and timetable.

The nominated person should check that there is adequate supervision for the party, that the group organiser has a First Aid kit, that they are adequately equipped and clothed for their intended activities and that they carry a mobile phone. If the nominated person believes the group is inadequately organised access to the reserve may be refused.

No child should be left on their own with an adult who is not their parent, guardian or other relative. There should be at least two adults working with every group though this may include adults coming with the children. Visiting groups will be reminded that they must comply with their own organisation's requirements with regard to the ratio of adults to children. All leaders of incoming groups should:

- Ensure an adequate level of adult supervision;
- Become familiar in advance with the environment into which they are going, including carrying out a Risk Assessment for the site and the activity;
- Decide on a 'lost' procedure that everyone knows and understands;
- 'Count heads' regularly.

Photographing Children

No photos will be taken or published of any child attending an event or activity unless prior permission is sought from a person with parental responsibility or from the organising group leader in the event of group activities. Children's names will not be listed with any photos. If any person has any concerns regarding any person taking photos at an event or activity, that person should contact NEWT immediately.

Responding to abuse, suspected abuse and disclosures of abuse

'Child abuse and neglect' is a generic term encompassing all ill treatment of children or young people; including serious physical and sexual assaults as well as cases where the standard of care does not adequately support the child's health or development needs. There are four main types of abuse:

- Neglect;
- Physical abuse;
- Sexual abuse;
- Emotional abuse.

All concerns and allegations of abuse will be taken seriously by trustees and volunteers and responded to appropriately. NEWT will not ignore anything it sees during what is often only brief contact with a child, but will ensure that all concerns are followed up. In the event of action resulting in dismissal banning of a volunteer, the safeguarding lead will inform the Disclosure and Barring Service. Further advice will be taken from the NSPCC, North Somerset Child Protection Team and Avon and Somerset Police, as necessary.

If a volunteer or trustee suspects abuse, or abuse is disclosed to them:

Stay calm and be sensitive

Record all observations and everything that is said

Contact a NEWT trustee or the safeguarding lead at the earliest possible opportunity.

Urgent medical attention

If the child or young person is suffering from a serious injury, medical attention must be sought immediately from the ambulance service or Accident & Emergency. Parents or guardians must be informed as soon as possible.

Ensuring immediate safety

The safety of children and young people is paramount in all decisions relating to their welfare. Any action taken by staff should endeavour to ensure that no child is left in danger.

Listening to the child

Responsibility for making enquiries and investigating allegations rests with Children and Young People's Services and Police Child Protection Teams (CPT), along with other relevant agencies.

Where abuse is alleged, the initial response should be limited to listening carefully to what the child or young person says in order to clarify the concerns, offering reassurance about how s/he will be kept safe and explaining what action will be taken.

The child or young person must **not** be pressed for information, led or cross-examined, or given false assurances of absolute confidentiality. Such well-intentioned actions could prejudice police investigations, especially in cases of sexual abuse.

If a trustee or volunteer notes a concern regarding a visiting youth group etc, that concern must be reported to the leader in charge, and followed up with a report to the NEWT safeguarding lead.

Complaints procedure

In the event of a child (or adult on behalf of a child) wishing to complain about anything that has happened at a NEWT event or visit, they should initially contact the trustee in charge of that event or visit who will pass the complaint on to the NEWT safeguarding lead or to the Chair of NEWT if the complaint concerns the safeguarding lead. He/she will investigate the complaint and reply to the complainant

within two weeks; if the nature of the complaint merited it, he/she would contact the local Child Protection Team.

If the complainant remains dissatisfied, they will be told that they may take their complaint to the Chair of NEWT. (This would happen immediately if the complaint concerned the safeguarding lead.) She/he would appoint a panel of at least two members of the Committee (which may include herself/himself) to investigate the complaint. If the Chair considers the matter warrants it, he/she may appoint an appropriate person from outside the Committee to sit on the panel. The complainant will be contacted within four weeks of the appeal being made and told the decision of the panel. There will be no further appeal procedure.

This policy is approved and robustly endorsed by Nailsea Environment and Wildlife Trust and is due for review annually.