



Safeguarding Policy and Reporting Procedure

This policy applies to all committee members and volunteers and will be effective from 6 February 2025.

The Friends will formally review this policy at least every 3 years unless changes in legislation or regulation require an earlier review.

Note: children will only be able to volunteer when accompanied by a parent or guardian or as part of a school visit with a teacher; volunteer groups of vulnerable adults will always be accompanied and supervised by a member from their organisation

1. Introduction

The Friends of Watermans Park (the “Friends”) are committed to the principles that ensure vulnerable people and children who volunteer are safeguarded. All committee members and volunteers have a duty to report actual, suspected or risk of harm.

This Policy applies to all committee members and volunteers and will be reviewed at least once a year and will be made available to the public.

This policy is informed by the following regulation and statute:

- Care Act 2014
- The Children’s Act of 1989 and 2004
- Mental Capacity Act 2005

2. Purpose of the Friends Safeguarding Policy & Procedure

- Provide Friends committee members and volunteers with guidance on policies and procedures to reduce the risk of harm to vulnerable adults and children.
- Provide guidance on what to do if they suspect a vulnerable adult or child may be experiencing, or be at risk of, harm.
- Provide protection for vulnerable adults and their children who volunteer.
- Ensure that there is adequate supervision for all vulnerable adults.
- Set out the minimum standards expected from all volunteers and that they are suitably trained and ensuring there is guidance to enable promptly and proportionate responses to support effective safeguarding.
- Ensure there are appropriate checks made that people are suitable to act in their roles by following safer recruitment principles, including the use of Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks for existing and new committee members and volunteers where a risk assessment reflects the requirement.
- Set out the minimum training requirements.

3. Definitions

Safeguarding can be defined as protecting individuals (particularly those that are vulnerable) from abuse, neglect or any form of harm.

Harm can come from adults, other children or people working closely with these vulnerable individuals. It is the legal mechanism by which statutory authorities can intervene in the life of any person who is experiencing or at risk of abuse, neglect or self-neglect and who is unable to protect themselves.

Abuse is when someone does something to a person that can cause harm. It could be emotional and/or physical harm. Abuse can take place in any setting, public or private, and can be perpetuated

by anyone. The harm can be deemed significant where there is not only ill treatment but also impairment and avoidable deterioration to physical, mental, social, sexual or emotional health.

Neglect is when someone is not being given the care and support that they need to live their life, this can include self-neglect.

4. The 6 Principles of Safeguarding as defined by The Care Act 2014 are:

- **Accountability:** Safeguarding is everybody's business. Everyone must accept that we're all accountable as individuals, services and organisations. Transparency is important when it comes to safeguarding. In the event of a disclosure being made it must be made clear to the individual that has been disclosed will be reported.
- **Empowerment:** It is important for any individual who has been a victim of abuse or neglect to feel that they have control over their situation. Support and encouragement are key to effective working with a victim of abuse or neglect.
- **Partnership:** Partnership working is essential. We should share information with other agencies where it is appropriate to help keep the individual safe.
- **Prevention:** If possible, act before harm has come to an individual.
- **Proportionality:** When a safeguarding incident occurs, you should report concerns in a manner that is appropriate to the risk presented. It is important to respect the person and think about what is best for them.
- **Protection:** Safeguarding is designed to protect children and adults from harm - at home, at work, at school, or anywhere else that they might be placed at risk. It is everyone's responsibility to look out for the wellbeing of others.

A **vulnerable adult** is above the age of 18 and is unable to care for themselves and not able to protect themselves from harm. One of the differences with safeguarding adults is that while preventing them from the risk of abuse or neglect, they also need support maintaining control of their own lives. A vulnerable adult is a person who is or may need community care services by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness; and who is or may be unable to care of themselves, or unable to protect themselves against significant harm or exploitation.

Vulnerable adults are entitled to: privacy, be treated with dignity, lead an independent life and be enabled to do so, be able to choose how they lead their lives, the protection of the law, have their rights upheld regardless of their ethnic origin, gender, sexuality, impairment or disability, age, religion or cultural background.

A **child** is defined as anyone who is below the age of 18. This type of safeguarding is protecting them from abuse, maltreatment or exploitation, as well as preventing any harm to their health or ability to develop. Safeguarding a child means identifying and protecting them from harm.

While the overarching responsibility for child safeguarding lies with the local authority, all professionals and agencies encountering children have responsibilities and duties to help safeguard children from harm.

Where someone suspects a child is at risk or is suffering harm they will:

- Report this immediately to the designated person who must then alert social services and the police where appropriate.
- Keep a full and accurate record of all concerns, or any reports received.
- Co-operate fully with any investigation as required.

The Friends recognise that everyone has strengths and weaknesses, capacities and restrictions yet, at sometimes, may become vulnerable due to pressures, dangers or overwhelming circumstances. Some people by reason of their physical or social circumstances have higher levels of vulnerability than others.

5. Accountability

It is the duty of everyone within the Friends to recognise and support those who are identified as being more vulnerable. However, the Committee of the Friends are accountable for a robust approach to safeguarding.

The Friends has a designated person who is responsible for dealing with any concerns about the protection of vulnerable adults or children. The designated Safeguarding Lead is Philip Jones. In the event that the designated person is unavailable, or the allegation of abuse is made about them, then another member of the committee will take responsibility.

However, safeguarding vulnerable people is everyone's responsibility by:

- Being aware of the risks of abuse and neglect that vulnerable individuals can face
- Knowing what help and support is available
- Supporting people to make informed decisions and choices about the way they live
- Understanding their responsibilities
- Working together to report and investigate concerns
- Working together to prevent abuse and neglect
- Be familiar with this Safeguarding Policy and Procedure and any other supporting process/guidance, including how to report a safeguarding concern
- Undertake mandatory safeguarding awareness training as appropriate to their role

The safeguarding risks which committee members and volunteers must be alert to include:

- sexual harassment, abuse and exploitation
- negligent treatment
- physical or emotional abuse
- bullying or harassment
- health and safety
- commercial exploitation

- extremism and radicalisation
- forced marriage
- child trafficking
- female genital mutilation
- discrimination on any of the grounds in the Equality Act 2010
- people may target the charity
- poor behaviour of other trustees and volunteers
- people may abuse a position of trust

The local authority (Social Care) has the lead role in safeguarding adults and children who may be at risk (in addition to the police who will lead on all criminal investigations). The Friends will work in partnership with them to deliver this Policy and put in place preventative measures through training and reporting.

6. Applying safeguarding principles

The Friends will record and refer all concerns, suspicions or allegations of abuse or neglect to the relevant local authority Safeguarding team who are responsible for carrying out safeguarding assessments and enquiries.

In applying safeguarding principles the Friends seek to meet the requirements of legislation, guidance and recognised best practice. This means that:

- All people are treated with respect and dignity.
- The Friends will ensure that this policy is applied fairly and consistently. It will not directly or indirectly discriminate against any person or group of people and will make reasonable adjustments to this policy to ensure it is applied fairly.
- The Friends will respect and not penalise those who stand up to anyone who is suspected of causing abuse.
- The Friends will make sure that committee members and volunteers are suitable and legally able to act in their positions
- The Friends will provide all committee members and volunteers responsible for implementing the policy with comprehensive training on induction [and at least every three years thereafter].
- All new gardening volunteers are required to be briefed about safeguarding as part of their induction programme.
- All committee members and volunteers must be familiar with these safeguarding policies, take appropriate actions in line with the policy
- All those making a complaint or allegation or expressing concern, whether they are committee members, volunteers, donors or members of the general public should be reassured that they will be taken seriously and their comments will usually be treated confidentially, but their concerns may be shared with the appropriate authorities if they or others are at significant risk.
- A vulnerable person and/or child have the right:
 - To be made aware of this policy
 - To have alleged incidents recognised and taken seriously
 - To receive fair and respectful treatment throughout

- To be involved in any process as appropriate
 - To receive information about the outcome
 - Be offered support so that they feel empowered to act
- The Friends will risk assess roles to determine if DBS is a requirement.
 - Where a young person is under the age of 16 and wishes to volunteer they must be accompanied by a parent or guardian. The exception is where the young person is attending under as part of an official visit by a local school and teaching staff are present.
 - Any disclosure made to a committee member or volunteer about an adult or child at risk, or any concerns that become apparent, must be treated with sensitivity and shared with the Friends Safeguarding Representative. Any sharing of information must be carried out on a strictly “need to know” basis. The priority should always be to ensure the safety and protection of the vulnerable.
 - It is appropriate to ascertain the wishes of the vulnerable person about what they want to do about the situation, explaining the boundaries of confidentiality and the role of the Safeguarding Representative. However, care should be taken if telling the vulnerable person what you are going to do could make them more vulnerable or at further risk.
 - If a complaint, allegation or expression of concern is upheld against a committee member or volunteer this will result in immediate dismissal from their role.
 - Records of applications, references, identity verification, DBS checks, training, accident and incident registers, any alleged, actual or threatened abuse, assault or molestation and action taken, revisions to this policy will be retained for no less than 15 years. Personal data will be maintained and protected in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018. Data Protection regulations do not prevent the organisation from sharing information with relevant agencies where there is a reasonable belief that a child is at risk of significant harm or an adult of substantial harm.
 - The Friends will monitor safeguarding concerns and actions taken.

7. Reporting Procedure

Concerns about vulnerable people emerge in a number of ways. The core actions that should always be taken are:

- Take any emergency action needed to alleviate any immediate risk to life or limb without endangering yourself
- Make a brief factual note of what you have seen, heard or become concerned about (within an hour when possible)
- Listen, don't ask any leading questions and treat all information confidentially
- Discuss your concerns with the Friends Safeguarding Representative or, if not available, another Friends committee member as soon as possible and in any event within 48 hours
- If you do not feel able to discuss your concerns with the Friends Safeguarding Representative or another committee member then alternative independent reporting mechanisms are set out below.

It is important that everyone is aware that the person who first encounters a case of alleged or suspected abuse is not responsible for deciding whether abuse has occurred. That is a task for the professional vulnerable adult and child protections agencies following a referral to them.

The committee member with overall responsibility for the Friends policies is **Philip Jones**.

Philip can be contacted by telephone on 07743 547262 or by email chair@friendsofwatermanspark.org.

If a volunteer, committee member or member of the public has a concern and does not wish to contact Philip or another committee member then alternative independent reporting and whistleblowing mechanisms are set out below.

If anyone becomes aware of, or wishes to make, a complaint, allegation or expression of concern but does not feel able to report it to the Friends Safeguarding Representative or Philip Jones or another committee member then alternative independent reporting mechanism are available.

- If anyone needs independent advice about blowing the whistle they may visit Protect's website (<https://protect-advice.org.uk>) and call their free and confidential advice line on 0800 055 7214.
- Citizens Advice also provide independent advice
- If there is a crime or if anyone is worried about someone's safety they should also tell the police.

7.1 Reporting and investigation mechanisms

Upon becoming aware of a complaint, allegation or expression of concern it should be reported to the Friends Safeguarding Lead as soon as possible and in any event within 48 hours.

The allegation/incident will be logged and an initial investigation to ascertain if the allegations are a safeguarding matter. The safety of the vulnerable person is priority. The Safeguarding Lead will decide from the initial investigation if appropriate agencies should be informed. They will inform the Friends Committee without using any personal information about the alleged victim or alleged perpetrator.

The designated person will make notes and keep confidential records of any disclosure or concerns that have been reported. They will report all safeguarding issues to the relevant local authority and criminal offences to the police, seeking consent from adult victims where appropriate. It is important that after initial fact finding establishes cause, that the relevant authorities are informed to investigate the matter fully.

Where there is concern about someone who is a victim of abuse or neglect, do the following:

- **If the person is in immediate danger, act at once by calling emergency services or medical assistance 999.**
- Contact the local authority Safeguarding team:

Telephone: 020 8583 3100 - Monday to Friday from 9am to 5pm.

Out of hours telephone: 020 8583 2222.

Email - Adultsocialcare@hounslow.gov.uk

If safe and appropriate to do so, ask the person if you can help them to get support.