

CHILD PROTECTION AND SAFEGUARDING POLICY

1. PURPOSE AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The Geographical Association (GA) is committed to the highest standard of child protection and safeguarding, to upholding the rights of all adults and children to be free from harm from abuse, exploitation and neglect. It strives to create and maintain a safe, equitable and inclusive environment for everyone who works for the GA and for volunteers who represent the GA. It fully recognises its duty toward safeguarding and promoting the welfare of everyone, including its beneficiaries, staff, trustees and other volunteers, in accordance with national legislation and relevant local requirements (e.g., in school settings). The Association understands this commitment necessitates: the recognition of those who may be at risk and the circumstances which may increase risk; knowing how abuse, exploitation or neglect manifests itself; and being willing to report child protection and safeguarding concerns.

The GA understands that child protection and safeguarding is everybody's responsibility and this policy therefore applies to everyone who works or volunteers for the GA, regardless of their role. It is expected that all staff, trustees and other volunteers who represent the GA will adhere to the child protection and safeguarding policy and procedures of the setting in which they are working (e.g., a school), as well as to the GA's policies and procedures. If the setting involves children or young people aged below 18 years, the GA employee, consultant, trustee or other volunteer must also be familiar with the contents of the Department for Education's publication [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#), part 1, or <https://www.gov.wales/keeping-learners-safe> if operating in Wales.

The purpose of this policy is therefore to safeguard the GA's beneficiaries, staff, trustees and other volunteers from harm and to ensure that everyone involved in the activities of the Association is appropriately aware of:

- the legislation, policy and procedures for child protection and safeguarding;
- their role and responsibilities for child protection and safeguarding;
- what to do or who to speak to if they have a concern relating to child protection or safeguarding.

2. DEFINITIONS

Abuse - a violation of an individual's human and civil rights by another person or persons. It can occur in any relationship and may result in significant harm to, or exploitation of, the person subjected to it.

Child protection - the set of actions, policies, and procedures aimed at preventing and responding to any form of abuse, neglect, or harm experienced by children. It involves safeguarding children's rights, ensuring their safety, promoting their well-being, and taking appropriate measures to address any risks or incidents that may compromise their physical, emotional, or social development.

Neglect - the failure or omission by a caregiver or responsible adult to provide the necessary care, support, and attention required for a child or vulnerable individual's well-being. It involves the persistent or severe deprivation of basic needs, such as food, shelter, medical care, education, supervision, and emotional nurturing, which can significantly impact their physical, cognitive, and emotional development.

Safe environment - a space free from any form of harm, abuse, exploitation, or discrimination, created and maintained when all individuals follow appropriate codes of conduct, maintain boundaries, uphold ethical standards, and actively prevent and address any concerns or incidents that may pose a risk to the individuals' safety or well-being; an environment based on respectful and inclusive practices and trust, in which individuals also provide support and protection to those in their care or under their supervision.

Safeguarding - the proactive measures taken to protect and promote the well-being, safety, and dignity of individuals, particularly those who may be vulnerable to abuse, harm, or exploitation. It involves creating a safe environment, identifying risks, and implementing strategies to prevent and respond to safeguarding concerns effectively.

3. RESPONSIBILITIES

Trustees have a responsibility for scrutinising, approving and reviewing appropriate child protection and safeguarding policy and procedures. Trustees will also designate a member of the Governing Body (GB) as a GB safeguarding lead.

The **Chief Executive** is responsible for the consistent operational application of the procedures and providing appropriate guidance to staff around child protection and safeguarding at the GA. They will act as the Association's staff safeguarding lead (or delegate this role).

Line managers are responsible for ensuring they execute any procedures in line with this policy and for ensuring their teams or those who they engage with understand their roles and responsibilities in relation to child protection and safeguarding.

All GA staff must be aware of and abide by this policy and must also take into account relevant sections on conduct within the Employee Handbook, alongside this policy.

Other individuals involved in GA events and activities, whether in a voluntary capacity, acting as a consultant to the GA or attending GA activities as a member or delegate also play a crucial role in safeguarding and child protection. Every such individual has a responsibility to:

- report if they witness any safeguarding or child protection issues or if they have concerns in relation to those holding leadership and management responsibility in relation to child protection and safeguarding procedures;
- follow guidelines, codes of conduct and procedures provided by the GA;
- promote a safe and supportive environment, by being aware of their own actions and treating others with respect and dignity;

- cooperate with investigations if approached by the GA or by a designated authority, helping to ensure the effective resolution of any safeguarding issues.

4. PROCEDURES AND MEASURES

a) Recruitment, selection and deployment

The GA undertakes and updates Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks for employees and volunteers who are likely to come into unsupervised contact with children as part of their GA paid or unpaid work. These DBS checks include a check against the Barred List where the employee or volunteer is undertaking regulated activity with children/young people.

Consultants to the GA who are likely to come into unsupervised contact with children or young people aged under 18 as part of their engagement must have a current DBS check and should also be prepared to evidence this.

In addition, the GA will continually assess the suitability of staff, consultants to the GA, trustees or other volunteers and prevent the employment or deployment of unsuitable individuals for any GA activity.

b) Training, awareness and conduct

All trustees will confirm annually that they have read and will comply with the Charity Commission guidance on [safeguarding and protecting people](#) and the [10 actions trustee boards need to take](#) to ensure good safeguarding governance.

Staff will confirm annually that they have read and will comply with this policy and with the relevant sections of the Employee Handbook.

Consultants to the GA will be directed towards this policy and will confirm they will comply with it upon signing each Consultancy Service Agreement (CSA) with the GA.

All staff, trustees and other volunteers will also be held to the standards set out in the GA's ethical policy.

c) Risk management and provision

When planning activities and events, the GA will assess any child protection or safeguarding risks to children and adults. It will issue appropriate guidance to all participants and, where needed, ensure a delegated safeguarding lead is identified for that event or activity.

For its online activities, the GA will:

- ensure its online services are suitable for users, particularly if these are aimed at children or young people aged under 18 years;
- protect people's personal data in accordance with its Information Security policy;
- ensure it has permission and consent to display any images on GA websites or social media accounts;
- explain how users can report online concerns.

d) Reporting and responding to concerns

The GA will treat with respect and care any individual who discloses or submits a child protection or safeguarding concern. The GA is committed to responding to any concerns fairly, equitably and sensitively. It will seek to provide prompt investigations of all concerns using transparent policies, procedures, and reporting. It will make no presumption of innocence or guilt and will respect the right of any complainant to make their own decisions about seeking criminal or civil recourse.

If a member of staff, trustee or other volunteer has child protection or safeguarding concerns while acting on behalf of the GA they should report these to the GA Chief Executive, who will then use the procedure set out in Appendix 2 to guide and manage the GA's response. If the concern is in relation to the Chief Executive, the Chair of Trustees should be contacted.

When the outcome of any child protection or safeguarding investigation has been determined, if the allegation is substantiated and if the safeguarding concern falls within the reporting guidance issued by the Charity Commission, the Chief Executive will inform the Commission. In this instance, the Chief Executive will also inform GB of the matter being reported.

e) Confidentiality and information sharing

The purpose of information-sharing and record-keeping is to facilitate effective communication, support decision-making, and maintain accurate and comprehensive records related to safeguarding concerns. It helps monitor and assess situations, implement appropriate interventions, and ensure the continuity of care and support, especially for vulnerable individuals. The GA will strive to protect the privacy of all affected individuals, except in circumstances where there is a significant risk of harm, where there is a need for other specific individuals to know (on a confidential basis) or where legal obligations otherwise require information disclosure.

In line with data protection legislation, confidential information may be shared within the GA, to allow a concern about child protection or safeguarding to be reported to an appropriate person within the Association, or as part of a case management meeting to co-ordinate actions by the GA. A confidential and accurate record relating to any child protection or safeguarding concern may be stored by the GA, in compliance with its Information Security policy. All information, digital or otherwise, will be accessible only to those with a need to access the information. Information will NOT automatically be shared with a subject's spouse, partner, adult, child, unpaid or paid carer, as information should only be shared with family and friends and/or carers with the consent of an adult or if the adult does not have capacity to make that decision and family/friends/carers need to know in order to help keep the person safe.

f) Risk management, monitoring and review

This Child Protection and Safeguarding policy will be reviewed regularly by GA trustees. Reviews will take account of changes in legislation and the lessons learned from the implementation of the policy in the preceding period.

This policy was reviewed in June 2023.

APPENDIX A: Safeguarding Lead role descriptions

The Chief Executive holds primary responsibility for putting into place procedures to support this policy. Their duties and responsibilities include:

- Working with others within the organisation to create a safe and inclusive environment.
- Playing a leading role in developing and establishing the organisation's approach to child protection and safeguarding and in maintaining and reviewing the organisation's implementation plan for safeguarding in line with current legislation and best practice.
- Coordinating the dissemination of the child protection and safeguarding policy, procedures and resources throughout the organisation.
- Receive reports of and manage cases of reported poor practice and concerns– including an appropriate recording system.
- Co-ordinate any case management processes.
- Manage liaison with, and referrals to, external agencies, for example the police.
- Create a central point of contact for internal and external individuals and agencies concerned about the child protection or safeguarding within the organisation.

The Governing Body Safeguarding Lead holds responsibility for:

- Identifying any inconsistencies between this policy and other GA policies and procedures when these are reviewed, and recommending ways to achieve consistency.
- Advising on the GA's training needs and the development of its training strategy.
- Supporting the Chair of Trustees in the event a child protection or safeguarding issue is reported in respect of the Chief Executive.
- Supporting case management processes at the invitation of the Chief Executive.

APPENDIX B: GA child protection and safeguarding procedure

a) Types of Risks and Harm

Harm and risks to be alert to, whether online or in person, include:

- sexual harassment, abuse and exploitation
- criminal exploitation
- organisational culture, which may allow poor behaviour and poor accountability
- people abusing a position of trust they hold
- bullying or harassment
- health and safety
- commercial exploitation
- cyber abuse
- discrimination on any of the grounds in the Equality Act 2010
- people targeting the GA
- data breaches, including those under General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)
- negligent treatment
- domestic abuse
- self-neglect
- physical or emotional abuse
- extremism and radicalisation
- forced marriage
- modern slavery
- human trafficking
- female genital mutilation.

b) How issues should be reported

Any individual or organisation wishing to bring a child protection or safeguarding issue or concern to the attention of the GA should contact either the Chief Executive (using the contact details provided on the GA's website) or the activity designated safeguarding lead, whose details will be clearly provided alongside the event or activity information. If the issue relates to the Chief Executive, the matter should be reported to the Chair of Trustees.

Issues or concerns can be raised in one of two ways:

- **Disclosure:** an individual or organisation may wish to disclose information to make the GA aware and/or to seek advice or support. In this case, we will seek to acknowledge the disclosure within three working days, to investigate the matter and to respond to the individual or organisation within four weeks in order to share the conclusion of the investigation and any actions the GA has taken, within the limits imposed by our duty of care and confidentiality to all parties. This timetable may be adjusted as necessary to account for extenuating or unforeseen factors.
- **Complaint:** an individual or organisation may wish to lodge a child protection or safeguarding complaint, relating to an individual working or volunteering for the GA, or to a GA activity. In this case, we will seek to acknowledge the disclosure within three working days, to investigate the matter and to respond to the individual or organisation within six weeks, to share the conclusion

of the investigation and any actions the GA has taken, within the limits imposed by our duty of care and confidentiality to all parties. This timetable may be adjusted as necessary to account for extenuating or unforeseen factors.

c) Referral and escalation processes

The Chief Executive (or, if the matter concerns the Chief Executive, the Chair of Trustees) will decide whether it is appropriate for any investigation to be undertaken and, if so, whether this investigation should be internal, whether an external agency needs to be informed, or whether the matter needs to be raised with an external agency for investigation. In particular, if a disclosure or complaint concerns an individual working or volunteering on behalf of the GA in a school or college setting, the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) of the school or college may need to be informed, so that the DSL can contact the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) for advice on how to proceed.

For internal (GA) investigations:

- A senior member of staff or a trustee will be appointed to investigate the disclosure or complaint.
- The individual or organisation raising the issue and the subjects of any disclosure or complaint will be informed about the investigation and be given the opportunity to ask questions about the process, so that they understand the steps being taken, matters of confidentiality and any other relevant matters.
- Depending on the nature of the issue, the person leading the investigation may seek to resolve the issue through mediation or by determining responsibility.
- Any recommendation for appropriate resolution, redress and/or sanction shall be proportionate to the seriousness of the issue and may, without limitation, include:
 - a public or private apology;
 - disciplinary action in line with the GA's Disciplinary Policy;
 - suspension or permanent removal from a position within the GA;
 - suspension or permanent cessation of organisational partnerships or agreements with the GA.
- For incidents requiring a report to the Charity Commission, the investigation lead will liaise with either the Chief Executive or, where the matter concerns the Chief Executive, the Chair of Trustees regarding the recommended course of action to resolve the issue.
- Either party may appeal the findings, resolutions, sanctions or responses by submitting a written appeal to the Chief Executive. In the event an appeal is unsuccessful, either party may appeal the decision with the Chair of Trustees, who will appoint a committee of three trustees to consider the final appeal and respond within six weeks. The appeal may be considered either on procedural grounds or where there is the provision of material new information for which fairness would dictate consideration. The decision of the trustee committee will be final.

d) Information-sharing and record-keeping instructions

As part of our dedication to child protection and safeguarding, it is crucial that staff and others involved in investigative processes understand the importance of information-sharing and record-keeping. These guidelines outline the appropriate procedures to ensure the confidentiality, accuracy, and integrity of safeguarding-related information. By adhering to these guidelines, the GA will collectively protect the well-being and welfare of those it serves.

- All safeguarding-related information shared within the organisation must be treated with the utmost confidentiality. Staff members are responsible for ensuring that such information is disclosed only to authorised individuals and strictly for safeguarding purposes.
- All information must be handled in compliance with the GA's Information Security policy.
- Staff members should share safeguarding information on a need-to-know basis within the organisation. This ensures that appropriate individuals are aware of potential risks, allowing for timely and coordinated action.
- In certain circumstances, it may be necessary to share safeguarding information with external agencies, such as local authorities or law enforcement. Such sharing should be done in accordance with legal obligations and established procedures, seeking advice from designated safeguarding leads when necessary.
- Staff members must maintain accurate, detailed, and contemporaneous records of safeguarding concerns, incidents, and actions taken. These records should include relevant dates, times, individuals involved, and any outcomes or decisions made.
- Safeguarding records should be stored securely in accordance with the GA's Information Security policy and be accessible only to authorised personnel.
- Records must be retained for the prescribed period in accordance with legal requirements. Disposal of safeguarding records should be carried out securely and in line with the GA's Information Security policy.

APPENDIX C: Examples of safeguarding incidents to report to the Charity Commission

Serious incidents to report	Incidents not to report
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A beneficiary or other individual connected with the charity’s activities has/alleges to have suffered serious harm • Allegation that a staff member has physically or sexually assaulted or neglected a beneficiary whilst under the charity’s care • The Chief Executive of the charity has been suspended pending the outcome of an investigation into their alleged sexual harassment of a fellow member of staff • Allegation that a trustee, staff member or volunteer has been sexually assaulted by another trustee, staff member or volunteer • A staff computer is found to contain images of child pornography • An internal investigation has established that there is a widespread culture of bullying within the charity • A beneficiary or individual connected with the charity’s activities has died or been seriously harmed; a significant contributory factor is the charity’s failure to implement a relevant policy • Charity failed to carry out DBS checks which would have identified that a member of staff or trustee was disqualified in law (under safeguarding legislation) from holding that position • Charity discovers that an employee or volunteer coming into contact with children or at risk adults is on the sex offenders register 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minor unusual/aggressive behaviour by a beneficiary towards a member of staff • Police called to charity premises because a beneficiary is drunk and disorderly • Charity becomes aware of allegations of abuse or neglect of a beneficiary that occurred outside the charity; the charity has reported the allegations to the appropriate agencies, and there is no harm to the charity’s reputation • Logged accident book reports where there was no significant harm to individuals • Details of reports under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 (RIDDOR) where there has been no significant harm to individuals • Minor accidental injury to a charity service user e.g. slipping on a wet floor • A staff member who is not in a senior position or position of specific responsibility (e.g. head of safeguarding) has bullied or harassed a fellow staff member. There is no indication of a widespread culture of bullying or harassment within the charity and the incident is dealt with by minor disciplinary action (for example, the staff member responsible has not been suspended or dismissed). • A staff member who is not in a senior position or position of specific responsibility is dismissed for marrying a member of the community in which the charity is working, in breach of the charity’s code of conduct but not in breach of local laws

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https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/752170/RSI_guidance_what_to_do_if_something_goes_wrong_Examples_table_deciding_what_to_report.pdf