



Friends of Coy Pond

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Established 1998

**Friends of Coy Pond  
Safeguarding Policy  
V1.0**



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**Version history**

Version	Author	Approved by	Release date
1.0	J.D. Preston	W. Hancock	17/10/2024



# **1 Introductions, statements and abbreviations**

## **1.1 Introduction**

The introduction of this Safeguarding and Child Protection policy should be seen as a clear signal by Friends of Coy Pond that it is determined to ensure all necessary steps are taken to protect from harm, those children, young people and vulnerable adults who participate in volunteer gardening at all levels.

The policy establishes Friends of Coy Pond's position, role and responsibilities and, together with the procedures section, clarifies what is expected of the individuals involved in the organisation.

It very clearly highlights the importance placed by Friends of Coy Pond on the protection of children, young people and vulnerable adults. It also safeguards and protects all personnel from the risk of false allegations of abuse or poor practice.

Everyone who participates in volunteer gardening is entitled to do so in an enjoyable and safe environment. To ensure this, Friends of Coy Pond has developed principles that all its personnel should follow.

These principles apply to all participants, but young people and vulnerable adults in particular are entitled to a higher duty of care and to be protected from poor practice or abuse. Abuse can occur within many situations including the gardening environment.

Some individuals will actively seek employment or voluntary work with children, young people or vulnerable adults in order to harm them. The Friends of Coy Pond is committed to devising and implementing policies so that everyone in the organisation accepts their responsibilities to safeguard children, young people and vulnerable adults from harm and abuse. This means following procedures to protect children, young people and vulnerable adults and to report any concerns about their welfare to appropriate authorities.

Everyone involved with Friends of Coy Pond has a role to play in Safeguarding and Child Protection of the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults and preventing their abuse. Anyone who may have regular contact with children, young people and vulnerable adults will be a very important link in identifying cases where an individual needs protection.

All policies and procedures discussed below refer to vulnerable adults as well as to children and young people.

## **1.2 Policy Statement**

The Friends of Coy Pond is committed to the following:

- Making the welfare of volunteers paramount
- Ensuring opportunities for all volunteers, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious belief and/or sexual identity should be able to participate in gardening in an enjoyable and safe environment.
- Taking all reasonable steps to protect volunteers from harm, discrimination and degrading treatment and to respect their rights, wishes and feelings.
- Taking action swiftly and appropriately to all suspicions and allegations of poor practice or abuse.



### 1.3 Terms and abbreviations

The following terms and abbreviations are used in this document:

- Anyone under the age of 18 is considered to be a child/young person.
- 'Parent' is used as a generic term to include parents, carers and guardians.
- 'Personnel' includes all volunteers of the Friends of Coy Pond.
- 'Designated Safeguarding Officer' is the individual within the Friends of Coy Pond whose responsibilities are explained in section 3.4 below.
- 'Friends of Coy Pond' refers to members of the organisation regardless of membership status
- DSO: Designated Safeguarding Officer



## **2 Good Practice, Poor Practice and Abuse**

### **2.1 Introduction**

To provide volunteers with the best possible experience and opportunities in volunteer gardening, everyone must operate within an accepted ethical framework and demonstrate exemplary behaviour. Not only will this allow activities to make a positive contribution to the development of volunteers and safeguards their welfare, but it also protects all personnel from the risk of false allegations of abuse or poor practice.

It is not always easy to distinguish poor practice from abuse, whether intentional or accidental. It is not therefore the responsibility of personnel within Friends of Coy Pond to make judgements about whether abuse is taking place. It is, however, its responsibility to identify poor practice and possible abuse and to act if they have concerns about the welfare of a volunteer, as explained in section 4. This section (2) will help you identify what is meant by good practice, poor practice and abuse.

### **2.2 Good Practice**

All personnel should adhere to the following principles and actions:

- Before undertaking any activities involving young people, conduct a risk assessment to identify possible sources of danger and take appropriate action to minimise these risks.
- Make the experience of gardening fun and enjoyable; promote fairness, confront and deal with bullying and do not condone rule violations or the use of prohibited or illegal substances.
- Insist on adherence to Child Protection procedures.
- Treat all young people equally; this means giving both the all members of the group similar attention, time, respect and preserving their dignity.
- Respect the developmental stage of each young person and do not risk sacrificing their welfare in a desire for personal achievements. This means ensuring that the gardening activities are appropriate to the physical, social and emotional stage of the development of the volunteer.
- Build relationships based on mutual trust and respect, in which young people are encouraged to take responsibility for their own development and decision-making. Avoid situations where a volunteer of Friends of Coy Pond uses their position and power to decide what the volunteer should or should not do without consideration of the young person's needs and capabilities.
- Always be publicly open when working with children and young people. Avoid sessions or meetings where a volunteer and an individual are completely unobserved.
- Where children and young people need to be supervised, volunteers should work in pairs and involve parents if possible. Maintain an appropriate and open environment, with no secrets.
- Avoid unnecessary physical contact with young people. Where any form of physical guidance is required, this should be provided openly and with the consent of the volunteer. It is important to educate parents of what is and is not acceptable in the context of gardening. Physical contact (touching) can be appropriate so long as it is neither intrusive nor disturbing and the volunteer's permission has been given.
- Maintain a safe and appropriate relationship with volunteers. It is inappropriate for volunteers in positions of authority to have an intimate relationship with a young person, even if they are over 16, the normal age of legal consent.



- Maintain appropriate standards of behaviour at social events that young people attend.
- Be an excellent role model, for example by not smoking or drinking alcohol while working with young people.
- Communicate regularly with parents and involve them in decision-making. Gain their consent in writing to act in loco parentis to give permission for the administration of emergency first aid or other medical treatment if the need arises.
- Be aware of any medical conditions, existing injuries and medicines being taken. Keep a written record of any injury or accident that occurs, together with details of any treatment given. Arrange that someone with knowledge of first aid is readily available.
- Gain written parental consent for any significant travel arrangements, especially if an overnight stay is involved.



### 2.3 Poor practice

The following are regarded as poor practice and should be avoided by all personnel:

- Unnecessarily spending excessive amounts of time alone with children and young people away from others.
- Taking children and young people alone in a car on journeys, however short.
- Taking children and young people to your home where they will be alone with you.
- Sharing a room with a child.
- Engaging in rough, physical or sexually provocative games, including horseplay.
- Allowing or engaging in inappropriate touching of any form.
- Allowing children and young people to use inappropriate language unchallenged.
- Making sexually suggestive comments to a child, even in fun.
- Reducing a child to tears as a form of control.
- Letting allegations a child makes go unchallenged, unrecorded, or not acted upon.
- Doing things of a personal nature that children and young people can do for themselves.
- Having children and young people stay at your home with you unsupervised.

Where cases arise where it is impractical to avoid any of the situations mentioned in this section, they should only occur with the full knowledge and consent of someone in charge in the organisation and the children and young people's parents.

If during your care of a child you accidentally hurt them, the child seems distressed in any manner, appears to be sexually aroused by your actions, or misunderstands or misinterprets something you have done, report any such incidents as soon as possible to another colleague and make a brief written note of it. Parents should also be informed of the incident.





## **2.4 Abuse**

Abuse in all its forms can affect a child at any age. The effects can be so damaging that if not treated, they may follow an individual into adulthood.

Children and young people with disabilities may be at increased risk of abuse through various factors such as stereotyping, prejudice, discrimination, isolation, and a powerlessness to protect themselves, or adequately to communicate that abuse has occurred. Children and young people from ethnic minorities, who may also be experiencing racial discrimination, may be, or feel, doubly powerless in these respects.

Abuse may take several forms, and may be classified under the following headings:

### **Neglect**

This is where adults fail to meet a child's basic needs like food, shelter, warm clothing or medical care, or to protect them from physical harm. Children and young people might also be constantly left alone or unsupervised.

Neglect in a gardening situation could include a volunteer not keeping children and young people safe or exposing them to unnecessary risk of injury.

### **Physical Abuse**

This is where someone physically hurts or injures children and young people, for example by hitting, shaking, throwing, squeezing, burning, suffocating and biting or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Giving children and young people alcohol or inappropriate drugs would also constitute physical abuse.

### **Sexual Abuse**

Girls and boys can be abused by adults or other children and young people, both male and female, who use children and young people to meet their own sexual needs. This could include full sexual intercourse, masturbation, or fondling. Showing children and young people pornographic material is also a form of sexual abuse.

In gardening activities which might involve physical contact with children and young people could potentially create situations where sexual abuse may go unnoticed. Also, the power of the volunteer over young students if misused, may lead to abusive situations developing.

### **Emotional Abuse**

Persistent lack of love and affection, where children and young people may be led to believe that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may involve the child being constantly shouted at, threatened or taunted which may make the child very nervous and withdrawn. It may also feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children and young people. Emotional abuse also occurs when there is constant overprotection, which prevents children and young people from socialising.

Emotional abuse in gardening might include situations where children and young people are subjected by a volunteer to constant criticism, name-calling, sarcasm, bullying, racism or unrealistic pressure to perform to high expectations.



## **Bullying**

This may be bullying of a child by an adult or another child. Bullying is defined as deliberate hurtful behaviour, usually repeated over a period of time, where it is difficult for those bullied to defend themselves. It may be physical (e.g. hitting, kicking, theft), verbal (e.g. racist or homophobic remarks, threats, name-calling, graffiti, abusive text messages transmitted by phone or on the internet), emotional (e.g. tormenting, ridiculing, humiliating, ignoring, isolating from the group), or sexual (e.g. unwanted physical contact or abusive comments).

In gardening, bullying may arise when a volunteer pushes a child too hard to succeed, a volunteer adopts a win-at-all-costs philosophy, or volunteer uses bullying behaviour.

### **2.5 Indicators of abuse**

Even for those experienced in working with child abuse, it is not always easy to recognise a situation where abuse may occur or has already taken place. The Friends of Coy Pond acknowledges that most people involved in the organisation are not experts in such recognition, but indications that a child is being abused may include one or more of the following:

- Unexplained or suspicious injuries such as bruising, cuts or burns, particularly if situated on a part of the body not normally prone to such injuries.
- An injury for which an explanation seems inconsistent.
- The child describes what appears to be an abusive act involving him/her.
- Someone else – a child or adult, expresses concern about the welfare of a child.
- Unexplained changes in a child's behaviour – e.g. becoming very quiet, withdrawn, or displaying sudden outbursts of temper - or behaviour changing over time.
- Inappropriate sexual awareness.
- Engaging in sexually explicit behaviour in games.
- Distrust of adults, particularly those with whom a close relationship would normally be expected.
- Difficulty in making friends.
- Being prevented from socialising with other children and young people.
- Displaying variations in eating patterns including overeating or loss of appetite.
- Losing weight for no apparent reason.
- Becoming increasingly dirty or unkempt.

It must be recognised that the above list is not exhaustive, but also that the presence of one or more of the indicators is not proof that abuse is actually taking place. It is not the responsibility of those working in gardening to decide that child abuse is occurring, but it is their responsibility to act on any concerns.

Signs of bullying may include:

- Behavioural changes such as reduced concentration or becoming withdrawn, clingy, depressed, tearful, emotionally up and down, reluctant to go to volunteer activities and events.
- An unexplained drop-off in behaviour.
- Physical signs such as stomach-aches, headaches, difficulty in sleeping, bed-wetting, scratching and bruising, damaged clothes and bingeing on food, cigarettes or alcohol.
- A shortage of money or frequent loss of possessions.



### **3 Recruiting and selecting personnel to work with children and young people**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

Anyone may have the potential to abuse children and young people in some way and it is important that all reasonable steps are taken to prevent unsuitable people from working with children and young people. The particular circumstances of individual cases need to be taken into account, but the fundamental principle is that those in charge of activities involving young people must take all reasonable steps to satisfy themselves as to the suitability of those who are given access to the children and young people in their care.

#### **3.2 Controlling access to children and young people**

Applicants for positions that involve significant access to young people (for example a Friends of Coy Pond volunteer) should first complete procedures designed to elicit information about their past career (including any gaps), and to disclose any criminal record or other matter that has a bearing on their suitability to work with children and young people e.g. previous investigations with police or social services or disciplinary investigations in relation to work with children and young people. It should be made clear that failure to disclose relevant information will result in disciplinary action and possible dismissal or exclusion.

Consent should be obtained from applicants for checks to be conducted to determine whether the Disclosure and Barring Service holds any relevant information on them.

#### **3.3 Vetting**

All personnel who will have significant access to young people must first be vetted to establish whether they have any criminal convictions or other past behaviour that suggests they are unsuitable to work with children and young people. This applies equally to all volunteers. This is done by obtaining a Disclosure about the individual from the Criminal Records Office.

It is important to emphasise that the absence of any relevant disclosure emerging from this vetting process does not guarantee that the individual is safe to work with children and young people, so it should not be relied on excessively. It is only one of several factors in the initial assessment of the person's suitability for such responsibilities.

#### **3.4 The Designated Safeguarding Officer**

The Friends of Coy Pond will appoint a Designated Safeguarding Officer to advise the organising committee on compliance with all the procedures described in this protection policy and to act as a focal point for reporting any concerns. This person will have the primary responsibility to check that everyone who has significant access to young people within the organisation is suitable for that role and has been vetted as described above.

The person appointed should be identifiable to the junior members of the group and their parents but should have a degree of independence from their activities – for example he or she should not be the junior co-ordinator in the organisation. The Designated Safeguarding Officer may be a member of the management committee. The Designated Safeguarding Officer should undergo the vetting procedure described in 3.3 above.



### 3.5 Training

The effectiveness of the policies described will depend on everyone who is involved with junior volunteering being aware of what is good practice. This applies particularly to those working directly with young people, such as junior co-ordinators and Designated Safeguarding Officers, but an awareness of child protection issues is also needed by others who may be involved more indirectly, such as committee members or occasional parent helpers.

All personnel with regular contact with young people will read this policy and confirm they understand and will abide by the procedures herein.

Training courses on Safeguarding and Child Protection are available and are recommended for those groups identified above.

Formal training in safeguarding and child protection will help people to:

- Compare their own practice against what is regarded as good practice in volunteer gardening and check that their practice is likely to protect them from false allegations.
- Recognise their responsibilities and report any concerns about suspected poor practice or abuse.
- Deal with the vetting procedures described in 3.3 above.
- Work safely and effectively with children, young people and vulnerable adults.



## **4 Responding to suspicions and allegations**

### **4.1 Introduction**

Many cases of child abuse in fact take place within the family setting. However, abuse can and does occur in other situations as well, which may include volunteer gardening or other social activities, and is rarely a one-off event when it occurs within such a setting. It is crucial that those involved in volunteer gardening are aware of this possibility and that all allegations are taken seriously, and appropriate action taken.

It is not the responsibility of anyone in a volunteer organisation whether in a paid or a voluntary capacity, to decide whether child abuse is taking place. However, there is a responsibility to inform appropriate agencies of possible abuse so that they can then make inquiries and take any necessary action to protect the child. This applies both to suspicions of abuse occurring within the context of volunteer gardening and to allegations that abuse is taking place elsewhere. This section explains how you should respond to such concerns.

### **4.2 Receiving evidence of possible abuse**

We may become aware of possible abuse in various ways. We may see it happening ourselves; we may suspect that it is occurring because of signs such as those listed in 2.5 above; it may be reported to us by someone else, or directly by the child affected.

In the last of these cases, it is particularly important to respond appropriately. If a child says or indicates that he or she is being abused, or information is obtained which gives you concern that a child is being abused, you should:

- React calmly so as not to frighten the child.
- Tell the child they are not to blame and that it was right to tell.
- Take what the child says seriously, recognising the difficulties inherent in interpreting what is said by a child who has a speech disability and/or differences in language.
- Keep questions to the absolute minimum necessary so that there is a clear and accurate understanding of what has been said and be careful not to ask leading questions.
- Reassure the child, but do not promise to keep the matter secret – explain that to resolve the problem it will be necessary to inform other people as appropriate.



### 4.3 Recording information

As with other forms of information arising in relation to child protection, information of this kind is highly sensitive and confidential. Accordingly, it should be held under secure conditions and only made available to those who have a definite need for it.

You should make a note as soon as possible of whatever information you obtain, both for your own future reference and possibly for passing on to others, appropriate agencies such as the social services department or the police.

In writing such a note, you should confine yourself to the facts and distinguish between what is your own personal knowledge and what you have been told by other people. You should not include your own opinions on the matter, to avoid the possibility of libel. Information should include the following:

- The nature of the allegation, in as much detail as possible, including times, dates, locations and other relevant information.
- Details of the child involved, including name, age, address and other contact details, and identifying who has parental responsibility for the child.
- Details of the person against whom the allegation is made, including name, relationship with the child, age and contact details (if known).
- The identity and contact details of any informants or other witnesses.
- The child's account, if he or she can give one, of what has happened.
- A description of any visible bruising or other injuries.
- Details of who else has been informed of the alleged incident.
- Any other relevant information.



#### 4.4 Reporting the concern

The Friends of Coy Pond expects its personnel to discuss any concern they may have about the welfare of a child immediately with the person in charge, and subsequently to check that appropriate action has been taken. The route you might follow in various circumstances is suggested below.

- **Working within a group**  
If you are working with any of the Friends of Coy Pond groups, you should inform the Designated Safeguarding Officer or the person in charge of the group.
- **Working with volunteers away from home**  
If you are working with volunteers away from home (for example at a workshop), then you should inform the person in charge of the group.

Circumstances in which other people might then need to be informed are discussed below:

- **Parents or carers**

There is always a commitment to work in partnership with parents or carers where there are concerns about their children and young people. Therefore, in most situations, it would be important to talk to parents or carers to help clarify any initial concerns. For example, if a child seems withdrawn, they may have experienced bereavement in the family.

However, there are circumstances in which a child might be placed at even greater risk were such concerns to be shared, e.g. where a parent or carer may be responsible for the abuse or not able to respond to the situation appropriately. In these situations, or where concerns still exist, any suspicion, allegation, or incident of abuse must be reported to appropriate agencies as soon as possible.

- **Social Work**

The social work department has a statutory duty for the welfare of a child. When a child protection referral is made its staff have a legal responsibility to investigate. This may involve talking to the child and family and gathering information from other people who know the child. The telephone number is in the local phone book. Wherever possible, referrals telephoned to the social work department should be confirmed in writing within 24 hours. A record should also be made of the name and designation of the social work member of staff to whom the concerns were passed, together with the time and date of the call, in case any follow-up is needed.

- **Police**

Where the apparent abuse is of a criminal nature it will be appropriate to inform the police. A record should be made of the crime reference number provided by the police, together with the time and date of the call, in case any follow-up is needed. The police and social services department may also carry out a joint enquiry.

The person in charge may be unsure about whether the allegation constitutes abuse or not and unclear about what action to take. There may be circumstances where allegations are about poor practice (which need not be referred to the social services or police) rather than abuse, but those responsible should consult with the group's Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO) who will obtain further advice where there is any doubt. Notifying the DSO is also important because this matter may be just one of a series of other instances which together cause concern.





#### **4.5 Disciplinary procedures**

The discovery that someone may be abusing a child will raise feelings and concerns among other personnel, and it can be inherently difficult to report such matters. However, it is important that any concerns for the welfare of the child arising from abuse or harassment by someone should be reported immediately. As indicated above an allegation of abuse may give rise to a child protection investigation by the social services department and/or a criminal investigation involving the police.

If the matter is being investigated by the police and/or social services, the organisation may decide to await the outcome of these investigations, which may well influence a disciplinary investigation, although not necessarily so. In appropriate cases, the organisation will suspend the individual concerned while an investigation is taking place. This is not intended to prejudge the outcome of the investigation, but simply to remove the individual from contact with children and young people until the investigation is concluded.

Every effort will be made to maintain confidentiality for all concerned, and consideration will be given to what support may be appropriate to children and young people, parents, and volunteers.

#### **4.6 Allegations of previous abuse**

Allegations of abuse are sometimes made some time after the event, for example, by an adult who was abused as a child by a member of staff who is still working with children and young people. Where such an allegation is made, you should follow the procedures given above and have the matter reported to the police and/or social services department. This is because other children and young people, either within volunteer gardening or outside it, may be at risk from this person. Anyone who has a previous criminal conviction for offences related to abuse is automatically excluded from working with children and young people.





## 5 Conclusion

Friends of Coy Pond by accepting this policy document, has indicated its determination to ensure that children, young people and vulnerable adults can participate in all forms of volunteer gardening, and do so, with their safety being of paramount importance.

It is essential that this document is representative of a process of continual improvement in safeguarding and child protection within volunteer gardening. It is for all adults engaged in volunteer gardening activities to promote good practice and procedures, whilst being ever vigilant and aware of their responsibilities towards the children, young people and vulnerable adults in their care.

## 6 Review of Policy

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Management Committee annually.

## 7 Contact details

### Designated Safeguarding Officer

Name: John Preston

Phone: 07749 032157

Email: [friendsofcoypond@outlook.com](mailto:friendsofcoypond@outlook.com)

### NSPCC Helpline

Phone: 0808 800 5000

This policy was last reviewed on 17/10/2024.

Signed:

Date: 17/10/24