

Safeguarding Policy



Good practice for Staff, Volunteers and Contractors when working with children, young people or vulnerable adults at events

The Belfast Hills Partnership hopes that all our events and projects will be associated with only the best memories for all those involved in them. It is our policy to safeguard the wellbeing of children and vulnerable adults, keeping them safe from harm. In order to ensure that this is the case, please take time to familiarise yourself with the information contained in this document.

We can all help to provide a welcoming, safe and enjoyable experience for everyone. This document for staff, volunteers and contractors provides essential and quick reference to good practice when in the company of under 18s (please note that these guidelines should also be taken into account when dealing with older vulnerable adults such as people over 18 with learning or physical disabilities).

In every situation, we just need you to take care and, above all, use your common sense to make sure that all activities are as safe as possible and everyone's interests are safeguarded.

Planning

Do

- Plan activities for young people carefully to ensure that there is maximum protection at all times. Undertake risk assessments for each activity.
- Attend to health and safety requirements.
- Make sure that young people are accompanied by their own adult carers (e.g. parents, teachers or youth leaders) and that these adults are directly responsible for those in their care. The Belfast Hills Partnership will not provide carers for groups.
- Ensure that a signed parent/guardian consent form has been obtained on the rare occasion that Belfast Hills Partnership is providing direct supervision.
- Make sure you know which young people are in your charge, the extent of your responsibility, where they are and what they are doing.
- Ensure you request an Access NI check when recruiting staff or volunteers or appointing a contractor who will have regular unsupervised contact with children and young people.

Supervision

Do

- Arrange for an appropriate number of adults to be present, bearing in mind the activity, number, ages and any particular needs of the young people. Ratios (Staff:Children) 1:8 for primary age groups (11yrs and below) and 1:15 for secondary (11 yrs+). Groups of very young children and/or of any age with learning or mobility difficulties will require more adult supervision. Higher ratios are recommended if the activity is near water, of an adventurous nature or involves tools.
- Have a minimum of two adults when working with small groups and work in view of other colleagues if supporting an individual on your own.
- Have male and female helpers where practical.

If in the unlikely situation you are on your own

Do

- Avoid being left alone with young people if you can, particularly one-to-one contact.
- Use your common sense and take great care if you are left alone with young people, e.g. don't escort a single child to the toilet; offer to stay with the rest of the class while the teacher does so.
- Tell someone else where you are going, what you are doing and why.
- Make sure it is for as short a time as possible.
- Ensure you are accessible to others.

Other practicalities

Do

- Insist on relevant training or instruction if you are expected to oversee something that you aren't confident about or don't feel competent to carry out.

Do not

- Allow rough activities, including contact sports such as rugby which could lead to inappropriate behaviour or injury.
- Permit abusive youth peer activities (e.g. ridiculing or bullying).

Awareness

Do

- Inform young people about the safety issues involved in their activity and how to cope (e.g. always tell someone where they are going).
- Be alert to potential harm or inappropriate behaviour by others to young people in your care.
- Provide access for young people to talk to another adult about any concerns they may have.
- Be alert to any evidence of drug or alcohol use by young people in your care.

Conduct

Do

- Remember you are a role model for young people and always provide an example you would wish them to follow.
- Bear in mind that some actions, no matter how well-intentioned, may easily be misinterpreted.
- Respect a young person's right to privacy unless you feel they are at risk of harm.

Do not

- Rely on your or the Belfast Hill's Partnership's good name to protect you.
- Show favouritism or get drawn into inappropriate attention-seeking behaviour (e.g. tantrums or crushes)
- Allow or engage in suggestive remarks, gestures or touching which could be misunderstood
- Do anything to undermine the Belfast Hill's Partnership's reputation for providing young people with a safe environment
- Jump to conclusions about others without checking the facts

Always remember

- Plan activities carefully and be alert to potential harm.
- Where possible ensure young people are accompanied by their own adult carers and that they take direct supervisory responsibility.
- Arrange for an appropriate number of adults to be present – try to have at least two at all times.
- Avoid being left alone with young people if you can.
- When one-to-one contact is unavoidable, keep it short, be accessible and make sure someone is informed.

General Information

The Belfast Hills Partnership engages with a wide range of people which includes vulnerable adults and children through a programme of events, volunteering, school and community outreach activities. It is stated on all of our events literature and at the start of events that all children under 16 must be accompanied by an adult, therefore any activities involving children will always have adequate supervision. Furthermore, when engaging with schools, youth or community groups, from the outset it is highlighted that it is the responsibility of the education, youth or community group provider to ensure that adequate adult supervision is met. Belfast Hills Partnership staff will rarely be alone leading a group of children or vulnerable adults.

This leaflet is a brief summary of good practices when working with children and young people. Your line manager, BHP outreach team and the volunteering officer can help you if you:

- Need help planning an activity
- Are unsure about the correct level of supervision
- Are worried that you may be left on your own
- Want instructions or guidance on safety or other matters involving young people

Dealing with incidents or concerns

If you reasonably believe a situation or matter which might present a danger to the health and safety of a child or vulnerable person has occurred, is occurring or is likely to occur in the future, it is your duty to report it. It is also very important for you to report such matters promptly to help prevent any danger occurring to any child or vulnerable person. The event/activity leader is responsible for making sure all allegations, concerns or incidents are taken seriously and recorded immediately in the event/activity incident/accident book and reported to the Partnership Manager at the earliest opportunity.

If you require immediate advice please contact:

Childline 0800 1111 - Free 24 hour helpline if you have serious concerns about a child

The Belfast Hills Partnership 02890 603466

Designated Child Protection Officer, Partnership Manager or
Deputy Child Protection Officer, Scheme Manager or
Independent Child Protection Officer (to be nominated)

In an emergency– call the Police on 999 or 112

If you have a concern about a young person's safety and well-being:

1. Immediately tell the designated or deputy child protection officer
2. Write careful notes of what you witnessed, heard or were told
3. Sign, date and pass your notes to designated child protection officer
4. If possible ensure that no further situation arises which could cause any further concern

If a young person tells you about an incident of abuse that has just occurred:

1. Allow the young person to speak without interruption, accepting what is said
2. Offer immediate understanding and reassurance, while passing no judgement
3. Advise that you will try to offer support but that you must pass the information
4. Assess whether there is any ongoing immediate danger
5. If there is take immediate action to stop or minimise that danger
6. Where there is no immediate danger tell your designated or deputy child protection officer
7. Write careful notes of what you were told
8. Sign, date and pass your notes to your designated child protection officer
9. If possible ensure that no further situation arises which could cause any further concern

Monitoring & Review

This policy will be monitored and reviewed by the Child Protection Specialist group every three years or whenever there is a major change in the organisation or in relevant legislation or guidance.

This policy has been adopted and reviewed by the Board of Trustees as dated below:

Policy date: 3rd September 2015