Safeguarding the Welfare of Children and Vulnerable Groups

Policy and Code of Practice

Please read this document and note any implications for you.

Ensure that all your staff and volunteers do likewise.

1.0 General

The Letcombe Brook Project (LBP) works with several groups and individuals who may be considered vulnerable to abuse. These may be children or others who may have special needs because of a learning or physical disability. If you expect to work with people who come into these categories, you **must** adhere to this Code of Practice.

There is a moral obligation and legal duty of care that we do whatever is reasonably practicable to ensure the safety and wellbeing of anyone with whom we work.

Our Designated Safeguarding Lead is Cat Boaz, Education Officer for the Letcombe Brook Project.

2.0 Definitions

A child or young person is a person under 18 years of age.

A vulnerable person is someone who for some reason such as disability, learning difficulty or poor English language skills could be considered vulnerable.

3.0 Working with children

3.1 Direct supervision

The LBP does not undertake activities whereby we have direct supervision of children under the age of 14 years of age.

Children aged 14-17 years of age may be accepted onto a LBP activity (e.g. Duke of Edinburgh Work Party) if parental/Guardian consent is given (see section 5).

There may be cases, e.g. work party group, where the LBP does have a direct supervisory role with adults who may be considered vulnerable. See section 6 in this Code of Practice.

Except in the event of a child lost at an event or in an emergency situation, LBP representatives or volunteers should **never** accept or assume responsibility for the welfare or conduct of children.

3.2 Unaccompanied children at events

Unaccompanied children who turn up at events can join in with static or geographically clearly defined and confined activities. Never take or encourage unaccompanied children to a different area to where their parents or guardians expect them to be (e.g. bug hunt or guided walk).

3.3 Risk Assessments

All activities should be preceded by a Risk Assessment. This assessment will enable planning for safety to take place so that activities are safe and enjoyable. Refer to specific Appendix 2 (Generic Risk Assessment for Working with Children).

The Risk Assessment should also determine what level of First Aid provision is required, based on numbers, activities, abilities and location.

3.4 Supervision Ratios

The LBP must ensure sufficient supervisors for the activity to take place safely and effectively. *Except in the case of absolute emergency, a single adult must never be left in the company of a single child under the age of 14. For children over the age of 15,* *see section 5.*

LBP's minimum ratios for working with children are:

Reception and KS1 (ages 4-7)	1 adult: 6 children
KS2 (ages 7-11)	1 adult: 8 children
Secondary (ages 11-18)	1 adult: 12 children
D of E Groups (ages 12-16)	1 adult: 12 children

Supervisors can include adults from the responsible organisation (e.g. the school), but only if those individuals have been given the responsibility for managing the behaviour of the group by that organisation (e.g. teachers, teaching assistants or parent helpers). There should always be a minimum of two adults present with a group of children (except for DoE Groups). If the activity involves splitting into groups which are not within sight of each other, there should be a minimum of two adults per separate group. LBP event leaders should inform the visiting group of how many adults they will need to provide to ensure the pupil: adult ratio is correct for the planned activities. If the required ratio cannot be met by either the school or the LBP, do not proceed.

NB: These are minimum ratios, and they should be increased accordingly if the nature of the group or activity merits a higher ratio.

3.5 Conduct

All representatives and volunteers working with children are under a legal duty of care which case law has interpreted as a duty to act as a *careful parent.*

When parents or teachers are involved with a group, the responsibility for the behaviour and discipline of the children lies with them. This must be made clear before any activity starts.

Appendix 5 (Code of Conduct) of this Code of Practice should be distributed to representatives and volunteers at relevant activities and events.

If the conduct from any adult present falls below these minimum requirements, you should:

- Conclude the activity immediately
- Make clear to the individual, and host organisation, that their action is unacceptable
- If the practice is repeated, suspend involvement with the organization until they can meet the required standard

3.6 Photography and filming

Never take pictures or film children or vulnerable people without written permission. This must be obtained from parents prior to the event. See separate LBP Film and Photography Policy.

4.0 Sharing Information about Good Practice

LBP representatives or volunteers in a supervisory role working with Children or Vulnerable people should be issued with Appendix 4 (Guidance for Representatives and Volunteers). The activity leader should check that its contents are understood prior to the commencement of activities.

5.0 Work placements, Work parties, Rangers and bush craft

5.1 Work placements and Youth Award schemes

LBP will accept small groups (twos or threes) or individual children (aged 14-17) onto some activities. This will typically be children undertaking work experience or doing a Youth Award scheme (e.g. Duke of Edinburgh Award).

Placements of individual children (aged 14-17) should only be taken with express permission from the child and parent to work alone with an adult with an enhanced DBS check for working with children.

The supervising representative or volunteer may need to have had a Disclosure Barring Service (DBS) check if the placement can be defined as sufficiently frequent (once a week or more) or intensive (on four days or more in a single month). See 8.2 below.

Parents and guardians are responsible for dropping off and picking up of their children; representatives and volunteers should never offer or provide lifts to children taking part in LBP activities.

In all cases, a Parent/Guardian consent form, or written permission from the school or hosting body, must be completed and submitted before the child is accepted onto a LBP activity.

5.2 Work parties

LBP representatives can choose to accept children (aged 8+) accompanied by a parent or guardian on work parties. Accompanied children remain the responsibility of the parent or guardian who must remain with the children throughout the session. Work party leaders should refer to Appendix 2 regarding age limits for using hand tools

LBP representatives can choose to accept unaccompanied older children (aged 14-17) on work parties if parental/Guardian consent is given.

LBP representatives should not accept children, accompanied or not, if the task, location or any circumstances relating to the work party session are not suitable or the presence of children creates an unacceptable risk level for the task.

REMEMBER: Except in the case of absolute emergency, a single adult must never be left in the company of a single child.

6.0 Vulnerable Adults

An adult is defined as a person aged 18 years or older (HM Government (2013) Working together to safeguard children: A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children).

A vulnerable adult may be a person who:

- Has a physical or sensory disability
- Is physically frail or has a chronic illness
- Has a mental illness or dementia
- Has a learning disability
- Is old and frail
- Misuses drugs and/or alcohol
- Has social or emotional problems
- Exhibits challenging behaviour

The LBP does not have an objective/remit to recruit or increase its work with vulnerable adults but aims to be open and inclusive wherever possible and appropriate.

Work with vulnerable adults should be assessed on a case-by-case basis. When representatives are approached to include vulnerable adults within their work several considerations should be made:

- Is there a suitable placement that is beneficial to both parties?
- Are there any reasonable adjustments needed and can these be met?

This will need supporting information to be gathered from themselves, their guardian/carer and/or careworker.

- If additional support is needed, are there suitably trained personnel to provide this?
- Are there potentially detrimental impacts or dangers to representatives or other volunteers?

Please Note: Advice should be sought from Trustees at the earliest opportunity in this area of work.

It may not always be clear if a person is a vulnerable adult. In cases where information has not been provided upfront and representatives have concerns, please seek advice from Trustees.

7.0 Dealing with Abuse discovered, disclosed or alleged

Although such occurrences are extremely rare, LBP representatives and volunteers may encounter Children or Vulnerable Adults who share with them their unhappiness from being abused, discover that abuse has taken place, or see what they consider to be abuse taking place.

IMPORTANT: Action must be taken immediately in ALL cases. Do not assume someone else will act.

Recognise that you will have to tell someone and avoid making promises you will be unable to keep, including that discussions held are confidential.

Only question the person to confirm what they have told you, and not to investigate any further. Never push a child for more information, leave that to the relevant agencies. As soon as possible, write down exactly what has been said to you.

If the child is with a host organisation (e.g. a school), inform the leader of the group directly of the alleged abuse and ask them to start their own procedures for handling the situation.
In all cases, contact the Child Protection team (within the relevant Local Authority.)

Inform the LBP Chair of Trustees as a matter of priority and in confidence, they will keep a confidential incident record.

If a LBP representative or volunteer is involved then they must be removed from the activity immediately and the LBP's relevant procedures started. They should be reassured that this removal does not imply any guilt but is to protect them as much as the person making the allegation. Do **not** discuss the allegations with them.

LBP representatives and volunteers should have access to counselling from outside the organisation. The NSPCC Child Protection helpline is available 24 hours a day and provides counselling, information and advice for anyone concerned about/accused of child abuse. NSPCC Helpline number **0808 800 5000.**

8.0 Recruitment and Training

8.1 Recruitment

All representatives or volunteers seeking opportunities to work with Children or Vulnerable Adults must be asked to declare any criminal convictions. All enquirers for these positions will be sent a copy of LBP's Safeguarding the Welfare of Children and Vulnerable Groups' Policy.

The selected applicants for salaried posts must be interviewed by a panel of at least 2 people, including at least one person who is experienced at working with children or vulnerable groups.

Applicants for volunteer posts involving work with children or vulnerable adults must be interviewed (formally or informally) by their prospective supervisor and at least one other person.

8.2 References and Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) disclosures

Representatives responsible for delivering education work will require an enhanced check (Child Barred list), because it is listed as a "regulated activity". This includes Teaching, training or instruction of children, carried out by the same person frequently (once a week or more often), or on 4 or more days in a 30-day period, or overnight.

LBP will undertake to renew DBS checks of relevant representatives and volunteers every 3 years.

Before appointment to any relevant post, referees must be contacted, seeking their views on the applicant's suitability for a post involving work with vulnerable groups.

Before appointment to any relevant post, all representatives or volunteers must provide 2 pieces of identification, including one showing their address, at least one confirming date of birth and at least one should be photographic identification.

NB: Representatives or volunteers helping out at events do not require DBS disclosures to be completed. The responsibility for children remains with parents and guardians at all times. Appropriate training or instruction should be given to such personnel (see 8.3 below).

8.3 Training

All representatives and volunteers working with children or vulnerable adults will be given appropriate training and/or guidance on safeguarding and child protection issues.

9.0 Relevant legislation

- *Children's Act 1989* – states that the welfare and development needs of children are of paramount concern and over-ride other considerations.
- *The Protection of Children Act 1999* – requires employers to check on the suitability of employees.
- *The Human Rights Act 1998* - sets out the rights of children and families.

- *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child* – sets out how all children should have access to basic human rights.
- *Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006*
- *Protection of Freedoms Act 2012*

10.0 Further reading

DBS checks: eligibility guidance (Disclosure and Barring Service December 2012)

Safeguarding: disclosure and barring – changes from 2012 (Dept. for Education)

Appendix 1: Safety Plan Checklist for activities with Children and Vulnerable Adults

If you are running an event for children or vulnerable adults, you should check that you have considered the following points. You should check the list at least a couple of weeks in advance of the activity in order to allow yourself time to complete any outstanding items

	(tick)	Actions Required	Guidance
1.		Risk Assessments for the site and activities must be completed and reviewed on the day of the activity by all leaders.	Appendix 2 & 3
2.		Your Risk Assessment should include information about the nearest emergency facilities.	
3.		You must have enough appropriately trained first aiders.	
4.		Check staff ratios are adequate for the activity.	
5.		Send this form (School and Clubs Sign up) and the activity risk assessment to the visiting organisation lead ahead of time.	
6		Ensure that all tools are safe and that a safety discussion about their use precedes any activity with them. Consider BBOWT's insurer's guidelines for minimum ages specified in Appendix 2.	
7.		Ensure items with in the first aid kit are in date and fit for purpose.	
8.		If you are taking photographs, you must have written permission from the relevant body (e.g. parent/guardian). See LBP Film and Photography Policy. Education Officer to	
9.		If no children/vulnerable adults are being left in your care, this completes your checklist. If, however, you will be responsible for other people's children or vulnerable adults, continue below.	
10.		If children/vulnerable adults are being left in your care see 8.2.	
11.		You must have a signed consent form (with contact details) for all children/vulnerable adults being left in your care. Send this form to gain consent.	

Appendix 2: Generic Risk Assessment for working with Children

Working with children brings risks that need to be guarded against. These are over and above the site- and task-specific Risk Assessments that you require.

Risk	Precautions	Resources
Lack of strength: children are not as strong as adults and any tasks must be adjusted with this in mind. Young people do not always appreciate the limits of their own strength.	Ensure that tasks are appropriate to the age and size of children. Try working from lighter loads up to heavier ones.	Tools designed for children
Lack of endurance: children get tired faster than adults.	Schedule frequent breaks and have snacks and drinks available.	
Short attention span: children don't have adult levels of control over their concentration.	Break tasks up. Aim to talk to children for their age in minutes before moving on to a task.	
The above factors mean that tools need to be appropriate to the age of the children.	LBP 's insurers are aware that we work to the following guidance for minimum ages: * *Trowels* – 5 years (NB: younger children can use children's trowels in line with manufacturer's instructions) *Hammers* – 8 years *Spades/shovels* – 8 years *Rakes* – 8 years *Forks* – 8 years *Screwdrivers* – 8 years *Loppers* - 10 years *Bow Saws* – 10 years *Other edged tools, such as bill hooks or slashers* – 14 years *Fixed blade knives*– 8 years	*NB: Always make sure you have completed an appropriate written Risk Assessment of the activity and the client group, AND provide adequate supervision. Close supervision is required whenever children are using tools. Adult ratios will normally be higher than the minimums set in LBP's Child Protection Guidance.

Risk	Precautions	Resources
Children can be inclined to run off.	Dangers such as roads must be assessed with particular care. Doors to the outside and gates to roads should be closed where possible. Clear instructions on boundaries of the task.	
Children can act in unpredictable ways.	Vigilance on the part of all adults present is your best defence.	
Children do not always understand the seriousness of risks.	Talk to children about risks in language they can understand. For example, asking them to consider how they would look after a younger sibling can help them appreciate dangers that they otherwise might not see.	
Children under 8 require specialised First Aid.	It is preferable to have a person trained in under 8s First Aid in attendance and on duty for this age group.	
Children are more vulnerable than adults to inappropriate behaviour such as bullying, sexual language or actions, swearing.	LBPs Code of Conduct for Guests (see Appendix 5) should be available to anyone running an event with children present in order that they can ensure that such inappropriate behaviour is prevented or stopped.	
Children are at risk from predatory paedophiles, who are few in number but significant in terms of the harm they cause.	Anyone running an activity with children must be clear about who is taking responsibility for the children present. Generally, this will be the school or parent or whoever brought the children to an event. NB: It is **never** acceptable for parents/guardians to leave children at a LBP event or stall.	Health and Safety Policy

Appendix 3: Generic Risk Assessment for working with Vulnerable Adults

Working with vulnerable adults brings particular risks that need to be guarded against. These are over and above the site- and task-specific Risk Assessments that you require.

Risk	Precautions	Resources
The term 'vulnerable adult' covers a very wide range of conditions.	Treat each individual vulnerable adult on a case by case basis.	
Specific medical conditions can make adults vulnerable in different ways.	Request information from carer or caring institution about the specific medical or other conditions that may have an impact on the health and safety of the vulnerable adult.	
Vulnerable adults may not have strong levels of concentration.	Break tasks up.	
Vulnerable adults can be inclined to wander off.	Dangers such as roads must be assessed with particular care. Doors to the outside and gates to roads should be closed where possible. Clear instructions on physical boundaries of the task.	
Vulnerable adults can act in unpredictable ways.	Vigilance on the part of all responsible adults present is your best defence.	
Vulnerable adults do not always understand the seriousness of risks.	Talk about risks in accessible language.	
Vulnerable adults can be subject to inappropriate behaviour such as bullying, sexual language or actions, swearing.	LBP's Code of Conduct for Guests Appendix 5) should be available to anyone running an event with vulnerable adults present in order that they can ensure that such inappropriate behaviour is prevented or stopped.	
Vulnerable adults are at risk from sexual predators.	Anyone running an activity with vulnerable adults should be clear about who is taking responsibility for their safety.	Health and Safety Code of Practice 04

Appendix 4: Guidance for representatives and volunteers working with children and vulnerable adults

Good management and careful planning go a long way to help make LBP's activities safe for everyone involved, including staff or volunteers in positions of responsibility as well as children or vulnerable people in their care. It is important that staff and volunteers running activities never behave in ways that could cause distress of any kind to children or vulnerable people. This Code of Conduct lays out what are acceptable and unacceptable standards of behaviour.

You should

- Always set a good example: you are likely to be seen as a role model and should adopt an approach that encourages mutual respect.
- Always respect an individual's right to privacy and personal space.
- Be alert to inappropriate or potentially harmful behaviours within a group and ask any parent or guardian to ensure safe and co-operative behaviour of any children for whom they are responsible.
- Treat group members as individuals and value everyone's comments and contributions.
- Always seek the consent of a child or vulnerable person if you need to touch them to administer First Aid or to help with clothing.
- Respond sensitively to children or vulnerable people anxiety about participation in any activities.
- Encourage a culture of openness, so people are able to report any concerns.
- Immediately report any concerns you have about the welfare or safety of any child or vulnerable person, or inappropriate behaviour of other adults.
- If available, use the staff/disabled toilets when on site

You should not

- Rely on your good name to protect you from allegations.
- Be alone at any time with a child or vulnerable person. If a degree of privacy is required then you should aim to remain within sight or earshot of other people.
- Show favouritism within the group or be drawn into attention seeking behaviour such as crushes or tantrums.
- Swear or use explicit language.
- Allow or engage in suggestive remarks, gestures or touching which could be misunderstood or misconstrued.

- You should not use physical restraint except to prevent an accident or harm to any member of the group, and only as a last resort.
- Take photographs without consent from both individuals and any adult or carer responsible for them.
- Smoke, consume alcohol or non-prescribed drugs.

Further information about procedures for working with these groups is found in LBP's Policy: Safeguarding the welfare of children and other vulnerable groups.

Appendix 5: Code of Conduct for adults attending activities which involve children and vulnerable adults

If you are attending an LBP event where children or vulnerable adults are present, please help the leader to ensure everything runs smoothly, by following these rules. They are here to help everyone avoid misunderstandings or upset.

Please…

- behave in a way that sets a good example to the children and young people.
- don't act in a way that distracts from or undermines the leader.
- only ever take photographs with direct permission from the leader and from any individuals and/or their parents involved.
- avoid touching any child in a way that could be misunderstood.
- do not swear or use any suggestive language or gestures.
- except in the case of absolute emergency, avoid being alone with any children who are not your own.
- do not smoke.
- be alert to anything that has the potential to cause accident or injury to group members.
- tell the group leader about anything that causes you concern about the safety or welfare of children at the group. Alternatively contact the Chair of Trustees at the below address.
- do not discipline other people's children, refer to the group leader.

This Code of Conduct supports LBP's Policy and Code of Practice on Safeguarding Children and other Vulnerable Groups. If you would like a full copy or have any questions, please contact LBP at:

The Letcombe Brook Project, c/o Vale and Downland Museum, 8 Church Street, Wantage, Oxon, OX12 8BL Tel: 01235 771447

Version 1 approved by Trustees on 13/10/19
Version 2 approved by Trustees on 25/06/2026