

RIVER BOURNE COMMUNITY FARM

SAFEGUARDING VULNERABLE GROUPS POLICY

Updated November 2024, Review Date November 2025

River Bourne Community Farm fully recognises its responsibilities for safeguarding children and vulnerable adults participating in activities, workshops, volunteering and educational schemes run by the organisation.

The aim of this policy is to ensure:

- all our learners are safe and protected from harm
- safeguarding procedures are in place to help learners to feel safe and learn to stay safe,
- adults in the organisation's community are aware of the expected behaviours and the organisation's legal responsibilities in relation to safeguarding adults and child protection.

Key Safeguarding Personnel

Role	Name
Farm Chairman	Peter Hardingham
Designated Safeguarding Lead	Sara-Jane Hancock
Deputy Safeguarding Lead	Lorna Gardner

Children's Social Care referrals:

Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH):

0300 456 0108

Vulnerable Adults Social Care referrals:

Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH):

0300 456 0111

Out of hours:

0300 456 0100

If you believe a learner is **at immediate risk** of significant harm or injury, you **must** call the police on 999.

1. Introduction

River Bourne Community Farm will take account of and comply with current legislation and best practice. All staff should read and adhere to the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups policy at all times. It complements other policies and guidance at the farm relevant to the safety and welfare of our learners including:

- Safer Recruitment Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Positive Handling Policy
- Equality and Diversity Policy
- NSPCC Whistleblowing poster
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (2024) (statutory for Alternative Provision Schools)

A child is anyone under 18 years of age (when we refer to young people in this document, we include children in this category).

A vulnerable adult is a person aged 18 years or over who may be in need of community care services by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness and who is or may be unable to take care of himself or herself, or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation (*No Secrets*, Department of Health and social care: Guidance of developing and implementing multi-agency policies and procedures to protect vulnerable adults from abuse 2000 (updated 2015)).

All children, young people and vulnerable adults, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin religious beliefs and/or sexual identity have the right to protection from abuse. River Bourne Community Farm will ensure that the welfare of young people and vulnerable adults is paramount when planning and carrying out activities.

In this document, the term 'staff' may be taken to include employees and volunteers, workshop leaders and educational practitioners working on behalf of the farm.

2. Recruitment and training of staff

Recruitment

- Staff recruited to provide or supervise activities with children, young people or vulnerable adults will be DBS checked and subject to an Enhanced Disclosure.
- All new staff whether paid or unpaid, will be provided with the Farm's Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Policy.
- Freelance workshop leaders should be appropriately qualified or experienced to ensure the safe teaching of skills and use of equipment.
- All River Bourne Community Farm staff must be mindful of protection and safeguarding issues at all times and be alert to the behaviour of others.

Training

- The member of staff with designated responsibility for safeguarding and protection (currently the Education Manager) will have access to regular training and advice to enable the Farm's policy and procedures to be updated. They will also have access to the resources necessary to organise training and briefings for all staff and volunteers working with children and vulnerable adults.

- Staff training will be designed to ensure that all staff have a clear understanding of their own and others' responsibilities in terms of protection and safeguarding issues and of the procedures to be followed.

FOR MORE DETAILED GUIDANCE PLEASE REFER TO THE SAFER RECRUITMENT POLICY

3. Conduct of staff

All River Bourne Community Farm staff must adhere to the following procedures at all times. If these standards are not followed, disciplinary action may be taken.

- Children and vulnerable adults should be treated with respect at all times.
- Staff should provide a secure and welcoming environment and be friendly, positive and approachable.
- Workshop leaders should carefully plan activity sessions to take into account the care and safety of participants.
- No physical punishment should be undertaken by Farm employees or volunteers.
- Staff must not use racist, sexist or homophobic language or any language that might undermine the confidence of any child, young person or vulnerable adult.
- Staff must not engage in any rough, physical or sexually provocative behaviour with, or in front of, children, young people or vulnerable adults.
- Staff should work in pairs, respect the privacy of individuals and avoid situations where they are working with a child or vulnerable adult unobserved. Staff should ideally never be left alone with a child or vulnerable adult. If this is unavoidable, another member of staff should be informed.
- When working with schools or other educational establishments, it is the school's responsibility to ensure that there is always a member of their staff present throughout the session.
- Workshop leaders should make themselves aware of the farm's emergency and evacuation procedures and should communicate relevant information to participants in an appropriate manner.
- Equipment must meet current safety standards.

4. Photography

- River Bourne Community Farm will ensure that the use of video or photography of children or vulnerable adults is undertaken only with the permission of a teacher, parent, carer or guardian, where the individual could be identified from the photograph. A standard consent form will be used.
- Staff photographing children and/or vulnerable adults will be designated to do so and will have a current DBS disclosure certificate.

FOR MORE DETAILED GUIDANCE PLEASE REFER TO THE BEHAVIOUR POLICY AND POSITIVE HANDLING POLICY

5. Parents

Parents / persons with parental responsibility are ultimately responsible for their children's welfare at all times, and they should be assured that their children are involved with a credible organisation. We achieve this by:

- Publicising information on all our primary, post-primary, youth and parenting work.
- Publishing a full copy of the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Policy on the internet site www.riverbournecommunityfarm.org.uk

6. Definitions of abuse and how to recognise the signs

It is not the responsibility of River Bourne Community Farm's staff to decide if abuse has occurred but it is their responsibility to act on their concerns. Farm staff must take all allegations or suspicions of abuse extremely seriously and must follow the procedures outlined in the rest of this document.

There are different kinds of abuse. Abuse can occur:

- Through neglect or through physical, sexual, emotional/psychological, financial or discriminatory harm.
- In an institutional or a family setting by a person known to the victim, or by a stranger.
- By inflicting harm or by failing to act to prevent harm

7. Identifying the signs of abuse

There are many ways in-which-abuse may manifest itself. The list below is not exhaustive and the presence of one or more of these is not necessarily proof that abuse is actually taking place. Abuse may be indicated by:

- Unexplained bruising or injuries.
- Unexplained behaviour over time e.g., becoming very quiet, withdrawn or displaying sudden outbursts of temper
- Inappropriate sexual awareness or behaviour
- Changes in appearance, e.g., becoming increasingly dirty or unkempt
- Someone else, a child or adult, expressing concern about the welfare of another child or vulnerable adult.

8. Our Procedures to Manage Allegations

Responding to suspicions or allegations of abuse

The River Bourne Community Farm member of staff with lead responsibility for safeguarding and protection and who should be informed of any incidents of abuse, or suspected abuse, is: ***Sara-Jane Hancock, Education Manager***

This member of staff will ensure that River Bourne Community Farm's Directors are also informed of any incidents or allegations of abuse. It is our responsibility to report all such instances to Social Services.

Flowcharts provided by the Wiltshire Safeguarding Vulnerable People Partnership (SVPP) sets out the required procedure for staff to follow when they have a safeguarding concern about a child. These are displayed in the farm lobby and education office for easy reference. The flowchart setting out the procedure in respect of adult learners 'Abuse / Neglect of Adult at Risk is Suspected, Disclosed or Discovered', is taken from 'Safeguarding Adults at Risk in Wiltshire - Policy and Procedures (2024)'.

What to do if you witness or suspect abuse

- If a member of Farm staff should see or suspect abuse of a child or vulnerable person they should report the incident and/or their concerns to the member of staff with designated responsibility for safeguarding and protection (as named at the top of this section), who will then make the person with legal responsibility for the child or person aware of the problem as appropriate.

- If this is not appropriate staff must refer the concerns to the appropriate agency as soon as possible- usually the Social Care helpdesk
- Always keep a written record of what was witnessed and who was involved; try to preserve any evidence.

What to do if someone tells you about abuse

It is possible that a child, young person or vulnerable adult who is suffering or has suffered abuse will confide in a staff member. This is something you should be prepared for and must handle carefully. The following action should be taken if there are concerns about abuse of a child, young person or vulnerable adult.

- Remain calm and in control but don't delay acting.
- Listen carefully to what is said. Allow the person to tell you at their own pace. Ask questions only for clarification; don't ask questions that suggest a particular answer.
- Respond in a caring, non-judgmental way.
- Explain that you will need to share the information with others. Do not promise to 'keep it a secret'. Make it clear that you will only tell the people who need to know and who should be able to help.
- Reassure the child, young person or vulnerable adult that they did the right thing in telling you.
- Tell the child, young person or vulnerable adult what you are going to do next.
- As soon as possible after the disclosing conversation, record exactly what the child, young person or vulnerable adult has said to you in a legible and accurate format. As far as possible use their own words. Stick to the facts and do not give your opinion. Note the date, time, any names that were involved or mentioned and who you gave the information to. Make sure you sign and date your record.
- Report the incident and/or their concerns to the member of staff with designated responsibility for safeguarding and protection who will then make the person with legal responsibility for the child or person aware of the problem as appropriate. If this is not appropriate, they will contact Social Services or talk directly to the person in the educational, youth or care setting who has designated responsibility for safeguarding and protection.
- Staff must NOT take photographs of any injuries

Missing Children/ Absence Policy

Teaching staff should take registers each day and report any absent children to the Education Manager.

If a child does not attend a pre-organised education session, or absconds from that session at River Bourne Community Farm, the farm staff should take the following actions:

- If the pupil is on roll with a school, contact the school to report the absence.
- Schools should contact the parents to enquire about the absence.
- If pupils are home-educated, farm staff should contact parents directly.
- If child has absconded from the farm during their session and parents or school are unable to be reached, police are to be notified.
- Parents or school to provide written or email confirmation to the farm when child is located with explanations if appropriate.

Learners with Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

Learners with additional needs face an increased risk of abuse and neglect. Staff take extra care to interpret correctly apparent signs of abuse or neglect. We never assume that behaviour, mood or injury relates to the learner's additional needs without further exploration. Staff understand that additional challenges can exist when recognising abuse and neglect in learners with SEND, including communication barriers. Staff recognise that learners with SEND are also at a higher risk of peer group isolation and can be disproportionately affected by bullying.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

FGM is illegal in the UK and a form of child abuse with long-lasting harmful consequences. Staff will inform the Safeguarding Lead / Deputy immediately if they suspect a girl is at risk of FGM. We will report to the police any 'known' cases of FGM to the police as required by law.

Child on child abuse

All child-on-child abuse is unacceptable and will be taken seriously. Staff recognise that while both boys and girls can abuse their peers, it is more likely that girls will be victims and boys instigators of such abuse. Child on child abuse is not tolerated, passed off as "banter" or seen as "part of growing up". It is likely to include, but not limited to:

- bullying (including cyber bullying)
- gender based violence/sexual assaults
- sexting
- 'upskirting' or any picture taken under a person's clothing without them knowing to obtain sexual gratification or cause humiliation or distress.
- initiation/hazing type violence and rituals.

Consequently, child on child abuse is dealt with as a safeguarding issue.

Domestic abuse

Domestic violence and abuse is any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. The abuse can encompass but is not limited to: psychological; physical; sexual; financial; and emotional harm. When police are called to an incident of domestic abuse, where there are children in the household who have experienced the domestic incident, the Safeguarding Lead ensures River Bourne Community Farm receives up to date relevant information about the child's circumstances and will ensure key staff provide emotional and practical support to the child according to their needs

Mental health

Mental health problems can be an indicator that a learner has suffered or is at risk of suffering abuse, neglect or exploitation.

Staff understand that:

- abuse and neglect, or other potentially traumatic adverse childhood experiences can have a lasting impact on learners' mental health, behaviour and education throughout childhood, adolescence and into adulthood.
- they have a duty to observe learners day-to-day and identify those whose behaviour suggests that they may be experiencing a mental health problem or be at risk of developing one.

If staff have a mental health concern about a learner that is also a safeguarding concern, they will report this concern using the agreed reporting mechanisms.

Preventing radicalisation

Protecting learners from the risk of radicalisation is part of River Bourne Community Farm's wider safeguarding duties and is similar in nature to protecting learners from other forms of harm and abuse.

Serious violence

We are committed to success in learning for all our learners as one of the most powerful indicators in the prevention of youth crime.

Our curriculum includes teaching conflict resolution skills and understanding risky situations to help our learners develop the social and emotional skills they need to thrive

9. Sharing information about concerns with agencies who need to know and involving parents and children appropriately: The procedure for reporting allegations or suspicions of abuse

In any case where an allegation is made, or someone at River Bourne Community Farm has concerns, a record should be made. Details must include, as far as practical:

- name of child or young person
- age
- home address (if known)
- date of birth (if known)
- name/s and address of parent/s or person/s with parental responsibility
- telephone numbers if available
- is the person making the report expressing their own concerns, or passing on those of somebody else? If so, record details
- what has prompted the concerns? Include dates and times of any specific incidents
- has the child or young person been spoken to? If so, what was said?
- has anybody been alleged to be the abuser? If so, record details of who has this been passed on to, in order that appropriate action is taken? E.g. School, designated officer, social services etc
- has anyone else been consulted? If so, record details

10. Confidentiality and sharing information

Staff should ensure that records, policies and procedures that are required for the efficient and safe management of provision and to promote the welfare and learning of children and vulnerable adults are maintained. Where records are kept, privacy and confidentiality will be kept in line with the Data Protection and Freedom of Information Acts.

What to do if you are asked for information by another organisation

● **If the information relates to a child**

The legal principle is that 'the welfare of the child is paramount'. This means that considerations of confidentiality that might apply to other situations should not be allowed to override the right of the child to be protected from harm. Every effort should be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned both when the allegation is made and whilst it is being investigated. However, although the Data Protection Act 2018, Human Rights Act 1998 or common law duty of confidence would need to be considered, the welfare of the child would normally override the need to keep the information confidential.

● **If the information relates to a vulnerable adult**

The same principle as for child protection applies - that the safety and wellbeing of the vulnerable adult will override considerations of confidentiality. RBCF will follow procedures as recommended in: Safeguarding Adults at Risk in Wiltshire – Wiltshire Safeguarding Adults Board, Policy and Procedures (2024) which is itself based on: (*No Secrets*, Department of Health and social care: Guidance of developing and implementing multi-agency policies and procedures to protect vulnerable adults from abuse 2000 (updated 2015)).

11. Whistleblowing

All staff can raise concerns about poor or unsafe practice and potential failures in the organisation's safeguarding regime. Our whistleblowing procedures, which are reflected in staff training and our Code of Conduct, are in place for such concerns to be raised with the Farm Directors.

If a staff member feels unable to raise an issue with the Farm Directors or feels that their genuine concerns are not being addressed, other whistleblowing channels are open to them:

- The NSPCC whistleblowing helpline
Staff can call: 0800 028 0285 from 08:00 to 20:00, Monday to Friday, or email help@nspcc.org.uk.

12. Policy Review

POLICY AGREED BY FARM COMMITTEE ON:01.07.21.....

Updated October 2022 in line with Wiltshire Approved Alternative Provision (WAAP) Guidelines

External References updated November 2024

SIGNATURE OF EDUCATION MANAGER:Sara-Jane Hancock.....

Reviewed: November 2024

Date of next review: November 2025