

Guildford Health Walks Safeguarding Procedure

This procedure explains how to respond to safeguarding disclosures, allegations or concerns.

Last reviewed: March 2023

As a volunteer, or someone involved in guiding our walkers, you must know how to use the safeguarding procedure.

In this procedure, you'll find out how to use our Safeguarding Policy when you recognise, receive or report a safeguarding allegation, concern or disclosure.

What is safeguarding, and what are my responsibilities?

Safeguarding is what we do to promote the welfare of young persons and adults at risk, and to protect them from harm.

You must report any safeguarding allegation, concern or disclosure within 24 hours of finding out about it, or sooner if it's an emergency. If you're not sure about the concern, report it anyway.

All volunteers must complete and maintain the correct level of safeguarding training for their role.

Contacting our Safeguarding team

If you have a concern about a volunteer or one of our walkers and need advice or support, write to safeguarding@guildfordhealthwalks.org.uk.

- If it's an emergency and there's an immediate risk of harm, phone the emergency services first, then email Safeguarding.

WHAT ARE SAFEGUARDING ALLEGATIONS, CONCERNS AND DISCLOSURE?

A safeguarding concern, allegation or disclosure could be anything relating to a child's or adult's safety or welfare. Or it could be about the potential risk a person may pose to others.

It could include:

- A walker or child or a volunteer making a disclosure of abuse, neglect or harm.
- Seeing, or hearing about, behaviour that failed to protect a young person or adult.

- Seeing something in a person's behaviour or appearance which makes you concerned about abuse, neglect, harm, criminal behaviour, or radicalisation.
- A concern about the behaviour of one child or young person towards another. Inappropriate behaviour between young people is known as child-on-child abuse.
- A concern, allegation, or disclosure about a volunteer who has, or may have, behaved in a way that suggests they may not be suitable to work with children or adults.
- An allegation, concern, or disclosure about abuse or harm that happened in the past. You must treat this seriously and report it straight away.
- An ongoing or past investigation into you or someone you have a significant relationship with, which relates to any child or adult safeguarding allegation, concern or disclosure. The investigation may have been carried out by the police, social services, an employer, or another organisation you volunteer for. Someone you have a 'significant relationship' with may include, but isn't limited to, a family member, partner, or member of the same household. You must inform our Safeguarding team without delay.
- If you have to deal with a safeguarding concern, it's extremely important that you understand your role, including what to say and how to behave. Remember, you should only share information with those who need to know, like our Safeguarding manager. Having fears about sharing information mustn't stop you from promoting the welfare and protecting the safety of children or adults at risk.

Our walk leader training includes how to react and respond to allegations, concerns, and disclosures. Refresh your memory by taking another look at our safeguarding structure.

How do I make a report?

If you've seen or heard something that concerns you, or you've received a disclosure or allegation, please email safeguarding@guildfordhealthwalks.org.uk as soon as possible. You must get in touch within 24 hours, or sooner if it's an emergency.

If there's an immediate risk of harm, you'll need to contact the emergency services first. Find out what we mean by an immediate risk of harm further down this page.

If you're unsure about the concern and whether to make a report, report it anyway. Use the Safeguarding Report Form. **If you report a referral under the Safeguarding guidelines for children or vulnerable adults, please do not record personal details of third parties on the form.**

The Safeguarding process

Is there an emergency? Is there an immediate risk of harm?

If yes:

1. Inform the emergency services, i.e., the police. Then contact our Safeguarding manager.
2. Complete a written report and email it to safeguarding@guildfordhealthwalks.org.uk
3. The Safeguarding manager will record and manage all allegations, concerns, and disclosures

If no:

1. Complete a written report. Ensure that you include your name and surname, all contact details, and any actions taken.

What do I include in a report?

When you make a safeguarding report, you should include as much information as possible, including:

- Who you are, your contact details, your country or region, and your role in Guildford Health Walks, if appropriate.
- Who or what you're making a report about, including names.
- Where and when the events of the report happened.
- Any action you or someone else has taken about the allegation, concern or disclosure before making this report.

It would be helpful if you could also include:

- A short, clear summary. If you're sending an email, you could use bullet points and notes, as long as they follow a logical order.
- Any previous concerns you've had about the person you're making the report about. Or any incidents that have taken place and may be relevant.
- any supporting documents and correspondence.

When you're reporting your concerns, remember:

- You must state very clearly if you're concerned about the person's immediate safety.

- To keep facts and opinions separate.
- To mention any help given to, or needed by, the person.

Ensure you share information safely by following our Managing Information Procedure.

Reporting a concern, allegation or disclosure can be stressful, so please let the Safeguarding manager know if you're struggling with this.

What happens next?

Our Safeguarding manager aims to respond to all concerns and emails within 1-2 working days. We'll always respond within 5 working days. We will address any emergency concerns promptly.

Once we've received your report, our duty safeguarding practitioner and team assistant will review it. They'll assess the risk and decide on what action to take. They'll respond to the report differently depending on its nature, severity, and complexity, and the people involved.

If the team decides to open a case to address the concern, we'll give you, as the person who reported the concern, an update.

Our Safeguarding manager may ask you, or another appropriate volunteer, to help with the next steps. This could include speaking to the parents or carers, or to the volunteers involved. We'll ensure you have the necessary support to do this.

WHAT HAPPENS IF THE SAFEGUARDING TEAM BELIEVES THAT A CHILD OR ADULT IS AT AN IMMEDIATE RISK OF HARM?

Our Safeguarding Manager will take action immediately. This may mean referring the allegation, concern, or disclosure to the police, children's services, or adult social care.

Safeguarding will consider whether we can do this without needing to inform or ask for consent from the child's parent or carer, or the adult at risk.

If letting parents or carers know about the report will put a child at further risk of harm, we'll make the referral without doing this.

If the concern is about an adult at risk of harm, our Safeguarding manager will also consider if the adult is able to give their consent to a referral. We'll make a referral directly to adult social services or the police if any of the following apply:

- The person meets the definition of an 'adult at risk'. This means the person has needs for care and support (whether or not the local authority is meeting any of those needs) and is experiencing or is at risk of abuse or neglect, and as a result of those needs can't protect themselves against the abuse or neglect, or the risk of it.

- There's reason to believe that a crime has been committed or will be committed.
- The person is at an immediate risk of harm.
- The person needs urgent medical treatment.

If our Safeguarding manager makes a referral without obtaining consent, they'll inform the person who reported the concern. Depending on the advice from social services or the police, we may ask the person who reported the concern, or another appropriate volunteer, to inform the parent, carer, or adult at risk that our Safeguarding manager has made a referral without their consent.

If we need consent before making the referral, we'll ask the person who reported the concern, or another appropriate volunteer, to urgently speak with the parent, carer, or the adult at risk, so we can proceed with the referral. You can find out more about this in the honest conversations section further down this page.

Guildford Health Walks can't stay anonymous when making a referral. However, our Safeguarding Manager will not disclose the name or details of the person who reported the concern unless required to do so by law. We'll let you know if we do this. We'll also ensure that you're supported if the police or social services inform the parent, carer, or adult at risk that the report originated from us.

If someone doesn't give their consent for a referral, our Safeguarding Manager will attempt to manage the concern in alternative ways.

WHAT HAPPENS IF THERE'S NO IMMEDIATE RISK OF HARM?

If there's no immediate risk of harm, it's unlikely we'll make a referral to the police or social care. But our Safeguarding Manager will provide the person who reported the concern with advice and resources to share with the young person, their family, or the adult at risk.

If the concern is about a child and no one has told their parent or carer about it, it's likely we'll ask the person who reported the concern, or another appropriate volunteer, to speak to them. You can find out more about what this might involve in the honest conversations section further down this page.

For concerns about adults at risk, you may also need to complete a risk assessment. Our Safeguarding Manager will let you know who's appropriate to complete these with each person. Our Safeguarding Manager will be able to provide support.

If an adult at risk is behaving in a way that puts themselves or others at risk of harm, we may need to consider further action. Our Safeguarding Manager will work to support the adult in any way possible before escalating the concern.

WHAT HAPPENS IF AN ADULT INVOLVED IN A GUILDFORD HEALTH WALKS EVENT MAY POSE A RISK OF HARM TO OTHERS?

Our Safeguarding Manager will determine whether immediate action is necessary and, if so, refer the concern to the police or other relevant emergency services.

Depending on the concern and on the advice we receive from statutory agencies, we may decide to suspend or place a sanction on that person's attendance at our events.

If we decide to suspend a volunteer or walker, they'll be offered support from our Safeguarding Manager.

We may also need to refer cases to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO). The LADO is responsible for giving advice, information, and guidance.

WHAT HAPPENS IF THE CONCERNS DON'T MEET THE THRESHOLD FOR A REFERRAL TO STATUTORY AGENCIES OR THE POLICE?

Our Safeguarding manager may begin an internal investigation. Some internal investigations may also need a risk assessment to be completed with the volunteer or walker who poses a risk of harm.

If the investigation reveals significant concerns about the volunteer's or walker's behavior, we may impose a sanction. This could include withdrawing their role and placing a sanction on that person's attendance at our events.

Under some circumstances, Guildford Health Walks has a legal duty to make a referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS), or Access NI, if we withdraw a person's role within our group.

HONEST CONVERSATIONS

We often ask the person who reported the concern or another local volunteer to discuss the concerns with the parent, carer, walker, or volunteer. This is because they're likely to have a relationship that will make it easier. If possible, ensure you have another volunteer with you for these conversations.

It isn't always an easy discussion. Our team will help you find support, including from local commissioners.

The purpose of the conversation may be:

- To ensure a family is aware of concerns so they can safeguard their child.
- To give a family, walker, or volunteer the chance to explain and respond to any concerns or allegations. They may take the chance to share their own concerns or discuss the help they're already receiving.
- To ask for consent to make a referral to children's services or adult social care.

- To share resources that may help.
- To offer ongoing support to a volunteer, walker, or a young member's family or carers.

If the concern is about an adult posing a risk of harm, our Safeguarding manager may ask to speak to them.

The purpose of this conversation may be:

- To gather more information from the volunteer or walker.
- To let them know about the allegation and give them the chance to explain and respond.
- To inform the volunteer or walker that we're suspending their participation due to an allegation.
- To let the volunteer or walker know the outcome of an investigation. This may include letting them know we're withdrawing their right to attend our events.

The Safeguarding Manager managing the case will support and provide guidance to the volunteer or walker during these conversations.

They'll also ensure the committee is aware of what information can be shared with the volunteer or walker and what must remain confidential due to the ongoing investigation. This will depend on the guidance from external agencies, such as the police or LADO, regarding the concern.

If we've decided to place a sanction on an individual's attendance at our events, a conversation must take place to inform them of this as soon as possible. Our Safeguarding manager will follow this up with a letter to confirm the details and reason. The conversation must take place before we send the letter.