



SUSSEX ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Safeguarding policy

1. What you need to know

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.

Our policy and procedures are based on the premise that the welfare and safety of children (under the age of 18) and adults at risk, is paramount. Any suspicion or allegation of abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately.

If you are concerned that a child or adult at risk is being abused, or you suspect abuse, then you must:

- Inform the Chair of SOS, or Safeguarding Advisor (contact details at end of this document), at the earliest opportunity.
- Avoid making any promises to children or adults at risk, to not report your concerns.
- In the very unlikely event of a child or adult at risk being in immediate danger, call the police on 999.

This policy complements our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy: they reinforce each other and aim to make SOS a safe, welcoming, inclusive organisation. This means that inappropriate language and behaviours that make children and adults at risk feel uncomfortable, will also be challenged.

Read on for more information and background, including important definitions in Appendix 1 below.

2. Purpose and scope

This policy framework sets out our commitment and approach to safeguarding children, and adults at risk from abuse.

Awareness is the first step towards creating a safe environment for SOS members and members of the public participating in SOS activities.

A key principle is that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.

In practice the purpose of this policy is to ensure that SOS Council:

A) Consider the potential for the abuse of children and adults at risk, whilst they participate in activities organised by SOS, and have appropriate safeguards in place.

B) Have a clear process, known to Council members and walk/event leaders, that sets out the action to be taken when there are safeguarding concerns.

3. Safeguards in place for children

Anyone under the age of 18 is regarded as a child.

Children joining SOS

If a child wishes to join SOS, **their parent or guardian must provide written approval by signing the application form, unless their membership is part of a family membership.** The parent or guardian will be sent a copy of this policy document.

Children attending SOS events

Parental consent is required for any **child** wishing to attend an SOS event without a parent or guardian, whether an indoor meeting or field trip. A parent or guardian of the under-18 will need to email consent to either the Safeguarding Advisor or Chair of SOS (contact details at end of this document) with reasonable notice, ideally a minimum of 48 hours prior to the event so that appropriate safeguards can be agreed, and event leaders notified. The parent or guardian's telephone contact details should be included in the email.

Safeguarding measures at our events

The following measures are in place to safeguard the safety and welfare of children attending our events:

- Any child travelling to and from an event must not share a car with anyone other than a family member, guardian, or responsible adult (see Appendix for definition)
- There must always be more than one adult present at any SOS activities where a child is present.
- Event coordinators will ensure that contact with children is appropriate for the activity.

Other considerations

A sub-set of outings are public engagement events, organised by SOS or other organisations, but open to absolutely anybody that turns up. In such circumstances, the SOS facilitators will be aware of the need to look out for children and to actively consider any health and safety or welfare concerns, taking action as required.

4. Safeguards in place for adults at risk

Across all settings, vigilance is the most important safeguard. This is because SOS officers, members and walk/event leaders will not necessarily know that an adult is at

risk or has additional support needs. We invite adults at risk, people with additional support needs and/or their representative to contact the Chair or Safeguarding Advisor in advance of events, to discuss their support needs. See Appendix 3 below for how to make contact.

Our Equality and Inclusion policy also sets out expectations that SOS events (walks and talks) will ensure that people feel comfortable, safe, and supported. In some circumstances, adjustments will be required, and inappropriate language or behaviour will be challenged.

5. The procedure to follow where there are concerns

If a Council member or walk/event leader has any concerns that a child or adult at risk is at risk of abuse, or abuse is observed, then the Chair of SOS, or Safeguarding Advisor, should be informed at the earliest opportunity. It is then the responsibility of the Chair or Safeguarding Advisor to assess and decide what action should be taken and to ensure that a file note is created, recording the basis of that decision. Actions could include making a referral to the relevant social services department. In most circumstances the Chair and Safeguarding Advisor will consult each other, except where delay might result in harm.

It is imperative that promises are never made to children or adults at risk, to not report concerns or make referrals to appropriate agencies.

Inappropriate behaviour or comments made towards a child or adult at risk should also be reported to the Chair or Safeguarding Advisor.

In the very unlikely event of a child or adult at risk being in immediate danger it is essential that the police are contacted on 999.

Appendix 1

Some important definitions

Children and adults may be vulnerable to neglect and abuse or exploitation from within their family and from individuals they come across in their daily lives. There are 5 main categories of abuse. These are: sexual, physical, financial, emotional abuse, and neglect. It is important to be aware of more specific types of abuse that fall within these categories. These are:

- Bullying and cyberbullying
- Child sexual exploitation
- Child Criminal exploitation
- Child trafficking
- Domestic abuse
- Female genital mutilation
- Grooming

- Historical abuse
- Online abuse

The Children Act 1989 definition of a child is: anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday, even if they are living independently, are a member of the armed forces or are in hospital.

Safeguarding children: Safeguarding children is defined in **Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018** as:

- protecting children from maltreatment.
- preventing impairment of children's health or development.
- ensuring that children are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care.
- taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes.

Adult at risk

In this document we have used the term adult at risk to include adults (any person aged 18 years or older) with learning difficulties and mental health issues as well as adults with additional support needs. This is not an exhaustive list and we have avoided a narrow, legalistic definition.

Responsible adult

The responsible adult role allows for people like older siblings, cousins, nephews or even neighbours to support children and facilitate their inclusion in our events. In almost all circumstances, recognition of the responsible adult will be based on a prior discussion between the Chair or Safeguarding Advisor and the child's parent or guardian.

Appendix 2

Practice guidance

If concerns are raised with the Chair or Safeguarding Advisor (relating to either children or an adult at risk) then a file note must be created that details the nature of the concerns (for example, what is the worry or concern/who/date/time/ and anything that has been said or heard). The Chair or Safeguarding Advisor should ensure that as much detail as possible is recorded, distinguishing between facts and opinion. In reaching a decision about what action to take or not, it is essential that the rationale for that decision is clearly spelt out. It is essential that confidentiality is maintained at all stages of the process when dealing with safeguarding concerns. Information relating to the concern and subsequent case management should be shared on a need-to-know basis only and should be kept secure at all times.

The thresholds for making referrals are available from each of the relevant local authority websites and it is always possible for the Chair or Safeguarding Advisor to have an informal discussion with the safeguarding teams.

In considering safeguarding concerns and referrals, the Chair / Safeguarding Advisor may also refer to the following guidance:

[Making a Safeguarding Referral](#)
[Reporting Safeguarding Concerns to Regulators](#)

If an adult is introduced to us as an adult at risk or as vulnerable (probably by a family member, carer or support worker), then the Chair or Safeguarding Advisor should request a discussion with the adult in question and seek to complete a risk assessment. It is recognised that this could be a difficult task. The Society will endeavour to meet the individual needs of the adult and aim to ensure that they are safeguarded. This might require negotiation over what information is shared with an event leader.

Appendix 3

Key contact details and 'phone numbers

To contact the Chair of SOS (Clare Buckle) email chair@sos.org.uk / call 07480 115506

To contact the SOS Safeguarding Advisor (Tony Benton) email safeguarding@sos.org.uk

The following 'phone numbers relate to referral points for raising concerns, although in practice the Chair is likely to take the lead in making any referrals.

East Sussex County Council

Single Point of Advice (SPoA) Mon-Thurs 8.30am-5pm and Fri 8.30am-4.30pm.

Phone: 01323 464222

Email: 0-19.SPOA@eastsussex.gov.uk

Out of Hours Social Care Service - Children's services: 01273 335905/6

Out of Hours Social Care Service Adult services: 01323 636399

ESCC If you are worried about an adult who may be being abused, neglected or exploited, please tell us.

Phone us on 0345 60 80 191 or report your concern online:

West Sussex County Council

Anyone who has concerns about the welfare of a child can contact a single countywide phone number, known as the Integrated Front door (IFD). Monday to Friday between 9am-5pm: 01403 229900

At all other times, including nights, weekends and bank holidays, contact the 'out of hours' emergency team: 0330 222 6664

WSCC - If you are a member of the public, and you wish to discuss your concerns, please phone 01243 642121.

To report an urgent concern out of usual working hours (Monday-Friday, 09:00-17:00), please call the Adult Social Care out of hours manager on 03302 227007.

Brighton and Hove City Council

Telephone: 01273 290400 for children and 01273 295555 for adults.

Out of Hours Emergency Duty Service

Telephone: 01273 335905 or 335906

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NSPCC

Adults concerned about a child can contact the NSPCC helpline seven days a week on 0808 800 5000, or email help@nspcc.org.uk.

Approved by Council 8 December 2023



Clare Buckle – Chair of Council

Alan Swetman

Alan Swetman - Secretary

This policy is available to all Council Trustees, officers, members/volunteers via the SOS website.

This policy and any links are to be reviewed by SOS Council annually from the above date.