



Hertfordshire Natural History Society

Policy on safeguarding children, young people and adults at risk

Our commitment to safeguarding

Hertfordshire Natural History Society and Field Club (hereafter referred to as 'Hertfordshire Natural History Society', 'the HNHS' or 'the Society') believes that a child, young person or adult at risk should never experience abuse of any kind. We recognise that we have a responsibility to promote the welfare of all children, young people and adults at risk regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation. We are committed to safeguarding the well-being of all children, young people and adults at risk we come into contact with and to protecting them from harm.

About this policy

This policy applies to all members and anyone working on behalf of Hertfordshire Natural History Society, including the Hertfordshire Bird Club, Hertfordshire Flora Group, Hertfordshire Invertebrate Project and other subsidiary groups, or taking part in their activities.

The purpose of the policy is to inform HNHS members and all who participate in our activities about the principles that guide our approach to protecting vulnerable people and the practical steps we will take when concerns are raised about abuse and mistreatment

This policy recognises vulnerable people as:

- Children up to the age of 16 or young people aged 16-18.
- Adults aged over 18 'at risk' – defined as anyone with social care needs. This includes adults with a learning or physical disability, a physical or mental illness, chronic or otherwise, including an addiction to alcohol or drugs, or reduced physical or mental capacity. The Society recognises that 'risk' may be temporary and determined by the activity an adult is taking part in and not solely on their personal characteristics or circumstances.

The policy aims to:

- Ensure that children, young people and adults at risk who are members of Hertfordshire Natural History Society and/or its subsidiary groups are protected from abuse or other mistreatment when participating in its activities.
- Ensure that HNHS members working with children, young people and adults at risk understand and accept responsibility for helping to safeguard those vulnerable individuals they are interacting with.
- Ensure that safeguarding of children, young people and adults at risk is a primary consideration when the HNHS or its subsidiaries plan any activity, event or project.

Legal framework

This policy has been drawn-up with reference to legislation, policy and guidance on the protection of children, young people and at-risk adults, including safeguarding guidance provided by the Charity Commission for England and Wales.

Policy review

The policy will be reviewed and amended (as necessary) on an annual basis by the HNHS Management Committee. It will also be reviewed in response to significant changes in relevant legislation, good practice, or in response to any identified failing in its effectiveness.

HNHS and vulnerable people

Hertfordshire Natural History Society is an adult and family membership organisation. Its principal aims are to promote the study and recording of the flora and fauna of Hertfordshire and encourage wider interest in natural history. The Society is run entirely by volunteers and employs no staff. It does not provide activities designed exclusively for children and young people. However, it organises activities that may be attended by individuals aged under 18 as well as adults aged over 18 whose social care needs define them as being 'at risk'.

Our involvement with children, young people and adults at risk might include, but is not limited to:

- Children and young people included in family membership and individual adult members who are at-risk attending conference, lectures, field meetings and other activities

- Relatives and friends of members attending HNHS activities
- Members of the public attending HNHS activities.

Level of involvement

The Society's current assessment of its involvement with children, young people and adults at risk is 'infrequent' – defined as occasional, irregular or short-term contacts over a period of time. Contacts in a group context are 'low intensity' – defined as participation in activities with minimal physical contact where no intimate care is provided and no child is permitted to take part unless accompanied and supervised by a parent or guardian. This assessment is subject to monitoring and annual review.

Safeguarding lead

David Utting, the HNHS Hon. Secretary, has lead responsibility for safeguarding issues. He has completed Level 1 CPD (Continuing Professional Development) certified training courses in safeguarding children and safeguarding vulnerable adults (2020, renewed training 2024).

Concerns relating to safeguarding and queries relating to this policy may be referred to him (although police should always be called first if a child, young person or at-risk adult is believed to be in imminent danger – see below)

Any projects, events or other activities likely to involve children, young people or at-risk adults must be planned with the involvement of David Utting and in line with this policy.

Our approach to safeguarding

The Society seeks to keep children, young people and vulnerable adults safe by:

- valuing, listening to, and respecting them
- appointing a lead management committee member for safeguarding and regularly reviewing its safeguarding policies and procedures to reflect best practice
- applying safeguarding procedures to ensure that concerns and relevant information are shared promptly with the relevant agencies
- maintaining an anti-bullying environment and ensuring that any bullying incidents are dealt with effectively
- seeking to provide as safe a physical environment for activities as possible by applying health and safety measures that accord with the law and regulatory guidance
- recording and storing information that relates to safeguarding concerns

- in a professional and secure manner
- reminding its members that everyone shares the responsibility for safeguarding and drawing their attention to this policy.

HNHS rules concerning the participation of children and young people

Accompanying parent or responsible adult

Children of family members are welcome at HNHS events and activities, but it is a rule those aged under 16 must be accompanied throughout by a parent or other responsible adult who will bring the child to the meeting and take them home again afterwards.

Young people aged 16 and 17 may attend the Society's events unaccompanied provided they have provided the organiser with prior written consent from a parent or guardian who has also supplied a phone number where they can be contacted in emergency.

Photography

Photography of people as well as wildlife is an integral part of the Society's activities and it reserves the right to publish images of its events. It is, nevertheless, policy to obtain parental permission before taking and/or publishing images of children aged under 18.

Safeguarding procedures

General health and safety

The HNHS takes active steps make its events safe for children, young people, adults at risk and all participants by holding indoor meetings on premises that satisfy current fire regulations and other health and safety requirements. Field meetings and other outdoor activities are subject to prior risk assessment by the organisers, to ensure that physical injury and other health risks are recognised and minimised so far as possible.

Neglect and abuse

Concerns about possible neglect, physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse or other ill-treatment involving a child or at-risk adult taking part in HNHS events will be treated with the utmost seriousness. Unless a direct report has already been made to the police or a social care agency, concerns should be communicated without delay to the Society's lead safeguarding person. After listening to the concern and making a note of relevant information, he will make a report to the appropriate agency.

Anyone attempting to contact the lead safeguarding person with a concern who finds he is away or not available should not delay in approaching the relevant social care agency directly (contact information below). If they believe a child, young person or at-risk adult is in imminent danger, they must not hesitate to contact the police by dialling 999.

Individuals who raise concerns have the right to expect that information shared with the safeguarding lead will be treated sensitively and in confidence – but only to an extent consistent with effective safeguarding. In particular, the lead safeguarding person has a duty to share and refer concerns relating to the welfare of a child or adult at risk as soon as possible to someone qualified to assess the information and take appropriate action.

Bullying

Like other forms of abuse, the HNHS will not tolerate the bullying of children or at-risk adults at its events. Should an incident occur at an event, the organiser or leader is required to separate those involved immediately. The parents or guardians of any children involved must be informed without delay. The lead safeguarding person (see above) must also be informed.

In addition to any action that may be taken by the relevant safeguarding authorities, the HNHS Management Committee will consider what action it should take against an individual found to have bullied or otherwise ill-treated children or at-risk adults at its events. This will include banning them from future events and revoking their membership.

Record keeping

All notes, reports and other written materials relating to safeguarding concerns that have been raised with the Society will be kept secure. Electronic files will be password-protected.

Disclosure and barring certification

It is HNHS policy that children under 16 be supervised at all times by a parent or other responsible adult. Given that the attendance of 16 and 17-year olds and adults at risk at its meetings is infrequent and of low intensity (see above) the Society does not currently require its event organisers to provide disclosure and barring certification. This assessment is subject to monitoring annual review.

Contact information

HNHS safeguarding lead

The Society is managed by a committee that includes the charity's trustees. David Utting holds the lead responsibility for safeguarding children, young people and at-risk adults. His contact details are:

David Utting,
HNHS Secretary,
250 Sandridge Road,
St Albans AL1 4AL
01727 762855 / 07930 313790
secretary@hnhs.org

Hertfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (HSCP)

Hertfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (HSCP) has been set up so that all agencies and organisations who work with children and young people work together to keep children safe. To report abuse of mistreatment concerns at any time of day or night call **0300 123 4043**

Hertfordshire Safeguarding Adults Board

Hertfordshire Safeguarding Adults Board is a partnership of relevant agencies working with organisations to make sure adults at risk are cared for in their daily lives, free from abuse and harassment. Concerns about an at-risk adult can be reported online at <https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/adult-social-services/report-a-concern-about-an-adult/report-a-concern-about-an-adult-form.aspx> or by telephoning **0300 123 4042** at any time of day or night.