

SAFEGUARDING POLICY

Introduction

Econet is an independent conservation group that undertakes a wide range of activities in order to conserve and promote awareness and enjoyment of the natural environment in public open spaces and sites by way of regular tasks and organised public events.

All of our members are volunteers who, may at sometime, come into contact with children or adults at risk. We will endeavour to provide a safe and welcoming environment where *everyone* is respected and valued. This policy aims to provide **ALL** volunteers with the principles that guide our approach to safeguarding, it aims to be proportionate and appropriate to the level of risk involved.

Children may come along to our events, however, they must be accompanied by a parent, guardian or a responsible adult.

Definitions

- A child – is a person in the UK under the age of 18 years
- Adult at risk– is someone over the age of 18 years, who has needs for care and support and may therefore be unable to protect themselves from either the risk of, or the experience of abuse and neglect
- Abuse and neglect– there are many types of abuse/neglect in both adult and child legislation which include: physical, sexual, emotional/psychological, financial, failing to act to prevent harm and domestic abuse. This may occur in a family/institutional or community setting, by those known to them, or by a stranger
- Volunteer – a member of Econet irrespective of their role
- Safeguarding Officer – designated volunteer responsible for the oversight of all aspects of safeguarding within Econet
- Safeguarding Lead – designated volunteer responsible for overseeing either a work party of volunteers on a conservation task, or responsible for managing a particular event
- Safeguarding concern – a concern about the safety or well-being of a child, and, or adult at risk because something has been seen/heard, or information has been received which involves people not in a position of responsibility within Econet
- Safeguarding allegation – an incident about the safety or well-being of a child, and, or adult at risk made against a volunteer of Econet

Safeguarding Principles

We recognise that:

- No-one involved in any Econet work party or activity should ever experience abuse, harm, neglect or exploitation
- We all have a responsibility to promote the welfare of all volunteers, to build a culture of safety and to work in a way that protects and supports them
- We must ensure a prompt and appropriate response to any concerns or allegations should they occur

SAFEGUARDING POLICY

Econet's Safeguarding Responsibilities

All Econet volunteers will be made aware of this Safeguarding policy and procedures and are requested to play their part in promoting a culture for safeguarding, in which everyone feels safe and able to speak out.

Safeguarding training will be provided (and refreshed at regular intervals) to ensure all volunteers are able to identify and respond to obvious signs of potential abuse/neglect and report any safeguarding concerns promptly in accordance with our reporting procedure. As a minimum, all volunteers are required to watch a basic video on Safeguarding.

Econet's volunteer activities to be assessed to take into account potential safeguarding risks and to ensure these are adequately mitigated.

All records of safeguarding concerns or allegations will be securely and confidentially stored in line with the Data Protection Act 2018 and General Data Protection (GDPR). These will be held on a non-public area of the Econet website with restricted access only.

This Safeguarding policy will be reviewed by the committee at the Econet Annual General Meeting (AGM) and subsequently updated whenever changes may be deemed necessary.

Safeguarding Reporting Procedure

Early sharing of information will ensure an effective response where concerns or allegations are raised. The Safeguarding Lead in charge of a specific work party or event will be the person to whom concerns should be reported. To ensure a safe outcome no one should assume that someone else will do it. Any concerns will be investigated and dealt with promptly, fairly, sensitively and with respect as well as reporting to the statutory authorities if necessary.

It is important to remember that the person who first encounters a case of alleged abuse or neglect is **not** responsible for deciding whether abuse or neglect has occurred. All safeguarding concerns or allegations will be dealt with in accordance with statutory child and adult safeguarding guidance.

Steps will be taken to protect a child or adult at risk should any volunteer be considered a risk to others through a mitigation process.

A written record must be kept relating to any concern or allegation regarding a child or adult at risk with safeguarding needs. These include details of the person involved, names of others present, dates, times, locations, the nature of the concern or allegation, the actions taken and decisions made. All personal details will be kept confidential.

All actions or investigations must be completed before an incident can be closed. The Safeguarding Officer will ensure that all records are signed, dated and securely and confidentially stored in line with GDPR.

Reporting a Concern or Allegation

It is important to ensure that a child or adult at risk is safe. Emergency services should be called immediately if there is an immediate threat of danger.

It is possible that a volunteer may observe something first-hand or be made aware of a potential safeguarding concern or allegation by a child, adult at risk, or by another volunteer.

The details should be communicated to the designated Safeguarding Lead who must make sure that actions including the following are undertaken:

SAFEGUARDING POLICY

- Ensure the child or adult at risk is safe
- Listen, offer support and reassurance
- Ascertain and establish basic facts about the incident but don't investigate beyond that which is necessary
- Make careful notes and obtain agreement on them
- Don't make promises or assume information
- Promises of confidentiality should not be given as this may conflict with the need to ensure the safety and welfare of the child or adult at risk.
- Explain areas of confidentiality, ensure only those who need to know are aware
- Ensure the child or adult at risk are kept informed as to what will happen next so they can be reassured about what to expect
- Ongoing support may be required

Important Contacts

Designated Safeguarding Officer:

Name: Tricia Marcouse
Email address: safeguarding@econetreading.org.uk
Telephone no.: 0118 9268341

Designated Safeguarding Lead:

This will be the volunteer responsible for overseeing either a work party of volunteers on the day of a conservation task, or for managing a particular event.

Further Information

Related policies/documents are:

- Volunteering policy
- Health & Safety policy
- Equal Opportunities policy
- Whistleblowing policy
- Volunteer Registration form

Approval and Review

Approved by: *Patricia Marcouse*

Date: 29th July 2025