SAFEGUARDING POLICY

Our vision is for all young people to be able to contribute confidently in the world. It is our aim to empower young people to make better decisions, to manage risk more effectively, to communicate what they need and be understood and taken seriously.

Helping young people to keep themselves safer is a central pillar, and a positive driver, for everything we do.

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility across British Exploring Society. Through this policy, other policies and SOPs, our staff handbook and in all our day-to-day dealings we aim to ensure staff, volunteers, trustees and partner organisations are aware of and embrace our consistent expectations in support of positive outcomes for young people and of acceptable conduct in relation to safeguarding.

POLICY STATEMENT

This policy describes our measures to protect the health, well-being and rights of young people and adults at risk of harm, or adults with a care and support need (described in this policy as vulnerable adults) and how we foster a culture to support the safety of young people and vulnerable adults.

We recognise that all young people, regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation have a right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse.

We are committed to taking into account the interests and wellbeing of young people in all our activities and to respect their rights, wishes and feelings. We are committed to taking all reasonably practicable steps to protect young people from neglect and all forms of abuse.

We promote the welfare of young people and their protection within a relationship of trust.

British Exploring Society is committed to safeguarding all children and vulnerable adults who are subject to its duty of care throughout the delivery of any activity, residential or otherwise in the UK, overseas or online. British Exploring Society recognises its responsibility to liaise with other agencies to protect children and vulnerable adults whenever they are or may be victims of abuse whether with us or outside of our care.

British Exploring Society will support positive outcomes and the safe and effective care of all programme participants through adherence to the guidelines contained in this policy and in related Standard

Operating Procedures (SOPs). This policy applies to all office staff, Trustees, expedition leaders, medics, volunteers and visitors who may come into contact with children and vulnerable adults during field visits and events.

How is Safeguarding managed at British Exploring Society?

The safeguarding team is made up of up to 3 staff members; 3 executive SLT (senior leadership team) members

- The **CEO (SLT) –** responsible for this policy
- **Head of Expeditions and Programmes (SLT)** – Safeguarding Lead. Oversees and manages the programme team

- **Senior manager, Young People (SLT)** Deputy Safeguarding Lead* - manages the Young People team. Oversees the recruitment, communications and relationships with young people and related stakeholder groups and is critical to positive safeguarding outcomes and to the management of communications in the event of any safeguarding concern.

*Deputy Safeguarding Lead will oversee the handling of safeguarding incidents with the support of other members of the safeguarding team. The Deputy Safeguarding Lead, will be approved by the Head of Expeditions and CEO - dependent on suitable skills, experience and training.

This team receives enhanced safeguarding training equivalent to a 'safeguarding lead' role.

- **And one non-executive member;**

Lead Trustee for Safeguarding - tasked with;

- Working with SLT to review whether our measures keep people safe
- Checking the risk register reflects safeguarding risks and that mitigation is in place
- Ensuring regular reporting, and that reports are understood and challenged
- Identifying safeguarding training / skills development needs for trustees
- Ensuring policies and plans reflect legislation, statutory guidance, and Charities Commission expectations

A safer organisation - dealing with Low Level concerns

Our culture and expectations of behaviour can help us identify and act on any concerns we see in the conduct of adults working with young people, often before they might meet a threshold of perceived harm to any young person. We aim to address problematic behaviours and support individuals to correct them at an early stage. This can help us keep young people safer. These behaviours are 'low level concerns'.

What is a Low Level concern?

Low level does not mean 'insignificant'. It might be unease or a nagging doubt, or a concern that an adult may have acted in a way which is inconsistent with our culture, staff handbook, policies and/or SOPs (standard operating procedures). Details of potential low level concerns are described in our staff handbook.

By sharing, being open, and better understanding low level concerns we want to;

- Keep young people safe
- Ensure effective staff support is in place and is used
- Reduce the opportunity and acceptability of problematic or inappropriate behaviour.
- Develop strong partnerships by agreeing expectations of support and conduct, including through written partnership agreements.

Flagging low level concerns can also help us identify areas for improvement in our culture, training and safeguarding.

RECOGNISING, REPORTING and RECORDING

We will adopt the principles of fairness and natural justice when reporting and investigating safeguarding concerns at any level.

British Exploring Society requires all its staff to be receptive to the needs of children and vulnerable adults and be vigilant to potential issues relating to the welfare of those within their care.

Staff will receive training and guidance on understanding the thresholds for reporting, and on identifying/self-identifying and responding to concerns, including low level concerns.

The relevant procedures can be found in *SOP Recognising and Responding to Safeguarding Concerns* and/or in our staff handbook.

Online concerns

All online safeguarding concerns will be raised to the Safeguarding Lead as with other programmes. Recognising and responding to Online Safeguarding concerns follow the same process outlined in *SOP Recognising and Responding to Safeguarding Concerns;*

Concerns 'in the field'

Leaders will ensure that safeguarding concerns are shared only on a need to know basis.

They will be mindful of our statutory obligations alongside data protection issues relating to any records kept or maintained in the field. Any records returned to the office will be treated in accordance with British Exploring Society's **Data and Privacy Protection Policy.**

External Reporting

British Exploring Society will raise any relevant concerns with statutory authorities in the UK, including where appropriate, the police, safeguarding children's partnership and/or Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub.

British Exploring will consult or refer to the LADO and/or other agencies any allegation(s) in relation to those working with children. In the case of low-level concerns advice from the LADO and/or other agencies may be sought on a no-names basis in the first instance.

Recording Low Level Concerns

British Exploring Society is outside the statutory guidance for having a Low Level Concerns policy, so we must take particular care that any data we process is reasonably necessary for the protection of young people. Staff about whom concerns have been raised may have rights of access to such records, if this would not unreasonably disclose information of young people.

Investigating

Our **Guide for Safeguarding investigations and reporting** is a practical framework to support investigations of allegations of wrong doing. The Safeguarding Lead is the first point of reference for a

possible investigation. They may delegate investigations to the CEO, refer to the Lead Trustee or to executive members of the safeguarding team, or opt for a third party to lead an investigation as outlined in the Guide.

We may refer to/use a proportionate version of the **Guide for Safeguarding Investigations and reporting** or other processes may be triggered – disciplinary, whistleblowing or grievance - in relation to a low level concern.

Filing safeguarding concerns

All records of safeguarding investigations will be held securely in a dedicated safeguarding file.

Where a staff grievance or misconduct is concerned, it will also be noted in the relevant confidential HR folder.

All safeguarding records are retained in accordance within relation to staff and volunteers are kept in accordance with our Records of Processing activities.

SUPPORT NEEDS, CHALLENGING BEHAVIOUR, PHYSICAL INTERVENTION

- British Exploring Society recognises that some participants of a programme may have specific care and support needs which need to be considered, to ensure their welfare during delivery of expeditions, UK training, online participation or residential events.
- In some cases, a participant on a programme might have specific needs, including emotional, behavioural, learning support or care needs. These needs will be identified either through a declaration of the young person/vulnerable adult or additional information provided by a referring adult or agency. In such cases, this information will be communicated, as appropriate to members of the programme leadership team. This can include a Chief Leader and expedition Medic. A decision will be made about whether the needs of the programme member can be safely accommodated and/or if reasonable adjustments need to be made to accommodate them.
- Where support needs relate to intimate care, British Exploring Society will only be able to accommodate the programme member if a staff member trained in delivering intimate care can accompany the person;
- British Exploring Society recognises that any participant of a programme can react unpredictably under the unique pressures provided by the programme environment and, accordingly, all British Exploring Society staff receive guidance on how to deal with challenging behaviour. Details of this guidance can be found in *SOP Working with Challenging Behaviour;*
- British Exploring Society recognises that there may be times when physical intervention is required to prevent a programme member causing harm to themselves or others. British Exploring Society staff receive guidance on their legal position with respect to physical interventions and the factors involved in such a decision (*SOP Working with Challenging Behaviour)*.

MEDIA, WRITTEN CONTENT AND CONSENT

British Exploring Society has a **Photography and Filming Policy** which acknowledges that it is natural and valuable for programme participants to want to retain images and footage and that the taking and holding of images can at the same time expose participants to risk. The policy seeks to mitigate those risks and to ensure we operate within the law. It also supports our values. We seek to educate young people to help them learn to navigate risk in relation to the use of images and social media.

All British Exploring Society staff contracted to record any form of media (photo, films, images and written content) of activities will be required to ensure media contains appropriate content and that all effort has been made to gain informed consent for such media;

- British Exploring Society will make every effort to ensure that all photos, films and written content submitted to its office will be used appropriately with all relevant consents gained;
- All staff, Trustees and visitors are expected to remain mindful of the appropriateness of media that they may collect during their contact time;
- Leaders will ensure that they do not circulate or reproduce images or other forms of media of programme participants except in secure online spaces including on social media without the express permission of the person concerned. The Leader takes full responsibility for the decision to reproduce any media content without the appropriate consents;
- British Exploring Society can take no responsibility for the photos and film held on personal cameras/smartphones by expedition participants after the end of their programme with us or the termination of their contract. However, all expedition members receive advice on taking personal responsibility for ensuring no photos are taken of them during events which they would not be happy to be held on a personal camera.
- Our **Shared Code** explicitly asks all programme participants to commit to respecting the rights of all fellow participants to be able to control how their own expedition experiences are shared.

DIGITAL SAFEGUARDING

These guidelines apply to all British Exploring Society volunteers until the end of their leader contract including any debriefing events which take place after a programme, and in all cases where a young person is under the age of 18.

- Staff and volunteers should not share their personal contact details with a programme participant, including email addresses, phone numbers and all personal social media accounts. Some platforms, e.g. WhatsApp, will automatically share personal phone numbers/contact details with any recipients of messages. These platforms should never be used with participants.
- Staff and volunteers should not communicate with Young Explorers privately (vital social media or personal devices). All communication should be made using British Exploring Society official channels.
- If a Young Explorer contacts a staff member or volunteer privately, they should not respond to the message and promptly notify another member of British Exploring Society staff.
- Where staff or volunteers hold private Social Media accounts it is their responsibility to ensure that their privacy settings enable them to control what content is seen by other members of the public, which could include participants.

ONLINE ENGAGEMENT

- Online engagement includes all activities conducted by British Exploring Society that include interaction with or the attendance of external parties where there will be children or vulnerable adults in attendance.
- British Exploring Society will ensure that any online platforms used for the delivery of activities are adequately risk assessed prior to use.
- British Exploring Society maintains an online engagement Risk Assessment which is the basis for its online **Code of Conduct** and **Online Terms & Conditions.**
- All British Exploring Society Staff and online programme leaders will attend in-house online safeguarding training prior to the delivery of online content.
- All staff delivering on-line content to young people are required to provide an up to date reference request, unless they are in possession of an enhanced DBS certificate for the purpose of leading on an expedition with British Exploring Society.
- All staff delivering online content to young people are required to sign up to the **online Code of Conduct** and **Terms & Conditions** and assume responsibility for any camera person or other support they may require during their session.
- All British Exploring Society Staff are provided with a guide on how to manage and respond to safeguarding concerns during an online session.
- All staff, external contributors and young people who participate in an online activity will sign up to the **Online Code of Conduct** and **Terms & Conditions**.

RECRUITMENT OF STAFF

- British Exploring Society operates Safer Recruitment practices:
- Our job descriptions make specific reference to working with young people and our responsibilities for safeguarding;
- We make clear that candidates must demonstrate suitability to work with young people;
- We always seek independent references,
- We include specific questions about each candidate's suitability to work with young people;
- We require role specific DBS checks for all staff, volunteers and trustees.
- All staff are recruited to specified competencies. In the case of Leaders, this includes their ability to manage a group safely in the expedition environment and secure the welfare of all group members.
- We ask staff and volunteers about overseas residency as part of their interview process. A stipulation of our application form is a declaration from candidates about any periods of residency overseas for 3 months or more, in the last 5 years.
- We ask for more information from candidates where we see anomalies, discrepancies, a history of gaps (including overseas) or unexplained pauses in employment or training which may be a cause for concern; changes of employment without any clear career or salary progression; or a mid career move from a permanent to temporary post.

- In addition to their fulfilment of essential competencies, all staff who may come into unsupervised contact with a child or vulnerable adults will undergo screening to ensure their suitability to work with these client groups. These checks will include receiving Enhanced DBS checks and reference checks. Details of the Procedure for completing DBS checks can be found in *SOP DBS and Update Service*
- In order to work directly and unsupervised with children or vulnerable adults, office staff and trustees will need to have completed an enhanced DBS check within the preceding 24 months;
- Our work is seasonal. All expedition Leaders not otherwise employed by British Exploring Society between contracts will be required to complete a new enhanced DBS check, or provide relevant details from the DBS update service on commencement of each seasonal contract within each calendar year (Leaders who work on two expeditions within one calendar year will be permitted to use the same DBS check);
- All staff appointments are made subject to completion of DBS checks. Such checks will be completed before any staff member is required to spend any time unsupervised with a child or vulnerable adult or can be provided with access to our office database. Any blemished DBS certificates will be forwarded to the Chief Executive Officer for consideration. Where such checks raise concerns about the suitability of the appointment, the staff member's contract will be cancelled.
- In addition to one-off DBS checks, staff members registered with the DBS update service will be able to supply British Exploring Society with their unique ID code to enable British Exploring Society staff to make a real time check of their status.
- If a staff member is not a UK resident, British Exploring Society will follow the guidance of the applicant's country of residence for criminal records checks or 'Certificates of Good Character';
- When a new candidate is identified at interview as having been resident overseas for 3 or more months in the last five years, and is not covered by Certificates of Good Character/Good Conduct, or a UK criminal records check, they may be subject to one of several additional checks. Because there is no single, definitive criminal records check for overseas residency, the final decision to recruit an individual with overseas residency and the assessment of any risk associated with that decision must rest with the CEO, supported by our Safeguarding Lead.
- For an individual with overseas residency in the last five years, the Safeguarding Lead and CEO will secure one or more of the following checks, depending on the reason given for an overseas residency, the location of the residency and the availability of evidence to support that residency.

We may:

  - Seek or ask to see an existing overseas DBS check;
  - Seek or ask to see an existing International Child Protection Certificate (if the individual has worked in a country using the CETS system)
  - Ask for written references from an employer/s for the period;
  - Contact overseas referees directly;
  - Ask for a self declaration from the Leader;
  - Any combination of the above.
- We may choose to adopt a different approach to different residencies with the same Leader, if this seems likely to produce more satisfactory evidence to support better safeguarding.

- British Exploring Society takes the view that its approach to securing assurance in relation to overseas residency must be proportionate and pragmatic depending on the information we have about any Leader and our assessment of the safeguarding risk they may present.
- The CEO, Safeguarding Lead and Expedition leadership team will undertake a risk assessment if necessary to manage the participation of any Leaders we choose to recruit with a declared residency overseas for 3 months or more in the last five years and/or who has indicated significant gaps in employment.
- Professional references will be sought in support of all appointments. Where staff members have not worked for British Exploring Society before, 2 references will be required. Where Leaders have worked for us in the preceding calendar year, 1 up to date reference will be required.

OUR SHARED CODE

All members of an Expedition Programme, including Leaders, Explorers and other Participants are required to conduct themselves according to our Shared Code;

The Shared Code is designed to support positive outcomes and to foster a culture of safety, equality, mutual care and respect on our programmes. It serves to help all members of a programme maintain appropriate relationships and boundaries. Any infringements of the Shared Code will be dealt with by the supervising Leader or Chief Leader. In some cases, this may result in the member of the expedition programme having to return home early. The Code identifies the potential necessity of sharing information about concerning conduct on expedition subsequent to the end of programme if necessary, with the knowledge of the participant.

PARTNERSHIP WORKING

- British Exploring Society enters into formal agreements with its partners to manage expectations, in support of positive outcomes for the young people it works with, and to promote safeguarding.
- Where British Exploring Society works in partnership with other organisations, their safeguarding policies and procedures will be sought.
- Where partners provide staff for any delivery, written assurances will be sought (often called a Letter of Comfort) that safer recruitment procedures have been applied and that they have recently been appropriately DBS checked (or equivalent).
- Where appropriate, office contractors will be asked to undertake DBS checks before undertaking work for British Exploring Society.

DEFINITIONS

Safeguarding is the action taken to promote the welfare of children and vulnerable adults and protect them from harm including:

- protecting children and vulnerable adults from abuse and maltreatment;
- preventing harm to the health and development of children and vulnerable adults; ensuring children and vulnerable adults have safe and effective care;

- taking action to enable all children and vulnerable adults to have the best outcomes.

The risk of harm from activities is also an element of safeguarding policy and for that reason there will be overlap between Policy 2.1 and Policy 3 and related SOPs.

Child Protection Part of safeguarding and promoting welfare. This refers to the activity that is undertaken to protect specific children who are suffering, or are likely to suffer, significant harm.

Child is anyone under the age of 18.

Vulnerable Adult is an adult at risk of harm, or an adult with a care and support need. They are anyone over the age of 18 who needs or may need community care services by reason of disability, age or illness; and who is or may be unable to take care of or be unable to protect themselves against significant harm or exploitation.

Abuse is a form of maltreatment of a child or vulnerable adult. Somebody may abuse or be neglectful by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. People may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting by those known to them or by others (e.g. online). They may be abused by an adult or adults, or a child or children. This policy takes the definition of physical, emotional and sexual abuse and neglect from the UK Government's *"Working Together to Safeguard Children"* document 2023.