

**The Lickey Hills Society**  
**Policy on Safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults from abuse.**

**NB. In this document,** “children, young people and vulnerable adults” are also referred to as, “subject(s)”.

### **Information for volunteers**

It is the aim of the Lickey Hills Society to provide a safe and secure environment at all events. This is especially important where events involve children, young people or vulnerable adults\*.

The Lickey Hills Society comes into contact with children only when they are supervised by an accompanying adult at organised events.

Invitations to, or notices of, events should state that all children must be accompanied by an adult.

The Lickey Hills Country Park Rangers are responsible for these notices at events organised or held under their auspices.

At all indoor events, a list of all those attending should be compiled and be readily available.

A log will be kept in which details of any incidents and of information given to the attenders. Any significant events should be reported to the Rangers if they occurred in the Lickey Hills Country Park or under their auspices: eg. on walks or events that take place outside the Lickey Hills Country Park’s boundary.

The log should be retained for two years along with any attendance lists.

At events organised or held under the auspices of the Lickey Hills Country Park, the compilation and retention of attendance lists, logs of incidents, etc, is the responsibility of the Lickey Hills Country Park Rangers.

### **Introduction**

It is helpful to follow the guidelines detailed below when working with, or having contact with, subjects.

The advice below is based on common sense, but it should provide guidance in how to deal with certain situations should they arise.

The Lickey Hills Society has a Safeguarding Officer, currently Baden Carlson, to whom any concerns should be addressed.

When working under their auspices, or within the Lickey Hills Country Park, the Ranger Service must be promptly informed of any concerns or direct allegations.

### **1. Children, young people and vulnerable adults have the right to be protected from all forms of abuse.**

It is possible that a volunteer may become aware or suspect that a subject has been or is being abused: they have a responsibility to report this information.

### **2. Forms of abuse or exploitation largely fall into four categories:**

Neglect, physical abuse, sexual abuse and emotional abuse.

Additionally, vulnerable adults may be subject to financial abuse, discriminatory abuse or institutional abuse.

### **3. What if I suspect a child, young person or vulnerable adult is being abused?**

It is not a volunteer’s responsibility to investigate abuse but if they have a genuine concern that a subject has been or is being abused, then they should list the reasons for their concern and note names, addresses and dates of birth where possible. It is better to record concerns no matter how small than to remain silent. Keeping a record of any concerns is important as they may be useful for future reference.

Although a subject can be asked for clarification if something is not clear, they should never be asked leading questions which could encourage them to change their version of events in any way. For example, they should be told: “Tell me what has happened,” rather than, “did they do X to you?”

With vulnerable adults, it is permissible to discuss with the individual subject what has happened to them but having due regard to their autonomy, understanding, privacy and rights to an independent life.

The chief task at this stage is to listen and only interrupt when necessary, remembering not to promise a subject absolute confidentiality whilst reassuring them that only people who really need to know and who can help them will be told. If a subject asks: “Can you keep secrets?”, an appropriate answer would be: “It depends what the secret is.”

It is imperative to try to understand exactly what the subject has said (and to write it down later) not what one thinks they meant. A useful technique is to repeat back to the subject what they have said.

If concern is great enough, the supervising adult should be spoken to, **unless the allegation concerns the supervising adult.**

**It is important that all information and identities** should be confidential to those who have a need to know.

**If it is felt that a subject is in imminent danger and that they should not return home,** then either Social Services or the police should be contacted via the Lickey Hills Ranger Service or directly.

#### **4. Indications that a subject may be being abused and actions needed.**

##### **4.1 A subject may make a direct allegation of abuse.**

A subject may tell a volunteer directly that they have been or are being abused. The volunteer should bear in mind that the subject may have tried to tell others who have dismissed or ignored their concerns: this could be their last hope.

The way a subject is spoken to could have an effect on the evidence which is put forward if there are subsequent proceedings.

If there is a clear, serious allegation about a specific person that person should not be questioned by volunteers.

If the concern is great enough, the supervising adult should be spoken to, **unless the allegation concerns the supervising adult.**

**4.2 A subject may make a comment which suggests abuse.** In this situation the best approach is to discuss it with someone who also knows the subject so that they can monitor the **situation unless the allegation concerns that person.**

**4.3 A subject may have bruises, burns or marks.** It is appropriate for them to be asked how they sustained their injury or whether they received medical attention. If concern is great enough the supervising adult should be spoken to **unless the allegation concerns that person.**

**4.4 Something about a subject's behaviour may suggest the possibility of abuse.** They may be exceptionally withdrawn; or flinch in the company of certain others; or show signs of neglect; or touch inappropriately or engage in sexually aware language that is inappropriate for their age. Again, in this situation the best approach is to discuss concerns with the supervising adult (**unless the allegation concerns that person**) who also knows the subject.

**4.5 The responsible adult's behaviour may suggest that they are not a suitable person to care for subjects.** Indications may include: failure to respond appropriately to the needs of subjects; neglecting some subjects in favour of others; inappropriate relationships with subjects.

In this situation the matter should be reported to Social Services.

#### **5. Sources of help**

A volunteer should understand that they will never need to deal with situations on their own, nor are they expected to be experts in identifying abuse.

A volunteer can consult with the Society's Safeguarding Officer (unless an allegation concerns him/her) but should not immediately take a subject to him/her as a way of avoiding talking to the subject themselves. The subject may have decided that they want to tell that volunteer and so might choose not to talk to the Safeguarding Officer.

**If a subject makes a serious allegation about an adult, or a volunteer it must be reported** to the Safeguarding Officer (unless the allegation concerns him/her) or to appropriate agencies (see Appendix 1) for enquiries to be made rather than the volunteer making the enquiries themselves or approaching the identified individual. The details and names should be confidential and shared only with those who have a "need to know".

**6. Self-Protection.** Volunteers should protect themselves by behaving towards subjects with the same respect and consideration that is shown towards adults, particularly as children, young people and some vulnerable adults are naturally more trusting and suggestible,

They should not speak or act in any way that might leave themselves open to allegations of abuse or inappropriate behaviour and should protect themselves from suspicion by avoiding being alone with subjects or by ensuring that there are sightlines to others.

They should avoid using any unnecessary physical contact which could be misconstrued.

**6.1 Strategies for avoiding unnecessary physical contact.** Whilst it is appropriate to assist, help up and to reassure a fallen or injured subject, it is for the accompanying responsible adult to physically comfort them and to give any attention.

If it is necessary for a piece of equipment to be used, the subject should be shown how to do it without being in physical contact with them: eg "You place the hobbyhorse between your legs as I am doing now."

Anything a subject needs to wear or display should be given to them or the accompanying responsible adult for them to put on: eg "You put the sticker where you want to."

**6.2 Self-reporting.** If a volunteer believes that something that has happened, or that they, or others have said or done something that could be misinterpreted or misconstrued, they should inform the Safeguarding Officer or a fellow volunteer at the earliest opportunity

### **6.3 First aid**

If a subject is in need of first aid, the supervising adult should be present when attention is given and should be asked if they want to give the appropriate attention themselves.

(Also see: Appendix 3: Incident Guidance.)

### **Review of policy**

This policy will be reviewed at least once a year and any changes made will be reported to those who administer it.

**\*A child or young person** is someone under 18 years of age, ie a minor.

In some respects, a “child” is regarded as a person under 16. Someone 16 to 18 years old is often called a “young person” as in some areas they can act without parental consent: eg they can give consent to sexual acts and medical attention, and can leave home. Nevertheless, they can still be subject to abuse by parents or others. It should also be borne in mind that it is illegal for anyone who holds a “position of trust” (eg teacher, youth worker) to have sex with someone under 18 over whom they exercise responsibility, even if the young person gives consent.

**A vulnerable adult** “is someone 18 or over who because of circumstance, particular vulnerability, or risk may be in need of protection. They may be in need of community care services by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness; or may be unable to take care of themselves, or unable to protect themselves against significant harm or exploitation.” (Dept of Health 2005)

Policy adapted by Baden Carlson from: Crossway Church’s document: *Safeguarding Policy and Practice Guidelines*.

The Friends of Cotteridge Park’s document: *Activities involving supervised children, young people & vulnerable adults*.

B. Carlson, March 2022