

# Safeguarding

## Volunteer guidance note

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Sustrans has a responsibility to safeguard children and adults at risk. This guidance note explains what Sustrans volunteers need to know and do.

### 1. Safeguarding is relevant to everyone

We do not expect the majority of volunteers to have contact with children or adults at risk as part of their role. However, whether you volunteer with children or adults at risk or not, you could witness, suspect or be informed about something that you need to report.

Reporting your concerns could help prevent a child or adult at risk from experiencing harm. Therefore, it is important that all volunteers know what to do if they have a safeguarding concern. You also need to be aware of what your safeguarding responsibilities are and how to protect yourself.

### 2. Explaining the terminology

**Children** - anyone under 18 years old.

**Adults at risk** - There are slightly different definitions of adults at risk across England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Generally an adult at risk is someone who has needs for care and support, and is experiencing, or at risk of, abuse or neglect. It is a good idea to be familiar with the specific definition that applies in your part of the UK. See the end of this guidance note for the information you need.

**Abuse** – is a form of maltreatment. Somebody may abuse by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Abuse may be physical, emotional, sexual, verbal or financial, or it may be an act of neglect. It may consist of a single act or repeated acts and can happen online. Abuse can be carried out by both adults and children.

**Safeguarding** – Safeguarding is the action that is taken to protect children and adults at risk from harm and to promote their welfare.

### 3. What to do if you have a concern

If you are concerned that a child or adult at risk is suffering from abuse, or has done in the past, **it is crucial that you tell someone who can help**. You should:

- i. First make an evaluation of the risk and take steps to ensure that the child or adult at risk is in no immediate danger, where possible. This may include ending an activity or event.
- ii. Do not put yourself in a risky or dangerous situation.
- iii. If a child or adult at risk is in immediate danger please call the police on 999 straight away.
- iv. Contact your staff supervisor or the Volunteer Engagement Team as soon as possible to report the situation and receive advice. If your concern occurs outside of Monday to Friday working hours contact them at the beginning of the next working day.
- v. Make a written record containing as much factual information as possible.

If someone discloses abuse to you and you do not think the allegation is valid it must still be reported.

However difficult it may seem, we all have a duty to make suspicions of abuse known. Failure to do so can be interpreted by a victim as approval of or condoning the abuse. It could also result in a failure to meet duty of care obligations and a missed opportunity to prevent abuse from occurring.

A child or adult at risk may not be able to alert anyone themselves, perhaps through fear or a failure to understand that the action is abusive.

## 4. What happens next

The Sustrans staff member you report your concern to will liaise with a trained member of staff who will advise on what should happen next depending on the specific scenario.

A volunteer placement may be terminated or suspended if a concern has been raised about them, but this is not automatic and alternatives will be considered. A risk assessment of the situation and the volunteer's role and responsibilities will determine the final outcome.

## 5. If someone discloses abuse to you

### Do:

- stay calm and try not to show shock
- listen carefully
- be comforting and sympathetic
- tell the person that:
  - they were right to tell you
  - it was not his/her fault
  - you are treating the information seriously
  - you will inform the appropriate Sustrans staff member

### Don't:

- ask leading questions
- promise to keep secrets and not report the disclosure
- make promises you cannot keep (such as "this will never happen to you again")
- contact the alleged abuser
- be judgemental (for instance, don't ask "why didn't you run away?")
- break the confidentiality of the alleged victim, by speaking to anyone other than your staff supervisor or relevant Sustrans staff members about the incident.

## 6. Code of conduct

**To keep yourself and others safe please follow the code of conduct below if you come into contact with children and adults at risk, as part of your volunteer role:**

- i. Do take all reasonable steps to ensure the health, safety and welfare of those in contact with Sustrans.
- ii. Do communicate in a way that is respectful and appropriate to age, understanding and preference.
- iii. Do ensure your behaviour, language, gestures and clothing are appropriate.

- iv. Do ensure that the focus of any volunteering remains based on volunteering and not on becoming friends with children or adults at risk.
- v. Do remain alert to any behaviour or relationship difficulties involving those you are volunteering with.
- vi. Don't put yourself in a compromising situation, such as by spending a lot of time with a young person or adult at risk away from others, which could result in an allegation.
- vii. Don't offer to do things of a personal nature for anyone who is capable of doing these things for themselves.
- viii. Don't exchange any personal contact information of any kind with children or adults at risk.
- ix. Don't have inappropriate physical or verbal contact e.g. engage in rough, physical or sexually provocative behaviour or any form of inappropriate touching or language.
- x. Don't tolerate bullying, rule violations or the use of prohibited substances.
- xi. Don't photograph any inappropriate images shared by a child or adult at risk on their mobile phone.

Also, when acting on behalf of Sustrans please do not knowingly email, message or call anyone under the age of 16. Please speak to your staff supervisor for further information about phone or online contact with 16-17 year olds.

## 7. Guidance, training and support

All volunteers will receive or be given access to this guidance note. Please familiarise yourself with the information given and speak to your staff supervisor if you have any questions.

Induction and induction refresher training are also provided to all volunteers and contain a section on safeguarding.

Additional training will be arranged for volunteers who are expected to have contact with children or adults at risk as part of their role.

If you have contact with children or adults at risk your staff supervisor will also check in with you about how this is going, on a regular basis.

## 8. What you can expect from us

Sustrans seeks to safeguard children and adults at risk by:

- Valuing, listening to and respecting them.
- Recruiting members of staff and volunteers safely, ensuring that all necessary checks are made. If a volunteer role involves contact with children a disclosure check and references are needed.
- Sharing guidance about safeguarding good practice with members of staff and volunteers
- Providing effective management for members of staff and volunteers by providing relevant supervision, support and training
- Sharing information about concerns with those with a statutory responsibility for their protection (the police or social services, for example)
- Having a robust safeguarding policy and procedures which are reviewed annually.
- Ensuring that children and some adults at risk are fully supervised when volunteering for Sustrans.

## 9. Definitions of adults at risk across the UK

### England and Wales

An adult at risk is a person of 18 years and over who:

- has needs for care and support (whether or not the local authority is meeting any of those needs); and
- is experiencing, or at risk of, abuse or neglect; and
- as a result of those care and support needs is unable to protect themselves from either the risk of or the experience of abuse or neglect.

### Scotland

Defines adults at risk as adults, aged 16 years or over, who:

- are unable to safeguard their own well-being, property, rights or other interests;
- are at risk of harm; and
- because they are affected by disability, mental disorder, illness or physical or mental infirmity, are more vulnerable to being harmed than adults who are not so affected.

### Northern Ireland

An 'adult at risk of harm' is a person aged 18 or over, whose exposure to harm through abuse, exploitation or neglect may be increased by their:

- personal characteristics and/or
- life circumstances

An 'Adult in need of protection' is a person aged 18 or over, whose exposure to harm through abuse, exploitation or neglect may be increased by their:

- personal characteristics and/or
- life circumstances and/or
- who is unable to protect their own well-being, property, assets, rights or other interests; and
- where the action or inaction of another person or persons is causing, or is likely to cause, him/her to be harmed.