

Blackland Farm Outdoor Centre

Safeguarding Policy

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Introduction

Blackland Farm Outdoor Centre recognises and accepts its duties for providing a caring, positive and safe environment to its employees, volunteers, and other visitors, including ensuring that, so far as reasonably practicable, young people and vulnerable groups are protected. If you have any queries about this policy, or its content, you can contact us at info@blacklandfarm.org.

4th Dimension t/a Blackland Farm Outdoor Centre (registered company in England and Wales 04617597). The Managing Directors have overall responsibility for Blackland Farm Outdoor Centre; for ensuring that we abide by our legal requirements and our own policies.

Purpose

This policy provides an overview of Blackland Farm Outdoor Centre's approach to safeguarding and the provision of safe environments.

Scope

This policy applies to employees, volunteers, work experience students, and other third parties who carry out or contribute to the business.

This policy will be reviewed annually or sooner where

- legislation changes;
- safeguarding guidance is updated;
- organisational learning identifies improvements;
- significant safeguarding incidents occur.

Relevant Laws and Guidance

This safeguarding policy at Blackland Farm Outdoor Centre is based on key legislation and statutory guidance in the UK that govern the protection of children, young people, and vulnerable adults. The centre is committed to complying with the following legal frameworks and guidance:

1. Key Legislation for Safeguarding Children and Young People

1. Children Act 1989 (as amended)
 - Establishes the duty of care to promote the welfare of children and protect them from harm.
 - Introduces the principle that the welfare of the child is paramount.
 - Defines categories of harm, including physical, emotional, sexual abuse, and neglect.
 - Outlines roles and responsibilities for local authorities, schools, and organisations working with children.
2. Children Act 2004
 - Builds upon the 1989 Act and emphasizes inter-agency cooperation to improve child protection.
 - Introduces the concept of Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs) (now replaced by Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements).
3. Children and Social Work Act 2017
 - Strengthens safeguarding arrangements by introducing Multi-Agency Safeguarding Partnerships (MASPs).
 - Establishes new requirements for child safeguarding reviews and serious case reviews.
4. Working Together to Safeguard Children (2026)
 - Statutory guidance outlining the responsibilities of all organisations involved with children and young people.
 - Provides standards for:
 - Identifying and responding to abuse and neglect.
 - Information sharing between agencies.
 - Child-centred safeguarding practice.
 - Early Help / Family Help support.
 - Managing safeguarding allegations and low-level concerns.
 - Multi-agency safeguarding responsibilities.
 - Ensures that organisations create safe, inclusive and protective environments for children.

5. Keeping Children Safe in Education (2023) *(if applicable to schools visiting the centre)*
 - Offers statutory guidance for safeguarding in educational settings.
 - Emphasizes safer recruitment, responding to disclosures, and managing concerns about adults working with children.

2. Key Legislation for Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults

1. Care Act 2014
 - Establishes a legal framework for protecting adults at risk of abuse or neglect.
 - Emphasizes a person-centered approach to safeguarding.
 - Introduces the term 'adult at risk' and defines safeguarding principles:
 - Prevention, Proportionality, Protection, Partnership, and Accountability.
2. Mental Capacity Act 2005
 - Provides a framework for making decisions on behalf of adults who lack capacity.
 - Defines principles of acting in the best interests of vulnerable adults.
 - Includes provisions for Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS).
3. Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006
 - Introduces the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) to prevent unsuitable people from working with vulnerable groups.
 - Mandates enhanced DBS checks for staff and volunteers working closely with children and vulnerable adults.
4. Protection of Freedoms Act 2012
 - Streamlines the vetting and barring scheme while maintaining safeguarding protections.
 - Introduces legal requirements for managing access to vulnerable groups through DBS checks.

3. Human Rights and Equality Legislation

1. Human Rights Act 1998
 - Protects individuals' rights to privacy, dignity, and freedom from degrading treatment.
 - Reinforces the responsibility to intervene when rights are threatened.
2. Equality Act 2010
 - Ensures protection against discrimination, harassment, and victimization.
 - Protects children and vulnerable adults based on characteristics like disability, gender, ethnicity, and sexual orientation.

4. Non-Statutory Guidance and Best Practice

1. What to do if You're Worried a Child is Being Abused (2015)

- Offers practical advice for identifying abuse and responding to disclosures.
- 2. NSPCC Safeguarding Standards and Guidance (*Voluntary Sector*)
 - Provides tools for creating child-safe environments in voluntary and outdoor settings.
- 3. Safe Sport Events, Activities, and Competitions Framework (2021) (*Sport England*)
 - Provides safeguarding advice specific to activity providers and outdoor centres.
- 4. Out of School Settings (OOSS) Guidance (2020) (*Department for Education*)
 - Offers advice on safeguarding arrangements for non-school settings offering educational activities to children.
- 5. Adventure Activities Licensing Regulations (1996) (*updated 2004*)
 - Requires centres offering adventurous activities to children under 18 to be licensed and meet safety management standards.

5. Local Safeguarding Partnerships

- The centre will work closely with the Local Safeguarding Children Partnership (LSCP) and Local Safeguarding Adults Board (LSAB) to report concerns, share best practices, and access training.
- Contact details for the relevant local authority safeguarding team are displayed and easily accessible to all staff.

1. Statement of Commitment

At Blackland Farm Outdoor Centre, we are fully committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all children, young people, and vulnerable adults who visit our centre. We recognise our responsibility to provide a safe, nurturing, and inclusive environment where all participants can enjoy outdoor activities free from harm, abuse, or exploitation.

We believe that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility, and we are dedicated to ensuring that:

1. The welfare and well-being of children, young people, and vulnerable adults are at the heart of everything we do.
2. All individuals, regardless of age, gender, ability, ethnicity, religion, or sexual orientation, have the right to be protected from harm and treated with dignity and respect.
3. Our staff and volunteers are carefully recruited, properly trained, and supported to recognize, respond to, and report safeguarding concerns effectively.
4. Clear policies, procedures, and practices are in place to identify and address safeguarding issues promptly, ensuring compliance with relevant legislation and statutory guidance.

5. We work in partnership with parents, carers, schools, local authorities, and safeguarding agencies to create a culture of trust, transparency, and accountability.

We will actively promote the empowerment of children and young people, encouraging them to speak out and be involved in decisions that affect them. We are committed to continuous improvement, regularly reviewing our safeguarding practices to ensure they remain current and effective.

We recognise that discrimination, racism, prejudice and bias can impact children's safety, wellbeing and access to support. Staff are expected to actively promote inclusive and anti-discriminatory practice.

We recognise that safeguarding concerns may arise from multiple and interconnected harms, including peer-on-peer abuse, child exploitation, online abuse, coercive control, domestic abuse, harmful sexual behaviour, bullying, discrimination, and extremist influences.

We are committed to adopting a child-centred approach which listens to, respects and values the voice, wishes and lived experiences of children and young people in all safeguarding processes and decision making.

We recognise the importance of Early Help / Family Help interventions and will work collaboratively with families, schools, local authorities and safeguarding partners to identify and respond to concerns at the earliest opportunity.

Everyone who works at Blackland Farm Outdoor Centre has a duty of care to safeguard participants and report any concerns immediately.

2. Definitions

To ensure clarity and shared understanding, the following key terms are defined within this policy:

- **Child** – Any person under the age of 18 years.
- **Young Person** – Typically refers to individuals aged 16–18 years, but still legally classified as children under safeguarding legislation.
- **Vulnerable Adult** – A person aged 18 or over who may need care services due to mental or physical disability, illness, or age and is unable to protect themselves from harm or exploitation.
- **Safeguarding** – The proactive measures taken to protect children, young people, and vulnerable adults from abuse, neglect, or exploitation, ensuring their safety and well-being.

- **Maltreatment** – Harm that can occur in different forms:
 - Physical Abuse – Deliberate infliction of physical harm, such as hitting, shaking, or burning.
 - Emotional Abuse – Persistent emotional mistreatment that impacts self-esteem, such as threats, humiliation, or isolation.
 - Sexual Abuse – Forcing or enticing someone to take part in sexual activities, including non-contact activities like grooming or exposure to pornography.
 - Neglect – Persistent failure to meet basic physical and psychological needs, leading to serious harm or development issues.
 - Peer-on-Peer Abuse- Abuse that occurs between children or young people, including bullying, physical abuse, harmful sexual behaviour, sexual harassment, emotional abuse, coercion, initiation/hazing behaviours, image sharing abuse, and online abuse.
 - Child Exploitation- A form of abuse where children or vulnerable individuals are manipulated or deceived into criminal activity, sexual activity, or other forms of exploitation in exchange for something they need or want.
 - Contextual Safeguarding- An approach to understanding and responding to risks outside the home environment, including online environments, peer groups, residential settings, social spaces, and community locations.
 - Online Harm- Abuse or exploitation occurring- through digital platforms, including cyberbullying, grooming, exploitation, coercion, radicalisation, image-sharing abuse, or exposure to harmful content.

These definitions form the foundation for identifying and addressing safeguarding concerns and guide all actions taken within this policy.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

Designated Safeguarding Officer(s) (DSO):

- A named individual(s) responsible for overseeing safeguarding practices at the centre. This individual will have undertaken Level 3 Training to certify them as a Designated Safeguarding Lead. This certification must be refreshed every three years.

This training allows the DSO(s) to:

- Be clear about the difference between safeguarding and child protection.
- Establish a safeguarding culture at Blackland Farm Outdoor Centre.
- Ensure the policies and procedures at Blackland Farm Outdoor Centre sit within the legislative and statutory guidance safeguarding framework.

- Understand the need to respond to all safeguarding and child protection concerns, including low-level concerns.
- Ensure they and their setting respond appropriately to children's differing levels of need within the safeguarding framework and understand the local threshold document.
- Understand what makes a good referral.
- Understand and explain their role in any assessment process and/or interventions put in place following the assessment.
- Describe the actions they and their setting need to take if you disagree with actions or decisions made.
- Recognise when and if it is appropriate to share information and with whom, and understand how information should be recorded and stored.
- Acts as the first point of contact for all safeguarding concerns and disclosures.
- Ensures concerns are recorded accurately and referred to the appropriate authorities, such as social services or the police.
- Provides advice and support to staff and volunteers regarding safeguarding matters.
- Maintains up-to-date knowledge of safeguarding legislation and best practices.
- Organises and monitors safeguarding training and policy reviews.

The DSO's at Blackland Farm Outdoor Centre are:

Mark Sinclair, Director

Charlotte Russell, Centre Operations Manager

Fran Cains-Ward, Deputy Centre Operations Manager

Ollie Saffery, DofE Manager

Staff and Volunteers:

- Have a legal and moral responsibility to safeguard the well-being of all participants.
- Must complete safeguarding training and be familiar with the centre's policies and procedures.
- Are responsible for identifying and reporting safeguarding concerns to the DSO immediately.
- Must promote safe practices and act as positive role models.
- Follow the code of conduct outlined in this policy and maintain professional boundaries.
- Ensure activities are conducted safely and any risks are assessed.
- Staff and volunteers must actively challenge discriminatory, abusive or inappropriate behaviour and language, including racism, sexism, homophobia, ableism or bullying.

- Staff and volunteers must remain professionally curious where concerns arise and escalate concerns where they believe a child or vulnerable person is not being adequately protected or listened to.

Management:

- Provide oversight and accountability for the implementation of safeguarding policies.
 - Ensure all staff and volunteers are properly trained, vetted, and supported in their safeguarding roles.
 - Allocate resources for safeguarding training, reviews, and policy updates.
 - Review safeguarding procedures annually and update them in line with legislative changes.
 - Foster a culture of safeguarding awareness and accountability throughout the organization.
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4. Code of Conduct

This Code of Conduct outlines the expected behavior for staff and volunteers when interacting with children, young people, and vulnerable adults. All staff and volunteers must adhere to these guidelines to maintain a safe and professional environment.

Physical Contact:

- Physical contact should only occur when it is necessary and appropriate, such as providing first aid, assisting with an activity, or offering reassurance.
- Obtain consent before initiating physical contact, wherever possible.
- Avoid any physical contact that could be misinterpreted as inappropriate.
- Report any accidental or inappropriate contact immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO).

Appropriate Language:

- Use language that is respectful, age-appropriate, and free from discriminatory or offensive terms.
- Avoid language that could be interpreted as suggestive, belittling, or intimidating.
- Listen carefully and validate concerns raised by children, ensuring responses are supportive and professional.

Maintaining Professional Boundaries:

- Avoid personal relationships or interactions with participants outside the professional context.
- Refrain from sharing personal contact details, including phone numbers and social media accounts.
- Ensure one-to-one interactions take place in visible or public spaces whenever possible.
- Do not engage in favoritism or create special relationships that could be misinterpreted.

Managing Online Communication:

- Communicate with participants and parents/carers through official channels, such as work emails and authorized social media accounts.
- Refrain from private messaging with participants on social media or personal platforms.
- Ensure all online content and messages are professional, transparent, and appropriate.
- Report any online communication concerns to the DSO immediately.

All staff and volunteers are required to read, understand, and agree to this Code of Conduct. Breaches of this code may result in disciplinary action, including dismissal or referral to external authorities if necessary.

6. Safe Recruitment Procedures

To ensure that all staff and volunteers are suitable to work with children, young people, and vulnerable adults, Blackland Farm Outdoor Centre follows strict recruitment procedures:

Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Checks:

- All staff and volunteers working directly with children and vulnerable adults must undergo an enhanced DBS check.
- Checks are repeated at regular intervals in line with statutory requirements.
- Any concerns raised during checks are thoroughly investigated before employment is confirmed.

Verifying References:

- At least one professional reference is required for all candidates.
- References must be verified by contacting referees directly to confirm authenticity.
- Particular attention is paid to roles involving prior work with children or vulnerable adults.

Interviews Assessing Safeguarding Awareness:

- Interviews include specific questions to assess a candidate's understanding of safeguarding principles.
- Scenarios related to safeguarding practices are used to evaluate decision-making and suitability.

Monitoring and Supervision:

- New staff and volunteers are subject to a probationary period during which performance and conduct are closely monitored.
- Staff are encouraged to discuss any concerns during supervision meetings.
- Staff and volunteers are expected to maintain appropriate professional conduct at all times both within and, where relevant, outside of work.
- Any safeguarding-related incidents, criminal investigations, cautions, allegations, or behaviour which may affect suitability to work with children or vulnerable adults must be disclosed immediately to management.

These procedures ensure that all individuals working at the centre share our commitment to safeguarding and uphold the highest standards of safety and care

7. Training and Awareness

All staff and volunteers at Blackland Farm Outdoor Centre must complete mandatory safeguarding training to ensure they are equipped to protect children, young people, and vulnerable adults effectively.

Mandatory Training:

- All staff and volunteers are required to complete safeguarding training as part of their induction process.
- Training covers recognising signs of abuse, reporting procedures, and safeguarding policies.

Refresher Training:

- Periodic refresher training is mandatory, conducted at least every two years.
- Additional training sessions are provided when policies are updated or in response to emerging safeguarding concerns.

Specific Risk Awareness:

- Staff are trained to assess and manage risks, including activities that present higher risks, such as activities involving harness and helmet fitting, water sports, working in overnight accommodation, and working in remote environments.

Ongoing Awareness:

- Regular team meetings and briefings include safeguarding updates.
- Posters and resources on safeguarding procedures are displayed in staff areas to maintain awareness.

By embedding training and awareness into our culture, we ensure safeguarding remains a priority at all times.

8. Risk Assessments

Effective risk assessments are a vital part of safeguarding at Blackland Farm Outdoor Centre. They help to identify potential hazards and implement measures to reduce risk.

Site-Specific Risk Assessments:

- Risk assessments are conducted for the centre, including high-risk activities like climbing, abseiling, and water sports.
- Assessments consider environmental factors, participant abilities, and specific safeguarding concerns.
- Safeguarding elements include supervision ratios, emergency procedures, and communication plans and specific residential risks.

Dynamic Risk Assessments:

- Staff are trained to conduct dynamic risk assessments during activities to address unexpected hazards or changes in conditions.
- Decisions and actions taken are documented and reported to supervisors as necessary.

Regular Reviews and Updates:

- Risk assessments are reviewed and updated regularly, at least annually or following any significant incident or change.
- Staff feedback and incident reports are used to inform updates and improve safety measures.

By integrating safeguarding into our risk assessment processes, we ensure the safety and well-being of all participants at Blackland Farm Outdoor Centre.

9. Reporting and Responding to Concerns

Procedures for Disclosure:

- In the event of a disclosure, staff must listen without judgment, avoid leading questions, and reassure the individual that they are taken seriously.
- Record the disclosure verbatim and report immediately to the DSO.

Incident Recording:

- Use the incident report form to document concerns, including dates, times, witnesses, and actions taken.
- Ensure all records are stored securely and confidentiality is maintained.

Action Steps:

- Concerns are reported to the DSO(s) for review and referral to external authorities if required (e.g., DSO of Organisation/School, Local Authority Designated Officer or Police), following statutory reporting timelines and procedures.
- Concerns relating to online safety, exploitation, harmful sexual behaviour, domestic abuse, coercive control, discrimination, peer-on-peer abuse, radicalisation or contextual safeguarding risks will be managed in accordance with statutory safeguarding guidance and referred appropriately where required.

Important Contacts for DSO:

West Sussex Safeguarding Children Partnership (Integrated Front Door):

- 01403 229900. Out of hours 033 022 26664
- <https://www.westsussex.gov.uk/education-children-and-families/keeping-children-safe/request-support-or-raise-a-concern-about-a-child/>

LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer):

- 0330 222 6450
- LADO@westsussex.gov.uk

Whistleblowing:

- Blackland Farm Outdoor Centre is committed to providing an environment for staff to raise concerns about others' behavior without fear of reprisal.
 - All whistleblowing concerns are investigated thoroughly, and appropriate actions are taken.
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10. Managing Allegations Against Staff or Volunteers

- All allegations are treated seriously and handled sensitively.
 - The accused individual may be suspended temporarily while investigations are carried out.
 - Concerns must be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO) immediately.
 - The DSO will refer cases to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) and cooperate fully with external investigations.
 - Accurate records of allegations, actions, and outcomes will be maintained.
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11. Low-Level Concerns

Blackland Farm Outdoor Centre recognises the importance of identifying and responding to low-level concerns in order to maintain a strong safeguarding culture.

A low-level concern is any behaviour by an adult working or volunteering at the centre that:

- is inconsistent with the staff code of conduct;
- may appear inappropriate;
- breaches professional boundaries; or
- may make a child, young person, vulnerable adult or colleague feel uncomfortable.

Examples may include:

- inappropriate comments or jokes;
- unnecessary one-to-one situations;
- over-familiar behaviour;
- inconsistent professional boundaries;
- inappropriate electronic communication;
- favouritism.

All low-level concerns must be reported promptly to a Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO).

Low-level concerns will:

- be recorded appropriately;
- be reviewed proportionately;
- help identify patterns of behaviour where relevant;
- be managed fairly and sensitively.

Reporting low-level concerns supports a transparent safeguarding culture and protects both participants and staff.

12. Consent and Confidentiality

- Personal information is handled in compliance with our Data Protection Policy.
 - Information is only shared with relevant personnel and authorities when necessary to safeguard welfare.
 - Records are securely stored, and access is restricted to authorised personnel.
 - Any breach of confidentiality is reported immediately and investigated.
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13. Online Safety

Use of Technology:

- Mobile phones and personal devices must only be used in accordance with safeguarding protocols. Staff working with children and young people directly should store mobile phones and personal devices securely.
- Staff and volunteers should avoid using personal devices to capture or store images of participants. Should they be used to capture important detail of an event or incident, they should be transferred to a secure storage system and removed from the personal device and any backup systems.

Photographing and Recording Children:

- Consent must be obtained from parents/guardians or those acting in loco parentis before photographing or recording children.
- Photographs and videos should be stored securely and only used for approved purposes.

Online Communication:

- Communication with children or young people must be conducted through official accounts and platforms.
- Personal messaging apps should not be used for communication with participants.

Monitoring and Review:

- Regular reviews of online safety practices ensure compliance and address emerging risks.

Emerging Online Risks:

The centre recognises the rapidly changing nature of online risks, including:

- AI-generated imagery and content;
- livestreaming risks;
- online coercion and exploitation;
- harmful online trends or challenges;
- anonymous messaging platforms;
- radicalisation and extremist content.

Staff will remain vigilant to evolving online safeguarding concerns and undertake ongoing training where appropriate.

14. External Partners and Contractors

Safeguarding Expectations:

- All external partners and contractors working with Blackland Farm Outdoor Centre must comply with this safeguarding policy.
- Contractors and partners must demonstrate an understanding of safeguarding responsibilities before being granted access to the centre.

Contractual Agreements:

- Safeguarding is included within Contractor Inductions and included in all contracts and agreements with external partners.
- Any safeguarding concerns involving external partners must be reported immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO).

Monitoring Compliance:

- External partners and contractors are subject to regular monitoring to ensure compliance with safeguarding standards.
 - Failure to adhere to safeguarding requirements may result in termination of the contract.
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15. Early Help / Family Help

Blackland Farm Outdoor Centre recognises that early identification and intervention can prevent concerns from escalating.

Where appropriate, the centre may:

- share concerns with schools, parents/carers, or safeguarding agencies;
- contribute information to Early Help / Family Help processes;
- support multi-agency safeguarding arrangements;
- work collaboratively with external professionals to promote welfare and safety.

Early intervention will always seek to act in the best interests of the child or vulnerable person.