



ACE Newburgh Safeguarding Policy

Purpose: Although ACE Newburgh's primary activities are environmental and community projects (and we have limited direct involvement with vulnerable groups), we believe that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. This policy outlines how we protect people – especially children (under 18) and vulnerable adults – in the context of our work. It provides a clear framework for our volunteers and trustees on what to do if they have any safeguarding concerns. In line with best practices, even small charities like ours should have measures to **protect people from harm, enable concerns to be raised, handle incidents, and respond appropriately, including reporting to authorities** charityexcellence.co.uk.

Our Commitment:

- **Safety First:** ACE Newburgh is committed to ensuring that no one involved in our activities – whether as a participant, volunteer, or member of the public – is harmed or put at risk of harm through our work. We believe everyone has the right to feel safe and respected. *Nobody who is involved in our work should ever experience abuse, harm, neglect or exploitation* charityexcellence.co.uk.
- **Culture of Awareness:** Safeguarding is a shared responsibility. All trustees and volunteers should be aware of potential risks and committed to acting on any concerns. We encourage a culture where concerns can be voiced openly, and where everyone feels confident that any issues will be handled sensitively and swiftly. *We all have a responsibility to promote welfare and protect each other, and to create an environment where people feel safe to speak up* charityexcellence.co.uk.
- **Proportionate Approach:** Given the nature of our activities (e.g. tree planting events, community workshops, litter picks), we typically engage with general community members. However, children often attend our family-friendly events (with parents), and we may have volunteers who are young people (14-17) or adults who could be considered vulnerable. Therefore, this policy is scaled to our context – focusing on basic precautions and clarity of action if something is amiss. If our activities expand to directly working with vulnerable groups (e.g. running programs for youth or disabled individuals), we will strengthen our procedures accordingly oscr.org.uk.

Scope: This policy applies to:

- **All trustees and committee members** of ACE Newburgh.
 - **All volunteers** working with or on behalf of ACE Newburgh.
 - **Members and participants** at ACE Newburgh events or activities, especially when representing the charity.
- Partners or affiliate groups we work with will be expected to have their own

safeguarding measures; when working jointly, we will mutually ensure safeguarding responsibilities are clear.

Safeguarding Officer/Lead: ACE Newburgh will designate one trustee as the Safeguarding Focal Point (Safeguarding Lead). This person (and a deputy, if possible) will be the main point of contact for any safeguarding issues. Their role includes:

- Receiving any reports of concerns or incidents and acting on them.
 - Advising the Board on safeguarding matters and ensuring this policy is followed.
 - Keeping basic records of any safeguarding issues and the actions taken.
 - Liaising with external authorities if needed (such as social services, police) and with OSCR in case of serious incidents.
- All trustees, however, share responsibility; the lead is just the coordinator.

Safe Recruitment and Training: Given we are a volunteer-led group:

- **Volunteer Recruitment:** We welcome volunteers of all ages (14+). For any volunteer under 18, we require parental consent and generally expect a parent/guardian or responsible adult to accompany volunteers under 16. We do not currently undertake formal Disclosure Scotland PVG checks because we do not regularly work in regulated roles with children/vulnerable adults. If in future a volunteer role involves regular unsupervised contact with such groups, we will implement PVG checks as legally required oscr.org.uk.
- **Trustee Awareness:** Trustees will be provided with basic safeguarding information during induction. We encourage trustees to familiarise themselves with safeguarding guidance (OSCR and Scottish Government have resources) and, where possible, attend relevant training especially if our activities expand. At least one trustee should have up-to-date knowledge on safeguarding best practices.
- **Volunteer Guidance:** In volunteer inductions or briefings, we include a short reminder of safeguarding. For example, we remind volunteers: "If you ever feel unsafe or see someone else at risk during our activities, please speak up to the organiser or a trustee." We also remind volunteers to keep an eye out, especially where children are present, even though parents are responsible for their kids at our events.

Code of Conduct: We expect all representatives of ACE Newburgh to conduct themselves in a manner that is safe, appropriate, and respectful:

- When children (under 18) or vulnerable adults are present at events, at least two unrelated adults should be present (to avoid any one adult-one child situations). Our volunteers should not be alone with an unrelated child – ensure group settings or ask a parent to be present. For example, if a child needs help with a task, do so openly in view of others.
- No volunteer or trustee should ever physically, emotionally, or sexually abuse anyone, or act in ways that could be interpreted as such. Bullying, harassment, unwanted physical contact, or discriminatory remarks are strictly prohibited.

- Use of alcohol or drugs is not allowed during volunteer activities, especially where it could impair judgment regarding safety or behaviour around minors.
- Respect privacy – for instance, if helping a child or vulnerable person with something, ensure it's appropriate and, if personal space is needed (e.g. first aid), have another adult present.
- Photographs of children at events should not be taken or used without parental permission. (We usually ask parents' consent if we want to feature a photo of an event with children.)
- Our volunteers and trustees are in positions of trust; they should not form inappropriate relationships with minors or exploit any vulnerability. Professional boundaries must be maintained (we are mostly peers in community activities, but this applies if any power dynamic exists).

Identifying and Reporting Concerns: A safeguarding concern might arise if a volunteer or trustee observes:

- A child or vulnerable adult involved in our activity showing signs of abuse or distress (e.g. unexplained injuries, fearful behaviour, hints of neglect or maltreatment).
- Inappropriate behaviour by an adult towards a child/vulnerable person (e.g. undue favouritism, rough handling, abusive language, or any form of sexual conduct).
- A disclosure: someone (child or adult) tells you directly that they have been or are being harmed in some way.
- A general sense that someone involved might pose a risk (e.g. a volunteer making inappropriate comments about children).

What to do if you have a concern:

1. **Ensure Immediate Safety:** If someone is in immediate danger or a crime is in progress, call the police (**999**) right away charityexcellence.co.uk. Do not hesitate – safety comes first.
2. **Report to Safeguarding Lead:** As soon as possible, report the concern to our Safeguarding Lead (or another trustee if you can't reach the lead). You can do this verbally or by phone initially but follow up in writing (an email or note) to have a record. If the concern involves the Safeguarding Lead themselves or a trustee, then report to an alternate trustee to avoid conflict of interest.
3. **Record the Details:** Write down what happened or what was said as soon as you can, using the person's own words if it was a disclosure. Note date, time, location, who was present. This record should be kept confidential and only shared with those who need to know (like the Safeguarding Lead or authorities).
4. **Do Not Investigate Yourself:** It's not our role to investigate suspected abuse – that's for professional authorities. Do not question the potential victim in depth or challenge any alleged perpetrator. Our role is to observe and report.
5. **Confidentiality:** Share information only with the proper channels. You might tell the Safeguarding Lead and maybe one other trustee, but don't spread it widely among volunteers. However, **do not promise secrecy** to anyone who

discloses something to you – explain that you will have to tell someone in charge who can help. We will handle it as confidentially as possible.

6. **External Reporting:** The Safeguarding Lead, in consultation with at least one other trustee, will decide if the matter should be reported to external authorities:
 - If it concerns a child being abused or at risk, we will contact **Social Work / Child Protection services** for Aberdeenshire or the Police.
 - If it concerns a vulnerable adult, we may contact Adult Protection services or Police, depending on urgency.
 - We may seek advice from organisations like NSPCC helpline or Children 1st for guidance if uncertain.
 - Any allegations involving a representative of ACE Newburgh (trustee or volunteer) will be taken very seriously. The person in question may be suspended from their role (e.g. not allowed to volunteer pending investigation) to ensure safety, while due process is followed.
7. **Support:** We will offer appropriate support to the person who raised the concern and, where appropriate, to the alleged victim. This might include helping them contact support services or just being there to listen. The welfare of any child/vulnerable person is the paramount concern.
8. **Follow-up:** Trustees will discuss the outcome of any reported case (in a confidential session) to see if any internal changes are needed. For instance, do we need to change procedures, or provide additional training? If the issue required reporting to authorities, the trustees will also consider whether it needs to be reported to OSCR as a serious incident (significant safeguarding issues may need to be reported to the charity regulator).

Whistleblowing: We encourage an environment where volunteers or trustees can report concerns about wrongdoing (including safeguarding issues) without fear of reprisal. If anyone feels a safeguarding concern was not handled properly within ACE Newburgh, they should escalate it:

- They can contact the Chair of the Board directly if, say, the Safeguarding Lead didn't act.
- If they still feel the response is insufficient, they can contact external authorities directly. We would rather have a false alarm reported than a real issue suppressed.
- The Public Interest Disclosure Act (UK Whistleblowing law) protects workers who raise concerns in good faith. While we are volunteers, we adhere to its spirit: no one will be penalised for speaking up about a genuine concern.

Risk Assessment: Part of our general risk assessments for events will include safeguarding considerations. For example, if we host an event specifically for children (like a school eco-workshop), we will plan for adequate supervision, parental permissions, and ensure volunteers are briefed on do's and don'ts around children. If we identify any new activity that introduces safeguarding risk, we'll address it in advance (possibly updating this policy or procedures accordingly).

Review and Training: The Board will review this Safeguarding Policy **annually** or whenever a major change in our activities occurs. The review will assess whether our measures are still appropriate and whether any incidents in the past year

suggest we need improvements charityexcellence.co.uk. We will also use the review to remind all trustees and key volunteers of safeguarding responsibilities. If needed, we will arrange for a basic training session (there are online modules or local authority offerings even for community groups).

Key Contacts (for reference):

- ACE Newburgh Safeguarding Lead: Cara Walkden, safeguarding@ace-newburgh.org or Kate Pangbourne. chair@ace-newburgh.org
- Aberdeenshire Council Social Work (Child Protection): Monday to Friday Office Hours 01467 53711, Out of hours 03456 08 12 06
- Police (non-emergency): 101 (for reporting concerns that are not immediate emergencies).
- NSPCC Helpline: 0808 800 5000 (for advice or to report child protection concerns).
- Stop It Now Scotland (re: concerns about sexual abuse): 0131 556 3535.
(These contacts are not necessarily publicized on our website, but trustees have them available when needed.)

By adhering to this policy, ACE Newburgh seeks to ensure that our community activities remain safe and welcoming. Safeguarding is not about being fearful – it's about being mindful and prepared. With these guidelines, even as a small charity, we aim to uphold the highest standard of care towards all those we serve or come into contact with.

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