



Child Protection & Safeguarding Policy

1. Purpose

The Sussex Reptile Rescue Centre (“the Charity”) is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people who come into contact with the Charity.

Our activities may include educational sessions, animal encounters, community events, fundraising activities, visits, demonstrations and other activities involving children, families, schools and community organisations.

The welfare and safety of children is paramount.

This policy explains the measures the Charity takes to protect children and how trustees, volunteers and anyone acting on behalf of the Charity must respond to safeguarding concerns.

2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- trustees;
- staff, if employed;
- volunteers;
- contractors where relevant;
- work-experience participants;
- partner organisations where appropriate; and
- anyone representing the Charity or carrying out activities on its behalf.

For the purposes of this policy, a **child** is anyone under the age of 18.

3. Our Safeguarding Commitment



The Sussex Reptile Rescue Centre believes that every child has the right to participate in our activities safely and without experiencing abuse, exploitation, neglect, discrimination, bullying or inappropriate behaviour.

We will:

- put children's welfare and safety first;
- listen to children and take their concerns seriously;
- treat children with dignity and respect;
- maintain appropriate professional boundaries;
- provide appropriate safeguarding information and training;
- use appropriate recruitment and vetting procedures;
- undertake DBS checks where a role is eligible for such a check;
- respond promptly to safeguarding concerns;
- work with parents, carers, schools and other organisations where appropriate;
- cooperate with statutory safeguarding agencies; and
- continually review our safeguarding arrangements.

4. Legal and Regulatory Framework

This policy has regard to applicable safeguarding legislation and guidance in England, including:

- Children Act 1989;
- Children Act 2004;
- Children and Social Work Act 2017;
- Working Together to Safeguard Children;
- relevant Disclosure and Barring Service requirements;
- applicable data protection legislation; and



- Charity Commission safeguarding guidance.

The Charity will review changes in legislation and statutory guidance and update this policy where necessary.

5. Responsibility of the Trustees

The Board of Trustees has overall responsibility for safeguarding within the Charity.

Trustees will ensure that:

- appropriate safeguarding policies and procedures are maintained;
- safeguarding risks are appropriately assessed;
- appropriate recruitment and vetting procedures are followed;
- safeguarding concerns are acted upon;
- appropriate safeguarding training is provided;
- serious incidents are considered for reporting to the Charity Commission where required; and
- safeguarding arrangements are reviewed at least annually and following any serious safeguarding incident.

Safeguarding responsibilities may be delegated operationally, but ultimate governance responsibility remains with the trustees.

6. Designated Safeguarding Lead

The Charity will appoint a **Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)**.

Designated Safeguarding Lead: Benjamin Checkley

Email: Benjamin.checkley@thesussexrrc.org.uk

Telephone: 07375 893640

Chair of Trustee



The DSL is responsible for:

- receiving safeguarding concerns;
- maintaining appropriate confidential safeguarding records;
- advising volunteers and trustees;
- making or coordinating referrals to statutory agencies where appropriate;
- ensuring safeguarding procedures are followed;
- supporting safeguarding training; and
- reporting significant safeguarding matters to the Board of Trustees.

The DSL does not investigate suspected child abuse themselves where this is properly the responsibility of children's social care or the police.

7. Recognising Abuse

Everyone working with the Charity should remain alert to possible indicators of harm.

Safeguarding concerns may include:

- physical abuse;
- emotional abuse;
- sexual abuse;
- neglect;
- bullying or cyberbullying;
- domestic abuse;
- exploitation;
- grooming;
- online abuse;



- child sexual exploitation;
- child criminal exploitation;
- trafficking;
- female genital mutilation;
- forced marriage;
- radicalisation;
- discrimination; or
- inappropriate behaviour by an adult in a position of trust.

A child does not have to disclose abuse directly for a safeguarding concern to exist.

8. If a Child Makes a Disclosure

If a child tells a trustee, volunteer or representative that they have been harmed or abused, that person should:

- remain calm;
- listen carefully;
- take the child seriously;
- allow the child to speak in their own words;
- reassure them that they were right to tell someone;
- avoid expressing shock or disbelief;
- not promise confidentiality;
- explain that the information may need to be shared with people who can help;
- avoid asking leading or investigative questions;
- make an accurate written record as soon as possible; and
- report the matter immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead.



Records should distinguish clearly between what the child actually said and the person's own observations.

9. Immediate Danger

If there is reason to believe that a child is in **immediate danger**, the priority is protecting the child.

Emergency services should be contacted by calling **999** where necessary.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead should then be informed as soon as reasonably practicable.

A safeguarding referral should not be delayed because the DSL is unavailable where urgent action is necessary.

10. Reporting Concerns

Any trustee, volunteer or other representative who:

- witnesses concerning behaviour;
- receives an allegation;
- receives a disclosure;
- suspects abuse or neglect; or
- otherwise becomes concerned about a child's welfare

must report the concern to the DSL as soon as possible.

The DSL will determine the appropriate next steps, which may include referral to:

- the relevant local authority children's social care service;
- the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO);
- the police;
- the Disclosure and Barring Service;



- another safeguarding authority; or
- another relevant organisation.

Where there is uncertainty about whether a concern meets a referral threshold, appropriate safeguarding advice should be obtained.

11. Allegations Against Volunteers, Trustees or Representatives

Any allegation that someone representing the Charity has:

- harmed a child;
- potentially committed an offence involving a child;
- behaved towards a child in a way indicating they may pose a risk; or
- otherwise behaved in a manner raising safeguarding concerns

must be reported immediately to the DSL.

If the allegation concerns the DSL, it must instead be reported to the Chair or another appropriate trustee.

If the allegation concerns the Chair, it should be reported to another trustee who is not involved.

The Charity will seek appropriate advice and make referrals to the LADO, police, children's social care or other relevant authorities where appropriate.

The Charity will not conduct an internal investigation in a way that could interfere with a statutory investigation.

Appropriate interim measures may be taken to protect children while allegations are considered. Such measures do not themselves imply that an allegation has been proven.



12. Recruitment and DBS Checks

The Charity is committed to safer recruitment.

Depending on the nature of a role, recruitment may include:

- an application process;
- interviews or informal suitability discussions;
- identity verification;
- references;
- consideration of relevant experience;
- safeguarding declarations;
- DBS checks where legally permitted and appropriate; and
- safeguarding induction.

The Charity will determine the appropriate level of DBS check according to the duties of each role and applicable DBS eligibility requirements.

A DBS check will not be treated as a substitute for appropriate supervision, safeguarding procedures and safer recruitment practices.

13. Code of Conduct Around Children

Anyone representing the Charity must maintain appropriate professional boundaries.

Adults should:

- treat children respectfully;
- use appropriate language;
- avoid unnecessary physical contact;
- ensure animal interactions are appropriately supervised;
- follow the Charity's health and safety procedures;



- challenge inappropriate behaviour;
- avoid favouritism; and
- maintain appropriate boundaries online and in person.

Adults must not:

- engage in sexual or sexually suggestive behaviour with a child;
- make sexualised, discriminatory or otherwise inappropriate comments;
- deliberately place themselves alone with a child unnecessarily;
- engage in inappropriate physical contact;
- exchange inappropriate private messages with children;
- invite children to private residences without an authorised and properly safeguarded reason;
- provide alcohol, illegal drugs or other inappropriate substances to children;
- photograph children contrary to the Charity's procedures; or
- use their position to establish inappropriate relationships with children.

14. One-to-One Contact

The Charity should minimise situations in which an adult representative is unnecessarily alone with a child.

Where individual interaction is necessary, it should normally:

- occur in an open or observable environment;
- be known to another responsible adult;
- remain appropriate to the activity; and
- be conducted within clear professional boundaries.

Children attending organised activities should remain subject to the agreed supervision arrangements for that activity.



15. Educational Visits and Outreach

When delivering activities at schools, youth organisations or other venues, Charity representatives must also comply with the safeguarding arrangements of the host organisation where applicable.

Before organised activities, responsibility for supervision should be clear.

The Charity remains responsible for the conduct of its own representatives.

Where children interact with reptiles, animal welfare and human safety requirements must be considered alongside safeguarding requirements.

Children must receive appropriate instructions before interacting with animals.

A child must never be pressured to touch, handle or interact with an animal.

16. Photography, Video and Social Media

Photographs and videos involving children must be handled responsibly.

The Charity will obtain appropriate consent where required before using identifiable photographs or videos of children for publicity, fundraising, websites or social media.

Images must not be used in an inappropriate or misleading context.

Personal information about children should not be unnecessarily published alongside photographs.

Private communication between adult Charity representatives and children through personal social-media accounts should be avoided.

Official Charity communication channels should be used where communication with young people is necessary and appropriate.



17. Online Safeguarding

Safeguarding responsibilities also apply to online activities.

Where the Charity provides online educational activities, social-media engagement or other digital communication involving children, appropriate controls must be maintained.

Adults representing the Charity must not use digital communication to establish inappropriate private relationships with children.

Any concerning online contact should be reported through the safeguarding procedure.

18. Animal-Related Safety

Because the Charity works with reptiles and other animals, safeguarding arrangements must also consider risks arising from animal interaction.

The Charity will:

- risk assess animals used during activities;
- select suitable animals for educational interaction;
- provide appropriate supervision;
- ensure children receive clear instructions;
- provide handwashing or hygiene arrangements;
- prevent inappropriate handling;
- maintain appropriate barriers or separation where necessary; and
- prevent public interaction with animals considered unsuitable for direct contact.

The decision to allow interaction with an animal remains with the Charity's authorised representative.



19. Dangerous or Higher-Risk Animals

Children must not be permitted to handle animals where the Charity determines that doing so would create an unacceptable risk.

Any activities involving potentially dangerous animals must be subject to specific risk assessment, appropriate licensing requirements and suitable physical controls.

Safeguarding considerations do not override animal welfare, licensing or health and safety requirements.

20. Lost or Missing Child

If a child becomes separated from their responsible adult during a Charity event:

1. a responsible Charity representative should be informed immediately;
2. appropriate venue procedures should be activated;
3. the child should remain appropriately supervised;
4. reasonable steps should be taken to locate the parent, carer or responsible organisation;
5. the child should not be taken away from the venue except where necessary for immediate safety; and
6. police should be contacted where circumstances indicate this is necessary.

21. Confidentiality

Safeguarding information will be handled confidentially and shared only where there is a legitimate safeguarding, legal or organisational need.

Safeguarding information may need to be shared without consent where this is necessary to protect a child or another person.

Protecting a child from harm takes priority over maintaining confidentiality.



22. Record Keeping

Safeguarding concerns must be documented accurately and securely.

Records should include:

- the date and time of the concern;
- details of the child where known;
- the nature of the concern;
- what was observed or disclosed;
- the exact words used where relevant;
- actions taken;
- people or organisations contacted; and
- the name of the person completing the record.

Safeguarding records will be stored securely with access restricted to appropriate persons.

23. Whistleblowing

Anyone connected with the Charity should be able to raise concerns about unsafe practices or inappropriate conduct.

A person who believes safeguarding concerns are being ignored, concealed or improperly handled should raise the matter with another trustee or use the Charity's whistleblowing arrangements.

Nothing in this policy prevents someone from reporting legitimate safeguarding concerns directly to an appropriate statutory authority.



24. Training

Trustees and volunteers will receive safeguarding information and training proportionate to their responsibilities and level of contact with children.

Those with specific safeguarding responsibilities should receive additional appropriate training.

Safeguarding awareness will form part of induction for relevant volunteers.

25. Partner Organisations

Where the Charity works with schools, youth organisations, community groups or other organisations involving children, safeguarding responsibilities should be clearly understood.

The Charity may request evidence of appropriate safeguarding arrangements where this is proportionate to the nature of the partnership.

26. Serious Incidents

Serious safeguarding incidents will be escalated promptly to the trustees.

The trustees will consider whether the incident requires notification to:

- children's social care;
- the LADO;
- police;
- the Disclosure and Barring Service;
- the Charity Commission;
- insurers;
- another regulator; or
- another appropriate organisation.

Regulatory reporting must not replace referrals necessary to protect a child.



27. Policy Breaches

Failure to follow this policy may result in action including:

- additional supervision;
- removal from an activity;
- suspension from volunteering;
- termination of a volunteer or employment relationship;
- removal from a position where legally and constitutionally appropriate; and/or
- referral to an appropriate authority.

The safety of children will be the primary consideration when deciding immediate protective action.

28. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed:

- at least annually;
- following a serious safeguarding incident;
- following significant changes to the Charity's activities;
- following relevant changes to legislation or statutory guidance; or
- where the trustees identify weaknesses in existing safeguarding arrangements.



Appendix 1

Useful Contacts

Child Protection Authority	Contact Number	Out of hours/Email
West Sussex County Council	01403 229900	03302 226664
West Sussex LADO	01403 229900	lado@westsussex.gov.uk
East Sussex SPOA	01323 464222	01273 335 905