Safeguarding Policy

Policy Statement

The British Hydrological Society (BHS) is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all children, young people, and adults who engage with our services.
We believe everyone has the right to live free from harm, abuse, and neglect, and we recognise our duty of care to protect and promote their wellbeing. We will create a safe, positive environment and respond promptly and effectively to any safeguarding concerns.

This policy applies to:

- All trustees, and contractors acting on behalf of the BHS.
- All children (under 18) and adults who encounter our services or activities.

This policy outlines how the BHS prevents, identifies, and responds to safeguarding concerns relating to both children and adults at risk, in accordance with:

- Children Act 1989[1] and 2004
- Care Act 2014[2]
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023)[3]
- Working Together to Safeguard Adults (2022)[4]
- Charity Commission Safeguarding Guidance (CC30)[5]

Key Principles

- The welfare of the child or adult at risk is paramount.
- All people, regardless of background, have the right to be protected from abuse.
- Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.
- We will work in partnership with children, adults, families, and statutory agencies.

---

[1] Children Act 1989
[2] Care Act 2014
[3] Working together to safeguard children 2023: statutory guidance
[4] Safeguarding policy: protecting vulnerable adults - GOV.UK
[5] Safeguarding and protecting people for charities and trustees - GOV.UK

Key Contacts

- **Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL):** Victoria Coates / Honorary Secretary / bhshonsec@outlook.com
- **Deputy Safeguarding Lead (DepSL):** Emma Cross / Ordinary Member / email
- Local Authority Safeguarding Children's Team: https://www.gov.uk/report-child-abuse-to-local-council
- Local Authority Adult Safeguarding Board: https://www.anncrafttrust.org/resources/find-your-nearest-safeguarding-adults-board/
- Police (non-emergency): 101
- Emergency: 999

Recognising and Responding to Concerns

If a child or adult is in immediate danger: Call 999.
If you have a concern or receive a disclosure:

1. Listen carefully — do not promise confidentiality.
2. Reassure the person they have done the right thing by telling you.
3. Record what was said, using their exact words.
4. Report immediately to the DSL.
5. The DSL will assess and, if necessary, refer to the Local Authority Children's or Adult Safeguarding Team.

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed annually or sooner if there are any legislation, guidance, or organisational structure changes.

Last review date: 30/11/2025
Approved by: [insert name and role]
Signature: _____

Definitions

Allegation: Describes an assertion of misconduct that has not yet been investigated or proved on the balance of probability.

Charity Commission: The Charity Commission of England and Wales.

Complaint: Describes a matter raised which refers to an alleged incident of harm or potential harm. A complaint may be raised by the individual affected or by a witness and may be made directly to a representative of the United Kingdom Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO), another organisation or through a whistleblowing procedure. It may be based on suspicion or experience.

Incident: Describes a wide range of events or circumstances that may cause harm and may include accidents as well as abuse.

Partner, delivery partner or partner organisations:

- An organisation that works with a UK NGO in the delivery of the UK NGO's objectives.
- A subsidiary trading company of a UK NGO.
- An organisation that receives funding from a UK NGO.
- Another charity or organisation that is linked to a UK INGO, for example as part of a federated structure.

Volunteer: Anyone who does something on behalf of the Society

What is safeguarding?

Safeguarding helps to create a safe and welcoming environment, where everyone is respected and valued. Every organisation that delivers charitable activities has a duty to safeguard volunteers, staff members, participants and donors.
Safeguarding ensures that the BHS is run in a way that actively prevents harm, harassment, bullying, abuse and neglect. Safeguarding is being ready to respond safely and well if there is a problem.

Who is most at risk?

Anyone can be at risk of abuse. People are at risk at different times and in different situations.

All organisations and individuals have a responsibility to safeguard children. A child is anyone under the age of 18.

Any adult may experience abuse or harm. However, certain people are at greater risk so are given more protection by law. An adult at risk is anyone aged 18 or over who:

- has needs for care and or support
- because of care and support needs is unable to protect themselves from abuse
- is currently experiencing or is at risk of abuse.

Adults at risk may:

- have a mental or physical illness
- have a learning disability
- have addiction problems
- be frail.

Whether an adult is at risk or not is something which changes with their circumstances – it's not fixed.

Recognising signs of harm and abuse

Anyone representing the BHS should know the signs and symptoms of harm and abuse. Signs and symptoms are not always obvious or clear. However, the more that trustees and volunteers know about possible warning signs, the more likely they are to recognise abuse and act.

Anyone representing the BHS must understand the risks and circumstances of the children and adults you work with so you can decide what trustees and volunteers need to know about.

As a rule, the more directly your trustees or volunteers work with children or adults at risk, the more detail about recognising the different types of harm and abuse they should know.

Confidentiality and Information Sharing

Safeguarding concerns will be handled sensitively, following the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR.

Information will only be shared on a need-to-know basis and may be shared without consent where there is a risk of harm, or a crime has been committed.

Allegations, Whistleblowing, and Complaints

Any allegation or concern about the behaviour of a staff member, trustee, or volunteer must be reported to the DSL or the Chair of Trustees immediately.

The BHS supports a culture of openness and will ensure no one suffers victimisation for raising a concern in good faith.

If the allegation involves the DSL, contact the BHS President directly.

BHS Trustee duties

Trustees are the first line of defence in managing risks and dealing with harm relating to their charities. Trustees should promote an open and positive culture and ensure all involved feel able to report concerns, confident that they will be heard and responded to.

Safeguarding is most successful when everyone knows their rights. The BHS will make it clear to all trustees, volunteers, people you work with or those who make donations that you intend to keep them safe. They must know they have a right to ask questions and know who to tell if they think something is not right.

In accordance with their Regulatory and Risk Framework, the Charity Commission can hold trustees to account if things go wrong and can check that trustees followed this guidance and the law:

- The role of the Commission as regulator is to ensure that trustees are actively and effectively implementing safeguarding.
- The Commission can look at how trustees have acted to protect beneficiaries, staff, volunteers and anyone else who encounters their charity.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Charity Commission expect all BHS trustees to ensure their charity:

- has appropriate policies and procedures in place, which are followed by all trustees, volunteers and beneficiaries
- checks that people are suitable to act in their roles
- knows how to spot and handle concerns in a full and open manner
- has a clear system of referring or reporting to relevant agencies as soon as concerns are suspected or identified
- identifies risks and how they will be managed in a regularly reviewed risk register
- follows safeguarding statutory guidance, good practice guidance and legislation relevant to their charity: this guidance links to the main sources of information
- is quick to respond to concerns and carry out appropriate investigations
- does not ignore harm or downplays failures
- has a balanced trustee board that works together and does not let one trustee dominate its work
- makes sure protecting people from harm is central to its culture
- ensures there are trained trustees that can safeguard and protect people
- conducts periodic reviews of safeguarding policies, procedures and practice.

Safeguarding and Training

The BHS will ensure:

- All trustees to receive appropriate safeguarding training.
- All roles are clearly defined with safeguarding responsibilities understood.

Code of Conduct

The BHS code of conduct sets out the BHS' expectations of trustees and volunteers. This includes clear expectations of what people should do and say, and what they must not. This will help raise awareness of illegal, unsafe, unprofessional and unwise behaviour. Being clear about standards of behaviour is an important part of safeguarding.

All representatives of BHS must:

- Treat everyone with respect and dignity.
- Maintain clear professional boundaries.
- Avoid situations that could be misinterpreted as inappropriate.
- Use professional and transparent communication, including online.

More about the importance of a good code of conduct can be found online:

- NSPCC Learning has pdfs of sample behaviour codes for children and adults
- NCVO members can use a sample code of conduct for trustees.
- For a reminder about the importance of using your code of conduct well, see our code of conduct in the day-to-day safeguarding section.

Designated Safeguarding Lead

The BHS will assign a Designated Safeguarding Lead. This is the absolute minimum we need to do safeguarding well. One trustee will be assigned as the lead, but all trustees need to have an awareness of safeguarding and lead by example. This means showing commitment to upholding your code of conduct and making safeguarding part of all the planning your organisation does.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead may have multiple responsibilities in the organisation, but their role as a designated safeguarding lead should be taken seriously and not seen as an 'add-on' to their other work.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead is responsible for:

- Keeping internal records up to date.
- Reporting when problems are discovered

- Managing referrals to social services
- Connecting with the local authority to keep up to date with the separate processes for children and adults at risk.

Digital safeguarding

The BHS trustees will consider digital safeguarding matters, including the design and delivery of digital services on BHS platforms (website, applications and social media sites).

The BHS trustees will consider how people who use the BHS' digital technology are kept safe from exposure to harm. The following guidance will be applied:

- DigiSafe – will be used to identify the risks and create a digital risk register
- NSPCC Learning specific guidance on using social media safely with children and young people – will be used to assess BHS social media

Trustees' annual report

The BHS must send an annual report and accounts to the Charity Commission. This must include a risk management statement that should state all the major risks the charity faces and how it controls those risks. The report will include safeguarding matters, especially around any work with children or adults at risk, or if there has been an increase of reports of harm in the organisation.

Risk policy and register

The BHS trustees must regularly review the risks the BHS faces, including safeguarding risks[6]. The BHS will show how they'll manage safeguarding risks through the production of an up-to-date risk register.

This register will include the likelihood and severity of the risks. It will cover how the BHS plans to reduce those risks and show how safeguarding sits alongside other risk management.

The following guidance will be followed:

- The Charity Commission guidance on risk management.

[6] Charities and risk management (CC26) - GOV.UK

- NCVO members risk register template.
- For online services, use the DigiSafe guidance and templates to assess and mitigate risk.
- For practical advice on managing risks in specific places, activities, and with equipment and resources use the National Youth Agency Safeguarding and Risk Management Hub.

External support

There is lots of help available outside the organisation. Trustees should become a member of a safeguarding network that's connected to their location or the type of work they do. There are always local authority contacts who have a responsibility to help. There are also national helplines to turn to.

- *Online advice and guidance.* You'll find links throughout our Knowhow safeguarding pages to other key organisations who cover topics in more detail or from a specialist angle.
- *Helplines***.** At different times you can need different support from a helpline. As well as containing links for reporting, our page on what to do if you have immediate concerns page also has numbers and links to helplines for a range of different situations.
- *Training*. You can find guidance on how to choose training and links to some face to face and online training on our training page.
- *Consultancy***.** Sometimes you need to turn to someone external to assist with formal audits or less formal reviews of your safeguarding processes. You can find individual consultants who offer these services or go to an organisation. Below you can see which of the partners in this project offer consultancy support
- *Networking* **and support**. Whether you choose to join a membership organisation, a movement or an informal network, it's great to be part of a group of similar organisations tackling safeguarding together. Different groups will be able to offer different things. Some of the partners in this project offer membership options.

Many organisations can provide services of support. You can find them by searching the internet for safeguarding in charities or safeguarding in the voluntary and community sector.

- **NCVO** - membership is home to over 15,000 voluntary sector organisations across England. In relation to safeguarding, benefits of membership include access to discounted face to face training and events, free sample HR policies and a HR

telephone advice line. Members also receive discounts when using an NCVO trusted supplier or key quality assurance tools that help you improve your organisation.

- **The Ann Craft Trust (ACT)** - The are a leading UK authority on safeguarding disabled children and adults at risk. They support all organisations and individuals to do safeguarding well and minimise harm. As well as safeguarding training, and a safeguarding adults checklist (link) which connects to lots of resources, ACT offer consultancy services. You might want to work with them on a formal audit or informal reviews of your safeguarding work.
- **Protect** - aims to stop harm by supporting whistleblowing. They provide advice and support to anyone who wants to speak up about wrongdoing in the organisation they work for but doesn't know what to do. They can also advise and train organisations on developing whistleblowing policies and making sure they are effective.

Guidance from other organisations

- To learn more about child abuse, use NSPCC Learning's definition and signs of child abuse.
- To learn more about how harm and abuse affects adults, use the Ann Craft Trust's clickable list of 14 types of harm.
- For more guidance on decision making with adults at risk, start with the Ann Craft Trust's mental capacity, self-determination and unwise decisions page.
- Find guidance on why you should act to keep everyone safe from sexual harassment with the Citizens Advice explanation of sexual harassment.

Change record

Date of change	Change by	Reason for change
November 2025	BHS Main Committee	Review