

Safeguarding Policy

The Hebridean Trust policy on the safeguarding of children, young people and vulnerable adults

1. Introduction

1.1 The Hebridean Trust aims to adopt the highest possible standards and take all reasonable steps in relation to the safety and welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults.

1.2 This policy applies to all staff, sessional workers, students and volunteers (“workers”) who may be working with children (i.e. those aged under 16), young persons (i.e. those aged 16 to 18) and vulnerable adults (i.e. as defined by section 59 of the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 and/or those persons aged over 18 who by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness are or may be unable to take care of themselves or are or may be unable to protect themselves against significant harm or exploitation) whom The Hebridean Trust encounters through its charitable activities.

1.3 This policy does not seek to discourage such activities. Instead, this policy seeks to support these activities and to offer assurances to both staff, sessional workers, students volunteers and visitors that, through its implementation, The Hebridean Trust seeks to protect children, young people and vulnerable adults and to keep them safe from harm when in contact with Trust workers (whether acting in a paid or unpaid capacity).

2. Aims and objectives

2.1 The Hebridean Trust wishes to ensure that it maintains the highest possible standards to meet its social, moral and legal responsibilities to protect and safeguard the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults with whom The Hebridean Trust’s work brings it into contact, whilst recognizing that it cannot act “in loco parentis”. Ultimate responsibility will continue to rest with parents and guardians.

2.2 While it is impossible to ensure that a child, young person or vulnerable adult would never come to any harm, the adoption of this policy and associated guidelines aims to facilitate the management of the risk associated with the duty to protect such individuals.

2.3 The aim of this policy is to highlight the four areas that form the basis of The Hebridean Trust’s approach to safeguarding the well being of children, young people and vulnerable adults (“the Cornerstones”) and to set out a code of practice (see Appendix) for all staff, sessional workers, students and volunteers at The Hebridean Trust who may work with them.

3. The Cornerstones

Risk assessment

3.1 All staff that intend to, or may be put in the position of, working with children, young people or vulnerable adults should ensure that they understand the implications of this policy before the commencement of any programme, event, visit or other activity.

3.2 A designated individual should complete a risk assessment before any new or changed programme, event, visit or any other activity involving children, young people or vulnerable adults, or before admitting [or employing] an under-18.

3.3 All those involved in the risk assessment process should understand that the risk assessment is not only a way to mitigate or remove any potential risks but may also be a prompt to consider alternative working practices.

Recruitment, selection and employment procedures

3.4 The Hebridean Trust will take all appropriate steps to ensure that unsuitable people are prevented from working with children, young people and vulnerable adults.

3.5 Where the risk assessment has identified that workers are likely to have regular contact with or encounter children, young people or vulnerable adults (which might include regular processing of information), rigorous checks into their eligibility will be required. Such processes will be compliant with The Hebridean Trust's Equality and Diversity policy.

3.6 The Hebridean Trust is registered with the Criminal Records Bureau and will ensure that any worker who will have substantial one-to-one contact with children, young people or vulnerable adults will be checked for relevant criminal convictions.

3.7 The Chair will seek guidance from the Board and from external specialists on safeguarding young people if the organisation intends to employ someone under the age of 18.

Dealing with suspicions or allegations of abuse

3.9 Concerns for the safety and well being of children, young persons or vulnerable adults could arise in a variety of ways and in a range of different settings. For example, a child may report or display signs of abuse; someone may hint that a child is at risk or that a colleague is an abuser; an individual may witness or hear about abuse in another organisation. It is essential to act quickly and professionally in all cases of suspected abuse.

3.10 Any allegation by a child, young person or vulnerable adult against a worker should be reported immediately to the relevant designated individual who has responsibility under this policy (normally the Chair). In dealing with any such allegation The Hebridean Trust has a duty of care both to the child, young person or vulnerable adult concerned and to the member of staff, student or volunteer against whom the allegation is made.

Training and support

3.11 The Hebridean Trust will provide appropriate guidance and training on this policy.

4. Responsibility

4.1 Guidelines will be issued to implement this policy and designated individuals will be appointed to undertake risk assessments.

4.2 The Chair will be responsible for reviewing and updating this policy. Workers are encouraged to discuss any concerns under this policy with the Chair. This responsibility may be devolved as appropriate.

4.3 Allegations or suspicions of abuse involving service users should be reported to the Chair. Allegations or suspicions of abuse involving staff who are under 18 years of age should be reported to the Chair of the Board.

Appendix

Code of Practice

The following code of practice applies to all those working for The Hebridean Trust with children, young people or vulnerable adults, whether acting in a paid or unpaid capacity:

- Avoid unnecessary physical contact.
- Avoid taking a child, young person or vulnerable adult alone in a vehicle on journeys, however short.
- Unless circumstances make it impossible to comply, do not take a child or vulnerable adult to the toilet unless either (a) another adult is present or (b) another adult is aware (this may include a parent or group leader).
- If you find you are in a situation where you are alone with a child, young person or vulnerable adult, wherever practicable make sure that others can clearly observe you.
- Avoid close personal relationships with a child, young person or vulnerable adult in relation to whom you are in a position of trust.
- Do not make suggestive or inappropriate remarks to or about a child, young person or vulnerable adult, even in fun, as this could be misinterpreted.

- If a child, young person or vulnerable adult accuses a student or member of staff of abuse or inappropriate behaviour, you should report this immediately to the relevant person.

The duty to report applies equally to complaints or accusations of historic, and not just recent, abuse/inappropriate behaviour.

If you are the recipient of any complaint or accusation from a child, young person or vulnerable adult, it is important to listen without making or implying any judgment as to the truth of the complaint or accusation.

If a child, young person or vulnerable adult makes a complaint, or if there are other reasons for suspecting abuse, you should not attempt to investigate this yourself, but should report your concerns to the designated individual appointed under The Hebridean Trust's policy ("the policy") on the safeguarding of children, young people and vulnerable adults.

Participate in the training available to you to support you in your work with children, young people and vulnerable adults.

Remember that those who abuse children, young people and vulnerable adults can be of any age (even other children and vulnerable adults), gender, ethnic background or class, and it is important not to allow personal preconceptions about people to prevent appropriate action taking place.

Good practice includes valuing and respecting children, young people and vulnerable adults as individuals, and the adult modelling of appropriate conduct – which would exclude bullying, aggressive behaviour and discrimination in any form.

Those dealing with any allegations of abuse or misconduct should adhere to the principles set out in the policy. Any information received should be acted upon sensitively, effectively and efficiently. Wherever possible, those making allegations should be given information about the outcome.

Although allegations should be reported only on a "need to know" basis, staff and students making allegations need not be concerned that they will be breaching confidentiality or the Data Protection Act, as complying with the policy overrides such obligations. If the person making the allegation feels they need counselling or other appropriate support from The Hebridean Trust, they are encouraged to seek it.

Ensure that you comply with appropriate licensing laws.