



Safeguarding Policy

BOTANIC GARDENS
EDUCATION NETWORK

BGEN is a registered Charitable Incorporated Organisation No. 1103482

c/o BGCI
Descanso House
199 Kew Road
Richmond, TW9 3BW, UK

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About this policy

The Botanic Gardens Education Network (BGEN) is a specialist support network for professional plant and natural world educators. We help our members connect people and plants in innovative and engaging ways.

BGEN aims to integrate our members into an energetic network of like-minded people. We do this through online events, face-to-face training and networking events, and our Annual Conference.

BGEN supports and builds capacity in educators and community engagers in natural and plant science, biodiversity and sustainability, visitor engagement, audience development, evaluation, and funding.

Objective and Purpose

We acknowledge our duty of care to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and vulnerable adults. We are committed to ensuring that safeguarding practice reflects statutory responsibilities, government guidance, and complies with best practice requirements.

This policy recognises that the welfare and interests of children and vulnerable adults are paramount in all circumstances, whether that's face-to-face, online, with a training provider, or at an external venue. It aims to ensure that regardless of age, ability or disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation, socio-economic background, all children and vulnerable adults:

- have a positive and enjoyable experience engaging with training or activities which we deliver, in a safe environment.
- are protected from harm whilst participating in training or activities hosted by us.

We acknowledge that some children and vulnerable adults can be particularly vulnerable to abuse, and we accept the responsibility to take reasonable and appropriate steps to ensure their welfare.

A child is defined by law in England and Wales as a person under the age of 18 years, and Safeguarding duties apply to an adult who:

- has needs for care and support (whether or not the local authority is meeting any of those needs) and
- is experiencing, or is at risk of, abuse or neglect; and
- as a result of their care and support need, is unable to protect themselves from either the risk of, or the experience of, abuse or neglect.



Our Responsibility

We have a responsibility to ensure that children, young people, and adults at risk are protected from harm, informed about potential risks to their welfare, and understand how to seek help. We ensure all concerns are dealt with timely and appropriately and have a responsibility to our volunteers, members, board members, freelance support staff, speakers and guests to minimise the risk of allegations against them.

All volunteers, board members, and freelance support staff are expected to comply with any background disclosure check requests (DBS) deemed appropriate and to have a good understanding of what constitutes a safeguarding or welfare concern. They should know how to provide support, and the channels for escalating a concern. We commit to the on-going training and awareness of our volunteers, board members and freelance support staff, as well as providing information, advice and guidance to feel confident in proactively promoting safeguarding and understanding individual responsibilities.

Our Policy

As part of our safeguarding policy, we will:

- minimise the time that our volunteers, members, board members, freelance support staff, speakers, and guests are alone with children, young people, or vulnerable adults. These instances will be avoided wherever possible.
- promote and prioritise the safety and well-being of children, young people, and vulnerable adults.
- value, listen to, and respect children and vulnerable adults.
- ensure robust safeguarding arrangements and procedures are in operation.
- adopt safeguarding best practice through our policies, procedures, and code of conduct for volunteers, board members, and freelance support staff.
- ensure everyone understands their roles and responsibilities in respect of safeguarding and are encouraged to notify the Safeguarding Officer of any signs of abuse, neglect, or other safeguarding concerns.
- ensure all members, speakers, and guests know about our policies, procedures, and behaviour codes and follow them confidently and competently.
- ensure that we always meet the adult-to-child ratio for 16 – 18-year-olds of one adult to ten children.
- ensure appropriate action is taken in the event of incidents or concerns of abuse and support provided to the individual(s) who raise or disclose the concern.
- ensure that confidential, detailed, and accurate records of all safeguarding concerns are maintained and securely stored.
- record and store information securely, in line with data protection legislation and guidance



- prevent the employment or deployment of unsuitable individuals by recruiting and selecting volunteers, board members, and freelance support staff safely, ensuring we meet the minimum requirements made by the relevant authorities.
- ensure all online activity we carry out is done so safely and securely.
- request express permission from a parent or guardian of a child or vulnerable adult, before taking photographs or video.
- make sure that children, young people, and vulnerable adults know to contact our Safeguarding Officer or the Deputy Safeguarding Officer for help if they have a concern about any of our activities.

The policy and procedures will be widely promoted and are mandatory for everyone associated with BGEN. Failure to comply with the policy and procedures will be addressed without delay and may ultimately result in dismissal or exclusion from the organisation.

Recruitment

We undertake safe recruitment practices by including our commitment to Safeguarding in job adverts, a thorough interview process, and the collation of references. We ensure that all appropriate checks are carried out on new volunteers, board members, and freelance support staff who will work or come into contact with children and adults at risk in line with the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS).

Disclosure and Barring Service Checks

The Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) is an executive agency of the UK government whose primary purpose is to help employers make safer recruitment decisions and appointments. By conducting checks and providing details of criminal records and other relevant information, DBS helps to identify applicants who may be unsuitable for certain work and positions, especially those involving contact with children or adults at risk.

BGEN's Board Chair is responsible for deciding which level of check is appropriate for a particular role and whether barred list checks are necessary. Even where a post has some contact with children or adults at risk, the definition of regulated activity may not be fully satisfied, but in order to safeguard our learners any unsupervised contact with learners will result in an enhanced DBS check with child barred list. All records of DBS checks will be securely stored in accordance with data protection legislation.

Smoking and Vaping

The welfare of children and vulnerable adults is our priority, and the harmful effects of smoking are well known. Where this policy refers to *smoking*, this includes electronic cigarettes and vapes.



Under UK law, it's illegal for under-18s to buy **cigarettes**. Our volunteers, board members, freelance support staff, speakers and guests will not smoke at external venues (*adhering to the venue providers' smoking policy*), in areas that are visible to children or vulnerable adults, or whilst undertaking work-related activities (e.g. hosting meetings and events).

It is unacceptable for adults to allow anyone under the age of 18 to smoke whilst in their care. Adults may come across those under the age of 18 who choose to smoke. The aim should be to inform the young person of the harmful effects of smoking on themselves and others and direct them to relevant support.

Alcohol, drugs and non-prescription medicine

Under UK law, it's illegal for under-18s to buy **alcohol**. Drinking alcohol can also put adults in a compromising position regarding their responsibilities for safeguarding and their duty of care.

Under UK law, it's a crime to possess, deal or produce what is termed an **illegal drug**. If you suspect that someone is in possession of illegal drugs, you must contact the police by calling 999 or 112 and then inform the Safeguarding Officer.

No volunteer, board member, freelance support staff, speaker, or guest shall, in connection with any work-related activity:

- report, or try to report, for duty having consumed alcohol, drugs, or non-prescription medication likely to render them unfit and/or unsafe for work.
- consume or be under the influence of alcohol or drugs while on duty.
- store alcohol or drugs on their person or anywhere within external premises whilst attending an external venue, or attempt to sell or give alcohol, drugs or legal highs to any other person at an external venue.
- consume alcohol during working hours or at break times or while undertaking work-related duties e.g. meetings and events.

If you're concerned that a child, vulnerable adult or adult may be affected by alcohol and/or substance misuse, please inform the Safeguarding Officer immediately.

Safeguarding Guidance – In Person

Good practice ideas:

- It is best practice to work in an open environment, avoiding private or unobserved situations and encouraging open communication.
- Treat each child or vulnerable adult equally with respect and dignity, always putting their welfare first.
- Maintain a safe and appropriate distance.



- Do not accept responsibility for a child or vulnerable adult's possessions.
- Be an excellent role model, be aware of the effect that your words and actions may have.
- Activities should be scheduled to be within the normal working day of the company.

Practices to be avoided:

- Spending excessive amounts of time alone with a child or vulnerable adult away from others.
- Saying anything that might make a child or vulnerable adult feel uncomfortable or debased.
- Saying anything that could be interpreted as aggressive, hostile or impatient.
- Being drawn into personal conversations or introducing personal subjects.
- Sitting or standing too close to a child or vulnerable adult.
- Standing over the child or vulnerable adult or otherwise making them feel pressured.
- Meeting other than at the pre-arranged venue.
- Exchanging personal contact details.

Any adult who works or volunteers with children must not enter into a sexual relationship with a child they have responsibility for. Failure to adhere to this rule will result in the adult involved being subject to safeguarding and disciplinary proceedings. The adult involved will also be reported to the police.

Safeguarding Guidance – Online

We will:

- conduct risk assessments for all digital and online platforms being considered or being used.
- ensure that we adhere to relevant legislation and good practice guidelines when using online platforms.
- provide relevant training to all staff on online safety, and ensure all staff or volunteers using online platforms have had training appropriate to their role.
- monitor how staff, parents, and children use our platforms both inside and outside of our setting to ensure it adheres to our policy, acceptable use statement, and code of conduct.
- regularly review existing safeguarding policies and procedures to ensure online safety is embedded throughout the organisation.
- ensure at least two members of staff have access to our digital platforms and moderate them regularly.
- ensure staff who moderate and use our digital platforms have appropriate safeguarding training and work closely with the safeguarding lead.
- keep all apps and platform security up to date, use strong passwords, and maintain privacy of all users.
- effectively use security and privacy tools available on each platform.



- have a zero-tolerance policy towards discrimination, hateful communication, cyberbullying, inappropriate, harmful, or illegal content.
- inform all staff, volunteers, parents, carers, and children of who to report any online concerns to, or what to do in the event they see something that worries them online.
- adhere to parental consents and permissions when sharing images, videos, or live streaming our organisation for promotional or celebrational purposes.
- never publish identifying information of children on publicly available online platforms (such as our website and public social media channels).
- ensure personal information gathered while using online platforms is stored securely and in line with our privacy policies..

Emergencies and Incidents

Emergency Contact forms for a parent or guardian will be obtained and retained by BGEN for all children and vulnerable adults who are participating in events, training, or activities. These forms will be treated in confidence and only shared with those who require the information they contain to perform their role effectively.

In the event of a child requiring medical attention:

- The parent(s) or guardian will be contacted immediately.
- In the event of failure to contact parents, the alternative emergency contacts will be used.
- An adult representative will accompany the child to seek medical attention, if appropriate, ensuring that they take the consent form with them.
- A record of the action taken will be made and retained by a BGEN representative and given to the Safeguarding Officer.

Where a parent or guardian is late in collecting their child, the following procedure will apply:

- Attempt to contact the parent/carer using the contact details on the Emergency Contact Form.
- Attempt to contact the first, then the second emergency contact nominated on the form.
- Wait with the young person(s) at the venue with, wherever possible, other staff or parents.
- If no one is reachable, contact the Safeguarding Officer for advice.
- If all attempts to make contact fail, consideration should be given to contacting the police for their advice.

Volunteers, board members and freelance support staff should avoid:

- Taking the child home or to another location without consent.
- Asking the child to wait in a vehicle or on the premises with them alone.



- Sending the child home with another person without permission.

Reporting a concern

If you have immediate concerns about the welfare of any child or adult, contact the police on 101 or ring the NSPCC 24-hour free helpline on 0808 800 5000.

Should you have any safeguarding concerns regarding any activity undertaken by BGEN, including concerns about members, volunteers, board members, freelance support staff, or attending members of the public, please contact us on the details below.

Please be aware that we will keep your report and any information or documents you disclose to us confidential. We will only disclose information internally or to our external advisors to the extent necessary to investigate your concern effectively or on the occasion a concern is elevated to relevant authorities.

Monitoring

The policy will be reviewed every year, or in the following circumstances:

- changes in legislation and/or government guidance
- as required by the local regulatory bodies
- as a result of any other significant change or event.

Supporting Policies or Documents

This policy statement should be read alongside our organisational policies, procedures, guidance and other related documents, including but not limited to:

- Anti-Harassment and Bullying
- Complaints
- Social Media
- Whistleblowing
- BGEN Code of Conduct.

Contact Details

Safeguarding Officer

Dr Lauren Baker, Chair of BGEN
Email: lauren.baker@obg.ox.ac.uk

Deputy Safeguarding Officer

Samantha Bowden, BGEN Coordinator
Email: info@bgen.org.uk



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