



Wild Soul Woods CIC Policies

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Health, Safety & Wellbeing Policy

Pre-planning:

All sessions will be planned in advance by Wild Soul Woods CIC or engaged Sub-Contractor with appropriate reference to site & activity risk assessments and the groups concerned. A review will be incorporated into the session planning process to look at the roles of staff and volunteers as well as adult to child ratios, appropriate to the group and the activities being planned.

We implement a general ratio of 1:6 for all groups, with activities involving tools kept to small groups of 1:3 or less and is often 1:1. This depends on the behaviour and ability of the individual or the group and can be adjusted accordingly. Ideally both male and female adults should be present for a mixed group but this is not always possible.

Travel:

Travel to and from the site will be the responsibility of the parent or carer or group leader and not the responsibility of Wild Soul Woods CIC, except where agreed beforehand and in writing. Parking is managed in accordance with the site management policies and local planning regulations.

Access:

Staff and/or volunteers will park in the appropriate parking area. Vehicles are parked at the owner's risk. Public transport is available nearby.

Approaches to appropriate clothing and footwear:

Wild Soul Woods CIC will advise participants in advance of the need for appropriate clothing and footwear and what this entails. Emails will be sent to all parents, carers and participants, as well as information included on initial booking forms.

Wild Soul Woods CIC is not responsible for supplying correct clothing and anyone not clothed appropriately will be asked to go home and get changed before returning.

Shelter:

There is access to the Community Centre Building via the front and rear doors, accessible from the car park. Our sessions will be held in the Building, the adjacent outside space or the allotment (depending on need of group and nature of session). In the case of high winds or stormy conditions the session will be delivered inside. Tarps and cord (if needed) are regularly checked and maintained.

Toilets:

Private flushing toilets are available in the community centre.

Washing arrangements:

Hand washing facilities are available in the Community Centre toilets and the kitchen area. There is also an outdoor running tap. Hands will be cleaned before eating or drinking. Any wet wipes provided for emergencies will be eco-sensitive.

Ongoing care:

Refreshments: Drinking water will be available at all times. Hot water and drinks are available in the kitchen. Participants will be advised to bring healthy snacks with them, unless food preparation is a planned activity.

First aid: A first aid kit is available in the Kitchen and in the Leaders bag at the allotment. A burns kit is kept next to the fire bucket near the fire bowl. A trained first aider with a current certificate will always be present. Staff and volunteers will be trained in emergency procedures (see below).

Accident, Medical or Lost Person Emergency:

In the event of an accident, medical or lost person emergency, Wild Soul Woods CIC will follow procedures outlined in the Illness, Accident and Emergency policy or the Lost Child Policy, whichever is relevant.

All incidents will be recorded in the Record Book, kept with the First Aid kit in the Leaders' bag.

Wild Soul Woods CIC will have access to up-to-date contact and medical details for all people on site, including staff and volunteers. This information will be kept securely and will be destroyed in compliance with the Data Protection Act once they are no longer needed. A paper copy of emergency contact details and any medical requirements is printed and available for quick access during sessions and destroyed after sessions. This is kept in the Leaders' bag and only accessible to the relevant staff and volunteers.

First aid arrangements:

As outlined in the Illness, Accident and Emergency policy, the named first aider is Victoria Duggan unless stated otherwise in the session details.

Communication and contact with the emergency services will be by a member of staff or trained volunteer, who will be chosen before the start of each session. Where a school is involved, communication with parents and carers will be the responsibility of the school. Where there is not a school involved, the next of kin will be informed by a Director at Wild Soul Woods CIC.

On adult-only courses where there is only one member of Wild Soul Woods CIC staff available, the first aider will instruct an appropriate adult on how and when to call for an ambulance.

Mobile reception has been checked and tested.

Lost person procedure is outlined in the Lost Person policy.

All staff and volunteers will receive induction training in all relevant policies and procedures before they are allowed on site, including role play scenarios to ensure competency.

Inclement Weather:

Wild Soul Woods CIC will check the weather forecast on the Met Office website on a daily basis. Where severe weather is predicted, Wild Soul Woods CIC will contact participants as soon as possible once a decision has been reached as to whether the session will go ahead. Wild Soul Woods CIC does not consider rain or snow to be a reason for cancelling a session and will provide advice on appropriate clothing and footwear.

Contingency plan for severe weather:

High Wind: In the event of predicted high winds, by the Met Office, Wild Soul Woods CIC will contact participants in advance to rearrange the session. In the event of sudden high winds, the

group will move out of any tree cover immediately and relocate to open space where a decision will be made about whether to cancel or to continue.

Extreme Weather: In the event of predicted extreme weather, by the Met Office, Wild Soul Woods CIC will contact participants in advance to rearrange the session. In the event of sudden extreme weather, the group will move out of the outdoor area immediately and relocate to a suitable space where a decision will be made about whether to cancel or to continue.

Lightning: When storms are forecast it is difficult to predict whether this will include lightning, and in many instances lightning does not materialise. In the event of predicted storms, by the Met Office, Wild Soul Woods CIC staff will discuss with participants prior to entering the area with tree cover what to do should lightning occur. In the event of lightning, the group will move out of the outdoor area immediately and relocate to a space away from large trees, and head to a building where a decision will be made about whether to cancel or to continue.

Daily Checks:

It is the responsibility of Wild Soul Woods CIC to ensure that:

- There is the correct ratio of adults to children in each session
- Contact numbers and medical information are available during each session
- There has been a sweep of the outdoor learning area to check for any hazards, including litter
- Adults in charge at Wild Soul Woods CIC have DBS clearance
- Tools are in a secure container and are in a clean and usable condition
- Appropriate PPE is available and suitable for use for all activities

On the day of a session, Wild Soul Woods CIC will check the ground conditions with consideration to vehicles and pedestrians. Wild Soul Woods CIC will walk the route from the car park to the session site and will walk the garden area that is to be used. If there are any areas where overhead branches are hanging broken, they will be removed. Where it is not possible to remove the branches, all participants will be made aware of the potential hazard and it will be considered when defining boundaries making sure the hazard falls outside of the boundaries.

All staff and volunteers will receive induction training in all relevant policies and procedures before they are allowed on site.

Tools, Equipment & PPE:

At times during sessions it will be appropriate for learners to make use of equipment, individual tools and the associated necessary Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

Tools: Tools will only be used when appropriately trained staff are available to supervise - i.e., L3 Forest School trained or equivalent.

Tools will only be used when appropriate levels of supervision are possible within the group (see Risk Assessments) and when relevant PPE is available.

A full Risk Benefit assessment will be undertaken (dynamically if necessary) to ensure that all conditions have been met that allow the tools to be used safely, including learners' temperament and climatic conditions, among others (see Risk Assessments).

When not in use, tools will be kept in a locked container stored off site. When in use, tools will be counted in and out of storage, and only used in designated areas.

Learners and any helpers will be taught to use all tools before use, including modelling and demonstration to ensure understanding. Tools with safety catches will be kept with safety 'on' when not in direct use, and 'blood bubble' zones will be modelled and used.

Tools will be cleaned, maintained and checked regularly - at the beginning and end of every session.

PPE:

Relevant PPE will be made available to learners when necessary. This may include the following, depending on the equipment being used:

- Gloves - cut resistant for use with bladed tools
- Gloves - heat resistant for use with camp fires & cooking
- Gloves - gardening - for use foraging and exploring in bramble / nettle areas

These will be available in a variety of sizes to ensure safe fit. Heat resistant gloves are only available in adult sizes so only adults will handle heavy or potentially dangerous cooking equipment on the fire. Fireside PPE also includes a fire blanket and several buckets of water to use in case of burns or embers catching on clothing.

The most effective protection within the sessions we provide will be appropriate clothing against the elements and appropriate footwear which should be provided by parents / carers.

'Sit mats' are available to protect against wet ground if sitting for periods of time.

Safe Lifting

There will be occasions when lifting heavy items is necessary, either during play within sessions, or for adults in preparation. These may be pallets or logs or other large items.

While this will not be a regular occurrence, the possibility of injury is high. Learners and staff will be taught safe lifting techniques in reference to the *Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992* and detailed on the Health & Safety Executive's website as follows:

- Think before handling / lifting: plan ahead, check the route, remove obstructions and ask for help if you need it
- Keep the load close to your waist: keep the heaviest side closest to your body and support the load as close to your body as possible
- Adopt a stable position: make sure you have a wide base with feet apart and that you can move whilst holding the load

- Ensure a good hold on the load: hug to your body rather than just grip with hands if you can and it's appropriate
- Slight bending of your back, hips & knees: better to slightly flex at the beginning of the lift than to fully flex or stoop whilst holding load - DON'T bend back while lifting
- Don't twist or lean back: move feet first instead
- Keep head up while handling: look ahead, not down while holding load
- Move smoothly: don't jerk or snatch or move quickly
- Don't lift more than you can SAFELY lift: what you CAN and what you SHOULD lift are different
- Put down, then adjust: slide into place rather than twisting while holding

These steps are adapted from:

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/msd/manual-handling/good-handling-technique.htm>

Learners moving pallets or logs in play are taught to move them in pairs by cartwheeling or rolling them around the site with gloved hands, and to avoid lifting where possible to minimise risk of dropping on lower limbs.

Fire:

Fire pits will be constructed in accordance with the guidelines laid out in the fire policy.

To prevent injury, participants will follow the procedures for moving around the fire pit as laid out in the fire policy.

Site Maintenance:

- A bucket and water must be near the fire circle at all times
- The fire area should be kept clear and free of trip hazards at all times
- The fire area should be checked for debris before each use
- Fires should be kept small and useable
- When the fire is no longer being used, it should be spread out and allowed to die down
- Monitoring the ground around the fire should be done after the fire is extinguished and the area should be doused with water before leaving the site
- All rubbish and food debris should be removed at the end of each session to prevent attracting vermin

Contingency plan in case of uncontrollable fire:

In case of uncontrollable fire, the group will leave the garden area and gather in the car park.

Wild Soul Woods CIC will call the fire brigade.

Safety equipment on site will consist of: first aid kit, burn treatment, water (at least 10 litres), fire blanket, bucket or bowl for submerging burns, tapped water container to provide running water.

Food Safety & Hygiene

Wild food & foraging:

Learners will be taught an introductory policy of '*no pick, no lick*'. This mantra supports safe behaviour around exposure to and eating of wild food.

Specific activities may then be delivered during sessions which introduce learners to local edible flora. These will be restricted to easily identifiable plants such as nettles, wild garlic, garlic mustard and dandelions.

Any foraging will be conducted in line with 'Honourable Harvest' principles, ensuring a balance between use and conservation is protected.

Learners will use reputable guide books alongside digital apps to demonstrate the need for reliable identification and to teach independent foraging and identification skills.

Learners will use appropriate PPE for foraging (gloves, closed toe shoes) and will prepare and cook any food following the guidelines below.

Learners will always be supervised in these activities by an experienced, confident adult who has received relevant training.

No fungi will be foraged, although identification will be encouraged using guide books.

Guest expert foragers may be invited during Autumn months to support learning and identification. During these sessions, fungi may be foraged, cooked & eaten, but only in line with policies and procedures implemented by guest expert.

Food Preparation & Storage:

All food preparation - whether domestic or wild - will be carried out with the 4 'C's of food hygiene in mind (as prescribed by the Food Standards Agency at www.food.gov.uk)

- Cleaning

All equipment will be washed onsite using environmentally friendly products that meet the FSA standards BS EN 1276 or BS EN 13697. Currently 'Ecover' products meet this need.

Warm, soapy water will be provided before and after preparation and cooking. Learners will be encouraged to wash their own equipment BEFORE use, which also enables them to wash their hands at the same time. Bowls of clean water are provided for rinsing. Blue paper towel is provided for drying.

Equipment is then washed AFTER using, washing hands at the same time. If deemed necessary, equipment will then be washed off site again before storage.

Hand washing can be a sensory issue for some of our learners, so this approach helps. Sanitiser will also be provided for use AFTER washing and drying hands with soap and water.

All food will be cleaned gently using clean, soap free water before using if appropriate. This includes unpeeled fruit, vegetables and foraged flora.

Environmentally friendly wipes will be provided for cleaning any surfaces used for preparation and eating.

All waste be disposed of into separate recycling / compost / general waste bags, removed from the site and disposed of using civic amenities.

- Cooking

All hot food will be eaten immediately (once cool enough and within 2 hours!) or disposed of, preventing hot food storage issues.

No food will be used past 'use by' dates.

All cooking will be carried out or supervised by an experienced adult with a Level 2 or above Food Hygiene certificate.

- Chilling

Any food that needs refrigeration (milk, cheese, prepared veg etc) will be transported and stored in a cool box with ice packs. It will be used within 4 hours or disposed of.

- Cross contamination

No meat or fish products will be cooked during sessions, preventing issues with cross-contamination.

Healthy Eating:

Wild Soul Woods CIC shares an ethos of 'balance' with its learners, and this includes our attitude to food and healthy eating. We will share information about the nutritional value of foods, their uses for our bodies & minds, and the impact of their production and use on our environment.

We will encourage discussion and personal reflection about our eating habits and their impacts - both personal and global. We will not dictate to children or parents & carers what they should or should not eat. We will encourage independent thinking and decision making, and make sure we model healthy eating as adults, using verbal descriptions of our personal choices and our reasons as learning aids.

To support this learning journey, if we provide any snacks or food during sessions, they will always be something that is a 'healthy' option and natural in origin including fresh fruit, rice cakes and baked goods.

We will not provide high-sugar or artificial foods of any type.

We recognise that during cold winter sessions, high-fat and high-carb content foods will be appropriate to young people expending a lot of energy and so will provide these when necessary.

Where appropriate, foods will be organic and locally sourced. However, we also recognise that many of our learners will not have access to these products because of their personal circumstances. We believe it is important to model experiences that can be replicated at home so we will also provide healthy options that the learners can then choose themselves from local supermarkets.

Poisonous & dangerous plants & Fungi

A full site species survey will be undertaken in any sites that Wild Soul Woods operates in. This will highlight any poisonous or dangerous plants & fungi.

These will be taught to the children so they can identify and avoid them during sessions. Areas with prevalent growth - such as stinging nettle beds - will be identified (reminder!) to the group at start of the session.

No fungi is to be picked or played with during sessions. Common issues that are discussed include squeezing puffballs and inhaling escaping spores.

A daily site check is undertaken before sessions to check for the emergence of any new or unexpected species.

Learners are not allowed to pick or eat any plants or fungi except with the direct supervision of an adult during a led activity or during an expert-led foraging session.

Any incidents or accidents should be treated according to the first aid policy and / or emergency procedures identified in this handbook.

Biting & Stinging insects

There are a number of insects that may bite or sting learners, but few cause serious issues other than minor and temporary irritation.

Any incidents requiring treatments will be dealt with in line with first aid or emergency procedures as appropriate.

Information regarding ticks - how to spot them and how to remove them safely - will be provided to learners and their carers before and after sessions. Tick removal tools will be available at the end of the session if parents wish to check whilst on site.

Any allergies will be made known to session leaders (e.g., wasps) with any treatment required (e.g. epi pens) stored appropriately and used according to instructions provided.

Dogs & Unwanted Guests

The site is private and is accessed via a private driveway and lockable gate. Signs will be used when sessions are delivered during Centre opening hours to direct other users away from the area being used by our group.

If members of the public cross these boundaries and approach learners or staff, the session leader will politely and respectfully ask them to move back to the public area outside of the boundary markers.

If there is a problem and the situation escalates for any reason, then Centre management will be notified and asked to deal with the situation.

Learners will be taught not to approach members of the public. They will be taught a respectful phrase that will direct any unwanted attention to a session leader or supporting adult.

Signs will request that dogs are put on leads in the vicinity of the Forest School session. If dogs approach the learners, they will be taught to turn their backs on the dog and stand still with their hands crossed across their chest so as not to encourage approach or play.

In both instances, learners can use the 'double coo-ee' emergency call sound to summon immediate help from an adult if they are not in direct line of sight.

Accident Reporting:

All first aid given will be recorded in the record book.

All accidents or near-misses will be recorded in the Record Book, to be completed, as soon as possible after the incident, by the person involved or by a person acting on his/her behalf e.g. First-Aider or witness.

Notifying the school or next of kin, as soon as possible, of any serious medical emergency, accident or injury concerning their participant, and requesting the school or next of kin make arrangements for the participant to be collected from Wild Soul Woods CIC as soon as possible or informing parent/guardian/next of kin that an ambulance has been called.

A record will be kept of any illness that requires treatment by a medical practitioner or an admission to hospital.

All accidents will be reviewed and evaluated.

Any near-miss will be reviewed and action taken.

Staff and volunteers will be trained in the procedure for accident reporting.

Liability:

Wild Soul Woods CIC will have all the necessary insurances in place (employers and public liability) and will be responsible for all people who are at the site for the purposes of Wild Soul Woods CIC sessions. Insurance is in place for climbing up to 5 metres with supervision and for fire lighting and tool use when a suitably qualified person is on site.

Wild Soul Woods are responsible for the maintenance and safety of the site and ensure annual tree safety checks are carried out and regular site risk assessments are undertaken.

Risk Management and Risk Assessment:

For activities and participants involved a 3 level risk assessment will be carried out stating the location and nature of hazard, who it might harm, the level of risk, the controls in place and if they have been carried out. It will also detail remedial work and actions taken to minimise the risk.

Risk assessment reviews of the site will be carried out annually or following extreme weather. A daily site check will be carried out as part of the Daily Operating Procedure. A risk assessment will be carried out for each activity before it can take place and will be reviewed. Records will be kept and reviewed by Wild Soul Woods CIC at the beginning of each quarter (to coincide with the changing of the seasons).

New groups will also trigger a review of activity risk assessments with regard to the groups' particular needs or limitations.

Where spontaneous activities that have not been previously risk assessed are requested by the participants, a dynamic risk assessment will be made by the Wild Soul Woods CIC staff. This will include the input of participants.

All staff and volunteers will be trained to Dynamic Risk assess - including role play training.

Child Protection:

See Safeguarding Children policy. All lead staff will be DBS checked and will be trained according to the Safeguarding Children policy.

Training and Qualifications:

Records of qualifications, certificates, competency, skills and knowledge will be kept for all staff.

Wild Soul Woods CIC staff running outdoor learning sessions will be trained in outdoor first aid and this qualification will be kept up to date.

All appropriate staff will be DBS checked and notes of certificate numbers kept in accordance with the Data Protection Policy.

All appropriate staff and volunteers will receive Safeguarding Children training and records will be kept.

All relevant insurance certificates will be available to third parties, such as participating schools and councils, upon request.

Reviewed: 09 May 2025

Safeguarding Policy

Wild Soul Woods CIC recognises its legal duty to work with other agencies in protecting children and vulnerable adults from harm and responding to abuse as outlined in this document.

- All staff will need to be cleared by the Disclosure and Barring Service (formerly CRB)
- Wild Soul Woods CIC will provide training opportunities for all adults involved in the group to ensure that they recognise the symptoms of possible physical abuse, neglect, emotional abuse and sexual abuse
- Untrained and unchecked adults will not be left alone with individual children, including taking children unaccompanied to the toilet
- Children will be encouraged to develop a sense of autonomy and independence through adult support in making choices and in finding names for their own feelings and acceptable ways to express them. This will enable children to have the self-confidence and vocabulary to recognise and resist inappropriate approaches
- The staff and volunteers seek to adopt an open attitude towards children as part of their responsibility for pastoral care, so that pupils and parents feel free to talk about any concerns and see Wild Soul Woods CIC as a safe place if there are any difficulties at school or home
- Children's worries and fears will be taken seriously should they seek help from a member of staff or volunteer
- Staff cannot guarantee confidentiality if concerns are such that a referral must be made to the appropriate agencies in order to protect the child
- Staff who observe, or are told of, injuries which appear to be non-accidental, or have concerns that indicate physical, emotional or sexual abuse or neglect, **MUST** report their concerns to the Wild Soul Woods CIC director who will follow the procedure outlined below
- Staff and volunteers do not carry out investigations themselves
- If staff are unsure how to proceed, they must ask the Wild Soul Woods CIC director for advice
- Wild Soul Woods CIC will ensure that bullying is identified and dealt with quickly, so that any harm to a child is minimised. Emotional literacy practice will ensure that all participants understand and recognise what bullying is
- All children are encouraged to show respect for others and to take responsibility for protecting themselves by reporting inappropriate behaviour
- Accompanying adults with groups are expected to help children to behave in non-violent and non-abusive ways to both staff and volunteers

Record keeping

Whenever worrying changes are observed in a child's behaviour, physical condition or appearance, a specific and confidential record will be set up. The acronym ABC is used in training to support staff and volunteers to recognize changes in Appearance, Behaviour and Communication. The record will include, in addition to the name, school and age of the child:

- Time and date
- Objective descriptions of the child's behaviour or appearance, without comment or interpretation;
- Where possible, the exact words spoken by the child;
- Dated name and signature of the recorder.

Such records will be kept in a file and will not be accessible to people other than the Wild Soul Woods CIC directors.

Child Protection Procedures

Child Abuse:

In addition to the procedures set out in the sections above, it is very important that volunteers and staff are aware of the signs which could indicate dangers to the child from other adults, particularly involving abuse.

What is child abuse?

Child abuse is a term to describe a range of ways in which people, usually adults, harm children. Often the adult is a person who is known and trusted by the child. Child abuse is neglect, physical injury, sexual abuse or emotional abuse inflicted or knowingly not prevented, which causes significant harm or death.

NSPCC (1999)

Awareness of actual or likely occurrence of abuse.

There are a number of ways in which possible abuse becomes apparent:

- A child discloses abuse
- Someone else discloses that a child has told him/her or that he/she strongly believes a child has been or is being abused
- A child may show signs of physical injury for which there appears to be no satisfactory explanation. An unusually high frequency of such injuries can be a particular cause for concern, but this should not rule out concern over one sudden injury for which there does not appear to be a plausible explanation
- A child's behaviour may indicate that it is likely that he/she is being abused. This could involve a significant change in behaviour from that which the child normally exhibits
- A child indulges in sexualised behaviour which is excessive or inappropriate to their age

Staff and volunteers must report any concern about possible abuse of a child to the Director of Wild Soul Woods CIC, immediately. S/he must also record the concern in writing.

Disclosures

Staff and volunteers may naturally develop a working relationship with a child and, in certain circumstances, the child may come to regard this person as trustworthy and wish to disclose and discuss certain confidential details concerning his/her life and previous experiences. It is very important that the member of staff or volunteer is aware of how best to deal with disclosures of this nature.

Becoming aware of abuse can cause a multitude of emotional reactions, which are personal to each individual. Whatever the reaction and however the abuse has become apparent, actual or suspected, it must be responded to in the correct manner according to the procedure outlined here. Even if the truth of the disclosure is uncertain, an appropriate response has to be made. A response in accordance with the procedure outlined here will be supported by the lead member of staff on child protection at Wild Soul Woods CIC.

A member of staff or volunteer **should not ask a child leading questions** regarding their personal circumstances or encourage the child to disclose confidential or sensitive information. If a child does reveal personal information which leads the member of staff or volunteer to believe that the child's personal safety or wellbeing may be at risk, then they should remain calm and listen carefully to what the child says. It is important that the member of staff or volunteer finds an appropriate early opportunity to explain that it is likely that the information disclosed will need to be shared with others. **Staff and volunteers should not promise to keep secrets for the child.** The following guidelines are taken from the NSPCC document Stopcheck: a step by step guide for organisations to safeguard children and should be followed by all volunteers and staff:

- Listen to what the child says calmly, without displaying shock or disbelief
- Allow the child to continue at their own pace
- Ask questions for clarification only
- Avoid asking questions that suggest a particular answer
- Reassure the child that they have done the right thing in making the disclosure
- Do not criticise the alleged perpetrator of any incident or reported abuse
- Inform the child of what will be done next and with whom the information will be shared
- Record in writing what was said using the child's own words, as soon as possible. Note date, time, any names mentioned, and to whom the information was given

Staff and volunteers should inform the Wild Soul Woods CIC director of the disclosure as soon as possible, if possible on the same day, but in any event no later than the following working day. Staff and volunteers should also keep the written record they have made about the disclosure, in case the information is needed by a court. Staff at Wild Soul Woods CIC should do likewise. The appropriate member of staff will pass the information on to the relevant authorities. Staff and volunteers should try to be as accurate as possible when passing on sensitive information. Staff and volunteers should be familiar with the reporting structure for both urgent and non-urgent information.

Allegations

If an allegation of abuse or other form of misconduct is made against a volunteer or member of Wild Soul Woods CIC staff, the allegation must be relayed immediately to the Wild Soul Woods CIC director.

Whether or not the member of staff or volunteer is aware of the allegation, Wild Soul Woods CIC director must consult with the client and the appropriate authorities to agree a course of action. If the member of staff or volunteer is not aware of the allegation, in some cases so as not to prejudice any official investigations, Wild Soul Woods CIC may be instructed by the relevant authorities not to inform the member of staff or volunteer until further investigations have been carried out by authorities such as the school, social services or police.

If there is any suspicion of physical or sexual abuse on the part of the member of staff or volunteer, or other conduct such as accessing websites involving child abuse, Wild Soul Woods CIC will immediately suspend the member of staff or volunteer from all his/her assignments pending the outcomes of investigations.

Even if the allegation is not of a physical or sexual nature, Wild Soul Woods CIC must always consider its Duty of Care to the child as the paramount consideration which overrides all other

factors and has the right to suspend or cancel any further sessions given by the member of staff or volunteer with the allegation, without giving any reason to the member of staff or volunteer.

All these decisions will be taken in consultation with the client. In the event that the allegation is against one of the Wild Soul Woods CIC directors, appropriate action will be taken by the remaining director.

In the event that the allegation appears less serious and has not resulted in any police investigation, it may be agreed with the client or appropriate authority for Wild Soul Woods CIC to inform the member of staff or volunteer, so that he or she can provide their version of what occurred which may have given rise to the allegation. That account must be made in writing by the member of staff or volunteer and given to Wild Soul Woods CIC within 24 hours of the incident in question.

In this kind of situation, the member of staff or volunteer may not participate in any activities until the conclusion of investigations into the matter. If the client clearly states in writing that the allegation is without foundation or is in their view not something which could cause a continued threat to the child, then the member of staff or volunteer may be reinstated on the assignment.

If there has been a case of misconduct not warranting suspension or dismissal, the member of staff or volunteer must first be formally warned in writing not to repeat that conduct, and must respond in writing saying that he/she accepts the warning.

If on the other hand the allegation is upheld and the member of staff or volunteer is found to have behaved in a clearly inappropriate manner, then Wild Soul Woods CIC must immediately cancel all existing or potential assignments for that person, and must delete his/her records from the active staff or volunteer database. If further investigations are to be appropriate, Wild Soul Woods CIC must collaborate with the appropriate authorities to support those investigations.

Reporting by staff and volunteers of concerns, incidents or accidents

Staff and volunteers must always immediately report any concerns and incidents related to child protection.

If someone is in immediate serious danger, call 999 straight away. In the event of other serious child protection concerns or emergencies, staff and volunteers must adopt the following procedure:

1. Contact the Wild Soul Woods CIC director as soon as possible
2. Give clear details of the emergency or concern
3. The Wild Soul Woods CIC director and, as appropriate, the person or organisation accompanying the child, will then decide on the appropriate course of action.

Please note that if the concern about the child implicates the person or agency with the responsibility of caring for that child, then Wild Soul Woods CIC will consult with other responsible authorities such as social workers, police and/or local authority, to decide on the correct course of action.

Note: always contact VICTORIA DUGGAN as soon as possible in the first instance. As soon as possible after that, when you have access to email, email the appropriate contact person describing the concern or incident.

Reporting by Wild Soul Woods CIC staff of concerns and incidents

Wild Soul Woods CIC staff may be informed about a child protection incident or concern by a volunteer. In this situation the responsible staff members must follow the procedures described above concerning their responsibilities following a report made by a volunteer. If a member of Wild Soul Woods CIC staff becomes aware of a child protection concern or incident through any channel, he/she must immediately inform the Wild Soul Woods CIC director and together decide on the next course of action.

If the child is a private client, the Wild Soul Woods CIC director must inform the young person's parents, relatives or guardians about the matter, unless the concern or incident indicates that the child is at risk from one or more of those people, in which case the police must be informed.

If the child has been referred by a school or other organisation, child protection incidents or concerns must immediately be communicated to the appropriate representative or representative of that organisation. They will then take the appropriate actions depending on their procedures, and all appropriate Wild Soul Woods CIC staff must be available to cooperate in the enquiries which may follow. This collaboration may include attendance at council strategy meetings where appropriate actions are decided upon.

If Wild Soul Woods CIC staff are informed by an agency such as the police or social services that there has been a reported concern or incident involving a volunteer or member of staff and relating to child protection, or that there has been or is an on-going investigation about a member of staff or volunteer relating to child protection, Wild Soul Woods CIC must cooperate in all aspects of ensuing investigations. In these circumstances police or social services may request that Wild Soul Woods CIC do not disclose any details of these investigations to the member of staff or volunteer, and Wild Soul Woods CIC must comply strictly with such instructions. In this type of situation Wild Soul Woods CIC must immediately suspend the member of staff or volunteer from all existing or pending assignments, pending the results of the investigations.

NSPCC Child Protection Hotline

The NSPCC Child Protection Helpline is a free 24-hour service that provides counselling, information and advice to anyone concerned about a child at risk of abuse. Volunteers and staff are always advised to speak to the lead member of staff for child protection matters, but if they require further information or advice, or wish to speak to an advisor anonymously, the following services are available:

Telephone 0808 800 5000 (10am - 8pm Mon - Fri)

Please note the old textphone number is now a Sporting Abuse Helpline and no longer NSPCC (0800 056 0566)

Email help@nspcc.org.uk

NSPCC Asian Helpline (Monday – Friday, 11am – 7pm) 0800 096 7719

NSPCC Cymru/Wales Helpline (Monday – Friday, 10am – 6pm) 0808 100 2524

Statutory Child Protection Procedures

Following a volunteer or member of staff reporting an incident or concern regarding a child, all information will be passed on to the relevant local authority or organisation by Wild Soul Woods CIC. How it is then dealt with will depend on the organisation in question.

Sufficient information passed onto the organisation may lead to the suspicion, allegation or actual incident being dealt with quickly, with few complications, or it may lead to thorough checks with several other organisations and possibly a child protection conference. A child protection conference involves as many people as possible, (including the parents/carers and sometimes the child as well), who discuss the issues that have been raised in the suspicions, allegations, or actual abuse that has been reported and investigated. Decisions about further actions are made at the conference.

Quite often, the person who has made the initial report may not be contacted again unless further information is required and it is not usual practice for the relevant statutory agency to feed back developments. However, if a volunteer or staff member believes that not enough action has been taken, and the child is still at risk, concerns should be reported again to Wild Soul Woods CIC, or the NSPCC Child Protection Helpline contacted for advice, as above.

Use of photographic/filming equipment

Written consent to take and use images of children should be obtained prior to the taking of photographs and/or video footage. Parents/carers should be made aware of when, where and how the images may be used in order to give their informed consent. This includes comprehensive information regarding use of images e.g. in print, multimedia, broadcast; for what purpose e.g. promotion, publicity, evaluation, audit, review; and where possible an indication of who the audience will be e.g. the general public, the participating children and their families, other organisations and institutes.

Confidentiality

Members of staff and volunteers are advised to treat all sensitive information extremely carefully. Sensitive information includes a child's name, date of birth, address, personal circumstances, parent/carer details, educational background and medical history.

Volunteers and members of staff are asked to contact Wild Soul Woods CIC director should they have any queries regarding whether certain information should be treated as confidential, although, as a rule, Wild Soul Woods CIC advises volunteers and members of staff to treat all information relating to children as sensitive. All children have a right to confidentiality and volunteers and members of staff are expected to carry out the following safety measures when handling sensitive data:

- Only share information regarding a child with known contacts. These will include a designated member of Wild Soul Woods CIC staff. It is vital that the member of staff or volunteer does not share information regarding a child with any other party
- It is especially important that, in cases where the child is in care, members of staff or volunteers do not disclose any information about a child to any person to whom they have not been officially introduced by Wild Soul Woods CIC or by a known council representative. It is quite common with children in care that one or both of the birth parents, or members of their family or friends, will have been prohibited by a court order from visiting a child, typically where there has been a case of serious abuse. In this situation a child's

new school may have been withheld, and clearly the unauthorised disclosure of that information could be very dangerous for the child's safety

- When speaking to a school teacher or other known partnership professional (e.g. youth worker, Social Services worker etc...) about a child receiving sessions who is 'looked-after' by a local authority or children's organisation, volunteers should never disclose that the child is in care, unless the teacher reveals they are already aware of this information. There is always a Designated Teacher in a school who will be aware of which children are 'looked-after', but it is likely that other members of staff will not be aware of this

Reviewed: 09 May 2025 (Currently under review for commissioning process)

Lost Learner Policy

Statement of intent

In the event of a learner becoming lost, while in the care of Wild Soul Woods CIC, Wild Soul Woods CIC will immediately put into place the procedures detailed below. These ensure that a systematic approach to find the learner is taken and consideration is given to the levels of risk to the learner.

Aim

We will ensure a search is made for the learner as soon as possible, parents/next of kin and authorities are notified at the appropriate stage, and a high level of care is maintained to other learners at Wild Soul Woods CIC while procedures are followed.

Procedures

If a learner goes missing from Wild Soul Woods CIC :

- As soon as it is noticed that a learner is missing, the person in charge will carry out a headcount to ensure that no other learner has gone astray. One member of staff or volunteer searches the immediate vicinity but does not search beyond that
- The remaining learners will be gathered into one large group at the CAR Park Gate. The learners will be sensitively asked whether they have seen the learner who is missing, as will all adults, so that it can be established who was last to see the missing learner, when and where
- The remaining staff carry out a quick search for the missing learner, checking the exit road and in the Community Centre
- Wild Soul Woods CIC will report the missing learner to the police
- If the missing learner is part of a school group, the leader of the school group contacts the school and puts in place their Missing Learner Policy for outdoor visits (including informing parents and returning other learners to school). The remaining learners are taken back to school while a contact from the school remains at Wild Soul Woods CIC
- If the missing learner is part of a private group, the Wild Soul Woods CIC contacts the parents/next of kin. If the learners are children, the parents of the remaining learners will be contacted and asked to collect their learners as soon as possible

When the learner is Found

- The person in charge of Wild Soul Woods CIC and the school representative will care for and talk with the learner, bearing in mind that s/he may be unaware of having done anything wrong or, alternatively, may also have been afraid and distressed and may now be in need of comfort
- Other adults present will take the opportunity to speak to the remaining learners to ensure that they understand that they must not leave the premises and why

After the Incident

- If the learner is a child, Wild Soul Woods CIC will discuss with the learner's school or parents the events surrounding the disappearance of the learner, to give brief, accurate information about the incident, as soon as possible
- Liability should not be discussed until the incident has been fully investigated by Wild Soul Woods CIC and the school or parents
- Staff and parents should be asked to refer any enquiries they have or any enquiries from the media, about the incident, to Wild Soul Woods CIC

The Investigation

The Directors carry out a full investigation taking written statements from all the staff and volunteers present at the time, or by those who were with the group

The key person/staff writes an incident report detailing:

- the date and time of the report;
- which staff/learners were in the group;
- when the learner was last seen in the group;
- what has taken place in the group since then; and
- the time it is estimated that the learner went missing

A conclusion is drawn as to how the incident happened.

If the incident warrants a police investigation all staff and volunteers are to cooperate fully. In this case, the police will handle all aspects of the investigation, including interviewing staff. Social Care may be involved if it seems likely that there is a Safeguarding Children issue to address.

The incident is reported under RIDDOR arrangements and is recorded in the incident book; the Local Authority Health and Safety Officer may want to investigate and will decide if there is a case for prosecution.

Wild Soul Woods CIC's insurance company is informed.

Missing Learner Action Plan

As soon as it is noticed that a learner is missing:

1. Double "Coo-ee" all learners back together, wherever you are, move to area by gate
2. Do a head count
3. One person search the exit road as quickly as possible
4. Check the Community Centre including toilets
5. Report the missing learner to the police
6. Contact school or parents

Reviewed: 09 May 2025

Illness, Accident & Emergency Policy

Values

Wild Soul Woods CIC is committed to providing a safe and healthy environment for all participants, staff, volunteers and any other persons participating in the programme.

Wild Soul Woods CIC is committed to responding to the needs of the participant if the participant becomes ill, or is traumatised whilst attending a Wild Soul Woods CIC session.

Purpose

This policy will clearly define:

- Procedures to be followed if a participant becomes sick, has an accident, is injured or has a medical emergency.
- Responsibilities of Wild Soul Woods CIC, parents/guardians, schools, staff and volunteers.

Scope

This policy applies to the participants, the school, and the staff, volunteers and Wild Soul Woods CIC.

Definitions

Emergency contact sheet: A card that Wild Soul Woods CIC has completed, which contains all the information that the Emergency Services will request when phoned on 999 and is kept with the first aid kit.

Exclusion: Unable to attend or participate in the programme.

Illness: Any sickness and/or associated symptoms that affect the participant's normal participation in the programme.

Injury: Any harm or damage to a person.

Medication: Any substance that is administered for the treatment of an illness or condition.

Minor accidents: Accidents where a cut, scratch, bruise is small, does not require medical attention and does not affect the consciousness of the participant.

Next of kin: for adult learners or children who attend directly and not part of a school group, the person designated as their emergency contact on their medical form.

Participant: any adult or child taking part in a Wild Soul Woods CIC session.

Third Party: any school or organisation or external group and its staff or person responsible for the wellbeing of another that is not part of Wild Soul Woods CIC.

Second member of staff: can be staff or volunteer working under the instruction of Wild Soul Woods CIC.

Serious medical emergency situations or accidents: Accidents or situations where the participant requires medical attention, and/or which affects the consciousness of the participant.

Procedures

Administrative and operational procedures Wild Soul Woods CIC Learning is responsible for:

- Ensuring third parties, parents/guardians and adult participants receive completed medical and consent forms prior to arriving for an activity.
- Ensuring completed medication, accident, injury and illness records are kept and the information is available during sessions in case of emergencies.
- Ensuring participants' medical and consent forms provide authorisation for Wild Soul Woods CIC to seek emergency medical treatment by a medical practitioner, hospital or ambulance service.
- Monitoring the First Aid Kit and arranging for it to be replenished when needed.
- Ensuring first aid qualifications are up to date.

On Site:

- Providing and maintaining a suitably equipped First Aid Kit.
- Ensuring the presence of at least one staff member with the required first aid qualification whenever Wild Soul Woods CIC runs an activity.
- Ensuring all staff on site are aware of the location of First Aid Kit.
- Ensuring the presence of participants' medical and consent forms.

Third Parties are responsible for:

- Providing signed authorisation forms for Wild Soul Woods CIC to seek emergency medical treatment by a medical practitioner, hospital or ambulance service.
- Notifying Wild Soul Woods CIC of any other medical conditions or needs and any management procedure to be followed with respect to that condition or need.

Parents/Guardians/Adult participants are responsible for:

- Providing signed authorisation forms for Wild Soul Woods CIC to seek emergency medical treatment by a medical practitioner, hospital or ambulance service.
- Notifying Wild Soul Woods CIC of any other medical conditions or needs and any management procedure to be followed with respect to that condition or need.

Wild Soul Woods CIC will not allow the participation of any person who has not consented to emergency medical treatment or provided appropriate consent forms.

Named first aider(s): Victoria Duggan, Julie Tozer

Policy for when ill participants are sent to Wild Soul Woods CIC, or become ill at Wild Soul Woods CIC:

Wild Soul Woods CIC is responsible for:

Notifying, as soon as possible, the school leader or the parent/guardian/next of kin of any illness.

Keeping an ill participant comfortable, away from other participants and under observation until the person authorised to collect the participant from Wild Soul Woods CIC arrives.

Recording details of the illness/symptoms shown by the participant in the record book.

Notifying the relevant professionals or organisations of any illness that requires treatment by a medical practitioner or an admission to hospital.

Wild Soul Woods CIC is NOT responsible for administering any kind of medication.

Third Parties are responsible for:

Ensuring that all participants are fit to take part in the session before arriving at Wild Soul Woods CIC.

Collecting their participant from Wild Soul Woods CIC as soon as possible after being notified the participant is unwell.

Ensuring that all participants bring with them any medication that they may be able to administer themselves e.g. inhaler.

Parents/Guardians/Adult participants are responsible for:

Ensuring that they, or their child, are fit to take part in the session before arriving at Wild Soul Woods CIC.

Ensuring that they, or their child, bring with them any medication that they may be able to administer themselves e.g. inhaler.

Procedure:

If a participant appears to be unwell, the designated first aider will make them comfortable and administer first aid where applicable.

The designated first aider will inform any **third party** of the illness, or in the case of direct participants, the next of kin.

The **third party** will make arrangements for the participant to be collected. If a direct participant is taken ill then Wild Soul Woods CIC will call the next of kin.

The illness will be recorded in the record book.

Wild Soul Woods CIC will not allow any person who is obviously unwell to participate in a session.

Policy for handling minor accidents or injuries

Wild Soul Woods CIC is responsible for:

Providing first aid and comfort for the participant as required.

Recording details of any accident or injury in the record book.

Notifying the Third Party or Next of Kin either immediately after the accident, or when they collect the participant from Wild Soul Woods CIC, depending on the severity of the accident and the emotional state of the participant.

Procedure:

The designated first aider will make the participant comfortable and administer first aid where applicable.

The designated first aider will inform the Third Party or Next of Kin of the accident or injury. If the injured participant is an adult then Wild Soul Woods CIC will advise the participant accordingly.

For Third Party groups, the Third Party will make arrangements to inform the participant's parent or guardian.

The accident or injury will be recorded in the record book.

Policy for handling serious emergency medical situations or accidents

Wild Soul Woods CIC is responsible for:

Administering first aid and providing care and comfort prior to the parent/guardian/next of kin or emergency services arriving.

Calling the emergency services if necessary.

Notifying the third party (or in the case of a direct participant, the next of kin), as soon as is possible, of any serious medical emergency, accident or injury concerning their participant, and requesting arrangements to be made for the participant to be collected from Wild Soul Woods CIC as soon as possible or informing parent/guardian/next of kin that an ambulance has been called.

Ensuring ongoing supervision of all participants.

Where an ambulance is required and the third party or parent/guardian/next of kin are not present to accompany the participant, a nominated staff member may accompany the participant in the ambulance providing the participant to staff ratios and all other requirements are maintained at Wild Soul Woods CIC for the remaining participants.

Recording a report in the record book.

Notifying all of Wild Soul Woods CIC's directors of any serious accident or injury as soon as possible.

Notifying Wild Soul Woods CIC's Insurance.

Third Parties are responsible for:

Collecting their participant as soon as possible when notified of a serious accident or injury.

Making arrangements for the participant to be collected from Wild Soul Woods CIC as soon as possible or informing parent/guardian that an ambulance has been called.

Parents/Guardians are responsible for:

Collecting their child as soon as possible when notified of a serious accident or injury.

Procedure:

The designated first aider will make the participant comfortable and administer first aid where applicable.

The second member of staff will retrieve the patient's medical form.

The other staff members will occupy the rest of the group and ensure their safety and wellbeing.

The designated first aider will decide whether to call an ambulance (see ambulance procedure).

The second member of staff will inform the **third party** (or in the case of a direct participant, the next of kin) of the accident or injury.

The **third party** will make arrangements to inform the participant's parent or guardian.

The **third party** will make arrangements to return the other participants and ensure their wellbeing.

The accident or injury will be recorded in the record book.

Ambulance Procedure:

If the first aider decides that an ambulance is to be called the procedure is as follows:

The first aider stays with the patient while the second member of staff calls the ambulance reading the information on the emergency contact sheet from the First Aid Kit and gives details of the patient's condition.

The second member of staff takes a mobile phone and walks up to meet the ambulance at the main entrance gate in the parking area via the shortest and safest route. The second member of staff directs the ambulance staff to the location of the injured participant along the safest route.

Helicopter Procedure:

If the emergency services decide that a helicopter is necessary, the second member of staff takes a mobile phone and walks up to meet the helicopter, waiting at a safe distance until it has landed. The closest available safe place to land with easy access is the field adjacent to the car park.

Once the helicopter has landed, and it is safe to move about the field, the second member of staff directs the crew to the site along the safest route.

Fire Procedure:

If Wild Soul Woods CIC decides that the fire brigade should be called the procedure is as follows:

All people in the learning area are gathered together by Wild Soul Woods CIC.

A head count is carried out and people are led out of the learning area via the quickest, safest route. This likely to be either the main path to the main gate, or, if this is blocked, the rear path through the clearing and into the field at the rear.

Wild Soul Woods CIC calls the fire brigade, reading the information on the emergency contact card and gives details of the situation.

The second member of staff takes a mobile phone and walks up to meet the fire brigade at the main entrance gate in the parking area via the shortest and safest route.

The second member of staff directs the fire brigade to the site along the safest route.

Police Procedure:

If Wild Soul Woods CIC decides that the police are to be called the procedure is as follows:

Wild Soul Woods CIC calls the police, reading the information on the emergency contact card from the and gives details of the situation.

The second member of staff takes the mobile phone and walks up to meet the police at the main entrance gate in the parking area via the shortest and safest route.

The second member of staff directs the police to the site along the safest route.

Policy for when forest school leader becomes ill

All session leaders and staff and volunteers will have either mobile phones or walkie talkies for contact in the case of illness or emergency. If the Forest School Leader becomes unwell or sustains an injury, a second adult will take the lead for the following procedures. The second adult will either be a trained first aider in the case of child sessions, or an adult participant in the case of adult only sessions.

In adult only sessions with one member of staff present, the initial house-keeping introduction will deal with this scenario and nominate a 'second adult', preferably someone with first aid training if possible.

Immediately upon notice of injury, the second adult will call the children to a group near the refreshment area with Double Coo-ee. This is away from the fire and snacks and water are available. They will be reassured that the Forest School Leader is being made comfortable and treated. Communication will be dealt with in line with our emotional literacy ethos, open, brief, honest and as reassuring as possible whilst being truthful.

If adults only, they will gather by the refreshment area and assist the designated second adult as necessary.

The second adult will make the Forest School Leader comfortable and administer first aid where applicable. They will contact emergency services if necessary (see details above).

The session will end, and the children's emergency contacts (sheet in Leaders' bag) will be called to come and collect them. The second adult will do this as soon as practically possible in the circumstances presented.

If a **third party** adult is present, then they will take responsibility for the children upon notice of The Forest School Leader's injury or illness. They will make arrangements for the participants to be collected.

The illness will be recorded in the record book.

Reviewed: 09 May 2025

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

Statement of Intent

Wild Soul Woods exists to improve the mental and physical health of individuals and to create cohesive community experiences within the natural world of human and non-human entities. By definition, this means treating every single living being with respect, regardless of the myriad of variables that distinguish both species and individuals. It makes no difference to us what colour your skin is, whether you have fur or feathers; what your social context looks like; whether you connect with same-sex specimens or have redefined your gender; how many years you've lived or how you've lived them. We will support any individual who needs it, in any way we can, whether that is physically, intellectually, emotionally or otherwise.

We recognise the principle of 'equity' over equality for the purposes of this policy. Equality ensures that everyone is treated equally, but equity allows that some people may need to be treated differently, or receive something unequal to others in order to ensure fair access to experiences. This became important to us early on in our delivery when we realised the woods presented different challenges for different individuals, resulting in different support to individuals within a session.

Wild Soul Woods CIC recognises that many people and groups suffer discrimination and face serious barriers when trying to fulfil their true potential. It also recognises that not all forms of unreasonable and unfair discrimination are the subject of legislation. It is the aim of this organisation to take positive steps to redress discrimination, to improve equality of opportunity and to combat any unreasonable or unfair treatment which places people at a disadvantage for any reasons not directly related to their ability to do a job for this organisation or to their eligibility to receive services from us.

The 2010 Equality Act lists the following characteristics as protected:

- Ethnicity
- Gender
- LGBTQ+
- Disability
- Age
- Pregnancy and Motherhood
- Marriage or Civil partnership status
- Religion or Belief (including lack of belief)

Wild Soul Woods adopts the belief reflected in the FSA's Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Policy that this policy will also positively impact those who identify as:

- Visible Minority Ethnic
- Of A Low Socio-Economic Standing
- Having Mental Health Issues
- Neurodivergent

We proactively celebrate uniqueness and use the abundant examples found in the natural world to illustrate the fabulous tapestry of life that surrounds us. This ethos permeates everything that we do.

All staff and volunteers MUST abide by this practice, and it is a condition of recruitment that this policy is read and agreed to. Any individuals showing, by their words, actions or otherwise, that they do NOT agree with these principles, will be removed from their position via our disciplinary procedure.

Wild Soul Woods CIC will not tolerate discrimination, harassment, bullying, victimisation or abuse of people who are staff members and volunteers or of people connected with the services provided by Wild Soul Woods CIC.

Relevant Legislation and Related Documents

Relevant Legislation:

- Employment Rights Act 1996
- The Equality Act 2010

Related Documents:

- Complaints Procedure
- Data Protection Policy

Management Issues and Delivery Mechanisms

Wild Soul Woods CIC's Director(s) has ultimate responsibility for the Equity, Diversity & Inclusion policy. It is the responsibility of the Director to implement, monitor and evaluate the equity, diversity & inclusion policy in terms of employment practice and service delivery. S/he is also under a duty to ensure that Wild Soul Woods CIC's staff and volunteers are regularly kept informed of the policy's implementation and the implications of the Director's decisions and policies for equity, diversity & inclusion issues. It is the responsibility of all staff to report any discrimination of which they become aware.

All staff and volunteers will be informed that an equity, diversity & inclusion policy is in operation and that they are bound to comply with its requirements. The policy will also be drawn to the attention of Wild Soul Woods CIC's members, funding agencies, job applicants and those using the services of Wild Soul Woods CIC.

The equity, diversity & inclusion Statement above shall be easily available via Wild Soul Woods CIC's online portals and on request, accessible to staff members, volunteers and visitors. Staff members and volunteers are to be given a copy of the whole policy upon appointment and whenever the policy is modified.

Participants will be given a copy and will sign a document to agree that they will behave accordingly.

Wild Soul Woods CIC's grievance and disciplinary procedures will be used to deal with any complaints about discrimination, harassment or bullying involving staff/volunteers.

Complaints from people using the organisation's services will be through the complaints procedure for Wild Soul Woods CIC.

It is expected that when staff members and volunteers or Directors represent Wild Soul Woods CIC on the committees of other agencies they will endeavour to ensure that equity, diversity & inclusion principles and practices are adopted by those agencies.

Employment Practices

Wild Soul Woods CIC aims to promote equity, diversity & inclusion as an employer and to ensure that no job applicant or employee receives less favourable treatment or is disadvantaged by conditions or requirements that cannot be shown to be justifiable within the context of the policy.

Wild Soul Woods CIC regards discrimination, harassment, abuse, victimisation or bullying of staff members and volunteers, service users or of others in the course of work as disciplinary offences

that could be regarded as gross misconduct. Condoning such behaviour could also be treated as a disciplinary offence. As well as disciplining the perpetrator(s), we will give appropriate support to people who complain of harassment of themselves or others.

Selection, recruitment, training, promotion and employment practices generally will be subject to regular review. Including the media used and search area covered in recruitment to demonstrate the reach to all groups to ensure that they comply with the equity, diversity & inclusion policy. In particular, selection and recruitment procedures should be reviewed no less than annually in order to try and constantly improve equity, diversity & inclusion practices.

Wild Soul Woods CIC will attempt to accommodate staff members and volunteers' requests to work flexibly, whether part-time or some other working arrangement, for whatever reason, so long as agreement is consistent with the needs of the organisation.

We recognise that organisations are obliged under the Equality Act 2010 to make reasonable adjustments to accommodate disabled people and to enable them to do their job without unnecessary difficulty. We will make adjustments which are reasonable.

We recognise that we are prevented from asking an applicant questions regarding their health until a formal offer of employment has been made. However, we will ensure that any access needs are met to enable an applicant to fully participate.

We accept our obligation not to discriminate against applicants and employees on the basis of their religion or belief. We will try to accommodate employees' religious beliefs in any way which is compatible with the work of the organisation by, for example, allowing for prayers during the working day and at the workplace; considering employees' dietary requirements in providing facilities for staff members and volunteers to eat and store food; allowing staff/volunteers to take their holidays for religious festivals; trying to arrange job interviews or other important work meetings at times when they do not clash with important religious festivals; and not imposing a dress code with which people of a particular religion cannot comply.

Wild Soul Woods CIC will not discriminate on grounds of age in recruitment, promotion, training, or in the availability of benefits such as pension contributions or health insurance.

Wild Soul Woods CIC will take whatever positive action is required where it can be shown that under-representation of any particular group has occurred in recruitment. Where appropriate and where legally permissible, employees from under-represented groups will be given training and encouragement in order to promote equity, diversity & inclusion within Wild Soul Woods CIC.

Service Delivery

Wild Soul Woods CIC seeks to ensure that its services are accessible to all sections of the community served by Wild Soul Woods CIC. Wild Soul Woods CIC will make public its commitment to combating discriminatory attitudes where these are encountered.

Wild Soul Woods CIC will attempt to ensure that none of its policies discriminate directly or indirectly against any group or individual.

Wild Soul Woods CIC will adopt a Complaints Procedure that will include its objectives with regard to equity, diversity & inclusion in service delivery.

Wild Soul Woods CIC will attempt to find ways of making our service accessible to everyone, including people for whom English is not a first language, people with visual or hearing impairments, and people who live in remote rural areas and/or who cannot easily travel.

Wild Soul Woods CIC will take all reasonable steps to ensure that all its activities are carried out in premises which are accessible to people with mobility difficulties. In the event that the premises

operated by Wild Soul Woods CIC are not accessible for particular individuals, Wild Soul Woods CIC will arrange alternative meeting places. This will include committee meetings.

Wild Soul Woods CIC will be sensitive to the particular needs of service users by trying to provide for example, translations, childcare facilities run by vetted carers and, when providing food, having regard to religious and other dietary requirements.

Wild Soul Woods CIC will operate a variety of means to allow people to contact staff members and volunteers.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Wild Soul Woods CIC will regularly evaluate its services and the effectiveness of its equity, diversity & inclusion policy, by a variety of means.

Wild Soul Woods CIC is required to monitor all job applications, appointments and promotions for all groups with reasons for such decisions, to ensure that the policy is working.

Monitoring may be carried out by Wild Soul Woods CIC to provide the data for this regular evaluation. For instance, Wild Soul Woods CIC may ask service users using our services, job applicants, volunteers and directors for information about their ethnic origin, disability, age or other personal information. We will only do this for a specific defined purpose such as collecting statistical data for funders, for research or for our own monitoring to evaluate this policy's impact.

Wild Soul Woods CIC will be sensitive to groups and individuals and will have due regard for the principles of data protection when seeking information. Where sensitive information is gathered, those responding will be explicitly informed of the purpose and that they are at liberty to withhold the information. All monitoring information will be securely stored, aggregated and anonymised.

Staff and Volunteers' Induction and Training

During the staff member/volunteer induction period staff members and volunteers will be made aware of organisational policies and the responsibilities of staff members and volunteers to maintain these practices and relevant specialist training agreed.

Review of This Policy

Wild Soul Woods CIC's commitment to equity, diversity & inclusion is an active one. This document should be amended on a regular basis as part of this active commitment.

Wild Soul Woods CIC's equity, diversity & inclusion policy will be reviewed in consultation with staff members and volunteers as and when required and in line with changes in legislation.

Wild Soul Woods CIC will also seek to keep abreast of new developments in equity, diversity & inclusion practice and actively seek information on this issue.

Reviewed: 09 May 2025

Anti-Racism Policy

As well as the above equity, diversity & inclusion policy, Wild Soul Woods CIC is actively anti-racist.

We believe that no one is inherently racist or anti-racist; this results from the choices we make. Being anti-racist is a conscious decision to make frequent, consistent, equitable choices daily. These choices require ongoing self-awareness and self-reflection throughout our lives. When we don't make anti-racist choices with intent, we unwittingly uphold aspects of white supremacy,

white-dominant culture, and unequal institutions within an unequal society. Being racist or anti-racist is not about who you are - it is about what you do.

Being anti-racist is to mindfully fight racism. Racism takes several forms and usually works hand in hand with at least one other form to reinforce racist ideas, behaviour, and policy. At Wild Soul Woods we choose to be anti-racist. We strive to be actively conscious about race and racism and take actions to end racial inequities in our day to day working and home lives. We believe that racism is everyone's problem, and that every individual can play a part in preventing it.

As a Directorship of white people, we acknowledge and understand our privilege, we work to adjust and eliminate any internalised racism, and we will disrupt and prevent racism when we see it. This is an ongoing practice and process.

Anti-racist education, taking into account class, race, and gender inequity, places race at the centre of its message. Focusing on race exposes direct links to unequal power, a system of oppression and privilege, and institutional practices.

Developing specific routines to make antiracist choices is a daily commitment that needs to be done with intention. The combined and ongoing efforts of every one of us individually can add up to a lasting change in our society. Since racism operates at multiple levels, we have to make anti-racist choices at every level - individual, interpersonal, and institutional - to eradicate racism from the structures and fabric of our society.

Review of This Policy

Wild Soul Woods' commitment to anti-racism is an ongoing, active one. This document will be amended on a regular basis as part of this active commitment.

Wild Soul Woods' equality and diversity policy will be reviewed in consultation with staff members and volunteers as and when required and in line with changes in legislation.

Wild Soul Woods will also seek to keep abreast of new developments in anti-racism practice and actively seek information on this issue.

Positive Behaviour Policy

Wild Soul Woods believes that behaviour is communication, and that adults have a responsibility to support young people as they grow and develop their communication skills. Our prefrontal cortex, the part of our brain responsible for decision making, does not fully develop until we are around 25.

Until this time, we need nurture, not judgement.

We believe that children flourish best when their personal, social and emotional needs are met and where there are clear and developmentally appropriate expectations for their behaviour.

As children develop, they learn about boundaries, the difference between right and wrong, and to consider the views and feelings and needs and rights of others and the impact that their behaviour has on people, places and objects. The development of these skills requires adult guidance to encourage and model appropriate behaviours and to offer intervention and support when children struggle with conflict and their emotions.

Staff Guidelines

All staff have high expectations of the children in terms of their relationships, choices and behaviour. Wild Soul Woods adopts the following guidelines for staff:

- be consistent with responses;
- treat each child fairly and with respect and understanding;
- be a positive role model by demonstrating positive relationships with everyone;
- regularly support children to reflect on, regulate and manage their emotions and actions, not only in conflict situations;
- try to identify and address triggers of inappropriate behaviours;
- share knowledge and strategies which promote appropriate models of behaviour;
- access relevant training and literature;
- having followed regular procedures and consequences, seek help and advice from a colleague;
- liaise with external agencies, as necessary, to support and guide the progress of each child
- regularly discuss with parents about children's social and emotional development, including behaviour and relationships.

Involving Children

- Adults and children work together to develop and maintain a set of agreements governing how we behave.
- Adults do not label children and do consider the underlying reasons for behaviour.
- Adults ensure that each child feels valued and respected at all times.
- Adults encourage children to express their strong feelings without physical or verbal aggression.
- Adults support children to manage behaviour themselves and develop the life skills needed to deal with their emotions and feelings.

It is important to consider the reasons why children might present certain types of behaviour; sensory impact (internal & external), boredom, feeling unsettled or unhappy, not feeling listened to, an unstimulating setting, and medical reasons for example. We also recognise that neurodivergence impacts our understanding and ability to connect with others in a way that might be expected by neurotypical people. We look out for this, and accommodate and allow equalising behaviour with support for the young person to operate within socially acceptable standards, primarily to avoid harm to others.

Working with parents

Working in partnership with our parents/carers is integral to the success of this Behaviour Policy. In order for it to work in practice, their contribution is vital. We recognise this by;

- Sharing the expectations of behaviour at forest school, through informal and formal discussions with individuals and groups of parent/carers.
- Talking to individual parents/carers about all aspects of their child's behaviour on a daily basis, as well as at regular parent/carer conferences.
- Being fair, non-judgemental and consistent when discussing children's behaviour with parents/carers.
- Providing extra support for parents/carers to help manage children's challenging behaviour e.g. through Family Support Services and outside agencies
- Working with parents to address recurring inappropriate behaviour, using our records to help us to understand the cause and to decide jointly how to respond appropriately.
- Drawing on parents' expertise about their child to gather information about children's emotions and behaviours, triggers, and effective strategies for supporting them in positive behaviour.
- Encouraging parents to inform us of any relevant changes to their circumstances which may affect their child's behaviour e.g. new baby, moving house, bereavement, divorce,

separation or hospitalisation. Strategies for Promoting Positive Behaviour In order to promote positive behaviours and avoid conflict we;

- Build self-esteem and confidence in children, recognising their emotional needs through close and committed relationships with them.
- Support each child in developing a sense of belonging in our group, so that they feel valued and welcome.
- Use clear and consistent boundaries.
- Support social skills through modelling behaviour, through activities, drama and stories.
- Communicate and model positive behaviour, using a variety of strategies and props e.g. makaton, gestures, visual timetables and puppets
- Recognise and acknowledge feelings to encourage empathy
- Provide planned opportunities to discuss behaviour and feelings e.g. at circle time
- Notice and acknowledge considerate behaviour such as kindness and willingness to share. Create an environment that minimises conflict e.g. ensuring there are sufficient resources Provide strategies to support turn-taking e.g. using a sand-timer.

Modelling Behaviour

We believe the best strategy for supporting children and young people to develop positive behaviour is to model it ourselves. All staff and volunteers will be expected to behave appropriately, using emotionally literate approaches when faced with situations that challenge our ability to do this.

As adults, we also need to have our needs met in order to function appropriately, and it is our responsibility to do this. Lack of sleep, not eating before a session, not taking advantage of our 'breath break' before sessions will all impact on your ability to take care of the children appropriately. Look after yourself!

Reviewed: 09 May 2025

Environmental and Sustainability Policy

Environmental Considerations:

Wild Soul Woods exists primarily to create connections between humans and the natural world, so that future sustainability is part of the natural order of things for our participants as they grow up (or just grow!).

Good practice should be modelled by staff and volunteers showing participants that the world in which we live in should be cared for. Involving children in site checks, planning environmental games and introducing them to the species in our local woodland - and how they can help care for them - will help support this.

Sustainable & responsible procurement

Wherever possible environmentally friendly products and recycled materials will be used in the course of our activities. This includes both capital items and consumables. Every effort will be made by the Directors and staff to proactively source goods from sources that are, as much as possible:

- Local
- Sustainable or renewable
- Minimally packaged
- Organic

- Ethically produced (workers rights, animal welfare, environmental impact)

The very core of our Organisation's ethos is welfare - of both humans and our planet - so this policy is intrinsic to our everyday activities and we expect all staff and volunteers to adopt this approach within the scope of their activities for Wild Soul Woods.

In particular, we will not deliberately purchase plastic items where avoidable, especially single use plastics. If an item has been gifted, it will be used in the interest of avoiding landfill for as long as possible, and recycled, reused or upcycled as appropriate at the end of its life.

Reuse and recycle:

We reuse and recycle wherever we can. We will divide rubbish into compost, recyclables and non-recyclables and these will be taken away after each session. Participants are encouraged and invited to take part in this process.

Transport:

Where possible, we choose sites accessible by public transport. When participants choose to drive, where appropriate, we invite participants (or their parents / carers) to join a temporary WhatsApp group in order to facilitate lift sharing. Most of our clients live locally and can easily save mileage and fuel costs & emissions by sharing and taking turns to drive.

Sustainable use of site:

All people present will be required to conform to the Countryside Code:

- Be safe - plan ahead and follow any signs
- Leave gates and property as you find them
- Protect plants and animals, and take your litter home
- Consider other people

All activities will be designed to be sensitive to the ecology of the site e.g. coppicing, minibeast hunts etc.

Care of Flora and Fauna:

Participants will be made aware of the importance of all flora and fauna in the outdoor environment, including the route to the learning area. They will be encouraged to only pick flora appropriately and to take care when walking through the environment.

When seasonal plants are present, such as bluebells and snowdrops, these areas will be separated by log dividers which the group will help to create. Participants will be made aware of which plants are toxic and will be advised not to touch anything that they do not recognise, especially fungi. All participants will be required to clean their hands before eating.

Every care will be taken to ensure that the local fauna will not be disturbed and this will be taken into consideration when planning activities and placing shelters etc. All consumables will be removed so as not to attract vermin.

See Environmental Impact Survey for more information.

Reviewed: 09 May 2025