SAFEGUARDING PROCEDURES FOR CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE

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1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose of this procedure

This procedure provides a framework for all staff and volunteers at The Royal Parks (TRP) to follow when dealing with safeguarding issues. Used alongside the Safeguarding Policy for Children and Young People, it helps prevent and reduce the risk of abuse to all children who visit and engage with TRP onsite, offsite, online or those who have contact with staff or volunteers.

This document gives clear guidance on the steps to take when concerns, disclosures or reports arise.

1.2 Areas of responsibility

- Safeguarding is a shared responsibility, and everyone has a role to play. All TRP staff, - including temporary, agency, freelance and contract staff, trustees and volunteers (referred to as 'staff') - must understand that children and young people have the right to be safe from abuse and neglect, know how to recognise concerns, disclosures and report them immediately through the appropriate channels. TRP is responsible for ensuring all staff are informed, trained and supported to the appropriate level for their role. Anyone can raise a safeguarding concern.
- Reporting: All staff are expected to report and discuss their safeguarding concerns without delay and on the same day to the relevant Safeguarding contact (as specified in 2.1, Raising a concern).

  The seniority of the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), Deputies, Safeguarding Leads (SLs) and Safeguarding Sponsor (SS) must never prevent concerns from being raised.
- Whistleblowing: All staff are protected under Whistleblowing legislation (Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998), when reporting in good faith.
- Exceptions: The only exception to informing the DSL, Deputies and SS is when they are implicated, in which case concerns must be reported to a line manager and HR.

1.3 What to do if you have a safeguarding concern (summary)

Anyone wishing to report an incident, suspicion or concern should follow these steps:

- Complete the Safeguarding Reporting Form available on the intranet, keeping as accurate a record as possible. If the disclosure is from the individual themselves, then care must be taken not to lead or interrogate the individual in a way that could prejudice further action by the relevant authorities.
- Once the online Safeguarding Reporting Form is completed, an automated notification will be sent to **safeguarding@royalparks.org.uk**. Please also alert the Designated Safeguarding Lead to confirm the form has been received, using other methods such as work email or phone. This mailbox is monitored daily by the Designated Safeguarding Lead and/or Deputies in their absence.
- If unsure, contact the Designated Safeguarding Lead, Deputy or your local Safeguarding Lead by email or phone.

The following procedures are mandatory and must be followed, including the use of flow charts, reporting forms and other guidelines included in the Appendix.

If you have any questions, please contact the DSL or Deputies. For a full list of all Safeguarding Group Leads and members, see **Appendix 1** – TRP Safeguarding Group and useful contacts

1.4 Recognition of signs and indicators of abuse

TRP is committed to providing a safe environment for everyone to participate in our organisation and its activities. These procedures must be followed in any circumstances where a child or young person is at risk of harm.

Recognising signs of abuse is not always straightforward, especially for staff who do not work with safeguarding regularly, and it can be more challenging when a child has disabilities or behaviours that may mask indicators of harm. All staff, trustees and volunteers should have the awareness needed to identify when something may be a cause for concern and report it promptly, noting that disabled children are at greater risk.

Appendix 2 sets out key indicators and signs of abuse and neglect, highlighting common barriers that may prevent timely recognition and action, and describes the main categories of child abuse and neglect. These include physical, emotional or sexual abuse, as well as neglect.

If a member of staff or volunteer believes that a child is at immediate risk of harm or abuse, they should take immediate and reasonable steps to protect the child. Examples of this would include calling **999** and, if possible, removing any immediate

danger from the situation. Such situations are very rare, and, in most circumstances, staff should raise a concern following the process below.

2. Procedures

All staff and volunteers must report any concerning or inappropriate behaviour, actions or attitude from members of the public towards a child. If there is a reason to suspect abuse, they must take appropriate action, including calling the police if necessary, and record and report this to the relevant SL and DSL.

For any safeguarding concerns that arise during activities delivered or led by TRP, staff must follow the safeguarding procedures set out below.

When concerns arise during activities delivered by third-party organisations operating within The Royal Parks, staff should follow TRP's safeguarding procedures and inform the relevant SL, DSL or Deputy, while the third-party organisation remains responsible for applying its own safeguarding policies and procedures.

See Reporting a Concern Flow Chart in **Appendix 5**.

2.1 Raising a concern

Concerns must be reported directly without delay and on the same day to a SL. If no SL is available, staff should contact the DSL or Deputies (these contacts are listed in **Appendix 1**). Volunteers report concerns to their volunteer coordinator, who will pass them to the relevant SL. The person raising the concern is the 'alerter'; the Designated Officer from the local authority or Safeguarding Board, or the police may need to speak with them.

2.2 Recording a concern

Accurate and prompt recording is essential to safeguarding. All staff and volunteers must complete a Safeguarding Report Form (**Appendix 6**) without delay and on the same day after raising a concern with the SL, DSL or Deputies. Forms can be completed online (available on the intranet) or completed on paper if needed (see Appendix 6 to print a copy), with support available from the DSL or a SL. Records must be clear, factual and separate opinion from fact, and must include all required information:

- The name, age, and address of the child, alongside the date and time.
- What the child said or did that gave you cause for concern.
- Any information that the child has given you about the alleged abuser.
- Whether the parent or carer is aware of the matter.
- The physical appearance and behaviour of the child.
- What the concern is.
- What action will be taken, and what the rationale is for this.
- Whether any other agencies need to be contacted, and what the rationale is for this.
- What immediate safeguards, if any, need to be put into place.

When the DSL reports a concern to the local authority, they will confirm that a written record is available and send the details as soon as possible. If TRP or the local authority decide that no further action is needed, then the reason for this and who made the decision must be recorded in the original safeguarding report and stored in the secured online safeguarding database. The SL responsible for the case is responsible for updating this record. All further actions, events and documents from the local authority, police or other agencies must also be added in chronological order to the original report.

2.3 Confidentiality and storage of safeguarding concerns

The welfare of children and young people overrides any obligations of confidence we may hold to others. Individual cases will only be shared or discussed on a 'need to know' basis.

Anyone at TRP may contact Children's Social Services or the police directly if a child is at immediate risk, following TRP's Safeguarding Procedures and Flow Chart (see **Appendix 5**).

The DSL and SLs are responsible for ensuring all concerns are securely recorded, monitored and stored:

- Electronic records, including email, will be saved to a secure safeguarding folder located on SharePoint. This folder will only be accessible to the Safeguarding Group.
- If there are any hard copy records (e.g. paper forms filled by hand), these will be scanned and kept within this secure folder.
- Access to these records will be strictly limited on a 'need to know basis' and controlled by the DSL, Deputies and the SS.

Roles and responsibilities for managing safeguarding concerns

The DSL, Deputies, and SLs are responsible for responding to safeguarding concerns. Once a concern is raised, the SL must escalate it to the DSL or Deputies, who will assess the level of risk using TRP's Safeguarding Escalation Chart and decide next steps. Cases rated as **Very Significant, Critical, or Complex** must be referred to the **SEG** for oversight and decision-making.

2.4 Responding to a disclosure

A disclosure can be direct, indirect, verbal or non-verbal, and may include specific incidents or patterns of behaviour. Staff must stay alert to both words and changes in behaviour, as a disclosure doesn't always involve explicit language.

- **Listen calmly in a safe, private space.** Focus on what the child says, without expressing shock or disbelief. Be patient, avoid interrupting and do not show your own views or feelings.
- **Help the child talk at their own pace.** You can use tools like Childline's 'conversation starter' if needed (this online tool uses simple prompts to help them share what's happening and how they're feeling). Ask only clarifying (not leading) questions, repeat back key points to check understanding, and remember they may lack the words to describe what happened.

- **Reassure them they've done the right thing**. If they've kept the abuse a secret, it can have a big impact knowing they've shared what's happened.
- **Tell them it's not their fault**. Abuse is never a child's fault. It is important they hear and know this.
- **Say you'll take them seriously**. Make sure they know they can trust you, and you'll listen and support them. Do not promise to keep anything secret; explain that you're going to speak to someone who will be able to help.
- **Don't confront the alleged abuser**, as this could make the situation worse for the child. It's not your role to "investigate" what has happened.
- **Explain what you'll do next** in an age-appropriate way. For younger children, explain that you're going to speak to someone who will be able to help. For older children, explain that you'll need to report the abuse to someone who can help.
- **Report what the child has told you as soon as possible**. Report and record the disclosure immediately after, so the details are fresh in your mind and action can be taken quickly. It can be helpful to take notes as soon as possible.

2.5 Reporting a concern to relevant services

All procedures for raising, recording and storing concerns must be followed.

- If the initial information suggests that concerns relate to a member of the public, the SLs, the DSL or SS must refer the matter to Children's Services.
- If a crime has or may have been committed, the SLs, the DSL, or the SS must contact the police immediately. In local authorities in London with a **MASH** (multi-agency safeguarding hub), police may be contacted through that team.
- Where police involvement is needed, the SL, DSL or SS must confirm whether the local authority (via MASH) will notify and make a referral to the police or whether TRP must make a separate referral. All agreed actions must be recorded in writing and shared between both organisations.
- Police may lead investigations and may request interviews with staff or volunteers as witnesses.

See **Appendix 5 -** Reporting a Concern Flow Chart.

2.6 Responding to concerns that a member of staff or volunteer may have harmed or abused a child or young person

Please refer to **Appendix 5** - Reporting a Concern Flow Chart.

All staff and volunteers must raise any concerns about colleagues, including:

- inappropriate behaviour, actions or attitudes towards a child
- inappropriate use of restraint
- actions or behaviour towards a child if working off site
- accessing inappropriate or abusive online material including child pornography

Any behaviour that raises doubts about someone's suitability to work with children must be reported.

Concerns about staff or volunteers may lead to three types of investigation:

- A criminal investigation
- A child protection investigation or enquiry under s47 of the Children Act (1989)
- A TRP disciplinary investigation

See **Appendix 3** for the full procedure.

2.7 Standards of behaviour for staff and volunteers

All TRP staff, volunteers and trustees must follow clear standards of conduct to keep children and young people safe.

Do

- ✓ Approach any child or young person who appears distressed and seek help when needed;
- ✓ Question anything you find suspicious;
- ✓ Be alert for unaccompanied children/young people and follow the Lost and Found Children procedure;
- ✓ Avoid one-to-one situations by staying in public areas;
- ✓ Remember that supervising adults hold the primary responsibility for the child/young person's care, safety and welfare;
- ✓ Report any allegation or concern immediately to a SL, DSL, Deputy or manager. If you cannot reach them, go directly to the police or to the local authority children's social care department (see Appendix 1 for details);
- ✓ Always behave professionally and ask yourself: 'How would my behaviour look to anyone else, and can I justify my actions?'.

Do not

- × Use physical restrain towards a child or young person, except in exceptional circumstances (e.g. to prevent injury, damage to property or to prevent theft), only using the minimum force required;
- × Engage in any form of physical or verbal abuse, threatening behaviour or harassment;
- × Provide personal telephone numbers, social media addresses or other contact details to any child or young person encountered through work (except for official and approved social network channels, e.g. TRP's Facebook page);
- × Provide lifts in a personal vehicle to children;
- × Take on role primary caregiving roles, or perform tasks of a personal nature that children or their supervising adults can do themselves (e.g. taking them to the toilet);
- × Engage in any inappropriate or unauthorised physical contact. The main principles of touch are:
  - Physical touch should take place only in a safe and open environment be observable by others, and occur with the child's consent;
  - It must always be appropriate to the child's age and stage of development;

- All staff and volunteers must be ready to report and explain any physical contact, recognising it is always open to scrutiny.

When working with children and young people, staff and volunteers must not:

- Ignore concerns or allegations;
- take unnecessary risks;
- use alcohol, drugs or smoke;
- develop inappropriate relationships with children and young people;
- make promises they cannot keep to children and young people;
- engage in any sexual contact or behave abusively with a child or young person;
- share personal contact details (mobile number, email or postal address) or have contact with them via a personal social media account;
- act in a way that can be perceived as threatening, intrusive, patronising or belittling;
- make sarcastic, insensitive, derogatory or sexually suggestive comments or gestures.

2.8 Photography and film/video

TRP may photograph or film children and young people during TRP activities for purposes including, but not limited to, use on the TRP digital channels, marketing materials (e.g. flyers, posters) and funding websites and applications. TRP may also share these images and recordings with third parties, such as press, online news sites or applications, or with event partners.

Permission must be obtained from the supervising adult with parental responsibility, who will be asked to read and sign a photo/filming and sound recording release form. For pre-booked groups (e.g. school groups), this is done in advance. Children without consent must be clearly identified (e.g. with a sticker) and must not be photographed or filmed.

For general photography (e.g. crowds gathered at an event), TRP must give advance notice in event listings and display clear signage on the day. An example of this type of activity is a family open day in the park delivered by TRP staff.

- Any visitor taking photographs or video in suspicious or inappropriate circumstances must be reported immediately to a supervisor or manager;
- Staff may challenge the behaviour where appropriate, with support from a supervisor or manager;
- If inappropriate behaviour around children is confirmed, the police must be contacted immediately;
- All concerning behaviour must be reported, and staff can request support when approaching members of the public;
- Volunteers are not expected to challenge directly but must report any concerns to TRP staff.

2.9 Work experience and Youth Volunteering

TRP welcomes young people under the age of 18 for work experience and youth volunteering. Work experience enquiries should be directed to the Learning, Access and Engagement team, and youth volunteering enquiries to the Volunteering team, who will follow their respective procedures.

Supervisors must review safeguarding policies and procedures before placements begin. Any welfare or safety concerns about a young person taking part in TRP work experience or volunteering must be referred to the DSL, Deputy or SL immediately.

2.10 Online safety

TRP is committed to the safety of children and young people engaging in online and digital activities with TRP. Guidance appropriate to the digital activity will be available to children and their parents/carers.

All digital and online activity will be developed in accordance with TRP ICT Security Policies & Procedures and the Online Safety Act 2023.

See **Appendix 4** - Digital Safeguarding Guidelines.