

Grass Roots Conservation Group

CHILD & YOUNG PERSON SAFEGUARDING POLICY

Aims of this Policy

The safeguarding of children and young people is a priority for Grass Roots Conservation Group. This document sets out Grass Roots policy concerning safeguarding children and young people, and its expectations of all volunteers.

Although Grass Roots Conservation Group is primarily set up to work with adult volunteers, we believe that it is of great benefit to children and young people to be able to work on conservation projects alongside adults. Benefits can relate to their physical development, their mental and emotional well-being, and the development of social and mechanical skills. Grass Roots is therefore keen to offer suitable volunteering opportunities to children, always having regard to the safeguarding of the child. Grass Roots welcomes family groups, subject to the guidelines below.

The abuse of children and young people, physically, emotionally, sexually and through neglect is a sad fact of life. Children may be abused regardless of their age, gender, religious belief, racial origin, culture, disability, sexual orientation or identity. They are usually (but not always) abused by people they know and trust. Grass Roots has a zero tolerance of abuse wherever it occurs or whoever is responsible.

Grass Roots Conservation Group recognises its responsibilities under the terms of The Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995 and other guidance with regards to the safeguarding of children. This policy has been drawn up following guidance on the website of the NSPCC in April 2021. We believe that it is consistent with the terms of The Conservation Volunteers (TCV) Safeguarding Policy currently in operation.

Under the [Children \(Northern Ireland\) Order 1995](#), a child is anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday. For this policy, Grass Roots Conservation Group will use 'child' to mean 'child and young person'.

Equality of Opportunity

Grass Roots Conservation Group will ensure that, wherever possible, it actively promotes equality of opportunity for children and young people regardless of gender, race, religion, culture, sexual orientation or ability.

Values

- The child or young person must be at the centre of the safeguarding process.
- Every child and young person is an individual and has the right to be respected as such; each child and young person should feel confident that individuality and diversity are valued by the adults who work with them.
- A considerate and caring attitude to individual children and young people is essential and should be displayed at all times.

- Adults should always promote equality of opportunity and access for all children and young people. Opportunities should always have regard to children's and young people's rights, health, safety and well-being.

Children working with Grass Roots: Registration and Consent

Grass Roots accepts children and young people as volunteers on tasks between the ages of 4 and 18. Below the age of 14, a child must be accompanied by a person with parental responsibility, or by another responsible adult with the explicit written permission of a person with parental responsibility. Children below the age of 14 remain the responsibility of the accompanying adult while on task. Between the ages of 14 and 18 there is no requirement for an accompanying adult, but a Consent Form must be completed as outlined below. There may be some tasks or sites which are unsuitable for children, and Grass Roots Conservation Group reserves the right to decide that children may not attend on a particular day.

To ensure the safe well-being of children and young people whilst volunteering with Grass Roots Conservation Group, it is essential that:

1. A consent form is completed by a person with parental responsibility for the child under the age of 18. This form is to provide Grass Roots Conservation Group with authorisation for the child to participate in the activity. A copy of the Grass Roots Consent form is attached to this Policy.
2. A Register is kept from each session of children and young people involved in Grass Roots Conservation Group activities. The name of each child should be indicated on the standard Task Report form on the day of the activity, and transferred to the Register afterwards. This Register will be kept for 5 years in case of future enquiries.

Recording and Reporting

If you think a child is in immediate danger

Don't delay – call the police on 999,
or call NSPCC on 0808 800 5000, straight away.

Grass Roots Conservation Group will record and refer all concerns, suspicions or allegations of abuse or neglect to the lead agencies responsible for carrying out safeguarding assessments and enquiries, specifically the Local Authority or the police. Not reporting a relevant offence to the police, including those against children, is an offence in Northern Ireland. Procedures for Recording and Reporting are detailed in the Code of Conduct below.

Confidentiality

Information provided in relation to any child or young person will be treated in strictest confidence by staff and volunteers. Information will not be passed on without the consent of a person with parental responsibility for the child. The only exception is where abuse is suspected or disclosed. In this case information will be passed onto the appropriate authorities.

Grass Roots will ensure that data is handled in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulations 2018. This allows for the sharing of information without consent where there is concern that a child is suffering abuse, or is at risk of abuse, or where obtaining consent to share information would place the child at further risk.

Review

This version of the Safeguarding Policy is for implementation in April 2023.
The Safeguarding Policy is due for review in April 2026.

References and resources:

TCV Safeguarding Policy:

www.tcv.org.uk/getinvolved/volunteering/volunteer-policies/safeguarding-and-child-protection/

NSPCC Guidance:

<https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/child-protection-system/northern-ireland>

Legal framework:

[Children \(Northern Ireland\) Order 1995](#)

Department of Health (2017) [Co-operating to safeguard children and young people in Northern Ireland](#). [Belfast]: Northern Ireland Executive government.

Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland Procedures Manual

<https://www.proceduresonline.com/sbni/contents.html>

Code of Conduct

These guidelines set standards that Grass Roots Conservation Group expects from its volunteers when working alongside children and young people.

1. Volunteers should, at all times, show respect and understanding for the rights of children and young people and their safety and welfare.
2. Any physical, mental or sexual abuse of children/young people will result in the termination of that volunteer's voluntary work with Grass Roots Conservation Group. The abuse may also be punishable by law.
3. Any volunteer with Grass Roots Conservation Group who suspects that a child has suffered abuse, or is at risk of abuse, during or related to any Grass Roots activity must report those concerns as soon as possible to the Leader of the task. This also applies to any instances of 'disclosure', when a child tells of abuse happening elsewhere.

Alternatively, the volunteer should contact the Chair of Grass Roots, or another Trustee of Grass Roots, as soon as possible. The list of current Trustees is available on the NI Charity Commissioners' web-site. The Charity Number for Grass Roots is NIC 102932.

The Task Leader will take immediate action to ensure that the situation does not continue, however it is not the responsibility of the Leader or volunteers to investigate or decide if abuse has occurred. This is the responsibility of child welfare experts. The Task Leader will record the concerns, noting the date and time, and names of witnesses, and make a report to the relevant authorities, usually the police or the Local Authority, as soon as possible. The Task Leader will inform the Chair of Grass Roots of the concerns and any action taken. In general, once a concern has been reported, there will be no further discussion of the report, to comply with confidentiality requirements.

4. Volunteers must ensure that they are not working with children without at least one other adult present.
5. The physical safety of children on Grass Roots sites must take precedence above any other consideration. Task leaders must ensure that all activities which involve children are suitable for the age and ability of the child, and that any risk inherent in a task has been considered and reduced to an acceptable level before the task is commenced. This is in addition to the standard requirements of Grass Roots Risk Assessments for Activities and Sites.

(example: After due consideration, the Task Leader believes that a child is of an age and ability when she or he can use a saw. The risks involved in using a saw have been explained in suitable language for the child, one-to-one training has been given in the use of the saw and the wearing of relevant protective clothing, and the child is supervised by an adult whenever using the saw.)

6. The use and misuse of illegal or mood-altering substances and alcohol is not permitted while volunteering with Grass Roots Conservation Group.
7. The use of offensive language and behaviour is considered inappropriate for people working with children and young people.
8. Attire - It is advisable that, in the interests of safety and community relations, everyone involved in Grass Roots Conservation Group refrain from wearing clothing and symbols identifiable with any one section of the community.
9. An incident book must be maintained to record any accidents or problems which may arise.

Supervision Ratios

1. There should be a minimum of 2 adults (over 18 years) supervising each activity where children are present, even if only one appears to be required in the ratios outlined below:

Children 4 to 14 years of age: 1 adult to 4 children
(GRCG will only accept children of this age if accompanied by an authorised adult)
Young people between 14 years and 18 years of age: 1 adult to 8 young people
2. These ratios should be seen as representing the minimum adult supervision required. Increased adult supervision is required when working with children who are vulnerable or with disabilities. Grass Roots Conservation Group should try to ensure that at least one female forms part of any group supervising children's activities.
3. Volunteers taking responsibility must be aged 18 years and over. Under 18's cannot be charged with responsibility for children and young people, and so they cannot be counted in the ratio.
4. Children and young people must never be left unattended under any circumstances. Dangerous behaviour of children and young people must not be permitted. The standard requirement that no Grass Roots volunteer ever works out of sight of other volunteers applies also in this case.
5. Transport by private car to and from sites: Children being transported by a car driven by another volunteer over the age of 18 must have the explicit consent of a person with parental responsibility. Whenever possible another adult should also be present. If it is essential for one adult volunteer to drive one child to or from the site, the child should sit in a rear seat.



Child Safeguarding Consent Form

Volunteers under 18 need to hand in a completed Consent Form before taking part in their first Activity, to comply with the N.I. Children's Order. Grass Roots Child Safeguarding Policy is available on the web-site at www.grassrootsni.org All data collected will be held in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulations 2018 and securely disposed of when the young person no longer volunteers with Grass Roots.

Young Person's Name: _____ Age: _____

Primary Contact name: _____ Relation to young person: _____

Home Address: _____

Telephone Number: _____ Mobile: _____ email: _____

Doctor's Name: _____ Tel No: _____

Doctor's Address: _____

Any special medical/dietary condition (allergies, medications, phobias etc)

Any other comments or information you feel may be useful:

Tick the following boxes to give consent for each item below.

I give permission for

- the young person named above to participate in Grass Roots activities
- the Task Leader to seek professional medical help for the young person in cases of emergency
- photographs to be taken of the young person while engaged in activities on task. Photographs may be used on social media, on the Grass Roots website, on presentations and on publicity materials.

I have read the information provided on this form, and agree to my son/daughter taking part in Conservation Tasks organised by Grass Roots Conservation Group.

Signature of a Person with parental responsibility: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Young Person: _____

Alternative contact name and details (in case of emergencies)

Contact Name: _____

Relationship to Young Person (e.g. neighbour, aunt etc.): _____

Address: _____ Tel No: _____



Family Consent Form

Families with children under 18 need to hand in a completed Consent Form before taking part in their first Activity, to comply with the N.I. Children’s Order. Please be aware that children under 14 must be accompanied by a person with parental responsibility throughout the duration of the activity.

Grass Roots Child Safeguarding Policy is available on the web-site at www.grassrootsni.org All data collected will be held in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulations 2018 and securely disposed of when the volunteering activity is completed.

Responsible Adult’s name: _____

Young Person’s Name: (1) _____ Age: ____ (2) _____ Age: ____

(3) _____ Age: ____

Home Address: _____

Telephone Number: _____ Mobile: _____ email: _____

Doctor’s Name: _____ Tel No: _____

Doctor’s Address: _____

Any special medical/dietary condition (allergies, medications, phobias etc)

Tick the following boxes to give consent for each item below.

I give permission for

- the young person(s) named above to participate in Grass Roots activities
- the Task Leader to seek professional medical help in cases of emergency
- photographs to be taken of the young person(s) while engaged in activities on task. Photographs may be used on social media, on the Grass Roots website, on presentations and on publicity materials.

I have read the information provided on this form, and agree to my family taking part in Conservation Tasks organised by Grass Roots Conservation Group.

Signature of a Person with parental responsibility: _____ Date: _____

Signatures of Young People: _____

Alternative contact name and details (in case of emergencies)

Contact Name: _____

Relationship to Young Person (e.g. neighbour, aunt etc.): _____

Address: _____ Tel No: _____