



WILD HEARTS SERVICES CIC

OUTDOOR THERAPEUTIC INTERVENTIONS

www.wildheartsservices.co.uk



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Wild Hearts Services CIC

Providing outdoor therapeutic services to children and families across Devon and the South West.

HANDBOOK, POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Revised: Feb 2025



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POLICY STATEMENT

Wild Hearts Services are committed to good practice which protects children from harm. We recognise our responsibility to provide an environment which promotes the safety of the child at all times. To achieve this we will:

- Keep all policies under regular review (reviewed annually) and adhere to them.
- Hold professional liability and indemnity insurance to cover all the services and activities we provide.
- Hold and up to date certificate from Devon safeguarding children board in safeguarding children and young people group 2.
- Ensure that required permissions, site surveys, equipment checks and risk assessments are carried out prior to sessions commencing.
- Maintain up to date relevant first aid qualifications.
- Complete and review accident report forms.
- Ensure careful recruitment, selection and management of staff and volunteers. These procedures will include DBS checks, regular support & supervision.
- Ensure complaints, grievance and disciplinary procedures are dealt with appropriately.
- Maintain my membership to the PSA government register for play therapist and to PTUK as an accredited play therapist and all the requirements that entails.
- Hold valid certificate of registration Information Commissioners Office to ensure I adhere to correct GDPR 2018 Data protection laws.
- We, the directors agree to abide by the ethical framework for PTUK professional organisations for Play Therapy & Creative Arts Counselling and to follow the forest school association's principles of good practice.

Leone Ellis MA

Matthew Banks

Daphne van Run



Date 30th October 2023



EQUALITY STATEMENT

Wild Hearts Services are committed to ensuring that equality is incorporated across all aspects of our work. We respect the rights, dignity and worth of every person and will treat everyone equally within the context of their sport, regardless of age, ability, gender, race, ethnicity, religious belief, sexuality or social/economic status.

We are committed to everyone having the right to use our services in an environment free from threat of intimidation, harassment and abuse.

We have a responsibility to oppose discriminatory behaviour and promote equality of opportunity. We will deal with any incidence of discriminatory behaviour seriously.

CONFIDENTIALITY STATEMENT

Wild Hearts Services will keep therapy sessions or information talked about during activities as confidential to the child unless they disclose information, which means they or others are in danger or being harmed. Where possible we will always inform the child or carer of our need and responsibility to pass on information.

All Wild Hearts Services staff and volunteers must adhere to the confidentiality policy.

Medical and personal information:

- All adults will be made aware of any medical details such as allergies affecting the children attending on a need-to-know basis and kept confidentially within the school's Forest School Handbook
- In case of emergency, contact numbers of each child will be kept in the school's Forest School Handbook
- Only trained staff will apply first aid to children and adults attending; volunteers must make staff aware if they are approached by a child needing care
- Any adults attending, with medical conditions, must disclose to the Forest School Leader; this information will be treated with the utmost confidentiality

MOBILE PHONE USE POLICY

Phones are not to be used by adults or children to take photos, audio or visual records of any adult or child with express permission being sought first. Wild Hearts Services use signed permission forms from carers before taking film or photographs of children. All footage is stored and used within strict alignment to GDPR and ICO regulations. Any adult or children found using their phones, unless agreed, will be asked to put away and may be asked to delete content. Children will be asked not to bring phone unless absolutely necessary and may be asked to keep them with an adult for safeguarding.



SAFEGUARDING POLICY

This Safeguarding policy is based on guidelines and legislation outlined in the following documents:

- Our Duty to Care NI, DHSSPS 2007
- Getting It Right, DHSSPS 2004
- Co-operating to Safeguard Children DHSSPS 2003
- Children's Act 2006
- Area Child Protection Committee – Regional Child Protection Policy 2005
- Working Together to Safeguard Children: A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.
- DCSF-00305-2010 Devon county council Safeguarding children eLearning course group 2 (online)

Safeguarding may be defined as: ***Doing everything possible to minimise the risk of harm to children and young people.***

Safeguarding is about being proactive and putting measures in place in advance of any contact with children to ensure that children are going to be kept safe. This includes:

- having a designated safeguarding lead that has undergone relevant level 3 training
- ensuring staff and volunteers are properly checked when they are recruited
- guidelines for people who come into contact with children as part of their role to ensure they know what they need to do to keep children safe
- guidelines for planning an event or activity with children and putting measures in place to minimise the risk of safeguarding issues occurring.

AWARENESS OF THE ISSUES

Background knowledge in relation to child abuse, the general principles of Safeguarding and the ability to recognise and respond to abuse are important issues. Wild Hearts Directors will attend regular safeguarding and child protection training in order to be up to date with the current child protection information.

Wild Hearts Services formally recognise four types of abuse:

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse is the deliberate physical injury to a child, or the wilful or neglectful failure to prevent physical injury or suffering. This may include hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, confinement to a room or cot, or inappropriately giving drugs to control behaviour.

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional ill treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may involve causing



children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill treatment of a child, though it may occur alone. Domestic violence, adult mental health problems and parental substance misuse may expose children to emotional abuse.

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative or non-penetrative acts. They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at or the production of pornographic material or watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

Neglect

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's physical, emotional and/or psychological needs, likely to result in significant harm. It may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate foods, shelter and clothing, failing to protect a child from physical harm or danger, failing to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment, lack of stimulation or lack of supervision. It may also include non-organic failure to thrive (faltering growth).

In addition to these we recognise that we have a responsibility to:

“protect children from bullying” - We will challenge bullying in any form i.e. physical or emotional. Physical bullying can take the form of attacks, such as hitting, kicking, taking or damaging belongings. Emotional bullying may be a verbal assault, including name-calling, insults, repeat teasing, sectarian/racist assaults, or it may take more indirect forms, such as spreading malicious gossip, rumours or excluding someone from a social group. Bullying is not an accepted behaviour.

INDICATORS OF ABUSE

The following is a list of some indicators of abuse, but it is not exhaustive:

PHYSICAL INDICATORS

- Unexplained bruising in soft tissue areas
- Repeated injuries
- Black eyes
- Injuries to the mouth
- Torn or bloodstained clothing
- Burns or scalds
- Bites
- Fractures
- Marks from implements

BEHAVIOURAL INDICATORS

- Inconsistent stories/excuses relating to injuries
- Unexplained changes in behaviour -becoming withdrawn or aggressive
- Difficulty in making friends
- Distrustful of adults or excessive attachment to adults



- Sudden drop in performance
- Changes in attendance pattern
- Inappropriate sexual awareness, behaviour or language
- Reluctance to remove clothing

RESPONDING TO DISCLOSURE OF ABUSE

Always

- Record by writing down verbatim what has been said ASAP
- Remain sensitive and calm
- Reassure child that they
 - are safe
 - were right to tell
 - are not to blame
 - are being taken seriously
- Let child talk - don't interview!
- Listen & hear, give the person time to say what they want.
- Ensure a positive experience
- Explain that you must tell, but will maintain confidentiality
- Tell child what will happen next
- Involve appropriate individuals immediately
- Stay calm.
- Reassure them that they have done the right thing in telling and that it will be dealt with appropriately.

Never

- Question unless for clarification
- Make promises you cannot keep
- Rush into actions that may be inappropriate
- Make/pass a judgment on alleged abuser
- Take sole responsibility, consult the designated officer so you can begin to protect the child and gain support for yourself.



DESIGNATED PERSON

Leone Ellis, Lead Therapist for Wild Hearts Services is the designated Person to deal with safeguarding & child protection issues. In the instances when we are working within a school we would refer to the schools designated safeguarding officer to take it further.

Wild Hearts Services will contact the multi agency service hub 'Front Door' within several hours of a disclosure and where possible always inform the child and the parent (where deemed safe) and the referrer that I am going to do so.

contact Front Door main number: 0345 155 1071

or call MASH Consultation Line on 01392 388428.

email mashsecure@devon.gcsx.gov.uk

HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY

Therapeutic sessions held outdoors and Forest school sessions offer learning opportunities for children and young people. Part of their purpose is to encourage participants to face new challenges and to learn to take reasonable risks. In order to do that safely, the adults and staff must know their role and ensure that the necessary risk assessments are carried out regularly and thoroughly. Risks can rarely be eliminated entirely, but they can be reduced to a minimum without unduly limiting opportunities for children to explore and learn.

The following guidance for adults and children must be clearly understood by all concerned. The Legal Framework. (Health & Safety At Work Act 1974 and Regulations 1992)

Employers must:

1. Assess the risk of activities.
2. Introduce measures to control those risks.
3. Tell their employees about the measures they have introduced.
4. Follow LEA Guidance on Educational visits and journeys for arranging school visits (but decisions about visits are usually delegated to the head teacher).

Employees and volunteers must:

1. Take reasonable care of their own and others' health and safety.
2. Co-operate with their employers over health and safety matters.
3. Carry out activities in accordance with training and instructions.
4. Inform the employer of any serious risks.
5. Act in accordance with the teacher's common law duty (as a reasonable parent would do in the same circumstances).
6. Follow the written procedure for arranging school visits, including obtaining the head teacher's prior approval.
7. In the event of a serious accident to a member of staff while at work then it shall be reported to RIDDOR.

Responsibilities.



School /organisation staff and volunteers

1. Must ensure that the head teacher is provided with the information and details as above.
2. They must do their best to ensure the health and safety of everyone in the group, follow the instructions of the Forest School Leader and help promote positive behaviour.
3. Ensure an appropriate ratio of adults: children.
4. Ensure that adults have details of the school contact and that they and the contact have details of the emergency procedures.
5. Ensure that adults have details of children's medical or special educational needs.
6. Observe the guidance for teachers and other adults.
7. Consider stopping the visit/activity (notifying the Forest School Leader) if they consider any risk unacceptable.

Forest School Leader and Therapist

The Forest School Leader and therapist should have the overall responsibility for the supervision and conduct of the activity. The leader should: -

- Obtain the relevant permission for use of site.
- Follow the health and safety guidelines and policies.
- Undertake a comprehensive risk assessment
- Clearly define each group supervisor's role and ensure all tasks have been assigned
- Be familiar with the site.
- Be aware of child protection issues.
- Ensure that adequate first aid provision is available as well as first aider
- Undertake the planning and preparation for the visit, including briefing group members
- Review activities and advise staff where adjustments may be necessary.
- Complete accident and emergency book
- Ensure all staff, volunteers and children are aware of the fire drill and emergency evacuation procedures.

Additional Adults/Facilitators/Volunteers

Other adults should be clear in their roles and responsibilities and have read the policies prior to attending. They must:

- Do their best to ensure the health and safety of everyone in the group.
- Not be left in sole charge of children. Follow the instructions of the forest school leader and teacher adults
- Speak to the leader/adults if concerned about the health and safety of children at any time during the visit.report any concerns of abuse to designated safeguarding lead.
- Observe the guidance of the qualified leader

Children

The group leader must make it clear to children that they must: Follow the instructions of the leader and any other adults. Look out for anything which might be a threat and tell an adult about it.

Attendance at Forest School by children and young people whose behaviour may be a danger (to themselves or to the group) will be reviewed, and strategies put in place to allow them to participate wherever possible.

Parents

The Forest School Leader/teacher should:

- Provide both written information and briefing sessions to help parents decide whether their child should go on the sessions.
- Tell parents how they can help prepare their child for the visit.
- Invite parents to support Forest School sessions as a volunteer if they wish.

Parents will need to:

- Provide the teacher with emergency contact numbers
- Sign a consent form
- Give the teacher information about the child's emotional, psychological and physical health.

Health & Safety Guidance.

The following guidance for adults and children must be clearly understood by all concerned.

An appropriate ratio of adults to children will be observed according to the setting. The number of adults to children will be increased if necessary, to accommodate larger groups and children with additional needs.

Shelter

Where possible a shelter will be constructed within a Forest School site. This will be both sturdy and waterproof and will be regularly checked for stability and safety.

Fire site

Normally a designated area for fires will be present within a Forest School site. Seating will be arranged for the children to sit at a safe distance from any fires lit. The children and young people will be encouraged to walk around the designated area at all times and they will not approach any fires unless specifically supervised to do so. Water will always be available to safely extinguish fires and the fire site will be designed to reduce the risk of any spread of fire.

Toilets/Hand washing

There are toilets in the main building and we will take regular trips whenever needed. An appropriate adult will accompany the child/ren and oversee feet wiping and hand washing.

If a child does need to change clothes they will be given a private area in which to do so. If a child has special requirements around toileting these must be known beforehand and a plan put in place.

First Aid and accident and incidents

At least one adult will have the relevant first aid training and a First Aid Kit, along with relevant emergency equipment, which will always be readily accessible. There will also be a mobile phone on site and in the event of a serious accident the emergency procedures will be followed.

In the event of an accident our report book will be completed, and a copy will be given to the responsible guardian on collection of the child.

This book will be reviewed regularly. First aid kit is accessible forest school leader will ensure this is adequately stocked and replenished. In addition to this a summary of medical information relating to each child and/or specific care plans are carried by the FS leader required (e.g. inhalers, epi-pens). Staff will be advised of any specific medical information they should be aware of. The leader will also ensure a mobile phone and walkie talkie are available in the area during each session.

Missing children

A register will be taken at the beginning and end of each session and a regular headcount will be taken throughout the session to ensure a child does not go missing or is found quickly. There will always be 2 adults present so in the event of a child not being found one can search the area.

Uncollected children at the arranged time will wait with a member of staff while their guardians are called 2 staff shall remain with the child until they are collected.

Weather Conditions

Assessments of weather conditions will be taken prior to a visit and if the weather is too extreme the session will be cancelled. Where possible, alternative indoor provision will be arranged. If the weather deteriorates suddenly during a session, the adults will decide whether to leave the site, use alternative accommodation or return the participants to their setting. When windy and there is a danger of falling branches, the children will be taken to an alternative setting or the session will be cancelled.

The participants are asked to bring Wellington boots and suitable warm/waterproof clothing. If possible, the setting will provide them with any missing essential items. The nature of woodland means that Forest School sites are quite sheltered, and most will have a shelter on site. Participants will experience hot, cold and wet weather but this will harm no one if they are properly dressed. If cold, they will be more active in order to maintain warmth. In extreme heat, care will be taken to stay in the shade and plenty of water for drinking will be available.

Ground Conditions

On some sites the ground conditions may present a higher risk and these will be assessed and dealt with accordingly, for example mud or steep slopes. Paths steps or even boardwalks may be constructed to avoid or reduce the risks. Discussions will also take place on how to safely access/cross/use such areas.

Vegetation



The areas of woodlands used are checked for toxic plants and participants will be instructed not to pick or eat any plants. Areas of nettles, brambles and other potentially harmful plants will be cut regularly to open up areas for access, but some areas will be left uncut to support dependant wildlife.

Using Tools/Lighting Fires

Participants will only be involved in using sharp tools/fire when the Forest School Leader deems that they are confident and competent at working in the woods. When tools such as penknives and small saws are used the younger participants will always be appropriately supervised. Fires will only be lit in the designated areas and again the participants will be appropriately supervised.

With older groups, tools will be used after individual risk assessments of each child have been carried out to determine the degree of supervision necessary. Children will always be in sight of an adult. Proper instructions will have been given and safety issues discussed prior to the use of any tools. Where appropriate, participants will use safety and protective gear such as gloves etc.

Tree climbing procedure

Children may only climb identified trees. Children must ask an adult before climbing a tree. Adults must check the tree for loose or rotten branches. Adults must check the area below the tree is free from any sharp objects. Children are permitted to climb to limits below 5 meters. An adult must be present and be near enough to guide and oversee a child.

Nil by mouth policy

There is no safe way of ensuring that children eat only safe berries, fungi and fruits or that the fruit is clean and edible. There is also the possibility if children eat those identified as safe in Forest School sessions they may incorrectly identify and ingest harmful berries, fungi or fruit outside Forest School sessions. For this reason LETS adopts a nil-by-mouth policy regarding any items found in the forest. Drinks and a snack are brought into the forest for the children to have each session. They are to use hand gel to clean their hands before partaking in snacks. The Forest School leader will make adults aware of any child who is unable to eat particular foods due to allergies. They will also be informed that this information is to remain confidential. On occasions adults may harvest fruits that are edible to clean and prepare with the children.

Forest School Leaders Personal Safety

When working alone, i.e. when carrying out visual checks prior to site visits, a mobile phone will be carried, and the relevant authorities will be made aware of their intentions and whereabouts. The setting where a Forest School Leader is expected will contact the relevant authorities if they do not appear within a reasonable period after the agreed time, and cannot be reached on their phone. Whilst in the woods with the children, the Forest School leader will usually be within sight of another adult

Unwanted visitors

If there is unwanted attention from a member of the public, the Forest School leader will ask the person to leave the area. If they fail to do so the Forest School Leader will phone the school and speak to the Head Teacher if on school premises as to the next steps taken. If the situation is causing concern regarding the safety of the children, the police will be phoned. The incident will be logged and shared with the children guardians.

Allegations of misconduct

If a staff member or parent/guardian has made an allegation of misconduct they would need to report it to Leone Ellis or if it involved a child being abused to contact MASH directly.

Phones and cameras

No images will be taken of children or staff without signed permission given by parents/ guardians. Staff must not use personal phones on site with children unless in case of emergency. All sites will be checked prior to sessions that there is phone signal or Radios will be used to contact someone in range to call emergency services.

Risk Assessment

A full and comprehensive site risk assessment will be conducted prior to the first visit to any new site. This will be done by the Forest School Leader and, if possible, in conjunction with a member of staff from the site setting.

- This risk assessment will be reviewed regularly.
- A visual check will be undertaken immediately prior to every session.
- Individual generic risk assessments will be used for the use of tools and some activities/actions.
- Individual activities will be risk assessed previously by the Forest School Leader.
- Ongoing risk assessments will take place at various times during a visit – this normally consists of judgements and decisions made as the need arises, which will then be recorded after the visit.

Risks can be minimised, but they cannot be eliminated altogether, and health and safety concerns need to be balanced against the potential benefits of any activity. Children, young people and adults will suffer the occasional bumps, cuts and bruises which are a part of everyday life. The application of common sense will ensure that everyone is as safe as they can be, whilst enjoying all the physical and intellectual challenges of Forest School

ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

During forest school sessions we aim to teach children about caring for the environment in a variety of ways from creating habitats to using non-native species for craft activities. There is a woodland management plan in place, with objectives to minimise the impact of activities on the site. We aim to balance the benefits the woodland provides the children with care for the



environment. We aim to leave the site as we found it each time, we use it. We will take all rubbish and waste away with us. We will not overuse one area if it becomes damaged.

EMERGENCY AND EVACUATION PROCEDURE

In the event of extreme weather conditions, fire or a medical emergency this procedure must be followed and all adults must be familiar with this emergency procedures. Most emergencies can be resolved on-the-spot by the leader removing the group from potential threat and providing first aid. However, in the event of a serious incident, which could arise as a result of an injury, illness or threat, emergency services should be contacted, and the following procedures followed:

1. Secure safety of whole group from further danger. Stop all work/activities if safe. Call in and locate group promptly as agreed with group in advance. If possible, remove the whole group from any further danger or threat of danger.
2. First Aider to attend to any casualties with adult helper and with regard for maintenance of required supervision ratios for the rest of the party. At least one first aider must be on site at all times. A record of changes in casualties' state and anything administered to them to be made if possible.
3. Emergency services contacted as necessary, ideally by an adult helper. Charged mobile phones are carried by staff. Despatch a designated driver to meet emergency vehicle at the entrance where possible/necessary.
4. Safety of the rest of group will be maintained by the remaining staff and adults away from the scene of the incident.
5. Informing next of kin should be carried out as soon as practicable after the incident by the head of school or by the designated member of staff of the partner organisation according to their own health and safety policy.
6. School management and managers of partner organisations must be informed of any major incident as soon as possible. Following this as soon as is possible the landowner of the site should also be informed.
7. Incident report and/or first aid book should be filled in on site if possible and then logged back at the School Office (some visiting group staff may fill out their own incident report form) – see first aid kit for report form. This should be filled in whenever the emergency plan is used even if no one was harmed and it was just a near miss.

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

In the event if a parent or guardian wanting to lodge a complaint, I would ask that they:

1. talk to me as my aim would be to resolve it immediately between us;
2. if they are still not happy, get in touch with my professional organisation PTUK <https://playtherapy.org.uk/> and follow their steps to lodging a complaint

LIST OF CHECKS

Tool and equipment check:

This is filled in at the end of each session to check all items are back in the locked box and accounted for. It is taped inside the lid of the box. There is also one in a folder to check for tool maintenance done at the end of each month.



TOOLS	NAME and DATE	NAME and DATE	NAME and DATE	NAME and DATE	NAME and DATE	NAME and DATE	NAME and DATE
AXES X1							
KNIVES X8							
FOLDING SAWX2							
HAND DRILL X4							
FIRE STEELS X10							

Useful links/more information

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/getting-started/index.htm>

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/toolbox/managing/writing.htm>

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/riddor/reportable-incidents.htm>

