

# **Wiltshire Search and Rescue**

## **Safeguarding Policy**



V4.1  
March 2026



# Wiltshire Search and Rescue

Registered Charity Number 1205651  
www.wilsar.org.uk



## Change Log

Version	Date	Change Author
V1.0	2019	Lowland Rescue
V2.0	December 2019	Samantha Metcalfe
V3.0	August 2023	Samantha Taylor
V4.0	March 2025	Hannah Turner
V4.1	March 2026	Hannah Turner

## Approvals

Role	Name	Date
Author	Hannah Turner Safeguarding Lead	March 2026
Approver	Adrian Sawyer Chair	March 2026



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## 1. Purpose

- 1.1. This document provides details of our practices, measures and responsibilities for the protection of all children, young people and vulnerable adults who either come into contact with Wiltshire Search and Rescue (WILSAR) through our search and rescue, fundraising and all other activities, or whom are WILSAR members themselves. This document includes a procedural guide describing our responsibilities to the individual, appropriate information sharing with local safeguarding partner agencies, and an outline of the process of recognising a safeguarding concern, and the procedure for reporting a safeguarding concern. The 'individual' is an unlimited term, and may include any persons engaged or associated with any activities WILSAR engages in.
- 1.2. The policy objective is to protect all people within WILSAR and those whom they may encounter in the course of their duties from harm, abuse, neglect or maltreatment, and to act appropriately and proportionately when evidence or allegations of the aforementioned are brought to light.
- 1.3. This policy defines the legal and moral safeguarding responsibilities and expectations of all WILSAR volunteers to which they must comply.
- 1.4. This policy clearly defines the requirements on individual volunteers, the Safeguarding Lead, any named deputies to the Safeguarding Lead, WILSAR Trustees and the broader organisation in all matters pertaining to safeguarding, including but not limited to individual responsibilities, information collection, appropriate reporting practices, data handling and confidentiality requirements.

## 2. Policy Statement

- 2.1. While it is recognised that WILSAR members act in a voluntary capacity, all members are subject to professional safeguarding standard, proportionate to their role and the associated duty of care expected of search and rescue volunteers.
- 2.2. All WILSAR volunteers have a responsibility to promote the welfare of all children, young people and vulnerable adults, to keep them safe and practice in a way that protects and enables them with equal priority regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation.
- 2.3. WILSAR recognises that some individuals will have additional inherent vulnerabilities because of the impact of discrimination, previous experiences, their level of dependency, communication needs or other issues. Both WILSAR as an organisation and WILSAR volunteers must consider these vulnerabilities when considering risk to the individual.
- 2.4. This policy seeks to ensure a clear understanding of individual and organisational duty of care in relation to recognising and sharing suspected,



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alleged or observed safeguarding concerns relating to children, young people and adults appropriately and completely.

2.5. This policy has been prepared in conjunction with legislation and national standard documents including (but not limited to);

- Care Act 2014
- Domestic Abuse Act 2021
- Sexual Offences Act 2003
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006
- Protection of Freedoms Act 2012
- Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998
- Children Act 1989 (as amended)
- Children and Social Work Act 2017
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023
- Equality Act 2010
- Prevent Duty 2015
- Human Rights Act 1998
- UN Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989
- Data Protection Act 2018
- The Ann Craft Trust guidance
- National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) guidance
- Social Care Institute for Excellence Safeguarding Guidelines

2.6. This policy shall be reviewed as a minimum every 12 months or following any significant change within the team.

### **3. Applicability**

3.1. Without exception, this policy is applicable to all WILSAR volunteers, associates, stakeholders and representatives, be they permanent or temporary.

3.2. In matters pertaining to safeguarding and confidentiality, this policy additionally applies to individuals who have previously volunteered or have been associated with WILSAR.

3.3. The policy and procedure do not form part of a representative's contract and may be subject to change. Revisions, amendments or alterations to the policy and/or procedure can only be implemented following approval by the Safeguarding Lead and Chair.



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## 4. Definitions

- 4.1. Safeguarding pertains to protecting every individual's right to live in safety, free from abuse and neglect, and the protection of individual health, wellbeing and human rights. Effective safeguarding is dependent on organisations working together to prevent and stop both the risks, exposure and experience of abuse or neglect
- 4.2. A vulnerable adult is someone who has care or support needs, and/or is experiencing or is at risk of harm, abuse or neglect and is unable to protect themselves from that actual or potential harm.
- 4.3. When a safeguarding concern pertains to a vulnerable adult, where appropriate, regard should be had to the individual's wishes, feelings and beliefs when deciding upon any action in accordance with section 1 of the Care Act.
- 4.4. When a safeguarding concern pertains to a child or young adult who has not yet reached their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, both evidence of harm, or the belief that the child or young adult has suffered, or is likely to suffer, significant harm will be considered sufficient to mandate appropriate action.
- 4.5. The Safeguarding Lead is a term that will include any individual temporarily deputised to cover the role when the named Safeguarding Lead is unavailable. In this document the term 'Safeguarding Lead' will include deputised individuals.

## 5. Scope

- 5.1. This policy addresses all forms of safeguarding including (although not limited to):
  - Physical abuse
  - Domestic violence or abuse
  - Sexual abuse, exploitation and grooming
  - Psychological or emotional abuse
  - Modern slavery
  - Discriminatory abuse
  - Organisational abuse
  - Neglect and acts of omission
  - Self-neglect
  - Honour based abuse and forced marriage
  - Female genital mutilation



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- PREVENT
  - Child criminal exploitation and trafficking
  - Financial or material abuse
  - Psychological or emotional abuse
  - Criminal exploitation and gangs
  - Online abuse
- 5.2. Organisational and individual safeguarding responsibility extends to a duty to act upon information or allegations pertaining to non-recent abuse.
- 6. Organisational Responsibilities**
- 6.1. WILSAR as an organisation has a duty of care to appropriately safeguard individuals whom WILSAR volunteers come in contact with through the full range of engagement activities WILSAR volunteers perform with members of the public where the risk of abuse, neglect or harm is alleged, observed or suspected.
- 6.2. WILSAR shall adhere to the following principles:
- Prioritise safeguarding, including ensuring the wellbeing of WILSAR volunteers within a respectful, inclusive and enabling culture.
  - Take positive action to prevent, stop, or reduce the risk of harm whenever possible and in a timely and proactive manner.
  - Provide adequate and sufficient safeguarding training to all individuals who may have contact with children, young people and vulnerable adults acting as volunteers, employees or representatives of WILSAR.
  - Ensure that volunteers have a sufficient working knowledge of General Data Protection Rules 2015 to ensure a sufficient standard of data recording, reporting and confidentiality to effect a robust safeguarding referral through sufficient training in line with national standards.
  - Action all safeguarding concerns, reports or allegations are considered valid without exception, and handle all in a prompt, objective and impartial manner, sharing information appropriately with stakeholder partner agencies within the principles of confidentiality and data protection.
  - Work in partnership with the vulnerable individual(s), their parent, guardians or care givers, and partner agencies to promote welfare, inclusivity and ensure effective safeguarding.
  - Ensure those who raise, and report, concerns are adequately supported and protected.



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- Protect from discrimination and promote reasonably practicable inclusivity to those holding the individual characteristics directly related to age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.
  - Be responsible for ensuring sufficient police vetting processes are in place to highlight any identifiable risk in an applicant's past which would render them inappropriate to be working with people at risk of experiencing abuse or neglect.
  - Hold WILSAR volunteers accountable for lack of appropriate action in response to safeguarding concerns or allegations in accordance with the charity's Grievance and Disciplinary Policy.
  - Be responsible for immediately suspending the activities of any volunteer within the organisation should allegations be made which pertain to the harm of others until such time an appropriate investigation has found no case to answer. At that point, the suitability of the individual to resume volunteering duties will be at the discretion of senior leadership within WILSAR.
  - Employ robust procedures within the scope of the WILSAR Grievance and Disciplinary Policy in the event of an allegation of evidence suggestive of improper or inappropriate behaviour by a WILSAR volunteer or associate of the charity.
  - Ensure free access to this policy to all individuals to whom it applies.
- 6.3. In the event that a membership or volunteer contract of an individual is ceased on safeguarding grounds, referrals to appropriate jurisdictional vetting bureaus (e.g. NPPV, Disclosure and Barring Service) and any other relevant professional bodies will be made.
- 7. Charity Trustees**
- 7.1. Safeguarding is a key governance priority for Trustees. It is part of their duty of care. As trustees of WILSAR, they are responsible for ensuring those benefiting from or working with WILSAR are not harmed in any way through any contact with it.
- 7.2. WILSAR trustees are ultimately accountable for ensuring the organisation and its representatives uphold our safeguarding requirements and commitments and create and embed a robust safeguarding culture across all departments, and that safeguarding is considered in all strategic decision making.
- 7.3. WILSAR trustees play an essential role in setting the safeguarding aims and objectives, devising strategy and holding senior leaders to account for their effective implementations.



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## 7.4. WILSAR Trustees shall:

- Ensure that safeguarding is prioritised across all departments and considered within decision making processes.
- Foster a working ethos where every individual feels equipped to raise concerns.
- Ensure that WILSAR has a named Safeguarding Lead.

## 8. Safeguarding Lead Responsibilities

- 8.1. The Safeguarding Lead will be the point of contact for external agencies for all safeguarding matters pertaining to the activities of WILSAR.
- 8.2. While reporting of suspected or known criminal activity to the police is the responsibility of attending responders, the Safeguarding Lead will assume the point of contact for partner agencies after the point of closure of the initial reporting and any on scene inter-agency interaction.
- 8.3. The Safeguarding Lead must contact the relevant local authority child or adult safeguarding emergency duty team by telephone as soon as all relevant information has been documented.
- 8.4. The Safeguarding Lead must back any telephone referrals up with a secure email to the relevant safeguarding authority within 24 hours, detailing all information collected.
- 8.5. Reasonable requests for additional information from relevant authorities must be honoured within a timely manner by the Safeguarding Lead.
- 8.6. The Safeguarding Lead will be the point of contact for external agencies on all safeguarding matters (unless otherwise directed).
- 8.7. The Safeguarding Lead is subject to a statutory obligation to co-operate with local professional safeguarding bodies, including (but not limited to) adult and child local authority safeguarding teams, Police organisations, NHS organisations in accordance with the Care Act 2014, the Children Act 2004, and the Children and Social Work Act 2017.
- 8.8. The Safeguarding Lead, in collaboration with the Management Committee, is responsible for ensuring the maintenance, regular review and updating of this policy in accordance with statutory arrangements, national guidance, and appropriate legislation, as well as leading on reflection and learning lessons from practice within WILSAR, and where appropriate, sharing learning with Lowland Search and Rescue.
- 8.9. In the event of the Safeguarding Lead being made aware of or discovering the event of non-adherence to this policy or breach of the principles of safeguarding more broadly, the matter will be escalated to the WILSAR senior leadership team and engage with any investigations, learning or actions stemming from the concern.



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8.10. The Safeguarding Lead must be contactable without notice to support WILSAR members appropriately in matters relating to safeguarding and will act as the primary source of support, advice and expertise for safeguarding.

## 9. Individual responsibilities

9.1. All individual members of WILSAR shall:

- Consider all allegations, suspicions or evidence of abuse, neglect or harm as valid and truthful without bias or prejudice.
- Engage with the individual subject to the concern in an open and constructive manner, but do not seek to investigate or question the account offered.
- Record objectively all information offered or found on the WILSAR/Lowland Search and Rescue Patient Report Form, handling the record in a secure and responsible way which accords to the principles of good data handling and appropriate limits of confidentiality.
- Record details of the individual who is subject to the safeguarding referral, including their full name, date of birth, and home address.
- Details of named alleged perpetrator(s) should be recorded if this information is offered by the subject of the referral.

9.2. If the subject of the safeguarding concern is a child or young adult, and details of any other children who may be at risk (i.e. siblings or other child relatives) which can be established from the subject, reasonable efforts should be made to collect this information.

9.3. If the safeguarding concern is one of self-neglect, this must be explicitly recorded on the Patient Report Form and when conveying all relevant information to the Safeguarding Lead.

9.4. If responders consider that there is a risk of harm to the subject, either in their current location or at the subject's home address, and/or a suspicion or allegation of criminality, the relevant Police service must be notified on 999 and details of the concerns recorded on the Patient Report Form.

9.5. The Responder with primacy at the scene must contact the Safeguarding Lead to inform of their concerns at the earliest reasonable opportunity. This will either be while the incident is ongoing, or immediately afterwards.

9.6. Individuals shall act upon all provided advice forwarded by attending Police Officers, the Safeguarding Lead or safeguarding professionals representing or working on behalf of within local authority safeguarding teams.

9.7. Individuals shall engage with the Safeguarding Lead and/or external partner agencies on the event of either party requesting further information, including after the immediate request for assistance from the Safeguarding Lead.



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- 9.8. If requested, the individual attend internal and external meetings and/or hearings when summoned.
- 9.9. Lone working with individuals subject to safeguarding concerns must be avoided unless in extremis and where there a robust justifiable reason for this.
- 9.10. All WILSAR volunteers are solely responsible for compliance with this policy in its entirety, without exception. This responsibility includes challenging practices which appear to contravene the principles of this policy.
- 9.11. Individuals shall maintain confidentiality, and seek guidance from the Safeguarding Lead, where appropriate information sharing is required with appropriate individuals within WILSAR and safeguarding partner agencies, which is essential for the effective safeguarding of children, young people and vulnerable adults in order to make informed decisions to protect individuals and in the case of children and young people, their families.