



BOTANIC GARDENS CONSERVATION INTERNATIONAL

Safeguarding Policy

1. Statement of Intent

1.1. Introduction

This policy sets out the principles and procedures for the safeguarding of children, young persons, and adults at risk involved in Botanic Gardens Conservation International's (BGCI) activities. BGCI believes that it is always unacceptable for a child or adult at risk to experience abuse of any kind and recognises its responsibility to safeguard the welfare of all children and adults at risk. The arrangements below explain how we will do this.

While BGCI's day-to-day activities do not normally involve children, young persons, or adults at risk, BGCI's projects may involve activities where children or adults at risk participate, volunteer, or support.

This purpose of this policy is to:

- provide protection for the children and adults at risk who engage with BGCI or our projects;
- provide staff and volunteers with guidance on procedures they should adopt if they suspect a child or adult at risk may be experiencing, or be at risk of, harm;
- provide individual staff and volunteers with guidance on working with children and adults at risk to protect them from accusations of misconduct/abuse; and
- protect BGCI as a whole and demonstrate our moral and procedural integrity in this area.

1.2. Scope

This policy applies to all BGCI staff, including employees, volunteers, and trustees, as well as to agency staff, students, or anyone else working on behalf of BGCI, e.g., freelance contractors and consultants.

In addition, BGCI Project partners should ensure that safeguarding policies are in place for the project and that the levels of protection for children and adults at risk are at least equal to the levels of protection in this policy. BGCI will not partner with any organisation that does not have an appropriate safeguarding policy if the activities covered by the partnership involve working with children or adults at risk. If a proposed partner does not have an appropriate safeguarding policy in place and the activities covered by the partnership involve working with children or adults at risk, the partner will be requested to agree to adhering to BGCI's safeguarding policy via contract. BGCI will provide training and advice to partners in safeguarding best practice, however it is the responsibility of individual partners to ensure this guidance is adhered to within their organisational activities.

1.3. Commitment

We want children, young persons, and adults at risk to enjoy their involvement with BGCI and safeguarding is therefore a top priority. We recognise that our contact with children, young persons, and adults at risk may arise incidentally or because of targeted interaction. We need to act and be seen to always act appropriately. We recognise that children and people at risk have specific needs due to their age, circumstances, medical condition/disability etc., and that they may therefore face barriers to their engagement with BGCI, especially in their ability to communicate. We need to take this into account in all our actions.

BGCI is committed to upholding the principle that children, young persons, and adults at risk are entitled to protection from physical, sexual, and emotional harm and have the right to a safe, positive, and enjoyable environment when involved with BGCI.

1.4. Values and principles

- The welfare of the child/young person/adult at risk is paramount.
- All children and adults at risk, regardless of age, disability, gender, racial heritage, religious belief, sexual orientation, or identity, have the right to equal protection from all types of harm, abuse, or exploitation.
- Working in partnership with children, young persons, and adults at risk, their parents, carers, and their agencies is essential in promoting people's welfare.
- All allegations, suspicions of harm or abuse and concerns will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly, fairly, and appropriately.
- Everyone will work in partnership to promote the welfare, health and development of children and adults at risk.
- Our safeguarding practice reflects statutory responsibilities, government guidance and complies with best practice and regulatory requirements.
- There is a culture of openness, learning and improvement at BGCI.

1.5. Definitions

- Child/young person - An individual under the age of 18.
- Adult at risk - A person aged 18 years or over and at risk of abuse or neglect because of their needs for care and support. For example, the person:
 - Is an older person who is frail due to ill health, physical disability, or cognitive impairment.
 - Has a learning disability.
 - Has a physical disability and/or a sensory impairment.
 - Has a severe impairment in the ability to communicate with others.
 - Has mental health needs including dementia or a personality disorder.
 - Has a long-term illness/condition.
 - Misuses substances or alcohol.
 - Is a carer such as a family member/friend who provides personal assistance and care to adults and is subject to abuse.
 - Lacks the mental capacity to make decisions and needs care and support.
 - Is receiving nursing services/personal care in a care home or at home, medical services, or social care services.

This list is not exhaustive.

- Abuse - Abuse may be intentional or unintentional. It involves the misuse of power and control that one person has over another, for example:
 - Domestic abuse
 - Physical abuse
 - Sexual abuse
 - Psychological abuse
 - Modern slavery
 - Financial or material abuse
 - Neglect and acts of omission
 - Self-neglect
 - Discriminatory abuse
 - Organisational abuse

Many abuses will constitute a criminal offence.

2. Responsibilities

2.1. BGCI

- Provides a designated Safeguarding Officer.
- Ensures effective complaints and whistleblowing measures are in place.
- Ensures that BGCI provides a safe physical environment for everyone who is involved with its activities and its workplaces by applying health and safety measures in accordance with the law and regulatory guidance.
- Treats all suspicions and allegations of abuse seriously and to respond swiftly, fairly, and appropriately.

2.2. Safeguarding Officer

- Has responsibility for receiving concerns about the safety and welfare of children and adults at risk.
- Makes decisions about what actions need to be taken, contacting and liaising with other agencies involved in safeguarding children and adults at risk as appropriate.
- Ensures that confidential, detailed, and accurate records of all safeguarding concerns/allegations are maintained and securely stored.
- Maintains an overview of all concerns, including details of action taken and, where possible, the outcomes.
- Reports cases (anonymized where relevant) for review at BGCI's Senior Management Team meetings.
- Reports any significant safeguarding incident or concern to BGCI's Board of Trustees.
- Has strategic responsibilities and is responsible for ensuring this policy and the arrangements are implemented.
- Reviews this policy annually and as required by changes in legislation and/or government guidance and by the Disclosure & Barring Service, or other appropriate authorities, ensuring it is up-to-date and fit for purpose.
- Ensures staff and volunteers have read and understand this policy (delegating to relevant managers/supervisors/partners as appropriate).
- Promotes safeguarding and provides guidance and advice to staff where needed.
- Ensures that safeguarding issues and consequences arising from investigations are communicated to relevant staff members (unless confidentiality prevents this), so that informed decisions on future activities can be made. If the Safeguarding Officer is not

available, individuals with concerns regarding the safety of children or adults at risk should follow organisational procedures for alternative contact.

At the current time Safeguarding Officer responsibilities are designated to:

Ane Zabaleta, Education and Training Manager, ane.zabaleta@bgci.org.

Where BGCI is working in a project partnership, Safeguarding Officer responsibilities may be delegated to the lead partner in the project.

2.3. All staff (including others as described in paragraph 1.2)

Whilst the Safeguarding Officer has specific safeguarding responsibilities, all staff who have contact with a person thought to be at risk of abuse have a responsibility to act on their concerns. When an individual is at immediate risk of harm or abuse, the priority is for their health, safety and welfare, and incidents should be reported to the appropriate authority, e.g., the Police, without delay. Staff who are unsure about whether something they have witnessed or heard is a safeguarding matter should seek advice from the Safeguarding Officer.

All staff should be aware of the common signs and symptoms of abuse and be prepared to report these so that the appropriate authorities, such as the Police and Social Services, can investigate them.

3. Arrangements

This section outlines what BGCI will do to keep children, young persons, and adults at risk safe. The arrangements apply to everyone mentioned in paragraph 1.2.

3.1. Planning activities

- For activities, ensure health and safety requirements and risk assessments are appropriate and implemented.
- Where possible make sure children, young persons, and adults at risk are accompanied by their own adult carers.
- Ensure that a signed parent/guardian consent form has been obtained if direct supervision is provided.
- Avoid inappropriate activities and material; think about the age, maturity, and ability of any children/young persons/adults at risk, so that they can understand and participate safely.

3.2. Awareness

- Share information about safety issues and safeguarding best practice with children, parents, staff, and volunteers.
- Be alert to potential harm or inappropriate behaviour by others to children, young persons, and adults at risk in your care.
- Provide access for children/young persons/adults at risk to talk to another adult about any concerns they may have.

3.3. Code of Conduct

- Do remember you are a role model and should listen, show respect and understanding for others.

- Do bear in mind that some actions, no matter how well-intentioned, may easily be misinterpreted.
- Do use appropriate language, gestures, and posture/body language.
- Do respect an individual's right to privacy unless you feel they are at risk of harm.
- Do not show favouritism or get drawn into inappropriate attention seeking behaviour (e.g., tantrums or crushes).
- Do not allow or engage in suggestive remarks, gestures or touching which could be misunderstood.
- Do not do anything to undermine BGCI's reputation for providing children and adults at risk with a safe environment.
- Do not jump to conclusions about others without checking the facts.
- Do not develop any form of relationship with children/young persons/adults at risk, which could in any way be deemed inappropriate or exploitative.
- Do not act in ways that may be abusive or place children/young persons/adults at risk of abuse.
- Do not use language, make suggestions, or offer advice (in person or online), which is offensive or abusive.
- Do not allow children/young persons/adults at risk with whom you are working to stay overnight at your home without a parent/guardian/carer or share rooms if in outside accommodation (e.g., at a conference) without the written permission of an adult carer
- Do not condone or participate in the behaviour of children/young persons/adults at risk, which is illegal, abusive, or unsafe.
- Do not intentionally act in ways intended to shame, humiliate, or degrade children/young person/adults at risk.
- Do not undertake any other action that could compromise the rights, safety, or welfare of children/young persons/adults at risk.

3.4. Supervision

- Arrange for an appropriate ratio of adults to be present, bearing in mind the activity, number, ages, and any needs of the individuals, in line with best practice
- Have a minimum of two adults when working with small groups.
- Meetings with individuals should take place as openly as possible (ideally with more than one responsible adult present in the room or with an open door to allow visual contact by another responsible adult).
- Have male and female helpers where practical and appropriate.
- Where children and adults at risk are in your care, make sure you know which children and adults at risk they are, the extent of your responsibility, where they are and what they are doing.
- Avoid being left alone with a child or adult at risk, e.g., 'one-to-one' car journeys, unless it is an emergency.
- If one-to-one contact is unavoidable make sure it is for as short a time as possible, ensure you are accessible to others, tell someone else where you are going, what you are doing and why; and always with the full knowledge of another responsible person and the individual's parent/guardian/carer.

3.5. Online safeguarding

- Consider platform use - most platforms have a minimum age requirement. Check the terms and conditions of services to make sure they are suitable. If the young person is under the age limit of the tool you want to use, then their parents must set up the required accounts and remain nearby throughout the meeting/activity;

- When using live video calling, two adults must be always present, and both must remain on the video call until all young person have logged off. This ensures no young person is left alone with an adult online;
- If a BGCI representative is calling from home and there are other people around, they should make sure those people are dressed appropriately and know how to behave when you are talking to young person;
- Background space must be child-friendly, ensuring nothing inappropriate is on display. You should not be drinking alcohol or have alcohol in the video; and
- If an online session is to be recorded (e.g., a meeting or webinar), ensure appropriate consideration has been given to the need to record the activity and ensure any young person's name and image is not visible on the recording unless prior consent (from an adult) has been obtained.

3.6. Recruitment

BGCI will follow best practice in safe staff and volunteer recruitment:

- Selection:
 - All applicants will submit a CV and supporting statements/cover letter.
 - Shortlisted applicants will be asked to attend an interview.
 - Successful applicants will be asked to provide references, and these will always be taken up prior to confirmation of an appointment.
 - Job/role advertisements, descriptions and person specifications should make clear where posts may involve working with children or adults at risk and where they will require a Disclose and Barring Service (DBS) check.
 - Successful applicants appointed into positions where working with children, young person or adults at risk is required will have their criminal records checked at the appropriate level prior to the applicant taking up their post.

3.7. Training

- All staff and volunteers who interact with children/young person/adults at risk will receive an introduction to safeguarding in their induction.
- Formal safeguarding training will be given at the appropriate level and as relevant to roles, to support the arrangements in this policy; where there is regular, direct, and unsupervised contact with children, young persons or adults at risk, safeguarding training will be mandatory and refreshed annually.
- Systems will be in place to ensure all those receiving training have understood the policy and procedures.

3.8. Responding to abuse, suspected abuse, and disclosures of abuse

If you have concerns about a child/young person/adult at risk or someone discloses that they are being abused, then upon receiving the information you should:

- React calmly.
- Reassure the individual that they were right to tell you and that they are not to blame and take what they say seriously.
- Allow them to speak freely.
- Do not trivialise the issue being discussed.
- Only ask questions to clarify the situation, do not probe or interrogate to investigate the allegations.
- Reassure but do not promise confidentiality, which might not be feasible in the light of subsequent developments.
- Inform the individual what you will do next.

- Make a full and written record of what has been said/heard as soon as possible to the Safeguarding Officer.

If the Safeguarding Officer (or another senior manager if the Safeguarding Officer is not available) considers the individual concerned is in immediate danger, or there has been a crime committed (e.g. you witness physical abuse), contact must be made with the emergency services and/or the appropriate authorities (parents/social services) to help ensure the individual does not remain in an unsafe environment. A full detailed record must be made. Remember, if you witness an assault, crime, or act of abuse the priority is the immediate health, safety, and welfare of the individual and you should contact the Police.

3.9. Record keeping of suspected abuse

A written record, marked 'confidential', should include the following details, and can be sent electronically to the Safeguarding Officer by the person reporting the incident/concern (refer to Appendix 1):

- Name of person making the report stating whether they are expressing their own concerns or those of someone else.
- Name of child/young person/adult at risk.
- Name of parent/guardian/carer.
- Date of birth.
- Address and telephone number.
- First language.
- Date, time, and place of incident/when concern arose.
- How the concern was identified (alleged or reported by child/adult at risk; alleged, reported, suspected, or witnessed by someone else; suspected or witnessed by self; other).
- Details of other people involved/alleged to be involved.
- Summary of incident/concern (if you include statements by other parties try to use their words in quotations; include details of all alleged perpetrators and details of any immediate protection made).
- Details of any physical injuries reported or witnessed (including description of any visible injuries and any indirect signs such as behavioural changes).
- Names of any witnesses.
- Have parents/carers been contacted? (details of any discussion).
- Were emergency services involved? (E.g., taking child to A&E, Police etc.) (where possible, referral to the Police or Social Services or LA Safeguarding Team should be confirmed in writing within 24 hours and the name of the contact who took the referral should be noted).
- Details of any advice given, and any action taken.

The safeguarding officer will save this information in a confidential folder.

4. Law and guidance supporting this policy

This policy has been drawn up based on law and guidance, namely:

- Children Act 2004
- United Convention of the Rights of the Child 1991
- General Data Protection Regulation
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Sexual Offences Act 2003

- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006
- Protection of Freedoms Act 2012
- Children and Families Act 2014

This policy is supported by the following BGCI policies and guidance:

- Anti-bribery and corruption policy
- Anti-harassment and bullying policy
- Code of conduct policy
- Dignity at work policy
- Discipline and grievances at work policy
- Equality, diversity, and inclusion policy
- Whistleblowing

Note all the above policies and guidance can be at: <https://www.bgci.org/legal-and-policies/>.

5. Allegations against members of staff and volunteers

As well as protecting those in BGCI's care, safeguarding arrangements are in place to also maintain the integrity of the organisation. We recognise that allegations which involve a member of staff or volunteer are potentially serious enough to cause significant reputational damage to BGCI (as well as to the individuals involved).

Safeguarding arrangements therefore ensure that the risk of suspicion or allegation of abuse by BGCI members of staff and volunteers is minimised. For the above reasons, safeguarding is included in BGCI's Risk Register. Regular reviews of the Risk Register by the Senior Management Team will ensure that controls and work to improve the controls are in place to reduce the risk. The Board of Trustees reviews the Risk Register on an annual basis.

If an allegation is made against a member of staff or volunteer, he or she will be made aware of their rights under employment legislation and internal policies and procedures. BGCI will take expert HR advice from the outset. BGCI's disciplinary procedures set out the rights of staff where an allegation of abuse is made and how BGCI will respond. The priority is always to ensure the safety and protection of a child or adult at risk. However, BGCI will support staff or volunteers who are subject to a complaint or allegation which is subsequently not substantiated or not proven.

6. Confidentiality

Every effort must be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned. Information should be handled and disseminated on a need-to-know basis only with information stored in a secure place.

Appendix 1: Recording form

CONFIDENTIAL
Record of suspected abuse

Name of person making the report stating whether they are expressing their own concerns or those of someone else
Name of child/young person/adult at risk
Name of parent/guardian/carers
Date of birth
Address and telephone number
First language
Date, time, and place of incident/when concern arose
How the concern was identified (alleged or reported by child/adult at risk; alleged, reported, suspected, or witnessed by someone else; suspected or witnessed by self; other)
Details of other people involved/alleged to be involved

Summary of incident/concern (if you include statements by other parties try to use their words in quotations; include details of all alleged perpetrators and details of any immediate protection made)

Details of any physical injuries reported or witnessed (including description of any visible injuries and any indirect signs such as behavioural changes)

Names of any witness(es)

Have parents/carers been contacted? (details of any discussion)

Were emergency services involved? (e.g., taking young person to A&E, police, etc.) (where possible, referral to the Police or Social Services or Safeguarding Team should be confirmed in writing within 24 hours and the name of the contact who took the referral should be noted)

Details of any advice given, and/or any action taken