

# Essex & Suffolk Hunt

## Safeguarding Policy

The aim of this policy is to safeguard and promote our junior and vulnerable members welfare, safety and health by adopting an honest, open, caring and supportive climate.

Although the hunt does not provide direct care to any child or vulnerable adult, hunt staff and any hunt officials may, in some situations, be in a position to identify, or otherwise be informed of, individuals who may be at risk or in need because of abuse.

We therefore recognise that it is the responsibility of every adult member and subscriber to safeguard the wellbeing of children and vulnerable adults and we will take action to fulfil this responsibility.

To this end, the hunt will take reasonable and practical steps to protect children and vulnerable adults from harm, discrimination, or degrading treatment and respect their rights, wishes and feelings.

We further recognise that all participants of the hunt, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious belief and/or sexual identity have the right to protection from abuse.

All suspicions and allegations of abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately.

Anyone aged 18 years or under should be considered as a child for the purposes of this document.

**The following guidelines can be used to help fulfil these responsibilities.**

### **Recognition of Abuse**

It is not always easy to recognise a sign of abuse. Even experience practitioners find this task difficult in some situations. Therefore, hunt staff and officials are not expected to be experts at recognising signs of abuse. However, hunt staff and officials are expected to use their judgement to report any concern they may have about the welfare of a child or vulnerable adult to a senior member of the hunt staff or an external agency such as the NSPCC or Social Services.

### **Indications That a Child or Vulnerable Adult is Being Abused**

There are many signs of abuse, however the following may be relevant to a child or vulnerable adult attending a hunt meet:

- An injury for which the explanation seems inconsistent.
- Unexplained changes in behaviour—e.g. becoming very quiet, withdrawn, or displaying sudden outbursts of temper.
- The child describes what appears to be an abusive act involving him/her.
- Someone else—a child or adult, expresses concern about the welfare of another child.
- Inappropriate sexual awareness.
- Engages in sexually explicit behaviour in games.

This list is not exhaustive and the presence of one or more of the indicators is not proof that abuse is actually taking place. It is not the responsibility of hunt staff to decide that abuse is occurring, but it is their responsibility to act on any clear concerns.

### **Listening to the Child or Vulnerable Adult**

If a child says or indicates that he or she is being abused, or information is obtained which gives concern that a child is being abused, the person receiving this information should:

- React calmly so as not to frighten the child.
- Tell the child they are not to blame and that it was right to tell someone.
- Take what the child says seriously, recognising the difficulties inherent in interpreting what is said by a child who is very young, has a speech disability and/or differences in language.
- Keep questions to the absolute minimum necessary to ensure a clear and accurate understanding of what has been said.
- Reassure the child, but do not make promises of confidentiality which might not be feasible in the light of subsequent developments.
- Make a full record of what had been said, heard and/or seen as soon as possible.

### **Responding to Suspicions or Allegations of Child Abuse**

**It is not the responsibility of hunt staff to take responsibility or to decide whether or not child abuse is taking place. There is however, a responsibility to report concerns so that appropriate agencies can then make inquiries and take any necessary action to protect the child.**

### **Allegations of Abuse Against Hunt Staff**

This would include anyone working with children in a paid or voluntary capacity. Abuse can and does occur outside the family setting. Although it is a sensitive and difficult issue, abuse has occurred within institutions and may occur within other settings, for example, in sport or other social activities. Recent inquiries indicate that abuse, which takes place within a public setting, is rarely a one-off event.

Any member of staff who has concerns must report details to the Senior Master or an external agency such as the NSPCC or Social Services.

The hunt will fully support and protect anyone who, in good faith, reports his or her concern that a colleague is, or may be, abusing a child. Where there is a complaint of abuse against a member of staff, there may be three types of investigation:

- A criminal investigation
- A child protection investigation
- A disciplinary or misconduct investigation.

The results of the police and social services investigation may well influence the disciplinary investigation, but not necessarily.

### **Further Information and Links**

Victim Support – 0808 1689 111 or <https://www.victimsupport.org.uk/>

NSPCC – 0808 800 5000 or [help@nspcc.org.uk](mailto:help@nspcc.org.uk) Childline – 0800 1111 or <https://www.childline.org.uk/>

Mind – 0300 123 3393 or [info@mind.org.uk](mailto:info@mind.org.uk)

Age UK – 0800 678 1602 or <https://www.ageuk.org.uk/>

Children First (Scotland) – 08000 28 22 33 or <https://www.children1st.org.uk/>

Domestic Abuse Hotline for – Women: 0808 2000 247 / Men: 0808 801 032