

Safeguarding vulnerable groups including children: policy and guidance

Walking for Health welcomes children and vulnerable adults on walks and activities as long as they are suitable. We are committed to equal opportunities and diversity and aim to treat everyone with dignity and respect, and not to discriminate on grounds of age, disability, ethnicity, race, sex (gender), sexual orientation, gender reassignment, religion or beliefs or non-belief, marriage or civil partnership, or pregnancy or maternity.

We, however, don't expect our schemes to provide specialist care and support for people who have special needs or who are unable to care independently for themselves, or to take special responsibility for looking after children and young people under the age of 18.

This guidance is designed to:

- help potential walkers decide if Walking for Health is right for them.
- help those running local Walking for Health schemes support children and vulnerable adults.

This document is in several parts. You only need to read the sections of the document that are relevant to you.

1. Policy statement

Find out about Walking for Health's general policy on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults.

2. Guidance for walkers or potential walkers

Read this if you are a child, young person or vulnerable adult planning to attend a Walking for Health walk or other activity, or if you are a parent, guardian or carer.

3. Guidance for Walking for Health schemes

If you're one of our 400 supported schemes, it's likely you'll already be applying the safeguarding policy of your host organisation. But we advise you to read this if you organise activities for your scheme, especially if children or vulnerable adults are likely to participate.

4. Guidance for Walk Leaders

Find out how to lead Walking for Health walks involving children and vulnerable adults.

1. Policy statement

We are committed to ensuring the wellbeing of everyone, including children, young people and vulnerable adults, who participate in Walking for Health activities. We will take every practical step to minimise the risk of harm, paying particular attention to the needs of those who are most vulnerable, including children and vulnerable adults. We are also committed to supporting fully our scheme coordinators and volunteers in their work, including protecting them from potential liabilities and false suspicions and allegations of abuse.

Who are children and vulnerable adults?

In this document, a **child** is anyone aged 0-18 years old, as defined by relevant child protection legislation in England.

A **vulnerable adult** is defined by the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012, as a person aged 18 years or older who is in receipt of regulated activity.

Regulated activity for adults is divided into six categories, each with detailed sub-categories and a definition of who is to be treated as a vulnerable adult.

1. the provision to an adult of health care by, or under the direction or supervision of, a health care professional,
2. the provision to an adult of relevant personal care,
3. the provision by a social care worker of relevant social work to an adult who is a client or potential client,
4. the provision of assistance in relation to general household matters to an adult who is in need of it by reason of age, illness or disability,
5. any relevant assistance in the conduct of an adult's own affairs,
6. the conveying by persons of a prescribed description in such circumstances as may be prescribed of adults who need to be conveyed by reason of age, illness or disability, (transporting from one place to another)

Regulated activity includes the supervision of any person carrying out regulated activity. A detailed guide to all these categories from the Department of Health can be found at:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/216900/Regulated-Activity-Adults-Dec-2012.pdf

This might include people who:

- have a physical disability, illness or injury, or have become severely frail, though old age.

- are experiencing mental health issues including dementia, or have learning disabilities.
- are in need of community care.
- are unable to protect themselves from harm, through domestic violence or substance addiction.

Welcoming children and vulnerable adults

Walking for Health welcomes children and vulnerable adults on walks and activities as long as they are suitable. We are committed to equal opportunities and diversity and aim to treat everyone with dignity and respect, and not to discriminate on grounds of age, disability, ethnicity, race, sex (gender), sexual orientation, gender reassignment, religion or beliefs or non-belief, marriage or civil partnership, or pregnancy or maternity.

We, however, don't expect our schemes to provide specialist care and support for people who have special needs or who are unable to care independently for themselves, or to take special responsibility for looking after children and young people under the age of 18.

Walking for Health schemes should only accept children and young people under the age of 18 on activities when they are accompanied by a parent, legal guardian or other person with equivalent responsibility for them such as a teacher or youth worker.

We should only welcome vulnerable adults when they are accompanied by a carer or support worker to assist with their everyday needs.

Scheme coordinators and walk leaders sometimes need to make judgements that take into account the safety and enjoyment of everyone involved in a walk. They have a right to refuse a participant if in the leader's opinion this would result in danger to the individual or danger or major disruption to the rest of the group. Our walk leaders will make these judgements on a fair and practical basis and without making stereotypical or unwarranted assumptions.

Who is responsible?

Everyone helping Walking for Health run its activities is responsible for providing children and vulnerable adults with appropriate safety and protection. This includes:

- Scheme coordinators, both practically when working with children and vulnerable adults and in ensuring management practices, procedures and guidance are in place to ensure children and vulnerable adults are protected.
- Walk leaders and other volunteers, including those who come into contact with children and vulnerable adults on a regular basis, and who organise and deliver activities where children and vulnerable adults are likely to participate.

What we will do

We will take all reasonable measures to protect the welfare of children and vulnerable adults involved with Walking for Health activities and minimise their risk of harm by:

- Having appropriate safeguarding procedures and practices in place, and striving to ensure they are implemented.
- Producing practical and appropriate guidance for walkers, scheme coordinators and volunteers on procedures, and ensuring it is easily available and publicised.
- Working closely with appropriate partner agencies.
- Referring any concerns promptly to the appropriate authorities.

Our specific policies and procedures include:

Confidentiality procedures	Walking for Health is covered by the Ramblers data protection policy: http://www.walkingforhealth.org.uk/privacy-policy Guidance on photo consent: http://www.walkingforhealth.org.uk/volunteering/volunteer-resources/leading-walk-kit
Guidance	Clear and targeted guidance appropriate to people's roles within Walking for Health, which is well publicised and easily accessible. Currently we have guidance for walkers, scheme coordinators, walk leaders and other volunteers. There is also detailed best practice guidance on specific practical matters such as leading walks safely: http://www.walkingforhealth.org.uk/volunteering/volunteer-resources/leading-walk-kit
Designated person(s)	A centrally based safeguarding officer who coordinates policies, ensures guidance is distributed, deals with enquiries, records incidents and escalates as necessary: Rob Wallis: email rob.wallis@ramblers.org.uk , tel 020 7339 8523
Civil liability insurance and incident reporting	A comprehensive civil liability insurance policy covering schemes and walk leaders, with an effective incident reporting system. Copies of reports are stored securely in compliance with relevant legislation, and are available for the insurers to view in the case of any claims or allegations. http://www.walkingforhealth.org.uk/running-health-walks/insurance-and-risk-

	assessments
Complaints procedure	An open and well-publicised complaints procedure enabling anyone in confidence to voice concerns about unacceptable and abusive behaviour towards children and vulnerable adults.

Updates and revisions

This safeguarding policy, procedures and guidelines will be reviewed on regular basis. They are, however, subject to change at any time, based on updated legislation and feedback regarding best practice. The next review date is March 2018.

2. Guidance for walkers

We are committed to ensuring the wellbeing of everyone who participates in Walking for Health activities and will take every practical step to minimise the risk of harm, paying particular attention to the needs of those who are most vulnerable, including children and vulnerable adults. We are also committed to supporting our hardworking scheme coordinators and volunteers.

This section is particularly relevant to children and young people; their parents, guardians and carers; vulnerable adults and others with special needs; and their carers and support workers.

We work to make Walking for Health accessible to all, particularly those who need support to get active and stay active, and want to share its benefits with as wide a range of people as possible. We are committed to equal opportunities and diversity and aim to treat everyone with dignity and respect, and not to discriminate on grounds of age, disability, ethnicity, race, sex (gender), sexual orientation, gender reassignment, religion or beliefs or non-belief, marriage or civil partnership, or pregnancy or maternity.

Everyone is welcome to participate in our walks, so long as it's safe and appropriate for them. We are, however, not able to provide specialist care and support for those that need it. We are also unable to accept responsibility for unaccompanied children and young people under 18.

When attending Walking for Health walks and activities:

- Check that a walk is appropriate for you before turning up. Our walks are designed to be short, easy and within reach of where people live and our schemes offer a variety of walks between 10 to 90 minutes in length. You can find a walk near you by at www.walkingforhealth.org.uk/walkfinder. Listings usually include an indication of length, pace and difficulty, so check this carefully, and follow any advice about clothing and equipment. If in doubt, get in touch with the scheme coordinator in advance.
- If you are under 18, you will need to be accompanied by a responsible adult when participating in a walk, such as your parent, legal guardian, carer, teacher or youth worker.

Please do not be offended if asked for proof of age.

- If you are a responsible adult accompanying children or young people under 18, be aware that you are responsible for their direct care and supervision, and that this is not the responsibility of Walking for Health walk leaders.
- If you are an adult who is in receipt of a “regulated activity”, or needs specific help in order to participate in

an activity safely (for example because of an illness or disability), you must be accompanied by another adult such as a carer or support worker who takes responsibility for your care.

- If you are a carer or support worker accompanying someone who is in receipt of a “regulated activity”, or who needs special assistance, please be aware you are responsible for their direct care and/or special assistance, and that this is not the responsibility of Walking for Health walk leaders.
- If you are over 18, please complete the Walker Registration Form at the start of the walk. For data protection reasons, we don’t collect or store personal information on under-18s.
- Please tell the walk leader discreetly and in confidence about any medical conditions that may affect the ability of you or the people in your care to participate safely in the activity.
- Before and during the walk, please follow the advice of the walk leader. Leaders have to take responsibility for everyone’s safety and enjoyment, and can refuse to accept people who in their judgement may place themselves or the group in danger or seriously disrupt the activity, so long as a judgement is not based on stereotypical assumption or prejudice.
- If you have any concerns about the behaviour of anyone participating in a walk, such as abusive, threatening or inappropriate behaviour, raise this discreetly with the walk leader. If you have concerns that a child or vulnerable person is being placed in danger or abused, you can raise this with your local authority, the NSPCC helpline and/or the Walking for Health safeguarding officer. Please see contact details below.

Useful contacts

1. **Emergency:** Police/Ambulance tel 999
2. **Walking for Health** safeguarding officer: rob.wallis@ramblers.org.uk, tel 020 7339 8523), website: www.walkingforhealth.org.uk
3. **Local authority child and family services.** Contact the County or unitary council and ask for child and family services. See the phone book or www.gov.uk which has a list of all councils in the UK. They normally have out-of-hours emergency contacts.
4. **Police** (non-emergency calls). England 0300 123 1212
5. **NSPCC helpline** tel 0808 800 5000, www.nspcc.org.uk/helpline

3. Guidance for scheme coordinators

Who should read this guidance

Scheme coordinators who organise walks specifically targeted at families/children and vulnerable adults, or where children or vulnerable adults regularly attend, should be familiar with this guidance and ensure it is implemented. Scheme coordinators who don't run targeted activities should still be aware of the contents of this guidance and be prepared to implement it when appropriate.

This guidance is part of a comprehensive policy with specific guidance notes for several different audiences. It is also useful to read the guidance for walkers and the guidance for walk leaders.

Why we need this guidance

We have a duty of care to ensure the wellbeing of everyone who participates in Walking for Health and to minimise the risk of harm, and a moral duty as well as a legal and an insurance obligation to safeguard those who are particularly vulnerable, including children and vulnerable adults. And it is vital we support fully our volunteers and staff, including protecting them from potential liabilities and false suspicions and allegations of abuse.

General principles

We are committed to equal opportunities and diversity and aim to treat everyone with dignity and respect, and not to discriminate on grounds of age, disability, ethnicity, race, sex (gender), sexual orientation, gender reassignment, religion or beliefs or non-belief, marriage or civil partnership, or pregnancy or maternity.

While we are the experts at providing health walks, we can't provide specialist care, supervision or support for children and for those who are unable to care independently for themselves. Children and young people under 18 and those with special needs should be accompanied by others who take responsibility for meeting their needs.

It is important to ensure that walk leaders or other volunteers don't work unsupervised on a regular basis with unaccompanied children and young people under 18 and/or with vulnerable adults. Otherwise, our activities might be classified by law as 'regulated activities' and the people carrying them out **will require enhanced background checks to establish that they are not barred from working in this way**. Organisations which knowingly allow barred people to work on regulated activities are breaking the law.

Participation in Walking for Health is subject to suitability for individual participants. Leaders of walks and other activities sometimes need to make judgements that take into account the safety and enjoyment of everyone

involved in an activity. So long as a judgement is not based on stereotypical assumption or prejudice, they are well within their rights to refuse a participant if they believe this would result in danger to the individual or danger or major disruption to the rest of the group.

It is also not our responsibility to investigate or intervene in suspected cases of abuse or ill treatment, but it is our responsibility to refer such cases to the appropriate authorities, and to recognise that as organisers and leaders of activities in a position of trust, we may be made aware of signs of abuse, or even have it disclosed to us.

When organising activities:

- Ensure that when promoting activities you help potential participants judge their suitability by including details such as walk length, pace, grade/difficulty, and advice on matters such as clothing, footwear and equipment required. Give contact details for more information and be prepared to discuss this in more detail with individual enquirers.
- If working with other organisations that work with children or vulnerable adults (for example schools or community groups) make clear from the outset in writing that they are responsible for the supervision and support of their participants.
- As outlined in existing guidance, leaders should inform people at the start of an activity what to expect, and be prepared to turn away those they consider ill-equipped or incapable, so long as their decision is based on practicalities and not stereotypical or prejudiced assumptions.
- Arrange for extra volunteers on activities aimed at children or people with special needs, to ensure there is cover in case of accident or illness.
- Always report incidents promptly and correctly using the standard form - see <http://www.walkingforhealth.org.uk/volunteering/volunteer-resources/leading-walk-kit>.
- Be sensitive about taking photos and films of activities. It's a requirement to ask the participants first if anyone would prefer not to be featured, and respect their wishes. If working with schools or organisations dealing with children or vulnerable adults, abide by any policies they have about written permission. You should use a photo consent form – see <http://www.walkingforhealth.org.uk/volunteering/volunteer-resources/leading-walk-kit>.

Welcoming children and young people

Walking for Health walk leaders cannot provide direct care and supervision to **children and young people under 18**. Instead, the children or young people must be accompanied by an adult, such as a parent, legal guardian, carer, teacher or youth worker.

We are responsible for ensuring that accompanying adults are aware of their responsibility for supervision and direct care. This is particularly important when the participants concerned are not already well known to the scheme.

If working with a school or youth organisation bringing children and young people under 18 on a walk, make clear to the organisation that they must provide sufficient supervising adults who will take responsibility for the young people.

Where accompanied children under 18 are present, the walk leader should remind the group verbally before setting out that Walking for Health volunteers are not responsible for their direct care and supervision.

Alternatively, you could consider including a tick box on the register for responsible adults to confirm they understand their responsibilities.

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- If an unaccompanied person is under 18, it is best for everyone that they do not participate in the activity. Do your best to ensure that they are safe, for example by asking for a contact number and making arrangements with a parent or guardian. Under special circumstances, for example, if you are far from the young person's home and no-one else is available to ensure they can get home safely, you may choose to include them as a one off. In this case:
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 - Keep a close eye on the young person and check they are accounted for throughout the activity.
 - Keep a note, and report the incident and your actions to whoever is responsible for coordinating the activity.

Make sure that the young person and their parent or guardian are aware that they will need to be accompanied in future.

We welcome and encourage young people under 18 to volunteer for Walking for Health. There are, however, specific recruitment procedures that need to be followed. Please contact the Walking for Health safeguarding officer for more details.

Welcoming vulnerable adults

A vulnerable adult is someone 18 or over who is in receipt of a “regulated activity”. This could be due to a physical or learning disability, illness or injury or mental health issues; old age; substance addiction; domestic violence or abuse or other reasons. It can be a temporary or a permanent condition.

Walking for Health volunteers cannot provide direct care to vulnerable adults. We ask for a carer or support worker to accompany them if necessary. Vulnerable adults may have varying degrees of independence and sometimes it will be at the walk leader’s or organiser’s discretion whether or not they can participate unaccompanied. We encourage people with additional support needs to contact leaders or organisers beforehand to discuss suitability of activities.

Note that providing care for vulnerable adults is generally classified by law as a ‘regulated activities’ and organisations must take special precautions before permitting individuals to provide them (see under General Principles above).

- Make sure the carer or support worker knows they are responsible for the direct needs of the person they’re accompanying.
- It can be difficult to identify levels of independence, and these may change over time. For example an individual who has been attending activities on a regular basis may experience deteriorating physical or mental health. If you have concerns and feel the person requires additional support or should be accompanied by a carer, you could ask them tactfully and discreetly to arrange to bring along a support person in future.

Concerns about abuse

Your scheme may typically have little contact with children or vulnerable adults, so it is unlikely volunteers will encounter concerns about abuse. If you regularly welcome children and vulnerable adults, though abuse remains thankfully rare, it is possible you may have concerns from your own observations of participants, or have such concerns raised with you. As a trusted adult, you may even have abuse disclosed to you by a victim. Abuse can include not only physical and sexual abuse, but also emotional abuse and neglect. Vulnerable adults can also be at risk of financial exploitation or may come to harm through self-neglect or their own behaviour.

If anyone is under serious threat of physical harm or in need of urgent treatment during a Walking for Health activity:

- **Dial 999 immediately** and ask for the **police**, if a criminal offence is being or is likely to be committed, and/or **ambulance** in cases of medical need.

- When it is safe to do so, make notes of the incident and its outcome, fill in an incident report form and return to the Walking for Health safeguarding officer
- If there is an issue of violence or abuse, be prepared to answer further questions from the police and/or the local authority.

If there is no immediate danger but you have a suspicion or concern that abuse is taking place or when an allegation of abuse has been made:

- Make a note of your concerns as soon as possible, within an hour of any incident if you can.
- Contact the local authority's children and family services team. They may ask for a written report and will advise what should be in it. If you need further advice, contact the safeguarding officer.
- Notify your funders/host organisation.
- Fill in an incident report form and return to the Walking for Health team, attaching a copy of any written report made to the local authority. Don't record personal details of people involved on the report form.

Generally:

- When working with children and vulnerable adults, be sensible and self-aware, and avoid placing yourself into situations where your actions may be misinterpreted. Avoid agreeing to supervise a child or vulnerable adult while a parent or carer is absent especially if this means being left alone with them.
- If someone discloses abuse to you, be sympathetic and supportive, but don't agree to keep confidences. Explain it is your duty to pass on information appropriately.
- Keep concerns confidential. Only share details as necessary with trusted senior volunteers and staff and the appropriate authorities.
- Don't risk putting yourself in difficulty or danger by attempting to investigate the case yourself or to challenge the alleged abuser.

Summary

Be familiar with this guidance and ready to explain it to walk/activity leaders.

Ensure publicity helps people judge the suitability of a walk.

Communicate our policy on children and young people: Children and young people under 18 must be accompanied by a responsible adult.

Be prepared to discuss the suitability of a walk with enquirers, and ensure people with special needs know they must be accompanied by someone responsible for their direct care.

Enlist extra volunteers on activities specifically aimed at children and people with additional support needs.

Know how to get hold of the contact details for your local authority Child and Family services.

Ensure incident reports are made correctly and promptly.

Support leaders in dealing with concerns about abuse, keep appropriate contact details and ensure incidents and referrals are reported to the Walking for Health team promptly and accurately.

Useful contacts

1. **Emergency:** Police/Ambulance tel 999
2. **Walking for Health** safeguarding officer: Rob Wallis, rob.wallis@ramblers.org.uk, tel 020 7339 8523
3. www.walkingforhealth.org.uk
4. **Local authority child and family services.** Contact the County or unitary council and ask for child and family services. See the phone book or www.gov.uk which has a list of all councils in the UK. They normally have out-of-hours emergency contacts.
5. **Police** (non-emergency calls). England 0300 123 1212
6. **NSPCC helpline** tel 0808 800 5000, www.nspcc.org.uk/helpline

4. Guidance for walk leaders

We welcome children and vulnerable adults on all Walking for Health activities that are suitable for them as individuals. If you lead walks directly targeted at children or vulnerable adults, please refer to the guidance for schemes.

Be aware that:

- Children and young people under 18, must be accompanied by an adult with parental responsibility.
- People with special needs must be accompanied by someone responsible for their direct care.

At the start of an activity:

- Inform people what to expect.
- Ask everyone new to the walk or with any changes to complete a Walker Registration Form , so long as they are over 18 (we don't collect or store personal information on under-18s). Assure walkers with medical concerns can raise them discreetly and confidentially with you.
- Remind adults accompanying children and young people of their responsibility for direct care and supervision. Remind carers of their responsibilities.
- Don't be afraid to ask for proof of age.
- So long as a judgement is not based on stereotypical assumption or prejudice, don't be afraid to exclude people for whom you believe the activity to be unsuitable; or if their participation would result in danger to the individual or danger or major disruption to the rest of the group.

During the activity:

- If anyone is under serious threat of physical harm or in need of urgent treatment dial 999 and ask for the police and/or ambulance as appropriate.
- Be sensible and self-aware. Avoid placing yourself into situations where your actions may be misinterpreted.