



Wild Souls
Company Handbook

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Introduction & Handbook Review Policy

This handbook contains information, policies and procedures relating to all activities undertaken by Wild Souls and its staff, volunteers and participants. Including, but not limited to, forest school sessions, workshops, other outdoor sessions and activities with both adults and children, and production of our own natural products for sale to the general public.

The Handbook is to be read by all staff and volunteers working for or with Wild Souls prior to participation in any capacity. The Handbook is subject to annual review and to immediate review if an incident indicates the need for this.

Reviewed by	Date	Amendments

Our Vision and Values

A return to nature.....

Wild Souls is a nature based, outdoor education provider with a key emphasis on 'child led' learning through play. Founders Rob Dart and Lisa McBride have a passion for the outdoors and are committed to providing high quality learning experiences for all children. We value uniqueness, allow children to learn at a pace that suits them, and encourage children to take ownership of their learning.

Underpinning all of this, we celebrate the natural world and hopefully inspire children to develop a deep and lasting connection with nature.

At Wild Souls we keep 4 main principles at the core of our thinking through everything we do.

- ❖ **Respect:** Always be respectful of ourselves, our community and nature.
- ❖ **Love:** Approach every aspect of our lives with compassion and kindness.
- ❖ **Learn:** Understand that our journeys are just that and be open. To know that failure is the moment when new knowledge is acquired and the best way for us to grow.
- ❖ **Grow:** As we grow use our knowledge to help grow our minds, bodies and souls; to help grow a strong healthy community; and to help create a strong and healthy environment in which our planet, our community and ourselves can thrive, together..

Outdoor Education

We aim to provide our vision through a variety of means. Firstly and foremostly through the provision of outdoor education to allow participants to get back to a more natural way of living and give them a more holistic wellness, but also a more holistic outlook on life. Allowing participants to be more comfortable with themselves and their natural world and seek a more natural and simplistic approach to life. To do this we aim to instill an intrinsic learning process within participants that enter into our sessions that they will be able to apply and adapt to their everyday lives.

The Learning Process

At Wild Souls we believe that understanding the processes we go through as learners is an important learning process in itself. Understanding and enjoying this journey is the key to creating inspired and open minded learners. At Wild Souls we believe that participants learn best when they lead their own learning as when they are following their own paths, a more focussed and attentive learner will be created allowing a deeper connection to the learning experience.

The learning process in itself is a very simple cycle of hypothesis, experimentation, evaluation, adaption and then back round to hypothesis again. Note there is no emphasis on the result of the experiment, a failed experiment is given equal value to that of a successful experiment. All experiments or actions are useful as long as proper evaluation of the results is made and future actions are adapted to create a more desirable result next time for the learner. This process may cycle several times before the learner reaches their desired result, and also, it is good to note here that the learners desired result may not be the same as the leaders / carers / parents / teachers desired result.

Ecological Policy & Ecological Impact Assessment

Through everything we do at Wild Souls we aim to reduce our impact on our natural environment as much as possible and through our actions we aim to inspire our participants to hold the utmost respect for the natural world around them. Waste should always be kept to a minimum and resources should be managed sustainably and responsibly. Our staff and volunteers should take a thoughtful and considered approach to every aspect of their work, ensuring a sustainable and long lasting partnership between themselves and the environment we live in. It is key that this thoughtful and considered approach is shared with participants in order to promote these considerations through the general community within which we work.

Activity	Ecological Impact	Mitigation
Purchasing of products - single use plastics	Single use plastics are a major cause of the degradation in the quality of our oceans and waterways. This impacts on plants and wildlife in many detrimental ways.	The purchase of single use plastics will be, where possible, kept to an absolute minimum.
Purchasing of products - manufacturer location & quality	A large cause of the degradation of our environment is through goods being produced in countries with cheap labour markets utilising cheap materials and then being transported halfway around the world to be sold at cheap prices to the consumer.	Products will be sourced locally from sustainable sources wherever possible and a better balance between quality and price will be taken into consideration when purchasing.
Purchasing of products - organic	The use of chemicals in many industries nowadays has detrimental effects on the environment, from	Wherever possible organic and responsibly produced goods will be sourced.

	chemicals used in clothes manufacturing to pesticides used to increase vegetable yields.	
Promotional and marketing materials	The manufacturing of single use promotional materials is costly to the environment and wasteful, especially in the digital age we live in.	We will not undertake any short term print marketing campaigns, we will run these online. Any hard marketing materials will be permanent and/or reusable, such as boards that can be repainted and reused in future campaigns. Wherever possible we will avoid plastics in our advertising boards but on occasion, for longevity, plastic may prove to be the best option.
Fires - siting of fires	<p>Composition of soil must be taken into consideration as setting fires directly onto peaty ground causes great risk of the fire spreading. There is less risk of fire spreading on a clay based soil.</p> <p>Setting fires directly onto the ground will damage roots underground and also the habitat of creatures living in the soil.</p>	<p>Wherever possible fires will be raised off the ground. If it is not possible the necessity for fire must be considered.</p> <p>On more permanent sites fires will be lit in a fire pit/container of some sort and the ground will be laid with stones beneath to ensure the soil beneath remains in tact and the wildlife beneath can continue unhindered.</p> <p>When a temporary fire is being lit the site will be chosen specifically in order to limit damage to surrounding plants and wildlife. Where possible a bare patch of ground should be sought and the fire raised in order to limit damage to the soil</p>

		<p>beneath. Any dead wood, twigs and leaves will be cleared from around the fire site to ensure the fire cannot spread. At temporary sites a leave no trace policy will always be followed to ensure the site is left in the same wilderness state in which it was found. This means all materials used to create the fire area will be spread so as other users of the woodland can enjoy the environment.</p>
Fires - fuel	<p>Foraging wood, kindling and tinder from the forest can reduce and/or damage the habitats of wildlife living in the woods such as fungi and insects. Dead wood is an important part of the ecosystem within a forest and should be used sparingly.</p>	<p>Fire wood will be sourced from local suppliers using sustainable sources.</p> <p>For bushcraft purposes use of natural materials to help start or light a fire can be foraged from the woodland but must adhere to the foraging guidelines below. Foraged wood will not be used as fuel for the fire.</p>
Foraging	<p>Accessing resources can lead to damage of wildlife environments and habitats.</p> <p>Over foraging can greatly impact the ecosystem of an area and can even lead to the removal of a species and/or species that rely on a particular foragable material.</p> <p>Foraging on Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) without a background of the site</p>	<p>Before foraging anything try to get as much information as possible on the item, such as other animals which may use the item and with this specific times of year which may cause them more damage. Also, look at the lifecycle of a plant, do not pick all the fresh young leaves from a single plant which will lead to it dying.</p> <p>Materials should only be foraged where there is an</p>

	could easily lead to changes that were unforeseen.	<p>abundance and taking of the materials will not be visible.</p> <p>Only what is needed should be foraged, more than is needed is wasteful and excessive.</p> <p>Always leave no trace when foraging.</p> <p>Do not forage on SSSI.</p>
Tree Climbing, shelter building and swings	Damage to trees.	<p>Only use fallen wood or responsibly foraged wood for shelter building.</p> <p>Restrict tree climbing and swings to suitable trees that will not get damaged.</p>
Toilet use	<p>Baby wipes contain plastic.</p> <p>Human waste contaminating waterways and/or land.</p>	<p>On permanent and temporary sites where access is possible, portaloos and toilet tents will be provided which Wild Souls staff will be responsible for disposing in a responsible manner i.e. down a toilet or suitable caravan waste disposal point.</p> <p>Toilet paper will be provided with no traces of plastic and baby wipes will be avoided/discouraged.</p> <p>Where a portaloos is not possible any waste including plastic free toilet paper should be buried at least 15 cm deep and at least 20m away from any water source.</p>
Entering and leaving sites	Disruption to/destruction	Just by being on a site we

	of natural habitats.	will have an impact but the aim must always be to keep this to a minimum. Where there are defined paths these should be followed, when leaving these paths care should be taken to ensure damage to flora and fauna is limited. We must always ensure we remove any rubbish generated by our presence leaving no trace of our presence but footprints.
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Equal Rights Statement

At Wild Souls we are committed to ensuring we provide a safe, nurturing environment for everybody. Children and adults, including staff, will be treated with respect and dignity regardless of age, gender, racial heritage, religion or disability and everyone has the right to participate on an equal basis.

Child Protection Policy

This policy applies to all members of staff at Wild Souls, including any volunteers that may work with us. It has been drawn up on the basis of law and guidance that seek to protect children.

At Wild Souls we believe that every child, regardless of age, gender, religion, racial heritage and disability have the right to feel safe and never experience any kind of abuse. We understand that we have a responsibility to keep the children we work with safe from abuse and we are committed to practise in ways that protects them.

We will do this through the following means:

Awareness:

- Ensuring that all staff are well informed, with relevant safeguarding knowledge, qualifications, or through attending training to ensure they can identify signs of abuse and promote the safeguarding of children.

Prevention:

- Ensuring, through awareness and good practice, that they minimise the risk to children. This will be achieved by providing a safe physical environment for the children to work in, avoiding situations where children are left on their own with adults and never allowing children to be unsupervised, by a Wild Souls member of staff, whilst attending our sessions.
- All Wild Souls staff, including volunteers, must have received enhanced DBS satisfactory checks prior to sessions taking place.
- All DBS certificate numbers and start dates must have been checked by Rob Dart and details recorded in this document.
- Children will use the portable toilet provided by Wild Souls, if parents/carers are staying to watch the sessions then they will take their own child only to the toilet.
- If children do not have a parent/carer with them then the children will go in pairs to the toilet, one can watch the door to ensure nobody enters.
- We will encourage children to use toilet facilities before and after sessions, when they are with their parents/carers.

Responding:

Ensuring that disclosures are responded to sensitively and appropriately, in line with current best practice. This means adults will:

- Take seriously any concerns raised by adults or children.
- Take positive steps to ensure the protection of children who are the subject of any concerns.
- Support children, staff or other adults who raise concerns or who are subject to concerns.
- Act appropriately and effectively in instigating or co-operating with any subsequent process of investigation; listen to and take seriously the views and wishes of children; work in partnership with parents/carers and other professionals to ensure the protection of children.

Reporting:

Ensuring that appropriate steps are taken where concerns arise regarding the safety of children - i.e. reporting incidents or concerns to designated safeguarding person.

A direct disclosure means that a child has told you in person about an incident of abuse.

An indirect disclosure may occur when you overhear a child talking or witness a child, through role-play or re-enactment, acting in a way that suggests they may be a victim of abuse.

- Disclosures may happen directly or indirectly, and must be recorded on the same day by the adult who witnessed the disclosure.
- It must be in the language used by the child and not interpreted by the adult.
- It must include the date and time of the disclosure, the child's name, and the witness's signature to state that the document is a true and accurate reflection of the disclosure.
- Adults must not ask the child any leading questions about disclosures.
- Adults should listen respectfully and respond sympathetically, never in disbelief or shock, to any disclosure a child may make.
- Adults should never promise to keep the disclosure to themselves - you should reassure the child/children that you will only tell people that will help to make them safe.

Any disclosure to an adult during Wild Souls sessions must be reported immediately to the designated safeguarding officer, in this case, Lisa McBride who has had 'designated person' training. If the disclosure involves the designated safeguarding

officer, then it should be reported immediately to the deputy safeguarding officer, in this case Rob Dart, who also has designated person training.

Designated safeguarding officers shall refresh their training every 3 years.

The session leader is responsible for checking at the end of the session that the disclosure has been reported to the 'designated person' and what action has been taken.

Designated Safeguarding Officer:

Lisa McBride
07772721251
info@wildsouls.net

Deputy Safeguarding Officer:

Rob Dart
07850538851
info@wildsouls.net

Name	Safeguarding Certificate number	Date of Issue	Date of Renewal
Lisa McBride	jUvSjcfxCZ	09.05.18	09.05.21
Robert Paul Dart	IMV2jSU1nA	10.05.18	10.05.21

Health and Safety Procedures

1. All Wild Souls sites will be risk assessed prior to the session taking place. (see Risk Assessments)
2. Any dog dirt will be removed from the site before sessions commence.
3. Any risks posed by extreme weather, such as fallen branches, thick mud, will be risked assessed and controlled where possible.
4. Medical details will be collected via internet forms prior to any sessions taking place and details placed on the register.
5. Children who need asthma inhalers should bring them to every session. It is the parents/carers responsibility to ensure children have their inhaler at every session. Wild Souls staff are responsible for looking after them during sessions.
6. Children with cuts or broken skin will be provided with waterproof plasters to protect from mud and germs.
7. There will always be at least one qualified first aider during each session and there will be a first aid kit to hand during every session.
8. Children will be registered before each session and head counted at key points throughout the session.
9. Children will wear brightly coloured bibs during each session so they are easy to identify in an open space.
10. A boundary will be explained to the children before each session, the boundary will be a clear defined area to avoid confusing the children.
11. Children are under the supervision and responsibility of parents/carers while walking to the site. This responsibility is transferred to Wild Souls at the site, 5 minutes before their session starts.
12. Public Liability Insurance is provided by Wild Souls. (see appendix)

13. Each session will be planned and risk assessed and shared with all Wild Souls instructors and volunteers.
14. Emergency Procedure will be known by all Wild Souls instructors and volunteers.
15. A mobile phone will be carried on all sessions.
16. All equipment used will be risk assessed and safety checked prior to each session.

Foraging Policy

(taken from Wild Food UK : <https://www.wildfooduk.com/foraging-code/> , accessed: 08/05/19)

1. Never eat anything unless you are 100% sure it is safe.

The first rule of foraging is simple. Never eat anything poisonous! When foraging for wild food, you must be able to correctly identify what you are picking, otherwise you should not eat it. Never eat any wild food without multiple sources of positive identification – do not eat any wild plants or mushrooms just from viewing this website. SOME WILD PLANTS AND MUSHROOMS IN THE UK ARE DEADLY POISONOUS. Please pick responsibly, you should not pick a basketful first hoping its edible to research later, as you may be unwittingly picking a rare or endangered species.

2. The rules we teach only apply to the UK.

You should really only apply these rules in the UK. Other countries and land masses have different plants and mushrooms that are poisonous and look very similar to some of our native safe species. The rules for foraging are different depending on what type of land you are on, but they mainly come from the Wildlife and Countryside Act of 1981. With a bit of the theft act, some of the foragers code and just some things that we at Wild Food UK would like you to do, so that we know that you are foraging responsibly and sustainably.

3. The Countryside Act & Foraging.

The countryside act says that foraging the 4 F's from common land is acceptable so long as it is for personal consumption only. The 4 F's are fruit, foliage, flora and fungus, This means moderate amounts for you and your family only, and most obviously not for Commercial Foraging purposes. The rules on common land are basically; 'take what you want for personal consumption' but to pick with respect. Respect the trees, plants and mushrooms, the surrounding environment, wildlife that may have a dependence on with what you are taking, other people and their property. The countryside act also states that you shouldn't uproot any plant from common land. In addition there are often localised Bylaws relating to picking in a specified area. To find out the local bylaws you need to look on park or borough websites, or check the backs of the big signs when you walk into a park. If you see something that relates to the removal of plants or fungi from the area then don't do it. There are plenty of places where you can still forage so find one of those.

4. Our Picking Limits.

In regards to 3 of the F's we go by what the countryside act says, picking responsibly for personal consumption. However with regards to fungus we go by what the British mycological institute said, which was that you should never pick more than 1.7 kg of mushrooms on any foray. We only see the fruiting body of a mushrooms organism; a bit like its apples; and each organism will produce thousands of mushrooms and each of those can produce millions or potentially even trillions of spores; or potential new mushrooms. So as long as everyone leaves at least half of what they find behind there should always be mushrooms left to procreate and for others to enjoy. As long as you are not digging the mycelium up from underground you are not harming the organism. Here at Wild Food UK we have also put a further caveat into the foragers code; that you never pick more than half of what you find anything from anywhere. The pick no more than half what you find rule applies to all the plants and fruits too

5. Wild Food UK SSSI Site Policy.

Please stay away from all Sites of Special Scientific Interest. These places are SSSI for a reason, such as a rare environment, butterfly, orchid, or even mushroom, and unless you really understand the SSSI nature of the site you may inadvertently do some damage whilst foraging. In our opinion at Wild Food UK, not enough of Britain is left for nature and for science, and we don't need to forage on these sites so let's not.

6. Nature Reserve Rules.

Nature reserves often don't mind you foraging as long as you stick to the countryside act, use common sense and be considerate. National Trust properties are generally the same, but please ensure you check with the individual nature reserve or National Trust property first.

7. Farmland Rules.

Although farmland is private property you will often find that there are byways running across or around most of it. As long as you don't leave the paths, observe the countryside act, and don't touch anything that has clearly been planted, then you are ok to forage. If you stray off the byways you are likely trespassing on somebody else's land and livelihood, so in essence you are breaking the law. The best thing to do if you see a foragable plant and you consider its placement somewhat ambiguous, is to find out who the farm belongs to and speak to them first. This of course comes with a warning, crops are often sprayed with nasties and if you are

foraging around the edge of a sprayed field, be aware that your takings will likely be laced with chemicals that you should not touch or ingest.

8. Commercial Foraging.

Wild food became fashionable in fancy restaurants, this led to a gold rush in and around London's green spaces, which resulted in an unstable quantity of fungi being removed from nature. Many boroughs reacted by enforcing complete picking bans through new local bylaws. Some famously restricted places are Epping Forest, Richmond Park, Wimbledon Common, Windsor Great Park and more. This of course has impacted responsible foragers and now foraging close to London could lead to a fine of up to £500 for picking 1 mushroom. The only place you can legally commercially forage in the UK is on private property.

9. Private Property Advice.

On private property you are not bound by the Countryside Act, however we still advise that you are sympathetic to the area and pick with respect, common sense and care. It is essential that before picking on private land, you have the landowner's full permission. If you do see mushrooms on someone's lawn, or a tree dripping with fruit that seem to be going to waste, then knock on that person's door and ask if they wouldn't mind you harvesting their bounty. You will likely be given a surprised look, but we have never had anyone upset by us asking. If they are willing, ensure you only pick what they are happy for you to take. Often people don't realise what they have, and are pleased to be enlightened!

Leave No Trace Policy

In order to maintain the beauty and ecosystems of the natural environments that we work in we will always adopt a policy of Leave No Trace.

Permanent Features/Additions on Permanent Sites

For permanent settings there may be permanent site features such as a fire pit and fire circle. By creating these permanent structures we are reducing the impact on the natural environment around us by ensuring our footfall is restricted to certain areas and we are not constantly moving logs from the environment around us to build the required structures to keep our sessions safe. By keeping these logs and structures in situ, insects, fungi and other natural living things will be able to create a habitat, within or underneath, and not be disturbed.

We may also engage with the environment around us by planting various plants and creating new natural structures but these things will always be done in a way that is sympathetic to the surroundings and any actions will be thoroughly researched to ensure our actions help to bolster the local ecosystems and do not hinder them in any way.

Leave No Trace Principles

Below we have listed the Leave No Trace principles taken from the Leave No Trace website. Underneath each principle we have outlined how we will ensure these principles are met.

1. Plan ahead and prepare.

At Wild Souls we ensure all sessions/activities are properly planned and any foreseeable impact we may have on the natural environment is minimised.

2. Travel and camp on durable surfaces.

At Wild Souls we will ensure we avoid disturbing natural habitats unnecessarily and keep erosion of natural landscapes to a minimum by sticking to marked footpaths and considering the suitability of the environments we work in. Should we leave a footpath we will do so with care and respect for the natural habitats we are moving through.

3. Dispose of waste properly.

At Wild Souls all waste will be disposed of correctly and there should never be any waste left behind.

4. Leave what you find.

At Wild Souls we will forage but only for materials and food sources that we will make use of and according to our Foraging Policy.

5. Minimize campfire impact.

As per our Ecological Impact Assessment in our handbook we will only ever light fires when raised off the ground following our Fire Procedure.

6. Respect wildlife.

Respect is our first principle at Wild Souls. Respect of ourselves, our community and the natural world we live in. All are equal.

7. Be considerate of other visitors.

We will ensure that our actions have no impact or a positive impact on the other users of the spaces we work in. Where possible a dialogue should be opened with other users to ensure this is happening.

(All in bold was taken from Leave No Trace, Center for outdoor ethics:
<https://lnt.org/why/7-principles/> , accessed: 08/05/19)

Food Preparation Procedure

Participants partaking in activities that require them to prepare food. A specific risk assessment will be completed prior to any food preparation activities, however we will always follow our food preparation procedure.

1. Participants and staff will wash their hands prior to touching any food, and wash their hands after the activity.
2. Surfaces will be clean with antibacterial spray prior to the activity.
3. No meat, cooked or raw, will be involved in our food activities.
4. If dairy products are involved, they will be kept at a suitable temperature.
5. If the activity requires children to use a sharp knife, they will do so on a 1:1 ratio with a Wild Souls member of staff.
6. Any foraged food will be washed thoroughly before consumption. Participants will only forage food that has been identified by a Wild Souls member of staff.
7. Wild Souls staff will all complete a level one food hygiene course.

Name	Certificate No.	Certificate Date	Renewal Date?
Lisa McBrid	CIEH Food Safety Level 1	23.5.2019	

Accident and Emergency Procedures

Injuries

First Aid

- A qualified first aider will always be present during Wild Souls sessions. Qualified First aiders are: Lisa McBride, Rob Dart.
- An up to date first aid bag will be present during all sessions.

Possible Fractures and significant injuries

- Emergency First Aid applied by most qualified first aider.
- If urgent and casualty cannot be moved call ambulance emergency immediately quoting position of site, including postcode. If casualty cannot be moved, give ambulance service a clear description of where you are.
- If parent/carer are not on site with child, they will be contacted immediately and incident reported.
- A report of the incident will be recorded in the Wild Souls incident report book for future reference.

Safety of group and follow up procedures

- In the event of a serious injury, the other member of Wild Souls will take sole control of the group.
- The group should be kept calm having had situation explained and then given some simple 'keeping together' games away from the casualty. Or if necessary cancel the session and contact parents.
- On arrival of ambulance the parent/carer should accompany the child to hospital. If they have been left under the responsibility of Wild Souls, one member of staff will accompany the child remaining with them until their parent / carer arrives.
- Any information about the child's medical history that is known to Wild Souls, will be relayed to the medical services.

Emergency Services 999 or 112 Ambulance, Police, Fire

When you call an emergency service state the service required and listens carefully to the instructions given by the operator. Be prepared to give the site address using the details on the site card and directions.

Name	First Aid Qualification	Certificate Number	Date of Issue	Date of Renewal
Lisa McBride	16 hour outdoor first aid course, including outdoor and paediatric elements, that meets the needs of outdoor NGB awards and Emergency First Aid at Work, Paediatric First aid for Ofsted and meets the criteria of Band 3 Outdoor First Aid as per Institute of Outdoor Learning.	27031803	27/03/2018	28/03/2021
Robert Dart	16 hour outdoor first aid course, including outdoor and paediatric elements, that meets the needs of outdoor NGB awards and Emergency First Aid at Work, Paediatric First aid for Ofsted and meets the criteria of Band 3 Outdoor First Aid as per Institute of Outdoor Learning.	05031902	05/03/19	04/03/22

Lost Child Procedure

If anybody suspects a person may be missing, they should immediately alert a member of Wild Souls staff.

Stage One:

- 1.Children will be recalled to staff and counted.
- 2.The missing person will be identified and in a calm manner it will be established where they were last seen.
- 3.One of the Wild Souls staff will remain with the group, while the other member does an initial search of the area to find the lost child.

Stage Two:

1. If the person is not found within 5 minutes, the session leader will alert the parents/carers and the police.
2. The group will assemble with parents/carers and a further headcount initiated.
3. Parents/carers will take responsibility of their child, all Wild Souls staff will continue to search for the lost child, prioritising hazardous areas first.

Stage Three:

1. Emergency Services will be notified again if person is still missing after a further sweep of the area.
2. Advice will be followed from these services.

Behaviour Management Policy

In our experience, as professionals working with children and parents, there is always a reason why children exert certain behaviour. When children are engaged in their learning, their behaviour is positive, they work collaboratively with others and they express an enthusiasm for learning. However, if children are not engaged in their learning, for whatever reason; be it boredom or difficulty, their behaviour can be negative. We understand that there are many reasons why children exert certain behaviours, be it personal trauma, biological or neurological barriers, social anxieties or burdened with responsibilities beyond their capabilities. At Wild Souls we believe that there are some key areas that we can influence to ensure children are learning at the best of their ability.

Meeting their basic needs: At Wild Souls sessions, we will always prioritise the children's basic needs. We will always ensure the children are warm or cool enough, depending on the weather. We will also ensure they have drinks to keep them hydrated and a healthy snack. If children are feeling unwell we will ask parents to collect them from sessions. We want all the children taking part to feel comfortable and enthusiastic about the sessions.

Engaging the children: At Wild Souls we believe if learning is exciting, stimulating and age appropriate, children will be fully committed. We are dedicated to planning and preparing fun, engaging activities that will get children excited about learning. All the sessions will be suitable for the child's age and developmental stage, as we are aware that if activities are too difficult or easy, children can become easily distracted.

All inclusive: Wild Souls believe all children have the potential to learn to the best of their ability, therefore if any children have particular needs we will strive to meet these needs to the best of our ability. We will differentiate activities and resources accordingly so all children can thrive in our sessions.

Our approach to behaviour management: If children do display inappropriate behaviour, we will first and foremost assess whether it is because of the session content and immediately address this. Following this, we will discuss with the children why they are behaving this way. We want to build a relationship of trust and respect and we believe treating children equally and fairly goes a long way to support this. If the behaviour is still an issue we will discuss any incidents with parents after the session. We will encourage an open dialogue between staff, parents and the child to help the child understand why their behaviour was inappropriate. We will decide together if any consequences should take place as a result of the behaviour. We would like to avoid exclusion from sessions as much as

possible, this will only become an option if they are putting themselves or others at serious risk.

We believe treating children as individuals is key when responding to behaviour and we will not label or categorise a child because of their behavior. Every session will start with a 'clean sheet'!

Anti-Bullying Policy

Bullying can be described as *“a behaviour, over time, by an individual or group, that intentionally hurts another individual or group, either physically or emotionally.”* (Guidance on Preventing and Tackling Bullying, Department for Education).

To ensure all children feel safe and included during Wild Souls sessions, our staff will do the following:

- Reinforce collaborative behaviour.
- Promote awareness, respect and care for others.
- Provide a positive role model for children and volunteers.
- Promote effective relationships in which all are accepted, valued and treated equally.
- Develop acceptable attitudes towards yourself, others and the environment.

Social Media Policy

Social media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn) is a broad term for any kind of online platform which enables people to directly interact with each other.

- Wild Souls will only post photographs of children on social media platforms if parental consent has been given before hand and never with children's names connected to the photographs.
- Parents and carers attending sessions should only take photographs of their child/children and should never post photographs of other children on their own social media platforms.
- Individuals who have observed Wild Souls sessions should never mention the names of any children who attend session or Wild Souls employees on their own social media platforms.
- Employees of Wild Souls should never 'friend' children whom they have worked with on social media platforms.

Confidentiality Policy

All information about children at Wild Souls will be confidential between parents/carers . Parent/carers will share with staff of Wild Souls information that they consider is relevant to the child's safety, welfare or progress. No named, permanent records of children will be kept of the children, after they finish with Wild Souls.

Photographic records will only be used by Wild Souls if permission is granted by parents/carers of children. All parents/carers will complete a consent form for photographs and videos, prior to the sessions starting. Photographs will never be annotated with names or anything that links to the child's identify. Wild Souls will only use unnamed photographs in its brochures and website.

Volunteers will be briefed by Wild Souls about confidentiality issues. Participants attending sessions that are unaffiliated with Wild Souls will also have their confidentiality rights treated with utmost care to ensure their safety and welfare.

Complaints Policy

1. Parents with complaints about Wild Souls staff should contact Rob Dart or Lisa McBride.
2. The session leader will respond to complaints orally within 24 hrs and in writing where necessary within 48 hrs.
3. Rob or Lisa will investigate the complaint and give written feedback to the parents/carers.
4. If this does not resolve the complaint the matter will be taken to the partners for a final resolution.

Toilet Procedure

Permanent/easy access sites

In order to meet the basic needs of groups within our care provision of toileting facilities are imperative.

1. A toilet tent with portable toilet, a bin for hygienic waste and hand washing facilities will be provided at Wild Souls sessions wherever possible.
2. Wild Souls staff are responsible for maintaining the cleanliness of these facilities.
3. At the beginning of each session participants will be told about correct operation of the toilet.
4. Only human waste and the toilet paper provided should be put into the portable toilet. Any other waste can be put in the bin provided.
5. Children should be accompanied to the toilet by parents or carers where possible.
6. Participants should go to the toilet in pairs so one can watch the door to ensure nobody enters the tent unwittingly.
7. As per our ecological impact policy we will use environmentally friendly products wherever possible for the toilets.

Temporary/remote sites

Sometimes it may not be physically possible to have toileting facilities. Should this be the case the following should be followed.

1. Wild Souls staff will be responsible for carrying a small shovel and plastic free toilet paper.
2. Participants will be instructed to dig a hole at least 20m away from a water source and at least 15cm deep in which to put any waste including toilet roll. This should then be buried and covered in order to leave no trace.
3. All other hygienic waste should be carried back to a locality where it can be disposed of correctly. Participants are responsible for this themselves.

Tool Procedure

During Wild Souls sessions we will use a range of tools to enable participants to use and engage with the natural world around them. From palm drills to axes and bow saws we are committed to allowing participants the opportunity to develop a full range of skills. **All tool use, however, will be at the discretion of the Forest School Leader managing the session.** It is up to a skilled leader to assess the suitability of tool use for a participant on an individual basis.

Storage and Maintenance of Tools

- Wild Souls staff will be responsible for the correct storage and maintenance of all tools.
- When not in use tools should be stored in a secure, locked, watertight container in order to keep tools in good condition and safe from misuse.
- All tools will be periodically cleaned and sharpened as per Wild Souls tool maintenance guidance videos: <https://wildbobs.co.uk/pages/tool-maintenance>
- At the beginning of each session all tools should be checked for signs of wear, loose handles, damaged blades etc. and any damaged tools should be removed from the kit box until repaired or be replaced.

Safe Use of Tools

Tools carry an inherent risk but when used properly these risks can be minimised and the use of tools can give amazing benefits to participants in expanding their creative and imaginative ways of thinking. Transforming a piece of wood with your hands and a few simple tools is a great way to connect with the natural world around you but will also do great things for self esteem and give a participant a sense of pride and well being.

The Tool Pit

In order to create a safe environment for use of tools a “safe space” must be created on site. During sessions all tools will be kept in this area and all participants will be aware that entry into this area is only permitted by a member of Wild Souls staff. This area should be at least arm length, plus tool plus 1m in diameter (approx 1.75m). By creating this safe space, no accidental collisions can occur. Tools will be kept in an orderly and tidy manner to avoid accidental damage or injury.

Facilitating Participants

As mentioned above, tools will only be used at the discretion of the Forest School Leader managing the session. It is important for the leader to assess the participants individually to see what level of skill they currently possess. This can be done through the careful observation of participants through engaging in other activities. For example, hammering a smaller stick into the ground with a larger stick using correct stance would indicate a participant had good hand eye coordination and may be able to use a variety of tools under close supervision.

When teaching a participant how to use a tool it should be done on a 1:1 basis within the tool pit. Observers to this are welcome, as long as they are outside the tool pit. An explanation of the tool should be given in the first instance, explaining the different parts of the tool and their uses and the risks they pose to the participant and others. The participant should then be told about the Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) that is needed whilst using the tool and both leader and participant should put on any necessary PPE.

The participant should then be instructed in the safe operation of the specific tool as per our safe operation of tools video guides:

<https://wildbobs.co.uk/pages/safe-operation-of-tools-guide>

Fire Procedure

Fire carries with it its own inherent risks and for this reason must be very closely managed. From injuring ourselves to damaging the natural world around us there are many considerations to be made in enabling the use of fires whilst maintaining a safe environment for all. The benefits of fire within Wild Souls sessions are great though. In colder months it is imperative we sustain the basic needs of all participants and the ability to provide hot food and drinks is essential. Fire also creates a sense of community and is a great way to bring a group together.

At Wild Souls we minimise the risks of fire by following the following procedures.

1. Fires will only be lit if permission has been granted by the landowner.
2. Suitable first aid and safety equipment must be present: First Aid box containing dressings and cling film, fire blanket, fire glove, plunge bucket.
3. Fires will only be lit by, or under the close supervision of a suitably trained member of Wild Souls staff.
4. As per our ecological impact assessment, all fires should be raised off the ground in a suitable fire pit. On more permanent sites the ground can be laid with stones too to prevent heat damage from the fire pit to the soil beneath.
5. A suitable boundary around the fire pit should be made from large timbers.
6. A seating area around the fire pit should then be arranged at a minimum of 1.5m from the fire.
7. Any overhead coverings should be kept a minimum of 2.5m above the fire.
8. All fires should be kept small and within the boundaries of fire pit.
9. During sessions participants will be advised that they do not enter the fire circle without first asking permission of the leader. When they do enter they should sit. When they wish to leave they should step out of the fire circle and walk around it.
10. If bringing participants into the fire circle to, for example, toast marshmallows this should be done on a 1:1 basis with a qualified member of Wild Souls staff.
11. Marshmallows should be removed from sticks using two biscuits and the sticks should remain with the leader.
12. Care should always be taken when handing over any food to a participant and the leader is responsible for checking/advising temperature of food.
13. Fire should not be left unattended at any point.
14. Fire should be extinguished by water, checking with hands to ensure all of the ashes and embers have cooled sufficiently before scattering the remains, ideally in nettles as the soil here will not be bothered by the addition of potash.

In the event of a burn it must be plunged into the plunge bucket for a minimum of 10 minutes before being assessed and possibly wrapped in cling film and further medical assistance sought.

Daily Operating Procedure

Our work at Wild Souls is varied, working with a variety of different age groups and people of different backgrounds and, as such, our sessions will constantly evolve and adapt in order to facilitate the best approach to learning for the participants within our care. We have a great team of highly skilled and dynamic practitioners who are able to adapt and respond to changes on a variety of different levels. Every session is different. Weather, seasons changing, animals emerging, opportunities for learning will emerge throughout every session and Wild Souls is committed to enabling participants to explore these opportunities wherever possible. This doesn't mean we don't have a plan though.

Leaders will arrive on the site 2 hours before the session is due to start in order to setup the site (as per relevant procedures and policies) and perform a daily site check. During this time, leaders will setup relevant activities based upon experiences the group had in previous sessions which will (hopefully!) spark some interest within the participants when they arrive.

When participants arrive on site they will be greeted and allowed time to explore the site a little before gathering the group around the fire circle. Leaders will then welcome everybody and explain areas of safety including but not limited to:

- Toileting Procedure
- Fire procedure
- Boundaries for free play
- Tool pit procedure

A period of time working as a group is usually then employed, this could be continued discussions around the fire for reflections or plans, a game to warm up, singing or a combination.

The participants are then allowed time to lead their own learning by exploring the environment and the different activities on offer. Leaders will not directly lead these parts of the session but observe and assist or inspire. Observations made here will be used in planning for the next session. Activities can then be provided that lead on from a participants experiences.

At a suitable point all participants will be gathered round the fire for refreshments and encouraged to share their experiences and further community time can be spent before it's time to say goodbye at the end of the session.

The site is then packed away by the leaders following our leave no trace policy in order to allow other members of the community to enjoy the natural space following our departure.

Clothing

Due to the nature of our work at Wild Souls virtually all of our sessions will take place in an outdoor, natural environment. For this reason it is essential that participants dress appropriately when attending our sessions. When spending time outside it is important to dress accordingly and not just assume it will be warm in the summer!

The key to staying warm and not getting too hot is layers. Layers will trap air and keep heat in much the same as an animals fur, should the weather turn a little milder you can always take a layer (or 2!) off. It is also a good idea to bring a rucksack to put any clothing in you may remove or carry extra clothing in you may not require at the beginning of the session.

A complete waterproof outer layer should always be brought to the sessions in order to keep out the rain should it appear, even in the summer. There's nothing worse than getting caught out and then spending the rest of the session in wet clothing!

When dressing for our sessions avoid scarves and go for snoods and also avoid any hats with dangly tassels as these will cause a hazard, for example, when approaching the fire.

Below is a handy guide for what to wear to keep out the cold taken from the weathersafety.gov website.



When dressing for our sessions it is also important to consider the environment we will be working in. The natural environment can provide scratches and stings from various sources so long trousers and sleeves are advisable, just think thin and cool in the summer months. Also, sun protection including a cap and suncream is essential.

Staff Ratio, Roles & Responsibilities

Staff Ratios

Our teaching philosophy at Wild Souls requires a low ratio of participants to leaders in order for the participants to get the most out of the sessions. The high amount of observation required for the approach to learning we adopt would become impossible should there be too many participants and the sessions would become bland with a goal of mediocrity for the group and aiming for the middle of the pack as opposed to enabling the growing needs of each individual learner.

We aim for the following ratios in our groups:

Age	Ratio (Participants:staff)
2-4 years	3:1
5-11 years	8:1
12-16 years	8:1
16 years+	12:1

These ratios may need to be adjusted depending on the environment, individual needs and risk assessments.

Supplying this ratio of Wild Souls staff for younger children and certain large groups such as schools would not be possible so we would rely upon the additional support from parents/carers and/or staff.

It is here where we will clearly define the roles and responsibilities of each individual working or participating within a Wild Souls session. It is important to understand that an individual may jump around between these different groups of individuals depending on the situation. For example an older learner may find themselves in a teaching role when helping a younger learner or a parent/teacher/leader will undoubtedly find themselves as a learner at some point within a session. Therefore these tables should not be looked at in isolation but as a whole with a group on the first session with any new group and be available for everybody to refer back to throughout all Wild Souls sessions.

Age	Ratio (Learners: staff)	Learners Roles & Responsibilities
2-4 years	3:1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Having fun!
5-11 years	8:1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● All of the above (including having fun!) ● Respecting others and the environment ● Following Toilet, Tool and Fire procedures ● Learn of the Wild Souls principles of Respect, Love, Learn & Grow and begin to apply them ● Take some responsibility for clothing and attendance/punctuality at sessions. ● Take responsibility for the content of the sessions ● Take responsibility for the structure of the sessions ● Become aware of the learning process ● Become aware of the natural cycles of our world ● Become aware of our interconnectedness with the world around us
12-16 years	8:1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● All of the above (including having fun!) ● Begin to facilitate learning for others ● Begin to understand how the natural cycles of the environment around them affect the activities they do within the sessions and their everyday lives. ● Begin to plan for activities on a more long term basis ● Begin to apply the principles of Respect, Love, Learn & Grow more to their everyday lives as well as within the sessions ● Responsible for own clothing choices for sessions. ● Responsible for own punctuality/attendance.
16 years+	12:1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● All of the above (including having fun!) ● Be able to deeply apply the Wild Souls way of life to their everyday life, practicing the principles of Respect, Love, Learn & Grow. ● Be able to open their minds to new learning and able to share old knowledge.

Age	Ratio (Learners: staff)	Parents/Carers and/or Teachers Roles & Responsibilities
2-4 years	3:1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Having fun! ● Ensure learners follow toilet, tool and fire procedures ● Observation of children and feedback to Wild Souls Leaders ● Ensure you and learners are appropriately clothed ● Allow learners space and time ● Try to lead the learners journey rather than dictate it, allow learners to solve problems their own way. ● Ensuring punctuality and regular attendance of learners ● Become a learner
5-11 years	8:1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● All of the above (including having fun!) ● Ask questions and allow thinking time, a few seconds isn't enough! ● Allow learners a little more responsibility for clothing but ultimately ensure they are safe and comfortable. ● Allow learners a little more responsibility for attendance/punctuality. ● Facilitate the learners in understanding the learning process as described in our vision and values in our handbook.
12-16 years	8:1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● All of the above (including having fun!) ● Understand the necessity for community and enable a more autonomous and independent approach for learners in order to develop a deep sense of community within the group and be a part of that community.
16 years+	12:1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● All of the above (including having fun!) ● All are equal.

Age	Ratio (Learners: staff)	Wild Souls Leaders/Staff Roles & Responsibilities
0-4 years	3:1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Having fun! ● Provision of a safe, welcoming and engaging environment in line with all policies and procedures within the handbook. ● Observation of children and facilitating and collating feedback from parents/carers/teachers ● Planning and provision of appropriate sessions based upon observations and feedback ● Ensure everybody is appropriately clothed ● Ensure learners are allowed space and time ● Ensure learner led approach throughout sessions ● Ensure parents/carers/teachers are fully aware of the importance of punctuality and regular attendance of learners ● Ensure everybody is aware of all of their roles & responsibilities, but specifically relating to fire, tools and toilet procedures. ● Instill an understanding of the learning process at Wild Souls in parents/carers/teachers.
5-11 years	8:1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● All of the above (including having fun!) ● Ensure everybody (including learners) is aware of the importance of punctuality and regular attendance. ● Instill an understanding of the learning process as described in our visions and values in our handbook at Wild Souls in everybody.
12-16 years	8:1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● All of the above (including having fun!) ● Facilitate the development of a more autonomous working community within the sessions. ● Enable and guide learners to become leaders. Assist in the application of their knowledge of the learning process through their guidance of others.
16 years+	12:1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● All of the above (including having fun!) ● Facilitate the growth of an independent and autonomous community from within the group.

Woodland Management Policy

As part of a well managed forest school it is essential that we engage positively with the natural settings we find ourselves in. We are not experts in woodland management but we have basic knowledge and a willingness to learn stemming from our principles here at Wild Souls. Where we are unsure of any matters regarding woodland management and our interaction with our natural environment, expert guidance will be sought.

Awareness of the Complexity of Nature

At Wild Souls we understand that nature is a complex thing and by changing one aspect of an ecosystem it can have dramatic effects elsewhere. From changes to soil conditions through fires or introduction of new plants to inadvertent removal/destruction of habitats for insects there are many considerations to be made and decisions to make permanent changes to an ecosystem or environment will not be made lightly and should only be done following an adequate amount of research and sufficient investigation.

Table of Interventions

Intervention	Considerations
Removal of branches from trees	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Safety of participants - risk of injury.● Any chopped timber should be stacked near the trunk of the tree to allow any mini beasts living and/or plants growing on the tree to remain in the same environment.● Wild Souls staff are not permitted to cut any branch greater than 6" in diameter or higher than 5m as per insurance policy.● Any branches greater than 6" or higher than 5m off the ground should only be attended to by a tree surgeon.
Clearing paths/areas for sessions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Safety of participants - risk of slips/trips, stings, cuts.● Killing off rare species of plant - areas should be thoroughly checked before cutting back and all foliage identified.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Destroying habitats for insects and wild animals - areas checked for insects and animals living in the area to be cleared and moved to a suitable location nearby. ● Removal of an environment from an ecosystem - there should be sufficient comparable areas of wildlife within the direct vicinity in order to sustain the ecosystem.
Removal of diseased plants or animals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Safety of participants - risk of infection. ● Consult with an expert to ensure any diseased plant or animal is treated/disposed of correctly.
Removal of poisonous plants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Safety of participants - risk of ingestion/contact with poisonous plants. Can participants be educated to risk rather than risk removed? ● Removal of habitats for certain creatures - can the plant be safely moved to another suitable location? ● Precautions to be taken when moving or handling poisonous plants - seek expert guidance.

Risk Assessment Policy

Assessing risk is an important aspect of our activities at Wild Souls and it is something we encourage everybody within our settings to get involved with. By making the management of risk a communal activity we feel we are giving the participants of our sessions a valuable life skill.

Risk Assessment Process

Upon setting up a site to run sessions we will perform a general risk assessment of the site and the specific activities that will take place on that site. This will be kept in the site folder and made available for everybody to review and will be reviewed on an annual basis as a matter of course. Should any new activities or risks come to light the general risk assessment will be amended accordingly.

Once on site and running sessions risk management will have to occur on an ongoing basis and this will be done through dynamic risk assessment. These risk assessments will be carried out on a very specific basis taking all of the individual characteristics of the situation under consideration. Any risk limiting interventions will be considered before a judgement is made on the appropriateness of the activity. These will then be written up on a dynamic risk assessment after the sessions in order to record this process. These dynamic risk assessments will also take into consideration the benefits of the activity as outlined below in our Risk Benefit Policy.

Risk Benefit Policy

At Wild Souls, we believe that risks should be balanced against the benefits that can be gained from taking that risk. This is mirrored by the HSE's statement on child's play and leisure, specifically regarding promoting a balanced approach to risk and they outline the following points:

“

- *Play is important for children's well-being and development*
- *When planning and providing play opportunities, the goal is not to eliminate risk, but to weigh up the risks and benefits*
- *Those providing play opportunities should focus on controlling the real risks, while securing or increasing the benefits – not on the paperwork*

- *Accidents and mistakes happen during play – but fear of litigation and prosecution has been blown out of proportion”*

(Taken from: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/entertainment/childs-play-statement.htm>
Accessed on:22/05/19)