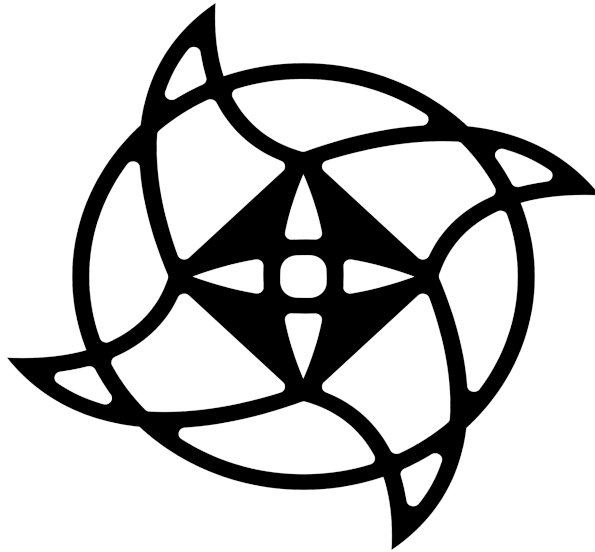




BELTANE FIRE SOCIETY

Safeguarding Policy

Autumn 2026

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Table of Contents

1. Induction
2. Purpose of the document
3. Definitions
4. Roles and responsibilities
5. Related documents
6. Key Principles that guide BFS Safeguarding
7. How To Access Support
8. Breaches to this policy
9. Version control



1. Introduction

Safeguarding is an active practice of care, respect and protection. It is an umbrella term describing the process of attempting to justly address harm done and minimise predictable future harm, where the risks may be physical, psychological, emotional, sexual, spiritual or financial. It is a keystone of several core processes of Beltane Fire Society (BFS), where controls or oversight should ensure predictable risk to volunteers, contractors and the organisation itself is minimised.

2. Purpose of the document

This document describes:

2.1 What Safeguarding responsibilities are attached to each named role within BFS organisational structure and community

2.2 An overview of how our community's aims and values should inform our Safeguarding work

2.3 Guidance for how this document interacts with other BFS policy and guidance documentation.

3. Definitions

The following BFS-Specific concepts are used throughout this document and their associated meaning:

Blues: Senior BFS volunteers with an established formal role. Currently Active Blues have important responsibilities in Festival facilitation and in pastoral/community care. Former or inactive Blues do not have any official responsibilities but still hold a degree of community respect based on their knowledge, experience and service.

Safeguarding Team: A small group of volunteers from the Board, Blues, Contractors and Membership of BFS who have opted-in to work on Safeguarding cases, complaints and policy. Where an external Safeguarding and Resolutions Officer is in post, they are the de facto Lead of the team, irrespective of how the members may choose to organise themselves and divide practical responsibilities.

4. Roles and responsibilities

By signing up to uphold the Code of Conduct, Safer Spaces Policy and Volunteer Agreement all active members of BFS have acknowledged that they hold some personal responsibility to safeguard the wellbeing of the whole community and the reputation of the Beltane Fire Society.

However within the organizational structure, many named roles hold specific responsibilities on top of this:

4.1. The Board Of Trustees

- 4.1.1. Monitor compliance with applicable legislation and best practice. The Board is ultimately accountable for safeguarding within BFS and is answerable to its members, regulators, and other stakeholders.



- 4.1.2. Make decisions in the best interests of the Society and its community, ensuring they are in line with our governing documents.
- 4.1.3. Receive and consider views on the changing needs of the BFS community over time.
- 4.1.4. Maintain the highest standards of discretion and confidentiality.

4.2. The Safeguarding Team

- 4.2.1. Receive feedback/requests for assistance from the community and support the members involved (both complainant and accused) through the process of seeking resolution either informally or via formal channels.
- 4.2.2. Advise and support the Blues, Trustees or Contractors on Safeguarding-related issues.
- 4.2.3. Implement agreed policies, guidance, and procedures, and recommend modifications to the same for consideration by the Board (or its delegated body).
- 4.2.4. Maintain confidential documentation from all casework according to applicable data protection policies.
- 4.2.5. Proactively identify community concerns or misunderstandings about the Safeguarding process itself and address them as clearly as possible (such as by changing a process, or communicating more clearly about it).
- 4.2.6. Provide clear, confidential guidance to Selection Panels about members' suitability for posts.
- 4.2.7. Maintain the highest standards of confidentiality and discretion, making fair and transparent judgements about when information needs to be shared outside of the Team.

4.3. The Safeguarding and Resolutions Officer

- 4.3.1. Provides an independent complaints and resolution service for any BFS member who wishes to access it.
- 4.3.2. Take the lead on the processing of complaints and the updating of policy, guidance and procedure within their area.
- 4.3.3. Be the final arbiter in complex safeguarding decisions and take individual responsibility for them.
- 4.3.4. Give or signpost appropriate support to any member or contractor that contacts them in need.
- 4.3.5. Make available a system for confidential complaints, statements or investigations to be made in the case of conflicts of interest on the Safeguarding Team.
- 4.3.6. Maintain the highest standards of discretion and confidentiality.

4.4. All contractors

- 4.4.1. Follow BFS Policy, guidance and procedures as pertain to their individual work and their involvement in the community at large.
- 4.4.2. From their specific viewpoints across the Festival and community, identify issues as they develop and bring them to the attention of Blues, Board or Safeguarding Team as appropriate.
- 4.4.3. Make reasonable adjustments to their work where requested by the Blues, Board or Safeguarding Team to support the health, wellbeing or dignity of members.



- 4.4.4. Maintain the highest standards of discretion and confidentiality when they are given access to sensitive information as part of their work.

4.5. The Blues

- 4.5.1. Being present and involved across a wide spectrum of the festival and community, applying their experience and knowledge to identify issues early and observe, offer support/mediation where appropriate or highlight issues to others (contractors, SG Team, Board) to fix.
- 4.5.2. Being the friendly, approachable and informal face of BFS Safeguarding.
- 4.5.3. Maintaining a high standard in their own behaviour in BFS and adjacent spaces, as appropriate to the very high level of community trust and influence the role infers.
- 4.5.4. Maintaining the highest standards of discretion and confidentiality when given access to sensitive information as part of their work.

4.6. The Group Organisers and the Court

- 4.6.1. Co-creating a safer space, ensuring their participants (or Court Helpers) understand and subscribe to this intention.
- 4.6.2. Hosting a consent chat in an early rehearsal, ensuring their participants (or Court Helpers) understand and subscribe to these values.
- 4.6.3. Ensure the volunteers they supervise are aware of BFS Safeguarding policies and guidance appropriate to their roles, and know where to access help (Blues, Safeguarding Team).
- 4.6.4. Being ready to take the lead in addressing a developing harmful situation in the moment in their rehearsals or group spaces if something goes wrong.
- 4.6.5. Moderating their own behaviour to reflect and acknowledge the higher level of trust placed in the role, as described in the Court Member Agreement and GO Agreement, including Don't Screw The Crew and not handing out intoxicants.
- 4.6.6. Bringing group-level problems to the attention of Board, Blues, Contractors, or Safeguarding Team as appropriate, and cooperating with them in the management of these problems.
- 4.6.7. Being respectful and discreet when they are given access to sensitive information as part of their work.
- 4.6.8. As GO is a temporary position, these responsibilities are considered to be held from the moment the GO application is accepted up until the end of the GO debrief for that Festival.

5. Related documents

Safeguarding is an umbrella term and other relevant information can be found in the following specific policy or procedure documents

Code of Conduct

Principles of Participation

Volunteer, GO and Court Agreements signed by all active members each Festival

Complaints Procedures: Resolutions, Grievances and Disciplinary



BFS-Wide Safer Spaces policy
BFS Guidance “How to build a Safer Space”
BFS Guidance “Consent Workshop”
Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy

6. Key Principles of BFS Safeguarding

These Key Principles define our community and organisational perspective on Safeguarding issues and our choices should uphold them wherever possible.

6.1 The Safer Space

See also Safer Spaces Policy

“A space where volunteers can choose to push their own boundaries, and expect to not have their boundaries pushed by others.”

6.1.1 Our members are empowered through a culture of consent that is Freely Given, Retractable, Informed, Enthusiastic and Specific. Activities should be opt-in and boundaries stated should be respected. Training should cascade from the GO weekend through the GOs to all volunteers to build this culture within the Society as one of our core values.

6.1.2 All members should be helped to understand that as much as they are part of the community, the work of continuous improvement belongs to them. BFS as an entity should support members as they step up and propose change or challenge current practice, as part of the work of making us better.

6.2 Prevention or mitigation of predictable harm

BFS should take sensible precautions against abuse or predictable harm

6.2.1 Where concerns are raised about a member harming others, BFS should risk-assess their continued presence in the Society as part of any investigation. The Safeguarding Team may propose as Outcomes to an investigation mitigations against future harm, such as a Personalised Volunteer Agreement addressing the problem or strongly recommending the Selection Panel not to give that member any positions of power.

6.2.2 Where there are concerns about serious or repeated harm that BFS Safeguarding Team cannot mitigate or control against, the Safeguarding Team may propose as an Outcome to an investigation that the person’s membership be withdrawn and their name listed as strongly recommended not to be readmitted.

6.2.2.1 Further detail about the process of handling complaints and concerns is found in the Resolutions, Grievances and Disciplinary Procedures.

Further guidance on removing a member is found in the Articles of Association.

6.2.3 As a team of volunteers for a small charity, it is acknowledged that many issues brought to the Safeguarding Team might be beyond our capacity to investigate fully or make any certain judgement on. BFS does not have the power to compel people to give evidence, or prove/disprove accusations beyond reasonable doubt. In the past BFS was advised to treat issues outside of its remit by not responding to them at all. This is no longer the case. Where there is evidence of a serious cause for concern, and the



continued presence of a Member could risk either harm to other members or to the reputation of BFS, the Safeguarding Team should use risk assessment tools to reach a decision, whilst acknowledging that they are only working on the balance of probabilities using imperfect information.

6.3 A transformational approach to justice

As a community, we acknowledge that unintentional harm is still harm. However, our processes should encourage acknowledgement and growth, rather than blame and punishment. Where we can, we should give our members space to learn and do better. Where restrictions are imposed on a member after they have caused harm, these should be proportionate and in the framework of reducing risk and promoting growth, not punishment. Long-term or permanent sanctions should only be considered where the Safeguarding Team do not believe an ongoing risk can be appropriately mitigated within the Society.

6.3.1 The Safeguarding Team should keep a list of former members who have either resigned membership or been expelled and who they heavily recommend should not be readmitted due to posing an unacceptable safeguarding risk.

6.3.2 They also keep a list of members and former members who they heavily recommend against giving positions of power and responsibility, such as GOing or Blueing - this may be ongoing, or may be until a certain issue is resolved (such as participating in several festivals without causing conflict, or managing a health/social issue that affects their behaviour).

6.3.2.2 After a period of time on one of these lists, if a person comes forward asking to change this, appearing to be willing to openly address the problem and give evidence of changed behaviour/personal growth/taking responsibility for harm done/appropriate management strategies, the Safeguarding Team may consider this. The decision to remove someone from the Banned or No Position Of Authority lists rests exclusively within the Safeguarding Team's discretion as they have the most complete understanding of the original reasons for listing.

It should be noted that, due to the need to uphold a fair and robust safeguarding process, BFS will need to retain some personal information of former and current members for a longer timescale than normal.

6.4 Access to a fair and transparent Complaints Process

6.4.1 Where a member brings a formal complaint to the Safeguarding Team, or where the organisational team feels a situation cannot be resolved informally, it should be processed according to the Resolutions, Grievance or Disciplinary procedures.

6.4.2 These Procedures should be made available to members on the BFS website and regularly signposted to members.

6.4.3 Communication with members involved in any complaint should be as clear and transparent as possible, without compromising the confidentiality of other members involved or the integrity of an investigation.

6.4.4 Safeguarding Team members should keep clear, coherent and complete records of casework so that future Team members can understand the background and the reasoning behind decisions made.

6.5 Support and representation

6.5.1 In all cases, BFS has a Duty of Care to members. Where the Duty of Care of two members, or a member and the Society as an institution, come into conflict, both sides should be treated with kindness



and dignity during the process of assessing the case. Both sides are entitled to support, and should be offered it from within BFS or signposted to places they can seek support elsewhere.

6.5.2 Where members are interacting with the Resolutions, Grievance or Disciplinary processes it should be acknowledged that this is emotionally complex and they should be allowed a support person in meetings.

6.5.3 If a criminal incident may have occurred and the Member wants to report it to the Police, the Board will offer their full support. If the member does not want to report it, the Board is only compelled to report in cases where a child or legally vulnerable adult has been harmed, or is at risk of harm. Otherwise the Board should uphold the informed choice of the Member involved.

6.5.4 Some complaints may need to be reported to the Scottish Charity Regulator OSCR. This is a legal requirement but would be handled with utmost discretion.

6.6 Dignity and Confidentiality

6.6.1 All BFS members within the organisational team (Blues, Board, Contractors, Safeguarding Team) acknowledge that as part of their work they will learn sensitive information. They commit to treating this with the highest level of discretion and confidentiality. Where fulfilling their roles appropriately requires sensitive information to be shared, this should be done on a need-to-know basis, following guidance, and with transparency around the decision to disclose.

6.6.2 Where members are asked to keep information confidential as it pertains to an open case, these expectations are defined clearly in the Working Definition of Case Confidentiality

6.6.3 Where an Outcome of an investigation is that a Member has a condition imposed on their future membership (such as an agreement to avoid a certain behaviour or a recommendation against GOing) this should be implemented in the least intrusive manner possible and with discretion.

6.7 Transparency, accountability and acting in partnership with the community

6.7.1 Traditionally the Safeguarding Team has comprised those members of the Board of Trustees, Blues, and former Trustees or Blues in good standing, who have opted in to this kind of work. Since 2024 the Team has also included a paid Safeguarding and Resolutions Officer who is external to the community and has specialist knowledge and experience. The Team may also include BFS members in good standing who are not within the Organisational Team but have volunteered to help and been confirmed by the Board as Community Organisers with a Safeguarding role.

6.7.2 The names of current members of the Safeguarding team should be publicly available, and kept up to date. Wherever these are listed, mechanisms for raising concerns whilst avoiding one or more of these individuals should also be highlighted, so that seeing the list never serves to stop a member reporting their issue.

6.7.3 Members of the Safeguarding Team who volunteer as GOs should step back from Safeguarding work during the festival run-up, to maintain clarity of priorities and avoid conflicts of interest. In some circumstances it may be best for work on a certain discrete task to continue but volunteers must at least be removed from the safeguarding@ mailing list.

6.7.4 Although casework itself should be treated confidentially, the Safeguarding Team should be open to questions about process, policy and outlook. They should proactively communicate about the



(non-confidential) work they do and ensure the community know that respectful challenges or suggestions for improvement are welcome. In the broadest sense, the work of safeguarding our community should belong to every member.

7. How to Access Safeguarding Support

There are multiple channels available for BFS members to access support or guidance with Safeguarding issues from the organisation. These include (but are not limited to)

Blues@beltane.org mailing list to all active Blues

Individual Blues (by email or in person)

safeguarding@beltane.org mailing list

Individual members of the Safeguarding Team (by email or in person)

resolutions@beltane.org Safeguarding Officer direct email

Their GOs

All BFS Contractors

board@beltane.org mailing list

Individual Trustees (by email or in person)

7.1.1 These should be signposted regularly to the membership regularly in a variety of ways

7.1.2 Where a BFS member reaches out to anyone within the organisational structure, that person should help them access the correct help. For example, if a member asks an individual Trustee advice on something which would be best supported by Blues, they should either make introductions or forward the information to the Blues.

7.1.3 As part of their pastoral role, Blues and Safeguarding Team members may offer members personal support to either process their feelings around difficult situations (listening, emotional support, offering advice, signposting to services) or provide mediated spaces for the difficult situations to be addressed.

7.1.4 Where a member wants to seek support outside of BFS (going to the Police, a charity, specialised support services) BFS will support them in their choice.

8. Breaches to this policy

Failure to comply with the BFS safeguarding policy may be managed in a number of ways, depending on the nature and consequences of any incident. In some cases a combination of responses may be required.

- Initial informal approach highlighting the issue and checking a member's understanding of their responsibilities, where appropriate
- Investigation using the resolutions procedure (Internal or co-operation with an external)
- Investigation using the grievance procedure (Internal or co-operation with an external)
- Investigation using the disciplinary procedure (Internal or co-operation with an external)
- Local authority co-ordinated safeguarding investigation
- Serious incident reporting to The Charity Commission
- Police investigation

9 Version control

Please update Version Control chart every time the document is reviewed or updated. For more guidance on how version control works, please see BFS Policy Framework.

Version control chart

Effective Date:	Draft: Autumn 2026
Next Review Date:	Autumn 2027
Version:	v2.0
Issued by:	Safeguarding Team - Jenny Bloom
Approved by:	Full board, October 2026
Summary of changes:	Full rewrite due to several years of changes in procedure and team structure