

# Stomping Grounds Handbook, Policies and Procedures

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## **1.1 What is it?**

Forest School is an educational ethos which develops confidence, creativity and communication skills through long term participant-led experiences in a woodland/natural environment. This setting offers opportunities for children to develop a connection with the natural world. It is learner-led and responsive to individual needs and interests. Being learner led means that choice and free play are integral parts of forest school; forest school is a process, not a product.

Each of our practitioners develop their approach through observation, planning and building relationships with their participants; in this way, our sessions cater for all learning needs and preferences. Observation and scaffolding are vital to our forest school planning to ensure individual preferences and interests are met and that activities/experiences develop in a logical sequence as children gain skills.

The holistic approach of forest school promotes self-esteem, empathy and enjoyment. Encouraging our learners to take supported risks is a significant part of forest school. It is a place where our practitioners' training and experience enables children and young people to 'try things out' within their individual parameters, whether that is a physical, emotional or social 'risk', enabling participants to make their own decisions about what they want to learn, how and when. In this way, forest school fosters resilience, independence and creativity.

Being a forest school practitioner is in itself a continuous learning process as we engage in reflective practice and use this to plan future sessions, in addition to developing our own skill sets. Our team of practitioners regularly participate in informal and formal opportunities to share experiences, knowledge, ideas, concerns etc to ensure our practice responds to children's needs.

## **1.2 Who are we?**

Stomping Grounds Forest School North East CIC is based in Prudhoe and was established by Sophie Watkinson, experienced teacher and passionate believer in getting communities back to nature. Stomping Grounds run regular Forest School sessions with groups of all ages, focusing on holistic development. Information about our directors and practitioners can be found here:

<https://www.stomping-grounds.org/meet-the-team/>

### **1.3 What do we do?**

Stomping Grounds specialise in long term Forest School programmes, but also offer taster days and one off bushcraft and woodland workshops.

We carry out a variety of Forest School programmes and Outdoor Adventure days which include but are not limited to Youth Clubs, Interventions for young people with EHCPs, Afterschool Clubs, School Groups, Pre School Groups, Birthday Parties and Holiday Clubs.

Some examples of the types of activities we can facilitate include:

Campfire cooking, fire lighting, den building, survival skills, simple foraging, green woodworking, using hand tools safely, woodland games, tree climbing, tree and plant identification and natural art.

We have our own base in Prudhoe, Northumberland, but also run community and school groups in other woodlands across the North East.

If you have a project or woodland in mind, we will complete a site survey and 3 year sustainability plan in partnership with the land owner to ensure appropriate use to minimise impact on the woodland. We can also support you with applications for grants to help fund some or all of the activity

### **1.4 Why we do it?**

As roaming distances decrease, risk and decision making is removed, screen time increases and continuous assessment shapes learning experiences, the Forest School movement offers an important and effective intervention.

As described by the FSA (Forest School Association), regular Forest School sessions enable children and young people to:

- Explore and discover
- Experience appropriate risk and challenge
- Choose, initiate and drive their own learning and development
- Experience regular success
- Develop positive relationships with themselves and other people
- Develop strong, positive relationships with their natural world

To support children and young people to experience appropriate risk, our team of practitioners follow the same risk benefit approach; we are sharing this here (*see appendix 1 of this handbook*) so parents/carers can feel reassured that we offer a considered approach to risk in our forest school practice.

Participants of regular Forest School sessions have shown increased motivation, attendance and attainment in other areas of the curriculum. Forest School has also been identified as an effective intervention for those who struggle to achieve in more formal learning settings.

## **POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

### **2.1 Admissions**

Stomping Grounds offer Forest School experiences to young people and families. Stomping Grounds is open to everybody from all ethnic, religious and social groups. Booking and consent forms to be received before places on courses are reserved to ensure we have relevant emergency and medical information to operate safely.

## **2.2 Staffing**

### **The Role of the Forest School Leader**

- To plan and run sessions, provide resources and risk assess, sharing this information with relevant parties.
- To observe and assess each group and plan subsequent sessions accordingly.
- To model appropriate behaviour at all times and encourage children to develop a greater awareness of their own and other's emotional needs.
- To take responsibility for liaising with all involved parties, producing risk assessments, updating and following policies and procedures, administering first aid, counting and maintaining equipment and tools.
- To ensure that every child is respected as an individual, that bullying is not tolerated and that the rules and guidelines are followed.
- To direct the group to safety in the event of emergency.
- To build an environment where learning, fun and enjoyment thrive.
- To maintain quality and skills through regular CPD and reflective practice.

### **Role of the Assisting Adults (e.g. parent helpers, school staff and volunteers)**

- To support the Forest School Leader with regard to safety, pastoral care, promotion of well-being and safe delivery of activities.
- To work with the Leader to develop tasks and activities that engage and support all of the participants.
- To support the Leader in case of a first aid incident or other emergency situation.
- To be fully conversant with the Forest School policies, risk assessments and emergency procedures.
- To help to manage and maintain the equipment and tool kit.
- To be willing to provide evaluation of sessions and participants.
- To be a role model.

### **Role the Parent/Guardian**

- To read and understand our ethos, policies and procedures and ask questions of us where necessary
- To complete relevant consent and information gathering forms to ensure safe delivery
- To bring the children on time with appropriate kit and clothing
- To ask their children about their expectations before sessions and their feelings after sessions.
- To inform the Forest School Leader about child's medical conditions or of any changes to such information.
- To inform about any other factors such as recent problems and worries that might affect child's well-being and behaviour.
- To collect children on time.
- To perform tick checks on children during tick season

### **Role of the Children (anyone under 18)**

- To behave safely and responsibly in line with Stomping Grounds policies
- To listen to and respond the group leader with regards to any safety information
- To play within the physical and behavioural boundaries established by the group and the leader

## **2.3 Equal Opportunities**

Stomping Grounds actively promotes equality and works hard to bust the myth that bushcraft and outdoor adventure is a 'traditionally white male' pursuit. We encourage applications from girls, boys, non binary and LGBTQ+ young people, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Groups, Differently Abled and Neurodiverse young people and families.

Stomping Grounds will actively promote this equal opportunity statement by role modelling and embedding it within delivery. We continually engage with and support organisations and networks as allies of minority groups who are under-represented in outdoor pursuits. Discrimination because of race, gender, ability, sexual orientation,

religious belief, age, or any other perceived difference will not be tolerated. Any breaches of the equal opportunity statement will be reported to Stomping Grounds management and partners.

Letters to parents/guardians/participants will include information on suitable clothing. Stomping Grounds will keep some spare items of outdoor clothing and waterproof so that all participants can take part in activities regardless of access to suitable clothing.

Under 18s can only take part in activities once a medical and consent form has been read and signed by their parent or guardian.

## **2.4 Confidentiality**

### **How we use your personal information**

This section tells you why Stomping Grounds collects information about you and/or your child and how this information may be used.

Our records are electronic and on paper. Records which we hold about you and your child may include the following information:

- Details about you, such as your address, contact details, previous medical history, allergies, school attended
- Any previous events you have attended / contact you have had with us
- Notes about your and/or your child's health
- Relevant information from schools and health care professionals

Information may be used for audit purposes to monitor the quality of the services we provide.

All of your information is held securely on our premises and securely on our person during sessions. It is used to communicate with you, for medical emergencies, and may be used for statistical purposes. Where we do this, we take strict measures to ensure that individual people cannot be identified.

Sometimes your information may be requested for research purposes – in such instances we will always ask your consent before releasing such information.

### **How do we maintain the confidentiality of you and your child's records?**

We are committed to protecting your privacy and will only use information collected lawfully in accordance with:

- General Data Protection Rules 2018
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Common Law Duty of Confidentiality

Every member of staff who works at Stomping Grounds has a legal obligation to keep information about you and your child confidential.

**Who do we share your information with?** We only ever pass on information about you to others, e.g. GP, schools if there is a genuine need for it and you have given your consent.

We will not disclose any information about you to any third party without your written permission or in case of a child's information the parental consent, unless there are exceptional circumstances such as a medical or child protection emergency.

**Access to your personal information** You have a right under the General Data Protection Rules 2018 to request access to view or obtain copies of what information Stomping Grounds holds about you and to have it amended should it be inaccurate.

**Objections/Complaints** Should you have any concerns about how your information is managed, please contact Jessica Lloyd (Director) in the first instance. If you are still unhappy following a review, you can then complain to the Information Commissioner's Office via their website ([www.ico.gov.uk](http://www.ico.gov.uk)).

**Change of details** It is important that you tell us if any of your/your child's details such as name or address have changed or if any details such as date of birth are incorrect in order for us to correct it.



**Taking and storing digital images** When parents/carers book their child/ren onto our sessions, they must complete a consent form for each child, which includes whether they allow us to photograph their child during forest school for the purpose of sharing images on social media. If they give consent, we will use their images for the purpose of communicating with parents/carers about our forest school programmes and for advertising to a wider audience to encourage greater participation. The images, once uploaded for this purpose, are permanently deleted from the device they were taken on. The images remain available for use on our password protected social media sites and stored securely on our Google Drive.

## **2.5 Child protection and Safeguarding**

In order to promote and protect the welfare of children and vulnerable adults who access Stomping Grounds provision, all group leaders will have up to date safeguarding training. In the case of a disclosure, leader will:

- Listen, not interrupt, not ask questions, not make judgements and not make promises of confidentiality.
- Make a record of what was said, as it was said, and how the participant behaved. (incident reporting form available as appendix to Safeguarding Policy Document)
- Sign and date any notes and keep them in a safe and secure place.
- Report concerns to Nominated Child Protection Lead (Sophie Watkinson) or Deputy (Jessica Lloyd).
- Not allow participant to go home if they feel they are at risk of serious harm.
- Stomping Grounds Safeguarding Policy is read and adhered to by all Stomping Grounds staff and volunteers. Parents, schools and others parents can read the policy in full here:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/u/0/folders/1bBilrXFMGgpOTzc1Fssp2sReNmuRaZU1>

## **2.6 Recruitment, Training and Induction**

- All sessional staff and volunteers must have DBS clearance before starting, unless supervised by another DBS checked person at all times.

- All those responsible for leading sessions will undertake safeguarding training by an external body - usually the NSPCC. This training must be updated every 3 years.
- If sessional staff and volunteers are working with other organisations and have completed safeguarding training within 3 years, evidence of this training must be provided. The training must be updated within three years from the original training.
- All sessional staff and volunteers will receive a copy of the safeguarding policy as part of their induction and must read and sign the document to confirm.
- Newly recruited sessional staff and volunteers will receive safeguarding training within 1 month of starting with Stomping Grounds.
- In some cases, it is in the best interests of the child for their parent to accompany them to Forest School. In these cases, clear guidance must be provided for both volunteers, practitioners and the parent involved. Unless they have appropriate DBS clearance, the parent does not work with any other child other than their own and is also supervised by a DBS-cleared volunteer or practitioner at all times. The parent must receive a copy of the safeguarding policy and sign confirmation.

## **2.7 Bullying and behaviour**

Forest School is known to have a positive effect on behaviour. Our practitioners view all behaviour as an expression of need. Behaviour modification or training is not favoured, however if participants partake in behaviours that put themselves, the equipment, the environment or others at risk then practitioners will:

- Issue an immediate verbal response to the action: a gentle explanation to the young person as to why the behaviour was unacceptable.
- If unacceptable behaviour persists, the child will be withdrawn from the activity/group for a short period. Support assistants and volunteers are in place to work 1-1 with young people who may need time and space away from the main group. Young people who are showing unsafe behaviours will not be allowed to take part in high risk activities until dynamic risk assessment shows the risk has been mitigated.

- Parents/carers or teachers will be informed if a young person's behaviour is of concern. Practitioners will refer to Stomping Grounds safeguarding policy (<https://drive.google.com/drive/u/0/folders/1bBilrXFMGgpOTzc1Fssp2sReNmuRaZU1>) if necessary.
- If appropriate mitigation cannot be put in place to ensure the young person can take part safely (such as 1-1 support), then Stomping Grounds will support Parents/Carers or School staff to find appropriate support from specialists via CYPS.

Bullying will not be tolerated at any Stomping Grounds activity or event. Participants who experience bullying should speak to their leader, or Sophie Watkinson immediately so that it can be addressed. Practitioners will follow the above steps for inappropriate behaviour towards other participants, staff or volunteers.

Staff and volunteers who experience bullying should contact Sophie Watkinson, or visit <https://www.nationalbullyinghelpline.co.uk/employees.html> for immediate advice and support.

### **3 Normal operating Procedures**

#### **3.1 Equipment**

For each session, the Lead Practitioner takes a bag of essential items into the woodland. This bag contains:

- First Aid
- Emergency whistle
- Charged mobile phone (check for the reception prior to the session) Bin liner or receptacle for removing waste
- Sharps box
- Forest Schools Folder containing: Handbook including emergency action plan and policies and procedures, register for the day, Risk assessments, medical and

emergency contact details (or contact details for a person in possession of these), parental and photo consent forms, permission to use the site, copy of public liability insurance, DBS, First Aid Certificate, FS Leader's emergency contact details. This folder can be electronic if the mobile device supports access, and there is enough network coverage to access it quickly if needed.

### **3.2 Staff to participant ratios**

During the sessions the Forest School Leader adheres to appropriate supervision guidelines and refers to the minimum standards for working with children, young people and vulnerable adults. See Tool and Fire policy (4.2 and 4.5) for appropriate ratios for these specific activities

### **3.3 Before the session**

- Equipment and tools are checked and packed.
- Essential items including medical forms are packed.
- Activity items are packed.
- The site is visited to review risk assessments.
- A site safety checklist is completed
- All involved have read and understood the risk assessments.
- The weather conditions are reviewed.
- Necessary equipment is assembled.
- The group is informed about wearing suitable clothing and footwear and it is ensured before the session starts that everyone is appropriately dressed.
- Register is taken.
- All participants are encouraged to use toilet before coming to the site.

### **3.4 During the Session**

- Headcount is conducted on arrival at the Forest School location, whenever the group is brought together and at the end of the session.
- Introductions are carried out if a new group or individuals is taking part.
- The group is made aware of hazards or medical considerations.

- The boundaries for the day are described or walked together.
- Participants are engaged in the development of rules and guidelines for the day.
- Activities are explained.
- Pastoral needs of the group are monitored.
- Safety is ensured throughout by continuously assessing risk and taking appropriate action to reduce or remove any risks found.

### 3.5 After the Session

- All fires are extinguished appropriately.
- Any tools used during the session are counted and packed.
- Any temporary structures are removed.
- The site is checked and all litter removed.
- All equipment is collected.
- A form of review takes place.
- If required the group is assisted on their way back.
- Evaluation forms are completed.
- Equipment and tools are thoroughly checked, cleaned and correctly stored.

### 3.6 Food

Where food or snacks are provided as part of a session, lead practitioners must:

- source food in line with our sustainability policy
- provide healthy and balanced meals
- serve **only** vegetarian food. We would like to move towards **all vegan** offers.
- check allergy and dietary information for participants and cater accordingly.

#### A note on **marshmallows**:

Here at Stomping Grounds, we have witnessed first hand the immediate impact marshmallows can have on the way that children and young people behave. We do not believe that marshmallows should automatically be associated with Forest School, and therefore our policy is to restrict the use of marshmallows in session to end of term

celebrations and birthday parties. We ask that parents do not bring marshmallows to sessions.

## **4 Health and Safety**

### **4.1 General Safety**

In line with the Health and Safety at Work Act (HASAWA 1974), Stomping Grounds has a legal duty to ensure that people affected by the company (clients, participants and partners) are not exposed to risk of health or safety as far as reasonably practicable. In order to ensure this, the following steps are taken:

- All activities and sessions are comprehensively risk assessed.
- All staff taking part in activities, including staff from partner organisations, volunteers and other supervising adults including parents will have read and understood each risk assessment before taking part in sessions (available in group specific handbook).
- All equipment is checked on a regular basis by trained staff.
- Accidents and Incidents will be reported on an accident reporting form.
- Safety checks are carried out of each site before sessions commence.
- An appropriately stocked First Aid kit will be kept on site at all times.
- A trained Outdoor First Aider will be on site at all times.
- Appropriate staff to participant ratios will be adhered to, depending on age and needs of participants. These will be reviewed according to group needs, but will at a minimum adhere to LEA and Ofsted ratio requirements.
- Strict tool ratios, appropriate to activity and equipment, will be adhered to.
- Tool work will take place within a designated tool area.
- Knives will be numbered and kept in a locked tool kit.
- Exit routes will be discussed and kept clear at all times.
- The group leader will always carry OS coordinates of location.
- The use of tools and fire will be supervised and monitored as part of a baseline assessment, to ensure activities are safe and appropriate for the group.

- Tools and dangerous equipment will be kept in secure storage and issued with age appropriate supervision and ratios.
- All sites have a no smoking policy.

## **4.2 Fire safety**

Fire prevention measures include removal of litter and debris from site. No flammable liquids or gases will be kept on site. All equipment used will comply to British Safety Standards. When group activities include fire lighting, participants will be trained in safe fire lighting and maintenance and will be appropriately supervised. No more than 4 participants will gather around the fire at 1 time and each participant will use the 'respect position' to maintain a safe posture. The area around each fire will be cleared of flammable debris and where needed fire bowls will be used to control the fire. All fires will be 'closed down' by the group before leaving the site. Fires during extreme drought will be prohibited.

When participants practice their own fire lighting techniques, they will have appropriate instruction to ensure they have chosen a safe area, have suitably prepared the area with a fire square, water, fire glove and removal of surrounding litter. They will be instructed on safely closing down their fire before leaving. Any additional temporary fire sites used by participants will be double checked by leader for safety before leaving site. A burns kit, fire blanket and fire buckets will be available at each site where fire lighting will take place. All fire lighting equipment will be counted in and checked at the end of each session.

## **4.3 Ticks**

Ticks are small, spider-like creatures that feed on the blood of animals, including people. They are usually found in woodlands, grassland, moorland, heathland and some urban parks and gardens. Ticks can transmit bacteria that cause diseases such as Lyme disease, which can lead to very serious conditions if left untreated. Symptoms of Lyme disease can include flu-like symptoms, fatigue, muscle and joint pain. After your child has attended Forest School, carry out a thorough tick check by removing your child's clothes and having a good look and feel for any ticks. Ticks prefer warm, moist

places on your body, especially the groin area, waist, arm pits, behind the knee and along hairlines, so look out for anything as tiny as a freckle or a speck of dirt. Young children are more commonly bitten on the head/scalp so they would need to be carefully checked around the neck, behind the ears and along the hairline.

If you find a tick, remove the tick as soon as possible by using a pair of fine-tipped tweezers, or a tick removal tool. Grasp the tick as close to the skin as possible and pull upwards slowly and firmly, as mouthparts left in the skin can cause a local infection. Once removed, apply antiseptic to the bite area, or wash with soap and water and keep an eye on it for several weeks for any changes. Contact your GP if you begin to feel unwell and remember to tell them you were bitten by a tick or have recently spent time outdoors.

For more information, visit:

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/552740/Ticksand\\_ourhealthinfoabouttickbites.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/552740/Ticksand_ourhealthinfoabouttickbites.pdf)

#### **4.4 Food Hygiene**

To ensure that all food prepared and shared at Stomping Grounds Forest School is safe, and to avoid contamination or illness, Stomping Grounds staff will follow the following food safety guidelines and should encourage participants to do the same:

- Food will be stored appropriately, according to instructions. Packaging will be checked for dates, potential allergens and signs of damage/spoilage
- Food will be cooked and served within guideline times. Refrigerated food will be stored in a cool box and served within 2 hours. All other food will be served within 4 hours of preparation.
- Cooking utensils will be thoroughly cleaned before and after each session and will be stored in a 'clean' box with a lid to prevent contamination in the woods.
- Used utensils will be taken away in a separate 'dirty' box.
- Staff and children will wash hands thoroughly before food preparation.
- Waste food will be gathered and removed from the site at the end of the session.
- Allergens will be noted on medical consent forms, which will be checked prior to any cooking or serving of food.



#### **4.5 Emergency Procedure**

In accordance with the Health and Safety (First Aid) Regulations 1981, Stomping Grounds is committed to its responsibilities regarding first aid. The group leader will carry an emergency kit and have up to date Outdoor First Aid training. In case of emergency, the leader will:

- Assess situation, nature and extent of injury/accident
- Ensure that the rest of the group are safe from danger and are adequately supervised
- Attend to the casualty, giving first aid where necessary
- Record detail of accident or near miss in Accident Book
- Gain signature of parent/guardian to acknowledge actions undertaken by Stomping Grounds
- Notify HSE of any accidents or near misses
- Review policies and procedures and make amendments where necessary In the case of injury which cannot be treated by first aid, the leader will:
- Contact emergency services via 999 on leader phone
- Notifying the parent/guardian
- Ensure another adult takes responsibility for supervision of the rest of the group
- Ensure the rest of the group is moved to safety
- Arrange for adult to meet ambulance at site entrance and direct crew to incident.
- Arrange for a member of staff or supervisory adult to accompany injured child to hospital
- Update parent/guardian
- Major incidents that are 'reportable' will be reported to the HSE (Health and Safety Executive)

#### **4.6 Missing child**

Stomping Grounds aims to encourage exploration and adventure in its participants, but with this sense of freedom comes the risk of straying too far.

To minimise the chance of a participant getting lost, the group leader will:

- Encourage an awareness of the surrounding area through games and discussion
- Agree with participants physical boundaries through the use of games and markers
- Agree with participants specific call or whistle to signify regroup

In the event of a missing child or participant, the leader will:

- Call participants back to a designated area using a pre agreed call of whistle
- Do a head count against the session register
- Ensure safety and supervision of group
- Conduct search of area
- Call 999 if participant is still missing after 5 minutes. At this point the emergency procedure would be followed.

#### **4.7 In the event of practitioner illness**

- In the event that one of our forest school practitioners became ill during a session, the other team member would contact all parents/carers by telephone to arrange immediate collection of their child/ren from site.
- Staff and children would travel together as a group to the site entrance to await collection.
- Medical details and next of kin information is held for each forest school practitioner in case of a medical emergency. These details are held on our password protected Google Drive; all level 3 practitioners have access to this data and can be contacted to request the relevant information should a practitioner fall ill.

#### **4.8 Tool safety**

- Participants may use hand tools as part of their Forest School Programme.
- Tools will be stored in a designated tool area and all participants will receive a

tool talk before using any.

- Gloves will be used where appropriate.
- Tools will be checked and counted in at the end of each session
- Sharps (knives and blades) will be kept in a locked tool box
- Participants will be taught the importance of the 'blood bubble' to ensure safe working distances and practices.
- Participants will be heavily supervised during initial tool use and as part of a baseline assessment. Ratios will not exceed 1:4. After long term provision, it is at the discretion of the leader, and based on observations and assessment, that some participants may be classed as competent at using specific tools and may use them more independently.

## **5.1 Site policy**

Prior to each session, the group leader will carry out the following checks as part of the risk assessment:

- tool maintenance
- review of medical forms
- egress and exit routes
- adverse weather conditions
- site boundaries
- visual site survey to assess for changes or new hazards since initial site survey
- take a register of attendance and do regular head counts throughout session

At the end of each session, the group leader is responsible for:

- removal of all litter and food waste
- ensuring the fire is properly closed down
- all tools are cleaned and stored correctly

The leader will carry an Emergency Kit Bag which will include:

- Full first aid kit

- Mobile phone
- Risk assessment for the site and activities
- Parental consent forms
- Medical forms
- Survival bag
- Torch

## **5.2 Removal of litter:**

- the site should be left in the condition in which it was found
- no waste should be left by participants, it should be disposed of off-site in line with local authority guidelines
- any food or drink brought onto site should be removed. If participants bring food or drinks, they should be responsible for removing waste
- bags or containers should be provided for gathering waste and removing from site
- leader should check site after participants have left for any waste that may have been left
- no food or litter to be burnt on the fire
- liquids containing pollutants (eg soap, detergent, paint) should be removed from site
- un contaminated liquid waste can be used to put out the fire or disposed of in a dug hole

## **5.3 Toilets**

On sites where available, participants will be shown toilet location and accompanied to the location by a supervisory adult if appropriate.

On sites where toilet facilities are not available, the group leader will:

- Encourage participants to use toilet facilities before coming to the session
- Identity a suitable area away from activity and provide a toilet bag (toilet paper, sanitising gel, nappy bags)
- In some situations, provide a screen (tarp) for privacy
- Encourage wild toileting

## **5.4 Environmental and Sustainability Policy**

Stomping Grounds passionately believes that by reconnecting communities with the natural world, humans can gain a deeper understanding of our place within the ecosystem and how our choices and actions can impact the environment. We acknowledge the connection between the climate and other environmental crises and the threat of current and future homelessness, disease, food and water shortages and poverty for millions of people around the world, as well as the major damage being caused to our natural landscapes and eco-systems.

We therefore recognise our responsibility to reduce our carbon and environmental footprints and formally commit ourselves to being an environmentally responsible company, whilst seeking to share best practice and support Stomping Grounds staff, partners and customers to develop more sustainable habits.

To take this forward we commit to the following actions:

- Stomping Grounds mandates the board to take executive responsibility for taking forward and implementing this commitment.
- Stomping Grounds annual impact statement will include an annual environmental audit of the company. This will include information on suppliers, transport, resource, food, waste and our environmental site policy.
- Progress on improvement to Stomping Grounds environmental performance will be a standard item at senior management meetings.
- All those who contribute to Stomping Grounds activity will receive information about the sustainability policy and will be expected to support Stomping Grounds in carrying out its aim of being an environmentally responsible organisation, in how they carry out their day-to-day duties.
  - Practitioners should use resources such as The Ethical Superstore to check the ratings of potential suppliers.
  - Kit should be repaired and repurposed where possible (in line with health and safety policies).
  - Practitioners should avoid purchasing ingredients and resources with excess packaging or air miles.
  - Food should be organic and local where possible. All food prepared and cooked by Stomping Grounds staff should be vegetarian. At least 50% should be vegan. This provides an opportunity to discuss the environmental impact of our food choices with our groups.

- Resources and consumables taken into the woods should be re-usable or recyclable. Plastic should be avoided, unless required for accessibility or equality (for example laminated sheets to aid communication or physical support aids).
  - Resources for crafts that are not sourced from the woods themselves should be re-purposed and recycled and removed from the woods afterwards for recycling.
  - Chemicals should not be taken into the woods where avoidable. Hand wash and dish wash fluids should be environmentally friendly.
  - Waste water should be taken home and disposed of rather than poured away on site.
  - All waste should be removed from site, and sorted for recycling (and composting where possible).
  - Disposable items such as plates, cutlery or wet wipes will not be used as a resource for Stomping Grounds activities.
  - Paper, for printing and for toileting, should be recycled. Printing should be kept to a minimum through the use of online shared drive and email.
  - Each site will have its own unique environmental impact plan, which will take into account footfall, habitat, water courses, flora and fauna. Activity will be planned to minimise human impact. Whilst we acknowledge that human presence alone causes damage to the site, practitioners will balance this with the long term positive outcomes of re-connecting communities with the natural world.
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- Stomping Grounds will ask current and future suppliers for their environmental policies and for evidence of implementation of such policies and indicate that such performance will be used as criteria for supplier selection.
    - This includes the purchase of ingredients, resources, stationary, promotional material and merchandise.
    - Our current suppliers include Suma Wholesale, Pickle Palace, The Ethical Superstore, The Paddock and Cotton Roots.
    - Stomping Grounds uses Cooperative Bank, chosen for its ethical and sustainability commitments.

- Stomping Grounds will observe existing environmental legislation as a minimum standard and seek to out-perform current legislative requirements where practical.
- Stomping Grounds will develop and maintain a sustainable transport policy for their staff, seeking to reduce unnecessary travel and making the transport that is necessary as sustainable as possible and will monitor progress annually. This will extend to a support network for partners and customers to support more sustainable transport to and from Stomping Grounds activity.
  - Customers who use public transport to attend Stomping Grounds activity will receive a 10% discount.
  - Customers who regularly lift share to Stomping Grounds activity will receive a 10% discount.
  - Staff and volunteers have access to a network group where they are encouraged to ask for lift shares for events and activity

### **6.1 Weather**

- Stomping Grounds aim to deliver sessions in all weather as long as it is safe to do so.
- Instances of high wind (in excess of 30 mph) will result in cancellation of session
- Where possible, sessions cancelled due to extreme weather will be rearranged to a mutually suitable date.
- In some cases, a refund may be offered, following discussion between Stomping Grounds and client.

### **6.2 Clothing**

- Participants, parents, teachers, volunteers and other visitors to the Forest School site should dress appropriately. Suggestions of appropriate clothing are as follows and are included in registration letters to parents or teachers:
- Warm and sturdy footwear – walking boots or wellingtons with additional thick socks.

- Waterproof jacket and trousers if wet.
- Sun cream and head cover if sunny.
- Additional layers and a change of clothes to help combat cold.
- Gloves, scarf and hat in cooler weather.

### **7.1 Cancellation**

- In the unfortunate event that a session(s) has to be cancelled by Stomping Grounds due to unforeseen circumstances, then an alternative date will be offered.
- Participants will be contacted with as much notice as possible via telephone and email.
- Messages will also be updated on Facebook and Twitter.
- In some circumstances, if previously discussed between client and SG, a refund will be issued.
- If SG or client wish to rearrange a session they must provide at least 2 weeks notice.
- Sessions that have been block booked cannot be rearranged without prior agreement.

If a client has paid a deposit for a party or workshop booking and wishes to cancel, they will lose their deposit. This is to cover administration costs and the cost of any resources or materials already purchased by Stomping Grounds

### **7.2 Complaints Procedure**

We strive towards excellence in everything that we do at Stomping Grounds, however we understand that on occasions you may like to comment on the service that we provide. We are very happy to receive feedback about our service, and will use this to review and make changes to our practice. We endeavor to maintain an open and honest culture and parents, carers, partners and schools are welcome to give feedback, both positive and negative, either face to face or via emails.

If however a parent, carer, partner, school or participant wishes to make a formal



Helping people make sense of their world and reconnecting communities with woodland through outdoor adventure



complaint, they are requested to approach Sophie Watkinson as soon as possible. They can do this face to face, by telephone or in writing.  
[sophiew@stomping-grounds.org](mailto:sophiew@stomping-grounds.org), 07950118816, 9 North Terrace, Chopwell, NE17 7AQ.

**Record Keeping** All complaints received will be recorded and dated in the complaints file. After a complaint has been resolved, the outcome will be recorded in the complaints file against the original complaint. If you are not happy with the outcome of your complaint you can escalate if further to our board of Directors via Jessica Lloyd [jesslloyd1@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:jesslloyd1@yahoo.co.uk)

## Appendix 1: Risk Benefit approach at forest school

### Forest School Dynamic Risk Assessment

