



Health and safety policy

Wilderness therapeutic programmes and woodland activities may include activities that are considered higher risk than usual for participants. It is the general approach Terravita WTP to consider not only the risks of each activity but the potential benefits as well. Terravita WTP seeks to minimise risk by following appropriate procedures, correct tool use and instruction, have appropriately trained staff and by carrying out risk assessments covering key hazards that participants may come into contact with during a session. We also carry out a risk assessment for each participant in consultation with the referral organisation.

Key legislation: Health and Safety at Work Act 1974.

Leaders, staff and volunteers

All our leaders are professionals with relevant qualifications and experience and hold a Level 3 EQE wilderness therapeutic practitioner qualification, qualifications/experience in woodland activity engagement and working with young people, F+ First aid training and first aid in the workplace and have undertaken current DBS checks.

We will also aim to provide adequate training and support to ensure all staff, volunteers and freelancers are confident and competent when following the policies and procedures we have set out in this Handbook.

Risk

We believe that, while there are risks that must be considered, there are also a wide range of potential benefits that can be gained by those involved. We also recognise that taking risks is an important part of learning and developing and we want to provide a safe and supportive environment in which participants can learn about risks, challenges and personal safety. Consequently, we will use a risk/benefit analysis in our assessment of our sites and activities. Please see site and activity risk assessments.

Venue

Activities can take place on our own woodland site that has been assessed and designed for our client group. Some sessions take part on other sites. Our session leader will need the site risk assessment in advance of sessions and do a site visit of



area to be used. Activities need to be agreed by the site manager prior to session delivery.

All staff/volunteers/visitors will have access to the emergency procedures in case the leader is occupied in an incident. These will be laminated and clearly visible on site.

Staff will check for mobile phone coverage and access in case of emergency, and assess toilet facilities. All staff will be briefed on the risk assessments and have a copy that they can access or a copy sent to them in advance.

When and where possible, we will carry out a last check of a site prior to the arrival of a group. Changing weather conditions and visitors to the site can create new challenges, such as fallen branches and litter. These will need to be assessed and may alter previously arranged activities. Where checks are not possible prior to groups' arrival a site sweep and assessment will be made with the group upon their arrival.

Responsibility

Group safety is ultimately the responsibility of the group leader who has specialised knowledge of working therapeutically with wilderness activities but every person attending has the responsibility to use common sense and follow rules to stay safe. If clients/staff/volunteers do not follow the safety guidelines issued by the Terravita WTP leader for any task or the signed group contract at any point, a reminder will be issued. If the rules are still not followed, the activity may be stopped or individuals may be asked to leave the programme.

Referral organisations will have a copy of the risk assessment and assess it with the knowledge of their young people. Any special knowledge of the group - for example a participant may have a particular fear of dogs, a food allergy or triggers - can be useful when planning activities as we aim to make every session as beneficial to participants as possible. Referral forms must be fully completed in order for the programme to be developed. The referral organisation will have a meeting with the wilderness therapeutic practitioner to decide on which clients are suitable for the programme. To work therapeutically and get the best outcome for each group member, it is better to group clients with similar needs and at a similar developmental stage. It is also essential to consider if the group might get along. We need to create a friendly and safe atmosphere for therapeutic work.



Partner organisations and schools must provide information on behaviours that may present risk to individuals and/or the group and, if necessary, a separate risk assessment prepared.

Insurance Terravita WTP is by Birnbeck Insurance for £5 million public liability cover.

All leaders must be familiar with the emergency procedures.

In case of an emergency

Most emergencies can be resolved on-the-spot by the leader removing the group from potential threat and providing first aid. However, in the event of a serious incident, which could arise as a result of an injury, illness or threat, emergency services should be contacted and the following procedures followed:

1. Secure safety of whole group from further danger. Stop all work/activities. Call in and locate group promptly as agreed with group in advance. If possible, remove whole group from any further danger or threat of danger.
2. First Aider to attend to any casualties with adult helper and allocate an adult to remain with the rest of the group. If only 2 leaders are present for the session, it is essential to have a third adult on call to support in an emergency. This person does not need to be trained to the same level as the staff or DBS checked. Their role would be to support the first aider or other staff as needed.

Charged mobile phones are carried by staff.

Allocate an adult to meet an emergency vehicle at the entrance where possible.

It is the duty of the referral organisation to contact next of kin/parents/ guardians and report any incident.

An incident record needs to be completed onsite and a copy sent to the referral organisation and the land owner. This should be filled in whenever the emergency plan is used even if no one was harmed and it was just a near miss. Legislation Ensure that all equipment involved in an accident or incident is retained in an unaltered condition in case it is required by the police. Do not focus on who is at fault. In all cases keep a careful written record i.e. a log, of all facts, events, times and circumstances and retain this record until all matters are finally settled. If possible take photographs. Do not allow anyone to interview any party member without an independent witness being present.



Incidents leading to admittance to hospital for more than 24 hours or resulting in an injury preventing a person working for three or more days afterwards need to be registered with RIDDOR within 24 hours Tel 0845 3009923 (HSE - Monday to Friday 8.30am to 5pm).

First aid kits must be restocked after use and a stock check carried out every 6 months. Any incident or near miss must be subsequently investigated by Terravita WTP to review existing controls and procedures.

Keeping safe:

- Boundaries will be chosen, clearly marked and made known to the group.
- Going outside the boundaries will require all of the group to go with the session leader and staff.
- It will be made clear to the group that boundaries must be followed or we cannot ensure their safety. If the boundary is purposefully crossed, it may mean the client will be sent home and unable to participate in further sessions.
- The group will be counted in and checked at start and end of the session and then at other relevant points in the session – particularly after activities that include members splitting up.
- Good communication within the group will encourage collective responsibility for each others' safety – leaders are always approachable and should be made aware if there are any concerns as to a participants whereabouts.
- In the event of leaders fearing that a member of the group has gone missing:
Initiate lost person policy.
 1. All the group will be immediately called back in, by prearranged call or whistle, and counted and missing member determined. The time will be noted.
 2. The Group Leader must ensure the safety of remaining pupils. At least two adults must stay with them at all times.
 3. One or more adults should immediately start searching for the missing group member – calling as appropriate.
 4. If the missing group member is not found within 5 minutes, the group Leader must contact police by telephoning 999 (this will result in the emergency plan coming in to action). Leaders must recall and write down a description of what the missing person was wearing and any distinguishing features. Any information on their last known location and time should be noted. Also if they have any special medical or learning needs then these need to be noted down. All information then must be passed to police or other agencies.



Tool use

Using a range of tools is essential to the programmes as it enables participants to develop new practical skills and supports therapeutic work. Terravita WTP aims to ensure that all people participating in sessions with tools do so safely and under expert guidance and instruction.

The following guidelines are to be followed when using tools:

- All tools will be checked at the start of each session for fit for purpose.
- Only tools that are in safe working order shall be supplied for use.
- Correct and safe use of sharp tools will be demonstrated to all staff and participants.
- Tools should be counted when handed out and counted back in again when finished.
- All groups are to be supervised closely by competent leaders until deemed competent to work with limited supervision.
- Tools should be kept in a designated safe area when not in use - none should be left unattended outside this area
- All knives will be closed/ sheaved immediately after use and stored in locked case when not being used.
- Saws will be stored folded closed.
- Walking around with open/ unmasked tools will not be permitted.
- Safe working distances and suitable ratios must be maintained at all times.
- All group members will wear suitable boots/shoes and outdoor clothing for the activity they take part in.
- Where any cutting or felling is taking place, helmets should be worn, and gloves provided for handling brash etc.

Fire procedure

Fires and the use of Ghillie kettles are an important part of wilderness therapeutic programmes and other sessions. Terravita WTP aims to ensure that all people participating in sessions with fires and/or storm kettles will do so safely and with as little risk to their health as possible.

Fires will only be used where it is appropriate to do so and where there has been an agreement with the site owner prior to the session.



Leaders will explain to participants the importance of using only dead wood for fires and also of the importance of dead wood as a habitat.

Smoke inhalation will be reduced by burning dead wood. Those in smoky areas will be encouraged to move to less smoky areas. Any clients/staff/volunteers/visitors will be warned to keep out of smoke if they have health concerns e.g. asthma or pregnancy.

Clients will only be allowed to light fires under direct supervision of a trained leader using suitable materials and equipment.

All participants will be given clear guidelines about how to behave and move around the area when the fire or kettle is lit.

Related safety equipment, including heat-proof gloves, a fire blanket, a burns kit and water will be kept within close range of fires.

All fires should be fully extinguished. We follow a leave no trace ethos.

Fire meeting point

All Terravita WTP staff and referral organisation staff attending a session must know where the fire meeting point and procedures are before the start of the session.

Usually this will be the carpark or open area.

This will be told to the group as part of the introduction.

Food Hygiene

All participants on activities will be encouraged to wash their hands with water and soap, which will be provided, before eating food.

During some sessions, we may cook food over the fire. The session leader will hold a current Food Hygiene Certificate and will ensure that safe procedures are undertaken accordingly.



Weather & Clothing

Clothing advice will be given to referral organisations to pass on to the clients.

Recommended:

- Winter: waterproofs/coats, fleece/jumper, hats and gloves.
- Summer: waterproofs, fleece, sun hat, long sleeved tops and trousers
- Footwear: wellies or strong/sturdy (ideally waterproof) outdoor shoes and warm socks.

We have a selection of outdoor clothing that can be borrowed for the session but this is limited. If the referral organisation think suitable clothing may be an issue, they need to address this with Terravita WTP and come to a solution. There will be survival blankets, woollen blankets on site if needed.

Toileting

For sites without toilet facilities:

- The referral organisation should encourage everyone to use the toilet before coming on site.
- We will identify a suitable location away from the work area in advance of the session. A screen will be used to provide privacy and a toileting bag/trowel placed at this location.
- The group should be introduced to wild toileting - participants encouraged to use a trowel to bury faeces and tissue if necessary and do their business away from water sources
- Hand washing facilities should be available but if this is not possible wet wipes and cleaning gel can be used. All wet wipes should be placed in bags and disposed of off site.

Public

The site owned by Terravita WTP is not open to the public but is close to a road and residential area. Most people will be happy to pass by the group without hindering activities, but there is the possibility of unwanted attention from a passer-by. In this event a leader will step in and assure the member of public that if they wish to raise any issues, then they should contact Terravita WTP.



If the situation escalates to a dangerous level staff will use a mobile phone to call the police and use the Emergency Procedure.

Some participants may be unused to or even afraid of dogs. This should be indicated on referral forms. If a dog appears, the fearful participant can be joined by at least one member of staff. If a dog approaches the group and appears likely to cause trouble, all participants will be advised not to run and to stay still. A leader will speak to the owner.

Flora and fauna

Identify any hazardous plants/fungi and point them out to the group so that all members are aware of the dangers.

There is a risk of poisoning from ingestion of leaves, berries or mushrooms. The risk is reduced by identifying potential risks and teaching the group about them. Foraging is part of some programmes but we do not allow participants to forage and eat anything that has not been agreed safe by the session leader. If a member of the group is exposed to a hazardous plant or fungi, so that they have a reaction a leader must be informed and appropriate First Aid given. If the nature of the reaction is more serious the Emergency & Serious Incident Procedure must be followed.

Insect bites and stings can be common, particularly in spring and summer, and usually cause only minor irritation. In rare cases, people can have a serious allergic reaction to a bite or sting that requires immediate medical treatment - if this is the case then a leader will refer directly to the Emergency & Serious Incident Procedure. If there is prior knowledge to suggest that a participant will have an allergic reaction if bitten, then the session leader must be informed before any activities take place on site.

If ticks are known to exist in proximity to a site then all participants need to check or be checked for ticks as soon as possible following any activity on site. Advice will be given to the group on how to do this and how to remove them. There is a risk of disease with tick bites, including lymes disease. Information on safe removal of ticks and tick diseases including lymes disease can be found at [Lyme disease - NHS](#).

Wilderness activities can be physically demanding for clients and staff. Best practice will be advised for each activity. All clients and staff will aid carrying heavy kit from the car to site and help tidy up after the session if needed.



Lone working

When preparing for a session, it may be necessary for one person to visit a site alone and set up alone. They must have a charged phone and check signal. Before leaving for the site, they will need to text a buddy the location, expected arrival time, leaving time and expected contact time to confirm safety. If contact has not been made at the expected time, the buddy will try phoning or texting the person. Wait 30 minutes, then try contacting them again. If no contact at this time, contact can be made with session site and their home or emergency contact number. Also contact Terravita WTP manager and inform them. If no contact after 24 hours, phone the police .

Medicines and sun cream

Permission will be sought from a guardian by the referral organisation to give their child sting or bite cream, antiseptic cream and sun cream. These permissions will be included in the pro forma consent form.

Guardians will also be asked to provide details of allergies or relevant illnesses and to supply medicines where necessary (such as an epi-pen or asthma inhaler). These will be looked after by the referral organisation staff who will be present at each session. Where a guardian does not give permission for medicines and creams to be applied, their wishes will be adhered to by Terravita WTP but the referral organisation may choose to follow their own policies and will retain responsibility for this. In the absence of a referral organisation, Terravita WTP staff will collect named medication for those under 18 and administer it as per instruction on the label and referral form.

Reporting incidents

Any accidents or near misses will be recorded using the incident recording form. A copy will be given to the referral organisation and land owner.

Major injuries that constitute 'reportable injuries' will be reported to the Health and Safety Executive via RIDDOR.

Guardians/clients will be notified of injuries via the referral organisation or directly if there it is a self-referred event.

The referral organisation will need to ensure consent forms are completed for the client to attend the programme. Consent forms need to be in place prior to the start of the programme to ensure the programme is suitable for the client. The completed consent



form will give relevant medical details of the child, consent for the child to take part in the activities and permissions to administer medicines and creams and to admit the client to hospital for emergency treatment. The form also provides emergency contact details. The session leader will keep copy of essential information with them at all sessions attended by the client.

Visitors

Terravita WTP needs to be notified for all visitors prior to the session date with the person, their role, organisation and reason for the visit. Visitors may disrupt the therapeutic atmosphere of a particular session, programme or work with specific young people. This needs to be considered by the referral organisation and visitor.

Psychological Health and wellbeing

We recognise that our staff and participants operate in challenging, remote environments that can present significant psychological demands. In accordance with the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations and current HSE oversight, we treat mental health as a core safety priority.

We conduct specific psychological risk assessments for all our sessions to identify and mitigate stressors, such as, secondary trauma, isolation and decision fatigue. We are committed to providing robust support systems, including mandatory debriefing sessions after programs and a culture of care where staff/volunteers are empowered to report stress related concerns without prejudice. Our goal is to ensure that mental resilience is protected as rigorously as their physical safety.

Public Protection Procedures

Terravita WTP is committed to the safety of all participants. While the risk of a terrorist incident is low in the environment we work in, we maintain a "Standard Tier" level of preparedness to fit in with the school environments we often work with. This policy ensures all staff and volunteers are equipped to respond proportionately and effectively to potential security threats in an outdoor environment. This structure aligns with the Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Act 2025 (commonly known as [Martyn's Law](#)), which requires certain settings to have proportionate procedures for evacuation, lockdown, and communication.



The session leader is the designated “Responsible Person”.

They are responsible for:

- Ensuring all staff complete basic [ProtectUK](#) awareness training.
- Reviewing these procedures annually.

Response Protocols (Run, Hide, Tell)

In the event of a live incident, staff must follow national [Run, Hide, Tell guidance](#):

- Alert group using a whistle and 3 long blasts or onsite signal for consistency for clients. Introduce this to all groups at start of program.
- Run: To a place of safety if there is a clear, safe route. Leave belongings behind. Use secondary exit routes identified in the site risk assessment to move away from the site entirely if possible.
- Hide: If running is not possible. Indoors if available or outbuilding, bird hide, or naturally concealed hollow. Turn phones to silent and stay away from open areas. Try to block access points.
- Tell: Call 999 when it is safe to do so.
- Communication Planning: Ensuring leaders have reliable means of communication, such as mobile phones or two-way radios, to alert the group and emergency services. Session leaders should have the phone number with them of the site team.
- Situational Awareness: Training staff to remain vigilant and recognise unusual items or activities that seem out of place in a forest setting or school setting and report to the setting.
- Staff Training and informed staff: Ensuring all practitioners and volunteers are familiar with emergency signals and procedures, including specific plans to support children with additional needs during a crisis in that setting. Discuss this prior to the session with the venue and client referral organisation.