

VULNERABLE ADULT PROTECTION POLICY AND PROCEDURES

1. Introduction:

- 1.1 The Huntingdonshire Volunteer Centre is committed to preventing the abuse of adults and responding promptly when abuse is suspected.
- 1.2 We will ensure that all staff and volunteers with access to vulnerable adults are appropriately checked, e.g. Disclosure and Barring Services (DBS) checks, references, as part of the selection process. The relevant legislation (*The Police Act 1997 Enhanced Criminal Record Certificates*) (*Protection of Vulnerable Adults Regulations 2002*) requires employers to apply for an enhanced disclosure from the DBS for staff and volunteers working with vulnerable adults.
- 1.3 We will annually review our Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy and Procedures to ensure that it complies with current legislation and best practice guidelines.
- 1.4 We will ensure that all volunteers, trustees and staff have read and understood our Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy and Procedures upon joining Huntingdonshire Volunteer Centre and will re-circulate on an annual basis.
- 1.5 Our Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy and Procedures will be available to view publicly on our website www.huntsvc.org.uk

2. Definitions: For the purposes of this policy and procedures the following definitions apply:

- a) **A Vulnerable Adult** is a person aged 18 years or over who may be unable to take care of themselves, or protect themselves from harm or from being exploited. This may be because they have a mental health problem, a disability, a sensory impairment, are old and frail, or have some form of illness.
- b) **Abuse** is violation of an individual's human and civil rights through mistreatment by any other person or persons. It can vary from neglecting the person to treating someone with disrespect in a way which significantly affects their quality of life and limits their ability to access opportunities. It also includes causing actual harm and suffering or failing to prevent harm. There are four main types of abuse: physical, emotional, sexual and neglect. Older people might also be at risk from financial or material exploitation.

3. Our Responsibilities

- 3.1 We have a legal responsibility to refer any vulnerable adult concerns to Social Services or the Police.
 - (a) We must refer
 - (b) We must not investigate
 - (c) We cannot maintain confidentiality – see below
 - (d) We have to act on suspicions, facts and disclosures
- 3.2 If we remove an employee or volunteer from a regulated activity, or controlled activity, or if they leave while under investigations for allegedly causing harm, or posing a risk of harm, we will refer this information to the Independent Safeguarding Authority.

4. Confidentiality

- 4.1 It is very important to understand that legally we have to report any disclosures or suspicions of abuse to vulnerable adults at risk of abuse which means breaking confidentiality.
- 4.2 The person making a disclosure has trusted someone enough to confide in them. To avoid distrust and misunderstanding we must be clear in our obligations to let them know that if they tell us something we may have to act on it and tell someone else. **It is important to encourage them to talk but it is essential that they know the limits of confidentiality.**
- 4.3 Only those people who **need** to know should be informed
- 4.4 All written records must be kept securely in a locked filing system

5. Roles

5.1 Role of workers including volunteers:

Staff and volunteers are not expected to know everything concerning vulnerable adult protection but your duty is to:

- (a) Be familiar with the Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy and procedures.
- (b) Be alert and responsive to problems and potential indicators of abuse and neglect – see **Appendix 3**.
- (d) Share and analyse information to enable informed assessments and good practice.
- (e) Keep clear, detailed and accurate records – see **Appendix 2**; record forms are kept in each of the offices.
- (f) Discuss issues and concerns with line managers and designated officers.
- (g) Undertake appropriate behaviour and language – see **Appendix 4**.
- (h) If you have a concern about a clients mental capacity or frailty please discuss this with your Area Manager.

5.2 Role of Designated Officers:

The following are the Designated Officers for the Huntingdonshire Volunteer Centre. They are trained to deal with Vulnerable Adult Protection issues and make referrals. They should be contacted in the first instance and if they are not available the procedures outlined in **Appendix 1** should be followed or see 6.2(b).

Contact telephone numbers are included in **Appendix 1** and are also available in the offices. Details of their role and guidance for designated officers are contained in **Appendix 5**.

Debbie Windsor
Mike Baker

Telephone: 07718 272524
Telephone: 07885 585950

6. Procedures if a vulnerable adult discloses abuse.

6.1 Responding to the vulnerable adult.

- (a) If a vulnerable adult alleges abuse it is important to respond appropriately. This means giving them the opportunity to talk without asking probing questions. You should:
 - Stay calm

- Acknowledge that you have heard them and are taking them seriously
 - Listen carefully to what is being said
 - Find an appropriate opportunity to explain that the information will probably have to be shared with others – never promise to keep secrets (see section on confidentiality)
 - Allow them to talk at their own pace
 - Not ask direct or ‘leading’ questions but allow them to say as much as they want
 - Reassure them that they have done the right thing in telling you
 - Avoid being judgmental
 - Reassure them that they have not done anything wrong
 - Avoid condemning the alleged abuser
 - Tell them what you will do next and with whom the information will be shared
 - Record in writing what was said as soon as possible – you should use their words; note the date, time, any names mentioned and to whom the information was given; and sign and date the record – see Appendix 2
- (b) You may have to make a judgement about how much of the story you allow the person to disclose: this is dependent on individual circumstances. In making your decision you should consider the following:
- That they are likely to have to repeat what is said to a social worker and/or the police – it may be appropriate to stop them so that they do not have to tell their experiences a number of times
 - That it may be traumatic for them to disclose their story and, if distressed, they may need to continue to tell of their experiences
 - That any attempt to stop them should be done very sensitively so that they do not think you do not want to hear, or are disgusted, angry or disbelieving
 - Contamination of evidence – if the vulnerable adult is led in any way or words put into their mouths this could endanger any criminal case
- (c) **Do not contact the alleged abuser.**
- (d) **Remember that neither you nor the Volunteer Centre is responsible for investigating or deciding whether or not abuse has taken place; your responsibility is to report the allegation of abuse.**

6.2 Reporting the Allegation

- (a) You must report the allegation to the Designated Officer immediately. They will take the responsibility for making any referrals required.
- (b) If you cannot get hold of the Designated Officer, you must contact Social Services or the Police direct. See **Appendix 1** for contact details. When doing this try to have as much information to hand as possible –
- Your name, designation and contact number
 - The person’s name (and any names they may have been previously known by, address, date of birth/age, gender, ethnic origin, language spoken, religion, names of carers/siblings/GP – if known) but don’t delay if you don’t have this information.
 - Details of the disclosure or concern
- (c) If you make a direct referral to Social Services you should also inform the Chair of the Trustees

7. Procedures if you suspect abuse

- 7.1 Don’t keep it to yourself –discuss it with the designated officer or your manager immediately

- 7.2 Complete a written record of your concerns – see **Appendix 2**
The record should include reasons for concern, a summary of any discussions, decisions made and reasons for those decisions. As abuse can often be a culmination of events it is important to maintain appropriate records of concerns whether or not further action is taken at the time.
- 7.3 If it is urgent and you cannot contact the Designated Officer call Social Services or the Police direct.

The flow chart on the next page will help you follow the correct procedure:

Something is wrong. What should I do?

Has something actually happened?

YES

Has what happened caused significant harm?

Inform the Designated Person

The Designated Person will inform Social Services

Follow up with a written report / complete the logging a concern form.

NO – ‘JUST A FEELING’

Complete the Vulnerable Adult- ‘Logging a Concern’ form

Give it to your Manager, who will place it in confidential records

Discuss with Manager and/or Designated Person if necessary

Designated Person to share concern with Social Services to find out if the person is known and how to proceed

Consult the Vulnerable Adult Protection Co-ordinator if still uneasy

Complete the Vulnerable Adult- logging a concern form

Give it to your Manager who will place it in confidential records

Monitor the person. Record your observations as factually as possible e.g. not ‘upset’ but ‘cried’ or ‘flinched’

Discuss with your Manager

Do you have general notes about the same person?

- 8. What do you do if an allegation is made against a member of staff or volunteer from the Huntingdonshire Volunteer Centre?**
- 8.1 Allegations against workers are dealt with by the Management Committee and may run parallel with Vulnerable Adult procedures if applicable. We appreciate that staff need support through such incidences and will endeavour to keep the individual member of staff informed and offer sources of support for them.
- 8.2 If an allegation is made to you about a colleague you must listen, make notes and inform the Designated Officer immediately.
- 8.3 The Chair of the Board of Trustees must also be informed immediately.
- 8.4 The reporting process does not alter from that outlined above. Keep an open mind even if the allegation is made about a colleague you know professionally or even socially.

This policy was approved by the Trustees of Huntingdonshire Volunteer Centre

Signed: *Mike Baker* Chairman

Date: *31st October 2023*

Date of next Review: *31/10/24*

APPENDIX 1:

CONTACT LIST

The following are Designated Officers for the Huntingdonshire Volunteer Centre who must be informed if there are any concerns about a being in danger of significant harm.

Debbie Windsor 07718 272524
E-Mail: info@huntsvc.org.uk

Mike Baker 07885 585950

If staff or volunteers have urgent concerns regarding the safety of a vulnerable adult and cannot contact the Designated Officer or deputy, they should contact Social Services or the Police directly on the numbers below:

Social Services:

0345 045 5202 and say that it is regarding vulnerable adult protection; if you cannot reach the appropriate team you should also ask for the duty social worker.

Out of hours – emergency duty team: 01733 234724

Police:

101 - They will grade the concern and deal with it appropriately

In an emergency dial 999

N.B. Social Services will automatically contact the Police and vice versa

****Please inform Huntingdonshire Volunteer Centre if you have reported a concern directly to Social Services or Police****

APPENDIX 2:

INCIDENT REPORT FORM

Part 1

Name of referrer:

Role:

Date:

Time:

Vulnerable Adult's Details:

Name:

Date of Birth/Age:

Address:

Tel No:

Any relevant information about the vulnerable adult's family or carers and home circumstances?

Any involvement with other agencies that you are aware of?

Details of Disclosure/Concern

Describe why you are concerned. If a disclosure has been made, record the actual words spoken by the vulnerable adult where possible:

Have you observed any significant changes in the vulnerable adult's behaviour or presentation?

What action(s) have you taken?

If you have made a referral, is the adult aware?

If yes, what is their response to the concerns?

Signed.....(referrer)

Date.....

Part 2:

Action Taken by Designated Officer - with reasons (e.g. why there was/was not a referral to a statutory agency)

Any Other Follow Up Action e.g. (criminal investigation, suspension of staff member or volunteer)

Signed..... Print Name.....

Date.....

APPENDIX 3:

SIGNS OF ABUSE

Possible Signs of Physical Abuse:

- Unexplained injuries or burns, particularly if they are recurrent
- Refusal to discuss, or improbable explanations for injuries
- Untreated injuries or lingering illnesses not attended to
- Shrinking from physical contact
- Fear of returning home
- Aggression/bullying
- A 'watchful attitude' or over-compliant behaviour

Possible Signs of Emotional Abuse:

- Fear of new situations
- Continual self-deprecation
- Inappropriate emotional responses to painful situations
- Self-harm or mutilation
- Neurotic behaviour – obsessive rocking, thumb-sucking etc
- Air of detachment – 'don't care' attitude
- Social isolation
- Desperate attention-seeking behaviour
- Depression, withdrawal

Possible Signs of Neglect:

- Poor personal hygiene
- Inappropriate clothing
- Constant tiredness
- Constant hunger
- Low self esteem and poor social relationships

Possible Signs of Sexual Abuse:

- Bruises, scratches, burns or bite marks on the body
- Self-injury, self destructive behaviour

Possible signs of Financial or material abuse:

- Unexplained or sudden inability to pay bills
- Unexplained or sudden withdrawal of money from accounts
- Disparity between assets and satisfactory living conditions

APPENDIX 4:

GOOD PRACTICE GUIDELINES

If you work with vulnerable adults you must accept that you are exposed to a certain level of risk.

It is impossible to cover every eventuality relating to the right or appropriate behaviour for every situation.

Use your common sense, keep alert and discuss even the slightest concern with your Manager.

The following do's and don'ts will help to raise your awareness, help you protect yourself and provide clarification of what to do or not do:

DO

- Treat everyone with respect
- Provide an example you wish others to follow
- Remember that someone may misinterpret your actions, no matter how well-intentioned
- Recognise that caution is required even in sensitive moments of counselling such as when dealing with abuse
- Avoid physical contact wherever possible
- Avoid being in a room alone with a vulnerable adult
- Keep records of concerns
- Remember you cannot promise confidentiality
- Ask for further guidance on anything you are unclear about

DO NOT

- Put yourself in a situation that could be misinterpreted or in a place that cannot be seen
- Have any inappropriate physical or verbal contact with others
- Jump to conclusions without first checking the facts
- Make suggestive remarks or gestures
- Lock doors
- Believe 'it could never happen to me'

If in doubt about how your actions towards a vulnerable adult may appear – don't do it

APPENDIX 5:

GUIDANCE FOR DESIGNATED OFFICERS

Designated Officers are responsible for the prompt reporting and recording of vulnerable adult concerns, maintaining appropriate confidentiality, as well as ensuring that staff and volunteers are familiar with the Huntingdonshire Volunteer Centre's policies and procedures and undertake any necessary learning.

It is crucial that Designated Officers take seriously any concerns about the safety of a vulnerable adult that are brought to their attention. However, the consent of the vulnerable adult must be obtained except where:

- The vulnerable adult lacks the mental capacity to make a decision, and a risk assessment indicates that referral would be in their best interests
- Others may be at risk
- A crime has been committed

If there is any doubt about whether to report a concern, advice must be sought from the duty social worker.

Designated Officers are responsible for ensuring that appropriate support is offered to any staff member or volunteer who becomes involved in a vulnerable adult protection concern. This may mean offering support themselves and/or ensuring line management support is available.

Designated officers should also be aware of their own support needs in this area. In order to carry out their role, relevant training should be undertaken and links should be established with all the key vulnerable adult protection organisations, including local Social Services and the Police. Designated officers should ensure these contacts are kept up to date and telephone numbers are available in the office.

Below is a checklist of responsibilities in the event of a staff member or volunteer reporting concerns that a vulnerable adult may be at risk:

- Allow the staff member or volunteer to relate the concerns and what they are based on
- Ask for a factual written report of what was said – see Appendix 2. N.B. the staff member or volunteer should not keep a copy of this
- Identify whether the family of the vulnerable adult are aware that this concern has been raised
- Make a judgement about whether there is sufficient concern to make a referral to Social Services – if you are convinced make the referral immediately - if you are uncertain contact the duty social worker. Remember that it is not your job to decide whether abuse has occurred, merely whether it is appropriate and necessary to make a referral
- Clarify any next steps with the agency to which referral is being made
- Ensure that any written material is kept securely to ensure confidentiality
- Ensure that only those who need to know are informed about the situation i.e. that it is not discussed with anyone else (internally or externally) unless there is a genuine and demonstrable reason need for them to know
- Make time to offer support to the staff member/volunteer involved and access support for yourself if you need it.