

Child Protection and Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Policy

Version 01

January 2019

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Volunteers have regular contact with children, young people and vulnerable adults, primarily through, open sessions and community programmes. Working in close proximity to children, young people and vulnerable adults means that volunteers may become aware of a situation of possible child abuse.

1.2. Significant Harm

There are no absolute criteria on which to rely when judging what constitutes significant harm. Significant harm can take place over a period of time or may be a single traumatic event e.g., a violent assault. To understand and establish whether significant harm has, or is likely to occur, it is necessary to consider

1. The child's or vulnerable adults individual needs in terms of health, education, emotional and behavioural development, family and social relationships, social presentation and self - care skills.
2. The family and environmental factors which surround the child or vulnerable adult in terms of a family history and functioning, the input of the wider family to help meet the child's needs, housing, employment, income, family social integration and the community resources available, if known.
3. The nature of harm, in term of ill treatment or failure to provide adequate care.

Local authorities have a statutory responsibility to investigate a young person's circumstances if they have reasonable cause to suspect that a child who lives (or is found) in their area is suffering from or is likely to suffer from significant harm. They must also investigate concerns for a child's safety when this is reported by either a member of the public or by a professional agency. The local authority for Little Foresters is Derbyshire.

Guidance for voluntary agencies working with young people is given by the Department of Health in the document "Working together to Safeguard Children" as follows:

1. The range of roles fulfilled by organisations from the voluntary and private sectors means that they need to have clear guidance and procedures in place to ensure appropriate referrals and co-operation with the Local Safeguarding Children's Board procedures. Staff and volunteers will need to be trained to be aware of the risk to and needs of children with whom they have contact.

2. Local voluntary youth organisations should seek guidance from their national bodies, or from the Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB), on how best to safeguard the children and young people for whom they are providing a service.

It is not the responsibility of volunteers to investigate any suspected case of Child Abuse. Volunteers must follow the guidelines laid down in this document and contact the local LSCB.

2.0 Child Protection Co-ordinators

2.1 One volunteer is designated Child Protection Co-ordinator (CPC) with responsibility for minimising the risk of child and vulnerable adult abuse within the organisation and its operations. The name of this person will be advised to all new volunteers/steering group members.

The CPC is responsible for:

- Providing support and first point of call for any volunteer with a child protection or vulnerable adult concern
- Establishing contact with the senior member of social services staff responsible for child protection in the organisation's catchment area. This should be a first step before an incident occurs.
- Provide information and advice on child protection within the organisation
- Ensure that the group's child protection policy and procedures are implemented and followed and particularly to inform social services of relevant concerns about individual children.
- Be aware of the Local Area Child Protection Committee and be familiar with local procedures
- Ensure that appropriate information is available at the time of referral and that the referral is confirmed in writing, under confidential cover as quickly as possible (e.g. within one working day)
- Advise the organisation of child and vulnerable adult protection training needs

3.0 Recruitment of volunteers

3.1 It is important that all possible steps are taken to prevent unsuitable people working with children and vulnerable adults. When volunteers are recruited proper vetting procedures will be followed. This includes:

- Informal chat
- Taking appropriate references where possible
- Advise of no lone working procedure

3.2 The group has a Complaints Procedure by which young people & vulnerable adults have the means to complain about abuse or other inappropriate behaviour from volunteers.

4.0 Process

4.1 In the normal course of events children or vulnerable adults may discuss personal matters with and can expect confidentiality, i.e. that personal issues will not be needlessly disclosed to others. However, if the person discloses abuse or are subject to domestic violence, parental drug and alcohol abuse or parental adult mental health concerns then volunteers **must not** give a guarantee of confidentiality.

4.2 Your actions if a disclosure of abuse is made:

If you think a disclosure is about to be made, or a child, young person or vulnerable adult is in the process of disclosing, you must tell them that you will have to talk to other people. **NEVER** tell them that you will keep it secret. Tell the person that you must talk to other people who can help. Be honest and open. Tell the person whom you will have to speak to and why.

If a child or vulnerable adult chooses to talk to you and discloses that he/she has been abused then take the child seriously and take the following action:

- **Listen** - repeat the child's or vulnerable adults words
- **Stop** - only ask questions that are necessary for you to fully understand what the child is saying – keep questions open (e.g. who did that? What happened next?) and avoid leading questions (e.g. Was it your father that did this?). Never make a judgement on what the child, young person or vulnerable adult is telling you (e.g. I think that you should be really angry etc).
- **Affirm** - "I am glad that you told me. It was right to tell me. I will now talk to someone about what to do next".

Remember that it is not your responsibility to carry out an investigation into what has happened. Never attempt a detailed examination or remove clothes to look further at an injury nor take photographs of injuries. Any disclosure of serious abuse will need to be formally investigated by Social Services and it is important to avoid a situation where the person has to repeat their full account on a number of different occasions. You should not stop the young person from talking, but you need to avoid a situation where they are in effect 'interviewed' several times over. The information that you hear may be very distressing, but it is important to try to remain calm and empathetic and not respond by showing horror or revulsion.

If the child or vulnerable adult is being accompanied by a responsible adult, teacher, youth worker, probation worker or any other agency, you should inform them that the incident has occurred, and outline the steps that you will be taking. However, if the allegation is against the responsible adult present, contact the CPC first.

It is important that the CPC knows as soon as possible – do not keep the disclosure to yourself. If you are afraid that the disclosure is unfounded you should still contact the CPC for advice. If the situation is an emergency but you cannot contact the CPC then you should telephone the Children's Social Care, or phone the NSPCC helpline.

You should record your own concerns immediately. All notes made relating to the incident must be dated and signed. Do not keep a copy of this yourself. Ensure the report is kept in a secure place and can only be accessed by the CPC's and these records are kept indefinitely.

5.0 Allegations of abuse involving volunteers

5.1 If a young person or vulnerable adult makes an allegation that a volunteer has perpetrated the abuse then these concerns must be shared immediately with the Chair of the Steering Group, unless that person is the subject of the allegation, in which case it should be reported to one of the other practitioners.

5.2 If it has been alleged that the person has:

- Behaved in a way that has harmed, or may have harmed a child, young person or vulnerable adult
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against, or related to a child young person or vulnerable adult
- Behaved towards a child or children or vulnerable adult in a way that indicates he/she is unsuitable to work with children

The Lead Practitioner should report it to the Children's Services Area Office within one working day. If a member of staff or volunteer has had an allegation made against them they will be suspended all information is gathered.

5.3 The parents/ carer of the child or vulnerable adult will be informed about the allegation as soon as possible. They will be kept informed about the progress of the case, and told of the outcome where there is not a criminal prosecution.