

Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Policy

Reviewed, revised & adopted December 2019

1) Introduction and need for a Policy

Volunteer Action recognises that the protection and safety of vulnerable adults is everyone's responsibility. The Law Commission defines a vulnerable adult as a person who: 'is or may be in need of community care services by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness; and who is or may be unable to take care of him or herself against significant harm or exploitation'.

In clarifying this further, Volunteer Action adopts The Department of Health's definition that a vulnerable adult is a person aged 18 years or over who is or may be in need of community care services by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness, and who is or may be unable to take care of him or herself, or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation.

Abuse can be defined as '...a violation of an individual's human and civil rights by another person or persons' (Government Guidance on Adult Abuse)

This policy, the related procedures and the Code of Good Practice which follow, establish the roles and responsibilities of staff and Trustees in relation to the protection of any vulnerable adults with whom their work brings them into contact.

The welfare of the vulnerable adult is the paramount consideration. The approach Volunteer Action will take is based on, and reflects, the principles of relevant legislation and guidance relating to the protection of vulnerable adults.

Our policy for safeguarding children is available separately.

2) The Trustees

The Trustees are responsible for the protection of vulnerable adults within Volunteer Action. This will include ensuring the implementation and monitoring of this policy.

It is also the responsibility of the Trustees to ensure that all staff and volunteers are aware of and understand the importance of implementing this policy and the related procedures and Code of Good Practice

3) The Recruitment Process

Volunteer Action will apply for an enhanced DBS check for all volunteers who take part in 'regulated activities'. This includes all drivers who will be taking members to medical appointments.

Volunteer Action will apply for a standard DBS check for all volunteer befrienders.

The importance of this safeguarding policy will be brought to the attention of all new recruits as part of their induction and will be signed as seen in the volunteer agreement

All volunteer drivers and befrienders will attend compulsory safeguarding training within 3 months of starting.

Volunteer Action will NOT apply for DBS checks for trustees or office volunteers.

In line with our separate 'Recruitment of ex-Offenders' policy, all applicants are encouraged to reveal convictions beforehand. The revelation of convictions at any time in the recruitment process is dealt with by the 'Recruitment of ex-Offenders' policy

Volunteer Action will pay all costs associated with obtaining mandatory DBS checks.

3) General responsibilities

If vulnerable adults are to be truly protected it is essential that everyone working with them contributes to the work of those with direct responsibility for safeguarding. The procedures that follow recognise and are consistent with that objective and have been designed to complement Local Authority procedures.

Remember that the overwhelming majority of vulnerable adults, whom you will meet through your work, are likely to experience a perfectly safe and happy life.

It is recognised as well, that a percentage of the vulnerable adults that you may meet will, through the nature of their experiences, demonstrate behaviours that might be indicators of abuse.

It is important to distinguish between "abuse", "vulnerability" and "risk". People often face risks or will be vulnerable within their lifetime, however this should not be confused with abuse. There may be many factors associated with disadvantage can also result in a vulnerable adult's behaviour being affected, thereby making the identification of abuse even more difficult. You are not expected to suddenly become expert in the protection of vulnerable adults nor are you expected to investigate abuse. You are expected to be sensible, alert and to comply with these procedures. In situations where people are at risk or will be vulnerable but there is no indication of abuse, it is more appropriate to use other systems and resources in order to try to identify and work with the individual to reduce and manage any risk or vulnerability.

In operating this policy, staff and volunteers must also be aware that, in order to protect vulnerable adults, in some circumstances it may well be necessary to share what might normally be regarded as confidential information. The following principles will be adhered to:

- Information will only be shared on a need to know basis.
- Information will only be shared when it is judged to be in the best interests of the service users.
- Confidentiality must not be confused with secrecy.
- Informed consent should be obtained but, if this is not possible and vulnerable adults are at risk, it may be necessary to override it.

Remember, the first priority should always be to ensure the safety and protection of vulnerable adults and that it is the responsibility of all staff and volunteers to act on any suspicion or evidence of abuse or neglect in the way set out in this Policy, related procedures and Code of Good Practice

4) Procedures

Follow this procedure if you think a vulnerable adult may be at risk of abuse, is being, or has been abused either by:

- a member of staff
- a member of their family
- any other person, including another vulnerable adult

Staff or volunteers, who for any reason become concerned that a vulnerable adult may be at risk of abuse, is being, or has been abused, must immediately report that concern to the Manager or Trustees of Volunteer Action as the designated safeguarding officer.

The Manager will discuss your concerns with you to clarify their cause and obtain all the known relevant information. This will then be forwarded to the Northamptonshire Adult Social Care team (County Council) stating that it concerns vulnerable adult protection.

Should the concern relate to the Manager you should contact a Trustee, or if it concerns a Trustee you should contact another Trustee and the Manager as the designated safeguarding officer.

Follow this procedure if a vulnerable adult tells you that they are being or have been abused

Vulnerable adults will occasionally disclose abuse to an individual they have come to feel they can trust. This happens for many reasons but the important thing to remember is that if they do tell you, it may be in the hope that you will act to stop it happening, even if they ask you not to do anything with the information.

Vulnerable adults may feel as if they are betraying someone they are close to and whom they love. It is not unusual for a vulnerable adult to love the abuser but want the abuse to stop, especially when that person is a family member or carer. Equally, it may be someone they fear e.g, a person whom they perceive to be able to influence decisions concerning their future. Either way, it takes great courage for a vulnerable adult to talk about abuse and your response can be crucial.

It is important to remember too, that it can be more difficult for some vulnerable adults to tell than for others. Vulnerable adults who have experienced prejudice and discrimination for example, through racism may well believe that people from other ethnic groups or backgrounds do not really care about them. They may have little reason to trust those they see as authority figures and may wonder whether you will be any different.



Vulnerable adults with a disability will have to overcome barriers before disclosing abuse. They may well rely on the abuser for their daily care and have no knowledge of alternative sources.

If a vulnerable adult discloses abuse to you in the course of your work it is important to react appropriately.

<p>DO:</p> <p>Remain calm and receptive</p> <p>Listen without interrupting</p> <p>Only ask questions of clarification if you are unclear what the vulnerable adult is saying</p> <p>Make it clear you take them seriously</p> <p>Acknowledge their courage in telling you</p> <p>Tell them they are not responsible for the abuse</p> <p>Check what they have said to you with them to ensure your understanding is right</p> <p>Let them know you will do what you can to help them and, where possible, get their consent to inform your Manager and Northamptonshire Adult Social Care team (County Council)</p> <p>Be aware of your own safety</p> <p>Make a written record</p>	<p>DO NOT:</p> <p>Ignore the allegation</p> <p>Allow your shock or distaste to show</p> <p>Probe for more information/ask other questions</p> <p>Make assumptions/judgements or speculate</p> <p>'Defame' anyone</p> <p>Make negative comments about the alleged abuser or anyone</p> <p>Make promises you cannot keep</p> <p>Agree to keep the information secret</p> <p>Make contact with the alleged abuser</p>
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It is essential that everything possible is done to protect the vulnerable adults who place their trust in us. If a vulnerable adult tells you that they are being, or have been, abused you must:

- make an immediate record of what the vulnerable adult has said, using their own words
- follow the instructions for reporting to the Manager, as set out in the procedure
- tell them that you will have to inform your Manager and that if appropriate; the Northamptonshire Adult Social Care team will also have to be informed.

APPENDIX 1

Vulnerable Adults Code of Good Practice

This Code has been developed to provide you with advice that not only will help to protect vulnerable adults, but will also help you and your colleagues identify any practices which could be mistakenly interpreted and perhaps lead to false allegations of abuse. It is important that at all times firm and appropriate boundaries are adhered to. Politeness and helpfulness in your volunteer capacity is a good thing, over familiarity is not.

Good practice will also protect Volunteer Action through reducing the possibility of anyone using their role to gain access to vulnerable adults, in order to abuse.

If in doubt, consider how an action or activity may be perceived as opposed to how it is intended.

Wherever possible, you should be guided by the following advice:-

- don't engage in or allow any sexually provocative games involving or observed by vulnerable adults, whether based on talking or touching
- never make suggestive remarks or discriminatory comments to a vulnerable adult
- don't engage in or tolerate any bullying of a vulnerable adult, either by vulnerable adults or other people
- don't engage in or tolerate inappropriate physical activity involving vulnerable adults
- respect all vulnerable adults, regardless of their age, gender, ethnicity, disability or sexual identity
- never trivialise abuse
- never let allegations by a vulnerable adult go unreported, including any made against you

Based on NAVCA (National Association for Voluntary and Community Action) Protection of Adults policy Dec 2009

APPENDIX 2 Internal Procedure

In the event of a safeguarding issue, the designated officer will:

1. Seek consent from the person concerned. If they are deemed not to have capacity to consent, log the decision to act without it.
2. Collect all available relevant facts and appropriate information
3. Make a written record of the concern
4. Tell the person involved what is being done and note their views regarding how they wish the matter to be dealt with
5. Tell only the people who need to know
6. Consider the balance between listening to someone's wishes and needing to refer information where others may be at risk
7. Inform the person involved about the outcome of any process

If someone is injured or at immediate risk, take immediate action. Seek help by dialling 999 for the police or an ambulance.