



Vulnerable Adult & Child Protection Policy

Definitions (for this document)

Vulnerable adult:

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, or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation¹.

Vulnerable adults are entitled to: privacy; be treated with dignity; lead an independent life and to be enabled to do so; be able to choose how they lead their lives; the protection of the law; have their rights upheld regardless of ethnic origin, gender, sexuality, impairment or disability, age, religion or cultural background.

Child:

Describes a child aged 0-17 years old.

Policy Statement

As a foodbank project team, we want to restore dignity and revive hope to people from all walks of life. We are concerned with individuals and their circumstances and actively encourage an inclusive environment throughout all our projects.

We seek to ensure that all our team members are aware of what is required from them under the vulnerable adult and child protection policy and make sure that it is practised at all times.

It is the responsibility of each one of us to prevent the physical, sexual or emotional abuse and neglect of vulnerable adults and children.

We commit ourselves to co-operate fully with the appropriate statutory services when they are conducting official investigation into physical, emotional or sexual abuse and neglect of vulnerable adults, children or young people (by an adult or young person).

¹ March 2000. 'No secrets: guidance on developing and implementing multi-agency policies and procedures to protect vulnerable adults from abuse', Department of Health. (The broad definition of a 'vulnerable adult' referred to in the 1997 Consultation Paper *Who decides?* issued by the Lord Chancellor's Department.

This statement is to be brought to the attention of all staff and volunteers when they join, as part of their induction programme. Any amendments will be brought to the attention of all team members.

Implementation

The Foodbank shall:

Plan its work so as to minimise situations where the abuse of vulnerable adults and children might occur. Although the number of people who actively seek to abuse vulnerable adults and children is very small, the foodbank project can reduce opportunities for abuse in various ways. We will, for instance:

- Ensure that there is adequate supervision for all vulnerable adults and children.
- Ensure that any vulnerable adult or child working with the foodbank project is aware of who they can talk to if they have concerns.
- Ensure that all staff and volunteers are aware that they must consult with the leader of the session if there have any concerns.
- Arrange that, as far as possible, an adult is not left alone with a child where there is little or no opportunity of the activity being observed by others. This good practice can be of as much benefit to the adult as to the child.
- Make sure the designated person has correct and up-to-date training.
- Ensure staff and volunteers supervising vulnerable adults or children are suitably trained.

Designated Safeguarding Person and their role:

The foodbank project has a designated person who is responsible for dealing with any concerns about the protection of vulnerable adults or children. The designated safeguarding officers for the foodbank project are Stuart Watkins (Safeguarding Officer) and Sue Jenkins (Deputy Safeguarding Officer)

During every Foodbank session a responsible person, normally the leader of the session, will be available for vulnerable adults and children to speak with should they feel the need to talk with someone about an incident which has happened whilst working for or receiving assistance from the foodbank project, particularly if they feel they have been physically, sexually or emotionally abused or neglected by an adult or another young person.

Recording:

The responsible person and/or the volunteer will make notes and keep confidential records of any disclosure or concerns they or another staff/team member has and seek advice from the leader of the session, or in their absence the Safeguarding Officer or their Deputy. In an emergency the session leader should contact Children's Services or the Police.

Staff and volunteers must ensure that they use the safeguarding incident form to record any concerns. They should ensure that recording of facts, incidents, assessments, referrals, and case discussions are all sufficient, accurate, concise, up-to-date, legible, dated, and factual. Opinions should be kept to a minimum and always backed up by factual evidence. Any supporting evidence should be preserved and clearly labelled. These records must be stored in an individual file and stored securely in a manner that safeguards the individual's right to privacy and security and are GDPR compliant. These records are available to individuals on request (not third-party information) and may be used as evidence in disciplinary proceedings or in civil or criminal prosecutions.

Whistleblowing:

Staff and volunteers are encouraged to take action when suspicious that abuse is occurring at work – no matter what the setting, who the perpetrator is or who the victim is. The foodbank project will respect and not penalise those who stand up for anyone who is suspected of being abused.

Staff have a responsibility to report any occurrences or suspicions of adult abuse. Staff who report abuse are protected by the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998.

REMEMBER

It is important that everyone in the foodbank project is aware that the person who first encounters a case of alleged or suspected abuse is not responsible for deciding whether or not abuse has occurred. That is a task for the professional vulnerable adult and child protection agencies following a referral to them of concern about someone.

Additional points

Displaying Information

Display the name of the designated Safeguarding Officer and Deputy (see above for names)

Make sure all workers in the foodbank project know the name of the designated person and how they might be contacted.

Applying agreed procedures for protecting vulnerable adults and children to all paid staff and volunteers

It is possible to be lulled into a false sense of security, believing that those who work alongside vulnerable adults and children in the foodbank project will never be guilty of abuse because they are part of a Christian organisation. It is not safe to assume that all others are automatically safe to be with vulnerable adults or children.

For this reason all procedures set in place to protect vulnerable adults and children should apply to all those in contact with them. This is not the same as treating each person who relates to vulnerable adults and children as being under suspicion, but a matter of taking sensible measures to protect vulnerable adults and children, which are then observed by everyone. This will involve thought and planning within each group to minimise the risk.

If any member of staff or supervising volunteer has concerns, please raise them with the designated person. If it is brought to the attention of the designated person and not adequately dealt with the next step is to talk to the management team of the foodbank for advice or contact Social Services/the Police as a private citizen to discuss your concerns.

Disclosure of Information

There is a difference between confidentiality and secrecy. All personal and delicate information disclosed to us is confidential but may not always be secret.

Personal and delicate information about staff and volunteers will be:

- Confidential to the foodbank project and can be shared with staff and volunteers on a 'need to know basis' *and*
- Can be shared with another agency when:
 - Permission is given by the person about whom the information is held.
 - There is an overriding justification to share information without the person's consent.
 - The law requires it.

Give staff and volunteers clear roles

Abuse of vulnerable adults and children is most easily concealed where there is confusion among adults about roles and responsibilities. Included therefore in all job descriptions, both for employees and supervising volunteers, will be a statement laying down the behaviour and values expected from all who work as part of this team.

Over and above the written word, expected behaviour towards vulnerable adults and children when working with the foodbank project will be explained to new workers as part of their induction.

It is the foodbank's policy not to engage in regulated activities (close or personal tasks such as washing, dressing, or accompanying to the lavatory) with vulnerable adults: members of staff and volunteers are therefore ineligible for DBS checks.

Supervision as a means of protection

Regular staff meetings should be held where team leaders meet together to raise issues about their area of work and discuss them. When receiving feedback about the project, particular attention should be paid to any situation or suggestion that a vulnerable adult or child is being either highly favoured or harshly treated, as these are signs of abuse.

Within the foodbank project our main area of concern about protecting people lies with the welfare of any vulnerable adult supported volunteers. Where possible, line managers should take opportunities to observe those vulnerable adults and children for whom they are responsible. It is good practice to have an update for all volunteers before every session.

In all recruitment decisions concerning volunteers:

- a) A detailed application form should be completed.
- b) 2 references should be taken about the suitability of the applicant for the post being considered.
- c) An informal interview will provide an extended conversation to allow an opportunity to explore in more detail the applicant's experience and motivation for volunteering.
- d) All records must be kept securely.

Criminal convictions:

All volunteers must complete a volunteer application form before commencing work at the foodbank project. Details of criminal convictions (except those 'spent' under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974) must be provided so an adequate risk assessment can be undertaken. (The foodbank project reserves the right to dismiss a volunteer and/or ban them from the property should they feel it is necessary). Records of such information must be kept securely.

Training

Training in the prevention of abuse and the action to take if abuse occurs should be included as part of the Training Programme for the foodbank project and can normally be accessed free of charge via the local authority. Further guidelines concerning the safeguarding policies of your local council can also be obtained free of charge and a copy should be kept available as a reference.

It should be noted that it is insufficient to give workers guidelines without equipping them with the skills and knowledge to carry them out.

Irrespective of any prior safeguarding training a new volunteer must undertake the Thirtyone:eight Basic Safeguarding Training. Those in a leadership position must also undertake the Foodbank Advanced Safeguarding Training. All volunteers must undertake refresher training every 3/5 years

All volunteers must attend safeguarding training. If a volunteer misses 2 opportunities for safeguarding training a conversation will take place with a designated person, and it will be explained that this training is a requirement. After 3 invitations with no valid reason for non-attendance the volunteer must be removed from the rota.

General

All workers driving any vehicle which transports vulnerable adults and/or children must hold a valid driver’s licence for the type/class of vehicle they are driving.

All vehicles used in the transportation of vulnerable adults and/or children must have a valid road fund licence, be appropriately insured, have a valid MOT certificate and comply with all appropriate legislation and regulations. Seat sharing is not permitted, and seat belts must be worn.

Review

This policy and its implementation will be reviewed at least annually and whenever there are any legislative changes or amendments to guidance issued by relevant statutory bodies.

Signatures

Sue Jenkins	22/01/2024
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Chair of Trustees	Date

Designated persons:
Stuart Watkins
Sue Jenkins

Other useful numbers:
NSPCC helpline 0808 800 5000
Emergency Social Services team (serious urgent risk only):
Children’s Services daytime (0845 607 2000), out of hours (01905 768020)
Adults /Police Community Protection number (0300 333 3000)