



Policy for the
Safeguarding of Children
and
Adults at Risk

for

Voices of Hope

UKCC registration 1187454

Version 1.0

Agreed and adopted by the Trustees on 20.08.14

To be reviewed no later than 21.07.31

0.1 Introduction

The Board of Trustees (hereafter the 'Board') of Voices of Hope (hereafter 'VoH') wish to safeguard the children and adults at risk with whom we work so as to maintain their safety, dignity and security at all times. This document is a policy expression in respect of safeguarding and is not specifically concerned with general health and safety matters, although it is recognized that the two might overlap in certain respects.

VoH works with both children and adults at risk. For the purpose of this document they are collectively termed 'vulnerable persons', except where a specific issue requires a difference to be recognised between children and adults at risk.

0.2 Definitions

For the purpose of this document, the following terms and definitions shall apply.

A child is defined as a person who is below 18 years of age.

An adult at risk is defined as a person who is 18 years of age or over, and who is or may be in need of community care services by reason of mental health issues, learning or physical disability, sensory impairment, age or illness and who is or may be unable to take care of him/herself, or unable to protect him/herself against significant harm or serious exploitation.

A Safeguarding Officer ('SO') is the person designated by VoH as having lead responsibility for issues relating to the safeguarding of vulnerable persons with whom VoH work during the normal course of its activities.

Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, scalding, drowning or suffocating. It may be done deliberately or recklessly or be the result of a deliberate failure to prevent injury occurring.

Neglect is the persistent and/or severe failure to meet the basic physical and/or psychological needs of a vulnerable person. In all cases it may result in serious health impairment, and in relation to children it can also result in serious developmental impairment.

Sexual abuse involves a vulnerable person being forced or coerced into participating or watching sexual activity. It is not necessary for the vulnerable person to be aware that the activity is sexual, and in the case of a child apparent consent is irrelevant.

Emotional abuse occurs where there is persistent emotional ill treatment or rejection. It results in low self-worth and, in relation to children it causes severe and adverse effects on emotional and behavioural development.

Financial or material abuse may be defined in accordance with the UK Government's 'No Secrets' publication which stated that it includes theft, fraud, exploitation, pressure in connection with wills, property or inheritance or financial transactions, or the misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits. We also recognise that financial or material abuse could include the exploitation of adults at risk for financial gain.

VoH personnel for the purposes of this document shall mean its trustees, members of staff (whether directly employed or externally contracted) and its volunteers.

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1. General Policy Statement

1.1 This policy is based on a child-rights framework and the principles encapsulated within the following authoritative references:

1.1.1 The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989, its Optional Protocols (on Worst Forms of Child Labour; Forced Recruitment), and other international child-rights and human-rights instruments;

1.1.2 All relevant national laws of England and Wales, in particular the Children Act 1989 (and its various amendments), the Protection of Children Act 2004 and Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006.

1.2 With respect to those vulnerable persons with whom VoH works with, the board is committed to ensuring that:

1.2.1 a reasonably safe environment is provided

1.2.2 those who are suffering are identified

1.2.3 appropriate action is taken to keep vulnerable persons safe from harm

1.3 Pursuant to the above aims, the board will approve and annually review policies and procedures in order to:

1.3.1 raise awareness of issues relating to the welfare of vulnerable persons and the promotion of a safe environment

1.3.2 provide procedures for reporting concerns to the relevant authority

1.3.3 provide procedures for reporting and dealing with allegations of abuse against VoH staff and volunteers

1.3.4 facilitate the safe recruitment of staff

2. Safeguarding Officer

- 2.1 The board has nominated Karen Reekie as the Safeguarding Officer ('SO'), which is the person with special responsibility for overseeing safeguarding matters within VoH and is the main point of contact within VoH for safeguarding issues.
- 2.2 The SO will:
 - 2.2.1 undertake and maintain an appropriate level of training commensurate with the requirements of the position and maintain awareness of developments in the approach to the safeguarding of vulnerable persons.
 - 2.2.2 provide VoH staff and volunteers who working with vulnerable persons with training adequate to familiarise them with safeguarding issues, their responsibilities and the policies and procedures of the organisation. Staff and volunteers shall be required to undertake refresher training every three years as a minimum. Where appropriate, other VoH staff with specialist training and experience may be asked to provide additional training and/or support.
 - 2.2.3 provide the board with an annual report which shall detail how the SO's duties have been discharged during the year.

3. Disclosure of abuse and reporting procedures

3.1 If a vulnerable person tells a member of staff or a volunteer about possible abuse, the person receiving the disclosure **should**:

3.1.1 listen attentively to what is being disclosed

3.1.2 conduct a calm conversation with the person making the disclosure

3.1.2 carefully record in writing the place and time of the disclosure, and precisely what is being disclosed

3.1.3 reassure the person disclosing that they have done the right thing

3.1.4 inform the person disclosing that you must pass their information on but only those who need to know will be told, and tell them who it will be reported to

3.1.5 report the disclosure to the SO or, if the SO is unavailable, to the VoH Director or a Trustee

3.2 If a vulnerable person tells a member of staff or a volunteer about possible abuse, the person receiving the disclosure **should not**:

3.2.1 put the person making the disclosure under pressure

3.2.2 put words into the mouth of the person making the disclosure

3.2.3 investigate disclosure allegations themselves

3.3 The appropriate authorities to be contacted may be different depending upon whether the disclosure has been made by a child or an adult at risk.

3.3.1 Where the person disclosing is a child, if they live outside of the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames (RBKuT) the child and family services of their local authority should be contacted. If the child lives within RBKuT then the Kingston Single Point of Access ('SPA') team should be contacted. Details may be found on the Kingston Council website www.kingston.gov.uk. If the allegation involves a VoH staff member or volunteer, the Local Authority Designated Officer ('LADO') should be contacted. The LADO's contact details are also on the Kingston Council website. In addition, the local police should be contacted if considered appropriate. If the child is in immediate danger, the emergency services should be contacted on 999.

3.3.2 Where the person disclosing is an adult at risk, if they live outside of RBKuT their local authority social services should be contacted. If they live within RBKuT, the Kingston Adult Safeguarding team should be contacted. In addition, the local police should be contacted if considered appropriate. If the person is in immediate danger, the emergency services should be contacted on 999.

4. Regulated activity and enhanced Disclosure & Barring Service ('DBS') checks

- 4.1 Under the *Safeguarding of Vulnerable Groups Act 2006* as amended by the *Protection of Freedoms Act 2012*, an individual working unsupervised with vulnerable persons is considered to be engaged in 'regulated activity' and must have an enhanced DBS check that will involve a review of the children's barred list and/or the vulnerable adults barred list in order to perform their duties.
- 4.2 An individual working in a directly and permanently supervised position is not considered to be engaged in 'regulated activity' but will still be required to obtain an enhanced DBS check that will not include a review of the barred lists but may include other relevant information held by local police forces.
- 4.3 An enhanced DBS check may only be submitted where an applicant is aged 16 or over at the time of making the application.
- 4.4 Persons working or volunteering with VoH shall be subject to the requirement for obtaining an enhanced DBS check at the discretion of the VoH Director and/or Board.

5. Duty to refer abuse to the DBS

- 5.1 The *Safeguarding of Vulnerable Groups Act 2006* and the *Protection of Freedoms Act 2012* both make it mandatory to refer anyone known to pose a threat of harm to a child or vulnerable people to the DBS. This means that the SO must not knowingly permit anyone who poses a risk of harm to vulnerable persons either to be employed by, or volunteer with, VoH. This includes anyone who has a record of having committed, or is believed to have committed, relevant conduct whilst either being employed or volunteering.
- 5.2 VoH has a legal duty to refer a staff member or volunteer who poses a risk to vulnerable persons to the DBS; failure to do so can result in a fine and/or five years imprisonment. VoH will also inform the police and other relevant authorities as appropriate. There must be sufficient and solid evidence that the staff member or volunteer poses a risk of harm before they can be referred to the DBS. The DBS will not consider evidence based on rumour or unsubstantiated reports.
- 5.3 DBS referral forms can be downloaded from the UK Government website at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dbs-referrals-form-and-guidance>
- 5.4 The organisation *thirtyone:eight* provides a range of services associated with safeguarding at <https://thirtyoneeight.org/>
- 5.5 The Board has a legal responsibility to report any concerns or investigations involving the safeguarding of vulnerable persons to the Charities Commission with whom VoH is registered. The Board is required to update the Commission on investigation outcomes and decisions made. The Board will also work with the relevant local, regional and national authorities to investigate all such concerns and allegations, including the Police, Social Services, the Designated Officer.

6. The DBS barring process

- 6.1 Whenever new and relevant information (such as a caution or conviction) becomes known about an individual, it will be sent to the DBS. The DBS will consider this information, together with other information known about the individual, and then decide upon whether the individual poses a risk of harm to vulnerable persons. If so, then the DBS will commence its barring process which includes issuing a disclosure certificate to the applicant with the barring information.
- 6.2 The applicant should be advised by the SO to make a representation to the DBS regarding the barring information. The DBS will then assess the barring information and representation and decide whether to bar the applicant. If there is sufficient evidence then the individual will be placed on either the children's barred list or the vulnerable adults barred list, or both as appropriate. The applicant must then be removed from regulated activity.
- 6.3 The applicant has the right of appeal to a tribunal and must be advised of this right. Serious offences committed against vulnerable persons will lead to automatic barring and the applicant will have no right either to make representations or to appeal against a barring decision.

- 7. Reporting and dealing with allegations of abuse by staff members & volunteers**
- 7.1 The safeguarding procedures apply to all VoH personnel irrespective of their position.
- 7.2 Because of the frequent contact that may be made between VoH personnel and vulnerable persons, VoH personnel may have allegations of abuse made against them. VoH recognises that such allegations may be made for a variety of reasons and that the apparent facts of the allegation may or may not be wholly or partly true. VoH will work alongside and cooperate with the relevant organisations to assist in the investigation of all such allegations and will abide by the decisions made whether this be to resolve by action or make further investigations.
- 7.3 The welfare of vulnerable persons is of paramount concern to VoH. It is also recognised that hasty or ill-informed decisions made in connection with VoH personnel may irreparably damage an individual's reputation, confidence and career. Accordingly, those within VoH who are dealing with allegations of abuse against other VoH personnel will do so with the sensitivity required and in a careful, measured way.

8. Additional information

- 8.1 VoH is General Data Protection Regulations ('GDPR') compliant. All data held in relation to vulnerable persons is kept securely and with consent. The reader is referred to the VoH GDPR Policy which is reviewed and updated annually prior to being submitted to the Board for approval.
- 8.2 The SO will submit a quarterly report to the Board to update them on any safeguarding issues, training needs and recommendations for policy and/or procedural amendments.

END OF SAFEGUARDING POLICY