##

**HH&D Policy Guide 4 SAFEGUARDING VULNERABLE ADULTS**

This version approved by the Executive Committee on 15-11-2023 [NB Annual Review req’d]

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## 1 Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults

1. Safeguarding vulnerable adults is part of the wider role of safeguarding and promoting welfare. It refers to the activity which is undertaken to protect specific vulnerable adults who are suffering or are at risk of suffering significant harm. As members and/or volunteers in u3a, everyone has a responsibility to safeguard vulnerable adults and promote their welfare.
2. Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of vulnerable adults – and in particular protecting them from significant harm - depends upon effective joint working between families, community members, agencies and professionals that have different roles and expertise.

**2 Why are Safeguarding procedures needed?**

1. As people age, they may become more vulnerable. Vulnerable older adults may find themselves subject to abuse or neglect. In the case of older people, abusers may be close family members, carers, strangers or neighbours. The most common forms of elder abuse in the community include physical abuse, psychological abuse or financial abuse.
2. For example, a carer or close relative may become angry or irritated with an older person and this could lead to physical or psychological abuse. This can present as hitting the person or handling them very roughly while helping them to mobilise or to wash and dress. It can sometimes mean neglecting someone who relies on a carer or relative for food or personal care. Name calling or humiliating someone are common forms of psychological abuse.
3. In relation to financial abuse, lonely older people can be very vulnerable to scammers who phone or knock on the door or appear very friendly and caring towards them. Older people can also be pressured by family members to part with money or family members or carers may steal from them.

**3 Indicators that someone may be being abused**

1. If an older person has an injury or a bruise it is important to ask how it happened. (We all fall and bump into things sometimes). If bruises or injuries are frequent and/or unexplained this may be a warning sign.
2. If a person appears to be under nourished or uncared for, this could be an instance of neglect or of a person not receiving the help they need.
3. If a person’s demeanour changes, it is important to check out what is happening. If someone becomes depressed, cries, or there are other marked psychological changes, this could be evidence of emotional abuse or of essential needs not being met.
4. If a person talks about giving away large sums of money or being approached or befriended by someone or is being badgered for money by family, this may constitute financial abuse.

**4 Safeguarding Responsibilities of all u3a members**

As u3a members, we are all peers and we need to watch out for each other. If we are worried about someone, we should not turn a blind eye but try to help. This means:

1. being alert to potential indicators of abuse or neglect
2. being alert to indicators of self-neglect where a member may be reluctant to seek the help they need from a family member, medical or social care agency
3. being alert to the risks which individual abusers, or potential abusers, may pose to vulnerable adults
4. reporting any concerns you may have about someone’s well-being to a group leader, group co-ordinator or Executive Committee (EC) member.

**5 Safeguarding responsibilities of EC**

1. The HHD u3a takes seriously the welfare of all vulnerable adults who are involved in its activities.
2. The HHD u3a aims to ensure that all members are welcomed into a safe, caring environment with a happy and friendly atmosphere that will enhance their well-being.
3. The HHD u3a will do all in their power, with the consent of the individual concerned, to provide support or referral for support to improve a vulnerable member’s health and well-being when required.
4. The HHD EC will appoint an HHD u3a member as the Safeguarding Officer, to whom any possible instances requiring safeguarding will be referred.

**6 Responsibilities of the Safeguarding Officer**

1. If an instance of abuse or neglect is brought to the attention of the EC, the Safeguarding Officer will be responsible for tactfully approaching the member concerned and informing them of the help and support that is available from the Adult Social Services Safeguarding team.
2. It is often the case that a vulnerable adult will not want to be referred to social services and will say that they can manage the situation. A referral cannot be made without the consent of the individual unless there is evidence that the person’s health and well-being is at serious risk or if a crime has been committed in which case the police should be informed.
3. If the vulnerable person does not wish to be referred, the Safeguarding Officer should do their best, in consultation with the individual, to ensure that an informal network of support is established for them and that someone who sees that person regularly at u3a monitors their welfare.
4. If the person agrees to a referral to Adult Social Services Safeguarding Team, they can either be given the contact information and refer themselves or the Safeguarding Officer can make the referral on their behalf.
5. An abused person can feel very shamed and embarrassed so it is vital that the matter is kept completely confidential and that the vulnerable person is assured of this confidentiality.
6. If referral is not wanted by the vulnerable adult but the Safeguarding Officer is seriously concerned, without breaching confidentiality by naming the person, the Safeguarding Officer may seek advice from Adult Social Services Safeguarding team about how best to proceed.
7. The Safeguarding Officer will know how to make a referral to the local Adult Social Services Safeguarding team.
8. The link below provides full information about how to raise a concern with West Sussex Council about a vulnerable adult:

[**https://www.westsussex.gov.uk/social-care-and-health/social-care-support/adults/raise-a-concern-about-an-adult#how-to-raise-a-concern**](https://www.westsussex.gov.uk/social-care-and-health/social-care-support/adults/raise-a-concern-about-an-adult#how-to-raise-a-concern)