

Whitworth and district U3A Safeguarding policy

1. Scope

1.1 Whitworth and district U3A is committed to promoting the wellbeing of all its members and seeks to create a safe and welcoming environment where members can learn, have fun and develop their skills and confidence, whilst being protected from harm, discrimination and abuse. This aim of this policy is to specifically address the safeguarding of vulnerable adults who are members of our U3A.

Definition of a Vulnerable Adult “A vulnerable adult is any person aged 18 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 maybe unable to take care of him or herself, or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation.” [DOH 2000 “No Secrets” Guidance]

1.2 This policy provides advice to the group organisers and specifies good practice guidelines to be followed by all members. Whitworth and district U3A follows the Third Age Trust governing body policy of providing equality of opportunity to all members and potential members, regardless of social standing, language, ethnicity, gender, orientation and educational background. All reasonable efforts will be made to facilitate membership for vulnerable people (as defined in the Home Office document No Secrets published March 2000) who wish to become members.

1.2 As a provider of activities for people no longer in full time employment, children are not normally involved in our activities. However, they may occasionally be present accompanying one of our members. In this case, the member must be with the child at all times and is responsible for the welfare of the child. In such circumstances, this policy applies to the child as well as to any vulnerable adults.

1.3. A vulnerable adult is someone aged 18 or over:

- Who is, or may be, in need of community services due to age, illness or a mental or physical disability;
- Who is, or may be, unable to take care of himself/herself, or unable to protect himself/herself against significant harm or exploitation.

For example, a person who:

- is frail due to age
- has drug or alcohol problems
- has a learning disability
- has mental or physical ill health or disability.

This does not mean however that just because a person is elderly or has a disability they are inevitably vulnerable or at risk, especially if they have capacity to make decisions & make informed choices to protect themselves from harm.

Vulnerability is related to how able an adult is to make and exercise their own informed choice, free from duress or undue influence, and to protect themselves from abuse,

neglect and exploitation. There is no hard and fast rule: an adult should be assumed to be covered by this policy unless there is information to indicate that they are not.

2. Reason for the policy

2.1. Everyone, including children, young people and vulnerable adults, has the right not to be abused. We recognise the need to ensure their welfare when they come into contact with the services we provide.

3. Types of abuse

3.1. Physical: causing physical harm, including hitting, shaking, biting, grabbing, withholding food or drink, force-feeding, wrongly administering medicine, unnecessary restraint, failing to provide physical care and aids to living;

3.2. Sexual: including sexual assault, rape, inappropriate touching/molesting, forcing or enticing someone into sexual acts they don't understand or feel powerless to refuse; grooming a child or young person in preparation for abuse.

3.3. Emotional or psychological: persistent emotional ill treatment or rejection, including verbal abuse, shouting, swearing, threatening abandonment or harm, isolating, taking away privacy or other rights, bullying/intimidation, blaming, belittling, silencing, controlling or humiliating;

3.4. Financial or material: illegal or improper use of an adult's property, money or other assets without their informed consent or where the consent is obtained by fraud. It can include withholding money or possessions, theft of money or property, fraud, intentionally mismanaging finances, borrowing money and not repaying;

3.5. Neglect: persistent or severe failure to meet a person's basic physical and psychological needs. It will result in serious impairment of their health or development, and can include withholding shelter, food, drink, heating and clothing, failing to provide access to health, social and educational services, ignoring physical care needs, exposing a person to unacceptable risk, failing to ensure adequate supervision or unresponsiveness to the basic emotional needs of a child;

3.6. Discriminatory abuse: including slurs, harassment and maltreatment due to a protected characteristic (Equality Act 2010).

4. Signs of abuse

4.1. There are many possible signs of abuse, none being conclusive on their own.

Examples include:

- Unexplained injury / weight loss / cuts and bruises / dirtiness
- Changes in behaviour
- Depression / low self-esteem
- Lack of self-care / dehydration / abnormal eating pattern
- Harm to self
- Obsessive behaviour
- Bills not being paid
- An overly critical or disrespectful carer who may bully or undermine
- Isolation from usual network of friends, family or community

5. Safeguarding

5.1. Safeguarding vulnerable adults means protecting them from maltreatment, and preventing injury or significant harm. Abuse violates an adult's human and civil rights. It can vary from treating someone with disrespect in a way which significantly affects the person's quality of life, to causing actual physical suffering.

5.2 Safeguarding children from abuse and promoting their welfare means: protecting children from maltreatment; preventing impairment of children's health or development;
 ensuring children are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care; taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes.

5.3. A safeguarding concern arises if abuse is suspected or disclosed. Abuse can happen anywhere – at home, in a residential or nursing home, a hospital, in the workplace, at a day centre or educational establishment or in the street.

6. Reporting safeguarding concerns

6.1. We all have a responsibility to report any safeguarding concerns over the welfare of children or vulnerable adults. This extends to the identification of signs of abuse; poor practice by volunteers, group leaders and members and allegations brought to our attention by a member of the public. We believe that reporting safeguarding concerns can prevent serious abuse or harm from happening, or from escalating.

6.2. Committee members must not attempt to investigate abuse themselves; neither must they confront anyone who is allegedly responsible for abuse nor tell them that allegations have been made about them.

6.3. The officer responsible for receipt of concerns and forwarding them on is the Chair. If the Chair is absent, concerns may be reported to the Vice Chair.

6.4. Report safeguarding allegations or concerns to Lancashire County Council Children's or Adults Services at the earliest possible opportunity, and at least within 24 hours. If it is outside working hours contact the Lancashire County Council Out Of Hours Team on **0300 123 6722**.

6.5. Dial 999 if a child, young person or vulnerable adult may be in imminent danger or a criminal offence may have been committed.

6.6. The Adult's or Children's Services or the Police should be given as much factual information as possible.

For example:

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- The child, young person or vulnerable adult's name and address (and parents'/carers' address if different);
 - The reason for concern – a note of significant events or conversations should be made as promptly as possible to assist with any referral and subsequent investigation. Evidence such texts or Facebook entries should be preserved;
 - Any other known factors which may be contributing to the problem;
 - Additional information such as age (or date of birth), ethnicity, religion, language and disabilities / specific needs. However, the safeguarding concern should still be reported whether or not the information is complete.

7. Confidentiality, record keeping and sharing information

7.1 Information about safeguarding concerns should be regarded as confidential. The information is not secret, however, and Whitworth and district U3A will co-operate with investigations by Lancashire County Council Children's or Adults services, or the Police as applicable, and follow their advice to ensure that any risk to the safety of children and vulnerable adults is addressed.

7.2 Where a disclosure is made it is important that the staff member does not promise the child/vulnerable adult to keep the information secret but says that they will only disclose it to someone who can help them.

8. Allegations against a committee member or group leader

8.1 If someone witnesses behaviour by a committee member, group leader or member of the community, or an allegation is made about them that indicates that they have, or may have:

- harmed a child, young person or vulnerable adult, or put them at risk of harm;
- possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child, or vulnerable adult or
- behaved in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children or vulnerable adults, they must report it as a safeguarding concern to the Police and/or LCC Children's or Adults Services at the earliest possible opportunity.

8.2 A committee member or group leader must report any allegation made against them to the Chair of committee.

8.3. Safeguarding concerns and allegations relating to U3A members will be dealt with in accordance with the U3A Disciplinary Procedure. However, investigations by the responsible authorities will take precedence over internal U3A processes relating to conduct.

Pat Matson, Chair of Whitworth and district u3a
5/9/22

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