

Volunteer Centre Kensington & Chelsea

Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults and Children Policy

General Statement of Policy

VCKC works directly with children and vulnerable adults on a range of its projects and programmes and has a responsibility to promote the wellbeing and safety of all people with whom it comes into contact. VCKC believes that it is always unacceptable for a person to experience abuse or neglect of any kind.

VCKC is committed to practices that protect children and vulnerable adults from harm and recognises its duty to ensure that appropriate action is taken where a child or vulnerable adult is experiencing harm or is at risk of harm.

Policy History

This policy was drafted and submitted to the Board for approval in November 2019. Further revisions were made in light of Board discussion and it was approved on 23 March 2020. It replaces the Vulnerable Adults Policy, which was initially approved by the Board in July 2014, and the Safeguarding Children Policy, which was initially approved by the Board in February 2015.

Policy Owner

Policy, Procedure and Personnel sub-group

Purpose

VCKC is involved in providing services with and for a wide range of people including our programmes for people with learning and physical disabilities, older adults and those experiencing poor mental health.

Our general statement of policy is:

- To safeguard and promote the wellbeing of the children and vulnerable adults with whom VCKC works
- To ensure that all employees and others covered by this policy understand the context within which checking with the Disclosure and Barring Service (“DBS”) takes place
- To provide all employees and volunteers with guidance on how they should behave if they suspect that a child or vulnerable adult may be experiencing, or be at risk from abuse or harm.
- To guide employees and volunteers on how to respond to - and report - concerns

This policy is based on the national guidance on developing and implementing multi-agency policies and procedures to protect vulnerable adults from abuse set out in the Care Act 2014 and subsequent statutory guidance.

WHO IS AFFECTED BY THIS POLICY?

This policy applies to all paid employees, trustees and volunteers, whilst working on behalf of VCKC in any capacity and in any setting.

Young clients, young people on work experience and any children or young adults involved in the work of VCKC should be made aware of our safeguarding policy. Those with specific communication needs because of language or disability should have access to information in appropriate forms to ensure their understanding.

This policy relates to all children from unborn up to 18 years of age and includes children with whom VCKC has direct or indirect contact with, for example children known to adults with whom VCKC works directly. This policy also relates to vulnerable adults who need to be safeguarded from harm, as these persons aged 18 or over may not be able to take care of, or protect, themselves.

Definitions

Abuse “is a violation of an individual’s human and civil rights by any other person or persons.’ and may result in significant harm to, or exploitation of, the person subjected to the abuse.

Categories of Abuse

The Care Act 2014 recognises ten categories of abuse:

- Physical Abuse – This relates to any form of malpractice involving an individual’s physical wellbeing. More commonly known examples include hitting or kicking a patient or adult in a care setting, but can also extend to misuse of medication and inappropriate use of restraint
- Emotional/ Psychological Abuse – Usually a repeated form of verbal abuse, where an individual is subjected to threats of harm, isolation or seclusion from services, harassment or intimidation, as well anything that alters the person’s behaviour from the way they’d like to live
- Financial Abuse – Where someone in a caring role misuses the finances of the individual they care for. This could be for personal gain or in a way originally intended to help the adult receiving care, but using someone’s money without their consent is a crime
- Sexual Abuse – If the adult in need of social care is subjected to sexual activity that they did not or could not consent to, including anything from inappropriate touching to rape, the perpetrator is guilty of sexual abuse
- Organisational Abuse – This is defined as a service, agency or care home putting its own needs before those of the service users. From imposing inflexible daily routine to reorganising a staff rota to suit its own costs, organisational abuse can damage the service users’ lives

- Neglect – Instances of a care worker ignoring the care needs of an individual and failing to provide the care services they require is neglect. Extreme cases can lead to irreparable psychological damage and even death
- Discriminatory Abuse – Refusing to acknowledge the different care needed for each individual. This could mean purposefully ignoring someone’s religion, personal beliefs, dietary views or any number of personal preferences
- Domestic Violence – Domestic violence is now recognised as the jurisdiction of the Safeguarding Adults Boards across the country when it is committed against an adult in need of care services
- Modern Slavery – The use of individuals working for little or no wages is now the business of the Safeguarding Adults Boards across the country. This could be perpetrated by care service employers, the adult in need to care themselves, or someone connected to that person
- Self-Neglect – Self-neglect is a condition affecting behaviour, where the individual refuses to attend to their personal care and hygiene, their environment or even refusal of care services offered to them

It is important to note that abuse:

- can consist of a single act or repeated acts
- can be intentional or unintentional or result from a lack of knowledge
- can be an act of neglect, an omission or a failure to act
- can cause harm temporarily or over a period of time
- can occur in any relationship
- can be perpetrated by anyone, individually or as part of a group or organisation
- can often constitute a crime, i.e. physical, sexual or sexual abuse

General Principles

Safeguarding relates to the action taken to promote the welfare of children and vulnerable adults and to protect them from harm.

All staff and volunteers should have a basic awareness of safeguarding issues. This includes:

- Being alert to the possibility of abuse and neglect
- Having enough knowledge to recognise an abusive or potentially abusive event or set of circumstances
- Knowing who in the organisation to raise concerns with
- Being competent to take the appropriate immediate or emergency action

All team members and volunteers should be told the name of the Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO) during their induction. If any member of staff or volunteer has any concerns about a child or vulnerable adult, they must alert VCKC’s DSO immediately. If the DSO agrees there are grounds for concern, they must take appropriate action to safeguard the child or vulnerable adult. This may include contacting the relevant local authority social care service or the local police child abuse investigation team.

If a child or vulnerable adult is in immediate danger the member of staff or volunteer who first becomes aware of the danger should dial 999 for the police.

In any situation where there is a suspicion of abuse, the welfare needs of the child or vulnerable adult must come first even where there may be a conflict of interest (e.g. where the suspected perpetrator may be a member of staff or volunteer).

The CEO will report annually, at the July Board meeting, on any reportable safeguarding incidents, and how any such events were dealt with under the terms of this safeguarding policy.

Responsibilities of the Designated Safeguarding Officer

The Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO) is responsible for ensuring that safeguarding is given high priority within VCKC. Specific responsibilities include:

- Providing support and advice to managers and all staff on safeguarding matters related to children and vulnerable adults
- Ensuring that all members of staff receive training on child protection and safeguarding as part of their induction, and on an ongoing basis where required
- Managing referrals/cases reported and working with Senior Management to ensure resolutions
- Carrying out referrals to the RBKC social care team where abuse of a child or vulnerable adult is reported or suspected
- Referring the matter to the local authority designated officer (LADO) where a member of staff is suspected of abuse
- Maintaining an overview of safeguarding issues and monitoring the implementation of this policy, in conjunction with the HR manager.

The DSO has responsibility for deciding whether to refer any reported matters onto the police or to the local authority social care service. Where possible, referrals should be made on the same working day and certainly **within 24 hours**. It is the responsibility of the DSO to decide whether the parents/carers (if applicable) of the child or young person should be informed of the referral.

Responsibilities of trustees

Protecting people and safeguarding responsibilities are governance priorities for VCKC, as they are ultimately accountable to the Charity Commission if things go wrong. Our trustees take reasonable steps to protect from harm people who come into contact with VCKC, including clients and staff (whether paid or unpaid, having regard to the Charity Commission guidance on safeguarding and protecting people.

Responsibilities of all line managers

Individual line managers are responsible for ensuring staff comply with the expectations set out within this policy. Specific responsibilities include:

- Being the first point of contact for reports of concerns
- Ensuring that all employees and volunteers are subject to DBS checks where applicable.
- Reporting all concerns to the Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO)
- Providing advice and support to employees reporting disclosures or concerns
- Working with the DSO to resolve issues.

Responsibilities of Staff and Volunteers

Paid staff and volunteers have a responsibility to be aware and alert to signs that all is not well with a child or vulnerable adult. They are not responsible for diagnosing, investigating or providing a therapeutic response to abuse. Not all concerns relate to abuse, there may well be other explanations. It is important to keep an open mind and consider what is known about the vulnerable person and his or her circumstances. No action should be taken without discussion with a member of the management team.

It is not the responsibility of VCKC to decide whether or not abuse has taken place. It is the responsibility of staff, volunteers and trustees at VCKC to act if there is cause for concern, in order that the appropriate agencies can investigate and take any action necessary to protect the young and/or vulnerable adult.

If a member of staff, volunteer or trustee is concerned that a child or vulnerable adult is in immediate danger, or requires immediate medical treatment, they should call the police and/or emergency medical services on 999 straight away.

VCKC staff and volunteers working with children and/or vulnerable adults will undergo appropriate mandatory safeguarding training and DBS checks in line with statutory guidance and good practice.

Staff and volunteers should not:

- meet with a child or vulnerable adult on their own except as noted below
- ask overly personal questions, including those about age or appearance (unless specifically related to a work project, in which case it must be documented)
send/give out material that could be considered offensive, which includes material on social media sites
- suggest or imply a personal relationship could develop
- take an aggressive or bullying tone
- have inappropriate physical contact or contact that could be misinterpreted
- offer or accept personal gifts
- travel alone with a young and/or vulnerable person except as noted below

Staff and volunteers should ensure their contact with children and vulnerable adults is appropriate and relevant to the work of the project in which they are involved. They

should also ensure that whenever possible, there is more than one adult present during activities with children and/or vulnerable adults. If a situation arises where you are alone with a child or vulnerable adult, staff and volunteers should ensure that they are within sight or hearing of other adults or if a child or vulnerable adult specifically asks for or needs some individual time with them, they should ensure that other staff or volunteers know their location and that of the child or vulnerable adult.

Disclosure of Abuse

If a child or vulnerable person discloses that they are being abused or any service user discloses that they are involved in abuse of a vulnerable person, action should continue as described in “Action on Disclosure of Abuse” below. All action must proceed urgently and without delay.

Action on Disclosure of Abuse

There should always be the opportunity to discuss welfare concerns with and seek advice from colleagues, managers and other agencies, but:

- Never delay emergency action to protect a child or vulnerable adult
- Always record in writing concerns about a child or vulnerable adult’s welfare, whether or not further action is taken
- When recording concerns, always stick to the facts, without adding own thoughts, feelings or predictions.
- Always record **in writing** discussions about a child or vulnerable adult’s welfare.
- At the close of discussion, always reach clear and explicit recorded agreement about who will be taking what action, or that no further action will be taken.

- All records should be treated as confidential.

At all times action must proceed urgently.

A staff member or volunteer informed of abuse should remind the service user that the charity cannot guarantee confidentiality where a child or vulnerable adult is at risk of abuse or further abuse.

Volunteers should consult with the Chief Executive (or in their absence, the Chief Operating Officer or Head of Wellbeing) before taking any action. Additionally, all action taken following a disclosure of abuse should be discussed in advance with the Head of Wellbeing.

In circumstances where a service user declines to disclose, despite some work having been done towards disclosing, it may be necessary to report the alleged abuse without the service user’s agreement. In these circumstances, a service user must be notified in advance of the decision to report to social services.

Any staff member or volunteer may report a disclosure of abuse to social services irrespective of the opinion of other staff or volunteers.

It is important for staff and volunteers to make written records of any incidents or concerns that they have as soon as possible and if appropriate to include sketches of sites and sizes of injuries. It is also important to make a record of conversations with the vulnerable person using the same language the vulnerable person used especially names used for body parts or sexual acts.

Full written records must be maintained of all disclosures and actions following disclosure.

Suspicion of Abuse

There may be circumstances when a volunteer or member of staff suspects that a child or vulnerable adult is being abused or neglected.

It is vital that any anyone who suspects a child or vulnerable adult is being neglected or abused discusses the situation immediately with his or her line manager or another member of management. Action should continue as outlined in the following section.

Action on Suspicion of Abuse

There should always be the opportunity to discuss welfare concerns with and seek advice from colleagues, managers and other agencies, but:

- Never delay emergency action to protect a child or vulnerable adult
- Always record in writing concerns about a child or vulnerable adult's welfare, whether or not further action is taken
- Always record in writing discussions about a child or vulnerable adult's welfare.
- At the close of discussion, always reach clear and explicit recorded agreement about who will be taking what action, or that no further action will be taken.
- All records should be treated as confidential.

At all times action must proceed urgently.

Volunteers should consult with the staff member co-ordinating their service before taking any action.

Additionally, all action taken following suspicion of abuse should be discussed in advance with a member of the management team.

In all cases of suspected abuse, the manager and staff member should discuss whether issues relevant to different cultures and lifestyles have any bearing on the matter. As

an organisation VCKC welcomes the fact that people and lifestyles are diverse and does not make judgements about the acceptability or otherwise of lifestyles. However, it is important that this philosophy does not stand in the way of the organisation's responsibility to protect vulnerable people from harm.

Any staff member or volunteer may report a suspicion of abuse to RBKC Adult and/or Children's Services or the Community Mental Health Team irrespective of the opinion of other staff or volunteers.

It is important for staff and volunteers to make written records of any incidents or concerns that they have as soon as possible and if appropriate to include sketches of sites and sizes of injuries. It is also important to make a record of conversations with the vulnerable person using the same language the vulnerable person used, especially names used for body parts or sexual acts.

Full written records must be maintained of all disclosures and actions following disclosure.

On and off-site activities

A Risk Assessment should be carried out at least 48 hours before any activity involving a child and/or vulnerable adult takes place.

Reporting Abuse

Managers should work within the following timescales for reporting allegations or suspicions of abuse:

- Immediate - if the vulnerable person is at risk of serious physical harm, or a serious criminal act has taken place, and evidence will need to be kept safe
- Within 2 hours - if it relates to a specific incident which is, or may be still going on, or may happen again
- Within 24 hours - if it is a more general concern, which does not indicate immediate harm

Support to Staff and Volunteers

VCKC will support staff and volunteers in these circumstances. If statutory services need further involvement from staff or volunteers following a report of abuse, the Chief Executive (or in their absence, the Chief Operating Officer or the Head of Wellbeing) will discuss with the service the nature of their needs and how they might be met.

Staff and volunteers may be subject to abuse allegations. VCKC will offer support in these circumstances to any such investigations and extend support to staff or

volunteers concerned: it may however be appropriate for VCKC to implement its disciplinary procedure.

Any suspicion, allegation or actual abuse of a child or vulnerable adult by an employee, volunteer or trustee must be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Officer and/or to the CEO immediately. These concerns must be treated with the same rigour as other concerns.

Preventing Abuse by Staff and Volunteers

Staff and volunteers should have due regard to, and be familiar with the VCKC Lone Working Policy where appropriate. It is important that any staff or volunteers who are likely to be working alone with vulnerable people are thoroughly vetted before being employed. At VCKC this means as well as references being checked there will also be a requirement for offences to be declared and an Enhanced DBS check undertaken.

It should be noted that having a criminal record does not automatically prevent someone from being recruited as a staff member or volunteer in all circumstances.

It may be very hard for a member of staff to report a concern about a colleague to a line manager but, as with all the other difficulties people will come across, the safety and protection of a vulnerable person must be the priority in any decision that is made.

CONTACT DETAILS

If you suspect that a child or vulnerable adult needs protection or is at risk of abuse, please contact VCKC's Designated Safeguarding Officer:

Chief Operating Officer / DSO 020 8960 3722

During office hours:

Hammersmith & Fulham 020 8753 6610

Kensington and Chelsea - socialservices@rbkc.gov.uk or 020 7361 3013

Westminster - accesstochildreancesservices@westminster.gov.uk or 020 7641 4000

Outside of normal office hours:

Emergency Duty Team

Description

Deals with Social Care emergencies for vulnerable adults, children and their families.

Address

Room 242 Kensington Town Hall
Hornton Street LONDON
W8 7NX

Telephone	020 7373 2227 (from 5:30 - 8:30am)
Fax	c/o daytime - 0207 361 2149
Contact	Jed McAndrew (Manager)
Mailing Address	Emergency Duty Team Room 242 Kensington Town Hall Hornton Street W8 7NX
Hours	Daily 5pm to 9am, plus 24 hours Bank Holiday and Weekends.
Services	Out of hours emergency service for Social Services. Typetalk, English and EITA for any language.
Clientele	Anyone who is eligible for SSD services whose problem cannot wait until office opens.
Eligibility	Those who have a statutory need or a high risk problem which require a social worker and cannot wait until the next working day.
Special Access Facilities	None
Notes	This is not an ordinary working duty service. There is only ever one social worker available so if there are other urgent demands sometimes they will not be able to respond immediately. No accessibility data required.

Adult Services departments have been designated as the lead agencies with responsibility for co-ordinating a response to allegations or concerns of abuse.

VCKC's managers/coordinators have the responsibility of informing RBKC Adult Services of concerns over the abuse or neglect of vulnerable adults. VCKC will ensure that they call safeguarding helpline on 020 7361 3013 (or 020 7373 2227 out of hours) or Action on Elder Abuse's Helpline on 0808 808 8141 or for those those with learning disabilities 0808 808 0700, or in an emergency, 999.