

Safeguarding Policy: Flitwick&District u3a.

Purpose

This policy and procedure is written to enable the u3a committee to be aware of and address issues where there are safeguarding concerns. Safeguarding includes incidents between members, concerns regarding abuse or neglect that a u3a member may be experiencing outside of the u3a, health related issues or previous criminal convictions.

The purpose of this policy is to demonstrate the commitment of **Flitwick and District u3a** (hereafter “the u3a”) to safeguarding their members and to ensure that everyone involved in the u3a is aware of:

- The legislation, policies and procedures for safeguarding adults;
- Their role and responsibility for safeguarding adults; and
- What to do or who to speak to if they have a concern relating to the welfare or wellbeing of an adult within the u3a.

Scope

This safeguarding policy and procedure applies to all individuals involved in the u3a, including the committee, group leaders and members, and to all concerns about the safety and wellbeing of members taking part in u3a activities and in the wider community. It is the responsibility of all.

Safeguarding Commitments

In order to implement this policy, the u3a will ensure that all members will be aware of the safeguarding procedures and know whom to contact if they have a concern relating to the welfare or wellbeing of an adult.

The u3a committee has a duty of care to its members, and is committed to upholding this safeguarding policy in order to protect its members.

The u3a recognises that some people are potentially at risk of abuse and/or

neglect. Where abuse or neglect is suspected, the u3a will aim to respond in a prompt and efficient manner to any situation where there is a risk of or perceived risk of harm.

The u3a does not hold any statutory authority. Matters of concern will be reported to the relevant authorities and charity regulatory authorities, as appropriate. This may include the local authority, the local multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH) or the police in an emergency.

Where there are concerns for a member's well-being or safety, the u3a committee will complete a safeguarding risk assessment, seek advice and support from the Trust where necessary. It is not appropriate for the u3a to take the lead role in any Safeguarding Enquiry (under Section 42 of the Care Act 2014 England and Wales).

The u3a recognises that there are various forms of abuse which can be perpetrated by volunteers, members, relatives, friends and neighbours. The u3a will not condone or tolerate any form of abuse or neglect and believes that all people should be able and, where necessary, enabled to live in and enjoy an environment which is safe and free from harm. A list of the types of safeguarding risks and harm can be found on the England and Wales Charity Commission website, which is applicable generally.

The u3a will put the wellbeing of those at risk of harm first, and they will be actively supported to communicate their views and the outcomes they want to achieve. Those views and wishes will be respected and supported unless there are overriding reasons not to. Any actions taken will respect the rights and dignity of all those involved and be proportionate to the risk of harm. The implementation of this policy and procedure will be monitored annually.

When following the safeguarding procedure, the u3a will strive to uphold the principles that those involved in incidents are entitled to:

- Privacy
- Be treated with dignity and respect
- Lead an independent life and to be enabled to do so
- Choose how they live their lives
- The protection of the law
- Have their human and civil rights upheld regardless of ethnic origin, gender, sexuality, impairment or disability, age religious or cultural background.

The u3a will also follow the principles enshrined within the England and Wales Care Act 2014:

1. **Empowerment** - whereby the approach is focused on the individual making their own decision and gaining informed consent, where possible.
2. **Prevention** - seeking to take steps to prevent issues from arising or escalating.
3. **Proportionality** - responding in a proportionate way to the issue(s) being presented.
4. **Protection** - seeking to keep the membership safe and protection for those deemed to be at risk.
5. **Partnership** - reporting incidents to the relevant statutory bodies and liaising with the Trust.
6. **Accountability** - accurate recording of incidents. Reporting incidents, as required, to the Trust and to relevant regulatory authorities.

Procedure

Introduction

The u3a has a responsibility to ensure that its committee and group leaders understand their safeguarding responsibilities.

Depending on the nature of the allegation and the identified risk, the u3a will support the alleged victims and the alleged perpetrators of any abuse as well as any volunteer who becomes aware of an allegation, in so far as this does not compromise any safeguarding enquiry or investigation into the allegation or place other adults at risk.

The u3a will make every effort to respect the confidentiality of any information disclosed under this policy and procedure, however due to the potential seriousness of allegations, confidentiality is not absolute. Information will be recorded and stored securely in accordance with Data Protection Act 2018 but may have to be shared with relevant authorities on a 'need to know' basis only to prevent:

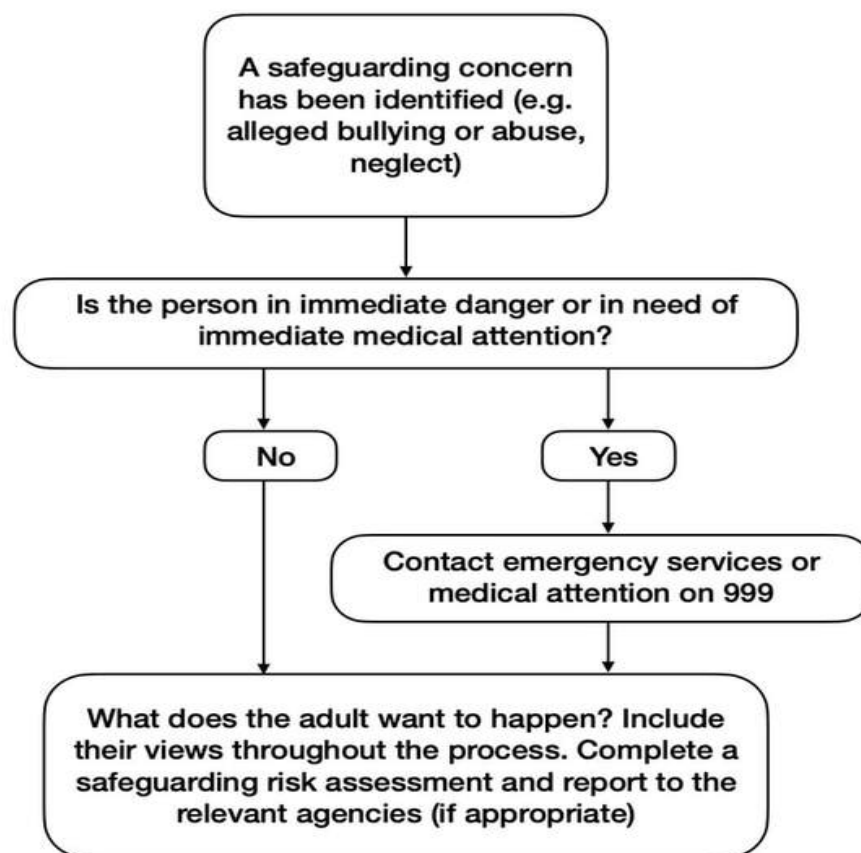
- Danger to a person's life
- Danger to a person's health
- Danger to others
- Danger to the community
- Or to facilitate the investigation of a serious crime

Courses of action

- The u3a's approach to safeguarding will include members who exhibit health concerns that could put them or others at risk, convictions (previous or pending) that include offences of a sexual or violent nature, inappropriate behaviour exhibited by a member including sexual advances, bullying, aggression or violent behaviour, harassment and/or discrimination. This can include behaviour exhibited face to face as well as electronic communications or via social media platforms.

- Where the committee becomes aware of a safeguarding concern, steps will be taken, as needed, to ensure the safety of the adult/s at risk is secured as a priority. The steps to take to address this will be discussed and agreed between the Executive Officers of the committee in the first instance. No committee member will act in isolation when dealing with a safeguarding concern. The steps taken should be documented and stored securely in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018.
- Where the u3a committee becomes aware of a safeguarding concern, the first step will be to gather as much information as possible to assist with the decision as to the next steps. A risk assessment will be developed and recorded as soon as possible after the concern comes to the attention of the committee.
- In developing the risk assessment, the committee will consider the level of risk and action that needs to be taken accordingly. Assessment of the risk will include:
 - Risk to the individual member
 - Risk to other members within the u3a
 - Reputational risk for the u3a and the u3a movement as a whole.
- Where it is deemed that the risk is high and immediate action needs to be taken, the committee will contact the relevant authorities and the Trust for advice and support.
- As far as possible, the adult at risk's wishes will be respected as to whether or not to refer any concerns to the local authority as a Safeguarding Enquiry under Section 42 of the Care Act 2014. However, it may be necessary to override their wishes in the best interests of other adults at risk.
- Where the risk is not deemed to be high but support is needed, the u3a will contact the Trust to discuss the concerns and seek additional assistance in developing the risk assessment. Assistance will always be sought before moving to exclude a member from the u3a on the basis of a safeguarding risk assessment.

- Once a risk assessment is completed, the committee will decide as to the most appropriate course of action. This could include excluding members from certain groups, requesting that a member attends the u3a with a carer or excluding a member from a group run by a particular group leader.
- Depending on the nature of the allegation it may be necessary to pursue the incident following the u3a's complaints or disciplinary procedure. Where it is decided that this is the best course of action the matter will not be investigated by any party that was privy to the initial reporting of the incident.
- All actions taken will be recorded. Any records will remain confidential to the committee unless a prior decision has been taken to share the record with the relevant statutory bodies.



Addendum: Safeguarding Guidance

Key Safeguarding Definitions:

Adult at risk

Any person, aged 18+ who has need for care and support, is experiencing, or is at risk of abuse or neglect, and as a result of those needs is unable to protect themselves against the abuse or neglect or risk of it.

Abuse

Is the “violation of a person’s human and civil rights by any other person(s). It may be a single or repeated act(s), physical verbal, psychological, sexual, institutional, discriminatory or financial, an act of neglect or failure to act”

Types of abuse

- **Physical abuse** – eg assault, hitting, slapping, pushing.
- **Domestic violence** – eg psychological, physical, sexual, financial, emotional
- **Sexual abuse** – including inappropriate looking or touching, indecent exposure and sexual harassment.
- **Psychological abuse** – eg threats of harm, humiliation, blaming, controlling, intimidation, coercion, harassment, verbal abuse, cyber bullying, isolation.
- **Financial or material abuse** – eg theft, fraud, internet scamming, coercion in relation to an adult’s financial affairs/arrangements, including in connection with wills, property, inheritance or financial transactions, or the misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits.
- **Modern slavery** – encompasses slavery, human trafficking, forced labour and domestic servitude.
- **Discriminatory abuse** – including harassment, slurs or similar treatment; because of race, gender and gender identity, age, disability, sexual orientation or religion.
- **Organisational abuse** – including neglect in relation to care provided at home. This may be a one-off incident or on-going ill-treatment through neglect or poor professional practice.

- **Neglect and acts of omission** – including ignoring medical, emotional or physical care needs, failure to provide access to appropriate health, care and support or educational services, withholding of medication, adequate nutrition and heating
- **Self-neglect** – this covers a wide range of behaviour neglecting to care for one's personal hygiene, health or surroundings and includes behaviour such as hoarding

Dealing with a safeguarding concern

If someone discloses a safeguarding concern to you

Do

- Stay calm and try not to show shock or disbelief
- Listen carefully to what they are saying
- Be sympathetic (I'm sorry that this has happened to you')
- Be aware of the possibility that medical evidence might be needed
- Tell the person that:
They did the right thing to tell you
- You are going to inform the appropriate person
- You/ will take steps to protect and support them
- Record and report the disclosure in line with the Safeguarding Policy and Procedure

Do Not

- Press the person for more details if they are not comfortable sharing
- Stop someone who is freely recalling significant event (Don't say 'hold on, we'll come back to that later'; they may not tell you or anybody else again)
- Promise to keep secrets; you have a duty of care to raise safeguarding concerns
- Make promises you cannot keep such as 'This will never happen to you again'
- Contact the alleged abuser unless they are also a u3a member and it is necessary to do so to safeguard other members
- Be judgemental
- Pass on the information other than to those with a legitimate 'need-to-know' under the u3a Safeguarding Policy and Procedure

Recording a safeguarding concern

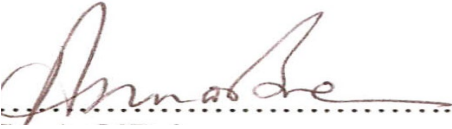
You should aim to:

- Note what people actually said, using their own words and phrases
- Describe the circumstances in which the disclosure came about
- Note the setting and anyone else who was there at the time of the abuse or the disclosure
- Separate factual information from your own and others' opinions
- Use pen or biro with black ink so that the report can be photocopied if needed
- Be aware that your report may be required later as part of a legal action or disciplinary procedure.

Recommended agencies

- The Local Authority, Social Services, GP Surgery, Police, etc.
- Hourglass (previously Action on Elder Abuse)
<https://wearehourglass.org> is a confidential support and advice for older people who have been abused or people who know an older person who may be suffering abuse. Available weekdays 9am - 5pm on freephone 0808 808 8141.

This Policy was adopted on: Monday 8th June 2026

Signed ... 

Committee Role ...Chair.....

Print Name...Ann O'Brien.....

Policy Review Date: June 2029