

## Volunteer Edinburgh

### Safeguarding of Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy

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## Part 1 – Policy

### Introduction

Volunteer Edinburgh provides services to a wide range of individuals and organisations. VE recognises that everyone has the right to live free from harm, abuse and neglect. VE also recognises that some of the people we may come into contact with through our work could be adults or children at risk of harm. All staff and volunteers can play an important part in promoting the safety and protection of vulnerable people that they work with.

This policy applies to all staff, volunteers, interns or trainees at Volunteer Edinburgh. In the context of this policy ‘staff’ should be taken to include all of these groups.

Incidents of harm are relatively rare – but they do happen and all staff members need to be able to recognise them and know what to do.

Volunteer Edinburgh’s senior management team will ensure that all staff and volunteers are aware of this policy (Part 1), procedures and guidelines (Part 2) and appendix, and receive training proportionate to the role they undertake in the organisation.

With regard to children, Volunteer Edinburgh provides a range of services including:

- workshops in school and community settings;
- access to public drop-ins at Volunteer Edinburgh offices;
- one-to-one support provided within Volunteer Edinburgh offices;
- telephone support;
- one-to-one support provided out with Volunteer Edinburgh offices;
- supported group volunteering activities.

In addition to this policy, Volunteer Edinburgh has a framework of policies that are designed to promote the emotional and physical safety of clients, staff and volunteers. These include:

- Recruitment and Selection Policy
- Confidentiality Policy
- Recruitment of Ex-Offenders Policy
- Complaints Procedure
- Harassment Policy
- Whistle Blowing Policy
- Making a referral under PVG to Disclosure Scotland.

Volunteer Edinburgh will apply appropriate disciplinary measures to staff found to be in breach of policy.

For the purposes of Safeguarding, the Chief Officer is the designated person who receives reports of safeguarding concerns, reviews PVG statements and ensures that policy and procedure are implemented.

Volunteer Edinburgh commits to addressing safeguarding according to three principles:  
**Prevention, Reporting, Response**

### ***Prevention***

**Priority** – safeguarding adults and children who come into contact with Volunteer Edinburgh is our first priority.

**Zero tolerance** – no type or level of harm is acceptable or justifiable.

**Recruitment, selection & training of staff & volunteers** - Volunteer Edinburgh will ensure that its recruitment and selection procedures take account of the need to protect vulnerable adults and children. See the procedures below for more information.

### ***Reporting***

**“Duty to protect”** – staff and volunteers have a “duty to protect” as well as a “duty to care”. This means that all staff or volunteers must immediately report harm which is suspected, witnessed or reported to them, to their line manager.

**Immediate reporting** – if a staff member or volunteer suspects or witnesses harm, or it is reported to them, they must immediately report this to their line manager. All reports of safeguarding concerns will then be raised to, and promptly followed up by, the Chief Officer, or the Director of Services if the Chief Officer is not available.

The Chief Officer will be responsible for reporting any safeguarding issues or concerns to the board of trustees.

It is not the responsibility of anyone working within Volunteer Edinburgh, in a paid or unpaid capacity, to decide whether or not harm has taken place. It is therefore vital that staff raise all cases of suspected or alleged harm in line with the procedures identified in this policy. It is important to do this as other members of staff may already have raised concerns and failure to report concerns may put a vulnerable adult or child at risk.

**Good practice guidelines** - all Volunteer Edinburgh staff and volunteers, where appropriate, will be familiar with the Good Practice Guidelines on the immediate action to be taken following a report of abuse, described in Part 2.

### ***Response***

**Safeguarding is a multi-agency activity.** Volunteer Edinburgh will ensure that social work services, the police, NHS and/or other relevant agencies are informed as appropriate, when harm is suspected, witnessed or reported.

**Rights & self-determination.** Volunteer Edinburgh is committed to increasing choices and opportunities for individuals. Sometimes this involves taking considered risks. Volunteer Edinburgh will endeavour to ensure that such risks are understood and minimised. Supportive risk-enabling interventions can be positive and life-enhancing.

**Safeguarding interventions should provide benefit to the adult and be proportionate** to the level of risk of harm i.e. should not cause more harm than good or be over reactive.

**Communication and information sharing** within Volunteer Edinburgh and with other agencies is essential to promote joint decision-making.

In addition to making a referral (a written report) to Disclosure Scotland, child protection issues concerning workers (paid/unpaid), children and young people must always be referred to the relevant child protection agencies (social work and/or police) for appropriate investigation. Any issues of a criminal nature must be reported to the police

**Confidential information sharing** – Volunteer Edinburgh will maintain confidentiality at all stages of the process when dealing with safeguarding concerns. Information relating to the concern and the subsequent procedure should be shared on a need to know basis only. All written or digital records should be kept secure at all times and in compliance with GDPR legislation and Volunteer Edinburgh's Data Management policy. However the duty to protect takes precedence over maintaining an individual's confidentiality if a child or vulnerable adult is at risk.

**Balancing risks and rights** – on occasions a balance will need to be struck between the duty to protect and the right of an adult who has capacity to make decisions and choices that put them at risk.

## Part 2 - Procedures

### What we do to safeguard children and vulnerable adults

#### a) Prevention

#### Recruitment, Selection and Training of Staff

Volunteer Edinburgh will ask applicants for paid or unpaid roles to complete a criminal conviction self declaration form.

We will seek two references for all successful candidates prior to a formal offer of employment. For volunteers, the number and types of references sought will be proportionate to the role they are undertaking. Where appropriate referees will be asked to comment on the applicant's suitability to work with vulnerable adults or children.

Where relevant to the post, any offer of employment or voluntary work will be made subject to receipt of a satisfactory Disclosure Scotland check, normally a PVG Scheme record. PVG Scheme records will be requested prior to the applicant taking up post. An individual may begin employment/volunteering before we have received their PVG record, however the individual will not carry out regulated work until the PVG record has been received.

The Protection of Vulnerable Groups (Scotland) Act 2007 makes it a criminal offence to recruit a member of staff or volunteer to carry out regulated work with Children or Protected Adults if the individual has been listed as unsuitable to work with that group.

Inductions for new staff include information on this policy and all relevant policies and procedures including the lone working and confidentiality policies, and Volunteer Edinburgh will provide ongoing training if necessary. Individual projects may have specific procedures relating to their distinct activities.

Induction for new staff will include information on public protection (covering children & vulnerable adults), including signs that may indicate abuse.

Staff will attend Adult Protection &/or Child Protection Level 1 training if it is deemed appropriate. Staff whose roles specifically involve regulated work with children will undertake external child protection training to be refreshed every 3 years.

All staff will sign an induction checklist confirming they have read and understood these documents.

All staff have a designated supervisor who will provide appropriate and regular support and supervision. All staff take part in an annual appraisal with their line manager to discuss and give feedback on performance, training and expectations. All support sessions, including the annual appraisal, will be recorded and signed off by both parties, wherever practicable.

## **Reporting & Responding Procedures**

All staff members must report any disclosure or suspicion of harm to their line manager as soon as possible.

The line manager, in consultation with the Chief Officer, will gather and record details by interviewing the person making the report, or the individual directly. In the event of the Chief Officer being unavailable for a prolonged period (due to annual leave or sickness), this will be undertaken by the Director of Services or nominated service manager. The Chair of the Board of trustees or their nominated representative will be consulted and kept informed.

The Chief Officer (or staff member instructed by the Chief Officer, or Chair of the Board) will take action as determined by the individual circumstances. This may include the involvement of external authorities, such as Social Work, referral organisations and the Police.

Any allegation made against a member of staff or volunteer should be reported to the Chief Officer who will investigate and take action as per the Disciplinary Policy and the Whistle Blowing Policy. In the event of an allegation being made against the Chief Officer, this should be reported to the Chair of the Board of Trustees or their nominated representative.

If a safeguarding issue is raised by an individual, they must be informed of the procedure that will be followed. The individual must be told that it may not be possible for Volunteer Edinburgh to maintain confidentiality.

If an individual makes an allegation about another organisation this must be reported without delay to the Chief Officer who will investigate and take appropriate action.

Volunteer Edinburgh is legally required to make a referral to Disclosure Scotland if a staff member is dismissed or removed from Regulated Work and has posed a risk to a child or

vulnerable adult. (See separate policy, Making a Referral to Disclosure Scotland under PVG.)

### **Reporting Procedures – Good Practice**

The following are guidelines on immediate action to be taken after a young person or vulnerable adult reports abuse/harm.

- Make sure the individual is safe. React calmly so as not to frighten or deter them.
- Reassure them that you are glad they have told you, and it is not their fault.
- Don't promise to keep it to yourself. At the earliest opportunity remind them of our confidentiality policy, explain what this means, including the fact that it might not be possible for Volunteer Edinburgh to maintain confidentiality.
- Explain that you need to make sure that they will be safe and may have to pass on the information to somebody trusted to deal with it appropriately.
- Listen carefully to what they say and take them seriously.
- Allow them to tell you what happened in their own words.
- It is important to clarify what you have heard, and to establish the basic facts. Avoid leading questions and do not ask them specific questions about explicit details.
- If possible make brief notes during the initial disclosure, explaining to them why you are doing this. If it is not possible to do this at the time, make notes as soon as possible afterwards. All notes should be dated and signed by the staff member taking them. The information recorded should include:
  - The nature of the suspicion or allegation
  - A description of any visible injury
  - Dates and times and any other factual information
  - The distinction between fact, opinion or hearsay e.g. "the person smelled of alcohol" (fact) rather than "the person was drunk" (opinion).

### **Good Practice when working with Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults:**

- Always consider the care, welfare and safety needs of the individual as paramount.
- Treat everyone with respect.
- Respect an individual's right to be involved in making choices and decisions which directly affect him/her.
- Respect a person's culture (e.g. faith and religious beliefs) and right to privacy. Be aware of and sensitive to the vulnerabilities of individuals, taking account of minority backgrounds.
- Respond sensitively to individuals who seem anxious about participating.
- Speak to your line manager or another manager immediately if you are worried about a child or vulnerable adult.
- Remember that someone might misinterpret your actions, no matter how well intentioned.
- Listen carefully to any individual who 'tells you' they are being harmed and report immediately to your line manager

- Never dismiss what a child or vulnerable adult tells you as 'lies' or exaggeration.
- Always set an example you would wish others to follow.
- Use appropriate language and behaviour.
- Maintain a good boundary between personal and professional life.
- Always give constructive feedback and not negative criticism.
- From time to time, personal circumstances may arise which adversely affect your professional relationship with an individual. In such a situation you are encouraged to seek advice and support from your manager.
- Always ensure that people who have relevant training and qualifications in that field administer first aid.

### You should not:

- Exaggerate or trivialise another person's concern about a potential safeguarding issue, or ignore allegations or suspicion of abuse or harm.
- Discuss personal issues about a child, adult or their family with others, except with your manager where you are concerned about an individual's well-being.
- Make derogatory remarks, gestures or use inappropriate language in front of others.
- Allow an individual to be bullied or harmed by anyone in the organisation.
- Allow children or vulnerable adults to swear or use sexualised language unchallenged.
- Take a child or vulnerable adult to your home.
- Contact a child or vulnerable adult out with the activity of your role with Volunteer Edinburgh.
- Disclose an individual's contact details to anyone outside of Volunteer Edinburgh without the individual's explicit consent.

### You must never:

- Hit, push or grab a child or vulnerable adult.
- Engage in sexually provocative games, including horseplay.
- Allow others or yourself to engage in touching a child or vulnerable adult in a sexually provocative way.
- Make sexually suggestive comments to a child or vulnerable adult, even in fun.
- Engage in rough physical contact with a child or vulnerable adult.
- Form intimate physical or emotional relationships a child or vulnerable adult.
- If you suspect that a child or vulnerable adult is becoming inappropriately attracted to you, you are strongly advised to share your concerns with your manager.
- Harass or intimidate a child, vulnerable adult or worker/volunteer, particularly because of their age, race, gender, sexual orientation, religious belief, socio-economic class or disability.
- Invite or allow a child or vulnerable adult to stay with you at your home in the context of your role within the organisation.

## Appendix 1 - Definitions

**Harm.** "Harm" rather than "abuse" is the preferred term when speaking about adult protection. "Harm" includes all harmful conduct and in particular includes:

- Conduct which causes physical harm
- Conduct which causes psychological harm e.g. by causing fear, alarm or distress
- Unlawful conduct which appropriates or adversely affects property, rights or interests e.g. theft, fraud, embezzlement, extortion
- Conduct which causes self harm

Harm does not need to have happened – the concern could be "risk of harm".

**Adult at risk of harm.** The Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Act 2007 defines **adults at risk** as adults who:

- a) are **unable to safeguard their own wellbeing**, property, rights or other interests and
- b) are **at risk** of harm; and

- c) because they are affected by disability, mental disorder, illness or physical or mental infirmity, are **more vulnerable** to being harmed than adults who are not so affected.

All three parts of the above definition need to be met.

In practice adults at risk may include older people, people with mental health difficulties, learning or physical disabilities, sensory impairment, a person with a long term health condition or someone affected by substance misuse and homelessness.

The Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Act 2007 says that an **adult is at risk of harm** when:

- a) another person's **conduct** is causing (or is likely to cause) the adult to be harmed; or
- b) the adult is engaging (or is likely to engage) in conduct which causes (or is likely to cause) **self harm**

Abuse of vulnerable adults can take many forms including physical, verbal, emotional, sexual and financial.

**Child.** As defined in the Protection of Vulnerable Groups (PVG) (Scotland) Act 2007, for the purposes of this policy anyone under the age of 18 should be considered a 'child'.