

Protection of Vulnerable Children and Adults Policy

1. Aim of the policy

To provide guidance for employees and volunteers on safeguarding and promoting the welfare of vulnerable people.

2. Key principles

AHAG has a legal responsibility to provide a duty of care to everyone accessing services and to take all reasonable steps to safeguard their well-being and protect them from harm.

3. What does AHAG mean by a vulnerable person?

AHAG does not work with people under 18. However, if in the conduct of their duties, any member of staff or volunteer has a concern about a child, they should contact the Buckinghamshire County Council Safeguarding team, the police or the NSPCC.

A 'vulnerable adult' is someone aged 18 or over who:

- Is unable to look after their own well-being, property, rights or other interests
- Is at risk of harm (either from another person's behaviour or from their own behaviour)
- Has a disability, mental disorder, illness or physical or mental infirmity, and is thereby more vulnerable to being harmed than other adults.

The presence of a particular condition or disability does not automatically mean that an adult is a vulnerable adult. A person can have a disability but be perfectly able to look after their own well-being etc. Their circumstances as a whole should be considered, and all 3 elements of the definition must be met in order for them to be classed as a vulnerable adult.

4. What is 'harm'?

The term harm covers all harmful behaviour, for example:

- Physical harm
- Psychological harm causing fear, alarm or distress
- Behaviour which adversely affects property, rights or interests (for example, theft, fraud, embezzlement or extortion)
- Self-harm
- Neglect.

5. Safe recruitment

All reasonable steps will be taken to ensure unsuitable individuals are prevented from having any involvement with AHAG. AHAG will ensure that all employees and volunteers have appropriate qualifications and training by adhering to the following selection procedure.

- All new volunteers and employees will complete an application form
- Before commencing employment/voluntary work, employees/volunteers will be interviewed. The interview will question values and behaviours
- All new employees and volunteers will be required to provide 2 references
- Employee and volunteer recruitment procedures will include a DBS check, at the appropriate level. This will include all members of the staff and Board of Trustees.

Any disclosure that causes concern will be assessed to establish the level of risk to service users, colleagues, the general public and/or AHAG. A number of questions will be asked:

- Does the offence relate directly to work with vulnerable adults?
- What is the seriousness of the offence[s] and the circumstances surrounding it?
- How long is it since the offence was committed?
- Is there a pattern of offending?
- What is the person's explanation of the offence?
- Was the offence declared prior to the disclosure?

If all these questions are not answered satisfactorily then the prospective employee or volunteer will not be allowed to join AHAG.

All new employees and volunteers will go through a probation and induction process, including relevant training. Ongoing training and supervision will ensure all employees and volunteers are adequately supported. Any concerns about an employee or volunteer should be passed on to the CEO or a member of the Board of Trustees.

6. Creating a safe and caring environment

AHAG expects all employees and volunteers to carry out their work to the best of their ability, safely and with the best interests of clients in mind.

7. Dealing with allegations

If a client asks to talk in confidence, confidentiality **should not be promised** – employees and volunteers have a duty to refer information if a child or adult is vulnerable. They should explain that they may have to get other people involved if the client is being harmed or is at risk of harm.

Employees and volunteers should have as much privacy as possible, but should try to have another adult present when the client is speaking to them. It is important to:

- Stay calm
- Listen attentively
- Maintain appropriate eye contact
- Allow the client to talk but do not press for information except to clarify factual information
- Not use leading questions (questions which imply a certain answer)
- Reassure the client that they were right to tell
- Let the client know that other people will have to be told so that appropriate help can be offered
- Try to explain what will happen next in a way the client can understand
- Reassure the client that he or she will continue to receive support
- Make a written record, quoting the client's actual words. Sign and date this
- Discuss with the CEO, but do not delay if they are unavailable
- Make a referral to the local authority social care service for the appropriate area or the police if applicable
- If unsure whether to refer, consult the local authority safeguarding team
- Inform the CEO of the referral.

8. Keeping safe

Risk assessments should be undertaken prior to any offsite visits or new types of activities. Employees and volunteers working with vulnerable adults should be appropriately trained and qualified to ensure the safe provision of services, use of equipment, activities undertaken, etc.

Employees and volunteers working with vulnerable adults should plan activity sessions with the care and safety of individuals as their main concern including the use of activities at an appropriate age/ability level. Employees and volunteers must treat all with fairness, dignity and respect.

Wherever possible AHAG encourages an 'open environment' e.g. avoiding private or unobserved situations and not keeping secrets. Wherever possible no employee or volunteer should work alone with a client, but if this is unavoidable, it should be done with the full knowledge and consent of the CEO.

9. Roles and responsibilities of employees and volunteers

The safety of employees and volunteers is of prime consideration at all times, and employees and volunteers should therefore undertake the following actions:

- Record all accidents involving anyone in AHAG's accident book immediately or as soon as practicably possible
- Familiarise themselves with building/facility safety issues, such as fire procedures, location of emergency exits, location of emergency telephones and first aid equipment
- Report suspected cases of abuse to the appropriate agencies
- Keep an attendance register for all organised sessions
- Ensure that their activities start and end on time.

10. Responding to signs of abuse

It is not the responsibility of employees/volunteers to deal with suspected abuse, but it is their responsibility to report concerns to the appropriate authorities. It is important that all employees and volunteers are aware of their responsibilities if abuse is suspected.

11. Supervision

Regular feedback and support will be given by AHAG regarding new laws, policies and procedures relating to vulnerable adults. AHAG will ensure that all those working with vulnerable adults are aware of this policy and are able and willing to work to these guidelines.

12. Protecting staff and volunteers from abuse

Employees and volunteers are openly discouraged from accepting gifts in whatever form from service users or well-wishers of AHAG. Should any employee receive any such item they must report it to their line manager.

Handling a Safeguarding Concern

1. Aim of the policy

The primary aim of this policy is:

- To document the actions that should be taken by all AHAG Trustees, staff and volunteers who identify a safeguarding concern.

2. Key principles

A safeguarding concern could be a disclosure or allegation about abuse or neglect as well as an actual incident; also a situation where there is risk of an incident or any other cause for concern. It could be connected with a variety of categories, including but not limited to these:

Domestic violence	Modern slavery	Cyber-bullying
Financial or material abuse	Self-neglect	Mate crime
Physical abuse	Discriminatory abuse	Forced marriage
Sexual abuse	Organisational abuse	Radicalisation
Psychological or emotional abuse	Neglect or acts of omission	

If someone asks that what they tell an AHAG Trustee, member of staff or volunteer remains confidential, this cannot be promised as the concern must be reported to the Safeguarding Lead who may ask to talk to the person further.

This procedure should be used in conjunction with the Protection of Vulnerable Children and Adults Policy. It should be followed by all AHAG Trustees, staff and volunteers when handling any safeguarding concern. The steps should be followed in order.

3. Actions to be taken by a person reporting a concern

3.1 Step 1 Take emergency action first if necessary

If someone is at immediate risk of harm or needs urgent medical assistance, dial 999 for emergency services. If someone is in danger, this point supersedes all other points in this procedure and you will not be acting against the policy if you dial 999 to get them emergency assistance. (Note: Whilst immediate action should be taken if someone is in immediate danger, the formal reporting of a crime should be handled by the Safeguarding Lead or Safeguarding Trustee).

3.2 Step 2 Gather some details

Using the bullet points below and the checklist table for guidance, gather some details and ask for consent to take further action.

- Ask for some brief details from either the victim or the person making the allegation or the person at risk or simply note down the concern and how you became aware of it
- Seek consent to take action and to report the concern. However, consider whether the adult may lack capacity to make decisions about their own and other people's safety and wellbeing. If, as a result, you decide to act against their wishes or without their consent, you must record your decision and your reasons
- In certain circumstances you should report the concern even if the adult has capacity and does not consent or cannot be contacted. This should be done on the basis of a risk assessment, weighing up the risk of not reporting the concern against reporting it, for example:
 - Where you believe the adult has been pressured into not reporting the concern
 - Where you believe that the adult may come to harm if the concern is not reported
 - Where you believe that someone else may come to harm if the concern is not reported
- As long as it does not increase risk, you should try to inform the adult if you need to share information without consent
- Where possible, make a note of what the victim or the person making the allegation or the person at risk has said using his or her own words
- Information required to complete a report includes:
 - Date and time
 - Description of concern
 - The names of all parties involved
 - Any immediate action taken
 - The involvement of any external agencies e.g. emergency services.
- As far as possible, records should be written as soon as possible, dated and signed.
- Only facts should be recorded and not opinions
- Do not rewrite these notes. The original notes may be needed, however untidy they may appear
- The following table provides a checklist for any interaction with the victim or the person making the allegation

WHAT TO DO	WHAT NOT TO DO
• Listen to and acknowledge what is being said • Try to be reassuring and remain calm • Explain clearly what you will do and what will happen next • Try to give them a timescale for when and how they will be contacted again • Be supportive • Tell them that: ○ They were right to tell you ○ You take what they have said seriously • Be open and honest • Give contact details for them to report any further details or ask any questions that may arise	• Do not promise confidentiality • Do not show shock, alarm, disbelief or disapproval • Do not minimise what is being said • Do not ask probing or leading questions or push for more information • Do not offer false reassurance • Do not contact the alleged perpetrator • Do not investigate the incident any further • Do not leave an adult at risk waiting to hear from someone without any idea of when or where that may be • Do not pass on information to those who do not need to know

3.3 Step 3 Fill in a reporting form

Fill in a Reporting Form to log any safeguarding concern as soon as practicable.

- Reporting Forms will be held on the AHAG Sharepoint Team Documents site in the AHAG office
- The person who witnessed the incident, or who received the disclosure or allegation or who observed the risky situation, or became aware of the concern in any other way should be the one to fill in the form
- The names of the current Safeguarding Lead and Safeguarding Trustee are given on the Reporting Form
- It is important to note that Reporting Forms could be used in a court as evidence
- Include a written record of all telephone calls
- Do not discuss this information with anyone else
- If possible, take a copy, and if not, ask for a copy to be given to you. Give the Reporting Form to the person who helped to complete it
- As soon as possible, the person making the report should email the Safeguarding Lead, Safeguarding Trustee and Chair of Trustees informing them that a Reporting Form has been completed but omitting any person implicated in the concern. If this is not possible, then the person making the report should convey this message by telephone personally to at least two of the above, omitting any of them that are implicated in the concern
- The Reporting Form should be delivered in an envelope to the Safeguarding Lead unless the Safeguarding Lead is implicated in the concern. In this case, the form should instead be conveyed to the Safeguarding Trustee or Chair of Trustees.
- At this point the Safeguarding Lead, Safeguarding Trustee or Chair of Trustees will be in possession of the Reporting Form, and at least two of them will be aware there has been a concern. They will take any further action needed.

3.4 Step 4 Internal reporting of situations

- The Safeguarding Lead should arrange with the Chair of Trustees (and the CEO if this person is not the Safeguarding Lead) for concerns which may expose the organisation to risk to be reported to the next meeting of the Board of Trustees
- The Safeguarding Lead should normally investigate the concern. However, if the concern involves:
 - sexual abuse or serious physical abuse by a Trustee, staff member or volunteer at AHAG
 - is one of a series of allegations about an individual who is a Trustee, staff member or volunteer of AHAG
 - brings AHAG's name into disrepute or has an impact on donors
 an investigation team of three people will be appointed consisting of at least one Trustee and at least one member of the leadership team (not including anyone implicated in the concern)
- The investigation could result in disciplinary action or external reporting (see next section).

3.5 Step 5 External reporting of situations

- The Safeguarding Lead (or Safeguarding Trustee if the Safeguarding Lead is implicated) will decide in consultation with any relevant staff whether the concern should be reported, and by whom, to the Buckinghamshire Safeguarding Adults Team and/or Police
- To locate for the Team's contact details and their referral form, search on the web for 'Buckinghamshire Safeguarding Adults Board' and click on 'Report a concern about an adult' and then on 'Report a Concern - Professionals' where there is a link to the 'Buckinghamshire Councils Referrals Portal' or call 0800 137 915 or out of hours 0800 999 7677
- For concerns relating to children contact 0845 460 0001
- The Safeguarding Lead (or Safeguarding Trustee if the Safeguarding Lead is implicated) will decide in consultation with any relevant staff whether information about the concern should be shared with other support agencies, and by whom
- The Board of Trustees will decide whether further reporting is needed, for example to funders or the Charity Commission and they will assign the task of preparing and submitting any report.

Last reviewed	1 April 2025
---------------	--------------