

**Safeguarding – All Vulnerable Persons**

**Procedure**

The safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults is implicit in the mission of Befrienders Worldwide and should be explicit any activities undertaken by BW. BW’s activities are very largely conducted by its members outside the UK. In this context, the safeguarding is expected to be observed by BW members and by trainers and others associated with Befrienders Worldwide (including Trustees and those involved in paid activities on behalf of BW).

Both child protection and safeguarding of vulnerable adults are a part of safeguarding and of promoting welfare. This refers to the activity which is undertaken to protect specific children or vulnerable adults who are suffering or are at risk of suffering significant harm. As adults and/or Professionals or Volunteers, everyone has a responsibility to safeguard those in need of additional care and promoting their welfare.

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of vulnerable groups – and in particular protecting them from significant harm - depends upon effective joint working between agencies and Professionals/Volunteers that have different roles and expertise.

Individual children or vulnerable adults, especially some of the most vulnerable persons and those at greatest risk of social exclusion, need co-ordinated help from health, education, social care, and quite possibly the voluntary sector and other agencies, including justice services.

For those who are suffering, or at risk of suffering significant harm, joint working is essential, to safeguard and promote welfare, and – where necessary – to help bring to justice the perpetrators of crimes against them. Volunteers should:

* be alert to potential indicators of abuse or neglect and report which, as appropriate;
* be alert to the risks which individual abusers, or potential abusers, may pose; and,
* be alert to the risk they pose to themselves and the likelihood that they will harm themselves.

**What to do if you have concerns?**

You may have concerns about an individual because of something you have seen or heard, or something that they may choose to disclose to you. In the UK it is expected that if they disclose information to you, you should:

* Do not promise confidentiality, you have a duty to share this information and refer to Social Care Services;
* Listen to what is being said, without displaying shock or disbelief;
* Accept what is said;
* Reassure them, but only as far as is honest, don’t make promises you may not be able to keep eg: ‘Everything will be alright now’, ‘You’ll never have to see that person again’;
* Do reassure and alleviate guilt, if they refer to it. For example, you could say, ‘You’re not to blame’;
* Do not interrogate them; it is not your responsibility to investigate;
* Do not ask leading questions, ask open questions such as ‘Anything else to tell me?’;
* Do not ask them to repeat the information for another Employees;
* Explain what you have to do next and who you have to talk to;
* Take notes if possible or write up your conversation as soon as possible afterwards;
* Record the date, time, place any non-verbal behaviour and the words used by them (try not to paraphrase); and,
* Record statements and observable things rather than interpretations or assumptions.

Whatever the nature of your concerns, discuss them with the designated person within the organisation. In the case of a Befrienders Worldwide member organisation, it is expected that such an issue be raised to one of the officers or Trustees of the organisation it relates to. In certain cases it may be felt necessary to raise the matter with the Trustees of BW itself to aid the investigation.

**If you still have concerns, you should refer to the appropriate Safeguarding organisation.**

**Allegations involving a Employees/Volunteer**

The organisation is committed to having effective recruitment and human resources procedures, including checking all Staff and Volunteers to make sure they are safe to work with all groups of vulnerable people.

Where appropriate, key staff involved in recruitment processes should undertake Safer Recruitment Training, or the local equivalent thereof.

However, there may still be occasions when there is an allegation against an Employee or Volunteer. Allegations against those associated with BW or the wider BW network, whether in a paid or unpaid capacity and be they against Children or Adults, must be taken seriously. All reports of allegations must be submitted within one working day to the Trustees of the relevant organisation.

The following procedure should be applied in all situations where it is alleged that a person has:

* Behaved in a way which has, or may have, harmed another person;
* Possibly committed a criminal offence against or relating to children or other vulnerable persons;
* Behaved towards a child, children, vulnerable adults or any other relevant group in a way which indicates that they are unsuitable to work with people at risk of harm (self or otherwise); or,
* Been convicted of a criminal offense relating to manipulation or instigation of another to harm themselves or those around them.

These allegations may relate to the persons behaviour at work, at home or in another setting.

The Trustee or relevant person will discuss the matter to determine what steps should be taken and where necessary obtain further details of the allegation and the circumstances in which it was made. The discussion should also consider whether there is evidence/information that establishes that the allegation is false or unfounded, whether a referral to a relevant body is required and/or whether disciplinary action is appropriate.

Some allegations will be so serious as to require immediate referral to the Police, but common sense and judgement must be applied in reaching a decision about what action to take.

If the allegation is not patently malicious and there is cause to suspect that a person is suffering or is likely to suffer Significant Harm, the Trustee will immediately refer the matter to the relevant agency and ask for a Strategy Discussion/Meeting to be convened straight away.

Some allegations may be less serious and at first sight might not seem to warrant consideration of a police investigation or enquiries by a relevant agency. However, it is important to ensure that even apparently less serious allegations are followed up and examined objectively by someone independent of the organisation. Consequently, the Trustee/relevant person should be informed of all allegations that come to light and appear to come within the scope of this procedure so that he or she can consult Police and social care colleagues as appropriate.

Where such allegations are made, consideration must be given to the following three strands:

1. The police investigation of a possible criminal offence;
2. Enquiries and assessment by Social Care Services as to whether a child/vulnerable adult is need of protection or in need of services;
3. Consideration by the organisation of disciplinary action in respect of the individual.

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