



WOCA Safeguarding Policy

Approved by WOCA Committee: April 2025 Date of next review: March 2027

PART ONE General Policy

West Oxford Community Association (WOCA) is committed to the belief that all children and vulnerable adults have a fundamental right to be protected from harm and fully recognises its responsibility for child and adult protection. The safety and protection of all vulnerable people that the organisation supports is paramount and has priority over all other interests, unless life is at imminent risk. All WOCA's employees, volunteers and contractors are required to comply with the procedures contained within this policy.

There are five main elements to the policy:

- i) ensuring that WOCA practices safe recruitment in checking the suitability of staff and volunteers to work with young people and vulnerable adults;
- ii) raising awareness of child protection and vulnerable adult issues amongst all paid/regular unpaid staff;
- iii) developing and implementing procedures for identifying and reporting cases or suspected cases of child or adult abuse;
- iv) supporting the child or adult who has been abused;
- v) establishing a safe environment in which children and adults can develop and grow, where they are able to talk and be listened to.

PART TWO Definitions, Forms of Abuse, and Status

2.1 The following definitions apply throughout this Safeguarding Policy and associated procedures:

- **Child or Children**

The Children Act 1989 defines a child as a person under eighteen, for most purposes.

- **Young Person**

The term young person will include those aged between 5 and 24 years. For the purposes of this policy, a young person aged under 18 years is regarded as a child and a vulnerable adult includes all people aged 18 and over subject to the criteria of the Protection of Vulnerable Adults Scheme (PoVA 2004) Scheme.

- **Vulnerable Adult or Adults**

The Protection of Vulnerable Adults Scheme (PoVA 2004) defined a vulnerable adult as a person aged 18 or over who has a condition of the following type:

A substantial learning or physical disability;

A physical or mental illness or mental disorder, chronic or otherwise, including addiction to alcohol or drugs;

A significant reduction in physical or mental capacity.

- **Regulated Activity**

The emphasis is on activities; there are new definitions which scale back the breadth of regulated activities.

Regulated activity relating to children covers:

i) Unsupervised activities: teach, train, instruct, care for or supervise children, or provide advice/guidance on well-being, or drive a vehicle only for children.

(ii) Work for a limited range of establishments ('specified places'), with opportunity for contact: for example, schools, children's homes, childcare premises. Not work by supervised volunteers.

Work under (i) or (ii) is regulated activity only if done regularly.

(iii) Relevant personal care, for example washing or dressing; or health care by or supervised by a professional.

(iv) Registered child-minding; and foster-carers.

The definition of regulated activity relating to adults places the emphasis on the kind of activity carried out for any adult who requires them rather than on any specific groups of people or vulnerabilities.

These activities cover:

- i) Provision of healthcare
- ii) Provision of personal care
- iii) Providing social work
- iv) Assistance with cash, bills, shopping etc.
- v) Assistance with conduct of personal affairs
- vi) Conveying e.g. to receive healthcare

2.2 Forms of abuse

The Children Act 1989 defines four types of abuse: physical, emotional, sexual and neglect. These categories of abuse apply and will be relevant to vulnerable adults as well as to children who WOCA has contact with as part of its activities and social care role with people of all ages.

- **Physical Abuse**

Physical abuse may take many forms e.g. hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning or suffocating.

It may also be caused when a parent or carer feigns the symptoms of, or deliberately causes, ill health to a child or vulnerable adult. This unusual and potentially dangerous form of abuse is now described as fabricated or induced illness.

- **Emotional Abuse**

Emotional abuse is continual emotional ill treatment causing severe and persistent effects on the child or vulnerable adult's emotional development and may involve:

- i) conveying the message that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only in so far as they meet the needs of another person;
- ii) imposing developmentally inappropriate expectations;
- iii) causing the child or vulnerable adult to feel frightened or in danger – e.g. witnessing domestic violence;
- iv) exploitation or corruption of children, young people or vulnerable adults.

Some level of emotional abuse is involved in most types of ill treatment, although emotional abuse may occur alone.

- **Sexual Abuse**

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or vulnerable adult to take part in sexual activities, whether or not they are aware of what is happening and includes penetrative and non-penetrative acts.

It may also include non-contact activities such as looking at, or being involved in, the production of pornographic materials, watching sexual activities or encouraging children or vulnerable adults to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

- **Neglect**

Neglect involves the persistent failure to meet basic physical and/or psychological needs, which is likely to result in serious impairment of the neglected person's health and development. It may involve failure to provide adequate food, shelter or clothing, failure to protect from physical harm or danger or failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care / treatment. It may also include neglect of basic emotional needs.

Staff should also be aware of other factors that influence these forms of abuse such as racial or homophobic abuse.

2.3 Status of Policy

This policy applies to all employees, trustees and volunteers. Its purpose is to protect the personal safety of all children, young people and vulnerable adults using the facilities, resources and activities provided by WOCA at the West Oxford Community Centre, Botley Road, actively promoting awareness, good practice and sound procedures. The Trustees will review this policy regularly and as informed by risk assessments relating to all activities of WOCA, and will make member organisations using the premises and working with vulnerable groups aware of the policy.

PART THREE

Procedures

3.1 Personnel/Recruitment

All employees, trustees and volunteers are required to provide references that WOCA deems appropriate. References are always verified.

All paid and unpaid staff involved in regulated or intensive contact with vulnerable people as part of their work for WOCA will be subject to the Disclosure and Barring procedures of the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS).

If the job or role is eligible then a DBS 'Standard', 'Enhanced' or 'Enhanced check with list checks' as appropriate check will be carried out. The check will be required to be repeated every 3 years at a minimum.

If an individual has a job or role with another organisation that involves the same degree of unsupervised access to children or vulnerable adults as their role in providing a service for WOCA, their existing occupational DBS certificate will suffice, if it is no more than 12 months old.

No new employees, trustees or volunteers should start employment/volunteer work until references have been verified and where one is required DBS checks received. If this is not possible: then new employees, trustees and volunteers must not be involved with regulated activities as set out in section 2 until references and DBS checks are completed. Details of the checks to be carried out are set out in Part 5.

All employees, trustees and volunteers will receive, and will be required to read and sign, the Safeguarding Disclosure and Barring Policy. All employees, trustees and volunteers will receive regular support in their work with children and vulnerable adults and further Safeguarding training will be sought if such work is undertaken by WOCA.

3.2 Responsibilities

All employees, trustees and volunteers working on behalf of WOCA have a responsibility for the welfare of the children and vulnerable adults that they work with, in relation to their employment.

All employees, trustees and volunteers have a duty to ensure that any suspected incident, allegation or other manifestation relating to child and vulnerable adult protection is reported using the reporting procedures detailed in this policy.

WOCA has a Designated (named) Safeguarding Officer and a nominated deputy. The Manager, or their deputy in his or her absence, or if there isn't a paid worker post, the Chair of the Management Committee must also be informed of issues which arise under this policy. The Designated Safeguarding Officer and Deputy Safeguarding Officer are responsible for child and vulnerable adults protection and implementation of this policy. It is the responsibility of the Designated Safeguarding Officer to take appropriate action following any expression of concern and make referrals to the appropriate agencies.

3.2.1 Designated Safeguarding Officers

The Designated Safeguarding Officers will attend training as appropriate and make referrals to external agencies. Other aspects of their role include:

- obtaining information from staff, volunteers, children, parents or carers who have concerns relating to the protection of children or vulnerable adults and to record this information;
- assessing information quickly and carefully and asking for further information where appropriate;
- consulting with statutory child and vulnerable protection agencies e.g. the local social services department and police, to clarify doubts or worries;
- making referrals to Social Services, the DBS or the police, without delay.

All employees will be made aware of the named Designated Safeguarding Officers and how to contact them. Contact details also appear in Part Twelve of this policy. The Designated Safeguarding Officers have contact telephone numbers for the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children's Board (OSCB) and Oxfordshire Safeguarding Adults Board (OSAB) and other statutory agencies.

3.3 Reporting Procedures: What to do if you suspect someone is being abused

All staff, volunteers and others working in direct or indirect contact with children and vulnerable adults as part of the organisation's activities or as part of the environment where the activities take place, must be alert to the signs of abuse. Anyone who suspects that abuse is taking place in this environment or to whom a child or vulnerable adult discloses issues relating to safeguarding should contact the Designated Safeguarding Officer immediately.

Any suspicion or allegation must be reported as soon as possible on the day of the occurrence to the Designated Safeguarding Officer:

Louise Siddle
07876 268313
louise.siddle@talk21.com

Disclosure or evidence for concern may occur in a number of ways including a comment made by a child or adult, physical evidence such as bruising, a change in behaviour, or inappropriate behaviour or knowledge.

It is the responsibility of the Designated Safeguarding Officer to liaise with other relevant agencies where necessary and seek clarification from the Safeguarding and Protection Unit of the local Constabulary if there is any concern about the validity of any allegation.

Any suspicion or allegation of abuse must be recorded by the observer/s on the appropriate incident reporting form. This form must be kept strictly confidential and stored securely following Data Protection Procedures. All employees and volunteers are instructed to report the disclosure or discovery of abuse or alleged abuse directly to their Line Manager who will inform the Designated Safeguarding Officer.

All trustees will report such incidents directly to the Designated Safeguarding Officer.

All stages of the reporting procedure must be documented, marked **CONFIDENTIAL** and stored securely following the procedures laid out in the Data Protection Policy.

3.4 Allegations against employees, trustees or volunteers

When any form of complaint is made against an employee or volunteer, it must be taken seriously and the complaint should initially be dealt with by senior employee, or the most senior staff member on site at the time the complaint is made. The senior staff member must report the complaint to the designated Safeguarding Officer immediately, giving details of the circumstances. If the designated Safeguarding Officer is unavailable (or is the person against whom a complaint has been made) the Chair or in their absence Vice Chair of the Management Committee must be informed immediately, and they will deal with the complaint and ensure that the designated Safeguarding Officer is informed.

If any of the above (Chair, Vice Chair, designated Safeguarding Officer) is the person against whom a complaint has been made they will be excluded from the processing of the complaint.

The Chair/Vice Chair will attend the site of the allegation to gain an initial account of what has occurred from all relevant parties, including the person against whom the allegation has been made. If this is not possible, contact will be made by telephone.

The Chair/Vice Chair will have the right to suspend from duty and/or the premises, any person who is a party to the allegation until a full investigation has been made in line with WOCA's Disciplinary Procedures or the Code of Conduct.

This action does not prejudice the outcome of the investigation of the complaint or imply in any way that the person suspended is responsible for, or is to blame for, any action leading up to the complaint. The purpose of any such suspension is to enable a full and proper investigation to be carried out in a totally professional and objective manner.

It is the responsibility of the Safeguarding Officer to make the decision as to whether to inform Social Services, NHS Community Mental Health Team (CMHT) and/or the Safeguarding Unit of the local Constabulary, depending on the nature of the allegation. They may also need to follow their legal duty to report the case to the Independent Safeguarding Authority (See 7 below).

WOCA will co-operate fully with the Police, Social Services, the NHS and all other parties involved.

The Senior staff member or his/her nominated deputy will ensure that the Chair of WOCA, or in his/her absence the Vice-Chair, Secretary or Treasurer, is fully briefed. An agreed statement will be prepared for the purpose of accurate communication with external sources and for the protection of the legal position of all parties involved.

The Senior staff member or nominated deputy will make a full written report of the incident and the actions taken. This report will be stored securely following the procedures detailed in the Data Protection Policy.

3.4.1 Resignation

If, during the course of an investigation relating to safeguarding, an employee tenders their resignation, or ceases to provide their services, WOCA is not prevented from following up an allegation in accordance with these procedures.

Every effort will be made to reach a conclusion, including in cases where the person concerned refuses to co-operate with the process.

See also:

PART SEVEN: Reporting cases to the Independent Safeguarding Authority, and West Oxford Community Association's (WOCA's):

- i) Disciplinary Procedure
- #ii) 'Step Away' from Abuse and Aggression Policy
- iii) Complaints Procedure

PART FOUR

Confidentiality

4.1 Confidentiality

All employees and volunteers must work under the principle that confidentiality is extremely important and plays a large part in much of the work carried out with children and vulnerable adults. However, under no circumstances will any individual in the employment of WOCA, or acting as a volunteer, keep confidential any information that raises concerns about the safety and welfare of a child or vulnerable adult. This statement relating to confidentiality is made known to all who access any provision of WOCA.

PART FIVE

Recruitment

5.1 Safe recruitment of staff

West Oxford Community Association (WOCA) undertakes to ensure that paid and unpaid staff are suitable to work in an environment where they will encounter children and vulnerable adults as part of the Organisation's work. It also reserves the right to refuse to employ staff or volunteers whom it has a reasonable belief may pose a risk to children and vulnerable adults.

WOCA has systems in place to prevent unsuitable people from working with children or vulnerable adults and to promote safe practice. These systems apply to all new staff and volunteers and require the following checks to be made on appointment:

- i) A minimum of two references, satisfactory to WOCA, one of which should be from a previous employer;
- ii) Documentary evidence checks of identity, nationality, residency and "right to work" status;
- iii) DBS Check at the level relevant for the job/role;
- iv) Documentary evidence of qualifications;
- v) Satisfactory completion of the probationary period.

PART SIX

The Vetting and Barring Scheme

6.1 Vetting and Barring

The Protection of Freedoms Act 2012 places a duty on WOCA to undertake an Enhanced check with list checks with the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) for all staff and volunteers supervising or carrying out regulated activity with children or vulnerable adults.

WOCA carries out appropriate DBS checks on all staff or volunteer whose jobs or roles are eligible for one.

PART SEVEN

Reporting to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)

7.1 Reporting cases to the DBS

WOCA has a statutory duty to make reports and provide relevant information to the DBS where there are grounds for believing, following an investigation, that an individual is unsuitable to work with children or adults in certain regulated activities, or may have committed misconduct. The responsibility for reporting cases to the DBS lies with the Designated Safeguarding Officer.

The DBS make barring decisions for Section 142 of the Education Act, The Protection of Children Act List (PoCA) and the Protection of Vulnerable Adults List (PoVA) and the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012. This has now been combined as part of the Vetting and Barring Procedures of the DBS.

PART EIGHT

Supporting Staff

8.1 Support for Staff

All staff and workers who come into direct contact with children and vulnerable adults must undertake training on the subject of safeguarding. This Policy will be issued to all new staff as part of their induction.

WOCA is aware that safeguarding cases can be distressing and that both paid and unpaid staff who have been involved may find it helpful to talk about their experiences, in confidence, with the Designated Safeguarding Officer or with a trained counsellor. Staff wishing to be referred for counselling should contact their line manager or the Designated Safeguarding Officer.

8.2 Whistleblowing

Any member of staff who raises an issue where they believe the employer, a fellow employee or any volunteer is acting in a way which is unlawful or falls below proper standards or contrary to this policy are protected by the Public Disclosure Act 1998, provided they comply with statutory procedures.

Any employee looking at whistleblowing can do so by using the grievance procedure and in the first instance should discuss it with their Line Manager, the Chair of the Management Committee or Safeguarding Officer.

Any volunteer with such concerns must raise it with the person responsible for their management or the Chair of the Management Committee. Anyone involved in whistleblowing will be supported and the Association will ensure that proper procedures are followed.

PART NINE

Equal Opportunities

9.1 Equality of Opportunities

As part of the community served by WOCA, all children and vulnerable adults have the right to be safeguarded from harm and exploitation whatever their race, religion, gender, sexuality, age or disability. This policy relates to the Organisation's legal obligation to protect children and vulnerable adults who are suffering forms of abuse as defined in the Children Act 1989 and Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 and is therefore in line with WOCA's equality and diversity policies.

See also WOCA's:

- i) Equality and Diversity Policy
- ii) Policy Statement on Recruitment of Ex-Offenders
- iii) Recruitment and Selection Policy

PART TEN

Operational Practices

10.1 The use of cameras, videos, or camera mobile phones

WOCA may take photographs of children and young people participating in activities and events. At all times permission, written or otherwise from parents/guardians/carers will be obtained before photographs are taken. WOCA reserves the right to prohibit the use of cameras, videos and mobile telephones with picture taking capacity on its land and within any of its properties or at events it promotes.

10.2 Employee Ratios

The ratio of employees/volunteers to children will be one to eight for those aged 8 years and under and one to ten for those aged 9 years or over as laid down by guidance issued under the Children Act (1989). WOCA recommends these minimum guidelines to those hiring WOCA premises to work with children and young people.

Where a Governing Body or Government guidelines require a higher ratio of employees /volunteers to the number of children and vulnerable adults then that ratio will override the minimum ratios set above.

Outdoor adventure activities will always have a minimum of 2 appropriately trained adults, one of which must be an employee of WOCA who will hold a First Aid at Work qualification.

In all but exceptional circumstances there will be two employees present when transporting children and vulnerable adults in a minibus or other forms of public and private transport.

10.3 Signing in and out

All children aged 18 and under and vulnerable adults attending a WOCA organised activity with a duration of less than one hour will be checked against a register. All children and vulnerable adults attending a WOCA organised activity that lasts longer than one hour must be signed in/out by a parent/guardian. This applies to all WOCA organised activities, regardless of their location.

10.4 Outside Organisations

Any club, society, organisation or individual undertaking activities on WOCA's behalf involving children aged under 18 and vulnerable adults will be required to either adopt WOCA's Safeguarding Policy or show proof that they have their own robust policies.

Any club, society, organisation or individual undertaking any activity that has been sanctioned by WOCA which involves children aged under 18 on WOCA's land or in its premises will be required to adopt WOCA's signing in and signing out procedures.

If any club, society, organisation or individual working with children and vulnerable adults wishes to adopt WOCA's Safeguarding Policy, but does not have access to the DBS vetting procedure, they will be able to use WOCA's vetting procedure in order to make appropriate DBS checks, after paying the appropriate fee. In the case of individuals running such activities sanctioned by WOCA, they will be required to share the results of any such DBS checks.

Any club, society, organisation or individual working with children and vulnerable adults who refuse to adopt WOCA's policies, signing in / out procedures or refuse to adopt their own policies and procedures will not be permitted to use WOCA's facilities. WOCA expects those running activities for children, young people and vulnerable adults on the WOCA premises to have a proven procedure for accounting for those in their care and have a method of registration: and to be able to describe such procedure if challenged.

Any club, society, organisation or individual working with children and vulnerable adults will be subject to random spot checks periodically by WOCA's employees to ensure policies and procedures are in place and being implemented.

PART ELEVEN

Contacting the Safeguarding Officer

11.1 WOCA's Designated Safeguarding Officers are:

Designated Safeguarding Officer

Name: Louise Siddle

Tel: 07876 268313

Deputy Designated Safeguarding Officer

Name: Rebecca Huxley

Tel: 07890 530416

All paid and unpaid staff who are not the Designated Safeguarding Officer, but who are approached with concerns about a child or vulnerable adult, must bring the concerns raised to the attention of the Designated Safeguarding Officer, his/her deputy or their line manager immediately.

All staff to whom a vulnerable person discloses issues that may be related to safeguarding must keep written notes of concerns. The staff member must also complete an Incident Form immediately after the issues have been noted by them or reported to them.

PART TWELVE

Review and Maintenance

12.1 Review and Maintenance of Policy

This policy will be reviewed annually and the views of all employees and volunteers shall be sought where necessary and reflected in the review process. Any new legislation or developments in existing legislation will be considered as and when required and the policy will be updated to reflect these developments.

All employees and volunteers will receive training in child and vulnerable adult protection procedures and the training will be reviewed as and when required.