



# Vulnerable Adults Safeguarding Procedures

*Last review and update: September 2024*

This document outlines the procedures related to safeguarding of vulnerable adults as outlined in the Lighthouse [Vulnerable Adults Safeguarding Policy](#) and links to [Safeguarding Code of Conduct](#).

## 1. Code of Conduct

All Lighthouse team members are required to follow the [Safeguarding Code of Conduct](#), which provides guidelines for maintaining appropriate behavior, professional boundaries and ensuring the safety of vulnerable adults.

## 2. Reporting Concerns

### 2.1 Concerns that must be reported/recorded

If any of the following occur you should report this immediately to another colleague and to the DSL, and complete a [Record of Concern form](#). The DSL / DSO will decide what action should be taken, including informing the parents or carers.

- If you accidentally hurt a vulnerable adult.
- If they seem distressed in any manner.
- If a vulnerable adult appears to be sexually aroused by your actions.
- If a vulnerable adult misunderstands or misinterprets something you have done.
- If you suspect a vulnerable adult in your care has suffered abuse or neglect
- If a vulnerable adult in your care discloses information to you that suggests they have suffered abuse or neglect.

### 2.2 Categories of abuse

It is not the responsibility of anyone working in Lighthouse to decide whether or not abuse has taken place. However there is a responsibility to act on any concerns through contact with the appropriate authorities. The following describes the categories of abuse. Further guidance on definitions of harm. The Care Act recognises 10 categories of abuse that may be experienced by adults: <https://www.anncrafttrust.org/resources/types-of-harm/>

#### Physical abuse:

Non-accidental injuries, bruising, wounding burns, fractures – indicators include:

- Obvious signs of injury
- Injuries which are unusual or unexplained
- Injuries, which while explained are frequent.

#### Neglect:

Chronic inattention to basic needs – indicators include:

- Dirty, unkempt appearance
- Developmental delay
- Low self esteem
- Hunger

#### Sexual Abuse:

The involvement of young people in sexual activity, including the abuse of position of trust by an adult with professional responsibility – indicators include:

- Physical difficulties such as wetting or soiling
- Extreme variations in behaviour
- Sexualised language, behaviour or play
- Indirect disclosure through play, drawing or written work

#### Emotional Abuse or neglect:

Persistent emotional ill treatment such as the extreme denial of love, affection or approval – indicators include:

- Low self esteem, unhappiness, fear, distress or anxiety
- Attention seeking behaviours
- Emotional developmental delay

There are emerging types and methods of abuse including;

- Sexual exploitation
- Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)
- Radicalisation and the encouragement or coercion to become involved in terrorist activities – Prevent Duty 2015. The Prevent Agenda helps to stop people becoming involved in or supporting violent extremism or terrorism through mentoring programmes such '[Channel](#)'.

- Abuse via online methods such as adults seeking to develop relationships with vulnerable adults or use sexual or abusive images of them.
- Domestic violence – witnessing this in some way between adult family members
- Trafficking/ Modern Slavery – Trafficking is where young people are tricked, forced or persuaded to leave their homes and are moved or transported and then exploited.
- County lines – County Lines is the police term for urban gangs exploiting young people into moving drugs from a hub into other markets.
- Mate Crime – a “mate crime” is when vulnerable people are befriended by members of the community who go on to exploit and take advantage of them.
- Cyber Bullying – Cyber bullying occurs when someone repeatedly makes fun of another person online, or repeatedly picks on another person through emails or text messages.
- Financial or Material – This includes theft, fraud, internet scamming, and coercion in relation to an adult’s financial affairs or arrangements.

Sometimes concerns that a vulnerable adult is suffering or is likely to be suffering some form of abuse will build up slowly over time, and some will be as a response to a injury or mark. All concerns should be logged/recorded and referred to the DSL . Notes should be made as soon as possible by the member of staff to maintain a

record. This should include what the member of staff noticed or was told by the vulnerable adult and should be signed and dated. If relevant, include a diagram of who was in the room and where they were situated. The DSL will provide support and guidance and if appropriate will make a referral to social services and if necessary the police.

## **2.3 Consent**

Vulnerable adults must give consent before any action is taken / confidential information is shared. In most cases, if an adult chooses not to share information and there is no sign of pressure or manipulation, their decision must be respected. However, there are times when their consent can be bypassed, such as:

- If they are at serious risk of harm
- If others are at risk
- If a crime has been committed
- If action is needed for public interest (e.g., a staff member in a position of trust)

If you're unsure whether to override their wishes, always seek advice from the local authority.

Sometimes vulnerable adults who are suffering abuse choose a trusted adult to tell. If a vulnerable adult discloses abuse, the person hearing the disclosure should:

- Listen, allowing information to be recalled freely
- Reassure that they are believed
- Make notes as soon as possible recording as accurately as possible language used by the vulnerable adult
- Ask for consent to share information if report for concern needs to be made.
- Refer to the DSL who will contact social services and the police if necessary

Do not leading questions. This is the role of specially trained social workers and police officers.

*Guidance on starting difficult conversations:*

<https://www.anncrafttrust.org/what-should-i-say-advice-for-starting-difficult-conversations/>

## **2.4 Responding to allegations or suspicions**

Lighthouse will assure all staff that it will fully support and protect anyone who in good faith reports a concern that a colleague is, or may be, abusing a vulnerable adult.

### **2.4.1 Types of investigation**

Where there is a complaint against a member of staff there may be three types of investigation:

- A criminal investigation
- A disciplinary or misconduct investigation

The results of the police and protection investigation may well influence the disciplinary investigation, but not necessarily.

### **2.4.2 Action if there are concerns:**

Concerns about poor practice:

- If, following consideration, the allegation is clearly about poor practice, the DSL will deal with it as a misconduct issue.
- If the allegation is about poor practice by the DSL, or if the matter has been handled inadequately and concerns remain, it should be reported to the Chief Executive, Lead Safeguarding Trustee or Lighthouse Board of Trustees who will decide how to deal with the allegation and whether or not to initiate disciplinary proceedings.

### Concerns about suspected abuse:

- Any suspicion that a vulnerable adult has been abused by a member of staff should be reported to DSL, who will take such steps as considered necessary to ensure the safety of the child in question and any other vulnerable adult who may be at risk.
- The DSL will refer the allegation to the social services department who may involve the police, or go directly to the police if out-of-hours.
- The parents or carers of vulnerable adult will be contacted as soon as possible following advice from the social services department.
- If the DSL is the subject of the suspicion/allegation, the report must be made to the Chief Executive or the Board of Trustees designated DSL who will refer the allegation to Social Services.

### **2.4.3 Confidentiality**

Every effort should be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned. This includes the following people:

- The DSL
- The parents of the person who is alleged to have been abused
- The person making the allegation
- Social services/police
- The Lighthouse Board of Trustees designated DSL
- The alleged abuser (and their parents/carers if the alleged abuser is a vulnerable adult)

Seek social services' advice on who should approach the alleged abuser. Information should be stored in a secure place with limited access to designated people, in line with data protection laws (e.g. that information is accurate, regularly updated, relevant and secure).

### **2.4.4 Internal Enquiries and Suspension**

- The DSL will make an immediate decision about whether any individual accused of abuse should be temporarily suspended pending further police and social services inquiries.
- Irrespective of the findings of the social services or police inquiries the Chief Executive and Lighthouse Board of Trustees will assess all individual cases to decide whether a member of staff or volunteer can be reinstated and how this can be sensitively handled. This may be a difficult decision, particularly where there is insufficient evidence to uphold any action by the police. In such cases, a decision should be made based upon the available information which could suggest that on a balance of probability, it is more likely than not that the allegation is true. The welfare of the vulnerable adult should remain of paramount importance throughout.

#### **2.4.5 Support to deal with the aftermath of abuse**

- Consideration should be given to the kind of support that vulnerable adults and members of staff may need. Use of helplines, support groups and open meetings will maintain an open culture and help the healing process.
- Consideration should be given to what kind of support may be appropriate for the alleged perpetrator.

#### **2.4.6 Allegations of previous abuse**

Allegations of abuse may be made some time after the event (e.g. by an adult who was abused as a child or by a member of staff who is still currently working with vulnerable adults).

Where such an allegation is made, Lighthouse will follow the procedures as detailed above and report the matter to the social services or the police. This is because other vulnerable adults may be at risk from this person. Anyone who has a previous criminal conviction for offences related to abuse is automatically excluded from working with vulnerable adults. This is reinforced by the provisions of the **Care Act 2014**, which outlines the legal framework for protecting vulnerable adults.

### **3. Information for social services or the police about suspected abuse**

To ensure that this information is as helpful as possible, a detailed record should always be made at the time of the disclosure/concern.

The Data Protection Act states that personal information held by agencies must be obtained and processed fairly and lawfully and stored securely. It must be accurate, proportionate to the purpose, not held longer than necessary and may only be disclosed in appropriate circumstances.

Where concerns arise about the safety and wellbeing of a vulnerable adult, or there are indications that the adult may be suffering or at risk of suffering significant harm, staff will record:

- The reason for concern
- What was said or witnessed and details of any other persons present
- Dates and times of incidents and when the notes were made
- Date, time and outcome of any discussion with the parent or carer
- Date, time and outcome of any discussion with the other staff, the DSL, social services, or other relevant professionals concerned

Staff will use the [Record of Concern form](#) and will be careful to distinguish between fact, opinion and hearsay. Notes will be passed to the DSL who will keep all welfare concerns in a secure digital folder.

#### **4. Whistleblowing**

We are committed to maintaining the highest standards of safeguarding, transparency, and accountability. [The Whistleblowing policy](#) provides a clear process for staff and others to report concerns about unsafe practices, and includes an [online reporting form](#).

#### **5. Useful contacts:**

Lighthouse Designated Safeguarding Lead & Officer contact details:

DSL – Emma Wickham – [emma@lighthouse.org.uk](mailto:emma@lighthouse.org.uk) / 01273 647197

DSO – Alli Beddoes – [alli@lighthouse.org.uk](mailto:alli@lighthouse.org.uk) / 01273 647197



The Brighton & Hove Safeguarding Adult Board (SAB) is a group of statutory, private, voluntary, and independent organisations across Brighton & Hove who work together to empower and protect some of the most vulnerable members of our community

Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)

If you receive an allegation or have a concern regarding a member of staff working or volunteering with children, send an email to [ladoenquiries@brighton-hove.gov.uk](mailto:ladoenquiries@brighton-hove.gov.uk). The LADO is available to discuss any concerns and to assist employers in deciding whether they need to make a referral and/or take any immediate management action to protect a child.

Direct telephone for enquiries is Darrel Clews 01273 295643

Concerns may include a member of staff or volunteer who has:

- behaved in a way that has harmed or may have harmed a child
- possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child
- behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children
- behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children

East Sussex – Single Point of Advice (SPOA) team:

Phone: 01323 464222

Opening hours: Monday to Thursday 8.30am to 5pm, Friday 8.30am to 4.30pm

West Sussex – MASH (Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub)

Email: [MASH@westsussex.gcsx.gov.uk](mailto:MASH@westsussex.gcsx.gov.uk)

Telephone: 01403 229 900

Out of Hours: 0330 222 6664

NSPCC helpline – 0808 800 5000

Police – 999

