



Safeguarding of Children and Vulnerable Adults: Policy & Procedures

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Introduction

Sutton Community Farm (SCF) is committed to ensuring that children or vulnerable adults who use our services are not exploited or abused and that working practices minimise the risk of abuse. SCF has a duty to comply with the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006. If abuse is reported to us or staff recognise abuse this policy outlines what steps should be taken.

Where a third party is running a service from SCF's premises they must have their own safeguarding policies in place or must sign up to this policy.

Definitions

Children

In accordance with the Children Act 2004, a child is any person who has not yet reached their 18th birthday. For the purpose of this document the reference to children therefore means 'children and young people' throughout.

Vulnerable Adults

A vulnerable adult is someone over 18 who has, or may need, help with their everyday living tasks and who is, for any reason, unable to protect themselves. This can include, but is not limited to:

- disabled people who have physical or sensory impairments
- people who have learning difficulties
- people who experience mental ill health
- people who live in care homes

It is important to recognise that adults can be vulnerable at different times, and in different settings, and therefore to maintain an approach which centres the individual and does not make assumptions.

What is abuse?

Abuse is the violation of an individual's human and/or civil rights by someone else. It can result from 'Action or inaction by a carer or any other person'. Abuse might be unintentional, the important factor is whether the vulnerable person is harmed or not. Different types of abuse may happen at the same time. It can happen in any setting.

Categories of abuse

The Statutory Guidance to the Care Act 2014 identifies 10 categories of abuse:

Self-neglect

This covers a wide range of behaviour such as neglecting to care for one's personal hygiene, health or surroundings and includes behaviours such as hoarding.

Modern Slavery

This encompasses slavery, human trafficking, forced labour and domestic servitude.

Domestic abuse

This includes psychological, physical, sexual, financial and emotional abuse perpetrated by anyone within a person's family. It also includes so-called 'honour' based violence.

Discriminatory abuse

Discrimination is abuse which centres on a difference or perceived difference particularly with respect to race, gender or disability or any other of the protected characteristics of the Equality Act.

Organisational abuse

This includes neglect and poor care practice within an institution or specific care setting such as a hospital or a care home, for example, or in relation to care provided in one's own home. This may range from one off incidents to ongoing ill-treatment. It can be through neglect or poor professional practice as a result of the structure, policies, processes and practices within an organisation.

Physical abuse

This includes hitting, slapping, pushing, kicking, misuse of medication, restraint or inappropriate

sanctions.

Sexual abuse

This includes rape, indecent exposure, sexual harassment, inappropriate looking or touching, sexual teasing or innuendo, sexual photography, subjection to pornography or witnessing sexual acts, indecent exposure and sexual assault or sexual acts to which the child or adult has not consented or was pressured into consenting.

Financial or material abuse

This includes theft, fraud, internet scamming, coercion in relation to an adult's financial affairs or arrangements, including in connection with wills, property, inheritance or financial transactions, or the misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits.

Neglect and acts of omission

This includes ignoring medical or physical care needs, failing to provide access to appropriate health, social care or educational services and the withholding of the necessities of life, such as medication, adequate nutrition and heating.

Emotional or psychological abuse

This includes threats of harm or abandonment, deprivation of contact, humiliation, blaming, controlling, intimidation, coercion, harassment, verbal abuse, isolation or withdrawal from services or supportive networks.

There are a number of signs and symptoms of abuse, for example:

- Frequent minor injuries or bruising.
- Depression
- Neglected appearance or poor hygiene
- Weight loss
- Change in eating patterns
- Change in behaviour

Duties and responsibilities

The Policy and Procedures will be reviewed annually. The Designated Safeguarding Officer will act as the key contact for this policy and procedure, and carry out this review. The responsibility for carrying out the safeguarding procedure lies with the Designated Safeguarding Officer, with assistance from the Safeguarding team members. If the Designated Safeguarding Officer is not available in an incident, then the staff member on the Safeguarding Team should take responsibility for the procedure.

Designated Safeguarding Officer: Alice Brown

Safeguarding Team staff members: Rachel Clark, Sarah-Jane Worth

Safeguarding Team committee member: Helen Triggs

All employees have a duty to be vigilant to signs that all is not well with a child or vulnerable adult. There is a duty to respond to any allegation or suspicion by following the reporting procedures. Not all concerns about children or vulnerable adults relate to abuse: there may well be other explanations. It is important to keep an open mind. If any person has concerns it is not their responsibility to decide if it is abuse. It is their responsibility to act on any concerns following the right procedures.

All volunteers should be made aware of the Safeguarding procedure, including knowing who the Designated Safeguarding Officer is, and to report any concerns they might have to a staff member.

Policy Statement

SCF holds as a high priority the health, safety and welfare of all children and vulnerable adults involved in our activities.

We have a duty to ensure that staff are competent to carry out and fulfill their responsibilities to prevent abuse of children and vulnerable adults and to report any abuse discovered or suspected. All new staff will be informed that there is a Safeguarding Policy. Relevant volunteers will be informed of the policy during the volunteer induction session.

We will take all reasonable steps to identify any vulnerable adult during the application for volunteering. Other additional supervision measures will be put in place for all volunteers defined as vulnerable adults, and such volunteers will come under the provisions of this policy.

We recognise that any children or vulnerable adult can be subject to abuse and all allegations of abuse will be taken seriously and treated in accordance with SCF's procedures.

We recognise that it is the responsibility of all staff to act upon any concern no matter how small or trivial it may seem.

SCF recognises its responsibility to implement, maintain and regularly review the procedures that are designed to prevent or notify suspected abuse, and to keep up-to-date with national developments relating to the care and protection of children and vulnerable adults.

SCF is committed to supporting, resourcing and training those who work with, or who come into contact with, children and vulnerable adults and to providing appropriate supervision.

Recruitment

All potential employees of SCF may be subject to an enhanced DBS check including a barred list check, depending on their work activity. Volunteers may be subject to an enhanced DBS check depending on the nature of the work they will be undertaking.

SCF will take all appropriate steps to ensure that unsuitable people are prevented from working with vulnerable adults and children. Where staff and volunteers are likely to have regular contact with or encounter vulnerable adults or children (which might include regular processing of information), rigorous checks into their eligibility will be required.

SCF will ensure that all new staff undergo a reference check prior to appointment, whether or not they have direct responsibility for vulnerable adults.

Volunteers that are supervised by employees whilst working with vulnerable adults do not require DBS checks. The supervisor will always be DBS checked. For safety and best practice, volunteers

that work in non-public venues off site with vulnerable adults will be DBS checked, even if supervised. Volunteers who are not DBS checked will not be working off site with vulnerable adults in non-public settings.

All staff and volunteers (or their parents / guardians) will be made aware of this policy and procedures, including all vulnerable adults.

Confidentiality

Though SCF has a duty to ensure confidentiality, it must be stressed that where abuse to a child or vulnerable adult is suspected, reported or concerns are raised, the management of the organisation must be notified. The individual will have been made aware that staff cannot ignore issues around abuse and that steps will be taken to deal with them in as sensitive a manner as possible.

Concerns about confidentiality should not be allowed to override the right of children to be protected from harm. However, every effort should be made to ensure that information surrounding the situation is only shared with those who are concerned with it.

Adults can insist on confidentiality unless there are circumstances in which an adult at risk's wishes may be overridden. As a general principle, SCF staff must act in accordance with the wishes of the vulnerable adult wherever possible. Where there is reasonable suspicion of abuse and the adult has capacity to withhold consent and does not wish the information to be shared, then the adult must be offered appropriate support from within SCF.

As a matter of good practice, vulnerable adults should not be offered nor promised confidentiality by SCF staff. It is important for staff to be able to share concerns and seek help from others in the Safeguarding Team and this must be explained to the vulnerable adult.

Acting in line with the Mental Capacity Act 2005

Safeguarding must respect the autonomy and independence of individuals, and should therefore always happen in line with the principles of the Mental Capacity Act 2005 which dictates that no decision should be made on behalf of someone else. This means that you should always get the consent of the individual before acting on their behalf, even if you believe you are acting in their best interest. The exceptions to this are:

- In cases of emergency;
- In cases where other people may be harmed or at risk;
- Where the person lacks capacity.

You must always assume a person has capacity unless it is proven otherwise.

Procedure

If you witness something of concern, or an individual discloses something to you that leads you to believe someone is at risk of abuse, you should take an approach which centres the person at risk, following the Principles of Safeguarding (below), and our guidance. Wherever possible, involve the

person at risk in the safeguarding process. The person who raises concerns or suspects abuse should discuss the concern confidentially with the Safeguarding Team.

Principles of Safeguarding

The six principles of safeguarding as set out in The Care Act 2014 are:

- *Empowerment* - People are supported and encouraged to make their own decisions and informed consent.
- *Prevention* - It is better to take action before harm occurs.
- *Proportionality* - The least intrusive response appropriate to the risk presented.
- *Protection* - Support and representation for those in greatest need.
- *Partnership* - Services offer local solutions through working closely with their communities. Communities have a part to play in preventing, detecting and reporting neglect and abuse.
- *Accountability* - Accountability and transparency in delivering safeguarding.

Our additional guidance

- Refer to our [Safer Spaces Agreement](#), remembering to respect the person at risk's identity and consider their background and experiences, and how this may guide the actions you take.
- Always prioritise each individual's autonomy and their right to choose
- Do not make significant decisions regarding another person's wellbeing or safety alone - always seek the support of the Safeguarding Team

Follow this procedure:

Listen	Listen openly and non-judgmentally to what they are saying; remain calm and do not show shock or disbelief; do not start to investigate or ask probing questions.
Reassure	Reassure them that what has happened is not their fault and telling somebody was the right thing to do.

Explain	<p>Explain that you would like to share this information with the Safeguarding team, in order to help you to take the right next steps. You can let them know you would like to involve them in this process</p> <p>Tell the person at risk that the Safeguarding team will follow up with the relevant services or authorities who will be able to help. Ask the individual for their consent to share this information with the Safeguarding team, and relevant services and authorities.</p> <p>For vulnerable adults, if they do not give their consent, and the situation is not an emergency or putting them or anyone else at risk of harm, then you should not share the information. (See exceptions to this, under Mental Capacity Act 2005). In this case, tell the Safeguarding Team without disclosing the specific confidential information you have been asked not to pass on, whose role would be to provide you with guidance and support.</p>
Record*	<p>Record exactly what you have witnessed or have been told as soon as possible, but do not make notes whilst the individual is speaking.</p>
Reach out	<p>Contact the Designated Safeguarding Officer immediately. If they are not available, then contact the staff member on the Safeguarding team.</p> <p>If you or the individual are at immediate risk of harm, you should contact the emergency services by calling 999 first. You should then follow up with the Safeguarding Lead afterwards, when this becomes possible and you have followed the instructions of the emergency services.</p>

***When reporting a concern to the Designated Safeguarding Officer, you should include the following information:**

- Your name, the date and time when the notes were made
- Information about the individual at risk
 - Their name and age
 - Where they live, and with whom
 - Which organisations are providing them with help or services
 - Appearance and behaviour of the person concerned
 - Any signs of injury
- Details of the concern, which may be
 - An account of what you witnessed
 - An account of something that was disclosed to you by the person at risk or a third party. (In the case of a third-party reporting, make a record of their relationship to the person at risk)
- Dates and times of incidents, including details of the person(s) who may be abusing the individual
- If you can, record what questions you asked the individual

The report should be factual and should not include opinions or personal interpretations of the facts presented. The report should contain as much detail as possible and as accurately as staff are able to record it, and where possible should use the words and phrases of the person concerned. The report may form part of a criminal investigation.

The report should be signed, dated and passed as soon as possible or at the latest within 24 hours to the key contact, who will keep a copy stored in a secure place. Records will be kept for 25 years.

The Safeguarding Lead or other Safeguarding team member will then make a decision, along with the person at risk if appropriate, whether to contact the relevant services or authorities using the contacts provided below.

If the individual is in immediate physical danger, the Designated Safeguarding Officer should contact the police.

If there is reason to believe a crime has been committed, or if the abuse is violent, the responsible person should seek the vulnerable adult's consent to inform the police:

- If the vulnerable adult gives permission, it should be ensured that the situation is discussed by the Designated Safeguarding Officer and other members of the Safeguarding Team as appropriate who may then contact the police
- If the adult at risk does not give permission to involve the police, or the person lacks capacity to give consent, the Designated Safeguarding Officer should discuss with the Safeguarding team, and consider informing the police. They should make a judgement based on the risk of harm if the police are not contacted, considering the vulnerable adult's individual circumstance.

A full list of contact names and numbers are at the end of this document. Records of all reports of concerns or incidents will be kept in a confidential file.

What happens next

All cases of possible abuse are treated very seriously.

If Social Services have been contacted, they will arrange for a team manager to investigate the case. The team manager will talk to other people and organisations, including the police and will make a decision about how to proceed within 24 hours.

They will decide if no further action is needed, or arrange a meeting for organisations involved with the relevant parties. This meeting will share information and agree how to proceed. The team manager will make sure any action agreed at the meeting and any follow meetings take place.

Actions might include: taking immediate action to protect the individuals, interview the vulnerable person and other people, deciding how to support the individual; decisions about possible criminal investigation or disciplinary action and producing a protection plan to make sure the child or vulnerable adult stays safe.

The Designated Safeguarding Officer may choose not to contact Social Services immediately, but to contact next of kin of the vulnerable adult or child, and closely monitor the situation.

The person reporting the suspected abuse, and the vulnerable adult or child will be given the necessary support, and kept informed as appropriate.

Contacting Social Services or the Police

If a crime is being committed, or if someone is in immediate danger, always call the emergency services on 999.

If the situation is not urgent, but there is concern about the way in which someone is being treated, or treating you, Adult Social Services will be contacted for help, advice and to report the abuse. You do not have to give your name.

Adults and Safeguarding Referral Point

[Fill in a Google form](#), found on Sutton Council's website

For Children's services, the make a referral via the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (see www.sutton.gov.uk/mash).

Sutton Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub

1st Floor Sutton Police Station

6 Carshalton Road, Sutton

SM1 4RF

Email: mash@sutton.gov.uk or MASH@sutton.gov.uk.cjsm.net.

Telephone: 020 8649 0418

More information can be found here:

- [https://www.sutton.gov.uk/info/200609/safe_from_abuse - adult safeguarding/1617/help f or adults being abused](https://www.sutton.gov.uk/info/200609/safe_from_abuse_-_adult_safeguarding/1617/help_for_adults_being_abused)
- [https://www.sutton.gov.uk/info/200235/safeguarding children/473/what to do if youre worried about a child](https://www.sutton.gov.uk/info/200235/safeguarding_children/473/what_to_do_if_youre_worried_about_a_child)

Appendix

Code of conduct

The following code of conduct applies to all SCF staff and volunteers working with children and / or vulnerable adults, whether acting in a paid or unpaid capacity:

- Avoid unnecessary physical contact. If physical contact seems appropriate or necessary, ask permission beforehand (e.g. for hugging or shaking hands).
- Avoid taking a child or vulnerable adult alone in a vehicle on journeys, however short.
- Unless circumstances make it impossible to comply, do not take a vulnerable adult to the toilet unless either another adult is present or another adult is aware.
- Avoid working alone with vulnerable adults or children. If you find you are in a situation where you are alone with a vulnerable adult or child, wherever practicable make sure that others can clearly observe you.
- Avoid close personal relationships with a child or vulnerable adult in relation to whom you are in a position of trust, this includes social media networks.
- Do not make suggestive or inappropriate remarks to or about those you are working with, even in fun, as this could be misinterpreted.
- If an individual accuses a volunteer or member of staff of abuse or inappropriate behaviour, you should report this immediately to the relevant person.
- The duty to report applies equally to complaints or accusations of historic, and not just recent, abuse or inappropriate behaviour.