

## **PROTECTION OF VULNERABLE GROUPS POLICY**

### **Safeguarding children and adults with care and support needs**

East Lothian Foodbank is committed to safeguarding the rights, well-being and safety of children and adults with care and support needs who come into contact with the Foodbank. This policy outlines the steps the Foodbank will take to ensure that children and adults with care and support needs are protected. It will be reviewed on an annual basis by the Safeguarding Officer and trustees.

#### Definitions (for this document)

**Safeguarding:** The Foodbank follows the Charity Commission that defines Safeguarding as:

- protecting from maltreatment
- preventing impairment of health or development
- ensuring children are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care.

#### **Adults with care and support needs:**

A person who is or may be in need of community care services by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness; and who is or may be unable to take care of him or herself, or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation<sup>1</sup>.

Adults with care and support needs are entitled to: privacy; be treated with dignity; lead an independent life and to be enabled to do so; be able to choose how they lead their lives; the protection of the law; have their rights upheld regardless of ethnic origin, gender, sexuality, impairment or disability, age, religion or cultural background.

#### **Child:**

Describes a child aged 0-17 years old.

For the purpose of packing a food parcel a child is considered to be anyone under the age of 16 as it is assumed that older children will require as much food as an adult. However, for legal purposes a child is anyone under the age of 18.

<sup>1</sup> March 2000. 'No secrets: guidance on developing and implementing multi-agency policies and procedures to protect vulnerable adults from abuse', Department of Health. (The broad definition of a 'vulnerable adult' referred to in the 1997 Consultation Paper *Who decides?* issued by the Lord Chancellor's Department.

## Types of abuse

**Physical abuse** is an act of another party involving contact intended to cause feelings of physical pain, injury, or other physical suffering or bodily harm.

**Sexual abuse** is forcing undesired sexual behaviour by one person onto another.

**Emotional abuse** is any kind of abuse that is emotional rather than physical in nature. It can include anything from verbal abuse and constant criticism to more subtle tactics, such as intimidation, manipulation, and refusal to ever be pleased.

**Neglect** is the ongoing failure to meet a person's basic needs

**Financial abuse** is the misuse of a person's money, property or assets through theft or fraud.

**Spiritual abuse** takes place when leaders to whom people look for guidance and spiritual nurture use their positions of authority to manipulate, control, and dominate.

## Policy Statement

As a foodbank team, we want to restore dignity and revive hope to people from all walks of life. We are concerned with individuals and their circumstances and actively encourage an inclusive environment throughout all our work.

We seek to ensure that all our team members are aware of what is required from them under the children and adults with care and support needs protection policy and make sure that it is practised at all times.

It is the responsibility of each one of us to play our part in preventing the physical, sexual, spiritual, financial or emotional abuse and neglect of children and adults with care and support needs.

We commit ourselves to co-operate fully with the appropriate statutory services when they are conducting official investigation into the abuse and neglect of children and adults with care and support needs or young people (by an adult or young person).

This statement is to be brought to the attention of all staff and volunteers when they join, as part of their induction programme. Any amendments will be brought to the attention of all team members. The statement will be displayed at all locations in which the Foodbank operates and all team members will be asked to sign to say they have read it.

## Implementation

THE FOODBANK PROJECT SHALL:

Plan its work so as to minimise situations where the abuse of children and adults with care and support needs might occur.

Although the number of people who actively seek to abuse children and adults with care and support needs is very small, the foodbank project can reduce opportunities for abuse in various ways. We will, for instance:

- Ensure that there is adequate supervision for all children and adults with care and support needs.
- Ensure that any child or adult with care and support needs working with the foodbank project is aware of who they can talk to if they have concerns.
- Ensure that all staff and volunteers know where the nearest telephone is in case of emergencies and that phones are clearly labelled with directions for how to make external calls.
- Arrange that an adult is not left alone with a child where there is little or no opportunity of the activity being observed by others. This good practice can be of as much benefit to the adult as to the child.
- Make sure the Safeguarding Officer receive correct and up-to-date training.
- Ensure that the Local Authority is informed of any safeguarding allegations, incidents or concerns.
- Ensure that the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR) is informed of any suspicions, allegations and incidents of abuse or mistreatment of vulnerable beneficiaries. OSCR's 'Notifiable Events' guidance will be followed: <https://www.oscr.org.uk/charities/managing-your-charity/notifiable-events>. It would be appropriate to inform the Trussell Trust's PR team about any allegations, incidents or concerns where there is a risk of negative publicity occurring as a result.
- Ensure Disclosure Scotland is informed if the trustees have dismissed or ceased using an employee or volunteer because they think they have harmed or posed a risk of harm to a child or adult with care and support needs.
- Ensure staff and volunteers who may come into contact with a child or adult with care and support needs at the Foodbank are suitably trained, including understanding what to do in the event that a disclosure of abuse is made.
- Encourage a culture of transparency, ensuring that volunteers and staff feel able and empowered to report any suspicious or concerning behaviour.

## Designated officers and their roles

The Foodbank has a Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO) who is responsible for dealing with any concerns about the protection of children and adults with care and support needs. The Designated Safeguarding Officer for the Foodbank project is Peter Dicker. He can be contacted at: 07516 510617

The Foodbank also has a Secondary Safeguarding Officer (SSO) who is responsible for dealing with any related concerns in the event that the DSO is ill, on holiday or an allegation of abuse is made about him. This person is Abigail Morrison. She can be contacted at 01875 853467.

The Safeguarding Officers will never be related to each other.

The Safeguarding Officers will be available for children and adults with care and support needs, as well as staff and volunteers, to speak with should they feel the need to talk with someone about an incident which has happened either within or outside of the foodbank project, particularly if they feel that a child or adult with care and support needs has been physically, sexually, spiritually, financially or emotionally abused or neglected by an adult or another young person. The Safeguarding Officers will treat all concerns with the utmost importance.

Where staff or volunteers have a concern about the safety or well-being of a child or adult with care and support needs and the Safeguarding Officers are unavailable, or acting inappropriately, the Chair of Trustees should be informed and they should contact the Police or Social Services. Local contact telephone numbers are: 101 or 999 for the Police and 06120 827827 and ask to speak to the duty Social Work officer, for the Council.

## Recording

The Safeguarding Officers will make notes and keep confidential records of any disclosure or concerns they or another staff/team member has and seek advice from the relevant Social Services Department or the Police if appropriate.

Staff and volunteers must ensure that their recording of disclosures, incidents, assessments, referrals and case discussions are all sufficient, accurate, concise, up-to-date, legible, dated, and factual. When recording details it is important not to jump to conclusions or judge the situation and to remember that the role of the safeguarding officer is to refer to appropriate agencies, not to undertake an investigation. Suspicions should be noted carefully and backed up with factual evidence. Opinions should be kept to a minimum and backed up by factual evidence. These records must be stored in an individual file and held securely in a manner that safeguards the individual's right to privacy and security. These records are available to authorised individuals on request (not third party information) and may be used as evidence in disciplinary proceedings or in civil or criminal prosecutions.

Note: once staff and volunteers have passed on their records, they have no right to know what happens next. They will only receive more information about the case if they are

required to be part of civil or criminal proceedings e.g. as a witness. Staff and volunteers must refrain from talking to other team members or outside persons about the safeguarding concern (with the exception of the Safeguarding Officers, the Police or Social Services).

### Disclosure of Abuse

Where a member of a foodbank team receives a disclosure of abuse from a child or adult with care and support needs they must:

1. Ensure they **do not promise confidentiality** to anyone wishing to share a secret. This is important in case information needs to be shared with the Safeguarding Officers or the Police/Social Services.
2. **Listen**-if the disclosure is particularly complicated and the person is not very young, this may mean asking permission to make notes as the disclosure is made to ensure nothing is missed. The team member hearing the disclosure can ask the child or adult with care and support needs to repeat something if it has not been said clearly but must not ask leading questions.
3. **Reassure**-making a disclosure of abuse can be a frightening process and often the child or adult with care and support needs is afraid that they won't be believed. Reassuring them that they have been brave and that the information will be passed on is vitally important.
4. **Record**-notes should be made as soon after the disclosure as possible. The notes should reflect what the child or adult with care and support needs has said in their own words. The record should be signed and dated.
5. **Report**-the record must be passed on to a Safeguarding Officer at the earliest possible opportunity and the child or adult with care and support needs told what will happen next.

The Safeguarding Officers will ensure that the trustees are informed of any incident, concern or Notifiable Event' guidelines in the event of an incident, or suspected incident, during or resulting from a foodbank activity.

Where a child or adult with care and support needs makes a disclosure of abuse to a member of the foodbank team they must never:

1. Trivialise, play down or ignore allegations of abuse'
2. Assume that somebody else will take responsibility for reporting/addressing concerns and making referrals'

### Whistleblowing

Staff and volunteers are encouraged to take action when suspicious that abuse is occurring at work - no matter what the setting, who the perpetrator is or who the victim is. The foodbank project will respect and not penalise those who stand up for anyone who is suspected of being abused.

*Staff have a responsibility to report any occurrences or suspicions of adult abuse. Staff who report abuse are protected by the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998.*

## Domestic Violence

Where foodbank clients report an incident of domestic violence which has taken place whilst a child or adult with care and support needs is in the home, this must be treated as a disclosure of abuse and should be passed on to a Safeguarding Officer with immediate effect. Where an incident of domestic violence is reported and there is no child or adult with care and support needs present, foodbank staff and volunteers should signpost the client to an appropriate agency but must not attempt to coerce them to contact the police unless the client feels ready to do so. Where foodbank staff or volunteers witness an act of domestic violence, they must contact the police immediately.

For advice or information about anything relating to domestic violence the foodbank team should contact the National Domestic Violence Helpline on: 0808 2000 247, East & Midlothian Women's Aid Helpline 0800 027 1234.

## Use of Images

The foodbank project recognises that protecting and upholding the rights of children and adults with care and support needs is of paramount importance and this includes on the internet and other promotional materials. The foodbank endeavours to present children and adults with care and support needs in a positive, empowering and dignified manner. Furthermore, images will only be used where the child or adults with care and support needs and their parents/guardians give their informed consent. The following principles will be adhered to:

- Images will not be taken without consent from the subject and their parent/guardian.
- The foodbank will explain to the subject and their parent/guardian how and where the images will be used and will adhere to this.
- Images used on the foodbank website and social media pages will not be used on personal social media pages.

**NB:** External media, television crews and journalists are usually responsible for obtaining their own informed consent from clients.

## Remember

It is important that everyone in the foodbank project is aware that the person who first encounters a case of alleged or suspected abuse is not responsible for deciding whether or not abuse has occurred. That is a task for the professional adult with care and support needs and child protection agencies following a referral to them of concern about someone.

If a child or adult with care and support needs begins making a disclosure of abuse to a team member who feels unable to cope with what they are hearing, they should gently halt the conversation and contact a Safeguarding Officer immediately. If both Safeguarding Officers are unavailable, the team leader should take over the conversation.

The wellbeing of staff and volunteers is of great importance. If a disclosure has been made which has caused upset to the person hearing it, the foodbank will endeavour to offer or facilitate counselling or support if requested.

## Additional points

### Displaying Information

The foodbank project will ensure that this policy is displayed in all locations in which the foodbank operates and that any changes to the name and contact details of the Safeguarding Officers are updated.

### Applying agreed procedures for protecting children and adults with care and support needs to all paid staff and volunteers

It is possible to be lulled into a false sense of security, believing that those who work alongside children and adults with care and support needs in the foodbank project will never be guilty of abuse because they are part of a charitable organisation. It is not safe to assume that anyone is automatically safe to be with children and adults with care and support needs.

For this reason, all procedures set in place to protect children and adults with care and support needs apply to all those in contact with them. This is not the same as treating each person who relates to children and adults with care and support needs as being under suspicion, but a matter of taking sensible measures to protect children and adults with care and support needs, which are then observed by everyone. This will involve thought and planning within each group to minimise the risk.

If any member of staff or supervising volunteer has concerns, they should raise them with the Safeguarding Officers. If it is brought to the attention of the Safeguarding Officers and not adequately dealt with the next step is to talk to the trustees of the foodbank for advice or contact Social Services/the Police as a private citizen to discuss your concerns.

### Disclosure of Information

There is a difference between confidentiality and secrecy. All personal and delicate information disclosed to us is confidential, but may not always be secret.

Personal and delicate information about staff and volunteers will be:

- Confidential to the foodbank project and can be shared with staff and volunteers on a 'need to know basis' *and*
- Can be shared with another agency when:
  - Permission is given by the person about whom the information is held *or*
  - There is an overriding justification to share information without the person's consent *or*
  - The law requires it.

### Give staff and volunteers clear roles

Abuse of children and adults with care and support needs is most easily concealed where there is confusion among adults about roles and responsibilities. Therefore, all job descriptions, both for employees and supervising volunteers, will include a statement laying down the behaviour and values expected from all who work as part of this team.

Over and above the written word, expected behaviour towards children and adults with care and support needs will be explained to new workers in the foodbank project as part of their induction.

It is the Foodbank's policy not to engage in regulated activities (close or personal tasks such as washing, dressing, or accompanying to the lavatory) with adults with care and support needs: members of staff and volunteers are therefore ineligible for Disclosure Scotland checks. The Foodbank will continue to keep abreast of any further legislative changes from the DS.

### Supervision as a means of protection

Regular Management Committee meetings are held where staff and Trustees meet together to raise issues about their area of work and discuss them. When receiving feedback, particular attention will be paid to any situation or suggestion that a child or adult with care and support needs is being either highly favoured or harshly treated, as these are signs of abuse.

Within the Foodbank our main area of concern about protecting people lies with the welfare of any adults with care and support needs volunteers. Where possible, line managers should take opportunities to observe those children and adults with care and support needs for whom they are responsible.

In all recruitment decisions concerning volunteers:

- a) A detailed application form should be completed.
- b) Two references should be taken to check the suitability of the applicant for the post being considered.
- c) An informal interview will provide an extended conversation in which the applicant's experience and motivation for volunteering can be explored in more detail.

## Criminal convictions

All volunteers must complete a volunteer application form before commencing work at the foodbank project. Details of criminal convictions (except those 'spent' under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974) must be provided so an adequate risk assessment can be undertaken. (The Foodbank reserves the right to suspend, pending investigation of any incident a volunteer and/or ban them from the property should they feel it is necessary.)

## Training

Training in the prevention of abuse and the action to take if abuse occurs will be included as part of the Induction Programme for the Foodbank. The Foodbank management team will monitor whether such training is available free of charge via the local authority, advise relevant Foodbank personnel, and facilitate attendance.

The Foodbank recognises that it is insufficient to give workers guidelines without equipping them with the skills and knowledge to carry them out. Therefore, regular updates and training will be provided to all volunteers and the Safeguarding Officers will be encouraged to attend external training in order to remain up-to-date with legislation and good practice.

## Supported Volunteers

The foodbank will ensure that all volunteers, including young people or volunteers with additional needs understand the safeguarding policy. If the volunteer is likely to struggle to absorb the information contained within this policy by reading it, the volunteer coordinator, supervisor or a Safeguarding Officer will talk through the policy verbally. In addition to this, one or more of the below resources, or other alternative developed locally, will be used to aid learning:

This page from Camden council includes easy-to-read leaflets on safeguarding adults: <http://bit.ly/1KAWYYt>

Easy read information about keeping safe: <http://bit.ly/1bKoh6l>

Leeds Safeguarding Board have produced some resources for safeguarding adults including leaflets and posters: <http://bit.ly/1bKokiV>

## General

All workers driving any vehicle which transports children and/or adults with care and support needs must hold a valid driver's licence for the type/class of vehicle they are driving.

All vehicles used in the transportation of children and/or adults with care and support needs must have a valid road fund licence, be appropriately insured, have a valid MOT certificate and comply with all appropriate legislation and regulations. Seat sharing is not permitted and seat belts must be worn.

### Review

This policy and its implementation will be reviewed at least annually and whenever there are any legislative changes or amendments to guidance issued by relevant statutory bodies.

Agreed at Trustee meeting of 1<sup>st</sup> August 2018.

### Signature

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "David Raw". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial 'D'.

David Raw, Chair, East Lothian Foodbank

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