

Safeguarding of Children and Vulnerable Adults: Policy & Procedures

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Introduction

Naturallythinking 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 and 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 Naturallythinking'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
- older people
- people who live in care homes

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. Abuse can be:

- Physical abuse - any form of assault, over-medication, restraint or poor manual handling practice.
- Sexual abuse - rape or any sexual act which was not actively consented to or the person did not have the mental capacity to consent to.
- Psychological or emotional abuse - threats, intimidation, coercion, harassment.

- Financial abuse - theft, borrowing money without repayment and any pressure in connection with wills or property, possessions or benefits.
- Neglect - ignoring medical or physical needs, not providing access to appropriate care, the withholding of the necessities of life, such as medication, adequate food, water and heating.
- Discriminatory abuse - all forms of harassment, slurs or similar treatment based on a person's disability, ethnic origin, gender or sexuality. This is often called hate crime.
- Institutional abuse - repeated instances of poor care, ill treatment of vulnerable adults, and unsatisfactory professional practice. This is often an indicator of more serious problems.

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

Recruitment

Naturallythinking is committed to promoting diversity and equality of opportunity for all staff, job applicants and volunteers. We aim to create a working environment in which all individuals are able to make best use of their skills, free from discrimination or harassment, where individuals are respected, treated fairly and able to give their best and all decisions are based on merit. Please refer to our Equality Opportunities Policy for further information.

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

All potential employees of Naturallythinking 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.

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.

Procedure

Duties and responsibilities

All employees and volunteers 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 vulner-

able 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.

Confidentiality

Though Naturallythinking 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.

Procedures

The person who raises concerns or suspects abuse must discuss the concern confidentially with the Community Coordinator, Farm Business Manager or a member of the Management Committee. The facts should be checked and the person who is the subject of the concerns should be made aware of the process.

The following information must be obtained when abuse is suspected:

- The individual's name and age
- Where they live and with whom
- Which organisations are providing them with help or services
- Why you are concerned
- Details of the person(s) who may be abusing the individual

The Farm Business Manager or other responsible person will then contact Social Services using the contacts provided below. If the abuse is violent or the individual is in immediate physical danger the manager should contact the police. 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. Social Services 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 person reporting the suspected abuse will be told what happens.

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
Phone: 020 8770 4565
Email: referralpoint@sutton.gov.uk

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_for_adults_being_abused
- 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 Naturallythinking staff and volunteers working with children and / or vulnerable adults, whether acting in a paid or unpaid capacity:

- Avoid unnecessary physical contact.
- 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.
- 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.