

Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Policy

1. Aim of this Policy

The aim of this policy is to outline the practice and procedures for staff and volunteers in the Beyond Food Foundation to contribute to preventing abuse of vulnerable adults, raise awareness and provide a clear framework for action when abuse is suspected.

The Policy is also designed to protect the vulnerable adult, the worker or the volunteer by recognising the risks involved in lone working.

The policy covers all staff and volunteers whose role involves regular contact with service users who may be considered vulnerable adults. The 'Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Code of Practice' (Appendix 1) provides detailed guidance.

2. Definition of vulnerable

Vulnerable adults are defined (under the Protection of Vulnerable Adults Regulations 2002) as people aged 18 or over who are receiving any one the following services:

- Accommodation, nursing or personal care
- Medical care provided by the NHS or other independent agencies
- Social services
- Services provided for people with:
 - learning difficulties or a physical disability
 - physical or mental illness (temporary or chronic), including drug or alcohol addiction
 - reduced physical or mental capacity

and who are dependent on others or who need assistance to perform basic physical functions; who are severely impaired in their ability to communicate, or who are unable to protect themselves from assault, abuse or neglect

3. Definition of abuse

“Abuse is the harming of an individual, usually by someone who is in a position of power, trust or authority over that individual. The harm may be physical, psychological or emotional or it may be directed at exploiting the vulnerability of the victim in more subtle ways (for example, through denying access to people who can come to their aid, or through misuse or misappropriation of his or her financial resources). The threat or use of punishment is also a form of abuse. In many cases, it is a criminal offence”

Appendix Two of the Safe-guarding Vulnerable Adults Code of Practice provides a list of behaviour which can be considered as 'abusive' to a vulnerable adult. The list is not exhaustive.

4. Rights and responsibilities

Responsibilities of The Beyond Food Foundation:

- To ensure staff and volunteers are aware of and are adequately trained to implement the Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Policy and procedures
- To notify the appropriate agencies if abuse is identified or suspected
- To support, and where possible, secure the safety of individuals and ensure that all referrals to services have full information regarding identified risk and vulnerability
- To work with local authorities and other partners to implement the policy

Responsibilities of Beyond Food Foundation staff and volunteers:

- To be familiar with the Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Policy and procedures
- To take appropriate action in line with the policy
- To take appropriate action to promote the principles and good practice within the voluntary sector

Statement of vulnerable adults' rights:

In dealing with incidents of abuse or potential abuse, vulnerable adults have the following rights, which should be respected. The right to:

- live without fear of abuse from their families, carers, professionals, volunteers or service users
- be safe and receive adequate care and protection. This includes protection from all forms of violence including physical punishment, intimidation, belittling, lack of respect, harassment, and sexual assault
- be involved in decision-making that affects them, and to be supported in making their own decisions about how they wish to proceed in the event of abuse, and in whom they wish to confide. Their wishes should only be overridden if considered necessary in the interests of their own safety or the safety of others
- report abuse and be taken seriously, including the right to involve the police if a crime has been committed
- make informed choices about intimate relationships without being exposed to exploitation or sexual abuse
- be free from discrimination because of their ethnic origin, culture or religion, gender or sexuality, age, disability or mental health
- bring a formal complaint under the Beyond Food Foundation's complaints procedure if they are not satisfied with the initial investigation regarding abuse
- be kept informed at all stages of the process, should the organisation take action as a result of an allegation of abuse

Statement of staff members' and volunteers' rights

In dealing with incidents of abuse or potential abuse, staff members and volunteers have the following rights, which should be respected. The right to:

- Raise concern with their line manager if they feel vulnerable to allegations of abuse of a vulnerable adult
- Full information about any allegation of abuse made against them and be kept informed at all stages of the process should the organisation take action

- Report any incident or situation which they feel could result in an allegation of abuse against them or a colleague
- Support from managers and colleagues if an allegation of abuse involving a vulnerable adult is brought against them
- Request alternative working arrangements if the behaviour of a vulnerable adult causes concern, or during an investigation of alleged abuse
- Be accompanied by an independent advocate during interviews and meetings related to an allegation of abuse of a vulnerable adult

Support for those who report abuse

The Beyond Food Foundation will ensure that anyone who makes a complaint, or expresses a concern regarding abuse of a vulnerable adult, whether they are a staff member, volunteer, service user, carer or a member of the general public:

- Will be taken seriously
- Their comments will be treated confidentially, but their concerns
- may be shared if they or others are at significant risk
- They will be given protection from the risk of reprisals or intimidation
- Staff members and volunteers will be given support and if necessary, afforded protection in line with the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998

5. Implementing the Policy

The Beyond Food Foundation will take steps to implement its policy to protect vulnerable adults and will review the policy every three years to ensure that it reflects legal requirements and good practice developments. In particular, the organisation will ensure that:

Recruitment of staff and volunteers

Staff application form will include a requirement to disclose any allegations or criminal action of abuse against a vulnerable adult. Failure to disclose information will be regarded as gross misconduct. All requests for references will mention the SVA policy. The Beyond Food Foundation will seek clearance from the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) for staff members whose role includes regular one-to-one contact with vulnerable adults. The Beyond Food Foundation will also seek confirmation that a 'staff member', formally employed by another organisation and seconded to it, is suitable to work in regular one-to-one contact with vulnerable adults.

The Beyond Food Foundation volunteers whose role will involve regular one-to-one contact with potentially vulnerable adults will be expected to carry out their duties on-site and during normal office hours. **Where this is not possible, volunteer's roles may include carrying out duties remotely (See Appendix 3).** A decision to seek CRB clearance for a volunteer whose role includes one-to-one contact with potentially vulnerable adults will be at the discretion of the Chief Executive.

Training

During induction into The Beyond Food Foundation all staff and volunteers will be made aware of organisational policies and procedures, including the SVA policy.

Management and supervision

It is the line manager's responsibility to clarify with the worker or volunteer their roles and responsibilities regarding their relationships with vulnerable adults with whom they may be in contact and any additional support or training needs they may have. Regular supervision for staff and volunteers will monitor the work and offer the opportunity to raise any issues.

Access to an independent person

The Beyond Food Foundation will nominate a designated staff member or Trustee with whom concerns and/or allegations may be discussed informally before raising issues with the line manager.

Record keeping

Concerns raised about suspected abuse of a vulnerable adult, will be recorded and stored in accordance with confidentiality, Data Protection guidelines and similar good practice guidance, by the Chief Executive. Records must include: the nature of the concern, date, time, any specific action taken or referral made. Where incidents or allegations involve investigative actions, the nominated Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults manager will store detailed records.

Planning

It is inevitable that some staff or volunteers will work one to one with vulnerable adults. In the case of volunteers this will almost always be on the Brigade premises **or on the phone**. Some staff will have off site lone worker meetings with group representatives who are vulnerable adults. Wherever possible the Beyond Food Foundation will make appropriate arrangements for the staff member/volunteer to work in an environment where they are within sight or easy hearing of other colleagues. The Beyond Food Foundation will expect all staff and volunteers to advise their line manager prior to one-to-one appointments 'off-site' or if they suspect a service user may be vulnerable and where necessary, discuss with their line manager any specific support needs or concerns they have.

Allegations and investigations

All complaints, allegations or concerns should be made through the agreed The Beyond Food Foundation complaints policy (except that where appropriate the complaint may be made on behalf of the vulnerable adult by a family member, carer, member of a voluntary group or other nominated advocate or representative) Where on investigation, a complaint or allegation is upheld against a staff member or volunteer the disciplinary procedures will apply. If a criminal act against a vulnerable person is suspected, it may be necessary to involve the police in taking further actions. At this stage, both the vulnerable adult and the other party will be informed and made fully aware of their rights and any support available to them.

6. Legal Framework

- The Police Act 1997 (Enhanced Criminal Record Certificates)
- Protection of Vulnerable Adults - Regulations 2002

7. Supporting Document

- I. Protection of Vulnerable Adults Code of Practice – Appendix 1
- II. The Beyond Food Foundation Disciplinary Policy and Procedures

Approval and Review

Approval By	Date	Next Review Date
Trustee Board	January 2021	January 2022

Appendix 1

THE BEYOND FOOD FOUNDATION SAFE-GUARDING VULNERABLE ADULTS (SVA): CODE OF PRACTICE

1. ACTIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS

- In situations where you suspect immediate danger, take urgent action by calling the relevant emergency services, e.g. Police, ambulance, GP
- Remember to have regard to your own safety. Leave the situation immediately, if you feel it is not safe for you and contact your line manager or other manager.
- Listen to the vulnerable adult, offer necessary support and reassurance.
- Issues of confidentiality must be clarified early on. For example, staff and/or volunteers must make it clear that they will have to discuss the concerns with their line manager
- Where a vulnerable adult or their carer/representative expresses a wish for concerns not to be pursued, then this should be respected wherever possible.
- Where a vulnerable adult or their carer/representative does wish to pursue a concern inform them of the complaints procedure and ask your line manager to send them a copy of the procedure and complaints form
- Decisions about whether to respect the service user's wishes must include the level of risk to the individual and others, and their capacity to understand the decision in question
- In some circumstances the vulnerable adult's wishes may be overridden in favour of considerations of safety
- Decisions to override the vulnerable adult's wish not to take the matter further should if possible be the product of discussion with your line manager
- Make a written note of any concerns and any information you are given or you witness and give a copy to your line manager
- Report any concerns you have or any issues about your personal safety to your line manager
- Understand the need not to contaminate, or to preserve evidence if a crime may have been committed
- It is not necessary or advisable for you to seek evidence. By supporting the vulnerable adult and carefully logging any information given to you at this stage, you will lay the foundations for an effective formal investigation

THE FIRST PRIORITY SHOULD ALWAYS BE TO ENSURE THE SAFETY AND PROTECTION OF VULNERABLE ADULTS. IT IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF ALL STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS TO ACT ON ANY SUSPICION OR EVIDENCE OF ABUSE OR NEGLECT AND TO PASS ON THEIR CONCERNS TO A RESPONSIBLE PERSON OR AGENCY

2. DISCUSSION AND DECISION MAKING

Information should be shared with your line manager who must approve any actions to be taken and any documents or correspondence being sent out

Staff with concerns should discuss them with their line manager within 3 working days (unless there are issues regarding immediate safety in which case any concerns should be discussed immediately with the line manager or nominated Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults manager)

Volunteers with concerns should discuss these with the Support and Progression Manager as soon as possible after the abuse or suspicions of abuse are observed. If unavailable, then any concerns should be discussed with the nominated Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults manager

Concerns about colleagues should be addressed initially with the line manager, but if this is not possible or the concern is about the line manager or other senior member of staff, then any concerns should be discussed with Chief Executive.

3. TO REFER OR NOT TO REFER

The decision to refer or not to refer to other services should be made by the Nominated Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Protection Manager and the Chief Executive should be informed in all cases

When considering whether to refer elsewhere (e.g. to Police, Social Services, National Care Standards Commission) the following should be considered:

- The wishes of the vulnerable adult, & their right to self-determination
- The mental capacity of the vulnerable adult
- Known indicators of abuse
- Definitions of abuse
- Level of risk to this individual
- The seriousness of the abuse
- The effect of the abuse on the individual
- Level of risk to others
- The effect of the abuse on others
- Whether a criminal offence has been committed
- Whether other statutory obligations have been breached (e.g. NCSC)
- The ability of others (e.g. Police, Social Services) to make a positive intervention in the situation

4. ISSUES OF MENTAL CAPACITY & CONSENT

The consent of the vulnerable adult must be obtained or their carer/nominated representative except where:

- The vulnerable adult lacks the mental capacity to make a decision, and a risk assessment indicates that referral would be in their best interests
- Others may be at risk
- A crime may have been committed

5. WHO TO REFER OR REPORT CONCERNS TO

- Relevant Area Social Services team
- Relevant Hospital Social Services team if vulnerable adult is in hospital
- Community Mental Health Team where the vulnerable adult has an ongoing mental health need
- National Care Standards Commission where there are issues relating to standards and regulations in care homes and domiciliary care agencies.
- Hospital Trusts/Primary Care Trusts where there is a complaint of abuse. The Police, if there is an emergency where delay may result in serious harm to the vulnerable adult or if the abuse may constitute a crime

6. SUMMARY

Staff member or volunteer should:

- Stay calm
- Listen patiently
- Reassure the person they are doing the right thing by telling you
- Explain what you are going to do
- Report to the relevant manager
- Make a written factual account of what you have seen, immediately

Staff member or volunteer should not:

- Appear shocked, horrified, disgusted or angry
- Press the individual for unnecessary details (unless requested to do so)
- Make comments or judgments other than to show concern
- Promise to keep secrets
- Confront the abuser
- Risk contaminating evidence

Discuss with the relevant manager who will:

- Ascertain whether the situation might fall within the definitions of abuse outlined in this policy
- Consider the vulnerable adult's capacity to make decisions
- Ascertain whether an advocate or appropriate adult might be necessary
- Ascertain any immediate action required
- Ascertain whether an investigation is necessary in accordance with internal Beyond Food Foundation policies and procedures
- Where abuse is suspected conclude that a referral be made to the appropriate agency

Appendix 2

TYPES OF POSSIBLE ABUSE

Physical abuse signs

- A history of unexplained falls or minor injuries
- Bruising in well protected areas, or clustered from repeated striking
- Finger marks
- Burns of unusual location or type
- Injuries found at different states of healing
- Injury shape similar to an object
- Injuries to head/face/scalp
- History of GP or agency hopping, or reluctance to seek help
- Accounts which vary with time or are inconsistent with physical evidence
- Weight loss due to malnutrition, or rapid weight gain
- Ulcers, bed sores and being left in wet clothing
- Drowsiness due to too much medication, or lack of medication causing recurring crises/hospital admissions

Psychological/emotional signs

- Isolation
- Unkempt, unwashed, smell
- Over meticulous
- Inappropriately dressed
- Withdrawn, agitated, anxious not wanting to be touched
- Change in appetite
- Insomnia, or need for excessive sleep
- Tearfulness
- Unexplained paranoia, or excessive fears
- Low self esteem
- Confusion

Sexual abuse signs

- Disclosure or partial disclosure (use of phrases such as 'It's a secret')
- Medical problems, e.g. Genital infections, pregnancy, difficulty walking or sitting
- Disturbed behaviour e.g. depression, sudden withdrawal from activities, loss of previous skills, sleeplessness or nightmares, self-injury, showing, fear or aggression to one particular person, repeated or excessive masturbation, inappropriately seductive behaviour, loss of appetite or difficulty in keeping food down.
- Behaviour of others towards the vulnerable adult

Neglect signs

- Physical condition poor
- Clothing in poor condition
- Inadequate diet
- Untreated injuries or medical problems
- Poor personal hygiene

Financial or material signs

- Unexplained or sudden inability to pay bills
- Unexplained or sudden withdrawal of money from accounts
- Disparity between assets and satisfactory living conditions

- Extraordinary interest by family members and other people in the vulnerable person's assets

Discriminatory signs

- Lack of respect shown to an individual
- Signs of substandard service offered to an individual
- Exclusion from rights afforded to others, such as health, education

Appendix 3

CHANGES TO WORKING PRACTICES DUE TO COVID-19

The way that Beyond Food Foundation staff and volunteers carry out their duties has changed due to COVID-19 restrictions and guidance. Vulnerable adults may now be more vulnerable than ever before because there are fewer opportunities for others to spot, identify and respond to safeguarding concerns and issues. All statements within this policy still apply with emphasis on the following:

- Beyond Food Foundation's nominated lead on safeguarding is the Support and Progression Manager, they should be contacted in the first instance of any safeguarding concerns. If the Support and Progression Manager is unavailable, then the Charity Team Manager should be contacted.
- Any concerns should be raised immediately via phone call to the nominated safeguarding lead. An e-mail follow up may be required for details to be noted in writing.
- All staff and volunteers continue to be recruited following procedure outlined in this policy. All volunteers are asked to provide valid CRB certificates and certification of any relevant qualifications (for example, counselling qualifications) these certificates are kept on file in accordance with GDPR procedure.
- Regular group supervision sessions are provided for all volunteers where any concerns can be raised. Volunteers can also contact the Support and Progression Manager and Charity Team Manager to raise any questions or concerns at any time during their volunteering experience.
- Volunteers are advised not to share their phone number or any personal details with beneficiaries.
- All staff and volunteers are asked to carry out their duties while maintaining social distancing.
- All vulnerable adults that we are working with have been informed of how they can contact Beyond Food remotely should they have any concerns. This can be via two different charity phone numbers or via email.
- All vulnerable adults are made aware of our SHOUT text service which is available 24/7 providing crisis support.

CHANGES TO WORKING PRACTICES:

- During periods of 'lockdown' or higher government restrictions it has been necessary to implement remote working for all Beyond Food staff and volunteers. Remote working has been implemented in accordance with government guidance and in order to maintain social distancing.
- All staff may work remotely from home and are fully contactable via phone, email and required for regular zoom meetings.
- All volunteers carry out duties remotely via phone and invited to regular check in meetings via zoom.
- All safeguarding procedures still apply to remote working conditions, all concerns must be escalated accordingly.