

# Carelinks Safeguarding Policy

*Adopted at a meeting of the trustees on 10 February 2020*

## **Purpose of this policy**

The purpose of this policy is to protect people (particularly children, vulnerable adults and beneficiaries of assistance) from any harm that may be caused due to their coming into contact with volunteers and others working with Carelinks. This includes harm arising from the conduct of personnel associated with this work or the design and implementation of our programmes and activities.

The policy lays out our commitments and informs those working with us of their responsibilities in relation to safeguarding.

## **What is safeguarding?**

In the UK, safeguarding means protecting peoples' health, wellbeing and human rights, and enabling them to live free from harm, abuse and neglect. For our work, we understand it to mean protecting people, including children and at risk adults, from any harm that arises from coming into contact with our work.

## **Policy Statement**

Everyone we come into contact with, regardless of age, gender identity, disability, sexual orientation or ethnic origin has the right to be protected from all forms of harm, abuse, neglect and exploitation. We will not tolerate abuse and exploitation by anyone involved in our work.

We commit to addressing safeguarding throughout our work, through the three pillars of prevention, reporting and response.

## **Prevention**

We will:

- Ensure that anyone working with us has access to, is familiar with and knows their responsibilities within this policy.
- Carry out all our activities in a way that protects people from any risk of harm that may arise from their coming into contact with us.
- Implement clear safeguarding procedures for our work.
- Follow up any reports of safeguarding concerns promptly and according to due process.

### *Responsibilities of volunteers and anyone else working with us*

Anyone working with us must not:

- Engage in sexual activity with, sexually abuse or exploit anyone being supported by our work.
- Subject anyone supported by our work to physical, emotional or psychological abuse, or neglect.
- Engage in any commercially exploitative activities with children or vulnerable adults.

Additionally, all those working with us are obliged to:

- Contribute to creating and maintaining an environment that prevents safeguarding violations and promotes the implementation of this Safeguarding Policy
- Report any concerns or suspicions regarding safeguarding violations by anyone working with us to an appropriate person.

Whenever feasible, we will ensure that any contact with *vulnerable adults* is carried out by at least two people working together, preferably of different genders. Any substantial contact with *children* where their parents or guardians are not present should be carried out only by someone who has the equivalent of a DBS check for the country in which the activity happens.

## **Reporting**

We will ensure that safe, appropriate and accessible means of reporting safeguarding concerns are made available to staff and those we work with.

### *How to report a safeguarding concern*

Anyone who has a complaint or concern relating to safeguarding should report it immediately to the Safeguarding Lead. If that person does not feel comfortable reporting to the Safeguarding Lead (for example, if they feel that the report will not be taken seriously, or if that person is implicated in the concern) they may report it to any Carelinks Trustee.

## **Safeguarding lead**

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The process for reporting complaints or concerns is set out in the annex to this document.

## **Response**

We will follow up all safeguarding reports and concerns, and will offer support to survivors of harm caused by anyone associated with our work, regardless of whether a formal internal response is carried out.

### *Confidentiality*

It is essential that confidentiality is maintained at all stages of the process when dealing with safeguarding concerns. Information relating to the concern and subsequent case management should be shared on a need to know basis only, and should be kept secure at all times.

## **Annex**

### **Procedures for reporting complaints or concerns**

#### *1. Report is received*

1.1 Reports could reach us by various routes. They may be in a written format such as a letter, e-mail, text or message on social media, but could equally be oral. If anyone associated with our work hears something in an informal discussion or chat that they think is a safeguarding concern, they should report this to the Safeguarding Lead or to a Trustee.

1.2 The person receiving the report should bear the following in mind:

- Listen
- Empathise with the person
- Ask who, when, where, what **but not why**
- Repeat/ check your understanding of the situation
- The need to report to the Safeguarding Lead or a Trustee (see below)

1.3 The person receiving the report should then document the following information:

- Name of person making report
- Name(s) of alleged survivor(s) of safeguarding incident(s) if different from above
- Name(s) of alleged perpetrator(s)
- Description of incident(s)
- Dates(s), times(s) and location(s) of incident

1.4 The person receiving the report should then forward this information to the Safeguarding Lead or a Trustee, if possible within 24 hours.

1.5 Due to the sensitive nature of safeguarding concerns, confidentiality must be maintained during all stages of the reporting process, and information shared on a limited 'need to know' basis only.

#### *2. Assess how to proceed with the report*

2.1 Appoint a Decision Maker for handling this report. The Decision Maker should be a Trustee, not implicated or involved in the case in any way.

2.2 Determine whether it is possible to take this report forward

- Does the reported incident(s) represent a breach of safeguarding policy?
- Is there sufficient information to follow up this report?

2.3 If there is insufficient information to follow up the report, and no way to ascertain this information, the report should be filed in case it can be of use in the future, or to help look at any wider lesson-learning we can take forward.

2.4 If the report raises any concerns relating to children under the age of 18, seek expert advice immediately. If at any point in the process of responding to the report (for example during an investigation) it becomes apparent that anyone involved is a child under the age of 18, the Decision Maker should be immediately informed and should seek expert advice before proceeding.

2.5 If the decision is made to take the report forward, ensure that you have the relevant expertise and capacity to manage the case. If you do not have this expertise in-house, seek immediate assistance, through external capacity if necessary.

2.6 Clarify what, how and with whom information will be shared relating to this case. Confidentiality should be maintained at all times, and information shared on a need-to-know basis only. Decide which information needs to be shared with which stakeholder – information needs may be different.

2.7 Check your obligations on informing relevant bodies, in particular the Charity Commission, when you receive a safeguarding report. When submitting information to any of these bodies, think through the confidentiality implications very carefully.

### *3. Appoint roles and responsibilities for case management*

3.1 If the report alleges a serious safeguarding violation, you may wish to discuss the issues between the Decision Maker, the Safeguarding Lead and the person who received the report.

### *4. Provide support to survivor where needed/requested*

4.1 Provide appropriate support to survivor(s) of safeguarding incidents. This should be provided as a duty of care even if the report has not yet been investigated.

### *5. Decide on next steps*

5.1 The Decision Maker decides the next steps. These could be (but are not limited to):

- No further action (for example if there is insufficient information to follow up, or no case to answer)
- Investigation is required to gather further information
- Immediate action
- Referral to relevant authorities

### *6. Make decision on outcome of investigation report*

6.1 The Decision Maker makes a decision based on the information available, if appropriate following further investigation. The next steps will depend on the nature of the case but should be appropriate, and include measures designed to prevent any similar incident occurring again.

6.2 If at this or any stage in the process criminal activity is suspected, the case should be referred to the relevant authorities.

### *7. Conclude the case*

7.1 Document all decisions made resulting from the case clearly and confidentially.

7.2 Store all information relating to the case confidentially and in accordance with UK data protection law.

7.3 Record anonymised data relating to the case to feed into organisational reporting requirements (eg serious incident reporting to the Board of Trustees or the Charity Commission) and into learning for dealing with future cases.