



# Wakefield and District Down's Syndrome Support Group

## Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy

### Information

Designated safeguarding person: Amanda Courtman 07956 869952

Trustee with responsibility for safeguarding: Ann-Marie Sheard 07427 475315

Policy review dates

### Group Commitment

**This policy applies to all persons, acting on behalf of WDDSSG.**

WDDSSG is committed to safeguarding and promoting the wellbeing of all children and vulnerable adults, regardless of age, ability, racial origin, religious belief, sexual orientation or gender.

We recognise that members of our group may be more vulnerable to abuse and that not all people with Down's syndrome or other learning difficulties may understand what constitutes abuse or report it appropriately. We will always take a considered and sensitive approach in order that we may support users of our group.

WDDSSG is committed to ensuring that every children and vulnerable adults safe by contributing to:

- Providing a safe environment for children and vulnerable adults, during events and activities that are run by the group.
- Reporting of suspected concerns of possible abuse

### Providing a Safe and Supportive Environment

The group will ensure that all appropriate measures are applied to everyone who represents the group, who is likely to be perceived by our users as a safe and trustworthy adult.

The group will:

- Obtain a CRB disclosure for anyone who has close unsupervised contact with a vulnerable person
- Keep a up to date record detailing checks carried out on trustees and volunteers

Safe working practice in our group ensures that all vulnerable persons are safe and that all trustees and volunteers:

- Are responsible for their own actions and behaviour and should avoid any contact which would lead to any reasonable person to question their motivation and intent
- Work in an open and transparent way
- Work with other trusted persons where possible in situations open to question

- Discuss and/or take advice from the trustees over any incident which may give rise to concern
- Report any incidents or decisions made
- Have access to a copy of our Safeguarding Vulnerable People Policy, understand its contents and are vigilant to signs of abuse or neglect.

As a group we will try to make all vulnerable persons aware that they can talk to any trustee when they are worried, concerned or upset. The trustees are aware that not all vulnerable persons in our group may be aware that certain behaviour towards them is not acceptable.

All the trustees, the designated safeguarding person (if not a trustee) will undergo safeguarding training. All trustees, volunteers and users of WDDSSG are directed to read the groups safeguarding policy and are informed of the groups safeguarding procedure.

### Identifying vulnerable persons who are suffering or likely to suffer significant harm

The relationship between vulnerable persons, children, trustees, and volunteers which foster respect, confidence, and trust can lead to the disclosure of abuse or trustees or volunteers being alerted to concerns.

#### Definitions

**A Child:** as in the Children Act of 1989 and 2004, a child is anyone who has not yet reached his/her 18<sup>th</sup> birthday or in the case of a disabled child 25 years.

**A vulnerable person:** any person in need of special care, support, or protection because of age, disability, or risk of abuse or neglect.

**Harm:** means ill-treatment or impairment of health and development, including for example, impairment suffered from seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another.

**Development:** means physical, intellectual, emotional, social or behavioural development

**Abuse and Neglect:** are forms of maltreatment. Somebody may abuse or neglect a vulnerable person by inflicting harm or failing to act to prevent harm. A vulnerable person may be abused in a family or in an institution or community setting; by those known to them, or, more rarely, by a stranger. They may be abused by an adult or adults or by a child or children.

**Physical abuse:** May involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocation or otherwise causing physical harm to a vulnerable person. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of or deliberately induces illness in a vulnerable person.

**Sexual abuse:** Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a vulnerable person to participate in sexual acts, against their will and understanding, whether or not they are aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities such as involving a vulnerable person in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging vulnerable persons to act in sexually inappropriate ways or grooming a vulnerable person for abuse (including by the internet or mobile phones). Sexual abuse can be initiated by other children or vulnerable adults, and is not solely perpetrated by adults.

**Emotional abuse:** Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a vulnerable person which can cause severe and persistent negative effects on their emotional wellbeing. It may involve

telling the vulnerable person that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only to meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving the vulnerable person opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of them or what they say or how they communicate. It may feature age, developmentally or intellectually inappropriate expectations being imposed on vulnerable persons. These may include interactions which are beyond the person's intellectual or developmental capacity, as well as the overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the vulnerable person participating in normal social activities. It may involve seeing or hearing the mal-treatment of another person. It may involve bullying (including cyber bullying via the internet or mobile phones) which causes the vulnerable person to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of vulnerable people. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment although it may occur alone.

**Neglect:** is the persistent failure to meet a vulnerable person's basic physical and/or psychological needs, which is likely to result in a serious impairment of the vulnerable person's health or development. This may be an adult's failure to provide food, clothing and/or shelter for a vulnerable person in their care, failure to protect a vulnerable person from abuse, failure to ensure adequate supervision of a vulnerable person or failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to a vulnerable person's basic emotional needs.

### Taking action if abuse is suspected or disclosed

If a vulnerable person reports a safeguarding issue, to a trustee, volunteer or group member, it is vital that they follow this procedure:

- Try to find a quiet area to speak where you will not be interrupted. Do not put them off talking, by asking them to meet later.
- Listen carefully to what they are saying and only ask open questions e.g. 'can you tell me what happened?'
- The vulnerable person should be informed of who we might talk to, both within the group and outside of the group, their right to be listened to and the steps that you can be taken to protect them harm.
- Immediately after the disclosure, write down exactly what they said. Make notes of times, locations and any other relevant facts.
- Report the incident to the designated safeguarding officer, or the safeguarding trustee. It is their responsibility to deal with the matter further.
- Do not discuss the matter with anyone else. Doing so could result in the vulnerable person being put at further risk of harm.

Anyone receiving information that a vulnerable person may be being abused or at risk of harm should:

- Take the disclosure of information, seriously.
- Try not to show signs of shock, horror or surprise.
- Not express any feelings or judgements regarding any person alleged to have harmed the vulnerable person.
- Tell the vulnerable person that they are glad s/he has told them what has happened and that it was right to tell.
- Explain sensitively to the vulnerable person that they have a responsibility to refer the information to someone that can help them but that those who need to know will be told.
- Reassure and support the person as much as possible.
- Explain what will happen next and who will be involved.

## Concerns that trustees, volunteers and group members must immediately report:

- Any suspicion that a vulnerable person is injured, marked, or bruised in any way which would not be caused by normal knocks or scrapes.
- Any behaviour which would lead to suspicions that a vulnerable person may have been harmed (e.g. worrying drawings, play, words, or behaviour. An excessive preoccupation with sexual matters or an inappropriate knowledge of adult sexual behaviour).
- Any concerns that a vulnerable person may be suffering from inadequate care, ill treatment, or emotional maltreatment.
- Any concerns that a vulnerable person is presenting signs or symptoms of abuse or neglect.
- Any hint or disclosure of abuse from any person

We will take all concerns seriously and will act in a way that is deemed appropriate on a case by case basis. If the situation is an urgent case, the vulnerable person is too frightened to go home or we have serious doubts about the vulnerable person's welfare, then we will discuss this with the designated safeguarding trustee, safeguarding officer or, if they are not available another trustee, who will then make a referral to Social Care Direct. It is important that all trustees, volunteers and group members communicate concerns immediately, accurately and maintain confidentiality.

## Allegations against a trustee or volunteer acting on behalf of WDDSSG

It is essential that any allegation of abuse made against a trustee or volunteer is dealt with fairly, as quickly as possible and consistently, in a way that provides effective protection for the vulnerable person and at the same time supports the person who is the subject of the allegation.

WDDSSG recognises that an allegation of abuse made against a trustee or volunteer, may be made for a variety of reasons and that the facts of the allegation may or may not be true. It is imperative that those dealing with an allegation maintain an open mind and those investigations are thorough and not subject to delay. It is also recognised that hasty or ill-informed decisions can irreparably damage an individual's reputation, confidence and career. Therefore, those dealing with such allegations within the group will do so with sensitivity and will act in a careful, measured way.

Investigations will be made in respect of all allegations that a trustee or volunteer has:

- behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child,
- possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child, or
- behaved toward a child or children in a way that indicates s/he is unsuitable to work with children.

## Procedure to be followed if an allegation is made against a trustee or volunteer

A person who receives an allegation from a child or vulnerable adult about another a trustee or volunteer, should follow the guidelines in the previous section entitled Taking action if abuse is suspected or disclosed. The same applies if another trustee or volunteer witnesses behaviour that they consider to be abusive by another trustee or volunteer. They must immediately inform the designated safeguarding trustee or the group's safeguarding officer.

The groups safeguarding officer will contact the designated safeguarding trustee immediately, unless the designated safeguarding trustee is the person against whom the allegation is about, in which case the report will be made to the group's chairperson.

The groups safeguarding officer will provide the designated safeguarding trustee with written details of the allegation that include information about times, dates, location, and names of potential witnesses. The written details will be signed and dated by the person who received the allegation, and countersigned by the groups safeguarding officer.

The designated safeguarding trustee will make an initial assessment of the allegation, consulting with the NSPCC, for advice. Joint consideration of the allegation and supporting information will be given by the designated safeguarding trustee and the groups safeguarding officer to establish whether the alleged behaviour

- harmed a child or vulnerable adult,
- is a possible criminal offence,
- indicates that an adult is unsuitable to work with children and/or vulnerable adults.

If the designated safeguarding trustee or the group's safeguarding officer believe a referral is appropriate this will be made by the designated safeguarding trustee or the groups safeguarding officer to Social Care Direct, within one working day of the incident being reported.

It is important that the designated safeguarding trustee or the group's safeguarding officer does not investigate the allegation. The initial assessment should be on the basis of the information received and is a decision whether or not the allegation warrants further investigation. The group will hold in abeyance its internal enquiries while the formal police or social services investigations proceed; to do otherwise may prejudice the investigation.

Other potential outcomes are:

- The allegation represents inappropriate behaviour or poor practice by the trustee or volunteer and is neither potentially a crime nor a cause of significant harm to the child/vulnerable adult.

In this case, the matter should be addressed in accordance with the group's disciplinary procedures.

- The allegation can be shown to be false because the facts alleged could not possibly be true.

Obviously false allegations may be indicative of problems of abuse elsewhere. A record will be kept and information passed to Social care direct, in order that other agencies may act upon the information.

The designated safeguarding trustee and the groups safeguarding officer are responsible for ensuring that the group gives every assistance to the agency's enquiries. S/he will ensure that appropriate confidentiality is maintained in connection with the enquiries, in the interests of the person about whom the allegation is made, and of the child or vulnerable adult making the allegation.

Subject to agreement of the investigating agency, the designated safeguarding trustee and the groups safeguarding officer shall:

- inform the child/vulnerable adult and parent/carer (where appropriate) making the allegation that the investigation is taking place and what the likely process will involve.
- ensure that the parents/carers of the child/vulnerable adult making the allegation have been informed that the allegation has been made and what the likely process will involve (where appropriate, and in most cases with the agreement of the child/vulnerable adult).
- inform the person against whom the allegation was made of the fact that the investigation is taking place and what the likely process will involve.

- inform the Chair of Group of the allegation and the investigation, without giving confidential details.
- keep a written record of the action taken in connection with the allegation.

During any investigation, regarding safeguarding issues, the trustee or volunteer will be suspended from undertaking all duties on behalf of WDDSSG. Should the allegations made be found to be true, the trustee or volunteer will be prohibited from taking part in any role within WDDSSG for the lifetime of the group.

- Upon the conclusion of the investigations, the designated safeguarding trustee and the groups safeguarding officer shall:
- inform the child/vulnerable adult making the allegation and/or their parents/carers of the outcome of the investigation and proceedings.
- inform the person against whom the allegation is made of the outcome of the investigation and proceedings.
- where the allegation was made by a child/vulnerable adult other than the alleged victim, consider whether to inform their parents/carers.
- prepare a report, that will be kept with safeguarding records, outlining the allegation and giving reasons for the conclusion and that the action that has been taken. Records will be retained in a secure place, by the designated safeguarding trustee.

Where an allegation has been made against a trustee or volunteer the designated safeguarding trustee, group's safeguarding officer and the chairperson of the group will, at the conclusion of the investigation, consider whether there are any matters arising from it that could lead to the improvement of the groups safeguarding procedures and policies. Consideration will also be given to the training needs of trustees and volunteers.

## [Contacts](#)

NSPCC 0800 800 5000

Social Care Direct 0845 8503503

LSCB (Local Safeguarding Children Board):  
Wakefield District Safeguarding Children Board,  
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Wakefield WF1 5PF  
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