



## Vulnerable Adult and Child Protection Policy

### Organisation

- South-West Belfast foodbank is governed by Colin Glen Christian Fellowship (CGCF).
- CGCF is registered with The Charity Commission for Northern Ireland NIC104892.
- Foodbank centre/warehouse: 1<sup>st</sup> Floor, 124 Stewartstown Road, Belfast, BT11 9JQ.
- Foodbank office: c/o 42A Cloona Park, Belfast, BT17 0HH.
- Foodbank manager: Edel Diamond.
- Foodbank phone number: 07938706552.
- Foodbank website: [www.southwestbelfast.foodbank.org.uk](http://www.southwestbelfast.foodbank.org.uk)

The foodbank is committed to safeguarding the rights, well-being and safety of children and vulnerable adults who come into contact with the foodbank. This policy outlines the steps the foodbank will take to ensure that vulnerable adults and children are protected. It will be reviewed on an annual basis by the Safeguarding Co-ordinators 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.

#### Vulnerable adult:

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>.

Vulnerable adults 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.

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<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.

### Child:

This 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.)

### **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 projects.

We seek to ensure that all our team members are aware of what is required from them under the vulnerable adult and child 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 vulnerable adults and children.

We commit ourselves to co-operate fully with the appropriate statutory services when they are conducting official investigation into the abuse and neglect of vulnerable adults, children 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 SHALL:

Plan its work so as to minimise situations where the abuse of vulnerable adults and children might occur.

Although the number of people who actively seek to abuse vulnerable adults and children 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 vulnerable adults and children.
- Ensure that any vulnerable adult or child working with the foodbank project is aware of who they can talk to if they have concerns.
- 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 Co-ordinators receive correct and up-to-date training.
- Ensure that the Local Authority is informed of any safeguarding allegations, incidents or concerns.
- Ensure that the Charity Commission is informed of any suspicions, allegations and incidents of abuse or mistreatment of vulnerable beneficiaries. The Charity Commission's 'Serious Incident' guidance will be followed: <http://bit.ly/1vpfv4B> 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 the Disclosure and Barring Service 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 vulnerable adult.
- Ensure staff and volunteers who may come into contact with a vulnerable adult or child 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.

Volunteers should be aware that wherever they are located when volunteering for the foodbank, they are legally governed by the foodbank, even if the place in which they are working is their home church. This means that any allegations or concerns of abuse must be reported to the foodbank's Designated Safeguarding Co-ordinators. However, there may be times when the foodbank Safeguarding Co-ordinators deem it necessary and appropriate to share information with the Safeguarding Co-ordinators of the buildings in which the foodbank centres operate. The Safeguarding Co-ordinators will ensure they have the contact information of the Safeguarding Co-ordinators and the Safeguarding policies of all the buildings in which the foodbank operates and that they in turn know how to contact the foodbank Safeguarding Co-ordinators.

### Designated Co-ordinators and their roles

The foodbank project has a Designated Safeguarding Co-ordinator who is responsible for dealing with any concerns about the protection of vulnerable adults or children.

The Designated Safeguarding Co-ordinator for the foodbank is Gemma O'Neill. She can be contacted on: 07716620644.

The Deputy Safeguarding Coordinator is Edel Diamond who can be contacted on 07938706552. She 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/her. This person is.

The Trussell Trust also has access to safeguarding consultants Thirtyone:eight. While immediate issues would be dealt with by the designated or deputy safeguarding co-ordinators, Thirtyone:eight would normally only be contacted for advice by the safeguarding co-ordinator(s) if needed. **Thirtyone:eight can be contacted on 0303 003 1111 using option 2.** When you speak to an adviser tell them you are a food bank in the Trussell Trust network and in which part of the UK you are based as some advice varies between countries. The service is paid for by Trussell Trust.

The Safeguarding Co-ordinators will never be related to each other.

The Safeguarding Co-ordinators will be available for vulnerable adults and children, 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 vulnerable adult has been physically, sexually, spiritually, financially or emotionally abused or neglected by an adult or another young person. The Safeguarding Co-ordinators 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 vulnerable adult and the Safeguarding Co-ordinators are unavailable or acting inappropriately they should contact the Chair of Trustees should be informed and contact the Police or Social Services. Local contact telephone numbers are:

For local Children's Social Services contact:

Greater Lisburn Gateway Team  
Stewartstown Road Health Centre  
212 Stewartstown Rd,  
Dunmurry  
BT17 0FG  
Tel: 028 90602705  
[www.setrust.hscni.net](http://www.setrust.hscni.net)

For Local Adult Services contact:

Belfast HSC Trust  
028 90565705 (office hours)  
028 90565444 (out of hours emergency number)

South Eastern HSC Trust  
028 92665181  
028 90565444 (out of hours emergency number)

To make contact with the Police Child Protection Team call the PSNI Helpline:  
0845 6008000

## Records

The Safeguarding Co-ordinators 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 Co-ordinator 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 Co-ordinators, the Police or Social Services).

### Disclosure of Abuse

Where a member of a foodbank team receives a disclosure of abuse from a child or vulnerable adult 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 Co-ordinators 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 vulnerable adult 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 vulnerable adult 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 vulnerable adult has said in their own words. The record should be signed and dated.
5. **Report**-the record must be passed on to a Safeguarding Co-ordinator at the earliest possible opportunity and the child or vulnerable adult told what will happen next.

The Safeguarding Co-ordinators will ensure that the trustees are informed of any incident, concern or allegation of abuse. The trustees must also notify the Charity Commission, following the Commission's 'Serious Incident' guidelines in the event of an incident, or suspected incident, during or resulting from a foodbank activity.

Where a child or vulnerable adult 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 vulnerable adult is in the home, this must be treated as a disclosure of abuse and should be passed on to a Safeguarding Co-ordinator with immediate effect. Where an incident of domestic violence is reported and there is no child or vulnerable adult 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

## **Use of Images**

The foodbank project recognises that protecting and upholding the rights of children and vulnerable adults is of paramount importance and this includes on the internet and other promotional materials. The foodbank endeavours to present children and vulnerable adults in a positive, empowering and dignified manner. Furthermore, images will only be used where the child or vulnerable adult 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 vulnerable adult and child protection agencies following a referral to them of concern about someone.

If a vulnerable adult or child 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 Co-ordinator immediately. If both Safeguarding Co-ordinators 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 Co-ordinators are updated.

### **Applying agreed procedures for protecting vulnerable adults and children to all paid staff and volunteers**

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

For this reason all procedures set in place to protect vulnerable adults and children apply to all those in contact with them. This is not the same as treating each person who relates to vulnerable adults and children as being under suspicion, but a matter of taking sensible measures to protect vulnerable adults and children, 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 Co-ordinators. If it is brought to the attention of the Safeguarding Co-ordinators 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 vulnerable adults and children 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 vulnerable adults and children 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 vulnerable adults: members of staff and volunteers are therefore ineligible for Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks. The foodbank project will continue to keep abreast of any further legislative changes from the DBS.

## **Supervision as a means of protection**

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

Within the foodbank project our main area of concern about protecting people lies with the welfare of any vulnerable adult supported volunteers. Where possible, line managers should take opportunities to observe those vulnerable adults and children 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 project reserves the right to dismiss 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 Training Programme for the foodbank project. 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. Further guidelines concerning the safeguarding policies of the local council have been obtained free of charge and a copy is kept in [x location] as a reference.

The foodbank project 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 Co-ordinators 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 volunteers is likely to struggle to absorb the information contained within this policy by reading it, the volunteer coordinator, supervisor or a Safeguarding Co-ordinator 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:

## **General**

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

All vehicles used in the transportation of vulnerable adults and/or children 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.

Signed: 

Date: 7/3/23

Designated Safeguarding Co-ordinator, (Chair of trustees)