

Key Safeguarding Principles

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Purpose

The Key Safeguarding Principles that follow are aimed at ensuring that children, young people and adults, whether they are service users, staff, volunteers or others who come into contact with Guide Dogs are treated with respect and are free from all forms of harm, abuse or mistreatment.

It is vitally important that staff and volunteers who work with our service users, who under statutory legislation are deemed potentially vulnerable or at risk are clear about their responsibilities for safeguarding and promoting their welfare. The Charity Commission goes further in stating that other people who come into contact with the charity are also free from all forms of harm, abuse or exploitation.

Managers have a significant role to play in creating and maintaining a safe working culture so that every worker paid or unpaid understands their duty of care as well as which behaviours constitute safe practice and which should be avoided. Guide Dogs policy and procedures in relation to the protection of vulnerable groups, including the Safeguarding Codes of Conduct, are demonstrably embedded in daily practice and form a solid foundation for such a culture. All staff and volunteers should be fully acquainted with the contents of these policies to ensure that the principles which they enshrine 'live and breathe' within Guide Dogs.

A commitment to safeguarding is the central focus for all staff and volunteers. Everyone within Guide Dogs should feel empowered to act on concerns knowing that their managers will be fully committed to the need to safeguard all those who come into contact with potentially vulnerable people.

The Key Principles

1. Prevention of abuse

We recognise that high self-esteem, confidence, supportive friends and good lines of communication with a trusted person help to protect vulnerable groups from abuse.

Guide Dogs staff and volunteers will therefore:

- treat every child and adult at risk with respect regardless of their disability, race/ethnicity, gender, religion or sexual orientation;
- establish an ethos where all potentially vulnerable people feel secure and are encouraged to talk, and are listened to;
- make sure that vulnerable people know that they can report concerns to any member of staff at Guide Dogs and that these concerns will be acted on appropriately;
- reinforce personal safety messages with vulnerable groups on a regular basis;
- recognise their duty and feel able to raise concerns about poor practice and unsafe conduct in relation to vulnerable people knowing that such concerns will be addressed by managers sensitively and effectively in a timely manner in accordance with agreed whistle-blowing policies.

2. Recognition of Abuse

All staff and volunteers understand:

- what constitutes abuse or harm of a child, young person or adult at risk;
- the indicators/ signs of abuse or harm
- that abuse can be physical, emotional or sexual or involve the neglect of care for the person. It may also take the form of bullying or racist abuse or self-harm;
- that children and adults at risk can be abused by anyone they come into contact with, whether known to the individual or not. Statistically, vulnerable people are much more likely to be abused by someone who they know and trust;
- that abuse or harm can take place in any context or setting: in a family or an institution or within a community setting;
- that the effect of abuse or harm on all vulnerable groups can be significant and can directly impact on their present and future well-being and quality of life.

3. Responding to abuse or harm

Staff and volunteers know that:

- *all* concerns or allegations expressed by children or adults at risk must be taken seriously;
- priority must be given to the child or adult at risk for their health and safety, i.e. their risk of harm;
- it is best to respond to concerns expressed by vulnerable people calmly and with reassurance;
- it is important to listen carefully to what is being said and to avoid questioning the individual;
- confidentiality will depend on the circumstances and age of the child or adult at risk. Concerns about children and young people *must* be passed on immediately. Adults at risk have the right to confidentiality unless they are deemed not to have the mental capacity to make such a decision or that there is risk of harm to other vulnerable people.

4. Reporting Abuse

All staff and volunteers must:

- act without delay when they suspect that a child or adult at risk may be being abused;
- contact the appropriate emergency service if the individual is at **immediate risk** of harm;
- realise that in all other cases, the first point of contact will generally be the line manager or the appropriate manager in the partner agency as applicable;
- understand that if they cannot contact their line manager for whatever reason they must go directly to the Safeguarding Team;
- know that they do not have to be certain that the child or adult at risk is being abused, having a suspicion that abuse may be occurring is sufficient to report concerns;
- make a record of the incident/concern immediately.

5. Record-Keeping

All staff and volunteers:

- must make a written record of their concerns where available using the appropriate [‘Report a Safeguarding Concern’](#) link on the intranet available to staff on Safeguarding page of the Pawtal. This will report directly into the database, or contact the Safeguarding Team on 03451430199; Information can also be sent to Safeguarding via email however this may not be responded to immediately to Safeguarding Safeguarding@guidedogs.org.uk
- must make such a record as soon as possible and not later than the end of the same working day on which the concern was received/observed;
- ensure that the record is factual and based on fact. Where opinion is included it must be supported by factual detail;

- must pass the record onto their line manager and Safeguarding
- know that their record will be kept confidentially by Safeguarding in accordance with the principles of GDPR.

6. Whistleblowing

All staff and volunteers:

- must bring concerns about the unacceptable behaviour or practices of any individual with whom they work to the attention of their line manager and/or relevant senior manager in partner organisations as applicable **without delay**;
- realise that should they have a concern about their line manager then it should be reported directly to Safeguarding;
- understand that no matter how difficult it may be to 'blow the whistle', doing nothing is not a neutral act; such inaction inevitably results in a continuance of the abuse;
- know that no action will be taken against them if the allegation proves to be unfounded as long as it was made in good faith;
- understand that line managers have a responsibility in law to protect whistleblowers from harassment or victimisation;
- realise that malicious allegations may be considered a disciplinary offence;
- understand that confidentiality is extended to whistleblowers whenever possible;
- know that records of concerns expressed by whistleblowers are kept as evidence to ensure that concerns are fully investigated and managed effectively.

7. Allegations against staff and volunteers

Staff and volunteers understand:

- The need to work safely with vulnerable people so that they do not open themselves unnecessarily to allegations of abuse;
- That allegations against staff or volunteers may come from within Guide Dogs, from clients, external agencies or from the public;
- That when an allegation is received, further advice will be taken from senior managers within Guide Dogs and from outside agencies such as Social Care and the Police as applicable;
- All information will be assessed and no decision will be made in isolation;
- An internal investigation will be carried out which may lead to a criminal investigation depending on what the situation warrants;
- That the member of staff or volunteer against whom the allegation is made may be suspended from duty;
- Suspension is a neutral act and may be necessary in order to undertake a full investigation;

- Where an investigation has been carried out it may lead to disciplinary action under Guide Dogs policy.
- That full records will be kept of the concerns and will be stored and handled in accordance with GDPR.

8. Safe Working Practices

A positive obligation to safeguard all vulnerable groups is placed on all staff and volunteers. The needs of both children and adults at risk are seen as being paramount.

All staff and volunteers:

- fully understand what constitutes safe working practices;
- have read and understood the Safeguarding Codes of Conduct for working with children and young people and with adults at risk;

Line managers:

- use the Safeguarding Codes of Conduct as part of the induction process for new staff and volunteers;
- regularly review these codes formally and informally at staff meetings and during 1:1 supervision of staff and volunteers and through training events to ensure compliance with expected behaviours and attitudes;
- evidence such monitoring through performance management, Supervision and My Contribution.

9. Recruiting Staff and Volunteers Safely

Human Resource managers and all other managers who recruit staff and volunteers to work with vulnerable groups understand:

- the importance of recruiting staff and volunteers safely in order to deter, identify or reject any individual who may be unsuitable to work with vulnerable clients;
- the need for Criminal Records checking to be undertaken rigorously, with all necessary paperwork completed and kept in accordance with GDPR;
- that no individual should be deployed to work with a vulnerable person until their Disclosure has cleared;
- that the recruitment process is undertaken with a view to maximum opportunities to safeguard:
 - all gaps in employment history are fully accounted for;
 - any anomalies or discrepancies between the application form and the references are rigorously scrutinised at the earliest opportunity and before appointment;

- Interviews are face to face and that there is always a minimum of two interviewers for disclosure roles;
- ‘challenging questions’ in relation to the Safeguarding Competencies for those roles working with vulnerable groups is part of the interview process;
- notes are made and retained of each candidate’s responses at interview.

10. Professional Development of Staff and Volunteers

All staff and volunteers who work with children, young people and/or adults at risk are required to undertake mandatory training in relation to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and adults at risk to:

- facilitate a sound understanding of the issues
- to understand their responsibilities to protect these client groups

Additional training is required for HR managers and all other managers who recruit staff and volunteers to work with vulnerable groups in order to gain an understanding of how to recruit staff and volunteers safely to lessen the possibility of unsuitable people gaining employment in Guide Dogs.

Failure to comply with Safeguarding Policy and related procedures will be investigated and may lead to disciplinary action.

Documentation

Safeguarding Adults Codes of Conduct (for Staff and Volunteers)

Safeguarding Children Codes of Conduct (for Staff and Volunteers)

All documents are available on the Knowledge Hub.

Permissible exceptions

None identified at this time

Governance Review & Approval Table:

The table below contains two rows and five columns. The first row contains headings

	H&S	Protection of Children & Adults	Insurance	Legal
Date Reviewed	N/A	March 2022	N/A	N/A

Version control table:

The table below contains three rows and four columns. (Only the original approval date and the most recent amendment should be included in the table.) The first row contains headings.

Date	Version	Status	Details of Change
January 2020	1.0	Approved	Kathryn Ward Director People and Performance
06/10/20	1.1	Updated	Transferred onto current template
07/03/22	1.2	Updated	Location of documentation to be found on Knowledge Hub
23/03/2022	1.3	Updated	Updated links

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