



Safeguarding Policy: Protecting Children and Vulnerable Adults

Part 1: Policy Statement

As the network for befriending organisations, we're the intermediary between our members, supporters and stakeholders. We work collaboratively and inclusively to connect and strengthen the befriending sector. We support organisations to deliver quality befriending services that promote wellbeing and meaningful connections, ensuring that everyone feels valued.

Befriending Networks is committed to promote the welfare of children and vulnerable adults and protect them from harm including physical, emotional, sexual, financial harm, and neglect (Appendix 1 provides illustrative types and indicators of each)

As a charity registered in Scotland this policy is developed in line with guidance from OSCAR and reflects the National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland (2021). We will follow policy and legislation from Scotland, unless legislation from England, Wales, Ireland, or any other nation offers greater protection.

Our definitions:

- A **child** relates to unborn babies and children and young people under the age of 18 years.
- A **vulnerable individual (adult)** who is anyone over 16 years of age who is unable to safeguard themselves, their property, and their rights. These individuals may be vulnerable to abuse due to their life circumstances or because of their age, health, physical or mental abilities.

Safeguarding includes child protection but goes further and extends to all vulnerable beneficiaries. The charity's trustees ensure that appropriate policies, practices, and procedures are put in place so that Befriending Networks provides a safe working environment for its staff, board members, and service users. It recognises that good safeguarding comes from a rights-based approach and aims to ensure no person receives less favourable treatment or reduced access to services on the grounds of sex, age, disability, race, nationality, ethnicity, marital status, sexuality, family responsibility, trade union activity, class, political or religious belief.

We understand that the effectiveness of this policy and its procedures will be achieved through collaborative leadership of our board and CEO; through planned workforce development; and through meaningful and proportionate communication.

Befriending Networks recognise that its staff and board members (whilst acting on behalf of Befriending Networks) do not regularly encounter children or vulnerable individuals and very rarely, if ever, in an unsupervised capacity. Therefore, the organisation's main role in relation to safeguarding is promoting awareness of understanding of safeguarding within member services and the management of disclosures from third parties.



Scope and context

Befriending Networks provides vital infrastructure support to more than 350 organisations across the UK, whose remit is to support marginalised people who would benefit from a befriender. These organisations cover a wide range of vulnerable service user groups. All member organisations are individually constituted charities or other legal entities and Befriending Networks role is to provide guidance and information but is not legally responsible for their actions or governance.

This policy is informed by legislative requirements and policy guidance set out in:

- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
- The Children Act 2004
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006
- Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Act 2007
- Equalities Act 2010
- Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014
- Data Protection Act 2018
- Disclosure (Scotland) Act 2020

This policy applies to all Staff and Board members. The policy scope must also include online communities and interaction on our social media.

Responsibilities of All

Our Trustees are responsible for Safeguarding in the 10 domains set out by OSCR. (**OSCR: [OSCR | Charity Trustees' duties](#)**)

TOP TEN
Practical Safeguarding Steps

OSCR
Scottish Charity Regulator

Know your duties in terms of charity law	Know your other statutory duties	Be appropriately trained in safeguarding	Manage the charity's risks	Have adequate policies and procedures
Properly implement policies and procedures	Embed safeguarding in your culture	Have clear concern raising procedures	Deal with concerns correctly	Learn and reflect from incidents



Befriending Networks will ensure it has:

- policies and procedures that will help make sure that children and vulnerable adults are protected from harm; and that they are implemented and understood by everyone in the charity.
- clear lines of responsibility and accountability within the charity to deal with any safeguarding issues.
- staff and volunteers who are trained to identify potential harm and know what action to takeⁱ.
- a board induction which includes responsibilities of charity trustees regarding safeguarding.
- an appointed Safeguarding Lead (this will typically be the CEO).

Befriending Networks will ensure that its support and information provided to member organisations:

- is current and up to date in relation to safeguarding
- promotes best practice
- raises awareness of statutory and other guidance such as from OSCR, Charity Commission and Governments.



Part 2: Procedures

Befriending Networks adopts a "4 R" approach:

Recognise	You can recognise any concerns for a child or vulnerable person at risk, this may be linked to welfare, wellbeing, or protection.
Respond	You will respond appropriately. You will listen and you will not question or investigate. You will not promise confidentiality. You will obtain fact (name, address, date of birth, concern). You should provide reassurance.
Refer	You should notify the Safeguarding Lead at the earliest opportunity. They will decide if they will refer to statutory services or they may seek advice in relation to child protection from NSPCC: 0808 800 500
Record	You will record objective information, facts, actions, dates, and times. These will be stored in line with data protection policy.

Reporting procedures for disclosures, concerns or allegations made by Third Parties

It is highly unlikely given the nature of our role, as an intermediary organisation, that a disclosure, concern, or allegation regarding abuse/harm could come to the attention of staff /board member through direct observation. However, it is possible that this could be raised by staff member or volunteer from a member organisation or a third party in the form of a phone call, online meeting, email, or face-to-face contact.

Regardless of how this comes to the Staff/board members attention they will immediately record the matter, outlining the details and any action that has already been taken and any other relevant information. The report should be recorded objectively, using the words of the person making the disclosure. This record should then be shared securely and confidentiality with the Safeguard Lead.

The Safeguarding Lead is required to:

- Ensure appropriate safeguarding is in place, ensuring action is taken if there is immediate risk. For example, this may require seeking medical attention and/or contact social work/police regarding the issue.
- Share concerns or disclosures with social services or the Police as appropriate to the circumstances.
- The safeguarding lead should also assess the impact of reporting back safeguarding concerns to the organisation associated with the source of the disclosure/concern/allegation.
- Retain information securely in line with the data protection and confidentiality policy.

Where the Safeguarding Lead is not available, and the vulnerable person is at immediate risk the staff/board member must take immediate action to protect the individual concerned. For example, seeking medical attention or/and contacting social work/police regarding the



issue. They must document all actions and outcomes and the CEO must be updated of the situation as soon as possible.

Procedure to respond to allegations made against or incident involving Befriending Networks staff or trustees.

All job roles will be analysed and considered if they involve regulated work. If there is regulated work, then PVG scheme membership will be required.

If an allegation of abuse, harm, or neglect is made involving an employee or trustee this must be fully investigated. Relevant authorities should be notified to protect the vulnerable person (if they are known); and to engage with Police if criminal activity is suspected. This should be managed by the Safeguarding Lead. If the allegation is made against the Safeguarding Lead then this should be managed by the Chair of the board of trustees.

Befriending Networks has a duty of care to our staff, volunteers and trustees. We will provide effective support for anyone facing an allegation and provide them with a named contact if they are suspended. Suspension should be carefully considered and is not automatic. It is essential that any allegation is dealt with very quickly, in a fair and consistent way that provides effective protection for the child/vulnerable individual and at the same time supports the person who is the subject of the allegation. All options to avoid suspension should be considered prior to taking that step.

Befriending Networks will follow its Disciplinary Policy and Procedure if an allegation of abuse, harm or neglect is substantiated; or if they have been notified that an employee has been involved in a safeguarding incident.

If a Safeguarding Incident occurs this is a notifiable event and must be reported to OSCR; and where required by contractual agreement with funders.

Befriending Networks Members: Service Quality Concerns

Where the matter is not a direct safeguarding concern, allegation, or disclosure but it is brought to the attention of Befriending Networks that a member service is not following good safeguarding practices or potentially placing individuals at risk, this would also be brought to the attention of the CEO. The CEO would then contact the relevant manager/senior manager or trustees responsible for the service to discuss the concerns raised and the practice Befriending Networks would expect to see. When this happens within the context of Quality in Befriending or Quality in Mentoring awards – these awards cannot be made until safeguarding practices are improved. Befriending Networks may also consider withdrawing an award.

Should there be no resolution to the concerns or there be ongoing concerns regarding any services safeguarding practices, the CEO and chair of Befriending networks would consider suspending membership and whether reporting to other agencies was required. Any such



situations would be recorded, all actions noted, and information stored securely in line with data protection and confidentiality policy.

Whistleblowing

Staff can raise concerns or make a disclosure in the public interest under PIDA legislation (Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998). Details of which are set out in the Employee Handbook.

Staff can raise concerns to OSCAR, and must have reasonable belief that the information they provide shows that one or more issue is happening, has happened, or is likely to happen in the future. OSCAR can be contacted during business hour: 01382 220446 or by email C&I@oscar.org.uk

Our Safeguarding Lead

Susan Hunter, Chief Executive Officer
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07729 107 002

Policy Implementation and Review

Overall responsibility for this policy and its implementation lies with the board of trustees of Befriending Networks. This policy is due for review every 2 years, or earlier if change is required.

Reviewed (Company & Contact Information Updated): 21st May 2024

Board Approved: 26th April 2023

Next Review Date: 31st March 2025



Appendix 1 – Understanding Abuse and Harm

<u>Abuse form</u>	<u>Types</u>	<u>Indicators</u>
Physical abuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assault, hitting, slapping, punching, kicking, hair-pulling, biting, pushing Rough handling Scalding and burning Physical punishments Inappropriate or unlawful use of restraint Creating purposeful discomfort for someone Involuntary isolation or confinement Misuse of medication Forcible feeding/withholding of food Restraint or restricted movement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No explanation of injuries or inconsistency with the account of what happened Injuries are inconsistent with the person's lifestyle Bruising, cuts, burns and/or marks on the body or loss of hair in clumps Frequent injuries Unexplained falls Subdued or changed behaviour in presence of a particular person Signs of malnutrition Failure to seek medical treatment
Domestic abuse	<p>Domestic abuse can entail:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Psychological abuse Physical abuse Sexual abuse Financial abuse Emotional abuse <p>Domestic violence and abuse is not limited to one relation, gender or sexuality.</p> <p>It can also include "honour" based violence such as female genital mutilation</p> <p>Coercive or controlling behaviour is a core factor of domestic abuse and can include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Act of assault, threat, humiliation, intimidation Harming, punishing, terrifying the person Isolating the person from source of support Exploitation of resources or money Preventing the person from escaping abuse Regulating daily behaviour 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low self-esteem Feeling that the abuse is their fault/that they deserve it Physical evidence of violence such as broken bones or bruising Verbal abuse or humiliation Fear or outside intervention Damage to home or property Isolation – not seeing family or friends Limited access to money
Sexual abuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rape, attempted rape or sexual assault Inappropriate touch anywhere Non-consensual masturbation of either or both persons Non-consensual penetration or attempted penetration of the vagina, anus or mouth Any sexual activity that the person lacks the capacity to consent to Inappropriate looking, sexual teasing, innuendos or sexual harassment Sexual photography or forced use of pornography or witnessing of sexual acts Indecent exposure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bruising particularly to the thighs, buttocks, upper arms or neck Torn, stained or bloody undergarments Bleeding, pain or itching in the genital area Unusual difficulty in walking or sitting Foreign bodies in genital or rectal openings Infections, unexplained genital discharge, STIs Pregnancy of a woman who is unable to consent to sexual intercourse Uncharacteristic use of explicit sexual language or significant changes in sexual behaviour or attitude



		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incontinence not related to medical cause • Self-harming • Poor concentration, withdrawal, sleep disturbance • Fear of receiving help with personal care
Psychological or emotional abuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enforced social isolation – preventing someone accessing services, educational and social opportunity and seeing friends • Removing mobility or communication aids or intentionally leaving someone unattended when they need assistance • Preventing someone from meeting their religious and cultural needs • Preventing the expression of choice and opinion • Failure to respect privacy • Preventing stimulation, meaningful occupation or activities • Intimidation, harassment, use of threats, humiliation, bullying, verbal abuse • Patronising someone • Threatening someone with abuse or abandonment • Cyberbullying • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Silence in presence of one person • Withdrawal or change in psychological state • Insomnia • Low self-esteem • Uncooperative and aggressive behaviour • Change of appetite or weight loss/gain • Signs of distress/anger • False claims by someone involved with the person
Financial or Material abuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theft of money or possessions • Fraud, scamming • Preventing a person from accessing their own money, benefits or assets • Undue pressure, duress, threat or undue influence • Arranging less care than is needed to save money to maximise inheritance • Denying assistance to access benefits/financial affairs • Misuse of benefits, personal allowance etc • Someone moving into a person’s home and living rent free without agreement • Misuse of a power of attorney or other legal authority • Exploitations of a person’s money • False representation, using someone else’s bank account • Rogue trading – over charging for repairs or poor workmanship 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Missing personal possessions • Unexplained lack of money or inability to maintain lifestyle • Unexplained withdrawal of funds from accounts • Person allocated to manage financial affairs is evasive or uncooperative • Failure to register an LPA after the person has ceased to have mental capacity • Family or others show unusual interest in the assets of the person • Recent changes in deeds or title to property • Rent arrears and eviction notices • A lack of clear financial accounts held by a care home or service • Failure to provide receipts for shopping or other financial transactions carried out on behalf of the person • Disparity between the person’s living conditions and their financial resources • Unnecessary property repairs
Modern Slavery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human trafficking • Forced labour • Domestic enslavement • Sexual exploitation i.e. prostitution • Debt bondage – being forced to work to pay off any debts that realistically they will never be able to achieve 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signs of physical or emotional abuse • Being malnourished, unkempt or withdrawn • Isolation from the community due to control of others • Dirty, cramped, overcrowded accommodation • Living and working at the same address



		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of personal effects or identification documents • Always wearing the same clothes • Avoidance of eye contact, appearing frightened or hesitant to talk to strangers • Fear of law enforcers
Discriminatory abuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unequal treatment based on age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage, civil partnership, pregnancy, maternity, race, religion, belief, sex, sexual orientation <i>protected characteristics of the Equality Act 2010</i> • Verbal abuse, derogatory remarks or inappropriate use of language related to a protected characteristic • Denying access to communication aids, not allowing access to an interpreter, signer or lip-reader • Harassment or deliberate exclusion on grounds of protected characteristic • Denying basic rights to healthcare, education, employment and criminal justice relating to a protected characteristic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The person appears withdrawn and isolated • Expressions of anger, frustration, fear or anxiety • The support on offer does not take account of the person's individual needs in terms of a protected characteristic
Organisational or institutional abuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discouraging visits or the involvement of relatives or friends • Run-down or overcrowded establishment • Authoritarian management or rigid regimes • Lack of leadership and supervision • Insufficient staff or high turnover resulting in poor quality care • Abusive and disrespectful attitudes towards people using the service • Inappropriate use of restraints • Lack of respect for dignity and privacy • Failure to manage residents with abusive behaviour • Not providing adequate food and drink, or assistance with eating if needed • Not offering choice or promoting independence • Misuse of medication • Failure to provide care with dentures, spectacles or hearing aids • Not taking account of individuals cultural, religious or ethnic needs • Failure to respond to abuse appropriately • Interference with personal correspondence or communication • Failure to respond to complaints 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of flexibility and choice for people using the service • Inadequate staffing levels • People being hungry or dehydrated • Poor standards of care • Lack of personal clothing and possessions and communal use of personal items • Lack of adequate procedures • Poor record-keeping and missing documents • Absence of visitors • Few social, recreational and educational activities • Public discussion of personal matters • Unnecessary exposure during bathing or using the toilet • Absence of individual care plans • Lack of management overview and support
Neglect and acts of omission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Failure to provide or allow access to food, shelter, clothing, heating, stimulation and activity, personal or medical care • Providing care in a way the person dislikes • Failure to administer medication as prescribed • Refusal of access to visitors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor environment – dirty or unhygienic • Poor physical condition and/or personal hygiene • Pressure sores or ulcers • Malnutrition or unexplained weight loss • Untreated injuries and medical problems



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Neglecting individuals cultural, religious or ethnic needs Neglecting educational, social and recreational needs Ignoring or isolating the person Preventing the person from making their own decisions Preventing access to glasses, hearing aids, dentures etc Failure to respect or ensure privacy or dignity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inconsistent or reluctant contact with medical and social care organisations Accumulation of untaken medication Uncharacteristic failure to engage in social interaction Inappropriate or inadequate clothing
Self-Neglect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of self-care to an extent that it threatens personal health and safety Neglecting to care for one's personal hygiene, health or surroundings Inability to avoid self-harm Failure to seek help or access services to meet health and social care needs Inability or unwillingness to manage one's personal affairs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Very poor personal hygiene Unkempt appearance Lack of essential food, clothing or shelter Malnutrition and/or dehydration Living in squalid or unsanitary conditions Neglecting household maintenance Hoarding Collecting a large number of animals in inappropriate conditions Non-compliance with health or care services Inability or unwillingness to take medication or treat illness or injury

ⁱ [Safeguarding Awareness Course - NSPCC](#)