



Herts Vision Loss

## Policy on Safeguarding of Children

### 1. Introduction

- 1.1) The Charity provides services to visually impaired people and some of our clients are children or have other disabilities. This client grouping would be deemed as Vulnerable children and therefore covered by legislation and requiring a specific policy.
- 1.2) Staff and Volunteers work with children in group settings and on a one to one basis. This potentially puts children at risk of abuse and staff/volunteers at risk of allegation of abuse.
- 1.3) Organisational Risk Assessments are carried out for all operational activities. In conjunction with this and reducing the risk to children, a number of vetting precautions are followed as part of the Charity's recruitment process:
- All new staff and volunteers go through a Disclosure and Barring service process.
  - All staff and volunteers have to provide two character references.
  - All staff and volunteers go through a thorough induction programme; including awareness of working with this client group.
  - All staff and volunteers are provided with Health & Safety guidance that covers lone working as part of their induction.
  - All staff and volunteers to have Safeguarding training.

### 2. References

2.1) Herts Vision Loss Policy on Safeguarding of Children runs in conjunction with Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) Safeguarding children from Abuse (SCFA) Procedure; which is an inter-agency procedure in Hertfordshire and must be used by any services in Hertfordshire who work with vulnerable people.

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2.2) Abuse is a violation of an individual's human and civil rights by another person or persons. Abuse may be systematic and repeated or may consist of a single incident. It occurs when a person or persons have caused harm, or may be likely to do so.

2.3) Categories of abuse. SCFA recognises seven categories of abuse:

- Physical
- Sexual
- Financial
- Neglect
- Psychological/emotional
- Institutional
- Discriminatory

The SCFA Procedure also describes Abusive Action and Signs and Symptoms of abuse within each category.

### 3. Herts Vision Loss Procedure

3.1) HVL is quite clear that it will not condone abusive behaviour to anyone. Where abuse is occurring or believed to be occurring then staff or volunteers must pass their concerns on to a responsible person and the safeguarding procedure must be followed.

3.2) HVL volunteers who have suspicions of or are informed of a potential case of abuse towards; must immediately inform their Vision Loss Adviser (VLA). If unavailable (or the potential complaint is about the VLA) then to inform the Charity's Chief Executive Officer Joanna Carter on 079320 605366 or authorised deputy.

If particularly concerned by the potential of abuse, the sensory services investigating team can be contacted direct via **0300 123 4042**. This includes out of hours calls, which would be dealt with by the Emergency Duty Team. If there is a danger to life, a risk of injury or a crime is taking place, the police should be contacted by dialling **999**.

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3.3) HVL staff who have suspicions of or are informed of a potential case of must inform the sensory services investigating team via **0300 123 4042** or via any other direct contact the member of staff may already have had with statutory services regarding the client. The staff member must also notify the Chief Executive Officer Joanna Carter on 07932 605366 or authorised deputy.

3.4) Once the referral is made, the HCC Safeguarding procedure will be used to deal with the case.

#### 4. The investigation process

The first issue to be considered is making sure the potential abused adult is put in a safe situation; ie. that the actual or alleged abuse is stopped. This may involve a discussion between HVL and the investigating team about an immediate protection plan for the child.

Information disclosed by the child **with a request that it be kept confidential** must still normally be shared with the investigating team (and police if a crime has been committed).

Once the referral is received, the investigating team completes a SCFA Alert screen, recording information on the case.

If the investigating team decide there should be a safeguarding strategy meeting, they will normally arrange this with the service provider and other professionals, including the police if necessary, within three days in an emergency or up to ten working days where there is no immediate risk. A risk assessment and risk management plan will be completed.

The strategy meeting will share information and agree actions. If the decision is to investigate or continue investigating the case, then a SCFA action plan will be completed, plus agreement on other information and a time and date for a second strategy meeting. If the decision is not to investigate then the reasons will be recorded and risks to the alleged victim

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considered and a safeguarding action plan will be set. A date will also be set for a review meeting within three months of the strategy meeting.

A second (and any other reconvened strategy meetings) will review the safeguarding action plan, the progress of the investigation and the protection plan for the alleged victim. A decision will also be made whether to continue the investigation. If the investigation is considered completed, the reasons will be stated and risks to the alleged victim considered and a safeguarding action plan (to include a protection plan) will be set along with the date of a review meeting within three months of the final strategy meeting.

A review meeting will look at the continued risk, ways in which the risks can be minimised or stopped and agree who will monitor the child. Further review meetings may be held if required.

## **5. Other actions from HVL**

5.1) The Charity will offer all appropriate support to the staff member or volunteer while the investigation takes place, as this can be an extremely stressful time. Depending on the outcome of the investigation, appropriate ongoing support will be provided.

5.2) Should a member of staff or volunteer of HVL be found to have been involved in the abuse, whether or not on HVL activities, then the matter will be thoroughly investigated. For staff members this will be through the Charity's Disciplinary Procedure and could lead to disciplinary action being taken, which may include dismissal. For volunteers this will be by investigation by the Chief Executive Officer and/or Office Manager and may lead to the volunteer being removed from the Charity's register of volunteers.

This policy will be reviewed at least bi-annually and, additionally, to reflect changes in legislation and in the Hertfordshire County Council Safeguarding Procedure.

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