



SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN POLICY

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SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN POLICY

1. Introduction

Herts Vision Loss (HVL) provides services to visually impaired people and some of our clients are children or have other disabilities. This client cohort would be deemed as Vulnerable children and therefore covered by the legislation and requiring a specific policy.

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.

Organisational Risk Assessments are carried out for all operational activities. In conjunction with this and reducing the risk to children, several vetting precautions are followed as part of the HVL's recruitment process:

- All new staff and volunteers go through a Disclosure and Barring service process.
- All staff and volunteers must 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.

HVL has adopted this policy on safeguarding children and expects every adult working or helping at Charity to support it and comply with it. Consequently, this policy shall apply to all staff, managers, trustees, directors, volunteers, students, or anyone working on behalf of HVL.

2. Purpose of the Policy

This policy is intended to protect children who receive any service from us, including those who are the children of adults who may receive services from us. Under this policy, the term children shall mean any person who is under eighteen years of age.

HVL believes that no child or young person should experience abuse or harm and is committed to the protection of children and young people. This policy is intended to provide guidance and overarching principles to those who represent us as volunteers or staff, to guide our approach to child protection and safeguarding.

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3. The Risks to Children:

Children can be vulnerable to different forms of abuse and harm. It is important to recognise that abuse and harm of children can cover a wide range of circumstances and behaviours. For example, children can be at risk of:

- physical or emotional abuse
- neglect
- sexual abuse
- female genital mutilation (FGM)
- grooming and exploitation
- trafficking and modern slavery
- exposure to or infliction of domestic abuse
- bullying or cyber bullying
- exposure to other inappropriate content or behaviour, such as violence or criminal behaviour
- self-harm
- physical harm when engaging with activities without adequate supervision.

The causal factors of any such harm and/or abuse can also be wide-ranging. For example, children can be placed at risk by family members or by members of the community.

3.1. References

HVL’s Safeguarding of Children policy 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 followed by any services who work with vulnerable people in Hertfordshire.

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.

According to SCFA there are seven key categories of abuse:

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

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

4. Safeguarding Principles

Safeguarding children from harm and abuse is an essential responsibility for HVL. We are committed to ensuring that any child who comes into contact with our services is properly safeguarded. Every person under this policy must ensure that they play an active role in ensuring that children are properly safeguarded.

Every person under this policy holds responsibility for:

- remaining alert and aware of possible safeguarding risks to children
- guarding children against harmful environments with appropriate actions (for example, adequate supervision or ensuring safe environments)
- taking positive steps to maintain the safety and wellbeing of children engaging with us as HVL.
- reporting concerns expeditiously and appropriately, in line with child protection procedures
- understanding the duty to report specific concerns (and understanding how these interplays with confidentiality)
- challenging any inappropriate or harmful behaviour of any other adult and reporting this accordingly
- acting appropriately in the presence of children
- not taking any inappropriate risks
- not smoking, drinking, or taking any form of illicit substances in the presence of children

5. Safeguarding Officer

- Any question, report, or concern in relation to the safeguarding of children should be shared with the HVL Chief Executive Officer, our Safeguarding Officer, Clement Musonda via either Email: Clement.Musonda@hertsvisionloss.org.uk, or tel. **07425791947**.
- The CEO will normally inform the Chair of Board of any incidents requiring investigation under this protocol.

6. Confidentiality and Data Protection

All personal information we may process relating to children, shall be processed, and stored in accordance with our data protection privacy policy which can be located at: HVL premises, 2 Brownfields, Welwyn Garden City.

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7. Responding to a Safeguarding Concern

Where a child is at immediate risk of serious harm, any adult present should call 999. Thereafter, the Safeguarding Officer should be contacted as soon as is reasonably practicable.

Where there is a safeguarding concern but no immediate risk of serious harm, the adult who has heard or witnessed this concern should consult with the Safeguarding Officer as soon as practicable and by no later than the end of that same day.

Where any child makes a disclosure relating to harm or abuse to an adult, it is important for that adult to:

- listen calmly and carefully, showing that their views are taken seriously.
- provide an appropriate and honest level of reassurance.
- avoid interrogating children and asking probing, intrusive and/or leading questions.
- avoid making false promises regarding secrets and confidentiality with the child (because any concern of abuse/harm must be shared with the Safeguarding Officer and any subsequent safeguarding referral)
- make a confidential *written* record of the discussion either during the discussion or immediately afterwards. The record should include the key details of the disclosure together with any relevant times, dates, places, and people concerned. Audio and video recordings of children making disclosures should be avoided.
- refer all relevant information to the Safeguarding Officer as soon as practicable afterwards, and by no later than the end of the day.

Upon receipt of any safeguarding concern, the Safeguarding Officer shall consult with any other relevant persons and will make any appropriate referrals to the relevant authorities, such as the applicable HCC Sensory Services.

8. Reporting Concerns About Other Adults

Where any person has a concern regarding the conduct of an adult connected to HVL, which poses or may pose a safeguarding risk to children such as:

- harming a child either physically or emotionally
- exposing a child to behaviour which may cause physical or emotional harm.
- engaging in criminal activity concerning a child.

This must be raised in the first instance with the Safeguarding Officer (or where this is not appropriate, a different senior member of the organisation) so that the next appropriate steps may be agreed and actioned. We recognise that there could be circumstances where a person may need to report a matter that has taken place in a setting outside of the person's engagement with HVL.

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Usually, any appropriate steps following a safeguarding referral in respect of an individual connected to HVL will include either:

- further initial enquiries
- escalation to the applicable HCC Sensory Service’s investigative team within 24 hours for assessment and/or the police for investigation
- instigation of any appropriate disciplinary, formal investigation processes and suspension of any person concerned within the HVL.
- a referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service, or any other relevant regulatory bodies.

Any person within HVL who has allegations made against them shall be informed properly in a formal meeting of the particulars of the allegations and the relevant next steps which shall be taken. Such a meeting should ordinarily be held by the Safeguarding Officer. On certain occasions, such a meeting may not be convened until this has been approved by any authorities involved (such as the police or the Hertfordshire County Council).

Any person from within HVL who has allegations made against them shall be treated fairly. All enquires, investigations and decisions taken shall be just and fair, with the safety of any child concerned at the heart of the process.

Any person from within HVL who makes an allegation against another person from within the Charity shall be listened to, taken seriously, and shall be treated fairly and justly throughout the process of enquiries, investigations and decision making.

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**.

HVL staff who have suspicions of or are informed of 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 must also notify the Chief Executive Officer Clement Musonda on **07425791947** or authorised deputy.

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

9. Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Checks and Reporting

HVL undertakes enhanced DBS checks for all new staff and volunteers. Wherever we deem it is necessary and appropriate to remove any individual from a position of work in an activity which is regulated under the relevant legislation,

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we shall also be obliged to make a referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service.

10. Safeguarding Children at Events and Activities

10.1. Responsibilities and planning

Typically, we may arrange the following types of events and/or activities which could involve children:

- Community & Road Show events across Hertfordshire.
- Vision loss awareness training
- Sight Information Points
- Forum meetings, etc.

The Safeguarding Officer shall hold ultimate responsibility for the safety and appropriateness of the event. They may however appoint a delegate for some responsibilities the purpose of a specific event.

Although the Safeguarding Officer and any appointed delegates will hold ultimate responsibility for overseeing the safety of events and activities, all individuals under this policy must also play an active role in ensuring the safety of children at all times.

Appropriate background checking shall be undertaken for any adult engaged by us in connection with an event or activity involving children, wherever this is required by law (see the relevant section above).

For certain types of events or activities, we may issue an additional code of conduct, policy, or some specific other requirements which is specific to that occasion. Any such additional documentation will be made available to all those concerned (staff members, parents, guardians etc.) in advance. They should be read carefully and adhered to.

10.2. Venues

Any events or activities held by us will typically take place at:

- Community venues,
- church halls,
- libraries, etc., across Hertfordshire

We have carried out a health and safety risk assessment of this location in reference to its safety and suitability for children. Where any events or activities are held at any other location, we shall also carry out a risk assessment.

The fire safety procedure at this location can be found in the following location:

- HVL premises, 2 Brownfields, Welwyn Garden City.

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10.3. First Aid

We have the following first aid procedure within the Charity:

- HVL premises, 2 Brownfields, Welwyn Garden City.

Any accident or injury concerning a child should be brought to the attention of the nearest first aider and should thereafter be formally reported to the Safeguarding Officer.

10.4. Consent Forms

We shall always obtain written consent from a parent or guardian for any event which takes place with children in attendance without their responsible parent or guardian present. Consent will be obtained via:

- In written format which will be available at HVL.

Consent forms will include emergency contact details and will set out any specific safety needs/requirements for children.

All consent forms will be kept secure and shall be stored in accordance with our data protection privacy policy.

10.5. Supervision

For most activities and events, our procedure for supervision of children is as follows:

- For groups of children aged 9-12, there shall be 1 adult for every 8 children. For groups of children aged 13 and over, there will be an adult for every 10 children.

Where we hold any events or activities whereby a child attends alongside their parent or guardian, parents and guardians should ensure that children are properly supervised.

11. Managing the Behaviour of Children Generally

Whenever any adult engaged by us is faced with challenging or inappropriate behaviour from a child or with conflict between children, they must:

- treat each child fairly and equally.
- approach the situation in a calm and neutral manner.
- only ever use physical restraint/intervention to protect the immediate safety of a person, for example, to prevent an injury or harm either to the child or others.
- wherever it is justified to physically restrain a child or to physically intervene, the amount of force used should be kept to the absolute minimum considering the risk posed.
- make a written record of the incident and ensure this is reported appropriately to the Safeguarding Officer

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Further details regarding our procedures for managing behaviour can be in our behaviour policy:

- Upon request from any member of staff at HVL.

12. Managing Risks Posed by Other Children

It is important for all adults engaged by us to recognise that children can face harm from their peers. This can commonly take the form of bullying. Bullying can be defined as any behaviour which is:

- repeated; and
- has the intention of hurting somebody either physically or emotionally.

Bullying can sometimes be motivated by prejudices based on certain groups, for example, gender, race, religion, or sexual orientation. Bullying can often include:

- physical harm perpetrated against another child.
- name calling and threats.
- cyberbullying (threats and abusive comments made via technology)

Any instance of bullying or concern relating to possible bullying between children at any event or activities arranged by us will usually be dealt with by us in the first instance as follows:

- All children and any relevant staff shall be spoken to individually to ascertain the facts. Where appropriate, children will receive a first warning and relevant support.

Where any behaviour amounting to bullying continues following this, the following steps will be taken:

- The child or children who have found to be responsible for persistent behaviour which amounts to bullying another child shall be banned from attending the premises.

All steps in relation to the prevention or management of bullying should be taken in consultation with the Safeguarding Officer.

13. Photography

We operate a strict no-photo policy. We will not take any photographs and ask that members of the public, parents or guardians and children do not take any photographs when attending our premises, activities and/or events.

Further information is contained in our photography policy which can be found:

- From any member of staff at HVL premises

14. Other Policies

We have referred within this document to the following other important policies which should be read in conjunction with this policy:

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- Our data protection policy
- Our first aid policy
- Our photography policy
- Our behaviour policy

This policy should also be read in conjunction with:

- Health and Safety and Employee and DBS Check policy at HVL premises.

15. Legal Framework

This policy has been drawn up in accordance with all relevant and applicable legislation and guidance available to the Charity in the jurisdictions it operates within.

The condition detailed within this document may only be amended following discussion and approval of the Board of Trustees which in turn should be properly recorded.

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