



SAFEGUARDING VULNERABLE ADULTS' POLICY

Adopted: January 2024	Approved: 16 th May 2024
Page 1 of 3	Next review due April 2026

SAFEGUARDING VULNERABLE ADULTS' POLICY

1. Introduction

Herts Vision Loss (HVL) provides services to visually impaired people and some of our clients may have other disabilities. This policy is designed to address the specific needs and risks associated with working with vulnerable adults, ensuring their safety and protection.

Staff and Volunteers work with vulnerable adults in group settings and on a one-to-one basis. This potentially puts these people at risk of abuse and staff/volunteers at risk of allegation of abuse.

As part of our commitment to safeguarding, HVL conducts Organisational Risk Assessments for all operational activities involving vulnerable adults. In addition, we implement several vetting precautions during the recruitment process to minimise risks:

- 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 vulnerable adults and expects everyone working or helping at HVL 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 aims to protect vulnerable adults receiving services from HVL, promoting their well-being and preventing abuse. The term “vulnerable adults” refers to adults in need of care and support who may be at risk of abuse or neglect. This may be because they are older or have mental health problem, a learning or physical disability.

HVL is dedicated to creating a safe environment for vulnerable adults, guided by overarching principles and guidance provided in this policy.

Adopted: January 2024	Approved: 16 th May 2024
Page 2 of 3	Next review due April 2026

3. Risks to Vulnerable Adults

Vulnerable adults may face various risks, including but not limited to:

- Physical or emotional abuse
- Neglect: self-neglect and/or acts of omission.
- Financial exploitation
- Discrimination
- Institutional abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Grooming and exploitation
- Exposure to inappropriate content or behaviour.
- Domestic abuse and modern slavery.

It is essential to recognise and address these risks through proactive measures outlined in this policy.

3.1. References

HVL's Safeguarding of Vulnerable adults' policy runs in conjunction with Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) Safeguarding Adults from Abuse (SAFA) Procedure, which is an inter-agency procedure in Hertfordshire and must be followed by any services who work with vulnerable adults 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 SAFA procedure, there are seven categories of abuse:

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

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

4. Safeguarding Principles

Safeguarding vulnerable adults is a core responsibility for HVL. All individuals associated with HVL, including staff, volunteers, and trustees, must actively contribute to:

Adopted: January 2024	Approved: 16 th May 2024
Page 3 of 3	Next review due April 2026

- Identifying and addressing safeguarding risks
- Ensuring safe environments for vulnerable adults.
- Taking positive steps to maintain the safety and well-being of vulnerable adults.
- Reporting concerns promptly and following safeguarding procedures.
- Understanding the duty to report specific concerns while respecting confidentiality.

5. **Safeguarding Officer**

Any question, reports, or concerns related to the safeguarding of vulnerable adults should be communicated to the HVL Chief Executive Officer and Safeguarding Officer, Clement Musonda, via Email: Clement.Musonda@hertsvisionloss.org.uk, or tel. **07425791947**

6. **Confidentiality and Data Protection**

All personal information concerning vulnerable adults is processed and stored in accordance with HVL data protection privacy policy which can be located at: HVL premises, 2 Brownfields, Welwyn Garden City.

7. **Responding to a Safeguarding Concern**

In cases of immediate risk of serious harm, individuals should call emergency services via 999. Subsequently, the Safeguarding Officer must be contacted as soon as is reasonably practicable.

Where there is a safeguarding concern but no immediate risk of serious harm, individuals must consult with the Safeguarding Officer as soon as practicable and by no later than the end of that same day. If the Safeguarding Officer is unavailable concerns can be logged into the HCC Adult Social Care online portal: <https://hcsportal.hertfordshire.gov.uk/web/portal/pages/SAFA>

8. **The Investigation Process**

The first issue to be considered is making sure the potential abused adult is put in a safe situation, i.e., that the actual or alleged abuse is stopped. This may involve a discussion between HVL and the HCC Adult & Children Social Care Services' investigative team about an immediate protection plan for the vulnerable adult.

Information disclosed by the vulnerable adult 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 SAFA Alert screen, recording information on the case.

Adopted: January 2024	Approved: 16 th May 2024
Page 4 of 3	Next review due April 2026

If the investigating team decides there should be a safeguarding strategy meeting, they will normally arrange 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 SAFA 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 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 to the vulnerable adult, ways in which the risks can be minimised or stopped and agree who will monitor the vulnerable adult. Further review meetings may be held if required.

9. Other Actions from HVL

- 9.1.** HVL will offer all appropriate support to the staff member or volunteer while the investigation takes place, as this can be extremely stressful time. Depending on the outcome of the investigation, appropriate ongoing support will be provided.
- 9.2.** Should a member of staff or volunteer of HVL be found to have been involved in the abuse of a vulnerable adult, whether on HVL activities, then the matter will be thoroughly investigated. For staff members this will be through the HVL's Disciplinary Procedure and could lead to disciplinary action being taken, which may include dismissal. For volunteers, this will be investigation by the Chief Executive Officer and/or Office Manager and may lead to the volunteer being removed from HVL's register of volunteers.
- 9.3.** The CEO will normally inform the Chair of Board of any incidents requiring investigation under this protocol.

Adopted: January 2024	Approved: 16 th May 2024
Page 5 of 3	Next review due April 2026

10. 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 vulnerable adults such as:

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

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.

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 Adult & Children Social Care Services' investigative team 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 HCC Adult & Children Social Care 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

Adopted: January 2024	Approved: 16 th May 2024
Page 6 of 3	Next review due April 2026

the HCC Adult & Children Social Care 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.

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

12. Other Policies

This policy should be read in conjunction with other relevant policies, including data protection, Employee and DBS Check, behaviour, and Health and Safety policies.

13. 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.

Adopted: January 2024	Approved: 16 th May 2024
Page 7 of 3	Next review due April 2026