



Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Policy and Procedure

Introduction

The Special Lioness has a responsibility to prevent and report concerns about the abuse, neglect and ill treatment of adults who are at risk of being harmed, alongside its responsibility to protect children who have suffered abuse. There are legal requirements on statutory bodies under the Care Act 2014, and statutory guidance (Care and Support Statutory Guidance 2018) applying to the voluntary sector across England and the devolved nations, for organisations to do everything they can to recognise and report abuse quickly and appropriately to keep adults safe, and to prevent such abuse from happening in the first place. Anyone who is employed or volunteers for or, on behalf of The Special Lioness, regardless of the type or amount of contact they have with adults who are at risk of abuse or vulnerable adults, has a role to play in safeguarding and protecting them. They must:

- Know how to recognise potential abuse of adults at risk/vulnerable adults
- Know what to do when safeguarding concerns arise

Understand what The Special Lioness expects of them in terms of their own behaviour and actions. An adult at risk of abuse can be anyone over the age of eighteen, including service users, staff or volunteers (see the 'terminology' section below). Whilst personal characteristics may make an individual more vulnerable i.e. disability and communication difficulties, it is the situation around an individual which may increase risk or place them at potential risk of harm. It is therefore vital to be open to the possibility that any adult may be at risk and that this can be temporary or on-going depending on the support and protective factors around them. This policy and procedure must be read in conjunction with:

- What to do if - for those who do not work directly with children or adults at risk
- What to do if - for those working directly with children
- Non - recent abuse policy
- Vulnerability Policy for Fundraisers

Professional fundraising agents, subcontractors, third-parties and assignees involved in services for The Special Lioness parties must comply with The Special Lioness safeguarding and child protection policies, legislation and all relevant regulatory codes of conduct including the Institute of Fundraising's code of practice when dealing with donors and prospective donors. This policy applies to all staff and volunteers (including trustees and interns), secondees, agency staff, students, sole traders and contractors, including associates and professional fundraising agencies

- Every person has a right to live a life free from abuse, neglect and fear.
- Safeguarding adults is everyone's business and responsibility.
- There is zero tolerance to the abuse of adults.
- All reports of abuse will be treated seriously.



- Every person should be able to access information about how to gain safety from abuse and violence and neglect.

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- All adult safeguarding work aims to prevent abuse from taking place, and to make enquiries quickly and effectively and take appropriate action where abuse is taking place or is suspected.
- All partner agencies, organisations and partners actively work together and encourage accountability and transparency.

Key Principles

The Special Lioness's approach to safeguarding adults at risk is based on the following principles:

- All adults have a right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse, regardless of age, ability, gender, racial heritage, religious beliefs, sexual orientation or personal characteristics which may indicate additional vulnerabilities
- The best interests of the child are paramount in all considerations about the safeguarding and protection of adults at risk
- Where concerns are identified, the key principles of working with adults at risk embedded in the Care Act 2014, will always inform The Special Lioness' approach to interventions (see section 6 below)
- Where a concern is identified, we must communicate very clearly what we have done and will be doing to safeguard the adult at risk, unless to do so would in any way increase risk to them or a child. Capacity will be assumed unless there is reason to believe that the person cannot understand (see section 7 below)
- Where we are working together with adults at risk, their carers', family members and other agencies, it is essential to recognise that, in some limited circumstances, it will not be appropriate to engage with carers or family members in order to protect the adult at risk
- Concerns or allegations that The Special Lioness staff or volunteers have abused or neglected adults will be taken very seriously and managed sensitively and fairly in accordance with these policies, relevant legislation and local procedures

We deliver this policy by:

- Providing effective leadership and management for staff and volunteers through induction, supervision/one-to-one learning and mentoring, support and training
- Ensuring effective and robust safeguarding and protection practices by having clear policies, procedures, practice standards and guidance in place
- Enabling staff to exercise professional judgements based upon seeking to act in the best interests of, and outcomes for, the adult or child at risk



- Safe recruitment and employment practices to ensure that robust recruitment, selection, induction and supervision processes are in place for all those who work for and with The Special Lioness.

How to comply Capacity and Consent

It is important to be alert to issues of cognitive capacity which can increase the vulnerability of people where they have a reduced ability to make informed decisions in the moment. This may be transient (e.g. due to fear, shock, injury, illness) or long term (e.g. due to learning differences, disability, mental health issues).

Whilst this is a complex issue, it should not get in the way of staff and volunteers genuinely seeking to ensure that all individuals are respectfully consulted in relation to participation in activities and/or sharing of information about them.

A young person aged 16 or older is presumed in law to have capacity to consent, unless there is evidence to the contrary. Capacity to consent is not simply based on age however, particularly where learning and communication difficulties and disabilities are identified. You should also consider a person's capacity to understand the consequences of giving or withholding their consent. They should not be treated as unable to make a decision until all practicable steps to help them have been taken.

When assessing a person's understanding you should seek to explain the issues using their preferred mode of communication and language. This should be done in a way that is suitable for them, considering all you know about them from your contact with them, particularly their age, language and likely understanding.

It is important to try and ensure that they really understand the issues and are not just agreeing to what is proposed. If you are unsure whether they have the capacity to consent, then you should seek advice from your Lead Safeguarding Officer. The person's friends, carer, another professional working with them, or an advocate, where available, may be able to provide relevant information or advice where consulting these people does not increase potential risks.

The following criteria should be considered when assessing whether a person has sufficient understanding at any time to consent, or to refuse consent, to sharing of information about them or participating in specific activities:

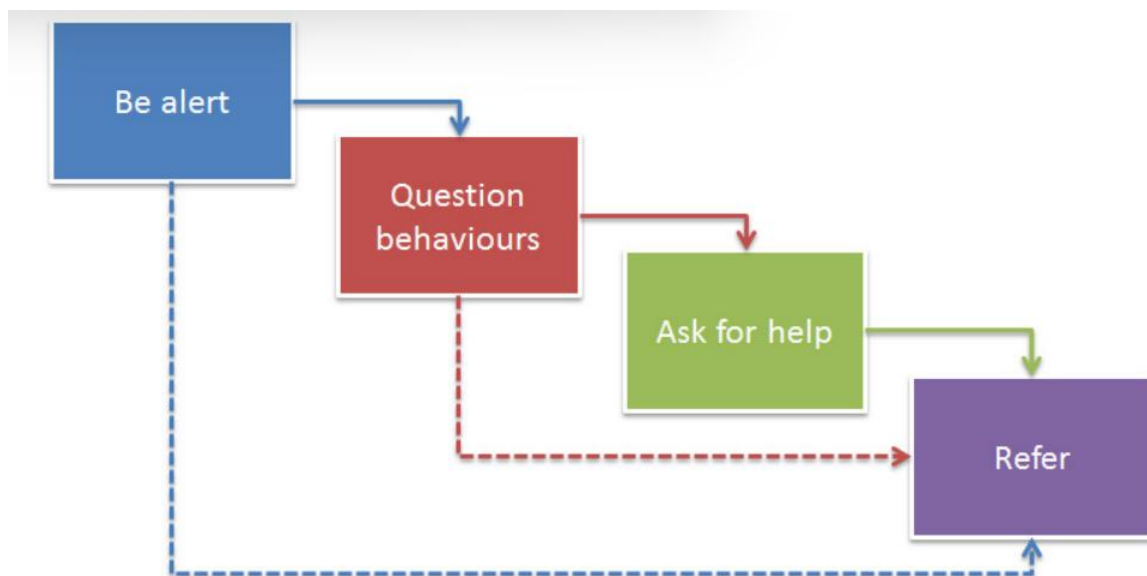
- Can the person understand the question being asked of them?
- Are they taking an active part in the discussion?
- Can they rephrase the question in their own words?
- How would they explain it to someone else?
- Do they have a reasonable understanding of what the risks or benefits of giving their consent or saying no?
- What do they say they think would happen if they agree the action being suggested?
- Can they appreciate and consider the alternatives, weighing up one aspect against another and express a clear and consistent personal view?



- Encourage them to say out loud, or write down, their view of the pros and cons. You could recheck these views later or at a later contact with them

If a decision is made by the Lead Safeguarding Officer that a referral is required, the member of staff should complete the Safeguarding Incident Report Form, The Lead Safeguarding Officer will then take responsibility for referring the information to the relevant agencies such as Adult Social Care. All information about the referral will be stored by the Lead Safeguarding Officer.

In an emergency, i.e. if the staff member or volunteer feels that someone is in imminent danger and needs either police or medical attention, they must contact the relevant emergency services. They must then notify the Lead Safeguarding Officer as above.



Staff and volunteers outside of their working or volunteering role

When staff, volunteers or fundraisers are outside of their working or volunteering role for The Special Lioness, they may identify safeguarding concerns in their own family or networks, community, neighbourhood or through activities in which they participate. The Special Lioness expects all its staff and volunteers to act appropriately on any safeguarding concerns they encounter about an adult at risk. Staff and volunteers should share any safeguarding concerns with the Lead Safeguarding Officer or with the local authority adult social care service (or equivalent), or the police in the case of an emergency. It should never be an option to do nothing where you have concerns about an individual who may be at risk of harm.



What constitutes abuse and neglect?

This section considers the different types and patterns of abuse and neglect and the different circumstances in which they may take place. This is not intended to be an exhaustive list but an illustrative guide as to the sort of behaviour which could give rise to a safeguarding concern. Organisations and individuals should not limit their view of what constitutes abuse or neglect, as they can take many forms and the circumstances of the individual case should always be considered. Exploitation and abuse of power are common themes in the following list of the types of abuse and neglect. Physical abuse including:

- assault
- hitting
- slapping
- pushing
- misuse of medication
- restraint
- inappropriate physical sanctions

Domestic violence including:

- psychological
- physical
- sexual
- financial
- emotional abuse
- honour-based violence

The cross-government definition of domestic violence and abuse is: any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality.

A new offence of coercive and controlling behaviour in intimate and familial relationships was introduced into the Serious Crime Act 2015. The offence will impose a maximum 5 years' imprisonment, a fine or both.

The offence closes a gap in the law around patterns of coercive and controlling behaviour during a relationship between intimate partners, former partners who still live together, or family members, sending a clear message that it is wrong to violate the trust of those closest to you, providing better protection to victims experiencing continuous abuse and allowing for earlier identification, intervention and prevention.

Sexual abuse including:

- rape
- indecent exposure



- sexual harassment
- inappropriate looking or touching
- sexual teasing or innuendo
- sexual photography
- subjection to pornography or witnessing sexual acts
- indecent exposure
- sexual assault
- sexual acts to which the adult has not consented or was pressured into consenting

Psychological abuse including:

- emotional abuse
- threats of harm or abandonment
- deprivation of contact
- humiliation
- blaming
- controlling
- intimidation
- coercion
- harassment
- verbal abuse
- cyber bullying
- isolation
- unreasonable and unjustified withdrawal of services or supportive networks

Financial or material abuse including:

- theft
- fraud
- internet scamming
- coercion in relation to an adult's financial affairs or arrangements, including in connection with wills, property, inheritance or financial transactions
- the misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits

Financial abuse is the main form of abuse investigated by the Office of the Public Guardian both amongst adults at risk and children. Financial recorded abuse can occur in isolation, but as research has shown, where there are other forms of abuse, there is likely to be financial abuse occurring. Although this is not always the case, everyone should also be aware of this possibility.

Potential indicators of financial abuse include:

- change in living conditions
- lack of heating, clothing or food
- inability to pay bills/unexplained shortage of money



- unexplained withdrawals from an account
- unexplained loss/misplacement of financial documents
- the recent addition of authorised signers on a client or donor's signature card
- sudden or unexpected changes in a will or other financial documents

Modern slavery encompasses:

- slavery
- human trafficking
- forced labour and domestic servitude.
- traffickers and slave masters using whatever means they have at their disposal to coerce, deceive and force individuals into a life of abuse, servitude and inhumane treatment

Discriminatory abuse including forms of:

- harassment
- slurs or similar treatment:
- because of race
- gender and gender identity
- age
- disability
- sexual orientation
- religion

Organisational abuse Including neglect and poor care practice within an institution or specific care setting such as a hospital or care home, for example, or in relation to care provided in one's own home. This may range from one off incidents to on-going ill-treatment. It can be through neglect or poor professional practice due to the structure, policies, processes and practices within an organisation.

Neglect and acts of omission including:

- ignoring medical
- emotional or physical care needs
- failure to provide access to appropriate health, care and support or educational services
- the withholding of the necessities of life, such as medication, adequate nutrition and heating

Self-neglect

This covers a wide range of behaviour neglecting to care for one's personal hygiene, health or surroundings and includes behaviour such as hoarding. A decision on whether a response is required under safeguarding will depend on the adult's ability to protect themselves by controlling their own.



There may come a point when they are no longer able to do this, without external support. Incidents of abuse may be one-off or multiple and affect one person or more. Professionals and others should look beyond single incidents or individuals to identify patterns of harm. Repeated instances of poor care may be an indication of more serious problems and of what we now describe as organisational abuse. In order to see these patterns, it is important that information is recorded and appropriately shared. Patterns of abuse vary and include:

- serial abuse, in which the perpetrator seeks out and 'grooms' individuals. Sexual abuse sometimes falls into this pattern as do some forms of financial abuse
- long-term abuse, in the context of an ongoing family relationship such as domestic violence between spouses or generations or persistent psychological abuse
- opportunistic abuse, such as theft occurring because money or jewellery has been left lying around

Note: This is not an exhaustive list, nor do these examples prove that there is actual abuse occurring. However, they do indicate that a closer look and possible investigation may be needed.

Policy Review

We will review and update this policy annually to ensure it remains compliant with Safeguarding legislation and our team and Volunteers are trained and updated around policy and procedure changes regularly. Our next review and re-issue will be 15th January 2027.

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This policy was last reviewed by:

Signed: Claire Stewart: Trustee & Safeguarding Lead

Date: 15th January 2026

Next Review Date: 15th January 2027