

Safeguarding Policy

Policy Tracking:

Previous Review:	Dec 2016
Last Reviewed:	Feb 2017 – no changes made
Next Review Due:	

Procedures for the Safeguarding of Young People Volunteering with AYA & Children, Young People or Vulnerable Adults using its Projects.

1. Introduction

Aylesbury Youth Action (hereinafter “AYA”) is committed to ensuring that vulnerable people who use our services, whether as volunteers or as project users, are not abused, that working practices minimise the risk of such abuse, and that AYA responds positively and proactively where abuse occurs. This policy should be used in conjunction with the Aylesbury Youth Action Equal Opportunities Policy.

The purpose of this policy is to outline the duty and responsibility of staff, volunteers and Trustees/Executive Committee Members working on behalf of Aylesbury Youth Action in relation to the safeguarding of children, young people and vulnerable adults from abuse.

Everyone has the right to be safe from harm and should be able to live free from fear of abuse, neglect and exploitation.

The key objectives of this policy are:

- To explain the responsibilities AYA and its staff, volunteers and Trustees/Executive Committee Members have in respect of safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults.
- To provide staff with an overview of appropriate safeguarding, to go alongside regular training.
- To provide a clear procedure that will be implemented where safeguarding issues arise.

2. The Context

AYA Volunteers

The aim of AYA is to provide young people with the opportunity to participate in volunteering opportunities in their local community through a variety of projects that appeal to a wide range of interests. Projects are of community benefit and are rewarding and satisfying for the volunteers. The young people are also encouraged to develop their own ideas and help projects (and AYA as a whole) become more youth-led.

The relationship between young people volunteering with AYA and members of AYA staff is essentially a voluntary one. Young people can choose to withdraw from the relationship at any time.

AYA volunteers are usually aged 14-24, with some starting at 13 or leaving at 25, at the discretion of AYA staff. Therefore, for the purpose of this document 'young person' means a person aged 13-25.

AYA staff seek to empower young people to identify the needs of themselves and others, to make informed decisions about their own lives, and to act for the good of others.

A significant proportion of AYA volunteers have additional needs and/or learning disabilities, making them more vulnerable to abuse, or in some cases more likely to abuse others. For this reason, a character reference is required for all volunteers, and a personal induction carried out before volunteering starts. Some volunteers may require personal risk assessments to help ensure they are kept safe, or are not a risk to others. Following DBS procedure, a DBS check is arranged for the volunteer where this is recommended, however this is rare as all the young volunteers are continually supervised by AYA staff on all AYA-run projects. Young people are only placed on projects that are appropriate to their personal circumstance. It is the responsibility of the member of staff working on the project with them to ensure their volunteering is appropriate and to report any concerns to a Manager.

Project Users

Many AYA projects involve delivering a service to our community's most vulnerable groups – including but not limited to: young children, children fleeing domestic violence, disabled young people, elderly and frail people, people in hospital, or disabled adults. For this reason, safeguarding issues must always be considered when planning project activities.

3. Recognition and Definition of Abuse and Neglect

Abuse is a violation of an individual's human and civil rights by any other person or persons.

Abuse may consist of a single act or repeated acts. It may be physical, verbal or psychological, it may be an act of neglect or an omission to act, or it may occur when a vulnerable person is persuaded to enter into a financial or sexual transaction to which he or she has not consented, or cannot consent. Abuse can occur in any relationship and it may result in significant harm to, or exploitation of, the person subjected to it.

The Department of Health in its 'No Secrets' report suggests the following as the main types of abuse:-

- **Physical abuse**- including hitting, slapping, pushing, kicking, misuse of medication, restraint, or inappropriate sanctions.
- **Sexual abuse**- including rape and sexual assault or sexual acts to which the vulnerable person has not consented, or could not consent 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, isolation or withdrawal from services or supportive networks.
- **Financial or material abuse**- including theft, fraud, exploitation, pressure in connection with wills, property or inheritance or financial transactions, or the misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits.

- **Neglect and acts of omission**- including ignoring medical or physical care needs, failure to provide access to appropriate health, social care or educational services, the withholding of the necessities of life, such as medication, adequate nutrition and heating.
- **Discriminatory abuse**- including racist, sexist, that based on a person's disability, age, sexuality, sexual orientation and other forms of harassment, slurs or similar treatment.

Child abuse is when a child suffers harm or even death because of physical cruelty, emotional cruelty, sexual abuse or neglect by an adult or another child. Often the adult is a parent or someone whom the child knows and trusts. In many cases, the child may be subjected to a combination of different kinds of abuse: for example, neglect and physical abuse.

Likewise, vulnerable adults may be unable to take care of themselves and unable to protect themselves from harm or exploitation by other people. Abuse of adults can take the same forms as for children.

Abuse can take place in any setting, public or private, and can be perpetuated by anyone.

Active form: when something is done to a child or vulnerable adult when it should not be.

Passive form: when something is not done for a child or vulnerable adult when it should be.

4. Procedure in the event of reported/suspected abuse

It is important that children, young people and vulnerable adults are safeguarded from abuse. All complaints, allegations or suspicions must be taken seriously. This procedure must be followed whenever an allegation of abuse is made or when there is a suspicion that someone has been abused.

If a volunteer or project user discloses a situation of abuse to a member of AYA staff, they **MUST** take immediate action to report this. If the disclosure is about a past situation, even if they feel they are no longer at risk, the disclosure **SHOULD** still be reported as soon as possible.

Workers should make verbatim detailed notes of what is said **AS SOON AS POSSIBLE** after any disclosure. In the event of suspected abuse, the worker should make verbatim detailed notes in relation to evidence seen or heard that has led to the suspicion. ***Verbatim - Do not put words in the mouth of the alleged victim but write the exact words they use.***

A full record shall be made as soon as possible of the nature of the allegation and any other relevant information including the date, the time, the place where the alleged abuse happened, your name and the names of others present, the name of the complainant and, where different, the name of the person who has allegedly been abused, the nature of the alleged abuse, a description of any injuries observed, the account which has been given of the allegation.

Responding appropriately to an allegation of abuse

In the event of an incident or disclosure:

DO

- Make sure the individual is safe
- Assess whether emergency services are required and if needed call them
- Listen
- Offer support and reassurance
- Ascertain and establish the basic facts
- Make careful verbatim notes and obtain agreement on them
- Ensure notation of dates, time and persons present are correct and agreed
- Take all necessary precautions to preserve forensic evidence
- Follow correct procedure
- Explain areas of confidentiality; immediately speak to your manager for support and guidance
- Explain the procedure to the individual making the allegation
- Remember the need for ongoing support.

DON'T

- Confront the alleged abuser
- Be judgmental or voice your own opinion
- Be dismissive of the concern
- Investigate or interview beyond that which is necessary to establish the basic facts
- Disturb or destroy possible forensic evidence
- Consult with persons not directly involved with the situation
- Ask leading questions
- Assume Information
- Make promises or offer to keep secrets
- Ignore the allegation
- Elaborate in your notes
- Panic

It is important to remember that the person who first encounters a case of alleged abuse is not responsible for deciding whether abuse has occurred. This is a task for the professional protection agencies, following a referral from the Designated Safeguarding Person (hereinafter known as the "Safeguarding Trustee").

5. Confidentiality

Confidentiality is crucial to all our work and relationships and AYA staff should aim to maintain it.

However, staff, volunteers and Trustees/Executive Committee Members have a professional responsibility to share relevant information about the protection of vulnerable individuals with other professionals, particularly investigative agencies and Social Services.

Clear boundaries of confidentiality will be communicated to all.

All personal information regarding an individual will be kept confidential. All written records will be kept in a secure area for a specific time as identified in data protection guidelines.

If an individual confides in a member of staff and requests that the information is kept secret, it is important that the member of staff tells them sensitively that he or she has a responsibility to refer cases of alleged abuse to the appropriate agencies in accordance with this Policy.

Within that context, the individual should, however, be assured that the matter will be disclosed only to people who need to know about it.

Where possible, consent should be obtained from the individual before sharing personal information with third parties. In some circumstances obtaining consent may be neither possible nor desirable as the safety and welfare of the vulnerable individual is the priority.

Where a disclosure has been made, staff should let the individual know the position regarding their role and what action they will have to take as a result.

Staff should assure the individual that they will keep them informed of any action to be taken and why. Their involvement in the process of sharing information should be fully considered and their wishes and feelings taken into account.

NEVER KEEP CONCERNS RELATING TO POTENTIAL ABUSE TO YOURSELF. ALWAYS SHARE IT WITH YOUR LINE MANAGER.

6. Reporting the disclosure

The worker receiving information about abuse SHOULD ALWAYS explain that in order to protect the person it will be necessary to share information with others (see above).

Children and young people usually choose an adult they feel they can trust when making a disclosure. It is important to make every effort to retain that trust whilst enabling them to understand that the disclosure will have to be reported.

It is also important to avoid people having to repeat their story to too many different people. This is not only traumatic for them, but can also result in evidence being inadmissible because it can be alleged that they have been led to make allegations which are not true.

Workers also need to take care regarding making promises about any resulting action.

It is advised that any early discussion with the individual should, so far as possible, adhere to the following basic principles:

- Listen to them, rather than directly question him or her.
- Never stop someone who is freely recalling significant events.
- Make a verbatim note of the discussion, taking care to record timing, setting and personnel as well as what was said.
- Record all subsequent events up to the time of the substantive interview.

Therefore, the worker's PRIME ROLE is to LISTEN, REASSURE and SUPPORT the individual.

It needs to be recognised that an individual will disclose to a person they feel comfortable with, regardless of the worker being a young person (volunteer), volunteer staff, AYA staff or Trustees/Executive Committee Members.

Volunteer or unpaid workers: If an adult volunteer worker or unpaid worker (e.g. student on placement, adult volunteer etc) receives information about the abuse they should, in the first instance, report this to an AYA staff member immediately.

The AYA staff member MUST inform the Safeguarding Trustee, or in his/her absence the Chair of the AYA Executive Committee.

Young People or Young Volunteers:

If abuse is disclosed to an AYA Volunteer s/he must report it to a member of AYA staff IMMEDIATELY. It is the responsibility of the AYA staff to support the young person with this disclosure.

Salaried AYA Staff:

When a member of AYA staff receives information about abuse they MUST consult the Safeguarding Trustee or in his/her absence the Chair of the AYA Executive Committee.

It is important that the worker states clearly what is likely to happen when the individual talks to Social Services/Police. The worker should also make it clear that s/he cannot tell Social Services/Police what has happened and that the individual will have to do that, but the worker will be present to give support.

Before taking any direct action with the child or young person, the staff member MUST discuss future action with the Safeguarding Trustee.

Any suspicions that someone has been injured or ill treated or abused MUST be discussed with the Safeguarding Trustee regardless of whether the individual has made a disclosure.

Referral to Social Services:

Social Services have a statutory duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and vulnerable adults along with an obligation to make enquiries if there is a reasonable cause to suspect significant harm.

The Safeguarding Trustee shall telephone, or otherwise, to report the matter to the Social Services. All relevant information must be shared when making the referral. A written record of the date and time of the report shall be made and the report must include the name and position of the person to whom the matter is reported. The report must be confirmed in writing to the relevant local authority adult social services department within 24 hours.

Any referral made should preferably be with the individual's consent, but this may not be possible in every case and the urgent need to protect the individual may take priority.

7. Recording

There are two main purposes for keeping records in these situations. One is for evidence for possible use in court and the other is about performance of the worker.

Records kept for evidence:

The words an individual uses to explain to someone what has happened to them are admissible in court as evidence. (Usually hearsay is inadmissible in court.) Abuse is a crime and at some stage criminal proceedings may well result. Therefore, the record of the first conversation between the worker and the child, young person or vulnerable adult may be needed as evidence in a court case.

These notes should be made where possible in conjunction with the individual concerned with due reference to their age and communication skills.

The notes should be signed and dated and kept in a secure place, preferably a safe or locked filing cabinet.

Records about worker performance:

The notes which a worker may make, in conjunction with the individual concerned, could be used by the worker to reflect on their performance in a difficult and sensitive situation.

These notes should also be kept secure until such a time that they are destroyed.

8. Non-managerial support/ counselling for staff

Staff to whom young people have disclosed may be distressed by the disclosure. Non-managerial support and/or counselling will therefore be available. It is the responsibility of the AYA Executive Committee to ensure this is provided if required.

9. Young People as Perpetrators of Abuse

Sometimes the abuser may be another child or young person. Workers need to recognise that children or young people who abuse others have often experienced abuse themselves. In this case, there are, therefore, considerations for both young people, one as the victim of abuse and the other as an abuser of others and possibly also as a victim. The matter **MUST** be immediately reported to the Safeguarding Trustee who will instigate the appropriate action.

Young people volunteering with AYA may be the subject of an allegation of abuse. While support will be offered, AYA will ensure that Social Services are given all assistance pursuing any investigation. The young volunteer should cease all volunteering activities with AYA during the investigation, but AYA staff may maintain contact with the young person to provide appropriate support.

10. AYA Staff and Adult Volunteers as abusers

Staff or adult volunteers themselves may also be the subject of an allegation of abuse. While support will be offered, AYA will ensure that Social Services are given all assistance pursuing any investigation. Suspension and/or disciplinary action may be implemented. The worker concerned **MUST** be immediately suspended from working directly with all young volunteers

or project users. The matter MUST be immediately reported to the Safeguarding Trustee who will instigate the appropriate action.

Where a volunteer (including Executive Committee members) or a member of staff is suspected of abuse the following action should be taken:

- The Safeguarding Trustee should interview the volunteer or member of staff with a witness present.
- The Safeguarding Trustee should make arrangements for interviewing the suspected victim. This should be done with another Trustee present (at the discretion of the Safeguarding Trustee). The person making the allegation may also have a support person present if he/she wishes.
- The purpose of the meeting is NOT to investigate but to provide an opportunity for disclosure.

If the allegation concerns the Safeguarding Trustee, then the Chair of the Executive Committee will assume his/her role in taking forward all appropriate action.

11. Preventing abuse at AYA

- AYA follows safe recruitment and selection procedures. All staff applicants are asked for references and DBS checks are made before a worker can work unsupervised.
- There is no unsupervised work by those without DBS checks, and even if staff have a clean disclosure, lone working with one young person/child must be avoided
- There should be no lifts given to only one volunteer / project user as far as possible, and only if this is the safer option for the individual.
- Staff and volunteers should receive appropriate training in relation to all projects and work undertaken
- Risk assessments for activities and individuals should be undertaken by project staff
- There should be 2 members of staff (AYA or otherwise) to be available as far as possible on all projects. If this is not possible then try to have another adult in the same building.
- AYA will follow Buckinghamshire County Council and Action4Youth recommendations on which staff and volunteers require DBS checks.
- References and self-disclosures should be provided by all young people wishing to volunteer.
- Photos should only be taken with consent, and where possible should be group photos rather than of individuals.
- The use of social networking between staff and volunteers or project users shall be limited to an official AYA profile – staff members should not become ‘friends’ with or ‘follow’ volunteers or project users. The Safeguarding Trustee will have access to all AYA social networking profiles for monitoring purposes.
- Emails to volunteers will always be from the AYA email, and texts from the AYA mobile, keeping communication transparent and traceable.

12. Worker Responsibility

Never assume that the other agencies are monitoring a child, young person or vulnerable adult. Others may have doubts but as a key worker with regular contact with the individual, you could be the only person taking action.

Never worry about reporting an incident that may turn out to be unfounded – it is your responsibility to report your suspicions and to pass on disclosures, the relevant authorities will decide whether abuse has occurred, and what happens next.

13. Contact Numbers

AYA Simon Garwood (DSP / Safeguarding Trustee): 07834 274 558
Richard Stansfield (Chair): 01296 394 339

Bucks County Council Safeguarding Adults Board Care-line: 0800 137 915
Child Protection First Response Team: 0845 460 001 or 01296 383 962
Out of office hours 0800 999 7677
Buckinghamshire LADO: 01296 382 070

Thames Valley Police Non-emergency number: 101 Emergency Number: 999
Aylesbury Police station: 01296 396 000

NSPCC Child Protection Helpline: 0808 800 5000