



Voices in Exile

Supporting refugees, asylum seekers & those with no recourse to public funds

Policy for the protection and safeguarding of vulnerable adults

Date written: July 2024	Version: 4
Date due for review: June 2027	Amendments:

Purpose	Scope
This policy of safeguarding is approved and endorsed by the trustees of Voices in Exile (VIE) and is intended to outline this organisation's commitment to the safeguarding of vulnerable adults.	This policy will be applied to any vulnerable individual affiliated with Voices in Exile, as well as all trustees, management, staff and volunteers.

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Company Limited by Guarantee and Registered Charity Number 1130363
OISC registration number: N201800021

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Core Principles of VIE's Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Policy

Voices in Exile aspires to a robust and effective safeguarding culture centred on supporting the rights and holistic needs of our clients, protecting them whilst creating conditions for them to thrive. Our approach is founded on best practice around dialogue and is focussed on strengths and assets, as well as risk or protective management. These principles are embedded both in our charitable aims and in our day-to-day practice and services.

The following measures serve as the framework for this policy and VIE's procedures necessary for the safeguarding of vulnerable adults:

- VIE understands that the wellbeing of vulnerable adults must be given paramount consideration.
- All vulnerable adults, without exception, have the right to protection from abuse regardless of gender, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation or beliefs.
- Adult safeguarding is the process of protecting adults with care and support needs from abuse or neglect. It is an important part of what many public services do, but the key responsibility is with local authorities in partnership with the police and the NHS. The Care Act 2014 puts adult safeguarding within a legal framework.
- Trustees, staff and volunteers must recognise that they have an important role to play in respect of safeguarding vulnerable adults and protecting them from all forms of abuse. All citizens, as well as professionals, are required to enact and support the principles set out in this policy and are responsible for following VIE's procedures for the safeguarding of vulnerable adults.
- VIE is committed to the safe recruitment of all trustees, staff and volunteers, and to their training with respect of this policy and VIE's procedures for the safeguarding of vulnerable adults.
- Any concerns or allegations with regard to the abuse of vulnerable adults must be taken seriously by the named Safeguarding Lead, all staff, the trustees and volunteers and dealt with appropriately (including referral to children's services, appropriate adult social care services or, in emergencies, to the police).

Six key principles underpin all adult safeguarding work

Empowerment

People being supported and encouraged to make their own decisions and informed consent.

'I am asked what I want as the outcomes from the safeguarding process and these directly inform what happens.'

Prevention

It is better to take action before harm occurs.

'I receive clear and simple information about what abuse is, how to recognise the signs and what I can do to seek help.'

Proportionality

The least intrusive response appropriate to the risk presented.

'I am sure that the professionals will work in my interest, as I see them and they will only get involved as much as needed.'

Protection

Support and representation for those in greatest need.

'I get help and support to report abuse and neglect. I get help so that I am able to take part in the safeguarding process to the extent to which I want.'

Partnership

Local solutions through services working with their communities. Communities have a part to play in preventing, detecting and reporting neglect and abuse.

'I know that staff treat any personal and sensitive information in confidence, only sharing what is helpful and necessary. I am confident that professionals will work together and with me to get the best result for me.'

Accountability

Accountability and transparency in delivering safeguarding.

'I understand the role of everyone involved in my life and so do they.'

Making safeguarding personal

In addition to these principles, it is also important that all safeguarding partners take a broad community approach to establishing safeguarding arrangements. It is vital that all organisations recognise that adult safeguarding arrangements are there to protect individuals. We all have different preferences, histories, circumstances and lifestyles, so it is unhelpful to prescribe a process that must be followed whenever a concern is raised.

Confidentiality and information sharing

Trustees, staff and volunteers should, where possible, respect the wishes of vulnerable adults who wish particular information or conversations to be kept confidential. However, sometimes a balance has to be struck between respecting a vulnerable adult's wish for confidentiality and the need to safeguard the welfare and safety of that vulnerable adult.

The safety and welfare of a vulnerable adult must be the overriding consideration, so staff and volunteers must always consider safety and welfare when deciding whether information about them should be shared. If it is felt that information should be shared, the agreement of the vulnerable adult to that information sharing should be sought. **Information should always be shared, without consent if necessary, if it is felt that the safety or welfare of a vulnerable adult is at risk.**

Responsibilities of all VIE staff, trustees and volunteers with responsible roles

Having considered the above guidance in respect of confidentiality and information sharing, if any member of staff or volunteer has any concerns about the safety or welfare of a vulnerable adult they should immediately report their concerns to their line manager or supervising caseworker, who will consult with the Safeguarding Lead or Safeguarding Officer/s, if needed (please see the section on Safeguarding Procedures for contact information and procedure).

Responsibilities of Voices in Exile

VIE must ensure that:

- There is always a named person or persons who have clearly defined roles in respect of the safeguarding of vulnerable adults. These people are presently **Safeguarding Lead and Safeguarding Officer/s**.
- The named person will have successfully completed suitable training to enable them to identify and make referrals to appropriate professional agencies and keep appropriate secure records, informing staff and volunteers with responsible roles of the appropriate procedures.
- VIE has a strict lone working policy and procedure. Staff and volunteers must not work alone with vulnerable adults unless they have an enhanced DBS check.
- Currently, the administrator is responsible for ensuring that necessary DBS checks are carried out and reapplied for every 3 years.
- Where it has not been possible to obtain a DBS check for a member of staff or a volunteer, they will not work unsupervised with vulnerable adults.
- All staff and volunteers working with vulnerable adults are monitored and supervised and have opportunities to learn about safeguarding vulnerable adults in accordance with their roles and responsibilities.
- Any complaint regarding the behaviour of any member of staff, trustee or volunteer will be dealt with by Safeguarding Lead, (or in the case of the complaint relating to the Safeguarding Lead, will be dealt with by the Chair of Trustees or Trustee Designated Safeguarding Lead) as soon as is practicable. See procedure section for contact information.

Responsibilities of Safeguarding Lead and Officer/s

- The Safeguarding Lead / Officer needs to be consulted when a line manager needs further advice about managing a safeguarding issue or if there is a need to refer to an external agency. The staff member or volunteer must always discuss with their line manager and if not available the Safeguarding Lead / Officer. Where necessary, the Safeguarding Lead or Officer will authorise referral of these concerns to the appropriate agency / agencies. Under no circumstances should any volunteer / staff take concerns directly to a statutory agency (BHCC adult safeguarding team) without consulting the named Safeguarding Lead or Officer first. Consult your line manager and/or the Head of Services in the exceptional circumstances where neither might be available.
- The staff member should complete a safeguarding report form with their line manager or the Safeguarding Lead (or Officer if absent)). The aim of the report form is to make a clear plan to safeguard the adult. There should be some set actions and timescales in which to complete these. It is the manager's responsibility to ensure these actions are followed up and to seek further advice from the Safeguarding Lead or officer if required. Completed safeguarding reports should be stored in the following location:
Voices in Exile/Safeguarding/Safeguarding client confidential
- Actions taken to address the specific safeguarding concern should be kept on the report form so there is a record of the safeguarding work that has taken place. Notes on discussions, actions and decision-making regarding safeguarding concerns should be kept on the client's file on AdvicePro, or on the hard copy file if appropriate.
- Once actions have been completed to address the immediate concerns the form should be signed and dated by the person who completed it and sent to the Safeguarding Lead / Officer to check, sign and file.

- The completed safeguarding report form will be stored securely in a designated electronic folder on Teams for a period of seven years.
- While the Safeguarding Lead and / or Officer retains ultimate responsibility, staff members will ensure that, as appropriate and relevant to circumstances, vulnerable adults are told about the safeguarding policies and procedures of ViE and that they know who to approach if they have concerns. Similarly, they will ensure that all persons visiting or working at ViE are aware of how they can make a complaint about unacceptable and/or abusive behaviour towards children or vulnerable adults.

Recognition of abuse

Staff and volunteers at ViE need to be aware that vulnerable adults may be abused by a variety of people. These include;

- A staff member, trustee or volunteer
- A member of a recognised professional group (e.g. a doctor, social worker or someone else working with the adult in a professional capacity or posing as someone doing this)
- Another member of ViE
- A relative or member of the person's social group
- A member of the public
- A person who deliberately targets vulnerable people in order to exploit them

Recognising abuse is not easy even for experts, but some indication that abuse may be happening or has happened, are as follows:

- Controlling a person's finances
- Isolating a person from friends and family
- Taking control over aspects of a person's everyday life, such as where they can go, who they can see, what they can wear and when they can sleep
- Depriving a person of access to support services, such as medical services
- Humiliating, degrading or dehumanising a person
- Repeated exclusions of rights
- Unexplained injury
- Injuries inconsistent with lifestyle
- Bruises or welts on face, lips, mouth, arms, back or buttocks
- Unexplained burns
- Fractures
- Lacerations to mouth, lips, gums, eyes, or external genitalia
- Finger marks on body
- Medication misuse
- Pregnancy in a woman who is unable to consent
- Withdrawn, depressed, or stressed
- Bleeding, pain or itching in genital area
- Sexually transmitted disease
- Unexplained change in behaviour
- Poor personal hygiene
- Denial of visitors or phone calls
- Failure to ensure appropriate privacy or personal care
- Lack of flexibility or choice e.g. choice of food

- Lack of adequate procedures, e.g. for medication, financial management
- Controlling relationships between members of staff, volunteers and members of the group
- Poor professional practice

This list is condensed, additional symptoms and signs of abuse can be sourced from Mayo Clinic "Symptoms and Signs of Abuse 2018". Although definitions of abuse and neglect of vulnerable adults are somewhat different, for the purposes of these procedures the above definitions - suitably modified - are adequate for understanding what might constitute the abuse or neglect of a vulnerable adult.

Definition of a vulnerable adult

Note: **All three of these criteria need to be met** in order to raise an adult safeguarding concern to the local authority.

An adult might be considered vulnerable if he/she is aged 18 years or over and:

- **Has needs for care and support (whether or not the local council is meeting any of those needs) and**
- **is experiencing, or at risk of, abuse or neglect; and**
- **as a result of those care and support needs is unable to protect themselves from either the risk of, or the experience of abuse or neglect**

A vulnerable adult may be a person who:

- Is elderly and frail due to ill health
- Has a learning disability
- Has a physical disability and /or sensory impairment
- Has mental health needs including dementia or personality disorder
- Has a long -term illness /or condition
- Misuses substances or alcohol
- Is unable to make their own decisions and in need of care and support
- Has no recourse to public funds
- Is a modern slave
- Is at risk of honour-based violence
- Has insecure or no immigration status
- Is a young adult, over the age of 18, who has care and support needs and is 'in transition' from children's to adults' services
- Is a carer (looking after another person with care and support needs)

Sourced from the Law Commission "Who Decides: Making Decisions on Behalf of Mentally Incapacitated Adult 1997". This list is not exhaustive, other people might also be considered to be vulnerable adults.

Categories of adult abuse

Physical Abuse

Resulting from acts of commission or omission on the part of others and causing pain, injury or impairment, including hitting slapping, pushing, kicking, misuse of medication, restraint or inappropriate sanctions.

Further headings under which to consider physical abuse:

- Bodily assaults: Resulting in injuries such as burns, bruises, abrasions, fractures, dislocations, welts, wounds, rashes, pressure sores or marks of physical restraint.
- Bodily impairment: Manifested in malnutrition, dehydration, emaciation, poor hygiene, drug or alcohol addiction, sleep deprivation, failure to thrive, unexplained fatigue, hyper/ hypothermia, or improper ventilation.
- Medical/ healthcare maltreatment: Inappropriate medication, over / under medication, inappropriate administration, provision of healthcare may be unavailable to an excessive degree, or irregular, improper, inadequate or duplicated in some way.

Domestic violence

Including:

- psychological
- physical
- sexual
- financial
- emotional abuse
- so called 'honour'-based violence

Sexual abuse

Including rape and sexual assault or sexual acts to which the vulnerable adult has not consented or **could not** consent or was pressured into consenting. Sexual abuse may also include exposure to pornographic materials, being made to witness sexual acts and encompasses sexual harassment and non-contact abuse.

Emotional or psychological abuse

Including threats of harm, controlling, intimidation, coercion, harassment, verbal abuse, isolation or withdrawal from services or support networks. It might include playing on someone's emotions to make them feel afraid, uneasy or unnecessarily dependent; bullying; shouting; threats of harm or abandonment; persistent ignoring; emotional blackmail; undermining; ridiculing; racial abuse; deprivation of contact; blaming or controlling.

Neglect (acts of omission and poor professional practice)

Including 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.

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; the withholding of key identity documents including immigration documents and correspondence such as passports, Biometric Residence Permits or letters from the Home Office.

Types of modern slavery

- Human trafficking
- Forced labour
- Domestic servitude
- Sexual exploitation, such as escort work, prostitution and pornography
- Debt bondage – being forced to work to pay off debts that realistically they never will be able to

GOV.UK has more information on [identifying and reporting modern slavery](#)

Discriminatory abuse

Including racist, sexist, that based on a person's disability and other forms of harassment, slurs or similar treatment.

Institutional abuse

Institutional abuse is mistreatment or abuse by a regime or the individuals within an institution. It occurs when the routines, systems and norms of an institution compel individuals to sacrifice their own preferred lifestyle and cultural diversity to the needs of the institution.

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. It should be noted that self-neglect may not prompt a section 42 enquiry (an enquiry under the Care Act that takes place when there are concerns about vulnerable adults). An assessment should be made on a case-by-case basis. A decision on whether a response is required under safeguarding will depend on the adult's ability to protect themselves by controlling their own behaviour. There may come a point when they are no longer able to do this, without external support.

A note on forced marriage

A forced marriage is where one or both people do not (or in cases of people with learning disabilities or reduced capacity, cannot) consent to the marriage as they are pressurised, or abuse is used, to force them to do so. It is recognised in the UK as a form of domestic or child abuse and a serious abuse of human rights. The criminal offence of forced marriage includes taking someone overseas to force them to marry (whether or not the marriage takes place) or marrying someone who lacks the mental capacity to consent to the marriage (whether or not they are pressurised). Forcing someone to marry can result in a 7-year prison sentence. The legal age to marry in England and Wales is 18 (this changed in February 2023). It's now a crime to do anything that would mean that a child is married before their 18th birthday, even if there is no violence, threats or other forms of coercion involved. As with all laws relating to forced marriage, this applies to non-binding, unofficial 'marriages' as well as legal marriages.

Key contacts:

Contact details for Safeguarding Lead & Officer

Mel Steel	Director & Safeguarding Lead Voices in Exile Fitzherbert Centre 36 Upper Bedford Street Brighton BN2 1JP Tel: 01273 328598 Email: mel.steel@voicesinexile.org or director@voicesinexile.org Out of hours & in emergencies only: 07815 100802
Beth Hudson	Safeguarding Officer Address as above Mobile: 07394 827425 (Mon-Thur 9-5) Email: beth.hudson@voicesinexile.org
Jacquie Ballard	Safeguarding Officer Address as above Tel: 07594 240255 Email: jacquie.ballard@voicesinexile.org (Mon-Thur 9-5)

If there is evidence that a serious crime has been committed or that someone is in immediate danger, it may be necessary to contact Sussex Police on 111 or in an emergency call **999** first.

See also:

Safeguarding Adults Procedures FINAL March 2024
Safeguarding Children Policy FINAL March 2024
Safeguarding Children Procedures FINAL March 2024
Domestic Abuse and VAWG Policy FINAL Jan 2024
Modern Slavery Statement FINAL March 2024
Whistleblowing FINAL March 2024