



# Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy

## 1. Definitions

For the purposes of this policy:

- A vulnerable adult is defined as somebody aged eighteen or over who is at greater than normal risk of abuse
- Anyone under the age of eighteen is considered a child

## 2. Policy

- 2.1. FRESH is committed to safeguarding the welfare of all children and vulnerable adults. We will take all reasonable steps to promote safe practices and protect children and vulnerable adults from harm, abuse and exploitation.
- 2.2. In order to minimise the risk of harm, abuse and exploitation we will:
  - a) Implement recruitment procedures for staff, volunteers and helpers to ensure so far as possible that nobody unsuitable or disqualified from working with children or vulnerable adults is appointed
  - b) Ensure that all employees, volunteers and Directors are aware of their responsibility to protect children and vulnerable adults
  - c) Promote the right of a child or vulnerable adult to be listened to and taken seriously, so they are able to express their views, thoughts and concerns
  - d) Ensure that all staff, volunteers and Directors understand the need to report protection concerns about a child or vulnerable adult, or inappropriate conduct of a worker or volunteer towards a child or vulnerable adult
  - e) Ensure that staff, volunteers and Directors understand their responsibility to refer concerns about the protection of any child or vulnerable adult to the Board
  - f) Ensure that staff, volunteers and Directors are provided with appropriate support and training on child and vulnerable adult protection



### **3. Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Checks**

- 3.1. Employees and volunteers who have substantial unsupervised contact with children and vulnerable adults will be Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checked. Applicants are required to complete the appropriate forms, supply the relevant identification and co-operate in the process.
- 3.2. All applicants will be made aware that any relevant appointment, whether paid or voluntary, is subject to satisfactory DBS checks. Information gathered through this process will be treated in the strictest confidence.

### **4. Criminal Convictions**

If a shortlisted applicant for paid or voluntary work has disclosed a relevant criminal conviction, an open and measured discussion will be held with them about the relevant offences. This will include consideration of:

- Whether the convictions or other matters are relevant to the duties
- The seriousness of any offence
- The length of time since the offence or other matters occurred
- Whether the applicant has a pattern of offending or other relevant behaviour
- Whether the applicant's circumstances or other relevant matters have changed since the offending behaviour
- The safety and well-being of other employees, volunteers or service users
- Any likely repercussions from taking on that applicant for FRESH's reputation and public standing

### **5. Support and supervision for employees and volunteers**

All employees and volunteers will receive regular support and supervision which will be recorded in writing and both parties given a copy. This should provide both parties with the opportunity to discuss any concerns or problems they may be experiencing and to identify any training or support needs

### **6. Planning activities to minimise harm**

- 6.1 **Risk assessments and other preventative considerations**  
FRESH's Health and Safety Policy requirements must be carefully considered when planning and carrying out activities involving people who may be vulnerable



- 6.2. Employees and volunteers must carry out risk assessments before undertaking events or activities with children or vulnerable adults, in order to address hazards and risks before any accident or harm occurs.

Risk assessments should consider:

- The suitability of the task to be tackled or activities to be undertaken
- The suitability of premises, tools and equipment
- The provision of appropriate clothing (e.g. wet weather clothing, footwear)
- The provision of safety information and training to all staff, volunteers and participants
- The provision of first aid facilities
- Emergency communications and procedures, including action in the event of an accident
- Fire prevention measures
- Whether employees or volunteers will be working directly with the service user group

- 6.3. People involved in FRESH-organised activities should be supervised and supported wherever possible. The level and extent of supervision will depend on the nature of the activity, the number and age-range of the people involved, and whether anyone involved has any specific needs

- 6.4. Consent forms should be completed by the parents or guardians of anyone who is under eighteen, or by the carers of anyone who is particularly vulnerable and who wishes to participate in a residential or hazardous activity.

## 7. Awareness of dangers

### 7.1 Types of harm

- **Physical:** where vulnerable people are exposed to physical hurt or injury
- **Emotional:** where vulnerable people are harmed by a constant lack of love and affection, or intimidated by threats or taunts
- **Neglect:** where adults fail to care for vulnerable people and protect them from danger, seriously impairing their health, well-being or development
- **Sexual:** where vulnerable people are encouraged or forced to observe or participate in any form of sexual activity, including the use of sexualised language



- **Discriminatory:** This is motivated by prejudice and discrimination, where values, beliefs or culture result in a misuse of power to deny some groups or individuals access to mainstream opportunities. It may include institutional discrimination, which occurs in group settings such as residential, nursing or day care centres and involves mistreatment of a group or individual by an organisation or regime. It can include deliberate abuse, inadequate care, neglect or poor professional practice
- **Financial:** where somebody's funds or resources are being inappropriately used by a third person. This includes withholding money or inappropriate use of a person's money or property

Recognising many of the warning signs is common sense. However, it is essential to rely on facts rather than opinions, and not jump to prejudiced conclusions.

## 7.2 Who may be abusers?

Many abusers are known to the person they are abusing. Abusers may be parents, siblings, other relatives, family members, neighbours or family friends. Children, young people and vulnerable adults are also subject to abuse from their peers. An abuser may be an adult who holds a position of authority over a young victim. There is no reliable way to identify an abuser – active or potential. They can be people of any background, and do not seem any different from anyone else.

## 8. Responding to alleged or suspected abuse

8.1. If somebody wants to talk about abuse, it is essential that the person they're talking to:

- Listens carefully to what they say, keeping calm and looking at them directly
- Lets them know that someone else must be told if they are to be helped
- Reassures them that they are not to blame
- Is aware that they may have been threatened
- Does not push them for information
- Reassures them that they are right to talk about it, and that what they say is accepted
- Lets them know what will happen next and promises to let them know the outcome
- Keeps that promise



## 8.2. Dealing with alleged or suspected abuse

- a) If a vulnerable person talks about abuse, or abuse is suspected, the person to whom s/he talks **must**:
  - i) Write down accurately what the person has said or any signs of abuse (see Appendix A)
  - ii) Notify a Director, giving them the written information
- b) If no Director is available and the vulnerable person is in immediate danger, the relevant authorities should be contacted at once (see 8.6. below) and a Director contacted as soon as possible.
- c) Dealing with incidents of harm is difficult for any individual, so employees and volunteers **should not**:
  - Act alone
  - Start to investigate
  - Make any assumptions about the people involved
- d) An employee or volunteer who is involved in a disclosure of any kind may feel that they need to speak to a care professional to seek guidance or reassure themselves they have done the right thing.

There are free, independent confidential help lines available:

- NSPCC operates a 24 hour help line for anyone concerned about a child or young person - **0800 800500**.
- Action on Elder Abuse (AEA) operates a helpline from Monday to Friday, 9,00 am to 5.00 pm providing information, advice and support to victims and people who are concerned about or have witnessed abuse - **080 8808 8141**
- 24-hour National Domestic Violence Free phone Helpline - 0808 2000 247

## 8.3. Dealing with alleged or suspected harm involving a FRESH Member, employee or volunteer

- If there is a suspicion that a FRESH Member, employee or volunteer may be involved in abuse, a Director should be told as soon as possible. The suspected Member, employee or volunteer should be immediately removed from access to vulnerable people, but be assured that no presumptions have been made and that the allegation will be fully investigated by the relevant authorities.



- If gross misconduct is suspected, it may be appropriate to ask the suspected person not to carry out work or have contact with FRESH while the matter is under investigation . Once the relevant authority has concluded its enquiry, the Board should decide what further action is appropriate.

#### 8.4. **Accurate notes**

Full and accurate notes must be written as soon as possible. They may be invaluable to the investigation and used as evidence in court. A pro-forma for notes is available at Appendix A. Notes should include:

- a) The date and time of the alleged incident or disclosure
- b) The parties involved
- c) What was alleged
- d) The action taken.

A copy of the notes must be sent to and kept by the Society's Secretary.

#### 8.5. **Confidentiality and sensitivity**

- Allegations or suspicions may prove to be unfounded, and when dealing with such personal and emotive issues, confidentiality **must** be maintained at all times
- Notes and records must be kept in a secure place and shared only with those who need to know about the incident or allegation.
- A sensitive approach must be taken when talking and dealing with anybody who is suspected or accused, explaining why an investigation has to take place and reassuring them that the matter will be handled discreetly and even-handedly
- No assumptions of guilt should be made unless a conviction has been obtained
- Impartial contact must be maintained by a nominated FRESH officer during this process

#### 8.6. **Reporting Suspected Abuse to the Authorities**

FRESH has no responsibility to investigate any allegations of abuse. Our responsibility is to ensure that the appropriate agencies are informed.

- **Social Services Initial Contact team** - 0345 678 9021 (9.00 am to 5.00 pm Monday to Thursday, 9.00 am to 4.00 pm Friday).
- **Outside these hours contact the Emergency Social Work Duty Team** - 0345 678 9040.



## 9. Summary

### 9.1. Welfare

As an equality-based organisation, FRESH actively encourages the involvement of vulnerable people in its governance and activities. This includes ensuring their well-being, health, safety and general welfare while they are involved with FRESH and its activities.

### 9.2. Health and safety

Health and safety considerations are particularly important when planning and carrying out activities with anyone who may be vulnerable. Actions should include:

- Carrying out prior risk assessments
- Providing adequate supervision and support from FRESH employees, volunteers and Directors.

### 9.3. Dealing with possible abuse (allegations or suspicions)

All employees and volunteers need to be aware of the harm that vulnerable people can experience. This can include neglect and physical, emotional and sexual abuse.

If a vulnerable person wants to talk with our employees or volunteers about abuse, the person to whom s/he talks **must**:

- a) Write down accurately what the person has said using or signs of abuse (see pro-forma at Appendix A)
- b) Notify a Director, giving them the written information. It is vitally important that a Director is notified, so that person can inform and liaise with the relevant authorities. In the absence of a Director, and if a vulnerable person may be in immediate danger, employees or volunteers should contact Social Services or the Police themselves, They should then inform a Director as soon as possible.
- c) If there is a suspicion that a FRESH employee or volunteer may be involved in abuse, employees and volunteers should let a Director know as soon as possible. The suspected employee or volunteer should be immediately removed from access to vulnerable people, but be assured that no presumptions have been made and that the allegation will be fully investigated by the relevant authorities.



- d) Employees and volunteers **should not:**
- Act alone
  - Start to investigate
  - Make any assumptions about the persons involved.
- e) An employee or volunteer who is involved in a disclosure of any kind may feel that they need to speak to a care professional to seek guidance or reassure themselves they have done the right thing.

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## 10. Review

- This policy will be reviewed annually by the Board on or around the anniversary of its adoption.
- Date of next scheduled review: November 2014





## Appendix A: Record of disclosure or signs of abuse

**To be completed by person receiving disclosure or noticing signs of abuse.**

<b>Name of person disclosing or displaying signs of abuse:</b>	
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<b>Date and time disclosure received or signs of abuse noticed:</b>	<b>DD</b>	<b>MM</b>	<b>YYYY</b>	<b>Hr</b>	<b>Min</b>

<b>Sex of person disclosing</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>

<b>What is their date of birth (if known)?</b>	<b>DD</b>	<b>MM</b>	<b>YYYY</b>

<b>What is their address (if known)?</b>



**What did the person say (word for word), or what signs of abuse did you see? (continue on separate sheet(s) if necessary)**

**Any other observations or comments? (continue on separate sheet(s) if necessary)**

**Full name of person completing this form:**

**Signature of person completing this form:**

**Date:**

**DD**

**MM**

**YYYY**

