

Veterans Community Network

SAFEGUARDING POLICY

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Safeguarding Lead	Dr Gillian Le Page
Policy written by	Dr Gillian Le Page
Ratified by	VCN Stake Holder Group
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Policy written by	Dr Gillian Le Page
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Operational Safeguarding Lead	Dr Gillian Le Page
Trustee Safeguarding Lead	Andy Collacott
Policy written by	Dr Gillian Le Page and Andy Collacott
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Authoritative online guidance and referral resources

- [Charity Commission - Safeguarding and protecting people for charities and trustees](#)
- [Care and support statutory guidance - Chapter 14: Safeguarding](#)
- [Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026](#)
- [Find your local council - for local adult and children's safeguarding routes](#)
- [Disclosure and Barring Service - making barring referrals](#)
- [Prevent duty guidance](#)
- [Charity Commission - report a serious incident](#)
- [ICO - data sharing and information sharing guidance](#)

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1. Safeguarding policy

Veterans Community Network (VCN) provides peer mentoring and support services to veterans, reservists, serving personnel and their families across England.

VCN is committed to taking reasonable steps to protect from harm beneficiaries, trustees, staff, volunteers and other people who come into contact with the charity through its activities.

Some people accessing VCN services may have care and support needs. An adult safeguarding concern may arise where an adult has care and support needs, is experiencing or is at risk of abuse or neglect, and, because of those needs, is unable to protect themselves from the risk or experience of abuse or neglect.

VCN will not tolerate abuse, neglect, exploitation or harm in any form. This includes, but is not limited to, physical abuse, domestic abuse, sexual abuse, psychological or emotional abuse, financial or material abuse, modern slavery, discriminatory abuse, organisational abuse, neglect and acts of omission, and self-neglect.

This policy sets out how VCN trustees, staff and volunteers must identify, respond to, report, record and refer safeguarding concerns. It also explains VCN's responsibilities for working with statutory authorities and other relevant organisations to promote welfare and protect people from abuse and neglect.

This policy applies to safeguarding concerns arising through any VCN service, activity, partnership, event, telephone or online contact, or other relationship connected with VCN's work.

VCN will adopt a person-centred approach and, wherever possible and appropriate, involve the adult in decisions about safeguarding action. VCN will maintain safe and effective working practices and act promptly where there is a risk of harm.

This policy is informed by the Care Act 2014, the Care and Support Statutory Guidance and other relevant safeguarding legislation and guidance. Where an external safeguarding referral is required, VCN will identify and follow the appropriate safeguarding arrangements for the area concerned, including the relevant local authority adult safeguarding or children's social care referral pathway. Uncertainty about which authority has responsibility must not delay action necessary to protect a person from harm.

[Care and support statutory guidance](#)

All trustees, staff and volunteers must know how to access the current controlled version of this policy, understand their safeguarding responsibilities and confirm that they have read it. Superseded copies must not be used operationally.

Policy objectives

- provide a clear overview of adult and child safeguarding relevant to VCN's work;
- define safeguarding responsibilities and reporting routes;
- ensure concerns are responded to promptly, proportionately and consistently;
- support person-led and outcome-focused safeguarding practice;

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- ensure appropriate referrals and information sharing with statutory and regulatory bodies;
- promote safer recruitment, appropriate boundaries and organisational learning.

2. Governance, roles and accountability

The Board of Trustees retains collective and ultimate responsibility for safeguarding within VCN.

[Charity Commission safeguarding guidance for charities and trustees](#)

Safeguarding will remain a standing governance and operational agenda item. The Trustee Safeguarding Lead will provide proportionate safeguarding oversight, scrutiny, challenge and assurance to the Board, including organisational safeguarding risks, compliance, training, significant themes, actions and lessons learned, while maintaining appropriate confidentiality.

Operational Safeguarding Lead

The Operational Safeguarding Lead is the Service Director, Dr Gillian Le Page. The Operational Safeguarding Lead is responsible for the day-to-day management of safeguarding arrangements, providing advice to staff and volunteers, coordinating safeguarding responses and referrals, maintaining appropriate safeguarding records and ensuring operational safeguarding procedures remain current.

Deputy Operational Safeguarding Lead

The Deputy Operational Safeguarding Lead will be nominated by the Board of Trustees as required. The Deputy provides cover where the Operational Safeguarding Lead is unavailable and provides an alternative reporting route where there is an actual or perceived conflict of interest.

Trustee Safeguarding Lead

The Trustee Safeguarding Lead is Andy Collacott. The Trustee Safeguarding Lead provides safeguarding oversight on behalf of the Board, including scrutiny and challenge of safeguarding arrangements, monitoring compliance and organisational safeguarding risk, considering significant safeguarding themes and lessons, and providing assurance to the Board.

The Trustee Safeguarding Lead may provide advice and support in relation to safeguarding matters but does not replace the operational responsibilities of the Operational Safeguarding Lead, the safeguarding responsibilities of individual trustees, staff or volunteers, or the collective responsibility of the Board.

The Trustee Safeguarding Lead will receive sufficient and proportionate information to provide oversight, challenge and assurance. Identifiable case information will only be shared with the Trustee Safeguarding Lead where necessary and proportionate.

Significant safeguarding concerns, allegations involving VCN personnel, serious incidents, recurring themes or concerns about the effectiveness of VCN's safeguarding arrangements must be brought to the attention of the Trustee Safeguarding Lead.

3. What is safeguarding adults?

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Safeguarding means protecting an adult's right to live in safety, free from abuse and neglect. It involves people and organisations working together to prevent and stop abuse or neglect while promoting the adult's wellbeing and, where appropriate, taking account of their views, wishes, feelings and beliefs.

VCN applies the six principles that underpin adult safeguarding:

- Empowerment - supporting people to make their own decisions and give informed consent where appropriate.
- Prevention - acting before harm occurs wherever possible.
- Proportionality - using the least intrusive response appropriate to the risk.
- Protection - providing support and representation for those in greatest need.
- Partnership - working with communities and other organisations to prevent, detect and report abuse and neglect.
- Accountability - being transparent and accountable in safeguarding practice.

4. Making Safeguarding Personal

Making Safeguarding Personal (MSP) means safeguarding should be person-led and outcome-focused. The individual should, wherever possible, be involved in identifying how they want the safeguarding concern to be addressed, giving them greater choice and control while improving wellbeing and safety.

VCN will deal with each concern on its individual circumstances. People's preferences, histories, cultures, relationships and lifestyles differ, and the same response will not be appropriate in every case.

5. Who do adult safeguarding duties apply to?

The Care Act 2014 adult safeguarding duties apply where an adult:

- has needs for care and support, whether or not the local authority is meeting those needs;
- is experiencing, or is 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 person does not need to meet the statutory adult safeguarding threshold in order to receive support from VCN. Where a concern falls outside the statutory threshold, VCN should still consider appropriate support, risk management, signposting or referral.

6. What to do if you are concerned: Respond, Report, Record, Refer

Respond

- If anyone is in immediate danger, requires urgent medical attention, or a serious crime is in progress, call 999.

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- Listen calmly and take the concern seriously.
- Obtain only the information necessary to understand the immediate concern and the person's wishes. Do not investigate, repeatedly question the person, seek proof or ask leading questions.
- Where appropriate, explain what will happen next and that information may need to be shared to keep them or others safe.
- Where the concern relates to an adult, seek consent to safeguarding action and referral wherever it is safe and appropriate to do so. If action is taken without consent, record the lawful safeguarding reason and why the action was necessary and proportionate.

Report

Report the concern as soon as possible to the Operational Safeguarding Lead. If the Operational Safeguarding Lead is unavailable, report it to the Deputy Operational Safeguarding Lead. Follow the alternative escalation arrangements in this policy where the concern involves the Operational Safeguarding Lead, Deputy, Trustee Safeguarding Lead or Chair.

A safeguarding concern must not be withheld or delayed because a particular VCN office-holder is unavailable.

Record

Make a factual, contemporaneous record as soon as possible. Record what was seen, heard or disclosed; the date, time and location; the people involved; the person's wishes where known; immediate actions taken; advice sought; decisions made; referrals made; and the reasons for those decisions.

Where recording a disclosure, use the person's own words wherever possible and distinguish clearly between fact, observation and opinion.

Apparently minor or low-level concerns should also be recorded where they may indicate an emerging pattern of harm or inappropriate behaviour.

Refer

The Operational Safeguarding Lead, Deputy or person acting in that role must consider:

- the adult's wishes and preferred outcomes;
- whether the adult has capacity to make the relevant safeguarding decision;
- the nature, seriousness and immediacy of the risk;
- the safety and wellbeing of any child or other adult at risk;
- whether a person in a position of trust is involved;
- whether a crime may have been committed or police involvement may be required;
- whether the concern may affect other people;
- whether external safeguarding, regulatory or professional advice is required.

Where referral is required, it must be made promptly to the appropriate agency. This may include the police, the relevant local authority adult safeguarding service, children's social care, the Disclosure and Barring Service, the Charity Commission or another relevant regulator or professional body.

Family members or relatives must not be informed automatically. Their involvement should take account of the adult's wishes and capacity, whether a family member may be implicated, whether disclosure could increase risk, and any advice from statutory safeguarding agencies.

Statutory safeguarding or police referrals must not be delayed while internal governance, disciplinary or regulatory reporting is considered.

7. Escalation and disagreement

Where a safeguarding concern or allegation involves the Operational Safeguarding Lead, it must be reported directly to the Trustee Safeguarding Lead. The person who is the subject of the concern must not investigate or determine the safeguarding response.

Where a concern involves the Trustee Safeguarding Lead, it must be reported directly to the Chair of Trustees.

Where a concern involves the Chair of Trustees, it must be reported to the Trustee Safeguarding Lead or another independent Trustee who has no involvement in the matter.

If the Operational Safeguarding Lead decides that no external referral is required and the person raising the concern remains seriously worried about risk or believes the decision is unsafe, they may escalate the matter to the Trustee Safeguarding Lead. Where necessary, a person may seek advice directly from the relevant statutory safeguarding agency.

Nothing within VCN's internal reporting arrangements should delay emergency action or referral to the police, local authority or another statutory safeguarding agency where this is necessary to protect an adult or child from harm.

8. Allegations or concerns about a person in a position of trust

Where a safeguarding allegation or concern relates to a VCN trustee, employee, volunteer, contractor, partner representative or another person working in a position of trust, the concern must be reported immediately through the safeguarding escalation arrangements in this policy.

VCN will assess any immediate risk to beneficiaries and other people and take proportionate protective action. This may include temporary changes to duties, suspension from particular activities or other precautionary measures while the matter is considered. Such action is neutral and does not imply that an allegation has been substantiated.

The person who is the subject of the allegation must not determine or control the safeguarding response.

VCN will consider whether the concern must be referred to the relevant local authority, police, Disclosure and Barring Service, Charity Commission or another relevant regulatory or professional body. Safeguarding action will be coordinated with any employment, disciplinary or volunteer-management process so that an external safeguarding or criminal investigation is not compromised.

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VCN will consider appropriate support for the person affected by the safeguarding concern, the person raising the concern and, where relevant, the person who is the subject of the allegation. Allegations will be handled fairly, sensitively and without prejudging their outcome, while prioritising the safety and welfare of those who may be at risk.

An allegation being unsubstantiated does not, by itself, mean that the person who raised it acted improperly. Deliberately false or malicious allegations may be considered separately under the appropriate VCN policy once safeguarding and any external processes are complete.

9. Safeguarding concerns, complaints and whistleblowing

VCN recognises that a safeguarding concern may arise through a complaint or whistleblowing disclosure. A concern must not be treated solely as a service complaint where the information indicates that a person may be at risk of harm.

Anyone raising a safeguarding concern about the conduct of a VCN trustee, employee or volunteer may use the alternative escalation routes within this policy where it would be inappropriate to report the matter to the person normally responsible for receiving safeguarding concerns.

No person who is the subject of an allegation or complaint will determine the safeguarding response to that allegation. A person who raises a safeguarding concern in good faith must not suffer retaliation or detriment for doing so. VCN's Complaints and Whistleblowing policies should be read alongside this policy.

10. Confidentiality, information sharing and records

Safeguarding information must be handled confidentially and shared only with those who have a legitimate need to know. Confidentiality is not absolute and must not prevent appropriate action to protect an adult or child from harm.

Information sharing must be lawful, necessary, proportionate, relevant, accurate, timely and secure. VCN will process and share safeguarding information in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018, UK GDPR and applicable safeguarding guidance.

Consent should normally be sought where appropriate. Information may be shared without consent where there is a lawful basis and this is necessary to protect the person or others, prevent or detect crime, comply with a legal obligation, or address another overriding safeguarding concern.

The reason for sharing or not sharing information, the information shared, the recipient and the decision-maker must be recorded.

Safeguarding records must be stored securely in VCN's approved safeguarding record system or location, with access restricted to those who require the information for safeguarding, management or governance purposes. Safeguarding information must not be stored in personal accounts or devices or shared through unauthorised channels.

Routine case notes may record that a safeguarding concern was identified and the action taken, where appropriate, but detailed sensitive safeguarding material should be held within the controlled safeguarding record unless there is a clear operational need for it to appear elsewhere.

11. Mental capacity and consent

VCN will apply the principles of the Mental Capacity Act 2005 when considering an adult's ability to make a safeguarding decision.

- An adult must be assumed to have capacity unless it is established otherwise.
- All practicable steps should be taken to support the person to make the decision before concluding that they cannot do so.
- A person is not to be treated as unable to make a decision merely because they make an unwise decision.
- Capacity is decision-specific and time-specific.
- Any act or decision made on behalf of a person who lacks capacity must be in their best interests and should be the least restrictive option appropriate to the circumstances.

Where there is doubt about capacity in relation to a safeguarding decision, the Operational Safeguarding Lead should seek appropriate professional or statutory advice. VCN staff and volunteers must not make clinical or legal capacity determinations outside their competence.

12. Safer recruitment and DBS

VCN is committed to safer recruitment and to ensuring that trustees, staff and volunteers are suitable for their roles. Recruitment and appointment processes will include appropriate identity, reference, role-history and other suitability checks.

VCN will obtain Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks only at the level for which the particular role and activities are legally eligible. Eligibility will be assessed against current DBS guidance and the VCN DBS Policy and Procedure. Where a role changes materially, DBS eligibility will be reviewed.

Where VCN is a regulated activity provider, it will comply with any legal duty to make a barring referral to the DBS where the statutory referral conditions are met. This may include circumstances where a person has been removed from regulated activity, or would have been removed had they not resigned, retired, been redeployed or otherwise ceased the activity, and the relevant conduct, harm-test or relevant-offence condition is met.

DBS referral consideration is separate from police, local authority, disciplinary or professional-regulator processes. One referral does not remove the need to consider another where required.

[DBS barring referral guidance](#)

13. Training, awareness and supervision

All trustees, staff and volunteers must receive safeguarding information appropriate to their role and complete safeguarding awareness training as part of induction. Refresher training will be completed at intervals determined by VCN's training framework and sooner where legislation, guidance, risk or lessons learned require it.

The Operational Safeguarding Lead and Deputy must undertake role-appropriate safeguarding lead training and maintain current knowledge of adult and child safeguarding procedures. The Trustee Safeguarding Lead must undertake training appropriate to trustee-level safeguarding oversight.

VCN will maintain records of safeguarding training and use supervision, case review and organisational learning to ensure safeguarding knowledge is applied in practice.

14. Safeguarding children

VCN does not ordinarily provide services directly to children. However, VCN has a responsibility to act where a trustee, member of staff or volunteer observes, receives a disclosure about, or otherwise becomes aware of a concern that a child or young person under 18 may be at risk of abuse, neglect, exploitation or other harm through VCN activity or contact with a beneficiary, family member or other person.

Safeguarding children is everyone's responsibility. Concerns may include, but are not limited to:

- physical abuse;
- sexual abuse;
- emotional abuse;
- neglect;
- domestic abuse;
- exploitation;
- online harm;
- modern slavery or trafficking;
- other forms of significant harm.

If a child is in immediate danger, requires urgent medical attention, or a serious crime is in progress, call 999. Other child safeguarding concerns must be reported promptly to the Operational Safeguarding Lead or Deputy and, where required, referred to the relevant local authority children's social care service, MASH or equivalent for the child's location.

Staff and volunteers must not investigate the concern or question a child repeatedly. Where a child makes a disclosure, listen, take the disclosure seriously, avoid leading questions, do not promise confidentiality, explain that the information may need to be shared to keep them safe, and make an accurate record as soon as possible.

It may not be appropriate to discuss the concern with a parent, carer or other adult where doing so could increase risk to the child, compromise evidence or interfere with a safeguarding or police response. Advice should be sought from the Operational Safeguarding Lead or the relevant statutory agency.

All child safeguarding concerns, decisions, actions and referrals must be recorded securely.

VCN will have regard to current statutory guidance for England, including Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026.

[Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026](#)

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15. Online and digital safeguarding

This policy applies equally to safeguarding concerns arising through telephone, email, messaging, video conferencing, social media, digital platforms and other remote or online VCN activity.

Trustees, staff and volunteers must use VCN-approved communication methods, protect personal and safeguarding information, and maintain appropriate professional boundaries when communicating with beneficiaries. Safeguarding concerns arising online must be reported, recorded and referred in the same way as concerns arising through face-to-face activity.

16. Peer mentor and volunteer boundaries

VCN peer mentors and volunteers provide support within the boundaries of their role, training and competence. They must not undertake safeguarding investigations, provide professional assessments for which they are not qualified, or attempt to manage serious safeguarding risk without appropriate escalation.

Where a concern exceeds the scope of their role, they must seek advice and escalate the matter in accordance with this policy. Maintaining appropriate boundaries protects both beneficiaries and those providing support.

Where peer mentoring includes home visits, lone working or contact in environments where there may be known behavioural, substance-use or environmental risks, relevant VCN risk assessment and lone-working procedures must also be followed.

17. Serving personnel and Defence interfaces

Where a safeguarding concern involves a serving member of the Armed Forces, VCN will consider whether relevant Defence organisations should be involved in addition to civilian statutory safeguarding agencies. Depending on the circumstances, this may include appropriate welfare services, Defence Medical Services, Service Police or the individual's Chain of Command.

The involvement of a Defence organisation does not replace VCN's responsibility to take appropriate safeguarding action or to refer to the police, local authority or another statutory safeguarding agency where required.

Information will only be shared with Defence organisations where there is an appropriate safeguarding, legal or operational basis to do so and the information shared will be limited to what is necessary and proportionate.

Where there is uncertainty about the appropriate Defence route, the Operational Safeguarding Lead should seek appropriate advice without delaying urgent protective action or a statutory referral.

18. Prevent and radicalisation

VCN recognises that vulnerability to radicalisation or being drawn into terrorism may present as a safeguarding concern. Concerns must be reported through VCN's safeguarding process and considered alongside the person's circumstances, vulnerability, capacity and level of risk.

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Where appropriate, the Operational Safeguarding Lead will seek advice or make a referral through the relevant local Prevent/Channel arrangements or the police. Where there is an immediate threat to life or a serious crime is in progress, call 999.

VCN will have regard to current Prevent guidance relevant to its activities. VCN's safeguarding responsibilities do not replace the statutory responsibilities of specified authorities.

19. Partnerships and safeguarding risk management

VCN will identify and manage safeguarding risks associated with its services and activities. Safeguarding considerations will form part of planning for new services, partnerships, geographical areas, digital platforms and activities, and proportionate controls will be put in place before delivery begins.

Where VCN works with partner organisations, safeguarding responsibilities and reporting arrangements should be clear and proportionate to the activity. VCN must not assume that its safeguarding responsibility has transferred simply because another organisation is involved.

Where relevant, partnership or service arrangements should address safeguarding standards, safer recruitment, information sharing, reporting routes, allegations involving personnel and cooperation with statutory agencies.

20. Serious incidents, governance and organisational learning

The Board of Trustees retains ultimate responsibility for determining whether a safeguarding matter constitutes a serious incident requiring reporting to the Charity Commission. The Operational Safeguarding Lead and Trustee Safeguarding Lead will ensure potentially reportable incidents are brought promptly to the attention of the Chair and Board. Any Serious Incident Report will be made promptly in accordance with current Charity Commission guidance.

Following a serious safeguarding incident, significant concern or near miss, VCN will consider whether there are lessons for policy, training, supervision, partnerships, record keeping, risk controls or wider organisational practice.

Safeguarding learning should be proportionate and should not wait for an allegation to be substantiated where the circumstances reveal a weakness in VCN's controls or procedures.

21. Useful contacts and referral routes

VCN operates across England. Safeguarding concerns must be referred to the appropriate statutory service for the location of the adult or child concerned. The following contacts provide the principal emergency, internal and local safeguarding referral routes.

Where the relevant local authority is not listed below, or where there is any doubt that the contact information remains current, use GOV.UK – Find your local council to identify the appropriate local authority and check its current Adult Safeguarding or Children's Social Care/MASH referral arrangements.



<https://www.gov.uk/find-local-council>

Emergency and VCN safeguarding contacts

Route	Contact / action
Immediate danger, urgent medical need or serious crime in progress	999
Police non-emergency	101
Operational Safeguarding Lead	gill@vcn.org.uk
Trustee Safeguarding Lead	safeguarding@vcn.org.uk
Concerns involving the Operational Safeguarding Lead	safeguarding@vcn.org.uk
Concerns involving the Trustee Safeguarding Lead	tom@vcn.org.uk

Local authority safeguarding contacts

Area	Adult	Children (MASH)
Bedford Borough Council	Email: adult.protection@bedford.gov.uk Tel: 01234 276222	Tel: 01234 718700 (office hours) Tel: 0300 300 8123 (out of hours)
Luton Council	Email: adultsafeguarding@luton.gov.uk Tel: 01582 547 730	Email: mash@luton.gov.uk Tel: 01582 547653 (office hours) Tel: 0300 3008123 (out of hours)
Central Bedfordshire Council	Email: adult.protection@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk Tel: 0300 300 8122 Tel: 0300 300 8123 (out of hours)	Email: ifd@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk Tel: 0300 3008585 Tel: 0300 3008123 (out of hours)
Cambridgeshire County Council	Tel: 0345 0455202 Tel: 01733 234724 (out of hours)	Cambridgeshire County Council Children Services
Peterborough City Council	Email: adultsocialcare@peterborough.gov.uk Tel: 01733 747474 Tel: 01733 234724 (out of hours)	MASH General Enquiries 01733 864170 PCCMASHReferrals@peterborough.gov.uk Professional Consultation Line 01733 864180
Norfolk County Council	Tel: 0344 800 8020 https://adultsocialcare.norfolk.gov.uk/web/portal/pages/safeguarding#assess	Tel: 0344 800 8020 Tel: 0344 800 8021 (Duty Line) https://norfolkscp.org.uk/people-working-with-children/how-to-raise-a-concern
West Northamptonshire Council	Tel: 0300 1267000 https://forms.westnorthants.gov.uk/xfp/form/924	Email: childrenstrust@nctrust.co.uk Tel: 0300 1267000 https://nctrust.co.uk/report-a-concern-or-request-support/ https://forms.westnorthants.gov.uk/xfp/form/779
North Northamptonshire Council	Tel: 0300 1263000 and select Option 1, Option 2 and Option 1. https://forms.northnorthants.gov.uk/service/Safeguarding_referral	Email: childrenstrust@nctrust.co.uk Tel: 0300 1267000 https://nctrust.co.uk/report-a-concern-or-request-support/ https://nctrust.co.uk/report-a-concern-or-request-support/

Contact information must be checked as part of the annual safeguarding policy review. Where there is any doubt about the accuracy of a local contact or referral route, staff and volunteers must

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check the relevant local authority's current published safeguarding arrangements before making the referral. This must not delay emergency action or a necessary safeguarding referral.

22. Key legislation and guidance

Key legislation - adults and organisational safeguarding

- Care Act 2014
- Data Protection Act 2018
- Equality Act 2010
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Mental Capacity Act 2005
- Modern Slavery Act 2015
- Protection of Freedoms Act 2012
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006
- Sexual Offences Act 2003
- Domestic Abuse Act 2021

Key guidance - adults and charity safeguarding

- Care and Support Statutory Guidance
- Mental Capacity Act 2005 Code of Practice
- Current Charity Commission safeguarding guidance
- Current Charity Commission serious incident reporting guidance
- Current Disclosure and Barring Service eligibility and barring-referral guidance
- Current Prevent Duty Guidance relevant to VCN's activities

Key legislation – children

- Children Act 1989
- Children Act 2004
- Children and Families Act 2014
- Children and Social Work Act 2017
- Equality Act 2010
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Modern Slavery Act 2015
- Sexual Offences Act 2003

Key guidance – children

- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026
- Current information-sharing guidance for safeguarding practitioners
- Current Prevent guidance where relevant

These lists are not exhaustive. VCN will review relevant legislation and guidance when this policy is reviewed and when material changes are published.

Where VCN undertakes work in, or in partnership with, an education setting, the current edition of Keeping Children Safe in Education should be considered where applicable.

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Appendix 1 - Categories and indicators of abuse and neglect

The Care Act framework recognises a range of forms of abuse and neglect. The categories below are not exhaustive, and more than one form may occur at the same time:

- Neglect and acts of omission
- Sexual abuse
- Physical abuse
- Psychological or emotional abuse
- Discriminatory abuse, including hate crime
- Financial or material abuse
- Organisational abuse
- Domestic abuse
- Modern slavery
- Self-neglect, including hoarding where relevant

Financial abuse

Financial or material abuse may include theft, fraud, scams, coercion or undue pressure in relation to money or property, misuse of benefits, wills, inheritance or financial transactions, or misuse or misappropriation of possessions.

Possible indicators

Abuse and neglect can be difficult to identify. Possible indicators may include:

- depression, self-harm or suicide attempts;
- fear, anxiety or unexplained changes in behaviour;
- withdrawal or isolation;
- difficulty making or maintaining relationships;
- poor hygiene, inappropriate clothing or an unsafe living environment;
- unexplained lack of money or unusual financial activity;
- injuries that are difficult to explain or inconsistent with the account given;
- pressure injuries or evidence that care needs are not being met;
- sleep disturbance;
- fear of a particular person or of physical contact;
- inappropriate sexualised behaviour or awareness;
- signs of coercion, control, exploitation or neglect.

Indicators are neither exhaustive nor conclusive. Their presence does not by itself establish that abuse has occurred. Concerns must be considered in context and reported in accordance with this policy.

If you are concerned about a person's wellbeing, you may ask limited, open and non-leading questions to establish immediate safety, what has happened and what the person would like to happen next. Do not investigate, repeatedly question the person, seek proof or attempt to determine whether an allegation is true.

Who may cause abuse or neglect?

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Anyone can cause abuse or neglect. This may include partners, family members, neighbours, friends, acquaintances, local residents, strangers, people who deliberately exploit others, paid staff, professionals, volunteers, contractors, partner personnel, VCN trustees, staff or volunteers, or any other person in a position of trust.



Appendix 2 - Definitions and examples of abuse and neglect

Neglect and acts of omission

Ignoring medical, emotional or physical care needs; failure to provide access to appropriate health, care, support or educational services; or withholding necessities such as medication, adequate nutrition or heating.

Sexual abuse

Rape, sexual assault, sexual harassment, inappropriate looking or touching, sexual teasing or innuendo, sexual photography, exposure to pornography or sexual acts, or sexual activity to which the adult has not consented or was pressured into consenting.

Physical abuse

Assault, hitting, slapping, pushing, misuse of medication, inappropriate restraint or inappropriate physical sanctions.

Psychological or emotional abuse

Threats of harm or abandonment, deprivation of contact, humiliation, blaming, controlling behaviour, intimidation, coercion, harassment, verbal abuse, cyberbullying, isolation or unreasonable and unjustified withdrawal of services or supportive networks.

Discriminatory abuse

Harassment, slurs, unequal treatment or other abuse motivated by, or connected with, a person's protected or perceived characteristic. Examples include age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation. The examples are not exhaustive and do not prevent VCN recognising discriminatory harm on other grounds.

Financial or material abuse

Theft, fraud, internet scamming, coercion in relation to financial affairs or arrangements, including wills, property, inheritance or transactions, or misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits.

Organisational abuse

Neglect or poor care practice within an institution, care setting or service, including care provided in a person's own home. This may range from a one-off incident to ongoing ill-treatment and may arise from poor practice, systems, policies, processes or organisational culture.

Domestic abuse

Domestic abuse may include physical or sexual abuse, violent or threatening behaviour, controlling or coercive behaviour, economic abuse, psychological or emotional abuse, stalking, harassment, forced marriage and so-called 'honour'-based abuse. Domestic abuse can occur between people aged 16 or over who are personally connected.

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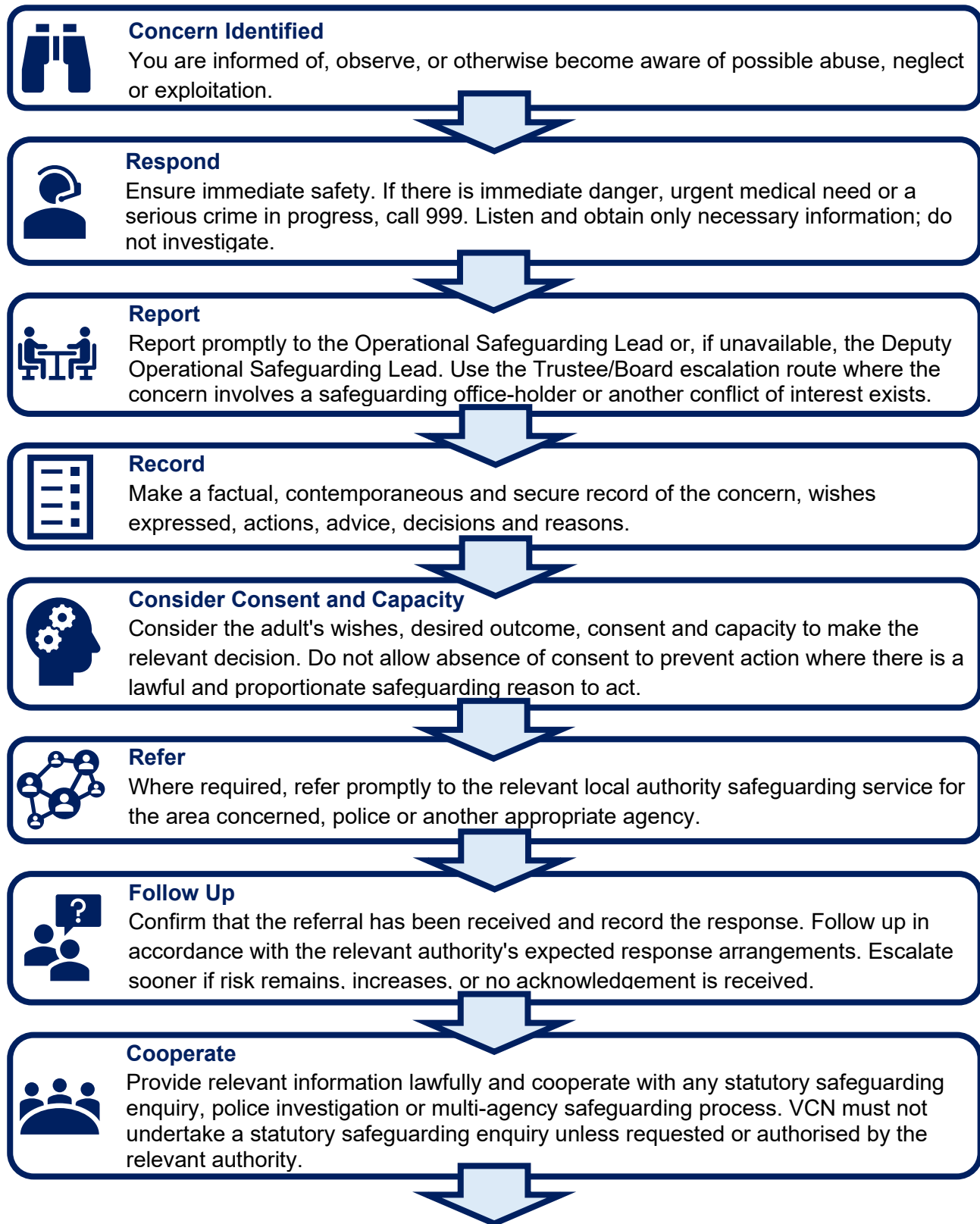
Modern slavery

Slavery, human trafficking, forced labour and domestic servitude. Perpetrators may use coercion, deception, threats or other means to exploit and control people.

Self-neglect

A wide range of behaviour involving neglect of a person's personal hygiene, health or surroundings, including an inability or unwillingness to meet essential care needs and, where relevant, hoarding. A safeguarding response should consider the person's circumstances, capacity, level of risk and the need for a proportionate multi-agency response.

Appendix 3 - Adult Safeguarding Concern and Referral Flowchart



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Review and Close



Record outcomes and any continuing safeguarding plan. Consider support for those involved. Identify lessons learned, policy or training implications and any wider organisational risk.



Governance



Provide proportionate information to the Trustee Safeguarding Lead where required for oversight and assurance. Significant themes, risks and actions should be brought to the Board while maintaining appropriate confidentiality.

DO NOT DELAY: Internal reporting must never delay emergency action or a necessary statutory referral.

Decision note: The person's wishes and desired outcomes should be central to the response wherever possible. VCN may nevertheless need to act or share information without consent where there is a lawful and proportionate safeguarding reason, including risk to others, immediate or serious harm, concerns about capacity or coercion, or another legal requirement.