



# Godalming & Villages Community Store

providing food and household supplies for those in need

## Safeguarding Policy

Godalming and Villages Community Store is committed to safeguarding the rights, well-being and safety of children and vulnerable adults who come into contact with the Store. This policy outlines the steps the Store will take to ensure that vulnerable adults and children are protected. It will be reviewed on an annual basis by the Safeguarding Officer and trustees.

### Definitions (for this document)

#### **Vulnerable adult:**

A person who is or may be in need of community care services by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness; and who is or may be unable to take care of him or herself, or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation<sup>1</sup>.

Vulnerable adults are entitled to: privacy; be treated with dignity; lead an independent life and to be enabled to do so; be able to choose how they lead their lives; the protection of the law; have their rights upheld regardless of ethnic origin, gender, sexuality, impairment or disability, age, religion or cultural background.

#### **Child:**

Describes a child aged 0-17 years old.

For the purpose of packing a food parcel a child is considered to be anyone under the age of 16 as it is assumed that older children will require as much food as an adult. However, for legal purposes a child is anyone under the age of 18.
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### Types of abuse

**Physical abuse** is an act of another party involving contact intended to cause feelings of physical pain, injury, or other physical suffering or bodily harm.

**Sexual abuse** is forcing undesired sexual behaviour by one person onto another.

**Emotional abuse** is any kind of abuse that is emotional rather than physical in nature. It can include anything from verbal abuse and constant criticism to more subtle tactics, such as intimidation, manipulation, and refusal to ever be pleased.

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<sup>1</sup> March 2000. 'No secrets: guidance on developing and implementing multi-agency policies and procedures to protect vulnerable adults from abuse', Department of Health. (The broad definition of a 'vulnerable adult' referred to in the 1997 Consultation Paper *Who decides?* issued by the Lord Chancellor's Department.

**Neglect** is the ongoing failure to meet a person's basic needs

**Financial abuse** is the misuse of a person's money, property or assets through theft or fraud.

**Spiritual abuse** takes place when leaders to whom people look for guidance and spiritual nurture use their positions of authority to manipulate, control, and dominate.

### **Policy Statement**

We seek to ensure that all our team members are aware of what is required from them under the safeguarding policy and make sure that it is practiced at all times.

It is the responsibility of each one of us to play our part in preventing the physical, sexual, spiritual, financial or emotional abuse and neglect of vulnerable adults and children.

We commit ourselves to co-operate fully with the appropriate statutory services when they are conducting official investigation into the abuse and neglect of vulnerable adults, children or young people (by an adult or young person).

This statement is to be brought to the attention of all volunteers when they join, as part of their induction programme. Any amendments will be brought to the attention of all team members. The statement will be displayed at the location in which the Store operates and all team members will be asked to sign to say they have read it.

### **Implementation**

Although the number of people who actively seek to abuse vulnerable adults and children is very small, Godalming and Villages Community Store can reduce opportunities for abuse in various ways. We will:

- Ensure volunteers who may come into contact with a vulnerable adult or child at the foodbank are suitably trained, including understanding what to do in the event that a disclosure of abuse is made.
- Encourage a culture of transparency, ensuring that volunteers and staff feel able and empowered to report any suspicious or concerning behaviour.
- Ensure volunteers are not left alone with users of the Store where there is little or no opportunity of the activity being observed by others. Volunteers should never give lifts to Store users or enter their homes when making deliveries.
- Make sure the Safeguarding Officer receives correct and up-to-date training
- Ensure that the Local Authority is informed of any safeguarding allegations, incidents or concerns
- Ensure that the Charity Commission is informed of any suspicions, allegations and

incidents of abuse or mistreatment of vulnerable beneficiaries. The Charity Commission's 'Serious Incident' guidance will be followed: [How to report a serious incident in your charity - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/how-to-report-a-serious-incident-in-your-charity)

- Ensure the Disclosure and Barring Service is informed if the trustees have dismissed or ceased using a volunteer because they think they have harmed or posed a risk of harm to a child or vulnerable adult.

### **Designated officers and their roles**

Godalming and Villages Community Store has a Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO) who is responsible for dealing with any concerns about the protection of vulnerable adults or children. The Designated Safeguarding Officer is Sue Clarke.

The Safeguarding Officer will be available for vulnerable adults and children, as well as volunteers, to speak with should they feel the need to talk with someone about an incident which has happened either within or outside of Godalming and Villages Community Store, particularly if they feel that a child or vulnerable adult has been physically, sexually, spiritually, financially or emotionally abused or neglected by an adult or another young person. The Safeguarding Officer will treat all concerns with the utmost importance.

Where volunteers have a concern about the safety or well-being of a child or vulnerable adult and the Safeguarding Officer is unavailable or acting inappropriately, the Chair of Trustees should be informed who should contact the Police or Social Services.

### **Recording**

The Safeguarding Officer will make notes and keep confidential records of any disclosure or concerns they or another staff/team member has and seek advice from the relevant Social Services Department or the Police if appropriate.

Volunteers must ensure that their recording of disclosures, incidents, assessments, referrals and case discussions are all sufficient, accurate, concise, up-to-date, legible, dated, and factual. When recording details it is important not to jump to conclusions or judge the situation and to remember that the role of the Safeguarding Officer is to refer to appropriate agencies, not to undertake an investigation. Suspicions should be noted carefully and backed up with factual evidence. Opinions should be kept to a minimum and backed up by factual evidence. These records must be stored in an individual file and held securely in a manner that safeguards the individual's right to privacy and security. These records are available to authorised individuals on request (not third party information) and may be used as evidence in disciplinary proceedings or in civil or criminal prosecutions.

Note: once volunteers have passed on their records, they have no right to know what happens next. They will only receive more information about the case if they are required to be part of civil or criminal proceedings e.g. as a witness. Volunteers must refrain from talking to other team members or outside persons about the safeguarding concern (with the exception of the Safeguarding Officer, the Police or Social Services).

## Disclosure of Abuse

Where a member of the Store receives a disclosure of abuse from a child or vulnerable adult they must:

1. Ensure they **do not promise confidentiality** to anyone wishing to share a secret. This is important in case information needs to be shared with the Safeguarding Officer or the Police/Social Services.
2. **Listen**-if the disclosure is particularly complicated and the person is not very young, this may mean asking permission to make notes as the disclosure is made to ensure nothing is missed. The team member hearing the disclosure can ask the child or vulnerable adult to repeat something if it has not been said clearly but must not ask leading questions.
3. **Reassure**-making a disclosure of abuse can be a frightening process and often the child or vulnerable adult is afraid that they won't be believed. Reassuring them that they have been brave and that the information will be passed on is vitally important.
4. **Record**-notes should be made as soon after the disclosure as possible. The notes should reflect what the child or vulnerable adult has said in their own words. The record should be signed and dated.
5. **Report**-the record must be passed on to a Safeguarding Officer at the earliest possible opportunity and the child or vulnerable adult told what will happen next.

The Safeguarding Officer will ensure that the trustees are informed of any incident, concern or allegation of abuse. The trustees must also notify the Charity Commission, following the Commission's 'Serious Incident' guidelines in the event of an incident, or suspected incident, during or resulting from a Store activity.

Where a child or vulnerable adult makes a disclosure of abuse to a member of the Store they must **never**:

1. Trivialise, play down or ignore allegations of abuse
2. Assume that somebody else will take responsibility for reporting/addressing concerns and making referrals

It is important that everyone in Godalming and Villages Community Store is aware that the person who first encounters a case of alleged or suspected abuse is not responsible for deciding whether or not abuse has occurred. That is a task for the professional vulnerable adult and child protection agencies following a referral to them of concern about someone.

If a vulnerable adult or child begins making a disclosure of abuse to a team member who feels unable to cope with what they are hearing, they should gently halt the conversation and contact the Safeguarding Officer immediately. If the Safeguarding Officer is unavailable, the team leader should take over the conversation.

The wellbeing of volunteers is of great importance. If a disclosure has been made which has caused upset to the person hearing it, the Store will endeavour to offer or facilitate counselling or support if requested.

## Disclosure of Information

There is a difference between confidentiality and secrecy. All personal and delicate information disclosed is confidential, but may not always be secret.

Personal and delicate information will be:

- Confidential to Godalming and Villages Community Store and can be shared with volunteers on a 'need to know basis' *and*
- Can be shared with another agency when:
  - Permission is given by the person about whom the information is held *or*
  - There is an overriding justification to share information without the person's consent *or*
  - The law requires it.

## Whistleblowing

Volunteers are encouraged to take action when suspicious that abuse is occurring at work - no matter what the setting, who the perpetrator is or who the victim is. Godalming and Villages Community Store will respect and not penalise those who stand up for anyone who is suspected of being abused.

It is possible to be lulled into a false sense of security, believing that those who work alongside vulnerable adults and children in Godalming and Villages Community Store will never be guilty abuse because they are part of a charitable organisation. It is not safe to assume that anyone is automatically safe to be with vulnerable adults or children.

If any volunteer has concerns, they should raise them with the Safeguarding Officer. If it is brought to the attention of the Safeguarding Officer and not adequately dealt with the next step is to talk to the trustees of the foodbank for advice or contact Social Services/the Police as a private citizen to discuss your concerns.

*Volunteers have a responsibility to report any occurrences or suspicions of adult abuse. Those who report abuse are protected by the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998.*

## Domestic Violence

Where Store clients report an incident of domestic violence which has taken place whilst a child or vulnerable adult is in the home, this must be treated as a disclosure of abuse and should be passed on to the Safeguarding Officer with immediate effect. Where an incident of domestic violence is reported and there is no child or vulnerable adult present, Store volunteers should signpost the client to an appropriate agency but must not attempt to coerce them to contact the police unless the client feels ready to do so. Where Store staff or volunteers witness an act of domestic violence, they must contact the police immediately.

For advice or information about anything relating to domestic violence, contact the National Domestic Violence Helpline on: 0808 2000 247

## **Criminal convictions**

All volunteers must complete a volunteer application form before commencing work at the Store. Details of criminal convictions (except those 'spent' under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974) must be provided so an adequate risk assessment can be undertaken.

Godalming and Villages Community Store reserves the right to dismiss a volunteer and/or ban them from the property should they feel it is necessary.

Volunteers are not required to undertake DBS checks as we do not provide the services listed in the government guidance (e.g. healthcare, supervision, training, control of finances)

## **Review**

This policy and its implementation will be reviewed at least annually and whenever there are any legislative changes or amendments to guidance issued by relevant statutory bodies.

Reviewed and agreed 18.03.24 - updated for DBS check information (changes in red font)

Next review date: March 2025

## **Resources**

[Concerned about an Adult - Surrey Safeguarding Adults Board \(surreysab.org.uk\)](https://surreysab.org.uk)

[Homepage - Surrey Safeguarding Children Partnership \(surreyscp.org.uk\)](https://surreyscp.org.uk)

DBS requirements:

[Working with adults in the charity sector and overseas aid organisations - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)