



# Protection of Vulnerable Adults Policy

## 1. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The aim of this policy and procedure is to provide the staff, core group and volunteers of Hitchin Community Gardens (HCG) with information on the appropriate action to take to protect vulnerable adults from abuse. It sets out the responsibilities of the staff, core members and volunteers in the recognition and prevention of abuse, and the actions to take in the event that abuse is suspected or identified.

As a voluntary sector provider of services funded by Hertfordshire County Council, Hitchin Community Gardens is required to comply with Hertfordshire County Council policies.

This policy and procedure is adapted from and must be used in conjunction with Safeguarding Adults from Abuse Policy and Procedure<sup>1</sup> which must itself be used in conjunction with Hertfordshire Interagency Procedure for the Protection of Vulnerable Adults (Safeguarding Adults from Abuse). This latter document is established as the **one procedure** in the county to be used by public agencies and private voluntary services in the protection of vulnerable adults from abuse.

Where there is conflict between this policy and Safeguarding Adults from Abuse, the latter will prevail.

## 2. RESPONSIBILITIES

- 2.1 Hitchin Community Gardens will ensure:
- robust staff and volunteer recruitment and selection processes are in place;
  - all staff and volunteers undergo an enhanced CRB check (see separate CRB policy);
  - all staff are made aware of relevant policies and procedures as part of their induction;
  - training is provided where this is identified as necessary

- 2.2 All staff, whether paid or unpaid, have a duty to:
- protect all vulnerable adults from significant harm and abuse;
  - report abuse or suspected abuse and to act on complaints of abuse;
  - be aware of and work within the guidance laid down in this and related documents;
  - work in partnership with service users, families and carers in order to meet their identified needs and ensure service users are protected from harm;
  - accept the principle that agencies work together in order to ensure health and social care is appropriately co-ordinated and people are protected from potential or actual abuse. Staff are expected to develop and maintain close links with statutory and other voluntary services to seek to achieve protection for vulnerable clients.

### **3. DEFINITIONS AND RECOGNITION OF ABUSE**

#### **3.1 Which adults are vulnerable?**

Any person of 18 or over who is attending or maybe referred to a Hitchin Community Gardens project and may have support needs by reason of mental or other disability, age, illness and who is or maybe unable to protect himself or herself against significant harm or serious exploitation.

#### **3.2 What constitutes abuse?**

- 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 adult 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 may result in significant harm to, or exploitation of the person subjected to it.
- Abuse is when a person or persons have caused harm, or may be likely to do so, to the physical, sexual, emotional, financial or material well being of a vulnerable adult.
- Harm may be caused by direct acts, or by failure to provide adequate care. It may be systematic and repeated or may consist of a single incident.

#### **3.3 Recognition of abuse?**

Abuse may occur anywhere, within lodgings, the family home, day establishments. Abuse does not always present as an acute incident, but more usually a growing concern about the welfare of a vulnerable adult. It may be identified by a variety of people, e.g. statutory and non-statutory agencies, or members of the community.

### 3.4 Who may be the abuser?

Vulnerable adults may be abused by a wide range of people including professional staff, paid care workers, volunteers, other service users, neighbours, friends and associates, people who deliberately exploit vulnerable people and strangers.

### 3.5 Threshold of Action

Where there is reason to believe that a vulnerable adult has suffered, is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm or serious exploitation, enquiries should be made in order to decide whether this is in fact the case and if so, what action should be taken to protect the person from such harm or exploitation.

"No Secrets" (DoH Guidance, March 2000) refers to abuse as often being about growing concerns about an individual's welfare rather than a serious incident.

**It is therefore, very important to treat all cases of suspected or actual abuse seriously from minor to serious incidents.**

### 3.6 Categories of abuse?

"No Secrets" identifies the main forms of abuse in seven categories and are used within the policies and procedures. They are:

- Physical
- Sexual
- Financial
- Neglect
- Psychological
- Institutional
- Discriminatory

## 4 IMPLEMENTATION PROCEDURE

### 4.1 Role of Hitchin Community Gardens' Project Managers

Project managers are responsible for responding promptly and appropriately to the concerns raised and notifying the suspected case of abuse to the appropriate organisation – either the police or Hertfordshire County Council investigating team. Contact details are given in Annex 1.

### 4.2 Receiving information concerning possible or actual abuse.

4.2.1 A member of staff or volunteer may become aware that the abuse of a vulnerable adult is or may be occurring.

4.2.2 The member of staff or volunteer **must** discuss their concern with the project manager regardless of the level of their concern, minor or serious.

- 4.2.3 If the member of staff or the volunteer is concerned that the alleged abuser is the project manager, they should discuss their concerns with the chair of the HCG core group or contact an investigating team, either direct or via the call centre. (see annex 1)
- 4.2.4 The worker with the project manager should decide:
- What is the nature of the alleged abuse?
  - Is medical attention / examination needed?
  - Is there reasonable explanation?
  - What is the current risk to the vulnerable adult?
- 4.2.5 Direct contact should be made with the Police (see annex 1) if:
- There is a serious injury
  - A crime is being committed
- 4.2.6 Otherwise contact should be made with the Hertfordshire County Council investigating team who will involve the Police if required. Once notified of the suspected case of abuse it is the responsibility of the investigating team to manage the adult protection investigation. The Project Manager or a nominated member of staff will be the main point of contact and provide assistance as required.
- 4.2.7 The investigation team or emergency duty team will take the lead in considering the need and any arrangements for a protection plan. Where the alleged abuser is a vulnerable adult then duty of care considerations may apply to that person.
- 4.2.8 Information received should be recorded in as verbatim format as possible, and any rough notes retained even after completion of an incident report (see Annex 2). The considerations at para 4.2.4. by the staff member and manager should be similarly recorded.
- 4.2.9 Guidance for staff on a code of behaviour is at Annex 3 and on handling complaints and communication on such issues is at Annex 4.

### **4.3 Allegations against members of staff**

- 4.3.1 Hitchin Community Gardens is responsible for following its own complaints procedures when an allegation of abuse is made against a member of staff or when an investigating team, or the Police suggest that a member of staff is removed from working with a suspected victim of abuse.

# **Annex 1 Contact details for reporting abuse or suspected abuse**

## **Investigating Teams**

Contact by direct line or via Client Services

01438 737400 open Mon to Fri 8.00am to 8.00pm  
Sat 9.00am to 4.00pm

Outside these times the Hertfordshire Emergency Duty Team can be contacted using the same telephone number

## **Police**

### **1. Immediate response**

For incidents concerning a Vulnerable Adult where there is danger to life, risk of injury or a crime is being committed – dial 999

### **2. High priority**

For incidents taking place against a Vulnerable Adult where there is no immediate risk to life or property but a police response is required as soon as practicable due to the seriousness of the incident and / or potential loss of evidence dial 0845 3300222.

### **3. Routine**

For incidents that have taken place against a Vulnerable Adult where that person wishes to make a report of crime please contact 0845 3300222 and specify that a crime has been committed and that person wishes to make a report the crime.

### **4. Existing referrals already being dealt with by a vulnerable persons officer**

Eastern area (includes Stevenage and North Herts)

01438 757619

[r.eastern.vpu@herts.pnn.police.uk](mailto:r.eastern.vpu@herts.pnn.police.uk)

Officers based at Hitchin Police Station

## Annex 2 Incident Report

This report should be completed by a Hitchin Community Gardens staff member in cases of suspected abuse, even if no further action is taken. Please do so as soon as possible after an incident., and within 24 hours at the latest.

This report is confidential: please keep it in a secure place at all times (eg a locked filing cabinet). The completed report should be countersigned by the project manager or the chair of HCG core group.

Date of incident:

Place of incident:

Name of person:

Age:

Gender:

Person's level of contact with the relevant HCG project eg 'Growing Ability' .

Name of Carer / Parent

Address

Telephone number

Name and contact details of Care Manager

What took place

Source of information (eg was the disclosure direct or indirect)

Verbatim account of disclosure

Any observed behavioural concerns

Action taken

Has project manager been contacted?

YES/NO \_\_\_\_\_ Date and time \_\_\_\_\_

Has Adult Care Services been contacted?

YES/NO \_\_\_\_\_ Date & time \_\_\_\_\_

Name and contact details of worker contacted

Comments

Have carers / parents been contacted?

YES/NO \_\_\_\_\_ Date & time of contact \_\_\_\_\_

Name of carer / parent spoken to

Comments

Has anyone else been contacted (eg: Police, Doctor, etc)? YES/NO

If yes please provide details, including names, times, dates and contact telephone numbers

Advice given

Summing up (remember it is important to separate fact from opinion)

Report completed by

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Time & date \_\_\_\_\_

Countersigned \_\_\_\_\_ Time & date \_\_\_\_\_

## **Annex 3 Code of behaviour for staff**

Community gardens and social therapeutic horticulture projects are, by nature, friendly and relaxed places. This may make it difficult for people to always know how to act appropriately: however, a friendly, relaxed atmosphere must also guarantee a safe environment for vulnerable people.

Many workers are concerned about how their contact with vulnerable people might be misinterpreted or seen as inappropriate. To minimise this, consider how you will behave in advance and follow the steps set out below.

### **General behaviour**

- Minimise the chances of spending time alone with vulnerable people, and where required tell other workers or adults that you are doing so in advance.
- Where close contact is required (eg learning to use tools safely), ensure that it takes place in a group, so that all involved are in an appropriate situation.
- Avoid physical activity which is, or may be thought to be, sexually stimulating.
- Don't rely on your good name - rely on good, consistent work practices.
- Do not offer lifts to vulnerable people.
- Language should always be appropriate to the age and nature of the people you are working with.
- Any computer-based activity should be agreed in advance and closely supervised. Hitchin Community Gardens will not tolerate access to pornographic or other inappropriate websites.

### **Physical contact**

- Keep everything public - a hug in the context of a group is very different to a hug behind closed doors.
- Touch should be related to the vulnerable person's needs, not the worker's.
- Touch should be age appropriate and should not be initiated by the worker, except in exceptional circumstances such as where medical attention is required.
- Adults should monitor one another regarding physical contact. They should be free to help each other by pointing out anything that could be misunderstood.

## **Annex 4 Guidance for staff on handling communication**

### **Receive**

- Listen to what is being said, without displaying shock and disbelief.
- Accept what is being said.
- Take notes (see Record below).

### **Reassure**

- Be reassuring, but honest.
- Don't make promises you may not be able to keep, don't say things like, "I'll stay with you," or "Everything will be all right now".
- Don't promise confidentiality, you have a duty to refer.
- Do reassure them that they were right to tell you, and recognise how difficult it might have been to tell.
- Remember that they may feel guilty; refer to this if they mention it. If they don't you could be putting the idea in their head, you could say things like "You're not to blame, it's not your fault,"; "You're not alone, you're not the only one this sort of thing has happened to".
- What you say should be appropriate to their age and stage of development.

### **React**

- Do not interrogate them for full details. All you need to do is find out whether or not you need to refer this further.
- Do not ask leading questions, for example "What did he do next?" (this assumes that something else did happen) or "did she touch your private parts?" Questions like this can invalidate your evidence (and the vulnerable person's) in any later court case.
- Do ask open questions, like "Anything else to tell me?"
- Do not criticise the person the vulnerable person is talking about; they may love him/her, and reconciliation may be possible.
- Do not ask the person to repeat what they have said to a colleague.
- Explain what you have to do next and who you will have to talk to.

## **Record**

- Make some brief notes as soon as possible. Do not destroy these in case they are needed by Social Services. As soon as possible, complete an incident report (Annex 2) and pass to the Project Manager. A decision on the need to refer the matter to Police or the appropriate investigating team will be made by the project manager in conjunction with the member of staff.
  - . Name of person
  - . Parents/carer's details
  - . Their address and any relevant phone numbers
  - . What is said to have happened or was seen, in the words used by the person making the allegation (ie if the person uses 'pet' words, record the actual words used, rather than translating them into 'proper' words)
  - . The date and time it occurred
  - . Who else, if anyone, was present
  - . What was said by others present
  - . Any evidence of abuse, eg bruises, bleeding, unusual behaviour (draw a diagram to show the position of bruises or marks they show you, include the size, shape and colour).

## **Remember**

- Ensure that you record, as accurately as possible, things that are really said, rather than your interpretations or assumptions.
- Follow this policy and refer any issues to the project manager as soon as possible.
- You may need support yourself: if so, please talk to the project manager in the first instance.

**Confidentiality** - in the case of suspected abuse, it is important to ensure as much confidentiality as possible. Allegations should not be openly discussed with others - this can be harmful for person who made the allegation as well as the person against whom the allegation was made.