Carelinks Safeguarding Policy
Adopted at a meeting of the trustees on 15 June 2026

Purpose of this policy

The purpose of this policy is to protect people (particularly children and vulnerable adults, including beneficiaries of our assistance) from any harm that may be caused due to their coming into contact with volunteers and others working with Carelinks. The policy lays out our commitments and informs those working with us of their responsibilities in relation to safeguarding.

This document combines the Carelinks Safeguarding Policy agreed on 10 February 2020 and the Safeguarding Adults Policy agreed on 9 June 2023.

What is safeguarding?

In the UK, safeguarding means protecting peoples' health, wellbeing and human rights, and enabling them to live free from harm, abuse and neglect. For our work, we understand it to mean protecting people from any harm that arises from coming into contact with our work, in particular **children** and **vulnerable adults**.

Children means anyone under the age of 18.

A vulnerable adult is someone aged 18 or over who:

- has needs for care and support (whether or not the local authority is meeting any of those needs)
- is experiencing, or is at risk of, abuse or neglect
- 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 or take steps to protect themselves from significant harm or exploitation or who cannot care for themselves

A vulnerable adult can be anyone aged 18 or over who is in a vulnerable situation or relationship. They may have difficulty making their wishes or feelings known. They may need or already receive community care services such as a care package or support worker or they may be heavily dependent on one or more family members or friends. They may have no means of dealing with intimidation, false accusations, humiliation, coaxing, coercion or may feel that someone is trying to take control over their activities. They may be confused. They may have problems with personal hygiene.

A vulnerable adult may find it difficult to form healthy and steady boundaries and pushing or challenging their boundaries can become damaging to that individual. A vulnerable adult may find it difficult to express their concerns or feelings which can lead to misunderstandings of their situation.

An adult at risk of abuse may:

- have an illness affecting their mental or physical health. This would include problems with mobility or with eyesight or hearing
- have a learning disability
- suffer from drug or alcohol problems
- be frail

What is abuse?

Abuse may be physical, emotional or sexual or it may involve not looking after someone properly, taking money or property without informed consent, misusing it or committing fraud. It may include poor care practices, bullying or humiliating, or not allowing contact with family or friends. It can involve criminal acts. It may be manging or taking control of someone without their permission. Abuse can be a single act or it may continue over time and may take many different forms. It can be unintentional or deliberate but in all cases it will result in harm to the victim that affects their wellbeing or security. Individuals may suffer more than one kind of abuse.

An abuser could be a partner, family member, friend or neighbour, a carer, volunteer, staff member or another service user, or a stranger. Abuse could happen anywhere and at any time including in the victim's own home or someone else's, or in a public place, such as a room where people meet.

Anyone can be at risk of abuse but the majority of people are not at risk all the time. The risk of abuse increases when someone is isolated, they depend on others for food or personal care, they are suffering from an illness or recovering, they are not mentally capable of making decisions for themselves, or they have suffered previous abuse.

Policy Statement

Everyone we come into contact with, regardless of age, gender identity, disability, sexual orientation or ethnic origin has the right to be protected from all forms of harm, abuse, neglect and exploitation. We will not tolerate abuse and exploitation by anyone involved in our work.

We commit to addressing safeguarding throughout our work, through the three pillars of **prevention, reporting** and **response.**

1. **Prevention**

We will:

- Ensure that anyone working with us has access to, is familiar with and knows their responsibilities within this policy.
- Carry out all our activities in a way that protects people from any risk of harm that may arise from their coming into contact with us.
- Implement clear safeguarding procedures for our work.
- Follow up any reports of safeguarding concerns promptly and according to due process.

Responsibilities of volunteers and anyone else working with us

Anyone working with us must not:

- Engage in sexual activity with, sexually abuse or exploit anyone being supported by our work.
- Subject anyone supported by our work to physical, emotional or psychological abuse, or neglect.
- Engage in any commercially exploitative activities with children or vulnerable adults.

Additionally, all those working with us must:

- Contribute to creating and maintaining an environment that prevents safeguarding violations and promotes the implementation of this Safeguarding Policy
- Report any concerns or suspicions regarding safeguarding violations by anyone working with us to an appropriate person.

Whenever feasible, we will ensure that any contact with *vulnerable adults* is carried out by at least two people working together, preferably of different genders. Any substantial contact with *children* where their parents or guardians are not present should be carried out only by someone who has the equivalent of a DBS check for the country in which the activity happens.

2. **Reporting**

The process of dealing with any report of harm, neglect or abuse will very much depend on the circumstances, but some general principles apply:

- respond quickly to any form of harm, neglect or abuse that has taken or is taking place
- consult with the person concerned as far as possible to explain a proposed course of action

- put in place a plan to assist and protect the person
- make sure regular monitoring takes place when concerns have been raised.

In doing this, be sensitive to the person's needs and treat them courteously. Seek their permission before managing or taking control of their situation. And, unless they are your close friend or family member or they rely on you for personal or professional care, try to have someone else with you when spending time with them, especially for long periods.

If they need help with financial matters or dealing with property, try to get their agreement to involve someone else such as a member of their family or a member of staff at their bank, building society or solicitor's office.

What should I do if I think someone is being abused?

In an emergency or if someone is in immediate danger call 999.

To report a crime (non-emergency) call 101.

In Croydon: urgent concerns that require immediate attention should be reported by telephone to 020 8726 6500. If reporting out of office hours ask for the Duty Social Worker.

Non-urgent concerns can be raised through the online Contact Referral Form or via email to CroydonAdultSupport@croydon.gov.uk.

Otherwise, speak to the Carelinks Safeguarding Lead or, if you do not feel comfortable reporting to the Safeguarding Lead, to any Carelinks Trustee.

Safeguarding lead

Norman Stock
5 Ashton Road
Moordown
Bournemouth
BH9 2TN
norman@stocktribe.co.uk

Subsequent action will depend on the circumstances.

A detailed set of procedures for dealing with reports of safeguarding complaints or concerns is provided in the annex to this document.

3. **Response**

We will follow up all safeguarding reports and concerns, and will offer support to survivors of harm caused by anyone associated with our work, regardless of whether a formal internal response is carried out.

Confidentiality

It is essential that confidentiality in maintained at all stages of the process when dealing with safeguarding concerns. Information relating to the concern and subsequent case management should be shared on a need to know basis only, and should be kept secure at all times.

Annex
Procedures for reporting complaints or concerns

1. *Report is received*

1.1 Reports could reach us by various routes. They may be in a written format such as a letter, e-mail, text or message on social media, but could equally be oral. If anyone associated with our work hears something in an informal discussion or chat that they think is a safeguarding concern, they should report this to the Safeguarding Lead or to a Trustee.

1.2 The person receiving the report should bear the following in mind:
- Listen
- Empathise with the person
- Ask who, when, where, what **but not why**
- Repeat/ check your understanding of the situation
- The need to report to the Safeguarding Lead or a Trustee (see below)

1.3 The person receiving the report should then document the following information:
- Name of person making report
- Name(s) of alleged survivor(s) of safeguarding incident(s) if different from above
- Name(s) of alleged perpetrator(s)
- Description of incident(s)
- Dates(s), times(s) and location(s) of incident

1.4 The person receiving the report should then forward this information to the Safeguarding Lead or a Trustee, if possible within 24 hours.

1.5 Due to the sensitive nature of safeguarding concerns, confidentiality must be maintained during all stages of the reporting process, and information shared on a limited 'need to know' basis only.

2. Assess how to proceed with the report

2.1 Appoint a Decision Maker for handling this report. The Decision Maker should be a Trustee, not implicated or involved in the case in any way.

2.2 Determine whether it is possible to take this report forward
- Does the reported incident(s) represent a breach of safeguarding policy?
- Is there sufficient information to follow up this report?

2.3 If there is insufficient information to follow up the report, and no way to ascertain this information, the report should be filed in case it can be of use in the future, or to help look at any wider lesson-learning we can take forward.

2.4 If the report raises any concerns relating to children under the age of 18, seek expert advice immediately. If at any point in the process of responding to the report (for example during an investigation) it becomes apparent that anyone involved is a child under the age of 18, the Decision Maker should be immediately informed and should seek expert advice before proceeding.

2.5 If the decision is made to take the report forward, ensure that you have the relevant expertise and capacity to manage the case. If you do not have this expertise in-house, seek immediate assistance, through external capacity if necessary.

2.6 Clarify what, how and with whom information will be shared relating to this case. Confidentiality should be maintained at all times, and information shared on a need-to-know basis only. Decide which information needs to be shared with which stakeholder – information needs may be different.

2.7 Check your obligations on informing relevant bodies, in particular the Charity Commission, when you receive a safeguarding report. When submitting information to any of these bodies, think through the confidentiality implications very carefully.

3. Appoint roles and responsibilities for case management

3.1 If the report alleges a serious safeguarding violation, you may wish to discuss the issues between the Decision Maker, the Safeguarding Lead and the person who received the report.

4. Provide support to survivor where needed/requested

4.1 Provide appropriate support to survivor(s) of safeguarding incidents. This should be provided as a duty of care even if the report has not yet been investigated.

5. Decide on next steps

5.1 The Decision Maker decides the next steps. These could be (but are not limited to):

- No further action (for example if there is insufficient information to follow up, or no case to answer)
- Investigation is required to gather further information
- Immediate action
- Referral to relevant authorities

6. Make decision on outcome of investigation report

6.1 The Decision Maker makes a decision based on the information available, if appropriate following further investigation. The next steps will depend on the nature of the case but should be appropriate, and include measures designed to prevent any similar incident occurring again.

6.2 If at this or any stage in the process criminal activity is suspected, the case should be referred to the relevant authorities.

7. Conclude the case

7.1 Document all decisions made resulting from the case clearly and confidentially.

7.2 Store all information relating to the case confidentially and in accordance with UK data protection law.

7.3 Record anonymised data relating to the case to feed into organisational reporting requirements (e.g. serious incident reporting to the Board of Trustees or the Charity Commission) and into learning for dealing with future cases.

The trustees of Carelinks are:

Rob Clements (clementsrc@hotmail.com)
Jean Field (jeanfield14@outlook.com)
David Hemingray (david.hemingray@ntlworld.com)
Norman Stock (norman@stocktribe.co.uk)
Debs Cwiecek (deb.cwiecek@gmail.com)
Tim Geddes (tim.geddes@yahoo.com)