

Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults from Abuse Policy



WYCHWOOD
SCHOOL • OXFORD

Date Reviewed	02.2026
Reviewed By	JE
Date Of Next Review	02.2027
Version	2.1

1. INTRODUCTION

The principles guiding our Protecting and Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults policy reflect those of The Care Act 2014 (this replaces the "No Secrets" guidance).

The following 6 key principles will underpin all our work to safeguard adults (Care Act 2014) Empowerment:

- People being supported and encouraged to make their own decisions and informed consent.
- Prevention - It is better to take action before harm occurs.
- Proportionality - The least intrusive response appropriate to the risk presented. Protection - Support and representation for those in greatest need.
- Partnership - Local solutions through services working with their communities. Communities have a part to play in preventing, detecting and reporting neglect and Abuse.
- Accountability - Accountability and transparency in delivering safeguarding.

We recognise that adult safeguarding arrangements are there to protect individuals, we all have different preferences, histories, circumstances and life-styles, and so it is unhelpful to prescribe a process that must be followed whenever a concern is raised. (The Care Act 14.14). The response to safeguarding concerns must be personal to the individual. Making safeguarding personal means it should be person-led and outcome-focused. It engages the person in a conversation about how best to respond to their safeguarding situation in a way that enhances involvement, choice and control as well as improving quality of life, wellbeing and safety.

(The Care Act 2014) Safeguarding is the responsibility of everyone including statutory, independent and voluntary agencies as well as every citizen. We will work together to prevent and minimise abuse.

2. DEFINITIONS

Vulnerable Adult: The safeguarding duty applies to any adult 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 are unable to protect themselves from either the risk of, or the experience of abuse or neglect.

Staff need to be vigilant about adult safeguarding in all walks of life (The Care Act 2014). If the person you are concerned about is aged under the age of 18 you should refer to the Wychwood School Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

Abuse: the violation of an individual's human and civil rights by any other person or persons it may be something that is done to the person or something not done when it should have been it can be unintentional, but if a vulnerable adult is harmed this must be reported.

Aim

The aim of adult safeguarding is to:

- Stop abuse or neglect wherever possible
- Prevent harm and reduce the risk of abuse or neglect to adults with care and support needs
- Safeguard adults in a way that supports them in making choices and having control about how they want to live
- Promote an approach that concentrates on improving life for the adults concerned
- Raise public awareness so that communities as a whole, alongside professionals, play their part in preventing, identifying and responding to abuse and neglect
- Provide information and support in accessible ways to help people understand the different types of abuse, how to stay safe and what to do to raise a concern about the safety or well-being of an adult
- Address what has caused the abuse or neglect

The understanding and implementation by staff of these policies and procedures are essential as part of Wychwood School's duty to safeguard adults.

3. RESPONSIBILITIES

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) who has a duty to lead responsibility for raising awareness amongst the staff of issues relating to the welfare of children and also young people (vulnerable adults). The DSL will also take the lead in:

- The referral of alleged harm or abuse to the relevant investigating agencies
- The lead in advice/support to staff on safeguarding issues relating to vulnerable adults
- To any e-safety issues should they arise
- Ensuring that accurate records are kept of any safeguarding referral, complaint or concern – even if this does not lead to a referral
- To ensure that all staff have initial and update safeguarding training and are aware of this policy as well as all other safeguarding policies including code of conduct, safer recruitment, e-safety etc
- Any safeguarding incidents at the school will be followed by a rigorous review of these procedures by the DSL and a report made to the Board of Directors. Where the incident involves a member of staff, the LEA Designated Office may be asked to assist in this review to determine whether any improvements can be made to the school's procedures and thereby remedy any deficiencies or weaknesses as soon as practically possible

DDSL - all adults who support the DSL in the role of Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead

The Head who has overall responsibility for safeguarding and manages any allegations of abuse made about the staff at Wychwood School

The Board of Directors - will undertake a regular annual review of this policy and the school's safeguarding procedures and their implementations including a review of the effectiveness of inter-agency working. The DSL will work with the Board of Directors and Head to prepare a written report.

4. PROCEDURES

Wychwood School will always involve the adult from the beginning of the enquiry unless there are exceptional circumstances that increase the risk of abuse. Involvement may be supported by an independent advocate if the adult has substantial difficulty in being involved and where there is no other suitable person to represent and support them (appointed by the local authority).

Where an independent advocate is appointed, we will work closely with them to ensure they are able to carry out their duties. Where an adult lacks capacity to make decisions about their safeguarding plans, a range of options should be identified, shared and discussed with the adult to enable them to remain in as much in control of their life as possible.

Wychwood School commits fully to:

- Pro-actively safeguarding adults so that the need for action to protect adults from abuse is reduced
- Ensuring that the occurrence of abuse is prevented, and where it does occur; ensuring, where possible, that it is not allowed to continue and that an adult safeguarding referral is made
- Ensuring that all suspicions and allegations of abuse are taken seriously, responded to swiftly and appropriately and understood from the viewpoint of the victim
- Ensuring that all Staff, paid or unpaid, are conversant with school's policies and procedures for safeguarding adults
- Ensuring that all staff understand the mandatory nature of the above procedures, including the responsibility to report concerns to an appropriate person
- Consulting with and referring to Social Care, and/or in an emergency the Police where concerns about possible abuse arise
- Working with partner agencies to safeguard adults and giving every assistance to the local authority and police in carrying out their statutory duties
- Working within the framework of safeguarding legislation, regulations and guidance.
- Ensuring that all Wychwood School pupils (young adults) receive the advice and support that they need, including access to civil and criminal remedies, victim support services and advocacy service.

Wychwood School will uphold this statement of intent by having:

- A clear commitment by senior leadership to the importance of safeguarding adults
- Clear priorities for safeguarding adults within the school's policies, working practices and procedures
- A clear line of accountability within the organisation and a named lead person who is responsible for safeguarding within the organisation
- Recruitment and employment procedures that take account of the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of both children and young adults
- Procedures for dealing with allegations of abuse against members of staff and volunteers
- Appropriate and up-to-date training for all staff
- Appropriate induction to ensure that all staff, including temporary staff and volunteers who work with adults, are made aware of Wychwood School's arrangements for safeguarding young adults and their responsibilities for that
- Policies and procedures for safeguarding young adults and procedures that are in accordance with the latest legislation and guidance
- A culture of listening to, and engaging in dialogue with vulnerable young adults and taking account of those views in individual decisions and in the establishment or development of services

- Appropriate whistle-blowing procedures
- A complaints procedure, fully publicised to all parents and pupils
- A culture that enables issues about safeguarding to be addressed.

5. STAFF CONDUCT

All staff must always abide by the school's Code of Conduct.

Types of Harm and Abuse

This is not intended to be an exhaustive list, but a guide as to the sort of behaviour which could give rise to a safeguarding concern. What constitutes abuse or neglect can take many forms and the circumstances of the individual case should always be considered.

Types of abuse include:

Physical abuse - including assault, hitting, slapping, pushing, misuse of medication, restraint or inappropriate physical sanctions.

Domestic abuse - including psychological, physical, sexual, financial, emotional abuse; so called 'honour' based violence.

Sexual abuse - including rape, indecent exposure, sexual harassment, inappropriate looking or touching, sexual teasing or innuendo, sexual photography, subjection to pornography or witnessing sexual acts, indecent exposure and sexual assault or sexual acts to which the adult has not consented or was pressured into consenting.

Psychological abuse - including emotional abuse, threats of harm or abandonment, deprivation of contact, humiliation, blaming, controlling, intimidation, coercion, harassment, Verbal abuse, cyber bullying, isolation or unreasonable and unjustified withdrawal of services or supportive networks. Financial or material abuse - including fraud, internet scamming, coercion in relation to an adult's financial affairs or arrangements, including in connection with wills, property, inheritance or financial transactions, or the misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits.

Modern slavery - encompasses slavery, human trafficking, forced labour and domestic servitude. Traffickers and slave masters use whatever means they have at their disposal to coerce, deceive and force individuals into a life of abuse, servitude and inhumane treatment. Discriminatory abuse - including forms of harassment, slurs or similar treatment; because of race, gender and gender identity, age, disability, sexual orientation or religion.

Organisational abuse - including neglect and poor care practice within an institution or specific care setting such as a hospital or care home, for example, or in relation to care provided in one's own home. This may range from one-off incidents to on-going ill treatment. It can be through neglect or poor professional practice because of the structure, policies, processes and practices within an organisation. Neglect and acts of omission - including ignoring medical, emotional, or physical care needs, failure to provide access to appropriate health, care and support or educational services, the withholding of the necessities of life, such as medication, adequate nutrition and heating.

Self-neglect - This covers a wide range of behaviour neglecting to care for one's personal hygiene, health or surroundings.

If any of the above are perpetrated by someone who is or has been an intimate partner or family member of the vulnerable person the abuse can also be seen as Domestic Abuse. A hate crime is any criminal offence that is motivated by hostility or prejudice based upon the victim's disability, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, transgender identity. Any safeguarding concern that reflects should be reported to the local Police.

Who Abuses and Neglects Adults?

Anyone can carry out abuse or neglect, including:

- Spouses/partners
- Other family members
- Neighbours
- Friends
- Local residents
- Acquaintances
- Local residents
- People who deliberately exploit adults they perceive as vulnerable to abuser
- Paid staff or professionals
- Volunteers and strangers

Abuse can happen anywhere, for example, in someone's own home, in a public place, in hospital, in a care home or in school. It can take place when an adult lives alone or with others.

Neglect can be intentional or unintentional and it is important to understand that being unintentional does not mean it is not abusive. There can be abuse in any relationship, occurring where the person abusing is in a more powerful position than the person being abused. The abuser may be more able than the person being abused, or the abused person may be dependent on the abuser in some way.

6. PROCEDURES

What you should do - Remember that whilst hearing allegations of abuse and reporting your concerns is not always easy it is your duty to report your concerns in line with these procedures, and it may be considered a disciplinary offence not to do so

Immediate protective action - Ensure that the person subject to alleged abuse is safe and supported before proceeding with any other action. Ensure they receive any medical attention required. In certain circumstances it will be necessary to take immediate action to protect the vulnerable adult by calling the police and/or by suspending a member of staff.

When and how to contact the police - Direct calls to the police should be reserved for incidents of assault and violence where an element of urgency applies, in which case you should call 999 call. If you believe a crime has been committed call the police on 0845 456 7000. Make a note of the log or "STORM" number you are given and include it in any adult safeguarding referral.

Preserving evidence - Be aware that in certain situations medical, or other evidence will be needed. You may need to lock rooms or ensure that equipment and documents are secured appropriately so that evidence cannot be tampered with. If there has been physical or sexual assault you should not clear up, move things, wash people, things, bedding or clothing before you report the incident or taken the advice of the police.

Remember to:

- Stay calm and try not to show if you are shocked
- Listen carefully and be sympathetic, you don't need to press the person for lots of detail, indeed taking a full written statement from the person at this point could be too stressful and jeopardise any future police investigation
- Tell the person they have done the right thing in telling you, and that the abuse is not their fault
- Tell the person that you are treating what they said seriously and that you will be talking to your manager about it
- Tell them that you will do your best to support them
- clarify with them the nature of the abuse and establish if it needs an urgent response. If so, keep them as calm as possible until the police arrive
- Make sure that everything you do keeps the person safe for now
- If you contact or question the alleged abuser you may be placing the vulnerable adult at risk.
- Do keep to information sharing protocols, only share the person's information with the people who need to know, observe the confidentiality of all concerned at all times. It may be that the person you are seeking to protect asks you not to do anything at all, although they say they are being abused. Whilst respecting this it is important that you **MUST** share it with your DSL, but assure them that you are listening to them and will let your DSL know that they want nothing more to happen. If the person is experiencing life threatening abuse, or abuse likely to lead to serious mental or physical harm, or a child or other vulnerable adult is also at risk, the vulnerable person's wishes for the matter not to be reported may be overridden.

If a vulnerable adult is being harmed or is at risk of harm - The matter must be reported immediately to Children and Young Peoples Services by telephoning the local area office. Follow our Safeguarding and Protecting Children Policy and Procedures and refer to the Oxfordshire Child Protection Procedures for further information on what to do.

Reporting your concerns - If you urgently need to make a safeguarding referral speak the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), DDSL or Head. Whatever the source of the information it must be treated seriously, checked, recorded and shared with your manager. All care agencies and professions share equally the responsibility for the identification of abuse, and for ensuring appropriate action is taken. Please also refer to the Safeguarding and Protecting Children Policy.

How to report your concerns - When you come to report your allegation you will be expected to give relevant details of the person you seek to protect. You should complete as much information as possible but do not delay. It is useful to pass on:

- Name and date of birth
- Circumstances, where they live and with whom
- Services they receive and from whom
- Who is providing the information
- Who was the person suspected or implicated in the abuse
- Your concerns, and the reasons for those concerns If you do not have all this information and the situation is urgent do not delay, report it first. There should be no delay in reporting serious concerns. If you are quoting someone else then be sure this is clear when reporting, it is important that the initial referral is clear, so try to use the person's own words. Ensure all records are signed and dated. The information will be treated in the strictest confidence within the limits of the law, which requires that the police are informed where there is serious risk to life, or information about a serious crime is discovered

What happens next - A Safeguarding Adults referral will be given high priority. It indicates that there is a risk to an individual's physical, emotional, or mental wellbeing and is considered a critical or substantial risk to independence under section 42 of the Care Act eligibility criteria. The Local Authority has the duty to coordinate the interagency response to safeguarding adults referrals and will consult with the Care Quality Commission (CQC), the Police, and other relevant agencies where this is appropriate. If an investigation is indicated, they may convene a strategy discussion to decide the best way to investigate the allegation(s).

Allegations against staff - Refer to the Management of Allegations Against Staff Policy

Keeping people informed - Where a pupil has disclosed information about abuse or the risk of abuse, the Wychwood School staff member should ensure, as far as they are able to, that the person who has made the disclosure is kept informed about what will happen next. This will help to reassure them about what to expect. All staff who continue to have a role should keep themselves and other professionals involved and informed throughout.