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Safeguarding Children, Young People & Adults at Risk Policy

Policy Statement

Hector's House is fully committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people, and adults at risk. We believe that everyone has the right to live free from abuse, neglect and exploitation, and to be treated with dignity, respect, and compassion.

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. We are committed to creating a safe, supportive environment where concerns can be raised without fear, and where all staff, trustees, and volunteers understand their role in protecting vulnerable people.

This policy sets out how Hector's House will:

- Prevent harm through safe practice
- Respond appropriately to safeguarding concerns
- Work in partnership with statutory agencies
- Meet its legal and regulatory duties

This policy applies to all staff, trustees, and volunteers, and anyone else acting on behalf of Hector's House.

Scope and Boundaries of Hector's House

Hector's House is a suicide prevention and mental health awareness charity. We provide support, information, education, and signposting. It is important to acknowledge that we are not a clinical service and are not able to diagnose, assess or treat mental health conditions.

Safeguarding responsibilities apply whenever:

- We have direct contact with children, young people or adults at risk
- We receive information indicating someone may be at risk of harm
- A safeguarding concern is disclosed to us by a third party

No staff member, trustee or volunteer is expected to manage safeguarding risk alone.

Legal and Regulatory Framework

This policy is informed by and complies with:

- Care Act 2014
- Children Act 1989 & 2004
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023)
- Charity Commission Safeguarding Guidance
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Equality Act 2010
- Data Protection Act 2018 / UK GDPR

Definitions

Children and Young People

A child or young person is anyone under the age of 18.

Adults at Risk

An adult at risk is a person aged 18 or over who:

- Has needs for care and/or support, and
- Is experiencing, or at risk of, abuse or neglect, and
- Is unable to protect themselves because of those needs

This may include people experiencing mental ill health, suicidal crisis, learning disabilities, physical or sensory impairments, long-term illness, social isolation, substance misuse, or self-neglect.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding means protecting a person's right to live in safety, free from abuse and neglect, while supporting wellbeing, dignity and choice.

Capacity

Capacity is a person's ability to understand, retain, use or weigh information and communicate a decision. A person may have the capacity for some decisions and not others.

Types of Abuse and Harm

Abuse may be a single act or repeated acts and may be deliberate or unintentional. It can occur in any setting. Types of abuse include:

- Physical abuse
- Emotional or psychological abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Financial or material abuse
- Neglect and acts of omission, including self-neglect
- Discriminatory abuse
- Domestic abuse (including coercive control)
- Exploitation (criminal or sexual)
- Organisational or institutional abuse
- Online or digital abuse
- Radicalisation
- Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)
- Modern slavery

It is important to note that risks relating to suicide and self-harm are addressed in a separate document, the *Suicide and Self-Harm Safeguarding Framework*, which provides clear guidance on identifying levels of safeguarding concern and the appropriate actions to take in line with this policy.

Principles of Safeguarding

Hector's House works in line with the following **Adult Safeguarding Principles:**

- **Empowerment** – supporting informed choice and consent
- **Prevention** – acting early to reduce risk
- **Proportionality** – responding appropriately to the level of risk
- **Protection** – supporting those in greatest need
- **Partnership** – working with other agencies
- **Accountability** – transparency in safeguarding practice

These principles also underpin safeguarding children and young people.

Roles and Responsibilities

Board of Trustees

The trustees hold overall accountability for safeguarding and will:

- Ensure safeguarding is embedded in governance and culture
- Review this policy annually
- Ensure serious incidents are reported to the Charity Commission where required

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

Hector's House has a Designated Safeguarding Lead and Deputy:

- **DSL:** Susan Davie – susan@hectorshouse.org.uk
- **Deputy DSL:** Celine Wilcock – celine@hectorshouse.org.uk

The DSL is responsible for:

- Receiving and managing safeguarding concerns
- Making referrals to statutory agencies
- Maintaining secure safeguarding records
- Providing advice and support to staff and volunteers
- Ensuring appropriate safeguarding training is in place
- Ensuring an effective reflect and learn cycle is in place across the organisation

Staff and Volunteers

All staff and volunteers must:

- Read and comply with this policy
- Attend safeguarding training appropriate to their role
- Report concerns immediately to the DSL
- Act in ways that promote safety, dignity and trust

Safer Recruitment and Working Practices

Hector's House is committed to safer recruitment and will:

- Carry out appropriate DBS checks
- Take up references
- Include safeguarding responsibilities in role descriptions
- Provide induction and ongoing training
- All staff members, trustees and volunteers must:
- Maintain professional boundaries
- Avoid being alone with a child or adult at risk where possible
- Avoid inappropriate physical contact or language
- Not communicate privately via personal social media accounts
- Not give or accept gifts without organisational approval
- Physical intervention must only be used to prevent immediate harm and must be proportionate, recorded and reported to the DSL.

Recognising Safeguarding Concerns

Possible indicators include:

- Changes in behaviour, mood or communication
- Signs of fear, withdrawal or distress
- Poor self-care or self-neglect
- Unexplained injuries or inconsistent explanations
- Financial concerns or exploitation
- Expressions of hopelessness, self-harm or suicidal thoughts

Referral Thresholds for Suicide and Self–Harm

Guidance on assessing suicide and self-harm risk is provided in a separate document, the *Suicide and Self-Harm Safeguarding Framework*. This framework helps staff, trustees, and volunteers:

- Identify levels of safeguarding concern
- Understand the appropriate actions to take in line with this policy

If you are ever unsure, always consult the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL). Hector's House staff, trustees, and volunteers must not attempt to manage suicide or self-harm risk alone.

Responding to Safeguarding Concerns – The 7 Rs

- Recognise – Be alert to signs of abuse or harm
- Respond – Listen calmly, take concerns seriously, do not promise confidentiality, do not investigate
- Report – Report concerns to the DSL as soon as possible and within 24 hours
- Record – Record concerns factually, using the person's own words where possible
- Refer – The DSL will decide on referrals to statutory agencies
- Review – Safeguarding practice and incidents are reviewed regularly
- Respect – All individuals are treated with dignity and compassion

Information Sharing and Confidentiality

Information will be shared:

- On a need-to-know basis
- With consent where possible
- Without consent where necessary to prevent serious harm
- All decisions to share information will be proportionate, justified, and recorded

Training and Awareness

Hector's House will ensure:

- Mandatory safeguarding training for all trustees, staff and volunteers

- Regular refresher training
- Additional training for safeguarding leads
- Quarterly safeguarding case study reviews

Allegations Against Staff, Volunteers or Trustees

Concerns about staff, trustees, and volunteers must be reported immediately to:

The DSL, or the Chair of Trustees (if the concern involves the DSL)
Hector's House will follow statutory procedures and support whistleblowers who raise concerns in good faith.

Related Policies & other Documents

- Suicide and Self-Harm Safeguarding Framework
- Lone Working in Support/Facilitator Role Policy
- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Complaints Policy
- GDPR / Data Protection Policy
- Vetting and Recruitment Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy

Review

This policy will be reviewed annually or sooner if:

- Legislation or guidance changes
- A safeguarding incident highlights the need for review

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