



# Thornton Heath Community Action Team: Safeguarding Policy

August 2019

Review date: Spring 2021

Thornton Heath Community Action Team (THCAT) is committed to safeguarding. All those organising / leading events are responsible for delivering on this commitment plus all committee members and other volunteers have a role to play in protecting vulnerable people from harm. Safeguarding is everybody's business.

## **What is safeguarding and why is it needed?**

Everybody has the right to be safe no matter who they are or what their circumstances. Safeguarding is about protecting everyone from harm, abuse or neglect, including those volunteers working with us. We are all responsible for the safety of children, young people and vulnerable adults and must ensure that we are doing all we can to protect them.

In its Safeguarding policy, the Government's Office of the Public Guardian (OPG) states: "Safeguarding is about protecting certain people who may be in vulnerable circumstances. These people may be at risk of abuse or neglect due to the actions (or lack of action) of another person. In these cases, it is vital that public services work together to identify people at risk, and put steps in place to help prevent abuse or neglect."

## **Vulnerable Adult Definition**

"A person who is 18 years of age or over, and 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 / herself, or unable to protect him / herself against significant harm or serious exploitation."

## **Factors of a Vulnerable Adult:**

- Is elderly and frail due to ill health, physical disability or cognitive impairment
- Has a learning disability
- Has a physical disability and / or a sensory impairment
- Has mental health needs including dementia or a personality disorder



- Has a long-term illness / condition
- Misuses substances or alcohol
- Is a carer, where the person meets the definition
- Is unable to demonstrate the capacity to make a decision and is in need of care and support.

Our approach to safeguarding includes clearly assessing risk and taking actions to mitigate these risks. It also includes essential information / training to carry out tasks safely plus clear guidelines on what to do in the event of an allegation or incident. Safeguarding also serves to protect all volunteers by helping avoid potentially compromising situations.

### **How do we determine the appropriate level of safeguarding?**

The level and nature of our safeguarding approach will be determined by, and proportionate to, the risk inherent in activities in question. Some roles will be very informal, and often require little more than an introductory chat about what the role demands, what the volunteer expects to gain from the opportunity and health and safety points. If children are involved we always ask for a responsible adult to accompany anyone under 18 years old.

We aim to continuously review THCAT's approach to safeguarding to ensure it adapts to changes to the responsibilities, roles and risks.

### **What safeguarding measures are available?**

Clearly stating the skills, equipment, experience and time commitment required is important to attract the most appropriate volunteers for a role. It can also help to set boundaries from the outset. To ensure all are aware of the policy, THCAT will publish this on its website and Facebook page and refer to it as part of training at action events.

We aim to regularly review our induction to ensure it remains relevant to the kinds of roles our volunteers are undertaking. All volunteers need support and supervision, but the form that this takes will largely depend on the role and the volunteer in question. This policy helps to ensure there is a way for volunteers to raise problems or concerns, ensuring potentially problematic behaviour is identified at the earliest opportunity and addressed.

The work of THCAT does not involve close and unsupervised contact with vulnerable adults and children – known as Regulated Activity and therefore Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks (previously CRB checks) are not currently appropriate.

### **Health and safety procedures**

THCAT event leaders carry out risk assessments for the volunteering opportunities it provides. The results of our risk assessments help determine what we need to do



in order to minimise the risk, taking into account that volunteering opportunities can vary greatly; we aim to evaluate each one on its own merits considering the characteristics of the group, where the action takes place, whether it involves working alone or with others and the duration.

THCAT recognises that a volunteer with responsibilities beyond their capabilities is more likely to make mistakes or be pressurised into incorrect decisions.

### **Different forms abuse may take**

These guidelines will help to ensure that everyone can be THCAT's 'eyes and ears' on the ground, know their responsibilities and how to take action.

Abuse and neglect take many forms. Abuse can lead to a violation of some-one's human and civil rights by another person or persons. Abuse can be physical, financial, verbal or psychological. It can be the result of an act or a failure to act.

It can happen when an adult at risk is persuaded into a financial or sexual exchange they have not consented to, or can't consent to. Abuse can occur in any relationship and may result in significant harm or exploitation.

Abuse is a misuse of power and control that one person has over another. Where someone is dependent on another, there is the possibility of abuse or neglect unless enough safeguards are put in place.

### **Categories of abuse:**

**Physical** - including assault, hitting, slapping, pushing, giving the wrong (or no) medication, restraining someone or only letting them do certain things at certain times.

**Domestic** - including psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional abuse. It also covers so-called 'honour' based violence.

**Sexual** - including rape, indecent exposure, sexual harassment, inappropriate looking or touching, sexual teasing or innuendo, taking sexual photographs, making someone look at pornography or watch sexual acts, sexual assault or sexual acts the adult didn't consent to or was pressured into consenting.

**Psychological** - including emotional abuse, threats of harm or abandonment, depriving someone of contact with someone else, humiliation, blaming, controlling, intimidation, putting pressure on someone to do something, harassment, verbal abuse, cyber bullying, isolation or unreasonable and unjustified withdrawal of services or support networks.

**Financial or material** - including theft, fraud, internet scamming, putting pressure on someone about their financial arrangements (including wills, property, inheritance or financial transactions) or the misuse or stealing of property, possessions or benefits.

**Modern slavery** - covers slavery (including domestic slavery), human trafficking and forced labour. Traffickers and slave masters use whatever they can to pressurise, deceive and force individuals into a life of abuse.



**Discriminatory** - types of harassment or insults because of someone's race, gender or gender identity, age, disability, sexual orientation or religion.

**Organisational** - neglect and poor care in an institution or care setting such as a hospital or care home, or if an organisation provides care in someone's home. The abuse can be a one-off incident or repeated, on-going ill treatment; it can be through neglect or poor professional practice, which might be because of organisational structure, policies, processes and practices.

**Neglect and acts of omission** - includes ignoring medical, emotional or physical care needs, failure to provide access to appropriate health, care and support or educational services, or not giving someone what they need to help them live, such as medication, enough nutrition and heating.

**Self-neglect** - a wide range of behaviour showing that someone isn't caring for their personal hygiene, health or surroundings (includes hoarding).

Abuse can take many forms. It might not fit comfortably into any of these categories, or it might fit into more than one. Abuse can be carried out by one adult at risk towards another. This is still abuse and should be dealt with. The adult at risk who abuses may also be neglecting him / herself which could also be reason for a safeguarding referral.

Adults at risk can be abused by a wide range of people – anyone, in fact, who has contact with them, including family members, professional staff, paid care workers, other adults at risk, volunteers, other service users, neighbours, friends, associates, people who deliberately take advantage, strangers and people who see an opportunity to abuse. Abuse is always wrong, but it's especially worrying when carried out by someone in a position of power or authority over someone, who uses that power to harm an adult at risk.

### **Our responsibilities when we have safeguarding concerns:**

- Assess the situation i.e. are emergency services required?
- Ensure the safety and wellbeing of the individual
- Establish the individual's views and wishes about the safeguarding issue and procedure
- Maintain any evidence
- Remain calm and try not to show any shock or disbelief
- Listen carefully, show understanding by acknowledging regret and concern that this has happened
- Inform the person that you are required to share the information, explaining what information will be shared and why
- Make a written record of what the person has told you (see form below), using their words, what you have seen and your actions.



**Confidential**

## **THCAT - Reporting Form for Safeguarding Concerns**

Date:

Event:

Location:

Who are you concerned about?

What are your concerns? (Please include any quotes that gave rise to these e.g He / she said "... " and any facts e.g I saw/heard...).

Name:

Date:

Signature:

Contact number:

Please give this form to the event leader who may refer you to local agencies / organisations:

Police - tel 999 in an emergency

AgeUK - 020 8680 5450

Croydon, Urgent concerns about someone's safety - 020 8255 2888

Croydon, Urgent referrals re Child Protection - 020 8255 2888

Croydon Community Against Trafficking (CCAT) - tccat.com

Crimestoppers UK - 0800 555 111

Metropolitan Police - 0800 783 2589

The Salvation Army - 0300 303 8151

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