

# Hack Oldham

## Protection of vulnerable adults and children policy

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### 1. Statement of purpose

- 1.1 Hack Oldham makes a positive contribution to a strong and safe community and recognises the right of every individual to stay safe.
- 1.2 All people, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious beliefs and/or sexual identity, have the right to protection from, bullying, neglect, physical, emotional or sexual abuse.
- 1.3 This policy seeks to ensure that Hack Oldham undertakes its responsibilities with specific reference to the protection of vulnerable adults and children and will respond to any concerns appropriately.
- 1.4 It recognises that all of the staff of Hack Oldham hold, to varying degrees, a position of trust with the community of Oldham. As part of a wider commitment to the safety and well being of our employees and volunteers it establishes a framework to support staff in their safe practices by
  - clarifying what is expected from everybody in terms of safe practice
  - explaining what to do when employees and volunteers have concerns

### 2. Legislative framework

- 2.1 The Care Standards Act of 2000 introduced the Protection of Vulnerable Adults (POVA) scheme to ensure safe recruitment. This has been in operation since July 2004.
- 2.2 The Children Act 2004 places a duty on all agencies, Oldham Council and its partners, to co-operate to improve the well-being of children in the authority's area specifically relating to protection from harm and neglect.
- 2.3 The Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 was passed as a result of the Bichard Inquiry arising from the Soham murders in 2002, when the schoolgirls Jessica Chapman and Holly Wells were murdered by Ian Huntley (their school caretaker). Recommendation 19 of the Inquiry Report highlighted the need for a single agency to vet all individuals who want to work or volunteer with children or vulnerable adults and to bar unsuitable people from doing so.
- 2.4 On February 11, 2011 the Coalition Government published the findings of its Review into the Vetting and Barring Scheme. Key recommendations were made to streamline and simplify the current system but until all the appropriate legislation has been introduced and the new arrangements are established, the existing responsibilities of employers remain the same.

### **3. Definitions**

- 3.1 For the purposes of this policy a child is defined as someone who is under 18.
- 3.2 The legal definition of a vulnerable adult is more complex. For the purposes of this policy it means a person aged 18 or over who has a condition of the following type:
  - a learning or physical disability
  - a physical or mental illness, chronic or otherwise, including an addiction to alcohol or drugs
  - a reduction in physical or mental capacity.The level of vulnerability is further defined by the level of dependency that the person has on others.
- 3.3 Currently, the level of safeguarding measures put into place are defined by the level of access, contact that staff/ volunteers have and the level of vulnerability of those we access, or come into contact with through the provision of our services. This complex definition ensures that no blanket decisions are made about safeguarding checks, or ongoing practices.

### **4. Application and review of this policy**

- 4.1 The director of Hack Oldham is responsible for ensuring that all paid staff/ volunteers adhere to this policy.
- 4.2 Hack Oldham values the resilience of all individuals and communities and seeks to empower people to be able to build on the massive contribution they are already making to ensure that children and vulnerable adults enjoy the same rights as others. We will actively listen to the wishes and feelings of those we work with and will ensure that our safeguarding policy reflects this. Policies only make a difference if they are put into practise. Monitoring and reviewing this policy and the associated procedures will happen on a regular basis.

## **5. Safe working practices for all paid staff and volunteers**

- 5.1 It is everyone's responsibility to follow the guidance laid out in this policy:
  1. To promote safe practices by being an excellent role model
  2. Encourage open communication by treating all people equally with respect and dignity
  3. Share information appropriately with others, and recognise that there are times when confidentiality is essential – verbal or written.
  4. Provide access to learning opportunities/signposting, and empower others to share in decision making
  5. Positively involve people in developing safe practices wherever possible.
  6. When planning any public event ensure that risk assessments take account of the safety of children, and vulnerable adults.
  7. Always working in an open environment, avoiding private or unobserved situations
  8. Maintain a safe and appropriate distance with service users
  9. Keep up to date with training, qualifications and insurance.
  10. Report concerns about poor practice and abuse as laid out in this policy

## **6. Safe selection and recruitment**

- 6.1 It is the responsibility of the organisation to:
  - Assess what level of contact the role requires with children and vulnerable adults.
  - To ensure that the core competencies required for this role are taken into consideration.
  - To ensure appropriate safeguarding checks, including CRB checks as defined below, are considered when the role description is agreed.
  - Undertake open and transparent selection and recruitment processes for all paid staff/ volunteers

- Check necessary identification – address, qualifications, criminal convictions
- Take up two references which request information regarding safe practices
- Recruit all paid staff and volunteers to adopt and abide by the appropriate practices and procedures outlined within this document
- Ensure all staff have access to related policies and procedures

#### 6.2 What level of DBS check is appropriate?

- Standard checks are appropriate for workers who have the trust of the community and have access to groups working with children or vulnerable adults (as defined in Section 3)
- Enhanced CRB checks should be undertaken where there is regular/ lone contact with children or vulnerable adults.

#### 6.3 A person who is barred from working with children or vulnerable adults will be breaking the law if they work or volunteer, or try to work or volunteer, with those groups. An organisation which knowingly employs someone who is barred to work with those groups will also be breaking the law.

## 7. Safe management

#### 7.1 It is the responsibility of managers to

- Ensure paid staff/ volunteers are clear about their responsibilities and your responsibilities with regard to safe practices and procedures
- To support staff/volunteers to apply safe working practices, particularly when this is difficult. Protection from abuse is a sensitive subject for everyone and difficult decisions have to be made. Hack Oldham provides access to counselling, if required.
- Ensure that they have the necessary skills and knowledge required to be effective in their roles, through induction and ongoing development.
- Ensure that their probationary review assesses their competent application of safe practices
- Ensure that staff/ volunteers have access to other related procedures- grievance and disciplinary procedures, whistle blowing
- provide appropriate guidance and learning opportunities , throughout induction and
- Ensure that all paid staff/ volunteers have access to regular support/ supervision
- Review the role, with regard to safe practices, should there be any changes to the level of contact that the paid staff/ volunteer has with vulnerable adults and children.

## **8. Responding to concerns about poor practice within the organisation**

- 8.1 As a general rule, all concerns are to be discussed with your line manager. The concern may be easily resolved but it is important that safety issues are dealt with promptly. If you are not comfortable raising these with your manager, or your concerns relate to your manager, you should raise them with another manager or directly with the Director.
- 8.2 If there are issues of unsafe practice or abuse that must be taken further the manager must ensure that Hack Oldham's policies and procedures are adhered to.

## **9. Responding to concerns about poor practice when working with a group or organisation**

- 9.1 All concerns must be discussed with your manager and the discussion should be recorded.
- 9.2 Where necessary, managers should seek advice from the appropriate body. Where the concern involves children managers should talk to the Lead Area Designated Officer or Adult Safeguarding Co-ordinator (details in Section 12) to clarify areas of responsibility in dealing with the concern.
- 9.3 The group/ organisation should be involved in the early discussions about the course of action, to enable them to make informed decisions. This should be followed up by clear, written information and guidance and summary of agreed course of action to the group / organisation.
- 9.4 A written summary of how the concern was dealt with should be forwarded to the appropriate safeguarding officers (LADO/ Adult Safeguarding Co-ordinator). If there are any queries/ concerns left outstanding then these should be also be raised with the relevant officer so that resolution can be sought.
- 9.5 Consideration should be given to holding a debriefing for those Hack Oldham staff, the group and other agencies involved (if deemed appropriate). Safeguarding issues can be emotionally distressing, and it allows Hack Oldham to reflect and 'learn lessons' to inform future situations and practice.

## **10. Suspicions, allegations and disclosures of abuse**

- 10.1 What you should do if someone discloses abuse to you:
  - React calmly
  - Reassure the person that they were right to tell

- Keep questions to an absolute minimum to ensure a clear and accurate understanding of what has been said.
- Don't ask about explicit details
- Reassure but do not promise confidentiality, which might not be feasible in the light of subsequent developments
- Inform the person what you will do next
- Make a full and written record of what has been said/heard as soon as possible

## **11. Reporting abuse**

- 11.1 However, if you receive information about alleged or potential abuse you must report this without delay.
- All suspicions, allegations or disclosures of abuse must be reported to the Director, or in his absence they must be reported to the Director's nominated deputy
  - All reports will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately in line with legislative guidance. It is not Hack Oldham's responsibility to investigate allegations of abuse - the appropriate agencies will be contacted immediately
  - If you have any concerns that this guidance is not being followed you must contact a member of the board of trustees, who is not the Chair.

## **12. Useful contacts**

- 12.1 If you are worried and do not feel comfortable talking to anyone from Hack Oldham, the following are useful contacts
- 12.2 If you are unsure that a child/ children may be at risk of suffering and are worried, contact:
- Oldham Children's Social Care, 770 3790 / 770 3791
  - Lead Area Designated Officer telephone number 0161 342 4111.
  - NSPCC Child Protection Helpline on 0808 800 5000.
- 12.3 If you are unsure that a vulnerable adult may be suffering and are worried contact:
- Oldham Adult Services, 0161 770 1515