

Introduction

All members of Woodhouse and Woodhouse Eaves Good Neighbour Scheme (GNS), whether volunteers or GNS steering group members, have a duty to **safeguard** vulnerable people who use the scheme and anyone with whom they may come into contact through the scheme, as well as volunteers with particular needs.

You should not be left alone in a room with a child under 18 years as our scheme is for over 18-year-olds only. You will not be covered by the GNS insurance if a mishap occurs. Nevertheless, if you think there is a child at risk of or suffering any type of abuse or at risk from an adult with whom you are in contact, it is your duty to take things further as explained below. We hope you never have to deal with a situation of possible abuse but, should the need arise, reading these guidelines in advance will help.

Safeguarding is about protecting vulnerable people from any kind of abuse so, if you suspect any such problems, the role of a volunteer is solely to alert others to their suspicions.

The guidelines are in place to help protect all vulnerable persons from abuse regardless of gender, ethnicity, disability, sexuality, religion or faith.

Abuse can be

- Physical / bullying
- Sexual
- Emotional / psychological
- Discriminatory
- Financial
- Neglect

Principles

The welfare of the vulnerable adult (or child) is paramount and is the responsibility of everyone. All vulnerable adults (and children), without exception, have the right to protection from abuse. Bullying, shouting, physical violence, sexism and racism towards anyone should not be permitted or tolerated.

Policy statement

- No volunteers or GNS steering group member will have unsupervised access to vulnerable adults unless they have been through the safe recruitment procedure (below)
- All reported suspicions or allegations of abuse will be taken seriously and dealt with speedily and appropriately by the Safeguarding Officers (SGOs)
- All volunteers need to be aware of this policy and vulnerable adult issues.

Safe recruitment

All volunteers must undergo a DBS security vetting and provide the GNS steering group with a copy of the result as well as ensuring that their certificate is current in terms of the GNS requirements.

Reporting incidents

If you are concerned that the client is at direct risk of or has been subject to **serious abuse and you think they are in immediate danger** (or anyone else with whom you have come into contact while acting under the Good Neighbour Scheme), you must always **report it immediately to the police or Adult (or Child) Social Care** (contact numbers are at the end of this section).

If you have any other safeguarding concerns at all, you must discuss them with the SGOs via the Telephone Co-ordinator by ringing the **GNS mobile 07561 890 100**. The SGOs have responsibility for reporting concerns that arise to the local authority Vulnerable Adult (or child) lead agency. The GNS Safeguarding team may choose to have additional confidential discussions with you or others to clear up any misunderstandings, or to corroborate and support any suspicions, before reporting a concern to the lead agency. If the SGOs are unavailable, any member of the GNS steering group may act in their place.

How to respond to a client if you suspect abuse, or are being told about it

Remember it is ultimately not a volunteer's responsibility but that of the statutory agencies to follow up any suspicions or allegations.

What to do

- Do treat any allegations extremely seriously and listen to what is being said
- Do tell the person they are right to tell you
- **Reassure them you are concerned for their welfare and want to make sure they are safe**
- Do be honest about your own position, who you must tell and why
- Do tell the person what you are doing and when, and keep them up to date with what is happening
- Do take further action – you may be the only person in a position to prevent future abuse – ring the GNS mobile immediately
- Do write down everything said and what was done as soon as possible after the event and date and sign the account
- Do seek medical attention for the client if it appears necessary
- Do inform carers, unless there is suspicion of their involvement.

What not to do

- Don't make promises you can't keep
- Don't interrogate the person – it is not your job to carry out an investigation – this will be up to the police and/or social services, who have experience in this
- Don't cast doubt on what the person has told you, don't interrupt or change the subject
- Don't say anything that makes the person feel responsible for the abuse
- Don't ignore signs of abuse - do something! Make sure you discuss the matter immediately with the SGOs – they will know how to follow this up and where to go for further advice.

Confidentiality

Vulnerable adult (or child) protection raises issues of confidentiality which must be clearly understood by all. Confidentiality is very important indeed. You may discuss this issue with the SGOs if you have any concerns. You should make a note as soon as possible, with date and times, of any incident(s) or concerns coming to your attention. This will give you a record to which you can refer should the need arise. A factual account will be required with the key points recorded.

If requested by professionals, particularly investigative agencies and adult social services, volunteers have a responsibility to share relevant information about vulnerable adults (or children).

All personal information regarding a vulnerable adult should be kept confidential. All written records must be kept in a secure area for a specific time as identified in data protection guidelines (please ask the SGOs if you are concerned about this).

If an adult confides in you and requests that the information is kept secret, it is important that you tell them who you will have to tell and why. Even though you must speak to someone else about the matter it is important that you assure the person that it will be disclosed only to people who need to know about it. The adult's involvement in the process of sharing information must be fully considered and their wishes and feelings taken into account.

Where possible, consent must be obtained from the adult before sharing personal information about them with third parties. However, in some circumstances, obtaining consent may be neither possible nor desirable, as the safety and welfare of the vulnerable adult is the priority.

Once the SGOs have been informed of any problems they will usually pass the information on to Social Services, and after that Social Services will decide if any follow up is needed.

Contact numbers

Police emergency	999
Police non-emergency	101
Woodhouse and Woodhouse Eaves GNS Telephone Co-ordinator	07561 890 100

Emergency Duty Team / Out of Hours	For Leicestershire and Rutland: 0116 255 1606
Safeguarding Adults Board Managers	Leicestershire and Rutland: 0116 305 7130
First Response Children's Duty Team (urgent for possible abuse or neglect of a child)	Leicestershire: 0116 305 0005 (24 hour phone line)
Social Worker already involved with client	If number and name known phone social worker direct If name and number unknown contact local social care office
Local Social Care Office	Charnwood: 01509 266641