

### 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 yourself and other volunteers.

Apart from safeguarding, if you have any **general** concerns about a client's welfare, please call the Telephone Coordinator on the **GNS mobile 07561 890 100** and the Telephone Coordinator will pass them on to the appropriate member of the steering group.

If you, as a volunteer, feel you have suffered any form of abuse during your GNS work, you must report it using the procedure below (Reporting incidents). There is more information in **Section 5 Lone worker and personal safety** and what to do if you ever feel unsafe as a volunteer.

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. If you are alone with anyone under 18 years of age 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 report your concerns 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, your role as a volunteer is solely to alert others to your suspicions.**

The guidelines are in place to help protect everyone from abuse regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, disability, sexuality, religion, faith or difficult circumstances.

**Abuse** can be intentional or unintentional and may 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 be reported.

### Policy statement

- All volunteers must go through the safe recruitment process
- All reported suspicions or allegations of abuse will be taken seriously and dealt with speedily and appropriately by the Safeguarding Officer (SGO), who is a designated member of the steering group
- All volunteers need to be aware of this policy and safeguarding issues.

### Safe recruitment

All volunteers must undergo, or already have undergone, enhanced DBS security vetting for adults and provide the GNS DBS administrator with sight of their original certificate. The DBS administrator will check that their DBS status is unchanged and current at regular intervals in line with the GNS constitution.

### 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 extremely seriously any allegations you are told about and listen to what is being said
- Do tell the person they are right to tell you
- Do reassure them you are concerned for their welfare and safety
- If the client confides in you, do be honest about your own position, who you must tell and why
- Do take further action – you may be the only person in a position to prevent future abuse – ring the GNS mobile immediately
- Do make a note as soon as possible of details such as dates, times and people involved so that you can pass this information on to the SGO
- 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 report the matter immediately with the SGO – they will know how to follow this up and where to go for further advice.

### 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 emergency services on 999**.

If you have any other safeguarding concerns at all, you must

- ring the **GNS mobile 07561 890 100 and say "I have a safeguarding issue"**. The Telephone Coordinator on duty will take your name and number and ensure that the SGO contacts you. Do **not** give the Telephone Coordinator any details of your concerns
- go through your concerns with the SGO, with details of names, dates, times, etc and who else is already aware of the issue so that the SGO can complete an Incident Report and take appropriate action
- do not discuss your concerns with anyone including other volunteers or friends as it is our duty to maintain client confidentiality.

### 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).

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. Their wishes and feelings should be included in your report to the SGO.

Once the SGO has 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.