

Safeguarding - making sure you and your community are safe during COVID-19

Safeguarding is the measures and steps we all take when we are concerned that someone – a child or an adult – may be at risk, or suffering from, or at risk of significant harm.

It's important to be able to recognise these so that you or your volunteers can stay safe, and know how to alert the relevant authorities who can then take action to make sure people are safe in your community.

In times of crisis and uncertainty it is important we protect the individuals in our community who may be at risk. We all have what is referred to as a 'duty of care' to individuals around us family, neighbors, colleagues as well as those who fall into the category of vulnerable groups within society.

How should I deal with safeguarding concerns?

If you come across a child or adult who is at risk of harm or abuse remember to:

Stay safe

See it

Recognise it

Refer it

Sharing Information

Before you share information with the relevant authority, ask yourself if sharing information with the relevant authorities is:

- Necessary and proportionate
- Relevant
- Adequate
- Accurate
- Timely
- Secure
- Recorded



Possible signs of abuse

Recognising signs and symptoms. Any of the following could be a sign that someone is being harmed or abused:

Physical

- Bruises, cuts, burns, scalds
- Unlikely reasons for injuries

Grooming

- Unusual secretive behaviour
- Change of emotional state - withdrawn or volatile

Sexual

- Inappropriate behaviours towards others
- Reluctance to be with a certain person

Financial

- Unexplained:
- Lack of money
 - New items and/or friendships
 - Bank activity

Psychological

- Tearful or defensive
- Self harm
- Extreme changes in behaviour

Neglect

- Poor weight, hygiene, and clothing
- Malnutrition or constant hunger
- Hoarding

Asking Questions

It's ok to ask parents or carers open, non-judgmental questions in order to clarify and contextualise any concerns before making a safeguarding referral.

However, there will be situations when it will not be appropriate to approach parents or carers if you believe the parents or carers could put the child or adult at increased risk of harm, or if you feel it is unsafe to do so.

Remember to stay calm. Panic will only cause distress. Actively listen. Use non-judgmental language to ask where/when type questions, but avoid enquiring about details.

Allow the person the time to say what they need to say; don't make them repeat what they are saying again and again. It's important you don't promise confidentiality, as you may want to share information with the local Safeguarding team. But it is equally important that you reassure them they have done the right thing by telling you.

Do record what you have heard or seen exactly as it was said to you, or seen by you. Record as much detail as possible. Be careful not to interpret their words. Forward your concern immediately to your local Safeguarding team.

If you don't know who this is, and require support in identifying if this is a safeguarding concern or simply to understand where to go next, you can email us at communications@volunteeringmatters.org.uk and we'll respond as soon as we can.