



Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Policy

Introduction

Oblong is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults, engaged in the breadth of its activities.

The purpose of this policy is to outline the duty and responsibility of staff, volunteers and trustees working on behalf of Oblong in relation to the protection of vulnerable adults from abuse. References to staff in the rest of this document should be taken to include volunteers and trustees when working on behalf of Oblong.

All adults have the right to be safe from harm and should be able to live free from fear of abuse, neglect and exploitation.

The key objectives of this policy are:

- To explain the responsibilities of Oblong and its staff, volunteers and trustees in respect to protection of vulnerable adults
- To provide staff with an overview of vulnerable adult protection

- To provide a clear procedure that will be implemented where vulnerable adult protection issues arise

Context For the purpose of this document 'adult' means a person aged 18 years or over.

Some adults are less able to protect themselves than others, and some have difficulty making their wishes and feelings known. This may make them vulnerable to abuse. The broad definition of a 'vulnerable adult' referred to in the 1997 Consultation Paper 'Who Decides?' issued by the Lord Chancellor's Department, is a person:

"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 or herself, or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation".

For purposes of ensuring consistent and widely understood terminology, these policy and procedures will use the phrase 'Vulnerable Adults' to identify those eligible for interventions within the procedures.

Legal framework This guidance reflects the principles contained within the Human Rights Act 1998, the Mental Capacity Act 2005.

The Mental Capacity Act 2005, covering England and Wales, provides a statutory framework for people who lack capacity to make decisions for themselves, or who have capacity and want to make preparations for a time when they may lack capacity in the future. It sets out who can take decisions, in which situations, and how they should go about this.

The Human Rights Act 1998 gives legal effect in the UK to the fundamental rights and freedoms contained in the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR).

The role of staff, volunteers and trustees

All staff, volunteers and trustees working on behalf of Oblong have a duty to promote the welfare and safety of vulnerable adults.

Staff, volunteers and trustees may receive disclosures of abuse and observe vulnerable adults who are at risk. This policy will enable staff volunteers to make informed and confident responses to specific adult protection issues.

The centre's Designated Safeguarding Leads are responsible for creating a culture that promotes safeguarding, and also are responsible for listening to reported safeguarding concerns, and for ensuring safeguarding concerns are recorded safely. The DSLs are also responsible for reporting concerns and allegations to Social Care, when appropriate.

What is abuse? Abuse is a violation of an individual's human and civil rights by any other person or persons.

Abuse may consist of a single act or repeated acts. It may be physical, verbal or psychological, it may be an act of neglect or an omission to act, or it may occur when a vulnerable person is persuaded to enter into a financial or sexual transaction to which he or she has not consented, or cannot consent. Abuse can occur in any relationship and it may result in significant harm to, or exploitation of, the person subjected to it.

The Department of Health in its 'No Secrets' report suggests the following as the main types of abuse:

- **Physical abuse**- including hitting, slapping, pushing, kicking, misuse of medication, restraint, or inappropriate sanctions.
- **Sexual abuse**- including rape and sexual assault or sexual acts to which the vulnerable adult has not consented, or could not consent or was pressured into consenting.
- **Psychological abuse**- including emotional abuse, threats of harm or

abandonment, deprivation of contact, humiliation, blaming, controlling, intimidation, coercion, harassment, verbal abuse, isolation or withdrawal from services or supportive networks.

- **Financial or material abuse**- including theft, fraud, exploitation, pressure in connection with wills, property or inheritance or financial transactions, or the misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits.
- **Neglect and acts of omission**- including ignoring medical or physical care needs, failure to provide access to appropriate health, social care or educational services, the withholding of the necessities of life, such as medication, adequate nutrition and heating.
- **Discriminatory abuse**- including racist, sexist, that based on a person's disability, age, or sexuality and other forms of harassment, slurs or similar treatment.
 - **Online Abuse** - including grooming, bullying, name calling, inappropriate sharing of intimate images without consent.

Procedure in the event of a disclosure It is important that vulnerable adults are protected from abuse. All complaints, allegations or suspicions must be taken seriously.

This procedure must be followed whenever an allegation of abuse is made or when there is a suspicion that a vulnerable adult has been abused.

The centre's Designated Safeguarding Leads should be informed. The DSLs are Jess Fishenden and Nick Lalvani; both can be contacted on safeguardingteam@oblongleeds.org.uk.

We should explain that we will respect their privacy and the sensitivity of matters referred to us. We would not share information provided to us other than as necessary for us to discharge our duty of care.

A full record should be made as soon as possible of the nature of the allegation and any other relevant information.

The report should include:

- Details of the person making the report: their name, address and contact number
- Details of the vulnerable person about whom the report is being made: their name, date of birth, address, and contact details
- Whether or not the person making the report is expressing their own concerns or those of someone else.
- The nature of the concerns / allegation, including dates, times, specific factors and any other relevant information. Make a clear distinction between what is fact, opinion or hearsay.
- A description of any visible bruising or other injuries. Also any indirect signs, such as behavioural changes.
- Details of witnesses to the incidents.
- The vulnerable adult's account, if it can be given, of what has happened and how any bruising or other injuries occurred.
- Accounts from others, including colleagues, volunteers and support workers.

Responding to an allegation

Any suspicion, allegation or incident of abuse must be reported to the Safeguarding Leads as quickly as possible. Safeguarding Leads at Oblong are Jess Fishenden and Nick Lalvani, who can be contacted through safeguardingteam@oblongleeds.org.uk.

The Safeguarding Lead assess the situation, and where necessary, telephone and report the matter to the appropriate local adult social services duty social worker. They will also ensure a written record of the account is made containing the date, time and a factual account; the report must also include the name and position of the person to whom the matter is reported. The telephone report must be confirmed in writing to the relevant local authority adult social services department within 24 hours.

In case of a suspicion, allegation or incident the nominated member of staff must inform adult social services on: **0113 222 4401**

If immediate action is needed, contact the emergency services on 999. If you

need to report a crime but it is not an emergency, telephone the police on **0845 60 60 60**. If you are worried about contacting the police you can talk things over with staff at Leeds Social Care first, on **0113 222 4401**. For further advice, contact Leeds Safeguarding Adults Unit on **0113 224 3511**.

A list of these phone numbers will be displayed in the Centre for ease of access.

Responding appropriately to an allegation of abuse

In the event of an incident or disclosure:

DO

- Make sure the individual is safe
- Assess whether emergency services are required and if needed call them
- **Listen**
- React Calmly
- Reassure the person that they were right to tell you and that they are not to be blamed and take what the person says seriously
- Ascertain and establish the basic facts
- Be careful not to be deemed as putting words into the person's mouth, the easiest way of doing this is by asking questions.
- Take all necessary precautions to preserve forensic evidence
- Explain the procedure to the individual making the allegation
- Remember the need for ongoing support.
- Make a full and written record of what has been said as soon as possible and don't delay in passing on the information to Oblong's Designated Safeguarding Leads.
- Explain that we will respect their privacy and the sensitivity of matters referred to us. We would not share information provided to us other than as necessary for us to discharge our duty of care to those covered by the information

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- Confront the alleged abuser
- Be judgmental or voice your own opinion
- Be dismissive of the concern
- Disclose details of the allegation to anyone other than the nominated member of staff/ official contact
- Investigate or interview beyond that which is necessary to establish the basic facts
- Disturb or destroy possible forensic evidence
- Consult with persons not directly involved with the situation
- Ask leading questions
- Assume Information
- Make promises
- Ignore the allegation
- Elaborate in your notes
- Panic

It is important to remember that the person who first encounters a case of alleged abuse is not responsible for deciding whether abuse has occurred. This is a task for the professional adult protection agencies, following a referral from the designated Vulnerable Adult Protection Officer.

Allegations about Oblong staff or volunteers

In the case of allegations of inappropriate behaviour or behaviours that cause concern by staff or volunteers, please report these to the staff's Designated Safeguarding Leads, immediately.

The DSL will then assess the situation and make a decision as to whether to deal with these allegations internally, or report them to Leeds Adult Social Care on 0113 222 4401.

A written report should be made as soon as possible after these concerns are made. The report should include: details of the individual reporting the concern; the name and job title of the staff member or volunteer who is the subject of the concern; and full details of the incident, and who was involved or present.

The DSL will be responsible for ensuring this report is made and safely stored, and for recording details of any immediate or agreed actions, and whether the LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer) was involved.

Safeguarding at Community events

Any activities within Oblong Woodhouse Community Centre will have a risk assessment completed and shared as appropriate to the level of risk. All Oblong staff will complete regular training on completing such risk assessments.

Responding to somebody who is having suicidal thoughts or actions:

Somebody voicing thoughts of suicide will be taken seriously as a safeguarding issue. As well as following the steps below, anybody who encounters a person voicing suicidal thoughts at the centre, should report this to one of the Safeguarding Leads as soon as possible. The DSLs will then assess the situation and make a decision as to whether to contact adult mental health services, the mental health crisis team, or the police.

Responding appropriately to suicidal thoughts or actions:

- Listen to the person
- Ask further questions
- Take details
- Tell them you are taking this seriously, and you are going to share your concerns with the appropriate person in order to get them the help and support they need.
- If the person has an emergency contact or support worker, Oblong staff will take responsibility for getting in touch with them
- If somebody is in immediate danger, has acted on suicidal thoughts or has self harmed and you fear for their safety, call the ambulance and/or police (if appropriate) on 999 if it is an emergency. If the person has contacted you by phone, try to get as much information as possible about their location.

Confidentiality

Staff, volunteers and trustees have a professional responsibility to share relevant information about the protection of vulnerable adults with other professionals, particularly investigative agencies and adult social services.

All personal information regarding a vulnerable adult will be kept confidential, and only shared with those who need to hear it, at an appropriate level. All written records will be kept securely in Oblong's Safeguarding and Incidents of Concern folder, and held for the time necessary under GDPR or other appropriate guidelines. Records will only record details required in the initial contact form.

If an adult confides in a member of staff and requests that the information is kept secret, it is important that the member of staff tells the adult sensitively that he or she has a responsibility to refer cases of alleged abuse to the appropriate agencies.

Within that context, the adult should be assured that the matter will be disclosed only to people who need to know about it.

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

Where a disclosure has been made, staff should let the adult know the position regarding their role and what action they will have to take as a result.

Staff should assure the adult that they will keep them informed of any action to be taken and why. The adults' involvement in the process of sharing information should be fully considered and their wishes and feelings taken into account.

The role of key individual agencies

Adult Social Services

The Department of Health's recent 'No secrets' guidance document requires that authorities develop a local framework within which all

responsible agencies work together to ensure a coherent policy for the protection of vulnerable adults at risk of abuse.

All local authorities have a Safeguarding Adults Board, which oversees multi-agency work aimed at protecting and safeguarding vulnerable adults. It is normal practice for the board to consist of people from partner organisations who have the ability to influence decision making and resource allocation within their organisation.

The Police

The Police play a vital role in Safeguarding Adults with cases involving alleged criminal acts. It becomes the responsibility of the police to investigate allegations of crime by preserving and gathering evidence. Where a crime is identified, the police will be the lead agency and they will direct investigations in line with legal and other procedural protocols.

Ratified By Oblong's Board of Trustees on 16th August 2023

Date of Next Review: August 2025



Safeguarding Leads
Safeguarding Leads



Jess Fishenden

Nick Lalvani

Contact: safeguardingteam@oblong.org.uk

Phone numbers:

Child Social Care 0113 2224403

Adult Social Care 0113 2224401

Leeds Safeguarding Adults Unit 0113 224 3511

Make an adult safeguarding referral online at: <https://ascferral.leeds.gov.uk/>