Malmesbury and District u3a

Safeguarding Adults at Risk Policy

General Principles and Definitions

The purpose of this policy is to demonstrate the commitment of Malmesbury & District u3a to safeguarding their members and to ensure that everyone involved in u3a is aware of:

- The legislation, policy and procedures for safeguarding adults.
- Their role and responsibility for safeguarding adults.
- What to do or who to speak to if they have a concern relating to the welfare or wellbeing of an adult within the u3a.

"Safeguarding" refers to measures designed to protect the health, wellbeing and human rights of individuals. Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility:

- All u3a members have a responsibility to report any safeguarding concerns to their committee.
- All u3a committee members have an obligation to follow their safeguarding policy and procedure if they suspect that a member is at risk of abuse.

Safeguarding is particularly key in relation to 'Adults at Risk' defined in the Care Act (2014) as someone who:

- Has needs for care and support (whether or not the local authority is meeting any of those needs) and;
- Is experiencing, or is at risk of, abuse or neglect; and;
- As a result of those care and support needs is unable to protect themselves from either the risk of, or the experience of, abuse or neglect.

Types of Abuse:

Abuse can take many forms – sexual; physical; psychological/emotional; neglect or self-neglect; discriminatory; financial/economic; organisational; domestic abuse; coercive control. People may be subject to more than one form of abuse and the abuser may often be someone in a position of trust or power. Abuse may occur between members of u3a; from family, friends or carers; from organisations or strangers; or from the person themselves in terms of self-neglect or threats to others.

Examples of potential abuse or safeguarding risk (to self or others):

- Unexplained bruises or injuries – or lack of medical attention for an injury.
- Non attendance at interest groups without reason and no response to reminders from group leaders or other members.
- Significant loss or gain of weight and/or an unkempt appearance.
- A change in the behaviour or confidence of a member, where they become quiet and withdrawn, or lash out in anger.
- A member showing fear of a particular group or individual.
- Inappropriate behaviour from one member to another e.g. unwanted sexually explicit text messages, harassment and/or discrimination (this could be face-to-face, or through written or electronic communication or via social media).
- Threats of physical harm and bullying, or intentional striking of another member.

- Exhibiting health concerns that could place themselves or others at risk.

Additionally, a member may report they are being abused – i.e., a disclosure.

Human Rights and Safeguarding

The safeguarding elements in Human Rights Act 1998 include a right not to be subject to inhuman or degrading treatment (Article 3) but also the right to enjoy private, family and home life without unjustified interference (Article 8). Adult safeguarding is therefore a complex issue requiring a difficult balance between protecting people from harm and recognising the right of adults to make choices for themselves.

Adult safeguarding is almost always based on consent whether or not the person is deemed to be an 'adult at risk' as defined above. There are only very limited circumstances when authorities can take steps to ensure safety without consent. In general terms, adults have the right to make decisions about how and where they live their lives even if we may be concerned that those decisions aren't always in their best interest.

However, 'safeguarding is everybody's responsibility' and therefore it is important that we're all alert to signs of abuse or neglect and are willing to engage proactively, compassionately and non-judgementally with individuals about whom we have concerns and to report any serious concerns to the relevant statutory authorities who can make the decision about whether to intervene.

When responding to safeguarding concerns, Malmesbury & District u3a will follow the principles enshrined in the Care Act (2014):

- Principle 1 Empowerment – whereby the approach is focused on the individual making their own decision and gaining informed consent, where possible.
- Principle 2 Prevention – seeking to take steps to prevent issues from arising or escalating.
- Principle 3 Proportionality – responding in a proportionate way to the issue/s being presented.
- Principle 4 Protection – seeking to keep the membership safe and protection for those deemed to be at risk.
- Principle 5 Partnership – reporting incidents to the relevant statutory bodies and liaising with the Trust.
- Principle 6 Accountability – accurate recording of incidents. Reporting incidents, as required, to the Trust and to relevant regulatory authorities.

Depending on the nature of the allegation and the identified risk, Malmesbury & District u3a will support members who are the alleged victims and the alleged perpetrators of any abuse as well as any member who becomes aware of an allegation in so far as this does not compromise any safeguarding enquiry or investigation into the allegation or place other adults at risk.

We will make every effort to respect the confidentiality of any information that is disclosed under this policy and procedure, however due to the seriousness of allegations confidentiality is not absolute. Information will be recorded and stored securely in accordance with Data Protection Act 2018 but information may have to be shared with relevant authorities on a 'need-to-know' basis only, to prevent:

- Danger to a person's life
- Danger to a person's health
- Danger to others
- Danger to the community
- To facilitate the investigation of a serious crime

What to do if a safeguarding concern is identified

All committee members, Group Leaders and other members of Malmesbury and District u3a will do their best to ensure that no-one comes to any harm through their participation in u3a activities and will act prudently to ensure that everyone, including those living with specific difficulties (see our separate policy), feels supported and safe.

We are not social workers nor police officers and therefore it's important that any significant concerns are dealt with by those qualified and experienced to respond.

Members' safety is paramount at all times, so if you are concerned that someone is in immediate danger, do not delay, dial 999 for the Police who will take appropriate action.

Guidance for Members

If you become concerned that another member of u3a is at risk of harm of abuse:

Wherever possible, speak to the person who you are concerned about, listen to what they say, assure them you are taking the matter seriously and, see what, if anything, they would like happen (but don't promise confidentiality).

If you are still concerned following your conversation (or you have been unable to speak to the person directly), raise the matter as soon as possible, either with the Group Leader or one of the Committee/Executive Officers. They will complete a 'Safeguarding Assessment' and take advice about next steps.

Guidance for Group Leaders & Committee/Executive Officers

If a concern is raised with you that a member may be at risk (from themselves, another member or someone outside u3a), then listen carefully to the concern, take a note of key facts and, where possible, speak directly to the person about whom the concern has been raised.

Group Leaders

In less serious circumstances, the concern may be resolved by speaking directly to the person involved although the group leader should remain alert to any further signs of issues.

Where the concerns are more serious and can't be simply resolved, group leaders should raise the matter confidentially, as soon as possible, with one of the committee/Executive Officers who will complete a 'Safeguarding Assessment' to decide next steps.

Committee/Executive Officers

If you are informed of a safeguarding concern by a member or group leader, first priority is to ensure that the individual is safe, if necessary by informing emergency services.

Complete a 'Safeguarding Assessment' form (available from the website or Chair). This form offers a standard way of collecting and assessing the information you have been given and helps guide next steps. The steps to take will be discussed and agreed between the Executive Officers of the committee in the first instance with additional advice and support available from Third Age Trust. No committee member will act in isolation when dealing with a safeguarding concern. The steps taken should be documented on the Safeguarding Assessment form and stored securely in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018.

As far as possible, the adult at risk's wishes will be respected as to whether or not to refer any concerns to the local authority as a Safeguarding Enquiry under Section 42 of the Care Act 2014. However, where the risk is assessed as 'High', it may be necessary to override their wishes in the best interests of other adults at risk. For 'High' risk concerns advice and support should be sought promptly from Third Age Trust and/or the relevant statutory authorities (contact details below).

Where the risk is not deemed to be high but support is needed, the Executive Officers will contact the Trust to discuss the concerns and seek additional assistance in deciding next steps which may include developing a risk management plan. Assistance will always be sought before moving to exclude any member from the u3a on the basis of a safeguarding risk assessment.

All actions taken will be recorded. Any records will remain confidential to the committee unless a decision has been taken to share the record with the relevant statutory bodies.

Key Contact Information

- Third Age Trust Head Office - 0208 466 6139 (Mon-Fri 9.30-4.30)
- Wiltshire adult Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) - 0300 456 0111
  Email: adviceandcontact@wiltshire.gov.uk
- Gloucestershire County Council (Adult Helpdesk / Advice Helpline) - 01452 426868
  Email: socialcare.enq@gloucestershire.gov.uk
- Hourglass 24 hour Helpline - 0808 808 8141 (provide information and support to an older person or anyone concerned about an older person who is at risk of, experiencing or recovering from any form of abuse or neglect)

More Information

- Care and support statutory guidance The Care Act 2014, updated 28 June 2017
- Safeguarding Policy and Procedure Third Age Trust, May 2023
- Factsheet 78. AgeUK Dec 2023 Safeguarding older people from abuse and neglect