

COMMUNITIES 1st

Safeguarding children and vulnerable adults

Who should read this guidance?

This guidance is principally intended for volunteers managed by Communities 1st staff who are likely to have regular contact with children and/or vulnerable adults through their volunteering work.

What is safeguarding

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is defined as protecting children from maltreatment and preventing impairment of children's health or development. Safeguarding ensures that children can grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care, enable those children to have optimum life chances and to enter adulthood successfully.

Communities 1st's **policy Safeguarding Children & Vulnerable Adults** gives clear procedures on responding to concerns regarding the safeguarding and protection of children, young people and vulnerable adults. Combined with the associated procedures, and guidance, the policy provides a structure for staff that may come across concerns of this nature within the context of their work.

Under the policy all volunteers likely to undertake regulated activity with young people under 18 or classified as a vulnerable adult are required to undergo a criminal disclosure check (DBS). This will be arranged by the team before you begin volunteering.

Other definitions

A **child** is defined as anyone who has not reached their 18th birthday. Children' therefore means 'children and **young people**.

A **vulnerable adult** someone 18 or over who is unable to care independently for themselves or unable to protect themselves against significant harm or exploitation. This could be due to a physical or learning disability, illness or injury or mental health issues; old age; substance addiction; domestic violence or abuse or other reasons. It can be a temporary or a permanent condition.

Child protection is a part of safeguarding and promoting welfare, and refers to the activity that is undertaken to protect specific children who are suffering, or are at risk of suffering, significant harm.

What Volunteers need to do

- **Know your role and responsibilities in relation to young people.**
Your Volunteer Team will ensure that you have the relevant information and are clear about your role in relation to the safeguarding of young people.

- **Be aware of Communities 1st's Safeguarding Children & Vulnerable Adults policy.** Communities 1st is committed to providing a safe and supportive environment in its work with children and young people. Communities 1st has a duty of care to ensure the well-being of everyone who participates in a Communities 1st programme and to safeguard those who are particularly vulnerable. Our approach to safeguarding which includes the procedure for reporting is outlined in our Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults policy.
- **Know who to contact to report and for advice on safeguarding issues.** Volunteers should discuss their concerns with their Volunteer Manager/contact in the first instance. However if the concerns are about the Volunteer manager/contact or they are unable to contact their Volunteer Manager/contact volunteers should contact the Chief Executive. Don't be afraid to raise genuine concerns about other volunteers or staff if you see examples of bad practice or failure to follow Communities 1st policy or even have suspicions of abuse. Speak discreetly to your Volunteer manager or the Chief Executive.
- **Maintain professional boundaries** at all times. Avoid placing yourself into situations where your actions may be misinterpreted. Volunteers shouldn't spend excessive amounts of time alone with young people away from others, take young people alone on car journeys, or undertake any home visits.
- **Use Communities 1st's procedure for reporting concerns**
Volunteers are not expected to be an expert in recognition; however all adults working within Communities 1st have a duty of care to be vigilant and respond appropriately to suspicions of poor practice, abuse or bullying. This does not mean that it is your responsibility to decide if a situation is poor practice, abuse or bullying, but it is your responsibility to report your concerns.

If someone discloses abuse to you, be sympathetic and supportive, but don't agree to keep confidences. Explain it is your duty to pass on information appropriately. Don't risk putting yourself in difficulty or danger by attempting to investigate the case yourself or to challenge the alleged abuser follow the procedure below

1. **Discuss your concerns with your Volunteer Manager/contact.** If this is the person who is suspected of abuse, or if your manager/contact is not contactable, contact the Chief Executive. Your Volunteer manager will report the concerns as soon as possible. This should normally be on the same working day, so do not delay in passing the information on.
2. **Make a note** of all events (with dates and times) and include what the child/young person has said (where this applies) and pass this information to your Volunteer Manager/contact. This information may be needed later.

In an emergency and where there is immediate risk to a child or young person ACT! It is essential to avoid delay as inaction may place the child at further risk. Inform your Manager as soon as possible, who will in turn contact the Chief Executive. If contact cannot be made appropriate action should be undertaken e.g. contact police.