



Hart Voluntary Action Limited Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy

1. Introduction

1.1 Hart Voluntary Action Limited (HVA) recognises that the protection of children and young people is a statutory requirement for an organisation that in any way supports or works with children and young people. This policy therefore sets out the principles that will be applied and the steps to be taken to ensure HVA meets its commitment to the protection of children/young people.

1.2 The aim of this policy is to outline the practice and procedures for paid staff and volunteers within HVA, in order to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people up to the age of 18 years (or 25 years if appropriate). It is aimed at protecting the child/young person and the worker/volunteer, and recognises the risks involved in lone working with children and young people.

1.3 The policy covers all staff and volunteers within all areas of work with children and young people.

1.4 A child safeguarding concern overrides issues of confidentiality as stated in the Children Act 2024 and HVA's Confidentiality Policy (Number 19).

- The Act aims to improve effective local working to safeguard and promote children's well-being by taking a child-centred approach and includes universal as well as targeted and specialist services.

1.5 It is the responsibility of all staff and volunteers to report any suspected abuse - **don't simply assume that someone else is doing something about it.**

2. Government Guidance

2.1 Hart Voluntary Action Safeguarding Policy and Procedures follow guidance laid out in the Government publication "Working Together to Safeguard Children" (2023) which is a guide to multi-agency working to help, protect and promote the welfare of children

2.2 Whilst it is parents and carers who have primary care for their children, local authorities, working with partner organisations and agencies, have specific duties to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in their area. The Children Act 1989 sets out specific duties to provide services to children in their area if they are in need and to undertake enquiries if they believe a child has suffered or is likely to suffer significant harm. The Children Act 2004 placed a duty on the local authority to promote co-operation with partners and other agencies in order to improve the wellbeing of children in their area. It also placed duties on a range of organisations and individuals to ensure they too give sufficient regard to children in need of help and safeguarding. (Government Website)

2.3 Amendments made by the Children and Social Work Act 2017 to the Children Act 2004 strengthened this already important relationship by placing new duties on the police, integrated care boards (ICBs) and the local authority, as statutory safeguarding partners. Safeguarding partners are under a duty to make arrangements to work together, and with other partners locally including education providers and childcare settings, to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in their area. (Government Website)

2.4 Guidance is also taken from the Children Act (1989, 2004), the Children and Families Act 2014, UNCRC (1989), The Human Rights Act (1998) and Care Act (2014). The Hampshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (HSCP) provides a statutory function for keeping children safe and ensuring their

wellbeing in the local authority area of Hampshire. The Partnership includes local agencies who work together to make sure that child protection services in Hampshire are effective and keep our children safe.

3. Principles

HVA's Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy is based on the following principles:

- All children have equal rights to protection from abuse and exploitation.
- Child abuse is never acceptable.
- We have a commitment to protecting children with/for whom we work.
- When we work through partners, they have a responsibility to meet minimum standards of protection for children in their programmes.

4. Code of Conduct

All HVA staff and volunteers working with children and young people are required to abide by the code of conduct which can be found in the HVA Staff Conduct and Behaviour Policy maintained by the HVA Senior Administrator

5. Best Practice

HVA's Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy is based on established best practice.

5.1 Disclosure Barring Service (DBS) Disclosures

HVA is responsible for ensuring that 'safe recruitment' practices are adhered to and that the suitability of all staff or volunteers who have contact with vulnerable persons is fully checked. In line with this requirement, all staff and volunteers, including Trustees who have direct contact with vulnerable persons or have any supervisory responsibilities over staff or volunteers who have contact with vulnerable persons are to be subject to a DBS Check .

- Prior to DBS results, staff or volunteers are not permitted to work alone with children/vulnerable young people and are to be supervised at all times by a member of staff or a volunteer who has been DBS checked.
- If a DBS check indicates that a staff member or volunteer is not suitable for working with children and/or vulnerable young people their probationary employment may be terminated. Similarly, an individual volunteer's agreement/placement will be terminated.
- Additionally, in support of the DBS process, all new staff are required to provide two referees and must disclose any cautions and convictions.
- All staff and volunteers have a duty to declare any subsequent convictions, adverse child protection or care proceedings. Failure to do so will be regarded as gross misconduct possibly resulting in dismissal.

5.2 Management and Supervision

All line manager's have a responsibility to ensure that their staff and volunteers are aware of the risks to children/young people and the policies and procedures in place to minimise those risks. Staff and volunteers working with children are also to be regularly supervised and their work monitored, providing them with an opportunity to raise any issues.

5.3 Training

All staff and volunteers working with children or responsible for supervising those working with children or vulnerable young people (including Trustees) are to receive training in safeguarding children/young people. This is to include training in recognising the signs and symptoms of physical abuse, neglect, emotional abuse, sexual abuse extremism and child criminal exploitation and the procedures for incident reporting.

5.4 Record Keeping

Records kept about children and young people should only include: contacts made, referrals made, including date, time, reason and referral agency. Records are recorded centrally as per Appendix 3 Safeguarding Procedures

5.5 Planning

Wherever possible, staff and volunteers should avoid lone working with a child. If possible, any one-to-one contact should take place in an environment where other staff, parents or volunteers are also present, or within sight. Other measures to reduce opportunities for abuse include:

- ensuring children can walk to an organisation's premises in good lighting, along safe paths
- not meeting with children away from the usual base or meeting place without a parent or other adult being present

Where it is necessary for staff to work with individual children or young people in an unsupervised setting, those staff involved must receive closer supervision from their manager.

5.6 Access to an Independent Person

Any child or young person who comes into contact with HVA staff or volunteers for more than just the odd occasion should be given information on their right to talk with an independent person including the name and contact details of the independent person. The independent person for HVA is the Chief Executive.

6 Concerns about Colleagues

6.1 Staff or volunteers who have concerns that a colleague's behaviour may be putting children/young people at risk must pass these concerns on to their manager immediately. Where the concern is about the manager, the Chief Executive is to be contacted directly. All concerns raised about a member of staff or volunteer are to be investigated immediately and appropriate records written and kept.

6.2 If deemed necessary and appropriate, any safeguarding concerns about staff, however minor, are to be recorded and placed on individual personnel files, with a copy provided to the member of staff concerned.

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Recognition and Identification of Abuse

Appendix 2 - Management of Allegations

Appendix 3 - Safeguarding Procedures

Appendix 4 - Safeguarding Procedure for Youth Counselling

Appendix 5 - Recruitment of Ex-Offenders

Appendix 6 – Guidance on Reporting to Trustees