# Vulnerable Adults Policy

The purpose of this policy is to outline the duty and responsibility of Sanctuary Hosting Ltd, volunteers and Committee Members working on behalf of Sanctuary Hosting Ltd in relation to the protection of adults from abuse.

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 Sanctuary Hosting Ltd and its employees, volunteers and trustees have in respect of adult protection.
* To provide employees and volunteers with an overview of adult protection.
* To provide a clear procedure that will be implemented where adult protection issues arise.

# Context and definitions.

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 most widely accepted definition of a ‘vulnerable adult’ is that referred to in the 1997 Consultation Paper ‘Who decides?’ issued by the Lord Chancellor’s Department. It 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”.

This definition does ***not*** apply to guests who are accepted by Sanctuary Hosting as we only select guests whom we assess as having the capacity to care for themselves and protect themselves against significant harm or exploitation. Nonetheless many of our guests, by virtue of *material and social circumstance* rather than *innate ability*, may be more vulnerable to being abused or exploited than ordinary British citizens. This is particularly true for those of our guests who do not have permission to work or recourse to public funds (or only diminished benefits) or limited or no use of English or limited knowledge of British culture and rights. For this reason Sanctuary Hosting, whilst it aims not to house adults defined as vulnerable according to the above definition still has a policy to protect the adults it works with - who remain at risk of abuse.

# The role of employees, volunteers and trustees.

All employees, volunteers and trustees of Sanctuary Hosting Ltd have a duty to promote the welfare and safety of adults within the scheme – particularly but not exclusively our guests.

Employees, volunteers and trustees may receive disclosures of abuse and/or observe adults who are or may be being abused in some way. This policy will enable employees/volunteers/trustees to make informed and confident responses to specific adult protection issues.

# 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 following are some of 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 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, pressure in connection with wills, property or inheritance or financial transactions, or the misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits.

• **Economic abuse-** including situations in which a person is required or manipulated, usually on account of a real or imagined power imbalance, to work without a proper, reasonable and/or consensual employment contract, or for unacceptably long hours or for illegally low levels of pay, or no pay, or without enjoying full employee rights and protection. Includes forced labour, human trafficking and domestic servitude through the use of coercion, deception and force.

* **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.

# Procedure in the event of a disclosure

It is important that everyone within Sanctuary Hosting is 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 someone has been or is being abused.

Promises of confidentiality should not be given as this may conflict with the need to ensure the safety and welfare of the individual.

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

This should include information in relation to the date, the time, the place where the alleged abuse happened, your name and the names of others present, the name of the complainant and, where different, the name of the adult who has allegedly been abused, the nature of the alleged abuse, a description of any injuries observed (physical or otherwise), the account which has been given of the allegation.

# Responding to an allegation

Any suspicion, allegation or incident of abuse must be reported to an employee (or in their absence a trustee) as soon as possible and as a matter of the highest urgency.

An employee shall report the matter by telephone to a trustee, who will discuss the matter with her/his fellow trustees. A written record of the date and time of the report shall be made and the report must include the name and position of the person to whom the matter is reported.

# Responding appropriately to an allegation of abuse

In the event of an incident or disclosure a member of staff (or in the event of there being no staff available a trustee) should:

• Make sure the individual is safe

• Speak to someone else on the committee at the earliest opportunity

• Assess whether emergency services (such as the police or adult social services – see below) are required and if needed call them

• Listen

• Offer support and reassurance

• Ascertain and establish the basic facts

• Make careful notes and obtain agreement on them

• Ensure notation of dates, time and persons present are correct and agreed

• Take all necessary precautions to preserve forensic evidence

• Follow correct procedure

• Explain areas of confidentiality;

• Explain the procedure to the individual making the allegation

• Remember the need for on-going support

**Neither** the Sanctuary Hosting employee, volunteer or trustee should:

• Confront the alleged abuser

• Be judgmental or voice their own opinion

• Be dismissive of the concern

• Investigate the matter or interview the alleged victim 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

• Put their own interpretation or opinions in their notes

It is important to remember that the person who first encounters a case of alleged abuse, although they may be concerned, is not responsible for deciding whether abuse has occurred. This is a task for the professional adult protection agencies/police, following a referral from the designated key worker within Sanctuary Hosting.

# Confidentiality

Protecting adults at risk of abuse raises issues of confidentiality which should be clearly understood by all.

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

Clear boundaries of confidentiality will be communicated to all.

All personal information regarding an adult who may be at risk will be kept confidential (for more detail on this and the circumstances in which information may need to be shared with third parties - see Sanctuary Hosting’s confidentiality policy). All written records will be kept in a secure area for a specific time as identified in data protection guidelines.

If an adult confides in an employee, volunteer or trustee and requests that the information is kept secret, it is important that they are advised sensitively that there is a responsibility to refer cases of alleged abuse to the appropriate agencies.

Within that context, the adult should, however, 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 adult is the priority.

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

The employees, volunteer or trustee should assure the adult that they will keep them informed of any action to be taken and why. The adult’s 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 adults at risk of abuse.

All local authorities have a Safeguarding Adults Board, which oversees multi-agency work aimed at protecting and safeguarding adults. It is normal practice for the board to comprise 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.

# Role of staff/trustees within Sanctuary Hosting’s vulnerable adults policy.

Should employees or volunteers have any suspicions or concerns relating to Adult Protection, they should immediately contact one of the Sanctuary Hosting trustees and then the most senior member of staff available should deal with the matter by following this policy and making clear early decisions as to whether or not to refer the matter to one or more external agencies. Trustees will respond to all adult protection concerns and enquiries and support any employee who raises a suspected case of abuse to implement this procedure. In the event of a concern coming to light to a trustee without a member of staff being available the trustee should themselves follow the procedure.

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Trustees should ensure that all employees and volunteers are familiar with Sanctuary Hosting’s Vulnerable Adult Policy and ensure that all employees and volunteers undertake training, where appropriate.

# Training

Training will be provided, as appropriate, to ensure that trustees, employees and volunteers are aware of these procedures.

**Important Contacts to Report Abuse**

**Oxfordshire**

Oxfordshire Safeguarding Adults Board

Tel: 01865 328232

<http://www.osab.co.uk/public/reporting-concerns/>

**Milton Keynes**

Monday to Friday from 8:30am-5:00pm
01908 253772

Out of hours 5:00pm-8:30am Monday-Friday Weekends & Bank holidays 24 hrs
01908 605650

<https://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/social-care-and-health/safeguarding-people-at-risk/adults-at-risk>

**Reading**

Adult Abuse Team

T: 0118 937 3747

<http://www.reading.gov.uk/adultabuse>