



CHILD AND VULNERABLE ADULT SAFEGUARDING POLICY

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1. Background

Much of the work of Harbury e-Wheels involves contact with children and vulnerable adults. Volunteer drivers need to take particular note of this policy and accompanying procedure. e-Wheels works with the church's Supporting Communities group and therefore e-Wheels board will liaise closely with the church's Safeguarding Officer for advice and in the case of suspected abuse.

2. General Principles

The safety of children, young people and vulnerable adults is of paramount concern.

All volunteers/members will receive guidance to enable them to carry out the duties required of them. All volunteers will be informed of the contents of this policy and will be advised in its implementation.

We will ensure all volunteers whose work involves contact with children, young people and vulnerable adults are guided in how to recognise signs of abuse and follow the referral procedure. Drivers should read the 'Notes to Drivers' in association with this policy.

3. Commitment

Harbury e-Wheels is committed to safeguarding all children and young people and vulnerable adults that come into contact with our volunteers. We believe that all children and young people have an equal right to protection from abuse, regardless of their age, race, religion, ability, gender, language, background or sexual identity and consider the welfare of the child and young people paramount.

Harbury e-Wheels will take every reasonable step to ensure adequate steps to keep children, young person or vulnerable adults safe where our volunteers/members are involved in the delivery of our work. All suspicions and allegations of abuse will be taken seriously and investigations will be undertaken swiftly so that appropriate and required action is taken as soon as possible.

Where abuse of a child, young person or a vulnerable adult by a third party is suspected by a volunteer, he/she will refer the matter to the agency referring the passenger.

4. Security checks

Harbury e-Wheels will ensure that all volunteers involved in working or coming into regular unsupervised contact with children and young people, such as may occur in the e-Wheels scheme are DBS cleared before they commence their role.

5. Dealing with disclosure of abuse and the procedure for reporting concerns

Volunteers are not expected to counsel children, young people or vulnerable adults who have been abused, but they should be able to respond appropriately if a child, young person or vulnerable adult chooses to confide in them. An appropriate response should take into account the age and the vulnerability of the child, young person or vulnerable adult as well as any possible continuing risk to which they may be exposed.

6. Reporting and disclosing information

At the beginning of contact with a person who may choose to disclose information, volunteers should ensure the child, young person and/or vulnerable adult is aware that the discussion between them and the volunteer cannot be kept confidential if they disclose that they or others known to them are at risk of significant harm, in the form of physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse or neglect.

If the child, young person or vulnerable adult is adamant that they do not want any disclosure to the authorities, even if they are aware of Harbury e-Wheels confidentiality principles, volunteers should seek advice from the chair about whether there is a case for going against their wishes. The final decision should be made in light of the seriousness of the disclosure and the level of continuing risk to the child, young person or vulnerable adult and to any others who may be involved. Names do not need to be given straight away, if you wish to ask for advice from Social Services.

If abuse is suspected, e-Wheels will fully investigate the incident or allegations and will notify the agency referring the user immediately, so that they can take the necessary action to inform the police and other Statutory Authorities of the concerns/alleged allegations. In general, the first point of notification should always be the agency concerned.

7. Types of abuse

The main forms of abuse likely to be observed by volunteers are:

- **Physical:** failure to prevent physical injury or actual physical injury through hitting, shaking, squeezing, burning and biting. Giving children alcohol, inappropriate drugs or poison and attempted suffocation or drowning is also physical abuse.
- **Sexual:** inappropriate use of children, young people or vulnerable adults to meet an individual's own sexual needs. This can range from full sexual intercourse, fondling or use of pornography.
- **Emotional:** persistent lack of love and affection, being constantly shouted at, threatened or taunted are just some examples.
- **Neglect:** inadequate diet, poor personal hygiene and clothing are examples. Children might be constantly left alone unsupervised.
- **Financial/Material:** Fraud, theft, or using the vulnerable/young person's property without permission.
- **Institutional:** repeated poor care of individuals through neglect or poor professional practice as a result of organisational structures, policies, processes and/or practices.

(This list is not exhaustive.)

Recognising abuse is not easy. Most children, young people or vulnerable adults will receive cuts, grazes and bruises from time to time and their behaviour may give reason for concern. Also, some ageing processes can cause changes which are hard to distinguish from some aspects of physical assault for example; skin bruising can occur very easily due to blood vessels becoming fragile.

Any concerns should be immediately discussed with the individuals outlined in paragraph 3 below.

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Abuse can happen anywhere and can be carried out by anyone:

- Informal carers, family, friends, neighbours
- Paid staff, volunteers

- Other service users, tenants
- Strangers

8. Guidance in dealing with allegations of abuse made by children, young people and vulnerable adults and suspicions of abuse to children, young people and vulnerable adults

Dealing with children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults

If a child, young person under eighteen years of age or vulnerable adult confides to a volunteer that they are, or someone known to them is, being abused the volunteer should:

- Remind the child, young person or vulnerable adult that what they say is possibly going to be have to be shared with others in order to keep them or other young people safe;
- Make sure that the child, young person or vulnerable adult knows what is meant by sharing information and what is likely to happen – usually that a social worker will talk to them and that, if necessary, the police may become involved;
- Do not ask leading questions or jump to conclusions about what is being said but let the child, young person or vulnerable adult talk, in their own time and using their own words, asking for further details only if absolutely necessary to clarify a point: and
- Make a note of what has been said and check it with the child, young person or vulnerable adult for accuracy.

Volunteers should avoid lone working with children, young people and vulnerable adults. Agencies referring people to Harbury e-Wheels will be informed that our volunteers will never work alone with a child or vulnerable adult. Nor will any e-Wheels volunteer enter the home of a child or vulnerable adult as part of delivering a project or advice or for any other business, even if invited.

Children, young people and vulnerable adults should never be given access to the home address or telephone number of any e-Wheels volunteer. Children, young people and vulnerable adults' contact details should never be disclosed to anyone outside of Harbury e-Wheels without their explicit consent. Harbury e-Wheels has a separate confidentiality policy.

9. Procedure for notifying an allegation

Any situation in which a child, young person or vulnerable adult tells a volunteer that they have been or are being abused must be notified immediately to the chair.

10. Referring the allegation

Referrals of children, young people or vulnerable adults must be made to the Social Services office in the area in which the child, young person or vulnerable adult resides. This should be done in conjunction with and with the knowledge of the relevant agency using our service.

11. Dealing with Suspicious Abuse

Where a volunteer suspects that a child, young person or vulnerable adult may be at risk of harm, although no disclosure or complaint has been made, the circumstances should be discussed with the chair prior to referral to a statutory authority.

12. Allegations of abuse by people now over eighteen years old regarding incidents during childhood

In many cases people may only be able to discuss incidents of abuse in childhood when they reach adulthood. In the event of such disclosures, volunteers should not act as a counsellor but should suggest to the person where they can obtain specialist help or information. The person should also be encouraged to pass the information on if the abuser continues to have access to other children, young people or vulnerable adults.

13. Reporting and dealing with allegations regarding safeguarding or child protection issues against a Harbury e-Wheels volunteer

In an extremely rare instance a volunteer may have been found responsible for abuse. As a result of their contact with children, young people or vulnerable adults volunteers may have allegations of abuse against them for a variety of reasons. That volunteer will be suspended from their role until the allegation has been investigated and resolved. The chair should be informed immediately if the volunteer is aware that an allegation will be made.

14. Receiving an allegation from a child, young person or vulnerable adult

A volunteer who receives an allegation about another volunteer from a child, young person or vulnerable adult should follow the guidelines in section 8 for dealing with a disclosure.

15. Initial assessment by Harbury e-Wheels

The chairperson should make an initial assessment of the allegation, consulting with the volunteer.

Potential outcomes:

1. Where the allegation is considered to be either a potential criminal act or indicates that the child, young person or vulnerable adult has suffered, is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm, the matter should be reported immediately to the police.
2. The initial assessment of the information received leads to a decision as to whether or not the allegation warrants further investigation.
3. The allegation represents inappropriate behaviour or poor practice by the volunteer and is neither potentially a crime nor a significant cause of harm to the child, young person or vulnerable adult. The matter should be addressed by the chair and board of Harbury e-Wheels.
4. The allegation can be shown to be false because the facts alleged could not possibly be true. Consideration should be given to dismissing the volunteer from their role.

16. External enquiries and investigations

Safeguarding procedures for child, young person, vulnerable adult protection by social services or the police are not to be confused with internal enquiries by Harbury e-Wheels. Harbury e-Wheels may be able to use the outcome of the external agency enquiries as part of its own procedure. Harbury e-Wheels should assist the agencies with their enquiries when and where appropriate.

Harbury e-Wheels shall hold in abeyance its own internal enquiries while the formal police or social services investigation proceeds, when to do otherwise may prejudice the investigation. If there is an investigation by an external agency, for example the police, the chair should normally be involved in contributing to the inter-agency strategy discussions. Subject to advice from the police or other investigating agency, the chair shall follow the advice given by that agency.

The chair shall keep a written record of the action(s) taken in connection with the allegation.

17. Suspension of a volunteer

Suspension may be considered at any stage of the investigation, but only for good reason; for example: -

- Where a child, young person or vulnerable adult is believed to be at risk;
- Where the allegations are potentially serious enough to justify dismissal on the grounds of gross misconduct; or
- Where necessary for the good and efficient conduct of the investigation.

Prior to making the decision to suspend, the chair should endeavour to meet with the volunteer. This should occur with the approval of the appropriate agencies, e.g. the police. If the police are engaged in an investigation the officer in charge of the case should be consulted.

During the meeting, the volunteer should be given as much information as possible, in particular the reasons for any proposed suspension, provided that in doing so it would not interfere with the investigation into the allegation. The interview is not intended to establish the volunteer's innocence or guilt. The volunteer member should be given details of the allegation(s) at the meeting.

If the chair considers that the suspension is necessary, the Harbury e-Wheels volunteer shall be informed that he/she is suspended from their role immediately. Written confirmation of the suspension, with reasons, shall be dispatched as soon as possible, ideally within one working day.

Since all people involved in delivering Harbury e-Wheels activities are volunteers there is no formal HR department to support them. However, any such investigation whether or not it leads to suspension of a volunteer will be handled with sensitivity and respect.

18. Allegations without foundations/malicious allegations

False/malicious allegations may be indicative of problems of abuse elsewhere. A record should be kept and consideration given to a referral to the relevant external agency.

In consultation with the volunteer of Harbury e-Wheels the chair shall: -

1. Inform the volunteer/member against whom the allegation is made orally and in writing that no further action will be taken.
2. Work closely with any referring agency to ensure that Harbury e-Wheels cooperates in any necessary action by that agency. Since this is most likely to be in respect of Harbury e-Wheels's e-Wheels project,

the original referring agency will be the appropriate one.

19. Records of an investigation

It is important that documents concerning an investigation are retained in a secure place, together with a written record of the outcome.

20. Monitoring effectiveness

Where an allegation has been made against a volunteer, the chair, at the conclusion of the investigation and any disciplinary action, will consider whether there are any matters arising from it that could lead to the improvement of Harbury e-Wheels's procedures and/or policies. Consideration should also be given to the training needs of the Harbury e-Wheels team.

21. Media Communication

Any communication with the media about such an allegation should be referred to the chair of Harbury e-Wheels.

22. Contact numbers

For concerns for a child or young person, Warwickshire's Children's Social Care Team should be contacted on 01926 414144 during office hours. Contact should be made on 01926 886922 outside of normal office hours.

In the event of concerns for a vulnerable adult within Warwickshire, the matter should be reported to the Adult Social Care Team on 01926 412080.

23. Code of Conduct and Behaviour

Harbury e-Wheels expects everyone who works with us to follow the guidelines that cover all aspects of Harbury e-Wheels's activities. These are:

- Treat everyone with respect.
- Provide access for people to talk about any concerns they may have.
- Support children, young people and vulnerable adults to create a safe environment where they feel comfortable to talk about attitudes or behaviours they do not like.
- Avoid situations that compromise your relationship with children, young people and vulnerable adults, which are unacceptable within a relationship of trust.
- Remember that someone else might misinterpret your actions, no matter how well intentioned.
- Recognise that caution is required even in sensitive moments of listening, such as when dealing with bullying, bereavement or abuse.
- Do not have any inappropriate physical or verbal contact with others.
- Do not jump to conclusions about others without checking the facts.
- Do not show favouritism to any individual.
- Do not make suggestive remarks or gestures, even in fun.
- Do not let suspicions, disclosure or allegations of abuse, go unrecorded or unreported.

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