



Safeguarding Policy

Underlying Principles

- The welfare of the child or vulnerable adult is paramount.
- All participants regardless of age, gender, ability or disability, race, faith, size, language or sexual identity, have the right to protection from harm
- All allegations and suspicions of harm will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly, fairly and appropriately
- Healthwatch Hackney will seek to work in partnership to promote the welfare, health and safety of children and vulnerable adults
- The interests of those who work or volunteer with children and vulnerable adults will be protected.
- Everyone shares responsibility for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people, irrespective of individual roles.
- In order that organisations and practitioners collaborate effectively, it is vital that all partners who work with children - including the local authority, the police, the health and social services, the courts, professionals, the voluntary sector, local residents and individual members of local communities - are aware of, and appreciate, the role that each of them play in this area.

Policy Statement

Children and Vulnerable Adults

Defining Children

Children are defined in the Children Act 2004 as people under the age of 18 years. For the purposes of this Policy the legal definition applies.

Defining Vulnerable Adults

Vulnerable adults are defined in the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 as someone 18 years or older who has:

- A dependency upon others, or a requirement for assistance from others, in the performance of basic physical functions
- Severe impairment in their ability to communicate with others
- An impairment in their ability to protect themselves from assault, abuse or neglect
- Has been detained in lawful custody or is being supervised as a result of a court order

Whilst this Policy refers to both children and vulnerable adults throughout, there are instances in which the management, both internally and externally, of concerns and incidents involving vulnerable adults may vary slightly from those involving children.

In particular, and in contrast to the situation when dealing with children, it is essential to obtain a vulnerable adult's consent (where possible) before referring the matter to any of the statutory agencies.

Putting this Policy into Practice: Safe Recruitment Mandatory Vetting of Volunteers and Employees

The law states that people who work with children have to keep them safe. This safeguarding legislation is set out in The Children Act (1989) and (2004). It also features in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (to which the UK is a signatory) and sets out the rights of children to be free from abuse. The Government also provides guidance in their document *Working Together to Safeguard Children 2013*

Adults working with children and vulnerable adults in a voluntary or paid capacity in a health or social sector setting must have an Enhanced DBS check formerly called (CRB) disclosure.

Before working unsupervised with children or vulnerable adults, DBS clearance is essential and vetting through a DBS application must be undertaken.

This includes checking whether someone is included in the two DBS 'barred lists' (previously called ISA barred lists) of individuals who are unsuitable for working with children and adults.

Healthwatch Hackney does not deliver services directly to children or vulnerable adults but recognises safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults is not just the province of those working directly with these groups of people. We will carry out appropriate checks for all relevant staff and volunteers.

Healthwatch Hackney aims to ensure that no act or omission on the part of the organisation, or that of its staff, or partner organisations puts a child, young person or vulnerable adult inadvertently at risk.

All staff will undergo safeguarding training as part of their induction.

Definition of abuse

The definition of abuse in the 'No Secrets' guidance is: "... a violation of an individual's human and civil rights by any other person or persons which results in significant harm." (DH, 2000)

Significant Harm

The degree of abuse that justifies intervention is that which poses a serious risk. In determining how serious or extensive abuse must be to justify intervention No Secrets uses the concept of 'significant harm'.

This refers to:

- Ill treatment (including sexual abuse and forms of ill treatment which is not physical).
- The impairment of, or an avoidable deterioration in, physical or mental health
- and /or

- The impairment of physical, intellectual, emotional, social or behavioural development.

(Department of Health 2000, No Secrets: Guidance on developing and implementing multi-agency policies and procedures to protect vulnerable adults from abuse).

The importance of this definition is that in deciding what action to take, consideration must be given not only to the immediate impact on and risk to the person, but also to the risk of future, longer-term harm. Seriousness of harm or the extent of the abuse is not always clear at the point of the alert. All reports of suspicions or concerns should be approached with an open mind and could give rise to action under this Policy and Procedures.

Reporting Abuse

All staff, volunteers and contract workers are obliged to report any child protection or safeguarding concerns about a child or vulnerable adult to the Director. For the purpose of accuracy, the person reporting is asked to write a factual account of what has happened and submit it to the Director.

The Director or a designated staff member will report to the Safeguarding lead at Hackney Council. A record of this will be kept including the date, time and the name of the person who took the report. Once the matter has been reported to Hackney Council, Healthwatch Hackney will cease to deal with the issue save to ensure all records are accurate.

Application of this policy

This policy applies to anyone employed directly or indirectly by Healthwatch Hackney, and also includes Board members and volunteers.

This policy is available to all interested parties. This document will be reviewed periodically, in line with national and local guidance.