



BARROW UPON SOAR GOOD NEIGHBOUR SCHEME

Vulnerable Persons Safeguarding Guidance

G001

1. Introduction

Safeguarding means protecting vulnerable people from any kind of abuse and reporting any suspicions or concerns.

All BGNS volunteers must help protect vulnerable people from abuse that they support or meet through the scheme.

This guidance explains **volunteers'** safeguarding responsibilities and must be followed by everyone, regardless of the person's gender, ethnicity, disability, sexuality, religion or faith.

Volunteers must not be left alone in a room with anyone under 18 while on BGNS business, as this is not covered by insurance.

If you believe a child or vulnerable adult is at risk of, or experiencing abuse, or at risk from an adult linked to BGNS activities, you must follow the reporting steps in this guidance.

2. Principles

- The welfare of the vulnerable adult or child comes first, and everyone shares responsibility for their protection.
- All vulnerable adults and children have the right to live free from abuse, bullying, shouting, physical violence, sexism and racism.
- No volunteer may have unsupervised access to vulnerable adults unless they have completed the safe recruitment process (including DBS).
- All suspicions or allegations of abuse must be taken seriously and dealt with promptly by the Safeguarding Officer or a deputy.
- All volunteers must understand this guidance and safeguarding issues and must hold a current DBS at the level required by BGNS and share the result with the Administration Team. They will be required, on a regular basis, to attest that their DBS accreditation has not been jeopardised.

3. What safeguarding adults means

Safeguarding means protecting an adult's right to live in safety, free from abuse and neglect, and working together to prevent or stop abuse while promoting their wellbeing and respecting their views and wishes.

Some adults cannot easily protect themselves due to mental or physical incapacity, sensory loss, disability, frailty, addiction, illness or a temporary crisis.

An adult who is usually independent may become vulnerable after an accident, illness or change in circumstances.

3a. Types of abuse

- Physical/bullying: Injury or harm to the body, or inappropriate use of restraint.
- Financial: Use of a person's money or belongings without permission.
- Sexual: Any sexual activity the person does not want or cannot consent to.
- Neglect: Failure to meet basic needs such as food, fluids, warmth, medication or hygiene.
- Emotional/psychological: Behaviour that makes a person feel worthless, unloved or uncared for.
- Institutional/organisational: Services focused on the organisation's needs rather than the person's needs.
- Discriminatory: Unequal treatment because of characteristics covered by the Equality Act 2010.

Abuse may happen once or repeatedly, affect one or many people, and can take many forms, so volunteers should look for patterns but keep an open mind.

3b. Possible signs of abuse

Be alert to signs such as:

- Depression, self-harm or suicide attempts
- Difficulty making friends, fear or anxiety
- Poor hygiene, dirty clothing or inappropriate dress
- Lack of money or unexplained financial difficulties
- Injuries that are hard to explain (e.g. bruises, finger marks)
- Pressure ulcers
- Sleep problems or insomnia
- Fearfulness, especially of physical contact
- Inappropriate sexual awareness or explicit behaviour
- Withdrawal or sudden changes in behaviour

If unsure, ask the member about their wellbeing, as there may be other explanations.

3c. Who may abuse

Abuse can occur anywhere, including in a person's own home, and is often carried out by someone in a position of trust or power.

Abusers can include: partners, family members, neighbours, friends, acquaintances, local residents, people who deliberately exploit vulnerable adults, paid staff or professionals, volunteers and strangers.

4. Reporting concerns or incidents

If a BGNS member or anyone you encounter through BGNS is in immediate danger or has suffered serious abuse, you **must** contact the Police or Adult/Child Social Care immediately using the emergency numbers at the end of this guidance.

For any other safeguarding concern, you **must** contact the **Safeguarding Officer** (via the Telephone Co-ordinator: 07771 625 591), who is responsible for reporting concerns to the local authority. A member of the Steering Group may also be used as a point of contact or first access point.

The Safeguarding Officer decides whether to notify Adult Social Services and may seek more information from you or others to clarify or corroborate concerns before making a referral.

4a. How to respond if you suspect or are told about abuse

Remember: it is **not** the volunteer's job to investigate; statutory agencies (police and social services) will do that.

Do:

- Take all allegations seriously and listen carefully.
- Tell the person they were right to tell you and reassure them it is not their fault.
- Be honest about who you must tell and why.
- Explain what you will do next and when, and keep them updated where possible.
- Act quickly: tell the Safeguarding Officer (or nominated person) immediately.
- Write down what was said and what you did as soon as possible, with date and time, and sign it.
- Seek medical help for the member if needed.
- Inform carers unless you suspect they are involved in the abuse.

Do not:

- Make promises you cannot keep, especially about secrecy.
- Question or interrogate the person; do not investigate.
- Cast doubt on what they say, interrupt them or change the subject.
- Say anything that suggests they are to blame.
- Do nothing; always pass concerns to the Safeguarding Officer promptly.

5. Confidentiality and information sharing

Confidentiality is **important**, but safeguarding concerns must be shared with appropriate professionals when necessary.

Volunteers should record any concern or incident as soon as possible, with dates, times and key facts, so there is a clear factual record.

If requested by investigative agencies or Adult Social Services, volunteers must share relevant information about vulnerable adults or children.

All personal information about a vulnerable adult must be stored securely and only for as long as allowed under data protection rules (check with the Safeguarding Team if unsure).

If a member asks you to keep something secret, you must explain who you must tell and why, and reassure them that information will be shared only with people who need to know.

Where possible, obtain the member's consent before sharing information, but if consent is not possible or safe, the vulnerable adult's safety and welfare take priority.

Once informed, the Safeguarding Officer will usually pass information to Social Services, who then decide what action to take.

When deciding whether to refer, the Safeguarding Officer should consider:

- The member's wishes and preferred outcome
- The member's mental capacity to decide about their own and others' safety
- The safety of any children or other adults with care and support needs
- Whether a person in a position of trust is involved
- Whether a crime may have been committed

This guides whether to notify: the Police, Leicestershire Adult Safeguarding Duty Team, relevant regulatory bodies, and family/relatives (after advice from Adult Social Services).

The Safeguarding Officer must keep a record of the reasons for referring or not referring a concern.

6. Key contact numbers

- **BGNS Telephone Co-ordinator:** Mobile 07771 625 591
- **Police:** Emergency 999; Non-emergency 101
- **Local Social Care (Charnwood):** 01509 266641
- **Leicestershire Adult Safeguarding (referrals):** 0116 305 0004
- **Leicestershire Safeguarding Team Duty:** 0116 305 4933
- **Emergency Duty Team / Out of Hours (Leicestershire & Rutland):** 0116 255 1606
- **Safeguarding Adults Board Managers (Leicestershire & Rutland):** 0116 305 7130
- **First Response Children's Duty Team (Leicestershire, 24 hours):** 0116 305 0005
- **Action for Elder Abuse helpline:** 0808 808 8141