

Halton
u3a

Safeguarding Policy & Procedure



Halton u3a

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Safeguarding Policy

1. Introduction

Safeguarding refers to measures designed to protect the health, wellbeing and human rights of individuals, particularly those who may be at risk of abuse, neglect or harm.

It is a legal requirement of the Charity Commission that all u3as (and other charities) must have a safeguarding policy in place to protect their members. To this aim, Halton u3a will ensure that procedures are in place to protect the welfare and wellbeing of all members and to facilitate safe environments at u3a group meetings, monthly meetings and events.

Halton u3a will not condone nor tolerate any form of abuse or neglect and believes that all people should be able and, where necessary, enabled to live in an environment which is safe and free from harm.

2. Aims

The main aim of the Safeguarding policy is to outline measures to help protect and safeguard members, visitors and guests from potential abuse and to provide a structured approach to managing safeguarding effectively. Therefore, the policy seeks to offer appropriate guidance to:

- Ensure compliance with all relevant legislation and common law duties of care
- To provide clarity regarding both organisational and personal responsibilities in respect to safeguarding
- To provide guidance regarding recognising indicators of potential abuse
- Outline the steps to take to ensure that potential safeguarding incidents are reported promptly to the appropriate authorities.

Whilst it is the protection of vulnerable adults that is the primary aim of the safeguarding policy. It should be noted that support, rather than investigation is the role of the u3a, which is actually the responsibility of the appropriate authority to which the incident has been referred, for example, Social Services.

3. Scope

3.1 This Policy applies to all members, Group Leaders and Trustees (The Halton u3a Committee) of Halton u3a.

4. Safeguarding Issues & Indicators

The safeguarding of members is far reaching and not simply confined to u3a related meetings and events. For example, the signs and indicators of abuse may be as a direct result of contact with another member within a u3a group setting or meeting, or instead, the abuse may have been inflicted in a home environment or from anyone else that the member comes into contact with.

The place of the abuse is not the primary concern, but rather the ongoing safety of the member concerned and Therefore, understanding the signs and indicators of abuse and neglect is crucial.



4.1 Examples of when safeguarding procedures might be activated

- A member arriving at an outdoor-based group without appropriate clothing and seemingly confused
- A member making advances towards another member with dementia
- A member appearing to bully another member

4.2. Signs and indicators of abuse and neglect

There are many signs and indicators that may suggest abuse or neglect including:

- Unexplained bruises or injuries, or lack of medical attention for an injury
- Non-attendance at interest groups without reason and no response to repeated reminders from group leaders or other members
- An unexpected significant loss or gain of weight and/or an unkempt appearance
- A change in the behaviour or confidence of a member, where they become quiet and withdrawn, or lash out in anger.
- A member showing fear of a particular group or individual
- A member who sends unwanted sexually explicit text messages to a vulnerable member
- Threats of physical harm and bullying, or intentional striking of another member
- Additionally, a member may actually report they are being abused – i.e., make a disclosure

5. Responsibilities

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and for the safety of the individual concerned it is important that any concerns are raised promptly.

5.1 Members

Members must bring any safeguarding concerns they have to their committee (this can be via a group leader). In addition, members should follow their code of conduct and not keep any concerns they have to themselves.

5.2 Trustees

The Trustees of Halton u3a will take reasonable steps to protect anyone who comes in contact with u3a from harm and matters of concern will be promptly reported to the relevant safeguarding authorities and charity regulatory authorities, as appropriate. This may include the local authority, the local multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH), or the police in an emergency.

Halton u3a does not hold any statutory authority. Therefore, whilst the Trustees will support those involved in safeguarding incidents, they will not lead safeguarding investigations, which must be left to the authority the incident has been referred to, as it is deemed inappropriate under Section 42 of the Care Act 2014 (England and Wales.)

Reporting abuse to the relevant authorities - Important Note:

In cases where the individuals involved are in immediate danger a call should be made to the emergency services via 999.

All other incidents would be reported to the local authority or social services in England.

Additionally, **Hourglass (previously Action on Elder Abuse)** <https://www.wearehourglass.org> is a confidential support and advice for older people who have been abused or people who know an older person who may be suffering abuse. Available weekdays 9am - 5pm on freephone 0808 808 8141



In addition, Trustees have a responsibility to:

- Ensure that all Trustees understand and implement safeguarding principles and have a clear oversight of how safeguarding and protecting people from harm is managed within Halton u3a
- Promote a culture that encourages welfare and safeguarding awareness amongst all members
- Provide information, instruction, training, and supervision, as necessary, to ensure the safety and wellbeing of its members
- Ensure members are aware of who to contact if they have concerns, which ideally should be a member of the Committee directly. However, can be via a group leader.
- Put the well-being of those at risk of harm first and actively support such individuals to communicate their views and the outcomes they want to achieve. Those views and wishes should be respected and supported unless there are overriding reasons not to. Any actions taken should respect the rights and dignity of all those involved and be proportionate to the risk of harm.
- Ensure that the Halton u3a Safeguarding policy is followed where there are concerns for a member's wellbeing or safety
- Ensure that information related to safeguarding is recorded and stored securely in accordance with Data Protection regulations. However, confidentiality may be overridden if deemed necessary to protect members from harm

6. Responding to Safeguarding Incidents

In the event of a safeguarding concern / incident the Trustees must ensure that a safeguarding risk assessment is undertaken in accordance with the Halton u3a safeguarding procedure.

6.1 Principles

When following the safeguarding procedure Halton u3a will strive to uphold the principles that those involved in incidents are entitled to:

- privacy
- be treated with dignity and respect
- lead an independent life and to be enabled to do so
- choose how they live their lives
- the protection of the law
- have their human and civil rights upheld regardless of ethnic origin, gender, sexuality, impairment or disability, age, religious or cultural background

Halton u3a will also follow the principles enshrined within the England and Wales Care Act 2014.

- **Principle 1 – Empowerment** – whereby the approach is focused on the individual making their own decision and gaining informed consent, where possible.
- **Principle 2 – Prevention** – seeking to take steps to prevent issues from arising or escalating.
- **Principle 3 – Proportionality** – responding in a proportionate way to the issue/s being presented.
- **Principle 4 – Protection** – seeking to keep the membership safe and protection for those deemed to be at risk.
- **Principle 5 – Partnership** – reporting incidents to the relevant statutory bodies and liaising with the Trust.
- **Principle 6 – Accountability** – accurate recording of incidents. Reporting incidents, as required, to the Trust and to relevant regulatory authorities.



6.2 Dealing with a Safeguarding Concern

If someone discloses a safeguarding concern to you:

Do:

- Stay calm and try not to show shock or disbelief.
- Listen carefully to what they are saying.
- Be sympathetic (“I’m sorry that this has happened to you”).
- Be aware of the possibility that medical evidence might be needed.
- Tell the person that:
 - They did the right thing to tell you.
 - You are treating the information seriously. It was not their fault.
 - You are going to inform the appropriate person.
 - You/ will take steps to protect and support them.
- Record and report the disclosure in line with the safeguarding policy and procedure.

Do not:

- Press the person for more details if they are not comfortable sharing.
- Stop someone who is freely recalling significant events (Don’t say ‘hold on, we’ll come back to that later’; they may not tell you or anybody else again).
- Promise to keep secrets; you have a duty of care to raise safeguarding concerns.
- Make promises you cannot keep such as “this will never happen to you again”.
- Contact the alleged abuser unless they are also a u3a member and it is necessary to do so to safeguard other members.
- Be judgemental.
- Pass on the information other than to those with a legitimate ‘need-to-know’ under your safeguarding policy and procedure.

6.3 Recording a safeguarding concern

- Note what people actually said, using their own words and phrases
- Describe the circumstances in which the disclosure came about
- Note the setting and anyone else who was there at the time of the disclosure
- Separate factual information from your own and others’ opinions
- Use pen or biro with black ink so that the report can be photocopied if needed
- Be aware that your report may be required later as part of a legal action or disciplinary procedure

7 Definitions

Definitions in respect of words or phrases which are not explained in further detail within the main body of the document.

7.1 Abuse

is the ‘*violation of a person’s human and civil rights by any other person(s). It may be a single or repeated act(s), physical verbal, psychological, sexual, institutional, discriminatory, or financial, an act of neglect or failure to act*’.

Types of abuse:

- **Physical abuse** e.g. assault, hitting, slapping, pushing.
- **Domestic violence** e.g. psychological, physical, sexual, financial, emotional.



- **Sexual abuse** – including inappropriate looking or touching, indecent exposure and sexual harassment.
- **Psychological abuse** e.g., threats of harm, humiliation, blaming, controlling, intimidation, coercion, harassment, verbal abuse, cyber bullying, isolation.
- **Financial or material abuse** e.g., theft, fraud, internet scamming, coercion in an adult's financial affairs/arrangements, including with wills, property, inheritance or finances, or the misuse/misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits.
- **Modern slavery** encompasses slavery, human trafficking, forced labour and domestic servitude.
- **Discriminatory abuse** including harassment, slurs, or similar treatment because of race, gender and gender identity, age, disability, sexual orientation or religion.
- **Organisational abuse** – including neglect in relation to care provided at home. This may be a one off incident or on-going ill-treatment, through neglect or poor professional practice.
- **Neglect and acts of omission** – including ignoring medical, emotional or physical care needs, failure to provide access to appropriate health, care and support or educational services, withholding of medication, adequate nutrition and heating.

7.2 Self-neglect

This covers a wide range of behaviour neglecting to care for one's personal hygiene, health or surroundings and includes behaviour such as hoarding

8 Further Information and Training

- Additional information around Safeguarding for committee members is available on the national u3a website <https://www.u3a.org.uk/members-area/support>
- In addition Halton u3a will offer appropriate induction and training around Safeguarding to Committee Members and Group Leaders.



Safeguarding Procedure

1. Introduction

Halton u3a has a responsibility to ensure that its committee members and group leaders understand their safeguarding responsibilities.

Depending on the nature of the allegation and the identified risk Halton u3a will support the alleged victims and the alleged perpetrators of any abuse as well as any volunteer who becomes aware of an allegation in so far as this does not compromise any safeguarding enquiry or investigation into the allegation or place other adults at risk.

Halton u3a will make every effort to respect the confidentiality of any information that is disclosed under this policy and procedure. However, due to the seriousness of allegations confidentiality is not absolute. Information will be recorded and stored securely in accordance with Relevant Data Protection legislation but information may have to be shared with relevant authorities on a 'need-to-know' basis only, to prevent:

- Danger to a person's life
- Danger to a person's health
- Danger to others
- Danger to the community
- To facilitate the investigation of a serious crime

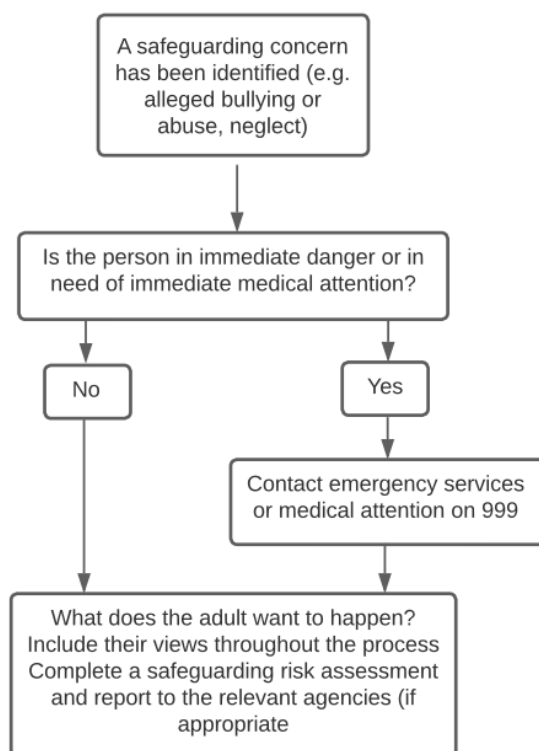
2. Courses of action

- Halton u3a's approach to safeguarding will include members who exhibit health concerns that could put themselves or others at risk, convictions (previous or pending) that include offences of a sexual or violent nature, inappropriate behaviour exhibited by a member including sexual advances, bullying, aggression or violent behaviour, harassment and/or discrimination. This can include behaviour exhibited face to face as well as electronic communications or via social media platforms.
- Where the committee becomes aware of a safeguarding concern, steps will be taken, as needed, to ensure the safety of adult/s at risk is secured as a priority. The steps to take to address this will be discussed and agreed between the Executive Officers of the committee in the first instance. No committee member will act in isolation when dealing with a safeguarding concern. The steps taken should be documented and stored securely in accordance with relevant Data Protection legislation.
- Where the Halton u3a committee becomes aware of a safeguarding concern, the first step will be to gather as much information as possible to assist with the decision as to the next steps. A risk assessment will be developed and recorded as soon as possible after the concern comes to the attention of the committee.
- Where it is deemed that the risk is high and immediate action needs to be taken, the committee will contact the relevant authorities and may also contact the Trust for advice and support.
- As far as possible, the adult at risk's wishes will be respected as to whether or not to refer any concerns to the local authority as a Safeguarding Enquiry under Section 42 of the Care Act 2014, section 4 of the Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Act 2007), and according to the Northern Ireland Charity Commission guidelines. However, it may be necessary to override their wishes in the best interests of other adults at risk.
 - In developing the risk assessment, the committee will consider the level of risk and the action that needs to be taken accordingly. Assessment of risk will include:



- Risk to the individual member
 - Risk to other members within the u3a
 - Reputational risk for the individual u3a and the u3a movement as a whole
- Where the risk is not deemed to be high but support is needed Halton u3a may contact the Trust to discuss the concerns and seek additional assistance in developing the risk assessment. Assistance will always be sought before moving to exclude any member from the u3a on the basis of a safeguarding risk assessment.
 - Once the risk assessment is completed, the committee will decide as to the most appropriate course of action. This could include excluding members from certain groups i.e., groups held in people's homes, requesting that a member attends the u3a with a carer or excluding a member from a group run by a particular group leader.
 - Depending on the nature of the allegation it may be necessary to pursue the incident following Halton u3a's complaints or disciplinary procedure. Where it is decided that this is the best course of action the matter will not be investigated by any party that was privy to the initial reporting of the incident.

All actions taken will be recorded. Any records will remain confidential to the committee unless a prior decision has been taken to share the record with the relevant statutory bodies.



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1.0	Policy & related procedure ratified and adopted by Halton u3a Committee		13.07.2026

