

SAFEGUARDING POLICY AND PROCEDURE FOR WADHURST U3A

REF NUMBER:	POL3.0
STATUS:	Approved and Issued
APPROVED BY:	Wadhurst & District Trustees & Committee Members
DATE:	April 2023
SIGNED:	Philip Cheung
DESIGNATION:	Chair of Wadhurst & District u3a
DATE OF LAST REVIEW:	April 2024
DATE OF NEXT REVIEW:	April 2027

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. This policy and procedure has been developed by the Third Age Trust and adopted by Wadhurst & District u3a. It is one of many policies to enable the Trustees, Committee Members and Group Convenors to address issues where there are questions and/or areas of concerns. The policy sets out our approach to the safeguarding.

2. POLICY STATEMENT

2.1. Safeguarding should be everyone's concern. It includes incidents between members, concerns regarding abuse or neglect that a U3A member may be experiencing outside of the U3A, health-related issues and/or previous and pending criminal convictions.

2.2. The Trustees and Committee Members have a duty of care to all u3a members, but does not hold any statutory authority. Matters of concern will be reported to the relevant safeguarding authorities and charity regulatory authorities, as appropriate.

2.3. We recognise that some people are potentially at risk of abuse and neglect. Where abuse or neglect is suspected, we will aim to respond in a prompt and efficient manner to any situation where there is a risk of or perceived risk of harm.

2.4. We recognise that there are various forms of abuse which can be perpetrated by volunteers, members, relatives, friends and neighbours.

- 2.5. Wadhurst & District u3a will neither 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 that is safe and free from harm.
- 2.6. It is not appropriate for the u3a to take the lead role in any Safeguarding Enquiry under Section 42 of the Care Act 2014. Where there are serious concerns regarding abuse or neglect, the Trustees and Committee Members will seek advice and support from the Third Age Trust, where possible, and will contact the relevant statutory authorities, as needed.
- 2.7. Wadhurst & District u3a will endeavour to review and monitor the implementation of this policy and procedure annually through its formal Committee meetings.
- 2.8. In following the safeguarding procedure, Wadhurst & District 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.

We shall also follow the principles enshrined within the Care Act 2014, namely:

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 protected 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 relevant regulatory authorities.

3. PROCEDURE

- 3.1. Wadhurst & District u3a has a responsibility to ensure that its Trustees, Committee Members and Group Convenors understand their safeguarding responsibilities. Depending on the nature of the allegation and the identified risk, we 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.
- 3.2. We will make every effort to respect the confidentiality of any information that is disclosed under this policy and procedure. Due to the seriousness of allegations, however, confidentiality is not absolute. Information will be recorded and stored securely in accordance with Data Protection Act 2018, but information may have to be shared, 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

or to prevent or to facilitate the investigation of a serious crime

4. COURSES OF ACTION

4.1. Our 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.)

4.2. Where we become aware of a safeguarding concern, steps will be taken, as needed, to ensure that 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 Wadhurst & District u3a in the first instance. No Trustee or Committee Member will act in isolation when dealing with a safeguarding concern.

4.3. When the Committee becomes aware of a safeguarding concern, the first step will be to gather as much information as possible to assist with the decision regarding the next steps. A risk assessment will be undertaken and recorded as soon as possible after the concern comes to light.

4.4. Where it is deemed that the risk is high and immediate action needs to be taken, the Chair will contact the relevant local authorities and, where possible, the Third Age Trust, for advice and support.

4.5. 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. It may be necessary, however, to override their wishes in the best interests of other adults at risk.

4.6. 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

4.7. Where the risk is not deemed to be high, but support is needed, Wadhurst & District u3a will contact the Third Age 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.

4.8. Once the risk assessment is completed, the Committee will decide on the most appropriate course of action. This could include:

- Excluding a member from certain groups eg groups held in a member's homes,
- Requesting that a member attends the U3A with a carer, or
- Excluding a member from a group convened by a particular member.

- 4.9. Depending on the nature of the allegation, it may be necessary to pursue the incident through a formal complaints, disciplinary or grievance 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 report 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.

5. CHILDREN AND VULNERABLE ADULTS

- 5.1. U3A organised events (eg group visits and activities) may encounter children and vulnerable adults. Taking photographs of children and/or vulnerable adults carries risks – the danger that the image can be reused, shared or adapted in a damaging or inappropriate manner. Parents of children or vulnerable adults must always be asked for their explicit permission before a photograph can be taken*. Therefore, u3a members are asked to be especially careful when taking photographs to ensure that there are no children included in them.

**Asking permission of the subject(s) beforehand is good practice for all photographs.*