

Kirkcaldy Foodbank Safeguarding Policy and Procedures

The foodbank is committed to safeguarding the rights, well-being and safety of children and adults at risk of harm who come into contact with the foodbank. This policy outlines the steps the foodbank will take to ensure that adults at risk of harm and children are protected. It will be reviewed on an annual basis by the trustees.

Definitions

The definitions of a child, child abuse and an adult at risk of harm are in the appendix of this document.

A volunteer of the Foodbank includes all trustees and all volunteers.

Policy Statement

The purposes of Kirkcaldy Foodbank's operations are the prevention and relief of food poverty in the Kirkcaldy area, the advancement of citizenship and community development, and the relief of those in need by reason of age, ill-health, disability, financial hardship or other disadvantage.

Kirkcaldy Foodbank seeks to safeguard the welfare of people who come into contact with our services. It is the responsibility of every volunteer of Kirkcaldy Foodbank to prevent abuse or harm to them.

We seek to ensure that all our volunteers are aware of what is required from them under this policy and make sure that it is practised at all times.

We commit ourselves to co-operate fully with the appropriate statutory services when they are conducting official investigation into the abuse and neglect of children and harm caused to adults at risk.

Implementation

In order to implement this policy, Kirkcaldy Foodbank will:

- Plan its work so as to minimise situations where the abuse of children and harm caused to adults at risk might occur, this including:
 - Seeking to ensure there are 2 volunteers providing services to clients at all times.
 - Ensuring that any child volunteer is accompanied by a parent or carer.
 - Ensuring that there is a probationary period of volunteering for 4 sessions in a role with no client contact for any new volunteers during which time they will be involved in aspects of the Foodbank's work that do not involve direct contact with clients or access to clients' personal information. Only after satisfactory completion of that probationary period will new volunteers carry out roles that involve direct contact with clients and access to clients' personal information. During the initial period when the volunteer has

direct contact with clients, the volunteer will work with another volunteer who is a volunteer team leader or a trustee.

- Ensuring that volunteers only deliver food directly to a client's house in exceptional circumstances.
- Requiring that volunteers do not retain any personal information of a client.
- Requiring that volunteers do not initiate direct contact with clients away from the Foodbank.
- Ensure that the local authority and/or the police is informed of any allegations, incidents or concerns about child abuse or harm to an adult at risk.
- Ensure volunteers who may come into contact with an adult at risk of harm or a child at the foodbank are suitably trained, including understanding what to do in the event that abuse or harm is suspected.
- Encourage a culture of transparency, ensuring that volunteers feel able and empowered to report any suspicious or concerning behaviour.
- Ensure that the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR) is informed of any suspicions, allegations and incidents of abuse or mistreatment of vulnerable clients.

Volunteers should be aware that wherever they are located when volunteering for the Foodbank, they are legally governed by the Foodbank, even if the place in which they are working is their home church or another agency. This means that any allegations or concerns of abuse must be reported to the Foodbank's Designated Safeguarding Officers. However, there may be times when the Foodbank Safeguarding Officers deem it necessary and appropriate to share information with the Safeguarding Officers of the buildings in which the Foodbank distribution hubs operate. The Safeguarding Officers will ensure they have the contact information of the Safeguarding Officers and the Safeguarding policies of all the buildings in which the Foodbank operates and that they in turn know how to contact the foodbank Safeguarding Officers.

Designated officers and their roles

The Foodbank has a Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO) who is responsible for dealing with any concerns about the protection of adults at risk or children. The Foodbank also has a Secondary Safeguarding Officer (SSO) who is responsible for dealing with any related concerns in the event that the DSO is ill, on holiday or an allegation of abuse is made about him/her.

The Safeguarding Officers will be available for volunteers to speak with should they feel the need to talk with someone about an incident which has happened either within or outside of the Foodbank, particularly if they feel that a child has been abused or adult at risk has been harmed. The Safeguarding Officers will treat all concerns with the utmost confidence.

Where volunteers have a concern about the safety or well-being of a child or an adult at risk and the Safeguarding Officers are unavailable or acting inappropriately they should contact the Chair of Trustees.

Recording

The Safeguarding Officers will make notes and keep confidential records of any disclosure or concerns they or another staff/team volunteer has and seek advice from the Fife Council Social Work Department or the Police if appropriate.

Once volunteers have passed on their records, they have no right to know what happens next. They will only receive more information about the case if they are required to be part of civil or criminal proceedings e.g. as a witness. Volunteers must refrain from talking to other volunteers or outside persons about the safeguarding concern (with the exception of the Safeguarding Officers, the Police or Fife Council Social Work Department).

Responding to suspected child abuse or harm

Safeguarding is about preventing harm to people and making a timely and appropriate response when harm is witnessed, suspected or reported. In order to do this, the Foodbank follows the 4 Rs of Safeguarding:

1. Recognition
2. Reporting
3. Recording
4. Referral

The person who first encounters a case of alleged or suspected child abuse or harm to an adult at risk is not responsible for deciding whether or not it has occurred. That is a task for the police and/or social work department following a referral to them of concern about someone.

1. **Recognition** of the signs of child abuse or harm to an adult at risk

Although recognising harm or abuse is often not easy, it is important that we act when harm or abuse is suspected and not just when absolutely sure that harm has occurred. Suspected means that it not necessary to have proof of abuse or harm, but it also means not jumping to conclusions or prejudging a situation.

Harm to an adult at risk or child abuse can come to light in different ways, for example:

- An incident is seen or heard.
- A child's or adult at risk's appearance, behaviour, health or comments may cause suspicion of abuse or harm.
- A person affected by the alleged harm or abuse tells a volunteer about it.
- A complaint is made about the behaviour of a Foodbank volunteer or trustee having abused a child or caused harm to an adult at risk.

If a person affected by the alleged harm or abuse tells a volunteer about it, it is important that the volunteer:

- Tells the person that the volunteer cannot keep a secret and will have to talk to someone else who will decide what to do.
- Listens to what the person says and take what they say seriously.

- Reassures the person that they have done the right thing.
- Does not take on any role in investigating what the person has said – that is the role of the Police and Social Work Department if the information is referred to them.
- Only asks open questions to establish the basic facts – questions such as “tell me about..”, “explain to me..” and “describe to me...”, and questions beginning with “who”, “what”, “when”, “where” and “how”.
- Keeps what they have seen or heard confidential and does not tell anyone other than the Designated Safeguarding Officer or anyone else in terms of this policy.
- Writes down everything that the child or adult at risk said (in the words of the child or adult) as soon as possible. See the section on **Recording** below.

2. **Reporting** the suspected child abuse or harm to an adult at risk

Reporting is about immediately sharing appropriate information verbally and later in writing with the responsible people who need to know.

If a volunteer suspects that abuse of a child or harm to an adult at risk has occurred, the volunteer is to report that immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Coordinator or the Secondary Safeguarding Officer if he/she is not available. The volunteer may also contact their team leader for advice or support. It will be the responsibility of the Designated Safeguarding Coordinator to decide whether the suspected harm or abuse should be referred to the police and/or social work department.

However, if a person is in immediate physical danger, the volunteer is to immediately contact the police (and ambulance service if appropriate).

3. **Recording** the suspected child abuse or harm to an adult at risk

Good recording is a critical part of detecting and investigating harm or abuse.

After recognising abuse or harm as outlined above, a volunteer must record what they heard or saw. The record is to:

- Be completed on the same day or within 24 hours.
- Be written legibly, dated and signed.
- Contain a detailed description of what happened, and what was said, recording the person’s own words.
- Stick to recording facts and not opinions.

If a volunteer has typed a record on a personal computer (or similar), once it has been printed and given to the Designated Safeguarding Coordinator, the volunteer is to delete the electronic files from their computer and from the computer’s recycle bin. No personal information regarding a Foodbank client, or any suspected abuse or harm, is to be saved on the personal computer of a volunteer.

The Foodbank will store the printed copy of the volunteer’s record securely.

4. **Referral** – making a referral to social work or the police.

It will be the responsibility of the Designated Safeguarding Coordinator to decide whether the suspected child abuse or harm to an adult at risk should be referred to the police and/or social work department. The Designated Safeguarding Coordinator will record that decision and the reasons for it.

However, if a person is in immediate physical danger, the volunteer is to immediately contact the police (and ambulance service if appropriate).

Concerns about Foodbank volunteers

Volunteers are encouraged to take action when suspicious that abuse is occurring at the Foodbank– no matter what the setting, who the perpetrator is or who the victim is. The Foodbank will respect and not penalise those who stand up for anyone who is suspected of being abused.

Review

This policy and its implementation will be reviewed at least biannually and whenever there are any legislative changes or amendments to guidance issued by relevant statutory bodies.

Reviewed: July 2021

Appendix - Definitions

Who is a child?

A child is a person under the age of 16 years. In some circumstances, for example when the concern is about human trafficking, someone aged 16 or 17 will be a child.

What is child abuse¹?

Abuse and neglect are forms of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting, or by failing to act to prevent, significant harm to the child. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional setting, by those known to them or, more rarely, by a stranger.

Physical abuse is the causing of physical harm to a child or young person. Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning or suffocating.

Emotional abuse is persistent emotional neglect or ill treatment that has severe and persistent adverse effects on a child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to a child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may involve the imposition of age - or developmentally - inappropriate expectations on a child. It may involve causing children to feel frightened or in danger, or exploiting or corrupting children.

Sexual abuse is any act that involves the child in any activity for the sexual gratification of another person, whether or not it is claimed that the child either consented or assented. Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative or non-penetrative acts. They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of indecent images or in watching sexual activities, using sexual language towards a child or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. It may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, to protect a child from physical harm or danger, or to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or failure to respond to, a child's basic emotional needs.

¹¹ These definitions are taken from the Scottish Government's National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2014: <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0045/00450733.pdf>

Who is an adult at risk²?

An adult at risk is defined as someone who:

- can't safeguard themselves, their property, their rights or other interests;
- is at risk of harm; and
- are more vulnerable to being harmed because they are affected by:
 - a disability,
 - a mental disorder,
 - an illness, or
 - a physical or mental infirmity.

What is meant by 'harm' to an adult at risk³?

Harm to an adult at risk can take the following forms:

- **Financial harm**

Vulnerable adults can be easy prey for thieves and bullies. Whether it's taking a valuable piece of jewellery or a few pounds from a purse, it's still stealing and is against the law.

There are also less obvious forms of financial harm. A person can be pressured into giving someone money because they have been made to feel sorry for them or obliged to them. In extreme cases, people have been pressured into changing their Will and signing away their property.

- **Physical harm**

This is when a person deliberately hurts someone else by punching, kicking, slapping, or shaking. Making aggressive physical contact with someone is known as assault. It is against the law to hurt someone intentionally.

- **Psychological harm**

Words do hurt. Especially when used to frighten, threaten, humiliate or control another person, or making them feel isolated. Vulnerable people can be targets for others taking advantage of them; for example, using their home and belongings or pressuring them into being involved in illegal or socially unacceptable behaviour.

- **Sexual harm**

Sexual activity requires permission, known as 'consent'. However, in order to give consent a person must fully understand what they are consenting to. They also need to understand that they have the right to refuse to do anything they don't

² This definition comes from the Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Act 2007.

³ This definition comes from the Scottish Government's website on adult support and protection, Act Against Harm: <http://www.actagainstharm.org/>

feel comfortable with – at any time – even if they have previously given permission.

It is a serious crime to coerce, threaten or force someone to engage in any type of sexual activity.

- **Neglect**

Neglect is when someone is not being cared for properly, either by themselves or by the person or authority responsible for them. A neglected person may not have enough food to eat or be living somewhere that's cold, dirty or damp, or they may not be fully dressed or appear to have washed. They may be being denied important medical and social care. It is important the everybody gets the professional help they need, especially if they take medication.

- **Self-harm and self-neglect**

Self-neglect is the inability to perform activities of daily living, even though the adult understands the need to do them. It can include an inability to recognise unsafe living conditions. However, adults have a right to make their own decisions, including the use of alcohol and drugs, even if that means they choose to remain in situations or indulge in behaviour which others consider inappropriate. Without any additional vulnerability, such as an illness or disability, adult protection intervention would not normally be appropriate.