

**BEFRIENDERS HIGHLAND LIMITED**

**Safeguarding Policy**

<b>Last Review Date</b>	<b>December 2021</b>
<b>Update Due</b>	<b>December 2023</b>
<b>Current Version</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Approved by Board</b>	<b>December 2021</b>

This policy will be reviewed bi-annually, or in the following circumstances:

- Changes in legislation and/or government guidance
- As required by the local Safeguarding Board or regulatory body
- As a result of any other significant change or event.

## 1. Policy Statement

1.1. BHL acknowledges the duty of care to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults and is committed to ensuring safeguarding practice reflects statutory responsibilities, government guidance and complies with best practice and regulatory requirements.

1.2. The policy recognises that the welfare and interests of children, young people and vulnerable adults are paramount in all circumstances. It aims to ensure that regardless of age, gender, religion or beliefs, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation or socio-economic background, all children, young people and vulnerable adults:

- Have a positive and enjoyable experience of befriending at BHL in a safe environment.
- Are protected from abuse whilst participating in the befriending relationship or in BHL group activity.

1.3. BHL acknowledges that some children, young people and vulnerable adults, including disabled children, young people and adults or those from ethnic minority communities, can be particularly vulnerable to abuse and we accept the responsibility to take reasonable and appropriate steps to ensure their welfare.

1.4. As part of our safeguarding policy BHL will:

- Promote and prioritise the safety and wellbeing of children, young people and vulnerable adults
- Ensure everyone understands their roles and responsibilities in respect of safeguarding and is provided with appropriate learning opportunity to recognise, identify and respond to signs of abuse, neglect and other safeguarding concerns relating to children, young people and vulnerable adults
- Ensure appropriate action is taken in the event of incidents/concerns of abuse and support provided to the individual/s who raise or disclose a concern
- Ensure that confidential details and accurate records of all safeguarding concerns are maintained and securely stored
- Prevent the employment/deployment of unsuitable individuals
- Ensure robust safeguarding arrangements and procedures are in operation

1.5. The policy and procedures will be widely promoted and are mandatory for everyone involved in BHL. Failure to comply with the policy and procedures will be addressed without delay and may ultimately result in dismissal/exclusion from the organisation, and where required, referral to Disclosure Scotland.

## **2. Introduction**

- 2.1. BHL makes a positive contribution to a strong and safe community and recognises the right of every individual to stay safe.
- 2.2. BHL comes into contact with vulnerable adults through the following activities: delivery of befriending services, delivery of small group activities. BHL may also come into contact with children through the delivery of befriending service, and general contact when meeting in public places.
- 2.3. The types of contact with vulnerable adults will be frequent over the course of a month, either face to face, via telephone or letter/e-mail, and less frequently through on-line video conferencing platforms. Contact with children will be infrequent, but may happen through the course of a meeting in a public place, or when contacting the vulnerable adult via telephone at home.
- 2.4. This policy seeks to ensure that BHL undertakes its responsibilities with regard to protection of children and vulnerable adults and will respond to concerns appropriately. The policy establishes a framework to support paid and unpaid staff in their practices and clarifies the organisation's expectations.

## **3. Legislation**

- 3.1. BHL The principal pieces of legislation governing this policy are:
  - Disclosure Scotland Act 2020
  - Working together to safeguard Children 2010
  - The Children Act 1989
  - The Adoption and Children Act 2002:
  - The Children act 2004
  - Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Act 2007
  - Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006
  - Care Standards Act 2000
  - Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998
  - The Police Act – CRB 1997
  - Mental Health Act 1983
  - NHS and Community Care Act 1990
  - Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974

## **4. Definitions**

- 4.1. Safeguarding is about embedding practices throughout the organisation to ensure the protection of children and/or vulnerable adults wherever possible. In contrast, child and adult protection is about responding to circumstances that arise.
- 4.2. Abuse is a selfish act of oppression and injustice, exploitation and manipulation of power by those in a position of authority. This can be caused by those inflicting

harm or those who fail to act to prevent harm. Abuse is not restricted to any socio-economic group, gender or culture.

4.3. Abuse can take a number of forms, including the following:

- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Bullying
- Neglect, or failure to act
- Financial (or material) abuse

4.4. Definition of a child - A child is under the age of 18 (as defined in the United Nations convention on the Rights of a Child).

4.5. Definition of Vulnerable Adults - A vulnerable adult is a person aged 18 years or over who may be unable to take care of themselves, or to protect themselves from harm or from being exploited.

This may include a person who:

- Is elderly and frail
- Has a mental illness including dementia
- Has a physical or sensory disability
- Has a learning disability
- Has neurological difference (e.g. autism)
- Has a severe physical illness
- Is a substance misuser
- Is homeless

## **5. Responsibilities**

5.1. The Executive Director is the designated safeguarding person for BHL.

5.2. All staff (paid or unpaid) have responsibility to follow the guidance laid out in this policy and related policies, and to pass on any welfare concerns using the required procedures.

5.3. BHL expect all staff (paid or unpaid) to promote good practice by being an excellent role model, contribute to discussions about safeguarding and to positively involve people in developing safe practices.

5.4. Additional specific responsibilities

- Trustees have responsibility to ensure: the policy is in place, appropriate and regularly reviewed. Trustees have responsibility to ensure sufficient resources (time and money) are allocated so that the policy can be effectively implemented.
- The Executive Director will ensure the policy is implemented, reviewed and monitored with Trustees. The Executive Director will make sure staff access to appropriate training/information and will receive staff concerns

about safeguarding and respond to all concerns seriously, swiftly and appropriately.

- Coordinators will receive volunteer and friend concerns about safeguarding and respond to all concerns seriously, swiftly and appropriately. Coordinators will ensure volunteers have access to appropriate training/information.
- A nominated Coordinator will keep up to date with local arrangements for safeguarding and PVG requirements, supported by additional signatories to ensure smooth processing of PVG requests.
- Coordinators will equally take a role in maintaining effective links with relevant agencies (e.g. through contact with nominated health professionals, relevant improvement meetings etc).
- All staff and volunteers will promote the welfare of children and vulnerable adults.

## **6. Implementation of Safeguarding Policy**

6.1. The scope of this Safeguarding Policy is broad ranging and in practice, it will be implemented via a range of policies and procedures within BHL. These include, but are not exclusive to:

- Data Protection Policy
- Protection of Vulnerable Groups Policy
- Confidentiality Policy
- Confidentiality Statement
- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Recruitment of Ex-Offenders Policy
- Recruitment and Selection Policy
- Lone working Policy
- Dignity at Work (Anti-bullying) Policy
- Staff Support, Supervision and Matches Policy
- Volunteer Selection, Assessment and Training Policy
- Referral, Assessment and Management Policy
- Monitoring and Evaluation Policy
- Media Consent Policy
- Business Continuity Management Policy

6.2. BHL recognises the importance of suitability in Recruitment and Selection, and expands on the above reference here:

- Shortlisting is based on formal application processes/forms and not on provision of CVs
- Interviews are conducted according to equal opportunity principles and interview questions are based on the relevant job description and person specification
- PVG/Disclosure checks will be conducted for specific roles for all staff (paid or unpaid) working with children and vulnerable adults
- No formal appointments to positions (paid or unpaid) are made until after checks for suitability are completed (including PVG application and checking of 2 references)

6.3. BHL is committed to complying fully with the Protection of Vulnerable Groups Scheme (the PVG Scheme) as introduced by the Protection of Vulnerable Groups (Scotland) Act 2007 and to its later amendments including the Disclosure Scotland Act 2020. BHL conducts enhanced PVG checks on everyone in a regulated role. This currently includes staff, volunteers and Board members who are directly involved in working/supporting vulnerable adults in a regulated role to ensure that they are not barred from working with children or vulnerable adults. BHL adheres to all relevant Codes of Practice in this regard.

6.4. BHL recognises the importance of protecting data pertaining to vulnerable individuals, and expands further on the above:

- All BHL laptops are password protected, a further password is required to log in to the cloud-based team site of BHL. A further password is then required to access the BHL database.
- Physical confidential files are kept in a locked filing cabinet, in a locked office.
- Data is not retained any longer than is necessary and is destroyed or deleted when no longer required.

## **7. Communications, training and support for staff**

7.1. BHL commits resources for induction and training of staff (paid and unpaid), and has effective communications and support mechanisms in relation to Safeguarding.

7.2. Induction of paid staff includes:

- Completion of the Induction Checklist, linking with appropriate team members
- Completion of a Confidentiality Statement
- Reviewing the Policies and Procedures Handbook
- Meeting with the Executive Director

7.3. All staff and volunteers who, through their role, are in contact with children and/or vulnerable adults will have access to safeguarding training at an appropriate level. Sources and types of training will include:

- Completion of necessary training books prior to consideration for matching (including review or supervision meetings to discuss learning)
- Completion of Vital Skills Training for new Coordinators (a course offered by Befriending Networks)
- Any appropriate training course/information session as assessed and discussed with the staff member and their line manager
- Training provision, either on-line, virtual or in-person, on topics identified by the individual or organisation following initial training/induction.

7.4. The following formal meetings will ensure regular, effective communication of safeguarding issues and practice, and demonstrate organisational commitment and prioritisation of safeguarding at all levels:

- BHL Board Meetings
- BHL team meetings
- Regular caseload discussions with other Coordinators
- One to one management supervision meetings (formal and informal)
- Support and supervision contact with volunteers

7.5. BHL recognise that involvement in situations where there is the risk of harm, or actual harm can be stressful for the staff and volunteers concerned. Regular support and supervision sessions are offered to both staff and volunteers, with records made of each meeting.

7.6. Friendship risk assessments are completed prior to the start of any new friendship match, and are then closely monitored at supervision sessions, and at 6 monthly reviews. Friendship risk assessments are reviewed at least every 12 months, and any high-risk matches, are reported to the board by the Executive Director.

7.7. In situations where a safeguarding concern needs to be escalated, a debrief meeting will be arranged with the Executive Director, and a Board Director as necessary, including all coordinators. This will allow individuals to express their feelings and experience, to review the process followed, and to allow for shared organisational learning, and will prompt any policy revisions or amendments as required.

7.8. Staff can self-refer to <https://www.healthyworkinglives.scot/> for confidential occupational health support and counselling referrals if required, and if further specialist support is indicated, BHL will liaise with the individual to arrange and access this where necessary.

## **8. Professional Boundaries**

8.1. Professional boundaries are what define the limits of a relationship between a worker (paid or unpaid) and a client. They are a set of standards we agree to uphold that allows the necessary and often close relationship to exist while ensuring the correct detachment is kept in place.

8.2. BHL expects staff to protect the professional integrity of themselves and the organisation.

8.3. The following professional boundaries must be adhered to:

- Gift Giving – BHL has a policy that forbids routine gift giving since this can cause embarrassment and inequality. On special occasions (birthdays or at Christmas) a small gift may be given, but only if the gift costs no more than £5.00 and both parties have agreed and discussed gift giving with the coordinator.
- Personal relationships between a member of a staff (paid or unpaid) and a friend who is currently a service user is prohibited. This includes relationships through social networking sites such as Facebook, Instagram and other

platforms. It is also prohibited to enter into a personal relationship with a person who has been a service user over the past 12 months.

- Abusive language and behaviour of any kind is not tolerated, and any inappropriate behaviour/language will be dealt with by following the BHL Complaints or Disciplinary Policy as indicated.
- BHL does not routinely offer home visits as part of its service. Volunteers and friends are not allowed to visit each other's homes, unless there are exceptional circumstances (for example during Covid-19, or if the friend is very elderly, or clinically vulnerable), and a prior risk assessment has been completed. Staff and volunteers must follow the Lone Working policy requirements when home visits have been agreed.
- BHL recognises it is not appropriate to accept responsibility for valuables for a friend, to give financial advice of any kind, or to lend any money to a Friend.
- Personal relationships with a third party related to, or known to friends, once matched are prohibited. Should such relationships exist prior to a match being started, they should be disclosed to the coordinator/or Executive Director as a Conflict of Interest. This will protect and address any confidentiality issues for both parties.

8.4. The following policies also contain guidance on staff (paid or unpaid) conduct:

- Complaints Policy
- Confidentiality Policy
- Confidentiality Statement
- Friend, volunteer, and carer agreements
- Disciplinary Policy
- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Dignity at Work (Anti-bullying) Policy
- Volunteer Selection, Assessment and Training Policy
- Referral, Assessment and Management Policy

8.5. If the professional boundaries and/or policies are breached this could result in disciplinary procedures or enactment of the allegation management procedures.



## 9. Reporting Procedure

### 1. CONCERNS

If you think an adult is at risk of harm and something feels wrong, you're right to get it checked out. If you see something, say something.

Harm could manifest as physical injuries, psychological distress, neglect, financial or sexual abuse.

### 2. EMERGENCY

If you think the adult is at immediate risk of serious harm, contact the **Emergency Services by dialling 999 and asking for the police.**

If it is possible to do so, you should inform the friend or carer that you are taking this action.

### 3. COMMUNICATE

At the earliest opportunity, make contact with any BHL coordinator or the Executive Director to discuss your concern and any action taken. Out of hours, or in non-emergency situations, leave a message on 01463 712791, giving brief details and your contact number.

### 4. CONSENT AND CAPACITY

In a non-emergency situation when concerns are raised that an adult may be at risk of serious harm, the coordinator will:

- Gather all information and fully discuss concerns with the volunteer at the earliest opportunity
- Make contact with the friend or carer, to ascertain their consent or capacity (Consent – did the person subject to suspected abuse give consent, and did they consent willingly? Capacity – does the person subject to suspected abuse have the capacity for self-determination, to understand what they are consenting to, or the capacity to refuse?)

To empower the friend/carer, if there is time before a disclosure is made, it is important to explain to the friend/carer that BHL has a duty of care to report concerns as part of our safeguarding procedure, and that we will be making contact with their named professional or the local Duty Social Work Team.

### 5. REPORTING

BHL has a legal obligation and duty of care to its service users. A coordinator, or the executive director should make contact with the friend or carer's professional at the earliest opportunity to pass on concerns. If the situation is deemed to be an "Adult Support and Protection" concern, contact the **Locality Social Work team** directly, or the **Adult Support and Protection Referral service on 0800 902 0042.**

### 6. RECORDING

Detailed records should be maintained throughout the case, regarding the concerns and all actions taken, using the secure BHL database. All records should be updated as soon as possible.

**CHILDREN** – whilst BHL only works with adults, we may become aware of vulnerable children in the course of our work. In such cases, this policy applies, and the same procedure should be followed. The relevant **Family Social Work Team** should be contacted at the Local Authority in office hours (<http://hcpc.scot/professionals/>), and out of hours, contact the **CHILD PROTECTION TEAM on 08457 697284.**

## **10. Allegations Management**

10.1. BHL recognises its duty to report concerns or allegations against any staff (paid or unpaid) within the organisation, or by a professional or member of staff or volunteer from another organisation. BHL recognises its legal duty to report any concerns about unsafe practice by any of its paid or unpaid staff to the 'Protection Unit at Disclosure Scotland'. The process for raising and dealing such matters is covered in the BHL 'Protection of Vulnerable Groups and Referrals Policy'.

## **11. Monitoring**

11.1. BHL will monitor the following safeguarding aspects:

- Safe recruitment practices
- PVG applications, renewals and referrals
- References applied for new staff (paid and unpaid)
- Records made and kept of supervision sessions
- Risk assessments
- Training – register/ record of staff training
- Monitoring whether concerns are being reported and actioned
- Checking that policies are up to date and relevant
- Reviewing the current reporting procedure in place
- Presence and action of designated senior manager responsible for Safeguarding is in post

## **12. Managing Information**

12.1. Information will be gathered, recorded and stored in accordance with the following policies (Data Protection Policy, Confidentiality statement and Confidentiality Policy).

12.2. All staff are aware that they have a professional duty to share information with other agencies in order to safeguard children and vulnerable adults. The public interest in safeguarding children and vulnerable adults may override confidentiality interests. However, information will be shared on a need to know basis only, as judged by the Executive Director.

12.3. All staff must be aware that they cannot promise service users or their families/ carers that they will keep secrets.

## **13. Communicating this policy**

13.1. BHL will make friends and volunteers aware of the Safeguarding Policy by uploading this policy to the BHL website. This policy is also referred to in the Friend/Carer Agreements and the Volunteer Agreement. It is also raised and discussed during the volunteer training process.

### **Confirmation of reading**

I confirm that I have been made fully aware of, and understand the contents of, the Safeguarding Policy and Procedures for Befrienders Highland Limited.

**Please complete the details below and return this completed form to *Executive Director (Befrienders Highland Limited, 42 Academy Street, Inverness, IV1 1JT)***

**Employee/Volunteer Name :**.....

**Employee/Volunteer Signature:** .....

**Date:**.....