

## **The Reader Group**

### **Vulnerable Adult Policy**

**Policy Title:** Vulnerable Adult Policy

**Date Adopted:** 10<sup>th</sup> December 2010

**Next Review Date:** August 2018

**Accountable Person:** Zoe Gilling, Associate Director Operations and Support

**To Whom the Policy Applies:** All staff, volunteers and trustees

The Reader Group is made up of The Reader Organisation and the Calderstones Mansion House Community Interest Company.

#### **Version History:**

| <b>Date</b> | <b>Summary of Change</b>            |
|-------------|-------------------------------------|
| 10.12.10    | New policy adopted                  |
| Oct 2013    | Policy review                       |
| Oct 2014    | Policy review                       |
| Oct 2015    | Policy review                       |
| Dec 2016    | Policy review                       |
| Aug 2017    | Policy review: no changes required. |

***This policy should be read in conjunction with the accompanying The Reader Group  
Guidelines for dealing with Vulnerable Adults***

### **Definition of a vulnerable adult**

A vulnerable adult is someone aged 18 or over:

Who is, or may be, in need of community services due to age, illness or a mental or physical disability

Who is, or may be, unable to take care of himself/herself, or unable to protect himself/herself against significant harm or exploitation

(Definition from the Department of Health 2002)

### **Responsibilities**

The Reader Group takes its responsibility towards vulnerable adults seriously. As part of its mission to promote the pleasures and benefits of reading, The Reader Group is committed to:

- Ensuring the health and welfare of vulnerable adults by providing opportunities for them to take part in events and activities safely
- Respecting and promoting the rights, wishes and feelings of vulnerable adults
- Recruiting, training, supporting and supervising its members to adopt best practice to safeguard and protect vulnerable adults from abuse and to minimise risk to themselves
- Reviewing and evaluating this Policy and these Procedures on a regular basis

### **Principles**

This Policy and these Procedures are based upon the following principles:

- The welfare of vulnerable adults is of primary concern
- All vulnerable adults, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, socio-economic status, religious belief and/or sexual preference have the right to protection from abuse
- All vulnerable adults, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, social economic status, religious belief and/or sexual preference have the right to be treated with dignity and respect at all times.
- All incidents of alleged poor practice, misconduct and abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately
- All personal data will be processed in accordance with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998

## **Review**

This Policy and these Procedures will be regularly monitored and reviewed:

- In accordance with changes in legislation and guidance on the protection of vulnerable adults
- Following any issues or concerns raised about the protection of vulnerable adults within The Reader Group

## **Section 1. Designated Safeguarding Officer**

The Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO) has the main responsibility for managing vulnerable adult protection issues within The Reader Group. The DSO at The Reader Group is:

**Neil Mahoney**

The DSO will:

- Implement and promote The Reader Group Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy and Procedures
- Act as the main contact within The Reader Group for the protection of vulnerable adults
- Encourage good practice and support of procedures to protect vulnerable adults
- Maintain confidential records of reported cases and action taken and liaise with the statutory agencies to ensure they have access to all necessary information
- Organise training for members
- Regularly monitor and review The Reader Group's Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy and Procedures

## **Section 2. Recruitment and Employment**

All reasonable steps must be taken to ensure that unsuitable people are prevented from working with vulnerable adults. For all positions that require regular contact with vulnerable adults, the following recruitment procedures must be completed.

### **2.1 Advertising**

All forms of advertising used to recruit members for positions involving regular contact with vulnerable adults will include the following:

- The aims of The Reader Group and details of the programme involved
- The responsibilities of the role
- The level of experience or qualifications required
- Details of The Reader Group's open and proactive stance on vulnerable adult protection

## **2.2 Checks**

The following types of check are to be requested for positions requiring contact with vulnerable adults:

- Standard Disclosures will be requested from those applying for positions listed in the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (ROA) (Exceptions) Order 1975.
- Enhanced Disclosures will be requested from those applying for positions that involve a greater degree of contact with vulnerable adults.

## **2.3 Induction and training**

The induction and training process for a newly appointed member of The Reader Group will include the following:

- Clarification and understanding of The Reader Group's Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy and Procedures
- Clarification of the expectations, roles and responsibilities of the position
- How to work effectively with vulnerable adults
- Training in safeguarding vulnerable adults
- Any other identified training needs

## **Section 3. Code of Conduct for the Protection of Vulnerable Adults**

This section details the types of practice required by all members of The Reader Group when in contact with vulnerable adults.

### **3.1. Good practice**

The Reader Group supports and requires the following good practice by members when in contact with vulnerable adults:

- Treat all vulnerable adults with respect and dignity in accordance with their individual needs
- Give enthusiastic and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism
- Ensure that if any form of manual or physical support is required for a vulnerable adult, it is provided openly, the vulnerable adult is informed of what is being done and their consent is obtained
- Involve guardians and carers wherever possible
- Build balanced relationships based on mutual trust and empower vulnerable adults to share in the decision-making process

### **3.2 First Aid and treatment of injuries**

If, in your capacity as a member of The Reader Group, a vulnerable adult requires First Aid or any form of medical attention whilst in your care, the following good practice must be followed:

- Only those with a current, recognised First Aid qualification should respond to any injuries
- Be aware of any pre-existing medical conditions, medicines being taken by participants or existing injuries, and the treatment required
- Keep a written record of any injury that occurs, along with the details of any treatment given
- Where possible, ensure access to medical advice and/or assistance is available
- In more serious cases, assistance must be obtained from a medically qualified professional as soon as possible

### **3.3 Taking and transporting vulnerable adults away from home**

If it is necessary to provide transport or take vulnerable adults away from home, the following good practice must be followed:

- Where practicable, request written guardian/carer consent if members are required to transport vulnerable adults
- Ensure all vehicles are properly maintained and insured
- Ensure all reasonable safety measures are taken, e.g. seatbelts worn
- Always plan and prepare a detailed programme of activities and ensure copies are available for other members and guardians/carers

### **3.4 Practice to be avoided**

The following practice is to be avoided. In the context of your role within The Reader Group:

- Avoid having 'favourites' – this could lead to resentment and jealousy by other vulnerable adults
- Avoid spending excessive amounts of time alone with vulnerable adults away from others
- Avoid taking vulnerable adults to your home
- Avoid, where possible, doing things of a personal nature for vulnerable adults that they can do for themselves

### **3.5 Practice never to be sanctioned**

The following practice is **never** to be sanctioned. In the context of your role within The Reader Group:

- Never form intimate emotional or physical relationships with vulnerable adults
- Never allow rough physical contact, sexually provocative games or the touching of a vulnerable adult in a sexually suggestive manner
- Never allow allegations made by a vulnerable adult to go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon
- Never invite or allow vulnerable adults to stay with you at your home

### **3.6 Reporting**

If members have concerns about an incident involving a vulnerable adult they must report their concerns to The Reader Group as soon as possible.

Report, record and inform your manager or team leader if:

- You accidentally hurt a vulnerable adult
- A vulnerable adult seems distressed in any manner
- A vulnerable adult misunderstands or misinterprets something you have said or done
- A vulnerable adult needs to be restrained
- Any instance of 'bullying' is suspected or identified
- If you have concerns a vulnerable adult is becoming dependent or developing a connection beyond your remit of facilitating and supporting within the reading group

### **Section 4. Photographing and Filming of Vulnerable Adults**

The following procedure is required for The Reader Group activities or events where vulnerable adults are participating:

- Where possible, consent from a guardian/carer for photographing and/or filming of a vulnerable adult must be obtained prior to the event or activity
- Where possible, anyone wishing to use photographic/film equipment at a venue must obtain the approval of The Reader Group
- No unsupervised access or one-to-one sessions are to be permitted unless this has been approved in advance by the vulnerable adult, guardian/carer and The Reader Group, and appropriate vetting has occurred
- The Reader Group reserves the right at all times to prohibit the use of photography or film at any event or activity with which it is associated

### **Section 5. Vulnerable Adults in Publications and on the Internet**

The following procedure must be followed to ensure that The Reader Group publications and their information on the Internet do not place vulnerable adults at risk:

- Publications or information on an internet site must never include personal information that could identify a vulnerable adult, e.g. home address, e-mail address, telephone number. Any contact information must be directed to The Reader Group or another relevant organisation
- Before publishing any information about a vulnerable adult, written consent must be obtained from the vulnerable adult's guardian/carer
- The content of photographs or videos must not depict a vulnerable adult in a demeaning or tasteless manner, in a provocative pose or in a state of partial undress

- All published events involving vulnerable adults must be reviewed to ensure the information will not put them at risk
- Particular care must be taken in publishing photographs or videos of vulnerable adults who are considered particularly vulnerable

## **Section 6. Responding to Disclosures**

Information you receive about or from a vulnerable adult may fall into one of the following categories:

1. Suspicion or allegation of misconduct against a member of The Reader Group
2. Suspicion or allegation of abuse against a member of The Reader Group
3. Suspicion or allegation of inappropriate behaviour against someone who is not a member of The Reader Group
4. Suspicion or allegation of abuse against someone who is not a member of The Reader Group

It is important that The Reader Group members understand what is meant by the term 'abuse'. The different types of abuse are:

- Emotional abuse
- Physical abuse
- Neglect
- Sexual abuse
- Discrimination (including racism)
- Bullying (physical, verbal, teasing, harassment)

### **6.1 How to Listen to a Disclosure**

When listening to a disclosure of inappropriate behaviour or misconduct made by a vulnerable adult, the following good practice is required:

- Listen carefully
- Take what the vulnerable adult says seriously
- React calmly
- Do not show disbelief
- Tell the vulnerable adult that he/she is not to blame
- Do not ask questions, though you may reflect back statements made the vulnerable adult to clarify your understanding (if necessary)
- Reassure the vulnerable adult
- Make a clear written record of the disclosure as soon as you can

### **6.2 Responding to a Suspicion or Allegation of Inappropriate Behaviour or Misconduct against a Member of The Reader Group**

If you receive a disclosure that leads to a suspicion or allegation of inappropriate behaviour or misconduct against a member:

- Listen to the vulnerable adult as detailed above
- Acknowledge the information received
- Make a full written record of the disclosure on the same day you receive the disclosure
- Sign and date the record and then pass it on to the DSO

### **6.3 Responding to a Suspicion or Allegation of Inappropriate Behaviour or Misconduct against Someone who is not a Member of The Reader Group**

If you receive a disclosure that leads to a suspicion or allegation of inappropriate behaviour or misconduct against someone who is not a member of The Reader Group:

- Listen to the vulnerable adult as detailed above
- Acknowledge the information received
- Pass the information to the DSO, and if appropriate to the guardian/carer of the vulnerable adult and the manager of the event
- Make a full written record of the disclosure on the same day you receive the disclosure
- Sign and date the record and then pass it on to the DSO

### **6.4 Responding to a Suspicion or Allegation of Abuse**

All allegations of abuse must be taken seriously. If a vulnerable adult says or indicates he/she is being abused, you must react as soon as possible in line with the following procedures. Where there is uncertainty about whether the concern relates to abuse or misconduct, the DSO must first be consulted for advice on the most appropriate course of action.

- Listen to the vulnerable adult as detailed above
- Pass your concerns to the Social Work Department or the Police in the area where the abuse is alleged to have occurred **immediately**. At the earliest opportunity, tell the DSO about the action taken
- Make a full written record of what has been seen, heard and/or told as soon as possible. The information must include the name of the vulnerable adult, their age and date of birth, home address and telephone number, the nature of the allegation, any times or dates relevant, details of any witnesses to the incident(s), and your own details
- Pass the record to the Social Work Department or the Police

**Remember: Listen, Respond, Report and Record.**

**Local Council Adult Safeguarding numbers (if you cannot get in touch with Neil):**

Check your SLA for details of your region's Local Council Adult Safeguarding number.



## **Appendix 1. Vulnerable Adults: Worst Case Scenario**

**Appendix 2.** Further guidelines for The Reader Group staff and volunteers working with children and vulnerable adults

### **Appendix 1. Vulnerable Adults: Worst Case Scenario**

Very occasionally you may find yourself in a situation with a group member with mental health problems that causes you concern and requires some action beyond what you do in your role as a shared reading facilitator.

For example: A person, who you know to have mental health problems, arrives at your group showing signs of obvious distress and upset, perhaps not making sense in his/her conversation, and is in obvious need of help.

#### **What you should do:**

- 1.** Stay in the same room but take the person aside from the group. Act calmly and talk calmly to the person, and assess the situation. Are they aware/is there a reason why they are distressed? Is there anyone they would like you to call? (e.g. a friend or relative, or mental health crisis service – if they are in contact with mental health services they should have a number to call in an emergency). Do they need a taxi to take them home or to A & E (to access crisis service)?
- 2.** If you are in a host organisation, contact someone in charge and make them aware of the situation. If it is in their remit, they may be able to deal with it themselves. If it is not, or if you are not in a host organisation, then...
- 3.** Unless the person is an immediate danger to themselves or others (in which case you would call 999), call the Designated Safeguarding Officer, Neil Mahoney on 07807 106 858

Neil will talk the situation through with you and then contact the Central Advice and Duty Team for advice. Neil will then call you back and advise you on what to do next/tell you to call the relevant emergency service (Police or Ambulance).

- 4.** If the person is an immediate danger to themselves or others call 999 and ask for the Police. Explain the situation calmly and in as much detail as possible. Follow their advice.

**Remember it is important to keep yourself safe throughout.** Do not be alone with the person. Keep another group member/member of staff/volunteer from the host organisation with you.

When the situation has been dealt with, you will need to explain to your group, without giving any personal details away, what has occurred, this may be something like the following:

“F isn’t well, she isn’t herself at the moment. I can’t go into details but I have followed The Reader Group policy to make sure she gets the help she needs and to keep the group safe.”



## **Appendix 2. Further guidelines for The Reader Group staff and volunteers working with children and vulnerable adults**

**\*Please refer to The Reader Group’s Vulnerable Adult and Child Protection Policies for an overview of procedures.\***

### In The Reader Group Induction

Care of the children and vulnerable adults who use our service is very closely bound up with the ethos of The Reader Group, and we expect all staff and volunteers to treat all of our beneficiaries equally, and with kindness, respect and compassion.

We aim to employ staff and recruit volunteers for whom the impulse of kindness is genuine, who are prepared to go the extra mile to engage those we read with, but it is very important that every employee is aware that there should be boundaries in relationships with beneficiaries and that these boundaries protect both staff members/volunteers and the experience of those using our service.

A rigid set of rules does not allow for flexibility, common sense, and the complexities of particular circumstances and could also compromise our core ethos which is founded on genuine human connection. It is therefore very important that staff members and volunteers give regular, detailed feedback to their line managers who will be able to advise them week-by-week about their relationships with individual group members, help with managing group dynamics, and provide opportunities to talk over any concerns. **If in doubt about any issue, no matter how small, talk to your line manager, or the Designated safeguarding Officer.**

### FAQs and examples

#### **Can I give a lift to a reading group member to an event or reading group session?**

Current The Reader Group policy is that we shouldn't be giving group members a lift.

#### **Can I accept a gift from a reading group member?**

Common sense is required: e.g. if an individual keeps buying gifts for you, clearly an attachment is forming and you will need to speak to him/her. If a group buys you a Christmas or birthday gift – no problem. If a looked after child gives you a bookmark he/she has made – no problem – but if they have clearly spent a lot of their pocket money on you, this would be a cause for concern and you would need to speak to them/their carer.

#### **Should I physically help a frail or disabled reading group member?**

Unfortunately, we cannot guarantee that a facilitator will always be able to help a group member into a taxi etc. as this may mean waiting around for some time when the member of staff concerned may

have other commitments. We need to encourage group members to ask a friend or relation to help if assistance is required on a regular basis or use a disabled person's transport service (as several group members do). In a care home, we should always ask for a member of staff to be present who will help with assisting frail people into the group. If you are helping someone put on their coat etc., please make sure that there is another person present in the room with you.

### **Should I answer out of hours phone calls?**

This is discretionary and again should be dictated by common sense. Phone calls after 6pm and at weekends should not be encouraged – you need some time off! Text communication can seem less intrusive, but experience has shown that if it gets out of hand, this can skew relationships with some vulnerable people.

### **Can I socialise with The Reader Group beneficiaries outside my job?**

Maintaining a warm, genuine, but ultimately professional relationship between facilitator and group member is very important, and the vulnerable adult and child protection policies clearly state that behaving in a way which may be seen as favouritism is contrary to good practice. Crossing a boundary may mean that the very person you are trying to help may lose the valuable support which The Reader Group offers, as the neutral, accepting space created by the group session may become muddled by external issues. For example, it may seem kind and friendly to go for lunch with a group member or to accept an invitation, but, as well as putting yourself in a vulnerable position, you may be compromising them, both in relation to other group members and their own experience within the group, where 'real life' issues are tackled indirectly through the literature rather than in concrete practical terms. Through conversation within the group, you may learn that a group member is having trouble with their neighbour which is causing stress and anxiety. You may wish to research housing associations and pass on phone numbers, but you should not go with them when viewing a flat.

### **What should I do if I become aware a beneficiary is forming an attachment?**

Sometimes a Reader beneficiary; group member or volunteer, may become interested in you in a manner that is outside of the remit of your boundaried working relationship. This can very easily happen in situations where comfort care and pleasure are being received by the beneficiary and, given their vulnerability and possibly the deficits of connection in their wider life (lack of warm, social connections), they would like more of this type of connection and may see you as a way to obtain it. You should notify your manager/team leader of any situation where you are concerned about the nature of a beneficiary's interest in you as soon as you become aware of it even though it may only be a niggles and probably initially just a very small thought about the nature of that person's interest. Do not ignore these feelings, seek support which will assist you to find ways to support the beneficiary and continue to provide the best care to them while at the same time ensuring your own safety.

### **How can I protect myself when reading one-to-one in people's homes?**

All project workers who conduct one-to-one reading sessions in people's homes should have a designated 'buddy' who is kept up to date with their weekly timetable. They should send a text when they leave the house of the person they are reading with and inform their 'buddy' if the session has been delayed or overruns. Project workers who read with children should always leave the door of the room in which the session is taking place ajar. Carers and relatives of elderly people who are offered shared reading sessions should be made aware of the service that is being provided. Home visits for other purposes should only be made under exceptional circumstances.