



# Our Special Friends

## Safeguarding Adult Policy

### Policy Statement

Our Special Friends (“the Organisation”) is an independent charity. Care is delivered by a multi-disciplinary team supported by a large voluntary team. The organisation works in multiple environments, both internally and externally.

### Purpose

This policy defines how **Our Special Friends** operates to safeguard Adults at Risk of abuse or neglect.

### Aims

The Organisation is committed to:

- The protection and safety of Adults at Risk involved in the services and activities provided by the Organisation, both on and off site. The Organisation is further committed to ensuring that our staff and volunteers are protected and supported.
- Ensuring that the welfare of adults is always paramount.
- Maximising people’s choice, control and inclusion and protecting their human rights.
- Working in partnership with others to safeguard Adults at Risk.
- Ensuring that safe and effective working practices are in place.
- Supporting staff/volunteers within the Organisation.

### Introduction

This policy sets out the roles and responsibilities of **Our Special Friends** in working together with other professionals and agencies in promoting the welfare of adults and safeguarding them from abuse and neglect.

This policy is intended to support staff/volunteers working within **Our Special Friends**. It does not replace, but is supplementary to the guidance available at Suffolk Safeguarding Partnership [www.suffolksp.org.uk](http://www.suffolksp.org.uk). The objective is to ensure every staff member or volunteer fully understands that they have a statutory duty of care to pass on any concerns or disclosures about an Adult at Risk, and to provide a safe and efficient reporting system.

## **Scope**

This policy applies to all staff and volunteers (permanent, seconded or temporary) of **Our Special Friends** as well as all people who work on behalf of **Our Special Friends**.

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. All volunteers and members of staff are required to report any suspected abuse following the mechanisms laid out in this policy. They must be aware of the appropriate reporting procedure for safeguarding.

The Safeguarding Officers are responsible for discharging their safeguarding functions in a way that ensures that any Adult at Risk or child is safeguarded from harm, and that their welfare is promoted. They are responsible for following up any suspected reports of abuse and for informing the Police or other appropriate external bodies.

## **Definitions**

**Abuse** includes but is not limited to physical, domestic, sexual, psychological, financial/material, hoarding, modern slavery, discrimination, organisational, neglect and omission, and self-neglect.

**Adult at Risk** of abuse or neglect means someone aged 18 years old or over, who according to Paragraph 42.1 of the Care Act 2014:

- Has care and support needs,
- Is experiencing, or is at risk of, abuse and/or neglect, and
- As a result of their care and support needs is unable to protect him or herself against the abuse or neglect or risk of it. Adults at Risk includes those who have care and support needs but are not currently receiving care or support from a health or care service.

Thus, all adults who meet the above criteria may be defined as Adults at Risk of abuse or neglect. Our Special Friends also recognise that our client group may be socially isolated and receiving care in their own homes, which further enables vulnerability and risk of abuse.

**Named Professional** means Bin Johnston

**MASH** means Suffolk County Council's Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub  
<https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/care-and-support-for-adults/protecting-people-at-risk-of-abuse/mash/>

**Organisation** means Our Special Friends

**Safeguarding** means the action taken to promote the welfare of Adults at Risk of abuse and to protect them from harm.

**Safeguarding Officers** means Gemma Reid and Sam McAulay

### **Commitments of the Organisation:**

- The welfare of any Adult at Risk is paramount.
- Our Special Friends recognise that any Adult at Risk has the right to be protected from abuse.
- Safeguarding is the responsibility of everyone at the Organisation.
- All staff/volunteers to be made aware of this policy and the procedures for the protection of Adults at Risk, and for creating an environment where staff/volunteers feel able to raise concerns and feel supported in their safeguarding role.
- All suspicions and allegations of abuse must be properly reported to the relevant internal and/or external authorities and dealt with swiftly and appropriately.
- Having appropriate senior leadership to take responsibility for the Organisation's safeguarding arrangements, and a clear line of accountability for the provision of safe services.

### **Responsibilities of the Organisation:**

- To take appropriate and swift action to identify, report and prevent abuse from happening.
- To respond appropriately when abuse has or is suspected to have occurred, by making the designated Safeguarding Officers and/or Chief Executive aware of any suspicions.
- Ensure that the adult safeguarding procedures are always followed.
- Provide support, advice and resources to staff/volunteers in responding to adult safeguarding issues.
- Inform staff/volunteers of any local or national issues relating to safeguarding adults.
- Ensure staff/volunteers are aware of their responsibilities to attend training and to support staff in accessing these events.
- Ensuring that the Organisation has a dedicated staff member with an expertise in safeguarding adults.
- Ensuring staff/volunteers have access to appropriate consultation and supervision regarding safeguarding adults.
- Understand how diversity, beliefs and values of people who use services may influence the identification, prevention and response to safeguarding concerns.
- Ensure that information is available to people which sets out what to do if they have a concern, and what they can expect of one another, to safeguard Adults at Risk of abuse.
- Ensure that arrangements are in place which clearly set out the processes for sharing information procedures with other professionals and with the Local Safeguarding Adult Board.
- Ensuring safe recruitment practices are in place.
- Ensure that all employees/volunteers who come in contact with Adults at Risk have an enhanced DBS check in line with the requirements of the Independent Safeguarding Authority Disclosure and Barring Scheme.

### **Responsibilities of all staff/volunteers**

- Always follow the safeguarding policies and procedures, particularly if concerns arise about the safety or welfare of an Adult at Risk. Staff must respect an “absolute and unequivocal” duty of care to protect service users from harm.
- Participate in the regular Our Special Friends training on safeguarding adults and maintain current working knowledge.
- Become familiar with this Adult Safeguarding Policy, which will be provided to all new staff and all volunteers upon completion of recruitment.
- Discuss any concerns about the welfare of an Adult at Risk with the designated Safeguarding Officer (or alternative where necessary) at the earliest opportunity.
- Contribute to actions required including information sharing and attending meetings.
- Work collaboratively with other agencies to safeguard and protect the welfare of people who use these services.
- Always remain alert to the possibility of abuse.
- Recognise the impact that diversity, beliefs and values of people who use services can have.
- Where there is a safeguarding concern, staff/volunteers must not keep information about abuse confidential but must inform the Safeguarding Officer at the earliest opportunity. If the Safeguarding Officer is unavailable, Customer First must be contacted (if you are a professional call 03456 066 167; if you are a member of the public call 0808 800 4005. If you would like guidance on making a referral, call the MASH Professionals Consultation line 03456061499). Call 999 if immediate risk of harm is suspected.

## **Policy**

The Organisation has a zero-tolerance approach to abuse. The Organisation recognises that under the Care Act 2014 it has a duty of care for the protection of adults who are at risk of abuse. It is committed to promoting wellbeing and harm prevention, and to respond effectively if concerns are raised. Adults will be included in swift and personalised safeguarding responses.

## **Appointing staff and volunteers**

Recruitment of staff and volunteers will adhere to Our Special Friends’ Recruitment Policy which complies with the requirements of the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012 and the Disclosure and Barring Service, or any government body set up in its place to implement a registration and vetting procedure. Every staff member or volunteer who comes into contact with a service user will provide evidence of a current Enhanced DBS (Children and Vulnerable Adults) or one will be acquired by Our Special Friends before they can progress within the Organisation.

## **Training**

All staff/volunteers will receive mandatory training on awareness and adult safeguarding at a level according to their role. This should be refreshed, as a minimum, every two years.

Staff and volunteers will have been made aware of the categories of abuse during an induction session or 1-2-1 training session at the start of their involvement with Our Special Friends. There will also be core training requirements for all volunteers, offered at regular intervals.

Categories of abuse will recognise the different forms of abuse, including the following: Neglect, Self-neglect, Emotional, Psychological, Physical, Sexual, Financial and Material, Hoarding, Modern Slavery, Discriminatory, Professional Abuse and Domestic Violence.

### **Reporting Abuse**

There are two designated Safeguarding Officers within the Organisation to ensure complete coverage for all staff and volunteers during times of annual leave (the two officers do not take planned annual leave at the same time) and sickness. Both report directly to the Chief Executive.

After an individual reports the concern, the designated Safeguarding Officer involved at the earliest opportunity will make a written record but must not delay the referral process to the Chief Executive, Social Services or the Police.

It is expected that all staff/volunteers follow the Suffolk Adult Safeguarding Policy. <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/care-and-support-for-adults/protecting-people-at-risk-of-abuse/adult-abuse-and-safeguarding/>.

All service users need to be safe. Throughout the process the service users' needs remain paramount. This process is about protecting the adult and the prevention of abuse.

When there are concerns about a person and Our Special Friends want to make a referral, the designated Safeguarding Officers or Chief Executive will contact the professional (MASH) consultation line (03456061499) before submitting the form via the Suffolk County Council Adult Care Portal.

### **Adult Care Portal**

<https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/care-and-support-for-adults/how-social-care-can-help/suffolk-adult-care-portal/>

### **Where Alleged Abuser and Victims Are Both Service Users**

It is important that consideration be given to a co-ordinated approach and partnership working, where it is identified that both the alleged abuser and alleged victim are service users.

Where both parties are receiving a service, staff should discuss cases and work together, however meetings with both the alleged abuser and alleged victim in attendance are not considered appropriate.

### **Where a Member of Staff or Volunteer is the Subject of an Allegation of Abuse**

Volunteers/staff should be aware that abuse is a serious matter that can lead to a criminal conviction. Where applicable the Organisation's disciplinary policy should be implemented.

Any allegation regarding a member of staff or volunteer must be investigated by the formal safeguarding procedures in force in Suffolk; if it is suspected that a crime has been committed, and a police investigation has been initiated, then this will take precedence over all other inquiries. However, a report must be compiled by the individual who has the concern and/or by their designated Safeguarding Officer and countersigned by the Chief Executive. It will then be forwarded promptly to the Care Quality Commission.

Our Special Friends' CEO with a Trustee will undertake an investigation of any such allegation, but any internal investigation must not obstruct an adult protection investigation or police inquiry; the timing and conduct of an internal inquiry must be agreed between the named professional and the Social Services Safeguarding Manager for the locality in which the adult lives.

Our Special Friends' personnel guidance outlines the procedures to be followed regarding staff or volunteer suspension, management and disciplinary matters in the event of an allegation of abuse or mistreatment of an adult.

Our Special Friends will also follow its standard complaints procedure having first ensured the welfare and safety of the person making the allegation. The person should be referred to Social Services following the procedure in the case of suspected abuse.

Staff and volunteers will have been made aware of the categories of abuse during an induction session or 1-2-1 training session at the start of their involvement with Our Special Friends. There will also be core training requirements for all volunteers, offered at regular intervals.

Categories of abuse will recognise the different forms of abuse, including but not limited to physical, sexual, neglect and emotional. Training will discuss common signs of abuse, sharing concerns and reporting procedures.

### **Confidentiality and Information Sharing**

Organisations are under a duty to share information where harm is suspected. In doing so, information sharing helps to identify the right kind of support and to reduce the risk of abuse, harm and/or neglect. Staff and volunteers must consider the harm that may be caused by not sharing information – this can outweigh the harm caused by sharing it. It is therefore important to identify an abusive situation as early as possible so that the individual can be protected. Withholding

information may lead to abuse not being dealt with in a timely manner. Confidentiality must never be confused with secrecy. Staff/volunteers have a duty to share information relating to suspected abuse with Adult Community Services and the Police.

Consent is not required to breach confidentiality (capacity issues must be considered) and make a safeguarding referral where;

- A serious crime has been committed.
- Where the alleged perpetrator may go on to abuse other adults
- Other vulnerable adults are at risk in some way.
- The vulnerable adult is deemed to be in serious risk.
- There is a statutory requirement e.g., Children's Act 1989, Mental Health Act 1983, Care Standards Act 2000
- The public interest overrides the interest of the individual.
- When a member of staff of a statutory service, a private or voluntary service or a volunteer is the person accused of abuse, malpractice or poor professional standards.

If a member of staff/volunteer has any doubt about the legality of sharing information, they must in the first instance consult their designated Safeguarding Officer.

### **Monitoring**

**The Safeguarding Leads** will be responsible for the monitoring of this policy. This policy will be reviewed every two years or earlier when changes are needed.

### **Contact Details:**

#### **1. Chief Executive Officer:**

Dr. Bin Johnston, Chief Executive Officer, Animal Companionship Practitioner

Registered Address: Unit 4. The Vision Centre, 5 Eastern Way, Bury St Edmunds, IP32 7AB

Office Address: Unit 4. The Vision Centre, 5 Eastern Way, Bury St Edmunds, IP32 7AB

Telephone Number: 01284 335351 / Mobile: 07770 855303

Email: [bin.johnston@ourspecialfriends.org](mailto:bin.johnston@ourspecialfriends.org)

#### **2. Designated Safeguarding Officers:**

Gemma Reid – Animal Companionship Practitioner

Mobile: 07909 598215

Email: [gemma.reid@ourspecialfriends.org](mailto:gemma.reid@ourspecialfriends.org)

Sam McAulay – Animal Companionship Practitioner  
Mobile: 07587 708122  
Email: [sam.mcaulay@ourspecialfriends.org](mailto:sam.mcaulay@ourspecialfriends.org)

### **3. Social Services - Adult Protection & Welfare Contacts:**

MASH Consultation Line – 0345 606 1499

Suffolk Safeguarding Adults & Children Team – during office hours, please call Customer First – 0808 800 4005

Suffolk Police – 101 where the call will be diverted to the Vulnerable Adult Investigation Unit for enquiries or to the Control Room for a report.

### **4. Social Care Portal**

<https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/care-and-support-for-adults/how-social-care-can-help/suffolk-adult-care-portal/>

Date of review: 07/08/2025  
Date of next review: 07/08/2027  
Owner: Bin Johnston  
Signed: Bin Johnston  
Dated: 07/08/2025



# Appendix

## Definitions and signs of abuse

It has been estimated that roughly two-thirds of those harming a vulnerable adult are family members, most often the victim's adult child or spouse. Research has shown that in most instances the abuser is financially dependent on the vulnerable adult's resources and have problems related to alcohol and drugs.

### General signs of abuse

The word abuse covers many different ways someone may harm a vulnerable adult.

### Physical abuse

Physical abuse is intentional bodily injury. Some examples include slapping, pinching, choking, kicking, shoving, or inappropriately using drugs or physical restraints.

#### Spotting the signs of physical abuse

- bruises, black eyes, welts, lacerations, and rope marks
- broken bones
- open wounds, cuts, punctures, untreated injuries in various stages of healing
- broken eyeglasses/frames, or any physical signs of being punished or restrained
- laboratory findings of either an overdose or under dose medications
- individual's report being hit, slapped, kicked, or mistreated
- vulnerable adult's sudden change in behaviour
- the caregiver's refusal to allow visitors to see a vulnerable adult alone

## **Neglect**

Neglect occurs when a person, either through his/her action or inaction, deprives a vulnerable adult of the care necessary to maintain the vulnerable adult's physical or mental health. Examples include not providing basic items such as food, water, clothing, a safe place to live, medicine, or health care.

### **Spotting the signs of neglect**

- dehydration, malnutrition, untreated bed sores and poor personal hygiene
- unattended or untreated health problems
- hazardous or unsafe living conditions (e.g., improper wiring, no heat or running water)
- unsanitary and unclean living conditions (e.g., dirt, fleas, lice on person, soiled bedding, faecal/urine smell, inadequate clothing)
- an individual's report of being mistreated

## **Sexual abuse**

Sexual abuse is non-consensual sexual contact (any unwanted sexual contact). Examples include unwanted touching, rape, sodomy, coerced nudity, sexually explicit photography.

### **Spotting the signs of sexual abuse**

- bruises around the breasts or genital area
- unexplained venereal disease or genital infections
- unexplained vaginal or anal bleeding
- torn, stained, or bloody underclothing
- an individual's report of being sexually assaulted or raped

## **Emotional abuse**

Emotional abuse is deliberately causing mental or emotional pain. Examples include intimidation, coercion, ridiculing, harassment, treating an adult like a child, isolating an adult from family, friends, or regular activity, use of silence to control behaviour, and yelling or swearing which results in mental distress.

### **Spotting the signs of emotional abuse**

- being emotionally upset or agitated
- being extremely withdrawn and non-communicative or non-responsive
- unusual behaviour usually attributed to dementia (e.g., sucking, biting, rocking)

- nervousness around certain people
- an individual's report of being verbally or mentally mistreated

## **Exploitation**

Exploitation occurs when a vulnerable adult or his/her resources or income are illegally or improperly used for another person's profit or gain. Examples include illegally withdrawing money out of another person's account, forging cheques, or stealing things out of the vulnerable adult's house.

### **Spotting the signs of exploitation**

- sudden changes in bank account or banking practice, including an unexplained withdrawal of large sums of money
- adding additional names on bank signature cards
- unauthorised withdrawal of funds using an ATM card
- abrupt changes in a will or other financial documents
- unexplained disappearance of funds or valuable possessions
- bills unpaid despite the money being available to pay them
- forging a signature on financial transactions or for the titles of possessions
- sudden appearance of previously uninvolved relatives claiming rights to a vulnerable adult's possessions
- unexplained sudden transfer of assets to a family member or someone outside the family
- providing services that are not necessary
- individual's report of exploitation

## **Abandonment**

Abandonment occurs when a vulnerable adult is left without the ability to obtain necessary food, clothing, shelter or health care. Examples include deserting a vulnerable adult in a public place or leaving a vulnerable adult at home without the means of getting basic life necessities.

### **Spotting the signs of abandonment**

- deserting a vulnerable adult in a public place
- deserting a vulnerable adult in his/her own home or living space
- individual's report of being abandoned

## Self-neglect

Self-neglect occurs when a vulnerable adult fails to provide adequately for themselves and jeopardises his/her well-being. Examples include a vulnerable adult living in hazardous, unsafe, or unsanitary living conditions or not having enough food or water.

### Spotting the signs of self-neglect

- dehydration, malnutrition, untreated or improperly attended medical conditions, and poor personal hygiene
- hazardous or unsafe living conditions
- unsanitary or unclean living quarters (e.g., animal/insect infestation, no functioning toilet, faecal or urine smell)
- inappropriate and/or inadequate clothing, lack of the necessary medical aids
- grossly inadequate housing or homelessness
- inadequate medical care, not taking prescribed medications properly

## Domestic abuse

Domestic abuse is any type of controlling, bullying, threatening or violent behaviour between people who are or were in an intimate relationship, dating, lived together or who have lived together, or who have had a child in common. There are many different types of abusive behaviours that can occur within intimate relationships, including emotional, sexual, financial, psychological and physical abuse. Domestic abuse can be underpinned by an on-going pattern of psychologically abusive behaviour (coercive control) that is used by one partner to control or intimidate the other partner.

In situations of domestic abuse, both males and females can be abused or be abusers. Domestic abuse can happen in any relationship regardless of age, sexuality, gender identity, race or religious identity.

### Spotting the signs of domestic abuse

It can be difficult to tell if domestic abuse is happening, because it usually takes place in the family home and abusers can act very differently when other people are around. Children who witness domestic abuse may:

- Become aggressive
- Display anti-social behaviour
- Suffer from depression or anxiety