**Reachout With Arts in Mind**

**Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Policy**

**Purpose**

This policy, and the Code of Conduct, establish the roles and responsibilities of staff and volunteers in relation to the protection and safeguarding of vulnerable adults at Reachout.

Reachout with Arts in Mind defines a vulnerable adult based on the Scottish Law Commission’s definition ie a person aged 16 or over who is unable to safeguard their own welfare, property or financial affairs and is in need of care and attention by reason either of infirmity or of the effects of ageing, suffering from illness or mental disorder or is substantially impaired by disability.

Reachout commits to following the principles of relevant legislation and guidance relating to the protection of vulnerable adults, namely the Mental Health (Scotland) Act 1984, National Assistance Act 1948, National Assistance (Amendment) Act 1951, Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968, Adults with Incapacity (Scotland) Act 2000, Human Rights Act 1998, The Age of Legal Capacity (Scotland) Act 1991, Race Relations Act 1976, Sex Discrimination Act 1995, Protection of Vulnerable Groups (Scotland) Act 2007, Criminal Justice and Licensing (Scotland) Act 2010, The Children and Social Work Act 2017, Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018), Keeping Children Safe in Education 2019 and Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment between Children in School and Colleges 2018.

**Scope & Aim**

The management of Reachout recognises -

* the protection and safety of vulnerable adults is everyone’s responsibility
* the welfare of the vulnerable adult is of paramount consideration
* all vulnerable adults, regardless of age, disability, gender, racial or ethnic origin, religious belief and sexual orientation have a right to protection from harm or abuse
* all necessary disclosure checks will be made to ensure staff and volunteers’ suitability to work with vulnerable adults
* all staff and volunteers have an understanding of the importance of the implementation of this policy, appropriate procedures and good practices

**Safeguarding**

Protection of vulnerable adults covers, but is not limited to, safeguarding both their physical and mental wellbeing.  Every effort will be made to protect vulnerable adults who use our services, and precautionary measures will be taken to prevent any contact with persons who may have a negative impact on our members. It is the responsibility of management, staff, members and third parties to notify the Executive Arts Director or a Board Director of concerns or issues and to allow precautionary measures to be put in place.  Precautionary measures will form the basis of a risk assessment and will be shared with relevant parties associated with a reported concern.

As stated in the Code of Conduct, individuals may be asked to leave Reachout if their behaviour is found to be unacceptable and having a detrimental impact on another individual in the studio.

**Procedure**

Management recognises that if vulnerable adults are to be protected at Reachout, it is essential that everyone in contact with vulnerable adults is involved in the support of those individuals. The procedures that follow recognise and are consistent with that objective and have been designed to complement Local Authority procedures.

In operating this policy, staff must also be aware that, in order to protect vulnerable adults, in some circumstances it will be necessary to share what might normally be regarded as confidential information. The following principles should be adhered to:

* Information will only be shared on a need to know basis
* Information will only be shared when it is in the best interests of the service users
* Confidentiality must not be confused with secrecy
* Informed consent should be obtained but if this is not possible and other vulnerable adults are at risk it may be necessary to override it

Guidance provides staff with ideas which not only help to protect vulnerable adults, but will also help to identify any practices which could be mistakenly interpreted and lead to false allegations. Staff should familiarise themselves with these and if it is necessary to carry out practices contrary to it, only do so after discussion with, and the approval of, the management.

The first priority should always be to ensure the safety and protection of vulnerable adults - it is the responsibility of all staff and volunteers to act on any suspicion or evidence of abuse or neglect.

**Vulnerable Adults procedures for groups in Scotland (1)**

**PROCEDURE TO BE FOLLOWED IF YOU THINK A VULNERABLE ADULT MAY BE AT RISK OF ABUSE, IS BEING, OR HAS BEEN, ABUSED EITHER BY:**

* a member of staff
* a member of their family
* any other person, including another vulnerable adult

The management of Reachout with Arts in Mind is responsible for ensuring that all staff are aware of and understand the importance of implementing these procedures.

It is recognised that a percentage of the vulnerable adults that staff come into contact with will, through the nature of their experiences, demonstrate behaviours that might be indicators of abuse. Many factors associated with disadvantage can also result in a vulnerable adult’s behaviour being affected, thereby making the identification of abuse even more difficult. Staff are not expected to show expertise in the protection of vulnerable adults nor investigate any potential abuse. Staff are, however, expected to comply with the following procedures -

* Staff who become concerned that a vulnerable adult may be at risk of abuse, is being, or has been abused must immediately report that concern to management
* Management will discuss the concerns with the staff member to clarify their cause and obtain all relevant information. This will be forwarded to the appropriate local Social Work Department stating that it concerns the protection of a vulnerable adult
* In the absence of management, concerns should be reported to a Board director and to the local Social Work Department. Management should be reported as soon as possible thereafter. Should the concern relate to staff management, it should be raised with a Board director

**Vulnerable Adults procedures for groups in Scotland (2)**

**PROCEDURE TO BE FOLLOWED IF A VULNERABLE ADULT TELLS YOU THAT THEY ARE BEING, OR HAVE BEEN, ABUSED:**

Vulnerable adults will occasionally disclose abuse to an individual they have come to feel they can trust. This happens for many reasons but they are usually doing so in the hope that action will be taken to stop it happening, even if they have spoken in confidence.

Vulnerable adults may feel they are betraying someone they are close to and whom they love. It is not unusual for a vulnerable adult to love the abuser but want the abuse to stop, especially when that person is a family member or carer. Equally, it may be someone they fear e g, a person whom they perceive to be able to influence decisions concerning their future. Whatever the circumstances, it takes great courage for a vulnerable adult to talk about abuse and action must therefore be taken.

It can be more difficult for some vulnerable adults to confide in someone than for others. Vulnerable adults who have experienced prejudice and discrimination through racism may believe that people from other ethnic groups or backgrounds do not care about them, and have little trust of those in authority.

Vulnerable adults with a disability will have to overcome particular barriers before disclosing abuse. They may rely on the abuser for their daily care and have no knowledge of alternative sources.

If a vulnerable adult discloses abuse to staff at Reachout, it is important to react appropriately.

**Do:** **Do NOT:**

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| * Remain calm and receptive * Listen without interrupting * Only ask questions of clarification if you are unclear what the vulnerable adult is saying * Make it clear you take them seriously * Acknowledge their courage in telling you * Tell them they are not responsible for the abuse * Let them know you will do what you can to help them and, where possible, get their consent to inform management/directorand local Social Work Department | * Allow your shock or distaste to show * Probe for more information/ask other questions * Make assumptions or speculate * Make negative comments about the abuser * Make promises you cannot keep * Agree to keep the information secret * Say Yes or agree to anything without checking with management first |

It is essential that everything possible is done to protect the vulnerable adults who place their trust in the staff at Reachout. If a vulnerable adult reports abuse, the following action must be taken:

* make an immediate record of what the vulnerable adult has said, using their own words
* follow the instructions for reporting to management, as set out in procedure Part 1
* tell them that you will have to inform management/directors and that if appropriate, the relevant authorities will also have to be informed

**Vulnerable Adults code of good practice**

This code has been developed to provide staff and volunteers with advice that not only will help to protect vulnerable adults, but will also help staff identify any practices which could be mistakenly interpreted and perhaps lead to false allegations of abuse.

While it is not intended that this code should restrict staff from normal working practices, there is much they can do to avoid situations that may give rise to misinterpretation, which will also work to protect vulnerable adults. If in doubt, consider how an action or activity may be perceived as opposed to how it is intended.

Wherever possible, you should be guided by the following advice. If it is necessary to carry out practices contrary to it, you should only do so after discussion with, and the approval of, management -

* avoid unobserved situations of one–to–one contact with a vulnerable adult. If it is unavoidable, keep a door open and ensure you are within hearing of other adults
* never invite a vulnerable adult to your home without the knowledge and consent of the carers and your manager
* never offer to or take a vulnerable adult alone in your own vehicle without the knowledge and consent of the carers and your manager
* if it is necessary to do things of a ‘personal’ nature for a vulnerable adult, e g, toileting if they are disabled, ensure these are carried out with the full knowledge of the carers and your manager
* develop a culture in which staff feel comfortable enough to point out inappropriate attitudes and behaviours to each other
* don’t engage in or allow any sexually provocative games involving or observed by vulnerable adults, whether based on talking or touching
* never make suggestive remarks or discriminatory comments to a vulnerable adult
* do not engage in or tolerate any bullying of a vulnerable adult, either by vulnerable adults or other people
* do not engage in or tolerate inappropriate physical activity involving vulnerable adults
* never enter a room where a vulnerable adult may be changing their clothes or not be fully dressed, without first clearly getting their consent to enter
* respect all vulnerable adults, regardless of their age, gender, ethnicity, disability or sexual identity
* avoid ‘favouritism’ and singling-out ‘troublemakers’
* never trivialise abuse
* never let allegations by a vulnerable adult go unreported, including any made against you