

Connecting Boroughs Safeguarding Policy

1. Introduction

Connecting Boroughs is a volunteer-led charity dedicated to supporting vulnerable groups, including single parent families, domestic violence survivors, and refugees. This Safeguarding Policy outlines our commitment to protecting all individuals within our care from harm, abuse, or exploitation. This policy applies to all staff, trustees, volunteers, and anyone working on behalf of Connecting Boroughs.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this Safeguarding Policy is to:

- protect children and vulnerable adults who receive Connecting Boroughs' services from harm;
- provide staff and volunteers, as well as children and vulnerable adults and their families, with the overarching principles that guide our approach to safeguarding; and
- establish procedures and responsibilities for preventing abuse and exploitation and for handling safeguarding concerns effectively.

3. Scope and Principles

Scope: This policy applies to all staff, trustees, volunteers, and anyone working on behalf of Connecting Boroughs.

Key Principles:

- **Zero Tolerance for Abuse:** Abuse, neglect, and exploitation are strictly prohibited.
- **Dignity and Respect:** All individuals, particularly vulnerable people, will be treated with dignity and respect.
- **Empowerment and Inclusion:** We strive to empower individuals, ensuring they feel safe, included, and valued.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

All Staff and Volunteers must:

- Act in accordance with this policy.
- Undergo enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks before working with vulnerable individuals.

- Complete mandatory safeguarding training upon onboarding and annually thereafter.
- Report any safeguarding concerns to the Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO) and seek support, advice and guidance when needed.

Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO):

- Oversees the implementation of this policy, responds to all safeguarding concerns, and coordinates with external agencies when necessary.
- Maintains secure, confidential records of all safeguarding incidents.
- Ensures safeguarding training compliance among staff and volunteers.
- Ensures that the trustees have clear oversight of all aspects of safeguarding and that safeguarding is given appropriate consideration by the trustees during decision-making.

Trustees:

- Have final accountability for ensuring that Connecting Boroughs fulfils its protection and safeguarding responsibilities.
- Have a duty towards the welfare and safety of Connecting Boroughs' staff, volunteers, and any other people for whom Connecting Boroughs is responsible.

5. Safeguarding Procedures**Reporting Concerns:**

- Staff and volunteers must immediately report any safeguarding concerns to the DSO, including any suspected abuse, neglect, or risk of harm.
- In emergencies, the DSO will initiate action within 24 hours to protect the individual(s) involved, which may include contacting local authorities.

Types of Abuse Addressed:

- **Physical Abuse**
- **Emotional or Psychological Abuse**
- **Sexual Abuse**
- **Neglect**
- **Financial Exploitation**

Confidentiality and Data Protection:

- Safeguarding concerns will be handled with confidentiality. Information is shared only on a need-to-know basis, adhering to UK data protection regulations.

Handling Allegations Against Staff or Volunteers:

- Any staff member or volunteer subject to an allegation will be suspended pending investigation.
- An independent inquiry will be conducted, with external agencies engaged as needed to ensure impartiality and accountability.

6. Supporting Vulnerable Individuals

Connecting Boroughs provides the following support to individuals affected by abuse:

- Access to external support services, such as counseling, legal aid, and social services.
- Practical assistance for those needing emergency services, housing support, or medical aid.

7. Recruitment and Vetting Procedures

- All new staff and volunteers undergo a thorough vetting process, including appropriate DBS checks and reference verification.
- Only individuals who have undergone this vetting process and share Connecting Boroughs' commitment to protecting vulnerable individuals are approved for roles involving direct interaction with beneficiaries.

8. Training and Awareness

- All staff and volunteers are trained in safeguarding upon joining and receive annual refresher training.
- Training covers recognizing signs of abuse, reporting protocols, and the roles of external agencies in safeguarding.

9. Policy Monitoring and Review

- This policy is reviewed by the DSO as required (but at least annually), and by the trustees annually to ensure compliance with current legislation and best practices.
- Updates to the policy are communicated to all staff, trustees, volunteers, and anyone working on behalf of Connecting Boroughs, who must confirm understanding of any changes.

10. Contact Information for Safeguarding Concerns

- **Designated Safeguarding Officer:** Lakvinder (Queeny) Singh.
- **Local Police and Social Services Contact:** For emergency safeguarding concerns.

11. Legal Framework

This policy has been drawn up on the basis of legislation, policy and guidance that seeks to protect children and vulnerable adults, including:

- Children Act 1989, Children Act 2004 and Children and Social Work Act 2017
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023
- Care Act 2014
- Domestic Abuse Act 2021