



The Braveheart Association SCIO

Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Policy

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Introduction

The Braveheart Association SCIO is committed to Safeguarding adults and young people in line with national legislation and relevant national and local guidelines. We will safeguard our vulnerable beneficiaries by ensuring that our activities are delivered in a way which keeps them safe.

Braveheart is committed to best safeguarding practice and to uphold the rights of vulnerable adults and young people to live a life free from harm, from abuse, exploitation and neglect.

Policy Statement

The Braveheart Association SCIO recognise the important role they have to play in creating a positive and safe environment where vulnerable groups are concerned. The characteristics of abuse of vulnerable groups can take a number of forms and cause victims to suffer pain, fear and distress reaching well beyond the time of the actual incident(s). Victims may be too afraid or embarrassed to raise any complaint. They may be reluctant to discuss their concerns with other people or unsure who to trust or approach with their worries.

There may be some situations where victims are unaware that they are being abused or have difficulty in communicating this information to others. Members of staff, and volunteers have an important role to play in creating a positive and safe environment and recognising the possible signs of abuse or neglect.

This policy applies to all employees, volunteers and members of the Board.

What is Safeguarding?

In the UK, safeguarding means protecting peoples' health, wellbeing and human rights, and enabling them to live free from harm, abuse and neglect.

For Braveheart, we understand it to mean protecting at risk adults and young people, from harm who use our services.

Purpose

The purpose of the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Policy is to demonstrate the commitment of Braveheart to safeguarding adults and young people, and to ensure that everyone involved in Braveheart is aware of:

- The legislation, policy and procedures for safeguarding vulnerable groups.
- Their role and responsibility for safeguarding adults and young people.
- What to do or who to speak to if they have a concern relating to the welfare or wellbeing of an adult or young person within the organisation.

The policy will outline clear procedures, and form a key aspect of the organisations communication on the responsibility of all Braveheart representatives

Braveheart Responsibilities

Braveheart will:

- Ensure all staff have access to, are familiar with, and know their responsibilities within this policy.
- Design and undertake all its programmes and activities in a way that protects people from any risk of harm that may arise from their coming into contact with Braveheart. This includes the way in which information about individuals in our programmes is gathered and communicated.

- Implement stringent safeguarding procedures when recruiting, managing and deploying staff and associated personnel.
- Ensure staff receive training on safeguarding at a level commensurate with their role in the organisation.
- Any actions taken will respect the rights and dignity of all those involved and be proportionate to the risk of harm.
- Actions taken under this policy are reviewed by the Board and General Manager on a regular basis.
- Follow up on reports of safeguarding concerns promptly and according to due process.

Definitions

- The term “vulnerable groups” applies to both young people and protected adults.
- ‘Young person’- anyone under the age of 18 years is considered as a young person for the purposes of this document.
- ‘Protected adult - is an individual aged 16 or over who is in receipt of one or more type of care, health or welfare service because they are affected by disability, mental disorder, illness or physical or mental infirmity, is more vulnerable to being harmed than adults who are not affected (Scotland Adult Support and Protection Act 2007)
- An individual aged 16 or 17 in receipt of one or more type of care, will be protected under both categories.
- Abuse is a violation of an individual’s human and civil rights by any other person or persons. It can take a number of forms: Physical abuse e.g. hitting, pushing, shaking, inappropriate restraint, force-feeding, forcible administration of medication, neglect or abandonment.
- Sexual abuse e.g. involvement in any sexual activity, exploitation, exposure to pornography, voyeurism and exhibitionism.
- Emotional/psychological abuse e.g. intimidation or humiliation.
- Financial abuse e.g. theft or exerting improper pressure to sign over money from pensions or savings etc.
- Neglect or acts of omission e.g. being left in wet or soiled clothing, or malnutrition.
- Discriminatory abuse e.g. racial, sexual, hate crime or religious harassment.
- Personal exploitation – involves denying an individual his/her rights or forcing him/her to perform tasks that are against his/her will.
- Violation of rights e.g. preventing an individual speaking his/her thoughts and opinions.
- Institutional abuse e.g. failure to provide a choice of meals or failure to ensure privacy and dignity.
- Non organic failure to thrive i.e. a child who isn’t reaching development milestones and genetic/medical reasons have been eliminated.
- ‘Braveheart representative’- for the purposes of this policy, is taken to mean a Braveheart employee, volunteer or Board member, who could be seen as acting for Braveheart in the course of their duties.

Braveheart Safeguarding Standards

Braveheart wishes to ensure that everyone who takes part in Braveheart activities, either as representatives of Braveheart (e.g. employees, volunteers, trustees) or participants, understands what constitutes appropriate and responsible behaviour.

Representatives of Braveheart are expected to follow these safeguarding standards in all their dealings where they are, or could be seen, as acting on behalf of Braveheart.

Breach of these safeguarding standards by Braveheart representatives will lead to appropriate sanctions and could lead to disciplinary proceedings against the person concerned. In appropriate cases, it will also lead to the matter being referred to the police or social services for investigation.

Braveheart appreciates that there may be Braveheart representatives who are also subject to the protection which the Safeguarding Policy aims to provide because of their age or increased vulnerability. Any such Braveheart representative will be expected to adhere to the Safeguarding Policy in the same way as any other Braveheart representative. They will also be entitled to expect the Safeguarding Policy to be followed in respect of their own involvement with Braveheart.

- Braveheart representatives are expected to treat everyone they meet in the course of their duties with respect and courtesy.
- Braveheart representatives should never use their positions to exploit others or abuse their trust.
- Braveheart representatives should promote equality (as defined within the Equality Act 2010) and should not engage in any activity which might amount to unlawful discrimination or harassment.
- Braveheart representatives should not behave in a way that could be regarded as bringing themselves or Braveheart into disrepute or opening Braveheart up to legal liability.

Working with under 18s

- Braveheart representatives are expected to take reasonable steps to determine whether the people they are working with are aged under 18.
- When an under 18-year-old is attending a Braveheart event or meeting, consent should be sought from the parent or guardian of the young person.
- Braveheart representatives should take steps to avoid direct unsupervised contact with anyone aged under 18 as part of their Braveheart duties. Any meeting with someone aged under 18 should take place in the presence of another Braveheart representative or other responsible adult acceptable to the person aged under 18.
- Where it is not possible for genuine practical reasons (to do with the specific circumstances of the situation) to meet a person aged under 18 in the presence of another responsible adult, any meeting should be in an open environment. The arrangement should be made in advance and the time, date, location and reason for the meeting should be communicated to another Braveheart employee (ideally the designated officer) and recorded.
- Braveheart representatives should never give under 18s their home addresses, telephone numbers, personal mobile numbers, social media Handles, or personal e-mail addresses.
- Where there are issues about the vulnerability of the person concerned, whatever their age, Braveheart representatives would be expected to follow the same guidelines and practices as those set out above in respect of their conduct and to seek support and advice from a designated person where concerns arise related to additional vulnerability.

Concern about the Behaviour of Others

- There may be circumstances where an employee, volunteer, trustee or any Braveheart representative has a genuine concern about the behaviour of another member of others within the organisation. There is a separate whistleblowing procedure for use in these circumstances.

- Braveheart recognises that individuals can feel very vulnerable and fail to respond to concerns as a result and for fear of reprisals. All representatives are expected to familiarise themselves with the whistleblowing procedure and are strongly recommended to follow it to ensure any safeguarding concerns are appropriately responded to. Individuals who report concerns in the belief that they are genuine will be supported even if those concerns are later found to be unfounded or unsubstantiated.

Breach of the Safeguarding Standards

If there is concern about a breach of these standards, it should be referred to the General Manager, or if the concern is related to the General Manager, the Chair of the Board, to consider any disciplinary action and also whether it should be reported to the police or social services.

If an employee is dismissed or moved into an unregulated work position within the organisation for a reason connected to the mistreatment of vulnerable groups, the Charity is under a duty to make a referral to Disclosure Scotland under the Protection of Vulnerable Groups (Scotland) Act 2007. Referrals will also be made if:

- Braveheart was considering dismissal/moving to unregulated work, and before a decision could be reached, the employee left the organisation.
- Braveheart discovers information after the employee has left, that would have resulted in a dismissal/move into unregulated work, had it been discovered whilst the employee was working.

Records

All breaches of these Safeguarding Standards will be recorded and held securely by the General Manager. It will also be held on the individual's personnel file, also under secure conditions. Confidentiality will be maintained and information shared on a need to know basis.

Recruitment and Training

Braveheart will ensure that all staff whose roles include working with vulnerable groups are carefully selected, screened, trained and supervised and where necessary are members of the Protection of Vulnerable Groups Scheme which will be renewed every 3 years.

As part of the recruitment procedure, most staff that have contact with vulnerable groups will require to be members of the Protection of Vulnerable Groups Scheme.

Responsibilities

Braveheart will operate a designated person system for the purposes of safeguarding. The Lead Designated Officer (LDO) shall be the General Manager of Braveheart and will retain responsibility for;

- Coordinating the whole organisation's safeguarding practice.
- Ensure that this policy is communicated to all staff, volunteers and members of the Board
- Ensuring training, and resources are available and adopted by Braveheart representatives working with vulnerable groups.
- Appointing, and supporting Designated Officer/s.
- LDO will refer cases of abuse or allegations to the relevant investigating agencies.

Designated Officers may be appointed by the General Manager and will;

- Act as the main point of contact regarding safeguarding concerns at Braveheart events.
- Act as a source of support and guidance in this area for the organisation.
- Write up any allegations / incidents of abuse or concerns and send to the LDO.
- All DOs will attend safeguarding and child protection awareness training to be renewed every 3 years.
- All DOs will be registered with the PVG Scheme.
- Designated Officers will not be expected to be experts in safeguarding and Young Person protection, but to have a greater level of knowledge and awareness of Young Person protection to assist in seeking appropriate help and making appropriate referrals.

Reporting Procedures

- Any incident or disclosure received by a Braveheart representative should be reported to a Designated Officer
- The DO receiving the report, verbally or in writing, will pass on the information to the LDO who will then decide how the matter should be dealt with in terms of involving the appropriate people internally and contacting external agencies.
- Where there is a high level of concern and statutory agencies are involved concerns should be communicated by the Lead Designated Officer.
- Written reports of all incidents should come to the LDO within 3 working days, who will keep a central record of all concerns, incidents and outcomes.

How to Respond to Concerns about Abuse or Disclosure of Abuse

It may be that a Braveheart representative will find him/herself in a position where s/he has a concern that an individual may be being abused, or where an individual discloses abuse to him/her.

Disclosure of abuse could equally be by someone over 18 revealing past abuse as an under 18 revealing current abuse.

It is not Braveheart's responsibility to investigate abuse. This should be done by the professionals in the statutory agencies (the police and Children's Social Care/social services). Braveheart does have a responsibility however to report matters of concern to the police and social services to investigate or to seek advice where appropriate.

The disclosure of abuse can be very distressing to the person who is being confided in. They may feel ill-equipped to deal with the situation. Despite this, it is important to stay calm and to listen to what the person is saying without any judgement as it is often very difficult for a person to disclose abuse. The Braveheart representative should remember that they will not be expected to deal with the problem alone.

It is crucial not to make any promises about confidentiality. Even if the person disclosing abuse is 18 or over and disclosing past abuse, there may still be Young Persons or vulnerable adults at risk from the abuser. The person should be assured that the only people who will be told are those that need to know, for the purposes of preventing further harm or abuse to that person or to others (this may include referral to the relevant authorities, where appropriate).

Where there is a concern that a person may be being abused or a disclosure of abuse has taken place, this should be reported immediately to LDO. The LDO will decide who should be informed internally and externally.

The LDO can seek advice from the relevant authorities and will contact the police or social services, as appropriate.

The person who has the concern or who has received the disclosure should write down exactly what was said/what happened on the Record of Incident form as soon as possible and forward the information to the DO.

There may be some urgent situations where it will not be possible to contact a DO – this should not be a reason for inaction or delay. In these circumstances contact the Police or Community Social Care

Social Work Services: Falkirk 01324 506070 - Stirling 01786 470500 - Clacks 01259 225000

Police Family Unit: 01324 574944

Recording Information

Purpose of recording

- Allows for a chronology of what happened and when it happened
- Shows the history of events and allows analysis of any patterns
- Allows for continuity in absence of worker
- Shows actions taken by staff
- Provides accountability- charity, staff and volunteers
- Provides a basis for evidence in court
- Provides information for enquiry, statistics, research
- Highlights staff training and development needs.

Checklist for a good record

- Structured and easily accessible
- Legible
- Clear and concise
- Author's meaning clearly conveyed
- Includes all relevant information
- Free from jargon and abbreviations
- Separates fact from opinion
- Professional judgment supported by evidence
- Decisions reached with worker are clearly recorded
- Signed and dated and timed.

Recording Issues

- Be specific - what is the exact nature of the concern and which category of abuse does it suggest
- Show the evidence - what did you see, hear? Who said what, when, how?
- Be precise with time words - what does always, frequent or never mean?
- State your professional judgment.
- Ensure your professional judgment is supported by the evidence

Complaints

Any complaints about the Braveheart Safeguarding Policy or its operation should be directed to the General Manager. If the complaint is regarding the General Manager, it should be directed to the Chair of the Board of Trustees.

For more information please visit <https://nhsforthvalley.com/health-services/az-of-services/childrens-services/child-protection/>

Follow Up

Braveheart will follow up safeguarding reports and concerns according to policy and procedure, and legal and statutory obligations.

Braveheart will apply appropriate disciplinary measures to Braveheart representatives found in breach of policy.

Braveheart will offer support to victims of harm caused by Braveheart representatives or service users, regardless of whether a formal internal response is carried out (such as an internal investigation). Decisions regarding support will be led by the victim.

Confidentiality

It is essential that confidentiality is maintained at all stages of the process when dealing with safeguarding concerns. Information relating to the concern and subsequent case management should be shared on a need to know basis only, and should be kept secure at all times.

Associated Policies

Disclosure of Malpractice in the Workplace (Whistleblower) policy

Complaints Policy

Other policies as appropriate