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**Safeguarding Policy**

**Cockermouth Emergency Response Group (CERG)** is a voluntary organisation offering services to a wide range of individuals in the event of a community emergency in Cockermouth town and the surrounding area. It is recognised that some of those who we interact with will be children, young people (under 18) and vulnerable adults.

The welfare of these individuals will always be paramount. Therefore, CERG has to make sure that the people it is working with are exposed to minimal risk in all matters and also to make sure that its’ members and volunteers are likewise at minimal risk of being accused.

CERG’s Safeguarding Policy applies to all volunteers or anyone working or volunteering on behalf of the organisation.

**The purpose of this policy is:**

• To protect children, young people and vulnerable adults who receive assistance from our group.

* To provide members, volunteers and anyone working on behalf of CERG with the overarching principles that underpin the organisation’s approach to Safeguarding.

**The Legal Framework**

The policy has been drawn up on the basis of law and guidance that seeks to protect children, young people and vulnerable adults, namely:

• The Mental Health Act (1983)

• Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act (2006)

• The Children Act (1989)

• Protection of Freedoms Act (2012)

• The Children Act (2004)

• The Children and Families Act (2014)

• The Data Protection Act (1998)

• The Care Act (2014)

* The Public Interest Disclosure Act (1998)

• Making Safeguarding Personal Guide (2014)

• The Sexual Offences Act (2003)

• Working Together 2015

• The United Convention of the Rights of the Child (1991).

**Combined children, Young Person and Vulnerable Adults Safeguarding Policy**

**Definitions** – Young Person/Vulnerable Adult in the context of this policy. A young person is defined as anyone aged less than 18 years. A vulnerable adult is a person over the age of 18 years who:

* is or may be in need of /eligible for Community Care Services by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness

• **AND** is unable to take care of themselves

• **OR** is unable to protect themselves from significant harm or exploitation

This includes people:

• With a mental health need

• With a learning difficulty

• With physical impairment

• With sensory impairment

• With substance or alcohol dependency

• Who receive personal care, nursing or support to live independently in their own home or a care home

• Who are older and frail

• Who are family carers providing assistance to another vulnerable adults.

**People who may be vulnerable to abuse**

Abuse is a violation of an individual’s human and civil rights by any other persons(s) or group of people.  Abuse may be single or repeated acts. It can be:

**Physical abuse:**  for example, hitting, slapping, burning, pushing, restraining or giving the wrong medication.

**Psychological abuse**: including emotional abuse, threats of harm or abandonment, shouting, swearing, frightening, blaming, ignoring or humiliating a person, intimidation, verbal abuse.

**Financial:** including the illegal or unauthorised use of a person’s property, money, pension book or other valuables, pressure in connection with wills, property or inheritance.

**Sexual:** such as forcing a person to take part in any sexual activity without his or her informed consent – this can occur in any relationship.

**Discriminatory:** including racist or sexist remarks or comments based on a person’s disability, age or illness, and other forms of harassment, slurs or similar treatment.  This also includes stopping someone from being involved in religious or cultural activity, services or support networks.

**Institutional:** the collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people at risk of abuse. This includes a failure to ensure the necessary safeguards are in place to protect adults and maintain good standards of care in accordance with individual needs, including training of staff, supervision and management, record keeping and liaising with other providers of care.

**Domestic Abuse:** incident or pattern of incidents of controlling coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse by someone that can be a partner or family member, regardless of gender or sexuality,

**Neglect and acts of omission**: including ignoring medical or physical care needs. These can be deliberate or unintentional, amounting to abuse by a carer or self-neglect by the vulnerable person: for example, where a person is deprived of food, heat, clothing, comfort or essential medication, or failing to provide access to appropriate health or social care services.

**How Might We Notice Abuse?**

Concerns about or evidence of abuse can come to us through:

1. A direct disclosure by the child, young person or adult.

2. A complaint or expression of concern by a volunteer, a carer, a member of the public or relative.

3. An observation of the behaviour of the person by the volunteer, member of the public or carer.

Safeguarding is the responsibility of everyone, either within or acting on behalf of the organisation. All members and volunteers of CERG play an important part in promoting the safety and protection of the young people and vulnerable adults with whom the organisation works. Everyone within CERG needs to be alert to the potential of abuse of children, young people and vulnerable adults both within their families and also from other sources – including abuse by members of the organisation. There is an expected responsibility for all members of the organisation to respond to any suspected or actual abuse of a child, young person or vulnerable adult in accordance with this Policy and procedures.

**DOING NOTHING IS NOT AN OPTION** - If we know or suspect that a child, young person or vulnerable adult is being abused, we will do something about it and ensure our work is properly recorded.

**1. Training of Members & Volunteers**

1.1 Induction for members and volunteers volunteering with us will include information on all relevant policies and procedures, including the Safeguarding of children, young people and vulnerable adults. All members and volunteers will be required to read CERG’s Safeguarding Policy and on-going training will be provided if necessary.

1.3 All members and volunteers providing the service will have a designated supervisor who will provide appropriate ongoing support and supervision.

1.4 All volunteers will work in pairs. On identifying a vulnerable child, young person or adult they will at no time be left alone with them. If initially at their premises alone, do not enter until further assistance is provided. Volunteers are required to stay with each other when in the presence of a vulnerable adult, young person or child.

**2. Reporting Procedure**

2.1 Abuse of vulnerable adults and young people can take many forms including physical, emotional, sexual, financial and institutional. It is not the responsibility of anyone working or volunteering within CERG to decide whether or not abuse has taken place, consequently all cases of suspected or alleged abuse must be raised in line with the procedures identified in this Policy. The need to escalate concerns is essential as there may already have been worries expressed by other members and/or agencies and failure to report concerns may put a child, young person or vulnerable adult at risk.

2.2 It is the responsibility of the person that first becomes aware of a situation where there may be a child, young person or vulnerable adult subject to, or at risk of, abuse to:

* Deal with the immediate needs of the person
* Inform the CERG Leader immediately – or a member of the board, if the Leader is unavailable or is implicated in the allegation

**Record the factual details of the allegation as soon as possible to include:**

* The allegation or concerns
* Date and time of the incident/when the concern was raised
* What the individual said regarding the abuse and how it occurred or what has been reported
* The appearance and behaviour of the individual concerned
* A description of any injuries observed
* Any other factual information
* Clarity regarding the distinction between fact, opinion or hearsay. There must be no attempt by the person to whom the allegation has been reported or has concerns/suspicions regarding potential abuse to investigate the matter themselves.

2.3 The CERG Leader or designated board member, in consultation with Cumbria Safeguarding Hub will:

• Decide without delay on the most appropriate course of action

• Deal with any immediate needs of the individual concerned, ensuring that other service users are not put at risk

• Clarify the facts stated by the member or volunteer but should not, in any circumstances, discuss the allegation of abuse with the alleged perpetrator or, if possible, the victim

• Address issues of consent and confidentiality

• **Follow the procedure above on the same day as the concern/allegation has been raised wherever:**

* + A crime has been, could have been, or yet could be committed
  + There is suspicion that an abuse has taken place
  + The allegation involves a member, volunteer, or anyone who works on behalf of CWI
  + Other children, young people or vulnerable adults are at risk.

2.4 Where a decision is made not to refer, the concern/allegation must be recorded together with the reasons for the decision.

2.5 Any allegation made against a member or volunteer should be reported to the CERG Leader and the Cumbria Safeguarding Hub who will take action as per this Safeguarding Policy.

2.6 Where a disclosure of abuse is made, care should be taken to explain to the individual/s the procedure that will be followed and they should be informed that it might not be possible for CERG to maintain confidentiality.

2.7 Where a member of CERG makes an allegation regarding another organisation, this must be reported to the CERG Leader who will take the appropriate action.

2.8 All members and volunteers (where appropriate) of CERG will be familiar with good practice guidelines on the immediate action to be taken following a report of abuse (see Appendix 1).

**3. Accusations made against a CERG volunteer**

If a member of CERG is accused of abuse, they will be immediately suspended from the service provided and any committee position held. This does NOT mean that there is a presumption of guilt: it is to protect the member/volunteer from further accusations. The CERG Leader will then follow the Safeguarding Policy for the organisation.

**4. Good Practice**

All members and volunteers should be familiar with and adhere to Cockermouth Emergency Response Group’s policy on safeguarding and good practice (See Appendix 2)

**Review Frequency: Every year**

The CERG Leader (person with responsibility for the procedure) is Paul Mogford or Brian Mitchelhill, with the nominated committee member being Joanne Crozier (if the Leader is unavailable).

**REVIEWED BY:**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Name | Position | Date |
| Brian Mitchelhill | Chair | 01 June 2022 |
| Jo Crozier | Administrator | 01 June 2022 |

**Appendix 1**

The following are guidelines on immediate action to be taken following a reporting of abuse by a child, young person, vulnerable adult or any member or volunteer:

* React calmly so not to frighten or deter him/her

• Re-assure him/her that it is not their fault

• Don’t promise to keep the information to yourself – inform the individual of the CERG confidentiality policy and explain what this means

* Explain that you need to make sure they will be safe and may have to pass on the information to somebody trusted to deal with it appropriately

• Listen carefully to what they say and take them seriously

• Allow them to tell you what happened in their own words

• Clarify what you have heard to establish the basic facts

• Avoid leading questions

• Do not ask specific questions regarding explicit details.

If possible, make brief notes during the initial disclosure, explaining why you are doing this. If this is not possible, a record of the conversation must be made as soon as possible afterwards. All notes must be dated and signed by the member or volunteer taking them, recording the information as set out within this Safeguarding Policy. The information to be included is set out under section 2.2 of the Policy.

**Appendix 2 Good Practice Guidelines for Working with Service Users**

If it is necessary for a volunteer to meet a service user outside of CERGI approved premises, then wherever possible, this meeting should take be in a public place. Visiting service users at their home is not encouraged, however, it is recognised that in certain circumstances it may be unavoidable. In the event of a member/volunteer visiting a member or service user at home, they should ensure that another committee member of CERG accompanies them and that the CERG Leader or nominated person knows where they are going and what time they are expected to complete their visit.

Service users should never be given access to the home address or telephone number of any volunteer or staff member of CERG. Service users’ contact details should never be disclosed to anyone outside of CERG without their explicit consent.