

Reading u3a: Safeguarding Policy and Procedure

Purpose

This Policy and Procedure is to enable the Committee to act appropriately when or where instances, or allegations of, actual harm, abuse or neglect involving one or more Reading u3a members or u3a activities (which may include non-members) come to their attention.

Context and scope

The Reading u3a Committee recognises that some people are potentially at risk of harm, abuse or neglect. This can take place in a person's own home, in the home of a carer, family member or friend, within any form of institution or when using digital communications or social media. Reading u3a also recognises that harm, abuse and neglect can be perpetrated by volunteers, other users of services, relatives, friends and neighbours. The reasons for harm, abuse or neglect occurring may not be fully understood and vary with each incident. Safeguarding includes incidents between members, concerns regarding harm, abuse or neglect that a u3a member may be experiencing outside of the u3a, health related issues or previous or pending criminal convictions.

Where harm, abuse or neglect is suspected the Committee will aim to respond to the situation in a way which is caring, effective and enabling. However, Reading u3a has no statutory authority and if any such case arises the Committee will refer this to the Police and/or Local Authority and, if appropriate, the Third Age Trust or the Charity Commission.

Principles

Reading U3A will neither condone nor tolerate any form of harm, abuse or neglect and believes that all people should be able and, where necessary enabled, to live in an environment which is safe.

In all situations, Reading U3A believes that everyone is entitled to:

- privacy
- be treated with dignity and respect
- lead an independent life and to be enabled to do so
- choose how they live their lives
- the protection of the law
- have their human and civil rights upheld regardless of age, gender reassignment, being married or in a civil partnership, disability, race (including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin), religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation.

Reading u3a will also follow the Principles enshrined within the Care Act 2014:

- *Empowerment* – focused on the individual making their own decision and gaining informed consent, where possible;

- *Prevention* – seeking to take steps to prevent issues from arising or escalating;
- *Proportionality* – responding in a proportionate way to the issues being presented;
- *Protection* – seeking to keep the membership safe and protection for those deemed to be at risk;
- *Partnership* – reporting incidents to the relevant statutory bodies and, where appropriate, liaising with the Third Age Trust;
- *Accountability* – accurate recording of incidents, reporting incidents, as required, to the relevant regulatory authorities.

Procedure

1. The Committee will ensure that its Committee members and group convenors have received this policy and have confirmed that it has been received and read. It may be appropriate to discuss the policy during convenors' meetings.
2. Depending on the nature of the allegation and the identified risk, the Committee will support u3a members who are the alleged victims and the alleged perpetrators of any abuse as well as any volunteer who becomes aware of the abuse in so far as this does not compromise any Safeguarding Enquiry or investigation into the allegation or place other adults at risk.
3. The Committee will make every effort to respect the confidentiality of any information that is disclosed under this Policy and Procedure and the information will be recorded and stored securely in accordance with GDPR 2018 but confidentiality is not absolute and information may have to be shared, on a 'need-to-know' basis only, to prevent danger to a person's life or health, danger to others, danger to the community or facilitate the investigation of a serious crime.
4. Action to be taken:
 - If the Committee becomes aware of possible or actual harm, abuse or neglect involving a member of the u3a or in connection with a u3a activity, it will ensure that the safety of the adult at risk is secured as a first priority.
 - Any Committee member who becomes aware of possible or actual abuse will, as soon as possible, record the details of the abuse. They will advise the rest of the Committee and, if appropriate, the Third Age Trust who will provide further guidance. The steps to take to address this will be discussed and agreed between the officers of the Committee in the first instance. No Committee member will act in isolation when dealing with a safeguarding concern.
 - The Committee, having been advised of the possible or actual abuse, will satisfy themselves that the adult at risk is safe, and that the alleged perpetrator, if known, does not pose a threat to any other adult at risk. In developing the risk assessment, the committee will consider the level of risk and the action that needs to be taken accordingly, including: risk to the individual member; risk to other members within the u3a; reputational risk for the individual u3a and the u3a movement as a whole.

- The Committee will decide whether or not to refer the possible or actual abuse to the Local Authority and/or the Police. When a crime may have been committed, the Police must be contacted as soon as possible. In the case of low-level verbal abuse the Committee may seek to deal with this directly. If the decision is not to refer, the reasons for this must be recorded. When appropriate the advice of the Third Age Trust may be sought.
- As far as possible, the adult at risk's wishes will be respected as to whether or not to refer any concerns to the Local Authority as a Safeguarding Enquiry under Section 42 of the Care Act 2014. However, it may be necessary to override these in the best interests of other adults at risk.
- Completed details will be held by the Secretary (or other officer designated by the Committee) in a confidential file for a minimum of 2 years.
- Confidentiality will be adhered to at all times and the contents of the record will not be provided to any third parties except where this is required for legal purposes.
- Depending on the nature of the allegation it may be necessary to follow up the incident using the u3a complaints, disciplinary or grievance procedure. Where it is decided that this is the best course of action the matter will not be investigated by any party that was privy to the initial reporting of the incident.

Raising an urgent concern: If you or someone else is in immediate danger or you suspect a crime has been committed, phone the police on 999 or, if less urgent, on 101. In the case of a serious incident which is not a police matter, contact Reading Adult Safeguarding Team on 0118 937 3747 or for out-of-hours emergencies on 01344 351 999. If not urgent, report online using the forms at <https://www.reading.gov.uk/adult-care/protecting-adults/report-abuse/>.

Responsibilities

Any action on this policy will be taken by the Committee. The Committee Chair (or in their absence Vice-Chair) has overall responsibility for the implementation of the policy, but in circumstances where there may be a conflict of interest the Vice-Chair or Secretary will take responsibility.

Monitoring and Review

The Committee will monitor the implementation of this Policy and Procedure annually. Every 3 years from the date of adoption the Policy and Procedure will be fully reviewed by the Committee.

Adopted by Reading u3a on: 20 March 2023

Review date: March 2026