



## 1.1 Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Policy and Procedures

Safeguarding Key Information	
Designated Safeguarding Lead	Richard Brooks (Trustee)
Deputy Safeguarding Lead	No current appointee
Ox County Council Social & Healthcare team	08450507666
Whistle-Blowing: Public concern at work	02074046609

### **Aim of this Policy**

FarmAbility is committed to ensuring that vulnerable people who use our services are not abused and that working practices minimise the risk of such abuse. Staff, volunteers, trustees and co-farmers of FarmAbility have a duty to identify abuse and report it. FarmAbility recognises that the welfare of vulnerable adults is paramount and that they have equal rights of protection. The organisation has a duty of care when vulnerable adults are in its charge and will do everything possible to provide a safe and caring environment for co-farmers while they are attending FarmAbility.

We are involved in providing a day service for adults with autism and learning disabilities. Some are likely to be 'vulnerable adults.' We have obligations to strive to protect vulnerable adults whom it may be believe to be abused or at risk of abuse or neglect.

The policy and procedures have been developed to assist staff and volunteers in acting on reported or suspected abuse. Depending upon the nature of particular services or the requirements of particular funders or partner agencies, the policy and procedures may be supplemented by local procedures.

FarmAbility employees and volunteers will:

- treat all members, young or old, with respect, and celebrate their achievements
- carefully recruit and select all staff and volunteers
- respond to concerns and allegations appropriately

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We believe that adults with learning disabilities and autism should have access to meaningful activities that improve their well-being and increase their independence, enabling them to participate actively in their communities.

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- act in accordance with the Safeguarding Procedures of Oxfordshire Safeguarding Adults Policy. These can be found at the following link, or in this OneDrive:

<https://m.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/sites/default/files/folders/documents/socialandhealthcare/publications/PolicyforSafeguardingAdults.pdf>

When there are concerns about the welfare of any vulnerable adult, whether whilst in the charity's environment or in the wider community, home setting or otherwise, all responsible adults in our organisation are expected to share those concerns with the organisation's Safeguarding Lead.

*These concerns can relate to any area of a co-farmer's life, if it is having or may have an adverse effect on their welfare. It may include targeted abuse but may also include general concerns relating to circumstances or other influences.*

## Definition

Vulnerable adults are people who are over 18 years of age and are getting or may need help and services to live in the community, because of physical or learning disabilities, sensory impairment or mental health issues. Vulnerable adults may be unable to take care of themselves and unable to protect themselves from harm or exploitation by other people. Abuse can take place in any setting, public or private, and can be perpetuated by anyone

The terms commonly used to describe areas where well-being may be compromised are:

**Physical:** Physically hurting, or threatening to physically hurt, someone

**Emotional:** Failing to meet the emotional needs, or damaging the emotional health, of someone. This includes bullying, isolation, undermining of ability, skill, self-worth, threats to well-being – this list is not exhaustive, and all abuse will include some level of emotional harm.

**Sexual:** Engaging people unable to give informed consent (such as those with limited mental capacity) in sexual activity. This will include a power imbalance or abuse of power within the abusive relationship.

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**Neglect:** Persistently neglecting the physical, emotional and spiritual needs of someone

**Sexual Exploitation:** A concerted campaign to exploit a vulnerable adult through sexual activity, for the gratification of others. This is usually linked to wider crime networks and those targeted are usually extremely vulnerable

**Domestic Abuse:** Abuse of an individual, in whatever way, by someone related through intimacy or as family.

**All employees are expected to familiarise themselves with FarmAbility's Safeguarding Policy, in order that they are able to manage their own, and volunteers', reactions and responses to disclosures or concerns.**

This Safeguarding Policy describes in detail the way in which FarmAbility will respond to any concerns about the wellbeing of the people in its care. Employees and volunteers are also expected to attend Safeguarding training when directed, at a minimum of every three years.

Vulnerable adults will be treated with a high level of awareness, swift response and thorough investigation in instances where there is concern for their wellbeing. This is in response to the difficulties FarmAbility's co-farmers often face in their levels of understanding, confidence, ability to interpret social interactions, and the power imbalance that may be present in their day-to-day interactions with others. The Safeguarding Lead has the responsibility to judge the extent to which a vulnerable adult's expressed feelings should be disregarded for the purposes of fulfilling the organisation's duty of care to keep the member safe.

**The Safeguarding Lead is responsible for (summarised):**

- ensuring that all concerns, however small, are recorded and responded to appropriately;
- making referrals to Oxfordshire County Council, as appropriate and without delay;
- investigating (as far as is agreed to be appropriate in partnership with the Local Authority Designated Officer) any concerns raised about the conduct of a FarmAbility employee or volunteer;

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- liaising with other agencies;
- ensuring that Safeguarding training for all staff is in place, and monitoring its effectiveness.

### **Responsibilities of FarmAbility Staff and Volunteers**

- All staff, volunteers and trustees working on behalf of FarmAbility - have a duty to promote the welfare and safety of vulnerable adults
- To be familiar with the vulnerable adult protection policy
- To take appropriate action in line with the policy of FarmAbility
- To declare any existing or subsequent convictions.
- Staff, volunteers and trustees are not responsible for diagnosing, investigating or providing a therapeutic response to abuse. In addition, not all concerns relate to abuse, there may well be other explanations. It is important to keep an open mind and consider what is known about the vulnerable person and his or her circumstances. No action should be taken without discussion with a member of the management team of FarmAbility<sup>1</sup>.
- Volunteers should consult with one of the Day Sessional Activity Workers coordinating the day service before taking any action.
- Additionally, all action taken following suspicion of abuse should be discussed in advance with a member of the FarmAbility management team.
- A staff member or volunteer informed of abuse should remind the service user that FarmAbility cannot guarantee confidentiality where a vulnerable person is at risk of abuse or further abuse.

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<sup>1</sup> The Programme Director, the Head of Education & Training, FarmAbility's Development Manager, and other Day Sessional Activity Workers

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- At all times action must proceed urgently.
- Any staff member may report a suspicion of abuse to social services irrespective of the opinion of other staff.
- It is important for staff and volunteers to make written records of any incidents or concerns that they have as soon as possible and if appropriate to include sketches of sites and sizes of injuries. It is also important to make a record of conversations with the vulnerable person using the same language the vulnerable person used especially names used for body parts or sexual acts.

### **Support for those who report abuse**

All those making a complaint or allegation or expressing concern, whether they are staff, volunteers, carers, co-farmers or members of the public should be reassured that:

- They will be taken seriously
- Their comments will usually be treated confidentially, but their concerns may be shared with the appropriate authorities if they or others are at significant risk.

### **The Vulnerable Adult has the right:**

- To be made aware of this policy
- To receive fair and respectful treatment throughout
- To be involved in any process as appropriate
- To receive information about the outcome
- To make a direct report to Oxfordshire City Council Social Services if their allegation involves a member of staff, a volunteer or a Trustee of FarmAbility

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## **Disclosure of Abuse**

If a vulnerable person discloses that they are being abused or if any service user discloses that they are involved in abuse of a vulnerable person, action should continue as in the below: *Action on Disclosure of Abuse* policy. All action must proceed urgently and without delay.

### Action on Disclosure of Abuse

There should always be the opportunity to discuss welfare concerns with and seek advice from colleagues, managers and other agencies, but:

- Never delay emergency action to protect a vulnerable adult
- Always record in writing concerns about a vulnerable adult's welfare, whether or not further action is taken
- Always record in writing discussions about a vulnerable adult's welfare.
- At the close of discussion, always reach clear and explicit recorded agreement about who will be taking what action, or that no further action will be taken.

In circumstances where a service user declines to disclose, despite some work having been done towards disclosing, it may be necessary to report the alleged abuse without the service user's agreement. In these circumstances, a service user must be notified in advance of the decision to report to social services.

It is important for staff and volunteers to make written records of any incidents or concerns that they have as soon as possible. Full written records must be maintained of all disclosures and actions following disclosure.

## **Suspicion of Abuse**

There may be circumstances when a volunteer or member of staff suspects that a vulnerable adult is being abused or neglected.

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It is vital that any anyone who suspects a vulnerable adult is being neglected or abused discusses the situation immediately FarmAbility's Programme Director, or another member of the [FarmAbility](#) management team. Action should continue as in the below *Action on Suspicion of Abuse* policy.

### Action on Suspicion of Abuse

There should always be the opportunity to discuss welfare concerns with and seek advice from colleagues, managers and other agencies, but:

- Never delay emergency action to protect a vulnerable adult
- Always record in writing concerns about a vulnerable adult's welfare, whether or not further action is taken
- Always record in writing discussions about a vulnerable adult's welfare.
- At the close of discussion, always reach clear and explicit recorded agreement about who will be taking what action, or that no further action will be taken.

In all cases of suspected abuse the manager and staff member should discuss whether issues relevant to different cultures and lifestyles have any bearing on the matter.

FarmAbility welcome the fact that people and lifestyles are diverse and does not make judgements about the acceptability or otherwise of lifestyles. However, it is important that this philosophy does not stand in the way of the organisation's responsibility to protect vulnerable people from harm.

It is important for staff and volunteers to make written records of any incidents or concerns that they have as soon as possible. Full written records must be maintained of all disclosures and actions following disclosure.

### **Making a Referral**

Social services departments have been designated as the lead agencies with responsibility for coordinating a response to allegations or concerns of abuse.

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FarmAbility staff have the responsibility of informing the Oxfordshire City Council Social and Health Care team (0845 050 7666) for incidents of considerable concern, abuse or neglect. For more information, see Protecting Vulnerable People:

<http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/content/protecting-vulnerable-people>

FarmAbility should work within the following timescales for reporting allegations or suspicions of abuse:

- Immediate if the vulnerable person is at risk of serious physical harm, or a serious criminal act has taken place, and evidence will need to be kept safe. **Remember, if it's an emergency, dial 999**
- Within 24 hours if it relates to a specific incident which is, or may be still going on, or may happen again
- Within 7 days if it is a more general concern, which does not indicate immediate harm.

### **Support to Staff and Volunteers**

FarmAbility will support staff and volunteers in these circumstances. If social services need further involvement from staff or volunteers following a report of abuse, a member of the FarmAbility management team will discuss with the social services department the nature of their needs and how they might be met.

### **Allegation of Abuse Made Against a Staff Member or Volunteer**

Staff and volunteers may be subject to abuse allegations. We will offer support in these circumstances, social services will be assisted in their investigation and the disciplinary procedure may be implemented.

### **Confidentiality**

Confidentiality is central to our work, and the attention of all staff and volunteers is drawn to FarmAbility's *Confidentiality Policy (1.5)*.

### **Preventing Abuse by Staff and Volunteers**

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## Preventative Measures

- Staff, trustees and volunteers should be aware that they should not put themselves in a vulnerable position, for instance, they should not take vulnerable adults alone to their home or enter into any kind of financial arrangement with them.
- They should be aware of what constitutes abuse
- They should understand how abuse can happen
- They should always be alert to the possibility of abuse
- They should know the procedures for dealing with abuse
- Staff, trustees and volunteers should be supported by training in the area of abuse.

## Whistleblowing

In the event that the abuse cannot be reported to the designated person within the organisation, (for instance it concerns the designated member of staff) you can report to either FarmAbility or a designated whistleblowing helpline such as:

- Public Concern at Work 020 7404 6609 <http://www.pcaw.org.uk/>

Alternatively, you may make a direct referral to Oxfordshire City Council Social Services.

## Safe recruitment of staff and volunteers

It is important that any staff who are likely to be working alone with vulnerable people, and any volunteers working alongside vulnerable people are thoroughly vetted before being employed. This means as well as references being checked there will also be a requirement for offences to be declared and a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check undertaken.

Additional checks on the suitability of Board/trustees/staff and volunteers to work with vulnerable adults will be made at the discretion of the relevant department.

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All new staff/volunteers will be required to provide two references.

We will ensure that all employees/volunteers have appropriate qualifications and training.

All new employees/volunteers will go through a probation and induction process, including relevant training. Ongoing training and supervision will ensure all employees/volunteers are adequately supported.

It should be noted that having a criminal record does not prevent someone from being recruited as a staff member or volunteer in all circumstances. Staff should seek the advice of the Programme Director in cases of doubt.

It may be very hard for staff to report a concern about a colleague to the Programme Director, or other member of the FarmAbility management team, but, as with all the other difficulties people will come across, the safety and protection of a vulnerable person must be the priority in any decision that is made.

## **Training**

This organisation recognises the importance of regular learning and development for staff, volunteers and trustees:

- The designated person(s) will attend appropriate training
- All staff, volunteers and trustees who come into contact with vulnerable adults will receive a briefing from one of the designated persons
- All staff, volunteers and trustees will be fully briefed concerning their safeguarding responsibilities during induction and prior to starting their duties.

We are also committed to reviewing our policy and good practice annually, ensuring that we are in line with current legislation.

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