



Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults

Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults guidelines (For use in England and Wales) One of the key features of the U3A movement in the UK is that each U3A is operationally independent with its Committee providing the required policies and administration and the Third Age Trust providing support and guidelines on a wide range of issues. However, it is important that U3A Committees recognise that they have a duty of care to their members and that activities are organised so that they do not contravene current UK legislation. Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults (SVA) legislation falls into this category. Failure of a U3A to recognise the guidance in this advice sheet, could lead to the insurance cover, provided by the Trust to all U3A members, being invalidated. The dictionary definition of 'Safeguarding' is:-

- To protect from harm or damage with appropriate measures
- To promote health and well being

SVA policy is contained in the following legislation:-

- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006
- Health and Social Care Act 2008
- The Protection of Freedoms Act 2012.

The Charity Commission website states that:- "Having proper safeguards in place means your charity can promote a safe place for your beneficiaries and gives the public confidence in your charity and trustees." (www.gov.uk/charitycommission) The emphasis of the legislation is that vulnerable adults should be safely and appropriately cared for, protected from abuse and treated with dignity and respect. To meet the requirements of this regulation, U3As are required to have a zero tolerance approach to abuse, unlawful discrimination and restraint. The Care Quality Commission can prosecute for breaches of SVA regulation if there is a failure to avoid harm to a person once an individual is aware of possible risk. These guidelines aim to provide U3A Committees, interest group leaders and members with basic information on SVA and to provide a recommended procedure for U3As to follow if, through disclosure or observation, it becomes apparent that a member is suffering abuse or neglect. In the context of a U3A, there will be members who have a long term debilitating illness, increasing mental and physical frailty, memory loss and confusion including dementia, mental illness (whether diagnosed or not), social isolation, etc. Many people facing one or more of the above issues will be living independently whilst some may be more dependent on care provided by others. In all U3As there will be members who are themselves encountering some of these challenges, or are close to someone who is. In some situations members could be considered to be Vulnerable adults. In order to comply with current legislation, U3A members need to be alert to situations where fellow members may be vulnerable and need appropriate support to ensure that they receive safe care and protection from any form of abuse, whether neglect, mental, physical, financial, sexual or emotional. According to the law, safeguarding is everyone's business. If members see or are told directly about a situation where a vulnerable person is at risk, they are required to bring it to the attention of those agencies that are best equipped to assess the situation. There may be a healthy explanation, in which case everyone can breathe a sigh of relief but, if not, external action should be taken. If there are Safeguarding concerns within a U3A, they should be passed to a committee member. Given the complexity of handling these types of issues, it is important that once a referral has occurred, a committee Member immediately contacts National Office (the Advice and Volunteering Manager) in order to seek further advice and counsel. The Advice and Volunteering Manager will then guide the committee Member on the procedures relevant to the situation reported. If the required action lies outside the scope of their U3A, they should be advised to contact the medical, police, social services or national helplines if a vulnerable person is at imminent

risk. Recommended agencies are:- a) Their Local Authority, Social Services, GP Surgery, Police, etc. b) Action on Elder Abuse (AEA) is a confidential support and advice for older people who have been abused or people who know an older person who may be suffering abuse. Available weekdays 9am - 5pm on freephone 0808 808 8141. c) Voice UK is a national charity supporting people with learning disabilities and other vulnerable people who have experienced crime or abuse. They also support their families, carers and professional workers. Voice runs a helpline 0808 802 8686. Third Age Trust
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