

Safeguarding Adults at Risk Policy

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this policy is to contribute to the prevention of abuse of adults at risk, by raising awareness of the importance of safeguarding. It provides a framework for action when abuse is suspected.

2. Applicability

- 2.1 This policy applies to all employees, trustees, volunteers, contractors and third-party representatives of Omega – Ending Isolation, Ending Loneliness (the “Charity”). Its requirements should be reflected in other policies and procedures, agreements and contracts, as necessary, including the following policies:

- Complaints and Compliments Policy.
- Conflict of Interest Policy.
- Grievance Policy.
- Health and Safety Policy.
- Lone Working Policy.
- Security Policy.
- Volunteering Policy.
- Whistleblowing Policy.

3. Policy statement

- 3.1 Safeguarding refers to the process of protecting adults from harm. It includes all procedures designed to prevent harm and uphold their right to live in safety. The Charity is fully committed to safeguarding and protecting the welfare of all who use its services.
- 3.2 As a general rule, if a colleague is in any doubt, they should err on the side of caution and report their concerns to the relevant authorities. This policy covers the Charity’s responsibility to all adults at risk and is not limited to vulnerable adults. It sets out the responsibility of colleagues to:
- Beneficiaries/clients.
 - Supporters.
 - Each other.
- 3.3 The policy will be made available to, and strictly observed by, all colleagues, in addition to equivalent policies adopted by delivery partners including the Care Act

2014 and the Care Act Statutory Guidance, the Adult Safeguarding: Multi-agency policy and procedures for the protection of adults with care & support needs in the West Midlands and other regional Adult Safeguarding policy and procedures outside of the West Midlands.

- 3.4 If conflicts of definition and interpretation should arise, these must be construed favouring the interests of adults at risk.
- 3.5 It is the responsibility of all colleagues to carefully read safeguarding guidance and ensure that they fully understand what is required of them. If in doubt they must seek advice, in the first instance from their line manager or Omega contact. Line managers may be required to seek written clarification from delivery partners.
- 3.6 This statement of the Charity's policy represents a general outline of a number of relevant issues. It is not exhaustive.
- 3.7 If you have concerns which relate to circumstances not reflected in the document, always place the needs of an adult at risk (or potentially at risk) first. Take appropriate action and urgently write an incident report or raise an alert.

4. Definition of an adult at risk

- 4.1 Often referred to as an adult with care and support needs, an adult at risk is an adult 18 years of age or older who:
 - has needs for care and support (whether or not the local authority is meeting any of those needs);
 - is experiencing, or at risk of, abuse or neglect; and
 - as a result of those care and support needs, is unable to protect themselves from either the risk of, or the experience of, abuse or neglect.
- 4.2 Adults with care and support needs may be:
 - Older people due to ill health, physical disability or cognitive impairment.
 - Those with long-term health conditions.
 - Individuals with a physical disability, learning difficulty or sensory impairment.
 - People with mental health needs, including dementia.
 - Individuals who misuse alcohol or substances to the extent that it impairs their ability to manage daily living.
- 4.3 An adult could temporarily be an adult with care and support needs.
- 4.4 If you have concerns but are unsure if the adult is an 'adult at risk' who has care and support needs and is unable to protect themselves from abuse or neglect, or the risk of abuse, due to their care and support needs, you should discuss this with the Charity's designated Safeguarding Officer or the local authority in the area the suspected abuse is happening.

5. Definitions of abuse

5.1 The Care and Support Statutory Guidance (updated October 2023) published by the Department of Health and Social Care identifies 10 different types of abuse:

Physical abuse

Including:

- Assault.
- Hitting.
- Slapping.
- Pushing.
- Misuse of medication.
- Restraint.
- Inappropriate physical sanctions.

Domestic abuse

Including:

- Psychological.
- Physical.
- Sexual.
- Financial and economic.
- Emotional abuse.
- So called 'honour' based violence.

Sexual abuse

Including:

- Rape.
- Indecent exposure.
- Sexual harassment.
- Inappropriate looking or touching.
- Sexual teasing or innuendo.
- Sexual photography.
- Subjection to pornography or witnessing sexual acts.
- Indecent exposure.
- Sexual assault.
- Sexual acts to which the adult has not consented or was pressured into consenting.

Psychological abuse

Including:

- Emotional abuse.

- Threats of harm or abandonment.
- Deprivation of contact.
- Humiliation.
- Blaming.
- Controlling.
- Intimidation.
- Coercion.
- Harassment.
- Verbal abuse.
- Cyber bullying.
- Isolation.
- Unreasonable and unjustified withdrawal of services or supportive networks.

Financial or material abuse

Including:

- Theft.
- Fraud.
- Internet scamming.
- Coercion in relation to an adult's financial affairs or arrangements, including in connection with wills, property, inheritance or financial transactions.
- The misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits.

Modern slavery

Encompasses:

- Slavery.
- Human trafficking.
- Forced labour and domestic servitude.
- Traffickers and slave masters using whatever means they have at their disposal to coerce, deceive and force individuals into a life of abuse, servitude and inhumane treatment.

Discriminatory abuse

Including forms of:

- Harassment.
- Slurs or similar treatment:
 - Because of race.
 - Gender and gender identity.
 - Age.
 - Disability.
 - Sexual orientation.
 - Religion.

Organisational abuse

Including neglect and poor care practice within an institution or specific care setting such as a hospital or care home, for example, or in relation to care provided in one's own home. This may range from one off incidents to on-going ill-treatment. It can be through neglect or poor professional practice as a result of the structure, policies, processes and practices within an organisation.

Neglect and acts of omission

Including:

- Ignoring medical, emotional or physical care needs.
- Failure to provide access to appropriate health, care and support or educational services.
- The withholding of the necessities of life, such as medication, adequate nutrition and heating.

Self-neglect

This covers a wide range of behaviour neglecting to care for one's personal hygiene, health or surroundings and includes behaviour such as hoarding.

- 5.2 Multiple forms of abuse may occur in an ongoing relationship or abusive service setting to one person, or to more than one person at a time, making it important to look beyond single incidents or breaches in standards to underlying dynamics and patterns of harm. Any or all of these types of abuse may be perpetrated as the result of deliberate intent and targeting of vulnerable people, negligence or ignorance.
- 5.3 No abuse is acceptable; any criminal offence must be reported to the police as soon as possible.

6. Recruitment and selection

- 6.1 Recruitment will be conducted in accordance with the Charity's recruitment procedures and policies, including:

Chatterbox telephone befrienders and office volunteers

- Completion of a detailed application.
- An interview, which will cover suitability for the role applied for.
- DBS check.
- Two satisfactory references, including ideally a reference from their current or most recent employer or an organisation they currently or have previously volunteered for.

Letterbox volunteers

- Completion of a detailed application.
- An interview, which will cover suitability for the role.

- Two satisfactory references, including ideally a reference from their current or most recent employer or another organisation they currently or have previously volunteered for.

Employees

- Completion of a detailed application.
- An interview.
- DBS check.
- Two satisfactory references, including ideally a reference from their current or most recent employer or another organisation they currently or have previously volunteered for.

6.2 Applicants for volunteer befriending are clearly informed that the positions are exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974. Candidates are informed of the need to carry out checks before posts can be confirmed, and that any offer will be withdrawn if any check is not satisfactory. Having a prior conviction will be discussed and considered on an individual basis. Where applications are rejected because of information that has been disclosed, applicants have the right to know and to challenge incorrect information.

7. Induction and training

7.1 All colleagues who have direct contact with clients go through a stringent induction process before any client contact takes place:

Chatterbox telephone befrienders and office volunteers

- An online e-learning Level 1 safeguarding course to be completed on the commencement of volunteering and repeated every three years.
- The Charity's safeguarding policy sent via email with a request that this is read.
- An online induction.
- An agreement to be signed stating all safeguarding procedures will be upheld.
- Contract of employment.

Letterbox volunteers

- All letters and postcards are read by office colleagues before being forwarded on, so any issues arising can be dealt with by office colleagues. Therefore Letterbox volunteers do not have to complete the online e-learning Level 1 safeguarding course.

Employees

- An in person or interactive online Level 2 safeguarding course to be completed on the commencement of employment and repeated every three years.
- The Charity's safeguarding policy sent via email with a request that this is read.
- An online induction.

Trustees

- New trustees also complete the in person or interactive online Level 2 safeguarding course and repeated every three years.
- The Charity's safeguarding policy sent via email with a request that this is read.

8. How Omega protects its clients and volunteers

Chatterbox

- Volunteers are only given the first name and telephone number of their client with minimal details of current situation, such as family support etc.
- Volunteers and clients are advised only to disclose information they feel comfortable sharing.
- Volunteers are advised to withhold their telephone number when calling clients or the Charity can provide an allocated mobile telephone.
- Bi-monthly reviews are undertaken with both client and volunteer to check both parties are happy with the calls.
- Volunteers are encouraged to contact staff about any concerns they may have regarding their client's safety.
- If a safeguarding issue is reported, the Chatterbox Team Leader will contact the relevant local social services authority and complete the relevant forms.

Letterbox

- All letters are read by vetted employees and colleagues to ensure they do not contain any personal information they may identify a client or pen pal.
- The use of surnames, address, emails or telephone numbers are not forwarded by either party.
- Letters are also read for any potential safeguarding concerns including signs of coercion, or inappropriate language or behaviour.

9. Colleague responsibilities

- 9.1 It is the duty of all colleagues to ensure that the Charity's beneficiaries are protected from any harm:

Responsibilities of Omega

- To ensure that all colleagues are aware of the Safeguarding Adults at Risk Policy and are adequately trained.
- To immediately notify the appropriate agencies if abuse is identified or suspected.
- To support and where possible secure the safety of individuals and ensure that clients working with us have full information in relation to identified risk and vulnerability.
- To ensure that care is taken to check the background of all colleagues who work with adults at risk.

Responsibilities of Omega colleagues

- To be familiar with the Safeguarding Adults at Risk Policy and procedures and any further guidance issued by local authorities.
- To take appropriate action in line with our policies and procedures.
- To declare any existing or subsequent convictions. Failure to do so will be regarded as gross misconduct, possibly resulting in dismissal from employment or termination of your volunteering agreement.

10. Rights of Adults at Risk

10.1 An adult at risk has the right:

- To be made aware of this policy.
- To have alleged incidents recognised and taken seriously.
- To receive fair and respectful treatment throughout.
- To be involved in any process as appropriate.
- To receive information about the outcome.

10.2 Wherever possible this should be made in writing and acknowledged by clients at the beginning of our relationship. It is important to explain the implications of safeguarding, especially the need to breach confidentiality in some cases.

11. Support for those who report abuse

11.1 Anyone making a complaint or allegation or expressing concern should be reassured that:

- Their concern will be taken seriously.
- Comments will usually be treated confidentially, but concerns might be shared if the reporter or anyone else is at significant risk.
- Reporters will be given immediate protection from the risk of reprisals or intimidation.
- Colleagues will be given support and afforded protection if necessary, in line with the *Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998*.

12. Reporting Procedures

12.1 The Charity's designated Safeguarding Officer is the Chatterbox Team Leader.

12.2 Exceptional incidents must be reported immediately to the designated Safeguarding Officer, and followed up in writing by email to **chatterbox@omega.uk.net** on the same day, or the next working day at the latest. If a report is delayed, the reason(s) must be recorded.

12.3 General examples of exceptional incidents which must be reported include situations in which:

- Serious interpersonal conflict, whether verbal or physical, takes place.

- An individual suffers deliberate or accidental harm, whether physical or psychological in nature, or in which there is evidence of an individual suffering harm elsewhere.
- An adult at risk leaves a scheduled event without explanation in an unusually distressed or agitated state giving cause for serious concern.
- Property is damaged, lost or stolen, or there is prima facie evidence of fraudulent or coercive activities.
- The dignity or human rights of an individual are undermined, including acts of discrimination or harassment.
- An individual suffers sexual infringement (direct or indirect) or in which an individual participates in sexual activity of any description to which they are unwilling or unable to give informed consent.

12.4 Colleagues should seek urgent telephone advice from the designated Safeguarding Officer or the Director, or the local authority safeguarding team, if they are not sure whether to raise an alert.

12.5 Upon receipt of an exceptional incident report, the designated Safeguarding Officer will notify relevant authorities to raise an alert. Should the designated Safeguarding Officer be temporarily absent, the reporter should immediately notify the relevant authorities themselves.

12.6 The exceptional incident report must include the following information if it is available:

- The name of the adult at risk (and as much identifying information as you can provide).
- Home Address (if known).
- Allegation or evidence of harm or abuse.
- Indication of frequency, severity and likelihood of reoccurrence.
- Date(s) of incident.
- Details of previous reports, i.e. has this behaviour been reported previously?
- Has there been a recent escalation?
- Full details of the Omega event or activity (time, venue, description, etc),
- Time concern was raised and exact location.
- Whether the adult at risk is aware of a safeguarding concern/has it been discussed with them?
- What immediate action, if any, was taken to safeguard the adult?
- Full name and contact details of any witnesses.
- The name(s) of the perpetrators.
- Is there evidence of organisational abuse?

12.7 When drafting an exceptional incident report, colleagues should:

- Distinguish between fact and opinion (both may be useful).

- Record in writing a detailed note of what happened; this should be signed and dated.
- Record the exact language used and precisely what they saw.

12.8 If a colleague feels certain that an adult with care and support needs is experiencing, or is at risk of, abuse or neglect, it is the responsibility of that individual to raise an alert independently even if, for example, a fellow colleague does not agree, or the designated Safeguarding Officer is temporarily out of contact. Sometimes it may be necessary to telephone the emergency services (by dialling 999) if an immediate danger is evident or a crime has occurred.

12.9 The designated Safeguarding Officer is responsible for conducting investigations and reporting to the Director, unless the designated Safeguarding Officer is personally involved in the incident, in which case, the reporter should raise their concern directly with the Director, or in the absence of the Director, with the Chair of the Board of Trustees.

12.10 All evidence will be preserved. A detailed statement will be taken from each witness. Where possible we shall seek and share feedback once an external safeguarding strategy meeting has been held and a multi-agency decision has been reached. Failure to comply with this policy may result in instant dismissal.

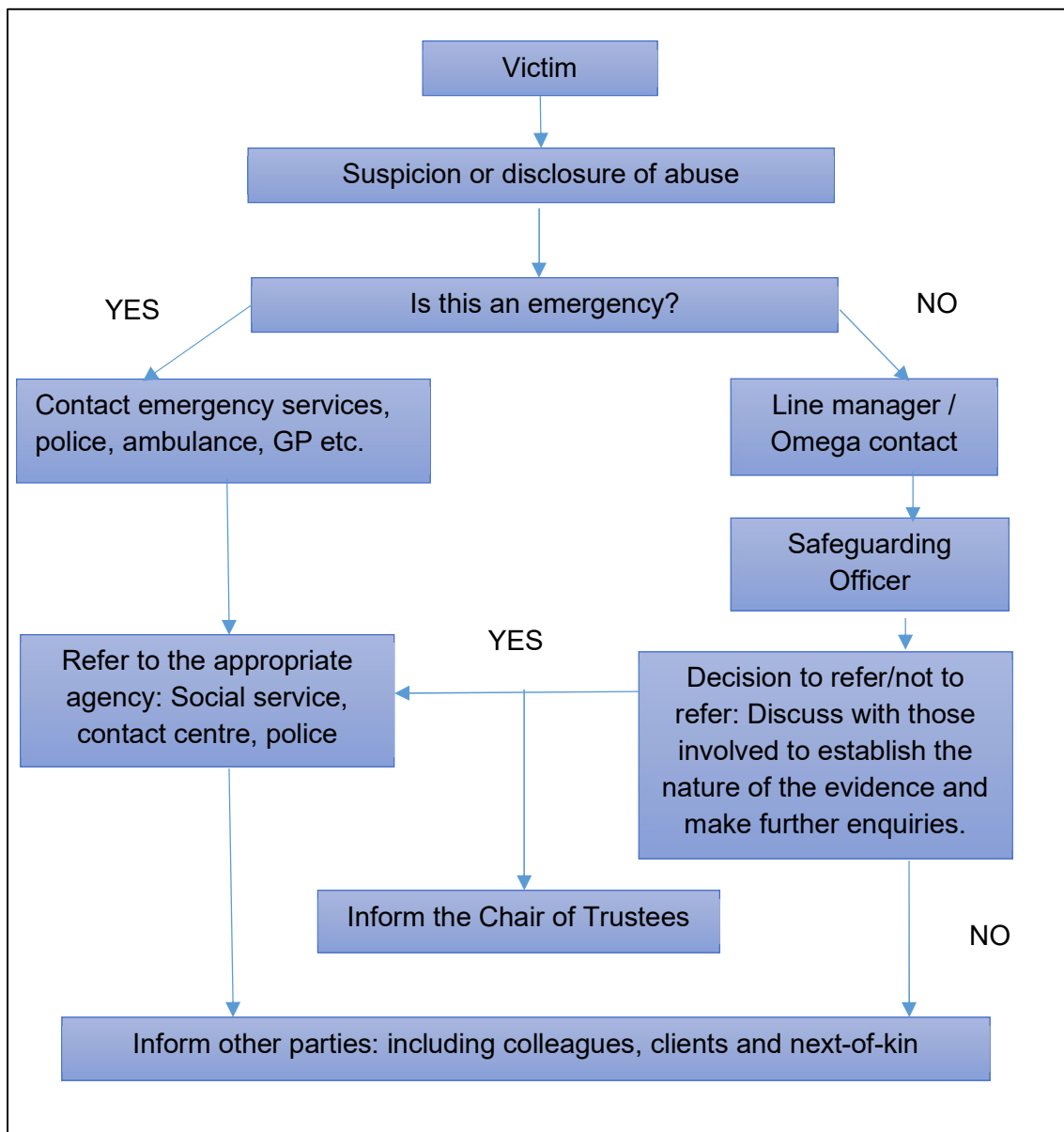
12.11 If allegations are made against a member of staff or volunteer, the same process should be followed.

13. Approval and review

13.1 Policy last reviewed and approved September 2026.

13.2 Next review due September 2029.

Appendix 1 – Safeguarding Adults at Risk Flow Chart of the reporting process



Appendix 2 – Useful contacts

Contact	Name	Telephone	Email
Designated Safeguarding Officer	Liz Evans	01743 245088	lizevans@omega.uk.net
Director	David Crosby	07913 055182	davidcrosby@omega.uk.net
Nominated Trustee for Safeguarding	Linton Waters (Chair of Trustees)		Linton.j.waters@gmail.com