

## **Conversation Club Leeds: Safeguarding Principles, Policy and Procedures**

Reviewed and updated 18.10.24

(Next review due -no later than September 2026)

Keeping people safe is a key element of the work we do at Conversation Club Leeds. We have clear policies and procedures in place and three safeguarding officers who have undertaken appropriate and up to date safeguarding training.

### **Our Safeguarding Principles:**

- \* The safety of our guests and volunteers is paramount.
- \* All guests and volunteers have equal rights to protection regardless of age, gender, culture, race, language, religion, or sexual identity.
- \* All volunteers have an equal responsibility to act on any suspicion or disclosure that suggests someone is at risk of harm either during our sessions or outside them.
- \* Volunteers involved in safeguarding issues will receive full support.

Part of our commitment to safeguarding is to support guests and volunteers by increasing awareness of the types of issues faced by asylum seekers and refugees in society today as well as providing guidance and advice.

### 1. Policy Principles

Our policy will be reviewed every 2 years unless an incident or a change in legislation or guidance requires that an interim review is necessary.

Next review due - no later than September 2026

#### Aims:

- to provide up to date and appropriate information to volunteers.
- to ensure consistent good practice when safeguarding issues arise.
- to demonstrate an ongoing commitment to our safeguarding principles.

p2/9

Terminology:

**Safeguarding officers:** 3 designated persons to whom concerns are reported and who are responsible for secure record keeping and appropriate action.

**Guest:** any asylum seeker or refugee who attends the sessions.

**Volunteer:** a person who attends the sessions in order to support guests in accordance with the aims of the charity.

**Volunteer Coordinator:** designated person who has an overview of the volunteer group.

**Trustees:** the 3 persons responsible for upholding the constitution of the charity.

2. Roles and Responsibilities

The designated Safeguarding Officers of Conversation Club Leeds are  
Elizabeth Thomas (Holbeck meeting)  
Kathleen Johnstone (Wheeler Hall Meeting)  
Geraldine Millea

The designated Volunteer Coordinator is Susan Clough.

The Trustees of Conversation Club Leeds are  
Dot Read (Chair)  
Margaret Cliff  
Susan Clough

The Safeguarding Officers are responsible for the initial response to any safeguarding issue and for taking appropriate steps to address it. They are also responsible for ensuring that volunteers receive appropriate guidance and supervision and for ensuring that our Safeguarding Policy is followed.

The Trustees are responsible for maintaining an overview, monitoring the work of the Safeguarding Officers and ensuring that policy and procedures are adhered to.

### 3. Volunteer guidance

Volunteers receive ongoing guidance about potential safeguarding issues from the Safeguarding Officers with the assistance of other experienced volunteers. Regular monthly meetings provide a safe forum where issues can be discussed.

All volunteers are required to read the Safeguarding Policy and sign to confirm their commitment to it. In addition, written guidance which shows the procedures which must be followed in the event of a concern, is distributed to all volunteers. (volunteer handbook & pocket-sized reminder).

Volunteers can request further information / signposting to training. New volunteers will be closely supervised by the Volunteer Coordinator and other experienced volunteers for several weeks to ensure their suitability for the role. Under no circumstances will a volunteer who has not been appropriately inducted be left with guests unsupervised.

Although not a legal requirement, some volunteers hold a DBS certificate.

### 4. Relevant Safeguarding Legislation and Guidance

Adults can be vulnerable to abuse and neglect, especially if they have care and support needs.

#### Definition

***Abuse is a violation of a person's human and civil rights by any other person.***

***It is where someone does something to another person or to themselves, which puts them at risk of harm and impacts on their health and well-being.***

10 categories of abuse are now recognised in law:

Physical

Sexual

Emotional/Psychological

Financial

Organisational

Neglect

Discriminatory / hate crime

Modern slavery

Domestic abuse

Self neglect

P4/9

At Conversation Club Leeds, we have a responsibility to be alert to the signs of abuse and to act to ensure that the appropriate authorities and agencies can investigate and take any necessary action to protect and empower adults in need of care and support.

Information about the categories and signs of abuse is provided to volunteers in conjunction with our Safeguarding Procedure ACT. See appendix 1.

#### 5. Safeguarding Procedure to be followed by volunteers

On discovery or suspicion of abuse – ACT as follows:

Inform the designated Safeguarding Officers, Elizabeth Thomas , Kathleen Johnstone or Geraldine Millea about your concern as soon as possible. The Safeguarding Officers will then take the following steps:

- investigate the issue by speaking to the individual/s concerned as soon as possible.**
- deal with the matter internally if appropriate.**
- make an external referral in cases where it is clear that this is the best course of action to safeguard the individual/s in question.**
- record the event securely and report it to the trustees.**

#### 6. Confidentiality and Information Sharing

Volunteers should understand that safeguarding issues warrant a high level of confidentiality out of respect for the persons involved. Volunteers should only discuss concerns with safeguarding officers who will then decide who else needs to be given the information, for example the trustees. Information will be handled securely in line with the Data Protection Act.

Any electronic information will be password protected and only made available to relevant individuals.

P5/9

## 7. Concerns about the conduct of a volunteer

A volunteer who is concerned about the conduct of a fellow volunteer towards a guest or towards another volunteer is placed in a very difficult situation. However, all volunteers must remember that the welfare of the guests and volunteers is paramount.

Examples of concerning behaviour by a volunteer *could* include:

being over-friendly with guests

taking photographs of guests without their permission

engaging with a guest on a one-to-one basis in a secluded area or behind a closed door

using inappropriate sexualised, intimidating or offensive language

If volunteers are concerned, they should speak to one of the designated safeguarding officers.

Where a volunteer feels unable to raise an issue with any of the safeguarding officers, or feels that genuine concerns are not being addressed, they should raise the issue directly with the trustees.

## 8. Allegations against a volunteer by a guest

If an allegation is made against a volunteer by a guest, it must be reported to both the safeguarding officers and the trustees who will take appropriate action.

As part of our approach to safeguarding, we promote an open and transparent culture in which all concerns are dealt with promptly and appropriately.

## 9. Referring and Reporting to External Agencies /

## 9. Referring and Reporting to External Agencies /

The Safeguarding Officers, in discussion with the Trustees when appropriate, may refer guests to agencies, for example Leeds Safeguarding Adults Board

<https://leedssafeguardingadults.org.uk>,

who can support them with any abuse that they may be experiencing. This will always be with the individual's permission unless the individual is felt to be in immediate danger.

Volunteers should follow the Safeguarding procedure as outlined in this policy. However, they may also share information directly with an outside agency such /

as the police in the following circumstances:

*\* The situation is an emergency and none of the designated safeguarding officers or a trustee are available*

*\* They are convinced that a direct report is the only way to ensure the guest's safety.*

## APPENDIX 1 Signs and indicators of abuse

### Physical Abuse

Possible indicators : frequent injuries with no or inconsistent explanation .Bruising, cuts, welts, burns, marks on the body, clumps of hair missing.Unexplained falls.

Failure to seek medical treatment or ,if sought , frequent change of persons approached for help. Signs of malnutrition.

Domestic violence - abuse can be psychological, physical, sexual, financial, emotional and any combination of these.

Indicators include: low self esteem, physical evidence of violence , feelings that the abuse is their fault when it is not.

P7/9

Verbal abuse and humiliation in front of others. Fear of outside intervention. Isolating the person from sources of support - such as friends and family. Limited access to household money and exploitation of a person's resources or money.

Domestic violence includes coercive control, i.e. regulating another's behaviour, preventing a person from escaping abuse, and honour-based violence.

Sexual abuse indicators may include ; reluctance to be alone with a particular person, excessive fear /apprehension of, or withdrawal from, relationships. Poor concentration, sleep disturbance, self-harming. Incontinence - not related to any medical diagnosis. Infections, sexually transmitted disease, unexplained genital discharge.

Unusual difficulty in walking or sitting. Torn, stained or bloody underclothing. Bruising to thighs, buttocks, upper arms and neck

.

Emotional and Psychological abuse e.g. enforcing social isolation, threats of harm or abandonment. Preventing someone from meeting their religious or cultural needs. Use of threats, intimidation or harassment. Cyber bullying.

Indicators of psychological and/or emotional abuse may include -  
Withdrawal or change in psychological state of the person. / cont  
An air of silence when a particular person is present, low self- esteem.  
Uncooperative and aggressive behaviour, changes in appetite, signs of distress - tearfulness, anger and insomnia.

Neglect and acts of omission ; failure to provide/allow access to food, shelter, clothing, heating, stimulation and activity, personal or medical care. Not taking account of a persons 'cultural,religious or ethnic needs. Preventing someone from making their own decisions or having privacy.

P8/9

Self-neglect - an extreme lack of self-care, which threatens personal health and safety. May be associated with hoarding and/or addictions, physical illness, a mental disorder or traumatic life change. Person may decline assistance.

Indicators include- poor personal hygiene , unkempt appearance, malnutrition, dehydration, unwillingness to take medication or seek medical care.

Financial or material abuse such as fraud, scamming, theft of money or possessions

Indicators may include; missing possessions, unexplained lack of usual funds. The person managing financial affairs is evasive or uncooperative. Disparity between a person's living conditions and their financial resources.

Modern slavery - a type of abuse e.g human trafficking, forced labour, domestic servitude, sexual exploitation; escort work/ prostitution.

Debt bondage.

Possible indicators; signs of physical and emotional abuse. Appearing malnourished, unkempt, or withdrawn. Isolated, seeming under the control or influence of others. Always wearing the same clothes. Fear of law enforcers. Lack of personal effects or identification documents.

Discriminatory abuse -Unequal treatment based on age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage/civil partnership, pregnancy & maternity, race, religion and belief, sex or sexual orientation. i.e. 'Protected Characteristics' ( as defined in equality act 2010).

May include verbal abuse, derogatory remarks, harassment , substandard service provision relating to a protected characteristic.  
**see appendix 2**

Organisational abuse includes lack of respect for dignity of members and failure to respond to complaints in a timely and appropriate way..

Source SCIE social care institute for excellence.

## **Appendix 2                      Covenant;**

The Leeds Conversation Club is built on kindness and consideration.

We all contribute to making this event friendly and sociable.

We are all equally responsible for the wellbeing and safety of everyone here.

Although we have different experiences and backgrounds we all have equal rights.

We therefore agree to respect the personal dignity of every volunteer and guest at all times .

---

