Cheddar Valley u3a

Safeguarding Policy and Procedure.

Purpose

This policy and procedure is written to enable the committee to address issues where there are safeguarding concerns. Safeguarding includes incidents between members, concerns regarding abuse or neglect that a u3a member may be experiencing outside of the u3a, health related issues or previous or pending criminal convictions.

The purpose of this policy is to demonstrate the commitment of Cheddar Valley u3a to safeguarding their members and to provide information to members about:

- The legislation, policy and procedures for safeguarding adults.
- Roles and responsibilities for safeguarding adults.
- What to do or who to speak to if a member has a concern relating to the welfare or wellbeing of an adult within Cheddar Valley u3a.

Scope

This safeguarding policy and procedure applies to all individuals involved in Cheddar Valley u3a, including the committee, group leaders and members, and to all concerns about the safety and wellbeing of members taking part in u3a activities and in the wider community.

Safeguarding Commitments

In order to implement this policy, Cheddar Valley u3a will inform all members of the safeguarding procedures and let them know who to contact if they have a concern relating to the welfare or wellbeing of an adult.

Cheddar Valley u3a committee has a duty of care to its members and is committed to upholding this safeguarding policy in order to protect its members.

Cheddar Valley u3a recognises that some people are potentially at risk of abuse and neglect. Where abuse or neglect is suspected Cheddar Valley u3a will aim to respond in a prompt and efficient manner to any situation where there is a risk of or perceived risk of harm.

Cheddar Valley u3a does not hold any statutory authority. Matters of concern will be reported to the relevant safeguarding authorities and charity regulatory authorities, as appropriate. This may include the local authority, the local multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH), or the police in an emergency.

Where there are concerns for a member's wellbeing or safety, Cheddar Valley u3a committee will complete a safeguarding risk assessment, seek advice and support from the Trust where necessary, and will contact the relevant statutory authorities as needed. It is not appropriate for

Cheddar Valley u3a to take the lead role in any Safeguarding Enquiry (under Section 42 of the Care Act 2014 (England and Wales) and it will not do so.

Cheddar Valley u3a recognises that there are various forms of abuse which can be perpetrated by volunteers, members, relatives, friends, and neighbours. Cheddar Valley u3a will not condone nor tolerate any form of abuse or neglect and believes that all people should be able and, where necessary, enabled to live in an environment which is safe and free from harm.

Cheddar Valley u3a will put the well-being of those at risk of harm first, and they will be actively supported to communicate their views and the outcomes they want to achieve. Those views and wishes will be respected and supported unless there are overriding reasons not to. Any actions taken will respect the rights and dignity of all those involved and be proportionate to the risk of harm.

A list of the types of safeguarding risks and harm can be found on the England and Wales Charity Commission website, which is applicable generally.

Cheddar Valley u3a will monitor the implementation of this policy and procedure annually through its committee.

When following the safeguarding procedure Cheddar Valley u3a will strive to uphold the principles that those involved in incidents are 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 ethnic origin, gender, sexuality, impairment or disability, age, religious or cultural background.

Cheddar Valley u3a will also follow the principles enshrined within the England and Wales Care Act 2014.

- **Principle 1 – Empowerment** – whereby the approach is focused on the individual making their own decision and gaining informed consent, where possible.
- **Principle 2 – Prevention** – seeking to take steps to prevent issues from arising or escalating.
- **Principle 3 – Proportionality** – responding in a proportionate way to the issue/s being presented.
- **Principle 4 – Protection** – seeking to keep the membership safe and protection for those deemed to be at risk.
- **Principle 5 – Partnership** – reporting incidents to the relevant statutory bodies and liaising with the Trust.

- **Principle 6 – Accountability** – accurate recording of incidents. Reporting incidents, as required, to the Trust and to relevant regulatory authorities.

Procedure

Introduction

Cheddar Valley u3a has a responsibility to ensure that its committee members understand their safeguarding responsibilities and support the group leaders as needed.

Depending on the nature of the allegation and the identified risk, Cheddar Valley u3a will support the alleged victims and the alleged perpetrators of any abuse as well as any volunteer who becomes aware of an allegation in so far as this does not compromise any safeguarding enquiry or investigation into the allegation or place other adults at risk.

Cheddar Valley u3a will make every effort to respect the confidentiality of any information that is disclosed under this policy and procedure, however due to the seriousness of allegations confidentiality is not absolute. Information will be recorded and stored securely in accordance with Data Protection Act 2018 but information may have to be shared with relevant authorities on a 'need-to-know' basis only, to prevent:

- Danger to a person's life
- Danger to a person's health
- Danger to others
- Danger to the community
- To facilitate the investigation of a serious crime

Courses of action

- Cheddar Valley u3a's approach to safeguarding will include members who exhibit health concerns that could put themselves or others at risk, convictions (previous or pending) that include offences of a sexual or violent nature, inappropriate behaviour exhibited by a member including sexual advances, bullying, aggression or violent behaviour, harassment and/or discrimination. This can include behaviour exhibited face to face as well as electronic communications or via social media platforms.

- Where the committee becomes aware of a safeguarding concern, steps will be taken, as needed, to protect the safety of adult/s at risk. The steps to take to address this will be discussed and agreed between the Executive Officers of the committee in the first instance. No committee member will act in isolation when dealing with a safeguarding concern. The steps taken should be documented and stored securely in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018.

- Where Cheddar Valley u3a committee becomes aware of a safeguarding concern, the first step will be to gather as much information as possible to assist with the decision as to the next steps. A risk assessment will be developed and recorded as soon as possible after the concern comes to the attention of the committee.

- Where it is deemed that the risk is high and immediate action needs to be taken, the committee will contact the relevant authorities and the Trust for advice and support.

- 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 (England and Wales). In some cases it may be necessary to override their wishes in the best interests of other adults at risk.

- In developing the risk assessment, the committee will consider the level of risk and the action that needs to be taken accordingly. Assessment of risk will include:
    - 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

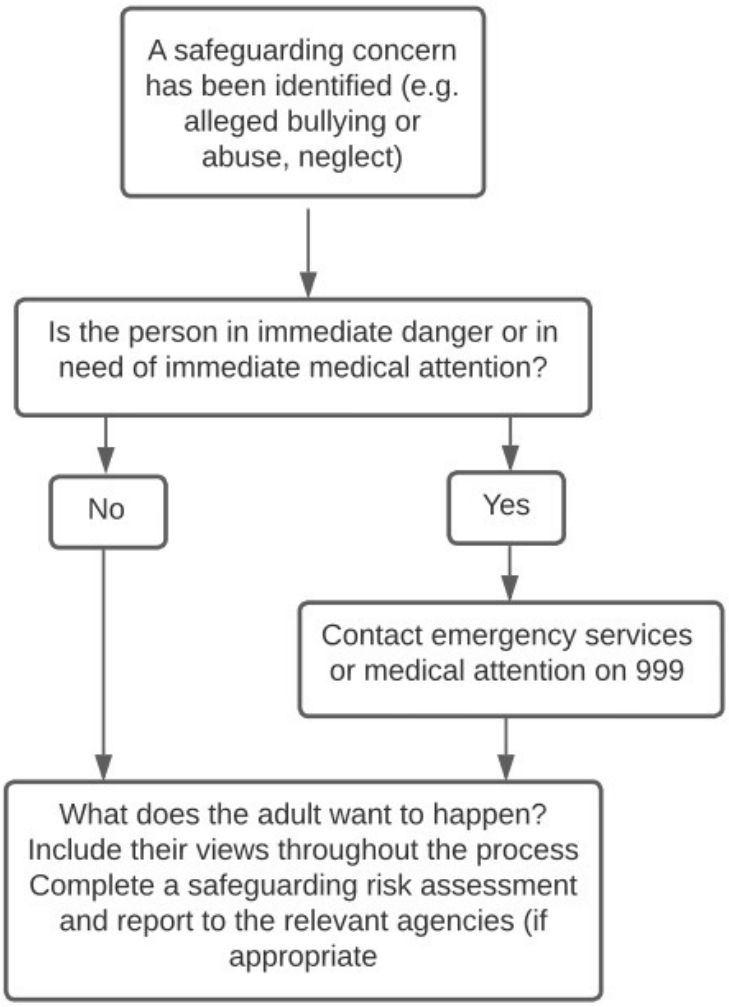
- Where the risk is not deemed to be high but support is needed, Cheddar Valley u3a will contact the Trust to discuss the concerns and seek additional assistance in developing the risk assessment. Assistance will always be sought before moving to exclude any member from the u3a on the basis of a safeguarding risk assessment.

- Once the risk assessment is completed, the committee will determine the most appropriate course of action. This could include excluding members from certain groups (eg groups held in people's homes), requesting that a member attends the u3a with a carer or excluding a member from a group run by a particular group leader.

- Depending on the nature of the allegation it may be necessary to pursue the incident following Cheddar Valley u3a's complaints or disciplinary procedure. In such a case the matter will not be investigated by any party that was privy to the initial reporting of the incident.

- All actions taken will be recorded. Any records will remain confidential to the committee unless a prior decision has been taken to share the record with the relevant statutory bodies.

Approved by the Trustees of Cheddar Valley u3a in October 2024.
Reviewed 29 October 2025 & 6 November 2026, no changes needed.
Next review due November 2028.


A safeguarding concern has been identified (e.g. alleged bullying or abuse, neglect)
Is the person in immediate danger or in need of immediate medical attention?
No
Yes
Contact emergency services or medical attention on 999
What does the adult want to happen?
Include their views throughout the process
Complete a safeguarding risk assessment and report to the relevant agencies (if appropriate