

The People Focused Group

Safeguarding Policy – JAN2023

General Statement of policy

This document is the Safeguarding policy statement of The People Focused Group

Our statement of general policy is:

PFG Doncaster is a company limited by guarantee that works to improve the lives of people who are at risk of or experience ill mental health. We believe that every individual who accesses our services should be treated with dignity and respect, have their choices respected and not be forced to do anything against their will. PFG Doncaster is committed to safeguarding everyone coming into contact with the service regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, disability, sexuality or beliefs.

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and all staff who, during the course of their employment have direct or indirect contact with children or vulnerable adults, or who have access to information about them, have a responsibility to safeguard and promote their welfare.

This policy applied to anyone employed directly or indirectly by PFG Doncaster and includes staff, volunteers, peer support worker placements, trainers and consultants. This policy is available to independent contractors and should be implemented as good practice.

An annual audit of safeguarding concerns, action taken and staff training and support will be conducted annually and safeguarding policy and procedures will be reviewed every twelve months (1 year) or in the light of significant changes to best practice or legislation.

This policy will be kept up to date, particularly as the organisation changes in nature and size. It will be reviewed annually or sooner if work activities change or health and safety legislation is amended.

10/01/2023

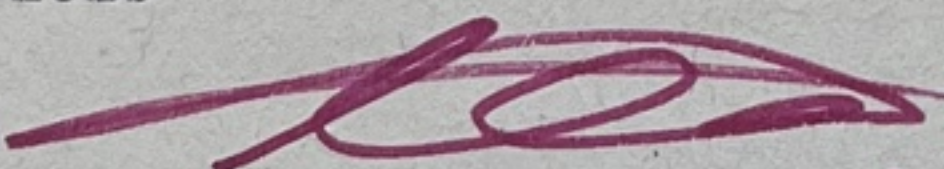
Signed



Position: Director

10/01/2023

Signed



Position: IT Manager (Training & Admin)

Responsibilities

The person(s) with overall and final responsibility for safeguarding is

- PFG Doncaster Board Members (Kelly Hicks | Glyn Butcher | Andrea Butcher)

Day to day responsibility for ensuring this policy is put into practice and is delegated to

- Kelly Hicks, Director of Operations

The person responsible for maintaining Staff records and training is

- Mark Gibson (IT Manager & Admin)

Note: Although the overall day to day responsibility is delegated to the Director of operations, the Board of Directors accepts that the actual responsibility is collective among Board Members

For PFG Doncaster this means ...

- ensuring that PFG Doncaster practices safe recruitment in checking the suitability of staff, freelancers and volunteers to work with vulnerable adults and have contact with children.
- ensuring safe environments, ensuring services are provided in safe environments and that sufficient safeguards are in place.
- raising awareness of how and when to signpost vulnerable adults to appropriate services.
- raising awareness of child and adult protection situations, and our procedures for identifying and reporting concerns or suspected cases.
- building a culture that values and respects all children and adults and modeling appropriate conduct in line with our values
- setting out clear roles and responsibilities for safeguarding

We set out below the steps PFG Doncaster is taking and requires all PFG Doncaster personnel to take in order to safeguard children and vulnerable adults.

1. Safe recruitment

a. Staff and Peer Supporters

PFG Doncaster will ensure that thorough checks are made prior to appointment of staff, volunteers and freelance consultants, in order to prevent a person using their position to harm a child or vulnerable adult.

For all posts at PFG Doncaster the following vetting checks are carried out prior to confirming the appointment:

- a Self Disclosure form to disclose previous spent/unspent convictions and disciplinary or capability procedures.
- Identity documents including photographic identity
- Proof of right to work in the UK
- References including a professional reference using a pro-forma template
- Qualification certificates if required for the role
- Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Check if eligible. All appointments to posts involving direct work with children and/or vulnerable adults will be subject to an Enhanced Disclosure from the DBS, and agreement to re-check every 3 years.

Supporters and freelance consultants post the same level of risk to clients as paid staff. Vetting checks include:

- a self-disclosure form to disclose previous spent/unspent convictions
- References including a professional reference using a pro-forma template

- DBS check if eligible. All volunteers and freelance consultants working directly with children and/or vulnerable adults will be subject to an Enhanced Disclosure from the DBS, and agreement to re-check every 3 years.

In line with PFG Doncaster's policy a criminal record does not prevent employment at PFG Doncaster. A thorough Risk Assessment is carried out by the Centre Manager if convictions are revealed on the declaration form or criminal record check or it is not possible to obtain a criminal record check from abroad, prior to confirming or withdrawing an appointment.

PFG Doncaster's Induction Policy ensures a thorough induction for new staff and peer supporters into the organisation.

b. PFG Doncaster Peer Support Groups

Some PFG Peer Support Groups are separate legal entities and PFG Doncaster is not responsible for their actions. Nevertheless PFG Doncaster will take a number of steps to support groups to safeguard vulnerable adults and children including:

- Requiring two references for Group officers and coordinators (noting role around supporting Group awareness of child protection issues). PFG Doncaster reserves the right, without having to provide an explanation, not to register someone in a coordinator role.
- PFG Doncaster will offer to pay for any DBS checks for Group officers that a Group decides to undertake.

2. Safe environments

a. Safe environments

PFG Doncaster will ensure that all environments where services activities are delivered will not cause harm to vulnerable adults or children. As well as ensuring that suitable staff delivers activities, all service delivery environments will be assessed in line with PFG Doncasters Health and Safety policy.

b. The media

Mental illness case studies are frequently used to support and illustrate the issues faced by people experiencing ill mental health. Our media policy provides clear guidelines on how peer supporters will be protected when supporting PFG Doncaster in this way.

PFG Doncaster's use of images policy and consent form for use of photographs ensures informed consent is given before images can be used.

3. Signposting vulnerable adults to support

A number of staff and peer supporters come into contact with people by phone or face to face and some staff and moderators may interact with people via online forums, social media and other written communication.

Some of these people may be particularly vulnerable, experiencing distress or have mental health issues. For the majority of these adults their situation will not be of a nature that requires a member of staff to report a concern. However PFG Doncaster believes it is important to recognise the vulnerability of these adults. PFG Doncaster does not have appropriate expertise

to deal directly with these issues although our intervention maybe helpful, nor do we provide counselling support (other than peer counselling), so it is vital that staff and peer supporters understand how to identify signs and signpost effectively.

PFG Doncaster will support frontline staff to recognise the signs of distress, to handle this and their own reactions, and to signpost clients to services that can provide support.

PFG Doncaster will provide up to date signposting information for use by staff and peer supporters which details organisations that can be contacted to support people in a range of situations ranging from domestic violence, to mental health, drugs and alcohol and child safety.

The Directors of PFG Doncaster will ensure that these resources are updated regularly.

3. Child and adult protection

Contact with children

There are a number of situations where contact with children might occur including:

- Parents bringing their children with them to interviews for training or to coffee mornings and engagement events.
- Visits to the Wellness Centre group meetings where children may be present
- A person under 18 accessing a service e.g. Employment support

Staff are not likely to be alone with a child face to face in any of the above situations but they may be providing telephone or online services on a one to one basis. Staff will also sometimes observe directly, infer from statements made or hear information that raises concerns about a child's welfare.

Contact with Vulnerable Adults

PFG Doncaster has contact with vulnerable adults either face to face, online, over the telephone and in writing. These situations include;

- Delivery of training
- Focus group or engagement session
- Research interviews
- Case study interviews
- Membership enquiries
- Online – forums, online advice, website enquiry form and other social media
- Social Activities
- Talk For Health Sessions

Awareness of PFG Doncaster's Policies

All staff and lead peer supporters are required to read PFG Doncaster's *Safeguarding Policy* and to provide signed confirmation of this on the Induction checklist.

Alert to the signs of abuse

Our role in protecting children and vulnerable adults is to pick up cues that the child or adult may need protecting and pass this information to those who can assess the situation and act when required. Staff and peer supporters are required to be aware of the different types and signs of abuse and the circumstances in which it can occur.

Aware of duty to report concerns.

All concerns and allegations of abuse will be taken seriously and responded to appropriately (this may require a referral to children's services and / or emergencies, the Police). Staff have a duty to report concerns in line with PFG Doncasters procedures. Peer Supporters will be aware to speak to paid staff for support to report concerns. Failure to comply with these responsibilities will be seen as a serious matter which may lead to disciplinary action.

Confidentiality.

Recognising that "the welfare of the child is paramount" Children's Act 1989, considerations of confidentiality which might apply to other situations should not be allowed to override the right of children to be protected from harm. PFG Doncaster's Confidentiality policy therefore requires staff to act in any situation in which a child is at risk and in particular situations when a vulnerable adult is at risk.

While all staff should be open to the possible abuse of vulnerable adults in all situations, we envisage that there will be very few instances where staff will need to report adult protection concerns. The situations where this is most likely to happen and where staff will be expected to act are

- an adult has been assessed as being at high risk of suicide (see guidance on reporting concerns)
- There is a significant risk that the adult will be seriously physically harm another person.

In respect of vulnerable adults all action, including referrals to Social Services and the police, must be subject to the consent of the service user. In every situation it will be assumed that a person can make their own decisions and action will only be taken in the absence of consent from the service user where;

- they or others are in physical danger
- after seeking advice from an appropriate agency you have been advised to report the concern as it is believed that the vulnerable adult is unable/incapable of making an informed decision for himself or herself.

Staff should never give absolute guarantees of confidentiality to anyone wishing to tell them about something serious.

PFG Doncaster's complaints procedure is an important way in which concerns can be surfaced and should be easily accessible to clients.

Aware of how and when to take action

Staff should follow Guidance: acting on safeguarding concerns to help them assess the risk of harm and take action if required.

All incidents should be recorded and emailed to the safeguarding manager. This form will be stored securely in compliance with relevant legislation. Any allegations of abuse or concerns raised against members of staff, volunteers, trainers or Directors, will always be treated seriously.

4. Culture

- Staff

Staff are encouraged in line with "how we work" and the equality and diversity policy to value diversity and respect the contribution of each individual.

Employees are encouraged to raise concerns about employment practices and concerns will be taken seriously. Unlawful discrimination, bullying or harassment will not be tolerated. Employees will not suffer any negative treatment for giving constructive criticism or raising a genuine grievance.

- Online forums and Facebook

PFG Doncaster works to ensure that our online forums and Facebook page are safe and supportive places where people feel comfortable to express themselves and share their experiences.

While we encourage lively debate, we do not tolerate behaviour which makes other users feel uneasy or unable to contribute to the page. As such, we reserve the right to remove posts which are aggressive in tone, abusive towards other users or disruptive to how the forum or page operates. Racist, sexist, homophobic or bullying posts will be removed without delay. This is common practice and corresponds with Facebook's terms and conditions. The forum netiquette is available on the forum home page and members using the forums agree to abide by this code of conduct. This guide details the behaviour expected of forum users as well as how to report posts that are of concern.

Volunteer moderators and staff are trained to implement this policy.

- **Roles and responsibilities**

Safeguarding and Child Protection Responsibilities are set out as follows:

- PFG Doncaster Directors are accountable for PFG Doncaster and therefore all safeguarding within the organisation and will receive annual reports on safeguarding.
- Safeguarding managers provide advice and support to staff unsure about how to proceed with a particular case, and take line management responsibility for the safe delivery, quality and effectiveness of their services. They will also be responsible for assessing at the start of a project whether there are Local Adult Safeguarding Board procedures that should take precedence over PFG Doncaster's procedures where there are significant differences.
- The Safeguarding lead manager will stay abreast of developments on safeguarding best practice, advise on changes to policy and practice and coordinate Safeguarding audits and reporting.

- **Definitions**

[1] Safeguarding

The term 'safeguarding' refers to inward facing procedures such as awareness raising, reporting concerns, responding appropriately to issues of abuse and exploitation and preventing harm through sound recruitment and safe programming. (*Charity Commission's Strategy for dealing with safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Issues in Charities*, April 2012)

[2] Vulnerable adult

Having a mental health issue does not in itself make an adult vulnerable.

For the purpose of this policy a vulnerable adult is defined as

"anyone over the age of 18 who: is or may be in need of Community Care services by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness and is or may be unable to take care of himself or herself or is unable to protect themselves against significant harm or serious exploitation" *No Secrets*, DOH (2000).

People who may be included in a definition of a Vulnerable Person:

- People with learning disability
- People with physical disabilities
- People with sensory impairment
- People with mental health needs including dementia
- People who misuse substances of alcohol
- People who are physically ill or mentally frail

People outside these definitions may also be vulnerable due to low self-esteem, social exclusion, offending history, homelessness, domestic abuse, ethnicity, immigration status etc.