

Registered charity number: 1175204

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| Safeguarding Policy |
| This is Veterans Outdoors policy to be followed by all staff  |
| Author | CEO |
| Date approved by SMT | 30 Mar 22 |
| Review Date | Mar 23 |

**This policy is in two parts:
1) The Policy itself which explains what safeguarding is, who it applies to and why it is important and...
2) Our Codes of practice – practical steps to enable us to make sure we implement the policy.**

**Why we have this policy.**

At Veterans Outdoors (VO) we conduct experience days and activities with military veterans and members of the emergency services, some of whom suffer with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and/or other physical and mental health related issues. Our events are undertaken in rural locations, on appointed farms or estates, with assessed providers, voluntary personnel and mentors. VO makes a positive contribution to a strong and safe community and recognises the right of every individual to stay safe. VO may come into contact with vulnerable adults through the training and experience days for our beneficiaries.

**What is safeguarding?**

Safeguarding is the vital principle of looking after the **physical and mental** wellbeing of those for whom we are responsible. It does not just apply to physical or emotional abuse – it’s about ensuring that those in our care are never put in any situation which might impact their wellbeing. **We must make sure that nothing we do or omit to do causes any kind of harm.**

We also have a duty to be vigilant to spot or prevent harm that may be occurring remotely from our operations at times when we are not on duty or in locations over which we have no jurisdiction. In other words, if we believe that a beneficiary is being physically or emotionally abused when they are not with us – or if we believe that a beneficiary is causing emotional or physical abuse to a third party - we have a duty to act.

All staff, volunteers and Trustees are expected to have ‘appropriate’ safeguarding training. While this is most important for those who have direct contact with beneficiaries, the Veterans Outdoors policy is that everyone on the team should have this training. Any one of us might answer a phone call for help or be in contact with someone who wanders into our offices or operational spaces seeking support.

All staff should complete an online course before they start working with beneficiaries. Non-operational staff (without prior training) should complete a course as soon as is practical after joining.

Training should be refreshed every year before the last day of MARCH. The Head of Operations will provide links for the course. There is usually a small charge for taking part, for which staff will be reimbursed on provision of a certificate or receipt.

**To whom do we owe a duty of care?**

Veterans Outdoors has a safeguarding responsibility for three groups of people:

1. Our staff – all those employed or engaged by us in any capacity, including volunteers, course leaders, landowners, estate managers, experts and course tutors, casual observers of our work.
2. Our beneficiaries – veterans, those still serving, their spouses or any other friends or third parties who may be invited to take part in VO activities.
3. Family, friends and any other contacts of our beneficiaries. Anyone who might be in a position to be harmed by our beneficiaries when we are not present to intervene.

**A vulnerable adult** is defined as a person who, for any reason, may be unable to take care of themselves or protect themselves against significant harm or exploitation. Safeguarding vulnerable adults involves reducing or preventing risk of significant harm from neglect or abuse, while supporting people to maintain control of their own lives.

A vulnerable adult could be:

* Anyone with mental health issues / conditions / illness
* Physical or learning disability
* Drug, alcohol or substance abuse
* Unable to speak for themselves
* Self-neglect

**Abuse**

* Physical abuse
* Domestic abuse or violence
* Sexual abuse
* Psychological / Emotional abuse
* Bullying
* Neglect or act of omission

is a physical or psychological act of oppression and injustice, exploitation and manipulation of power by those in a position if authority. It can be a single act or an ongoing pattern of behaviour. It can be caused by those inflicting harm or those who fail to prevent such harm. Abuse is not restricted to an individual, group, gender or culture and can take a number of forms, including:

* Financial (or material) abuse
* Modern Slavery
* Organisational or institutional abuse

**What we need to do.**

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of vulnerable adults (in particular, protecting them from significant harm) depends upon effective joint working between VO, those who provide activities and events, and some statutory or emergency bodies. Staff (and event organisers should):

* Be alert to potential indicators of abuse and/or neglect.
* Be alert to the risks which individual abuser, or potential abusers, may pose to vulnerable adults.
* Be prepared to share and help to analyse information, in confidence, so that an assessment can be made of the individuals needs and circumstances.
* Contribute to whatever actions are needed to safeguard and promote the individual’s welfare.
* Take part, as required, in regularly reviewing the outcomes for the individual.
* Work co-operatively with relatives and/or other carers unless this is inconsistent with ensuring the individuals safety.
* Take seriously the welfare of all vulnerable adults who engage with, or are involved in, its activities.
* Ensure that they are welcomed into a safe and caring environment with a happy and friendly atmosphere at the core.
* Recognise that it is the responsibility of all staff to prevent the neglect, physical, sexual or emotional abuse of vulnerable adults and to report any such abuse discovered or suspected.
* Recognise its responsibility to implement, maintain and regularly review procedures which are designed to prevent and to be alert to such abuse.
* Be committed to supporting, resourcing and training those who work with vulnerable adults and to providing supervision

**CODES OF PRACTICE:**

* All staff have a responsibility to follow the guidance laid out in this policy and related policies, and to pass on any welfare concerns using the required procedures. All staff are expected to promote good practice by being excellent role models, contributing to discussions about safeguarding and positively involving people in developing safe practices.
* Staff must not abuse, neglect, harm or discriminate against anyone, or act in a way that may be interpreted as such.
* Staff should be positive role models, acting with integrity and creating safe and inclusive environments.
* We should value and celebrate diversity and make all reasonable efforts to meet individual needs.
* All staff should receive appropriate training and guidance and should undergo an annual online safeguarding refresher course.
* All staff should be DBS checked.
* **BE VIGILANT. Look and listen for the signs of abuse – for instance physical injuries, bruises or withdrawal from social contact. A common symptom of abuse is a reluctance on the part of the victim to report it.**
* **One indicator should not be taken on its own as proof that abuse is occurring, however it should raise alarms and further assessment may need to be considered.**
* We should ensure we have the relevant consent forms signed before taking and using photographs/video and uploading them to social media platforms.
* Where at all possible, do not put yourself in a position where you are alone with a vulnerable adult.

**IF YOU SEE, HEAR OR SUSPECT THAT SOMEONE IN OUR CARE MIGHT BE THE VICTIM OF ONGOING ABUSE:**

* Report it immediately (via a verbal conversation) to the DSO (Duty Safeguarding Officer) – usually the Head of Welfare but possible the CEO or Head of Operations. The CEO, ultimately, will determine a course of action.
* The Head of Welfare should maintain (and regularly review) a log of all reported cases.
* However minor or slight you might think the abuse or the possibility of abuse might be, you should report it. Minor, but regular bruises on someone’s body could still be the signs of major ongoing abuse. Doing nothing should not be an option.
* If you think that someone is at risk of immediate further harm, you should not let them return to that situation – though if they have capacity it must be their decision.
* You should not approach a perpetrator with questions or allegations – this could make a situation worse.
* The CEO (or in his absence the DSO) is responsible for notifying safeguarding issues to the Trustees (The appointed safeguarding trustee.)
* The DSO is responsible for notifying concerns/disclosures that are reported to her/him, prioritising the wellbeing of the vulnerable adult at risk at all times. Dependent on the concern/disclosure, a referral may be directed to:

o The Police in an emergency – 999
o Plymouth safeguarding team 01752 668000 / 101
o Local Authority Adult Services – Care Direct on 0345 155 1007
o Disclosure and Barring Service for concerns/disclosures about a member of staff (paid or volunteer) – 03000 200 190

**Safeguarding is also about best practice and avoiding ways in which we might unintentionally cause emotional harm to someone in our care. So there are some important principles which govern the way we work....**

• We are not an ‘out of hours’ emergency service. Our duty of care is restricted to dealings with beneficiaries related to and during their attendance at activities and events. Through our website and other forms of communication we should signpost other organisations which are better suited to provide emergency provision.

*It might be tempting to try to ‘save’ a beneficiary threatening self-harm or suicide but if you are not trained for this highly specialist line of work, you may do more harm than good.*

* We discourage ‘trauma talk’. The standard sector view now is that we do not need to know the fine detail of a beneficiary’s trauma and we should not ask us them to tell us. It is important that we know any triggers and we may wish to record a basic detail like “left Army after being injured in a car accident” but every time a beneficiary is asked to repeat their story in detail, an emotional wound can be reopened.
* If, during an activity, a campfire-type conversation breaks out with beneficiaries swapping stories, the VO support worker should intervene to offer those present the opportunity to walk away from the conversation.
* Beneficiaries can treat all conversations with VO staff as confidential unless VO staff have reason to believe that the beneficiary or a.n.other person may be at risk, in which case we reserve the right to pass information to a third party organisation.
* Care must be taken to avoid dual relationships between staff and beneficiaries. Beneficiaries might confuse the friendly warmth and support we offer with friendship but professional guidelines say we cannot be both support worker and friend. Staff should limit the amount of personal information they reveal about themselves to beneficiaries and should avoid accepting presents from beneficiaries or meeting them out of hours.
* Keep clear boundaries between your personal and professional life, including on social media.

**TRUSTEES - responsibilities and procedures.**

Trustees have the responsibility to:

* + Appoint, from the board, one trustee to have specific responsibility for safeguarding.
	+ Make sure that all staff are aware of the policy and abide by it and receive appropriate training and information
	+ Make sure the policy is accessible, regularly monitored and reviewed on an annual basis.
	+ Make sure that the welfare of vulnerable adults is consistently promoted within Veterans Outdoors.
	+ Ensure all staff undertake DBS checks, as appropriate
	+ Ensure trustees have overall accountability for this policy and its implementation

**Safe and Inclusive Codes of Practice and Conduct**

* + The Policy and Code of Conduct should be interpreted in a spirit of integrity, transparency and common sense, with the best interests of vulnerable adults at risk being the primary consideration.
	+ The principal pieces of legislation governing this policy are: *Working together to Safeguard Children 2018
	The Children Act 2004
	Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006*

*Public Interest Disclosure Act 2013 The Police Act 1997
The Mental Health Act 2017
NHS & Community Care Act 1990*

*Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974*

• Comments related to the content and maintenance of this policy are to be directed to the Operations Manager in the first instance.

Approved on behalf of the trustees & CEO.

GRANIA PHILLIPS ***Grania Phillips*
Safeguarding Trustee
Date: 30.03.2022**

JEREMY HIBBARD

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**Jeremy Hibbard Chief Executive Date: 30.03.2022**