

Hatch Community Car Scheme

Safeguarding Policy

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Purpose

The purpose of this document is to outline the HATCH COMMUNITY CAR SCHEME (HCCS) policy for protecting children, young people and adults at risk (vulnerable adults) from harm, abuse, neglect and exploitation.

Everyone involved with the Hatch Community Car Scheme has a role to play in safeguarding.

The policy will apply where volunteers of the the HCCS may come into contact with vulnerable people while carrying out their duties.

The policy applies to all volunteers with the HCCS including all registered drivers, escorts and all committee members.

The policy is designed to help HCCS to:

1. Provide a safe and suitable service to vulnerable passengers of all ages
2. Recognise what makes a person vulnerable
3. Understand how to respond, including how to report safeguarding concerns and where to get advice.

The policy is based on law and guidance that seeks to protect children and adults namely:

Children Act 1989

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 1991

Data Protection Act 1998

Sexual Offences Act 2003

Children Act 2004

Protection of Freedoms Act 2012

Relevant UK Government guidance on safeguarding children

Care Act 2014

Definitions

Safeguarding

Safeguarding is action taken to promote the welfare of children and vulnerable adults to protect them from harm, it underpins the principles set out in the Children Acts 1989 and 2004 and the Care Act 2014.

Children and vulnerable adults, regardless of age, disability, gender, racial heritage, religious belief, sexual orientation or identity, have a right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse.

Children and vulnerable adults may be additionally vulnerable because of the impact of previous experience, their level of dependency, communication needs or other issues.

Child

A young person below the age of puberty or below the legal age of majority (under 18).

Vulnerable Adult

A vulnerable adult is a person aged 18 years or over who is in receipt of, or may be in need of community care services because of mental or other disability, age or illness and who is or may be unable to take care of themselves, or is unable to protect themselves against significant harm, abuse or exploitation.

Harm

Conduct which causes physical, psychological, self harm or unlawful conduct which appropriates or adversely affects property, rights or interests.

Bullying, verbal, emotional and physical, is also a form of harm. HCCS will take any reports seriously and investigate any reported incident, also ensuring children are able to report bullying to someone in authority.

Abuse

All forms of **physical and/or emotional ill treatment** of a **child** or **vulnerable adult** which result in actual or potential harm to health, survival, development or dignity.

Categories include physical; financial or material; sexual; neglectful; psychological; discriminatory; institutional; and domestic.

Other critical forms of abuse include:

Trafficking

Exploitation, including sexual exploitation (prostitution), child labour, slavery

Child sexual exploitation

Policy Statement

HCCS believes that everyone we come into contact with, regardless of age, gender identity, disability, religious belief, sexual orientation or ethnic origin has the right to be protected from all forms of harm, abuse, neglect or exploitation. HCCS will not tolerate any of this behaviour by its committee members or volunteer drivers, or conversely its volunteers to be subjected to the same.

We address safeguarding across all our activities, by means of prevention, reporting and response.

Responsibility and Accountability

All committee members are responsible for safeguarding. They should proactively promote the wellbeing and welfare of the beneficiaries and volunteers of the organisation, as well as everyone else who comes into contact with the scheme.

The safeguarding policy is subject to regular review by the committee, and must be reported upon in the annual report of the organisation. A member is nominated as the safeguarding lead and will report to the rest of the committee on such matters.

Risk Assessment

The committee must proactively assess the risks inherent in the activities of HCCS and put in place policies and procedures to protect children and vulnerable adults. There must be ongoing monitoring to ensure that they are being implemented effectively in practice. The key risks are identified as:

- Potential abuse or harm to scheme members as they are picked up or driven
- Ignorance of volunteer drivers of their responsibilities in avoiding harm to members
- Failure to report safeguarding incidents
- Failure of the committee to respond to incidents appropriately and in a timely manner
- Failure to appropriately vet volunteers and committee members
- Reputational risk arising from damage to public trust in HCCS through an incident occurring, or the allegation of such an incident
- Failure to protect volunteers or committee members from legal costs in responding to an allegation of misconduct

These risks are to be managed as follows:

- Regular risk assessments including identification, mitigation or elimination where possible - especially when new activities or events are proposed
- Implementation of actions identified by this process, and reviewing their effectiveness on a regular basis
- Ensuring that DBS checks are carried out every 3 years for each volunteer driver and anyone else having regular contact with children or vulnerable adults
- Ensuring that all volunteers and committee members having contact with vulnerable individuals are familiar with this policy and the actions required by it. This shall include formal training in the policy to be carried out on an annual basis.
- Ensure that at least 2 adults travel in a vehicle when a passenger is under 18

Procedure if a volunteer with Hatch Community Care Scheme (driver, escort, committee member) has a concern about a child or vulnerable adult

Confidentiality in any safeguarding matter, the welfare of the child or adult at risk, is paramount.

Consequently information that involves the issue(s) will be shared on a 'need to know' basis.

A member of the committee will be appointed with responsibility for Safeguarding and will act as the conduit for all concerns.

Any volunteer will be able to share their concerns with this officer.

If it is suspected that a child or vulnerable adult is subject to a crime or is in immediate danger a call to the police on 999 will be made.

In other circumstances relevant local Social Care Teams may be contacted.

Other agencies include the NSPCC helpline, www.gov.uk/domestic-abuse website, and in cases of suspected modern slavery the Salvation Army's confidential 24/7 referral helpline or the UK government website.

This policy outlines the commitment of Hatch Community Car Scheme (HCCS) to protect people, specifically children under 18 and vulnerable adults, from any harm that may be caused from contact with HCCS. This includes risks arising from:

- The conduct of HCCS volunteers (including committee members)
- The nature of HCCS activities, principally transporting residents of Hatch Beauchamp and the surrounding areas by car

It also describes the steps that will be taken to reduce these risks, and the action to be taken should anyone associated with HCCS become aware of a safeguarding issue.

Responsibilities

Volunteers and committee members must not:

- Subject a child or vulnerable adult to physical or mental abuse, or neglect
- Endanger members by careless or reckless driving
- Seek payment in excess of the prescribed fees for journeys taken, or exploit their position for other commercial gain
- Engage in sexual activity with anyone under the age of 18
- Sexually abuse or exploit members of any age (this includes exchange of money, employment, goods or services for sexual activity)

Volunteers and committee members should:

- Be familiar with the policy and take action as indicated
- Help to create an environment that promotes safety and prevents safeguarding violations
- Report any concerns or suspicions they may have regarding safeguarding concerning any HCCS volunteer to the safeguarding lead (or any committee member)
- More generally report any safety concern arising from their contact with members, even if it is not related to HCCS activities

Incident Reporting

Volunteers having any complaint or concern relating to safeguarding should report it immediately to the Safeguarding Lead. If there is any concern that the leader will not take it seriously or may be implicated in the report, then it may be reported to any committee member. This is also the case where the Safeguarding Lead cannot be reached within 24 hours. Incidents that may not seem serious to the volunteer, but have in any way upset a member (whether reasonably or not) should also be reported.

The Safeguarding Lead will decide what action, if any, should be taken in response to an incident report. Each incident will be investigated thoroughly, with fairness and sensitivity to all parties. Suitable steps will be taken as a result of the investigation which may include informing the police, and/or referring information to the DBS and Local Safeguarding Board. Not all situations require such a notification but must be recorded anyway.

Response

HCCS will respond to incidents as required by the policy, and according to legal obligations. Apart from such obligations HCCS may decide to act as follows:

- Suspend contact between the volunteer and complainant, and in more serious cases with any member at all
- Offer support to affected children and vulnerable adults, regardless of any findings regarding the incident. Decisions regarding such support and other action will be principally informed by the wishes of the affected person(s)

Confidentiality

Confidentiality shall be maintained at all stages of the process when dealing with safeguarding concerns. Information relating to the concern and all aspects of the follow up shall be shared on a need to know basis only, and records must be kept secure.