Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Policy

1. **Introduction**
Robertsbridge and Salehurst Helping Hands ('Helping Hands') is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults, engaged in the breadth of its activities.
Helping Hands as an organisation does not have direct responsibility for vulnerable adults but through its work developing and supporting voluntary organisations, community groups and families and individuals can become involved with groups where vulnerable adults are present. Therefore Helping Hands has developed this policy to cover such activities and all working in such activities, in whatever capacity

2. **Aim**
The Aim of the policy is to contribute to the personal safety of all vulnerable adults using the facilities and resources of Helping Hands through actively promoting awareness, good practice and sound procedures and to outline the duty and responsibility of volunteers and the Management Committee working on behalf of Helping Hands in relation to the protection of vulnerable adults from abuse.

3. **Implementation**
3.1 The Management Committee shall appoint one person, the Vice-Chair, as Responsible Officer for all aspects of safeguarding vulnerable adults' awareness and implementation of this policy.

3.2 The Responsible Officer will be responsible for:

- Ensuring the implementation of this policy throughout Helping Hands;
- Ensuring all necessary safeguarding vulnerable adult related enquiries, procedures and investigations are carried out;
  Ensring appropriate DBS checks are made on all prospective volunteers
- Ensuring secure and confidential records relating to safeguarding vulnerable adults matters;
- Regular reporting to the Management Committee on the implementation of this policy;
- Checking all incident reports made by volunteers, countersigning them, and making such reference to authorities as is appropriate;
- Reporting f allegations and suspicion of abuse to the appropriate authorities;
- Ensuring adequate induction and training relating to safeguarding vulnerable adults matters;
- Ensuring that all activities carried out are sound in terms of safeguarding vulnerable adults.

3.3 The Management Committee of Helping Hands shall work closely with the Responsible Officer to ensure active compliance with this policy by all working with Helping Hands, affording the Responsible Officer every assistance to this end.

3.4 All volunteers of Helping Hands will actively endeavour to implement this policy.

4. Context
4.1 For the purpose of this document 'adult' means a person aged 18 years or over.

4.2 Some adults are less able to protect themselves than others, and some have difficulty making their wishes and feelings known. This may make them vulnerable to abuse. The broad definition of a 'vulnerable adult' referred to in the 1997 Consultation Paper 'Who decides?' issued by the Lord Chancellor's Department, is a person:

> "Who is or may be in need of community care services by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness; and who is or may be unable to take care of him or herself, or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation".

4.3 The first priority should always be to ensure the safety and protection of vulnerable adults. To this end it is the responsibility of all volunteers to act on any suspicion or evidence of abuse or neglect (see the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998) and to pass on their concerns to the Responsible Officer who may then refer such matters to Social Services.

4.4 For purposes of ensuring consistent and widely understood terminology, these policy and procedures will use the phrase 'Vulnerable Adults' to identify those eligible for interventions within the procedures.

5. **Legal framework**

5.1 This guidance reflects the principles contained within the Human Rights Act 1998, the Mental Capacity Act 2005 and Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998.

5.2 The Mental Capacity Act 2005, covering England and Wales, provides a statutory framework for people who lack capacity to make decisions for themselves, or who have capacity and want to make preparations for a time when they may lack capacity in the future. It sets out who can take decisions, in which situations, and how they should go about this.

5.3 The Human Rights Act 1998 gives legal effect in the UK to the fundamental rights and freedoms contained in the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR).

5.4 The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (PIDA) created a framework for whistle blowing across the private, public and voluntary sectors. The Act provides almost every individual in the workplace with protection from victimisation where they raise genuine concerns about malpractice in accordance with the Act's provisions.

6. Activities

6.1 Prior to any activity being commenced that might include already known vulnerable adults the Responsible Officer shall ensure adequate safeguarding vulnerable adults measures are in place.

6.4 Every activity shall be undertaken with the possibility in mind that a vulnerable adult may be suffering abuse outside the project and that a disclosure or symptom relating to this may become apparent during an activity. It is important that the activity undertaken by a volunteer as as conducive to support an adult in such a situation as is possible.

7. Personnel checks

7.1Helping Hands aims to ensure, as far as is possible, that any volunteer, who might engage with vulnerable adults during a Helping Hands job and who gains substantial access to them is as safe to do so in safeguarding vulnerable adults terms as can be guaranteed.

7.2 The Responsible Officer in co-operation with the Management Committee shall ensure that DBS checks are carried out on all prospective volunteers

7.3 At all times the onus is on the volunteer to reveal any conviction, caution, bind-over, probation order or pending prosecution, whether imposed prior to or within the period the applicant volunteers for Helping Hands.

8. Reporting of concerns

8.1 Those working on Helping Hands activities have a duty to ensure that any suspicion, incident, allegation or other manifestation relating to safeguarding vulnerable adults is reported as provided below:

8.2 Evidence for concern may occur in a number of ways including what the vulnerable adult says, intervention of a written item, activity and behaviour, physical or emotional pointers. Inappropriate behaviour or knowledge or changes in behaviour or attitude.

8.3 The observing volunteer, will make a verbal report to the Responsible Officer and will then make a written report to the Responsible Officer, outlining in adequate detail of what was seen, reported, alleged etc.

Abuse may include:

- physical
- financial
- sexual
- psychological
- discriminatory
- emotional abuse
- neglect.

Abuse can take place in any setting, public or private, and can be undertaken by anyone.

8.4 Verbatim quotes are important as is the retention of anything which gives cause for concern such as drawing, painting, writing etc.

8.5 The Responsible Officer will keep records in such a way as will enable appropriate cross referencing of reports to ensure any persistent pattern is identified as soon as possible.

8.6 The Responsible Officer will take an appropriate course of action as follows:

If there is an immediate perceived danger to a vulnerable adult or detection of criminal offences against a vulnerable adult or other form of obvious serious harm an immediate report will be made to Social Services and/or Police.

9. Feedback and reporting

9.1 The Responsible Officer is entitled to ask Social Services what action has been taken so far, whether the police have been informed etc., although Social Services, through reasons of confidentiality, may be unable to give specific details.

10. Allegations against workers or management

10.1 If an allegation regarding safeguarding vulnerable adults is made to Helping Hands against any volunteer of Helping Hands the following procedure will come into force, with incident reports made at all stages as appropriate:

10.2 The person receiving the complaint will immediately contact the Chair who will contact the Responsible Officer.

10.3 The Responsible Officer will immediately contact Social Services to apprise them of the situation.

Normally this will be through informal channels, but if a criminal allegation has been made the contact will be formal and also to the police.

10.4 The Chair should inform the person against whom the allegation has been made as soon as possible UNLESS THERE APPEARS TO BE A CASE THAT THIS MIGHT PREJUDICE A CRIMINAL INVESTIGATION. This will require consultation with the police to ascertain.

10.5 The course of action to be taken from thereon will be decided by the nature of the allegation(s).

10.5.1 In a criminal allegation the Chair will activate the Disciplinary Procedure and suspend the person from any activity under the heading of Gross Misconduct.

10.5.2 If there is no criminal allegation the Responsible Officer will gather as much detail from available sources as possible by way of investigation. Check records to see if any other reports relating to Safeguarding. Consider whether suspension of the volunteer is advisable and recommend accordingly to the Chair:

10.5.3 The Responsible Officer will report to the Chair the outcome of such investigations and will recommend whether the circumstances constitute grounds for:

a) to treat the matter as a disciplinary issue, either as misconduct or gross misconduct with associated rights of appeal;
Or b) to dismiss the allegations as unfounded or to make other such non-disciplinary recommendations as is appropriate.

10.6 The Chair shall consider such recommendations and report to the next meeting of the Management Committee the action taken.

10.7 The person against whom such non-criminal allegations are made should have opportunity to give an explanation or answer any allegation at an interview conducted under the protocols of the Complaints Policy

11. Induction and Training

11.1 Helping Hands will ensure that there is adequate and appropriate induction and ongoing training and information to all volunteers concerning safeguarding vulnerable adults matters.

11.2 All volunteers shall have this policy highlighted on joining Helping Hands

11.3 All volunteers shall be made fully aware of how and where to access the full policy statement.

12. Monitoring and Review of this policy

12.1 All policies are reviewed annually by the Management Committee in regard to effectiveness and implementation. The views of volunteers will be sought and reflected in the review process and that any statutory sector input is sought as appropriate.

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Approved by Committee 4 November 2026