

## Digital Advantage

### Vulnerable Adults and Child Protection Policy

Reviewed December 2021

#### 1 Policy Statement

It is crucial that the child and vulnerable adult policy and procedures apply to **everyone** who works for and on behalf of the Charity. This includes all professional and non-professional, full and part-time staff, paid and unpaid employees, Board/Executive and Committee members, volunteers, parents, guardians and the children and vulnerable adults themselves.

In this Policy the term 'members' has been used to describe those to whom the policy and procedures apply.

It is advisable to formally require any other individual who is associated with Digital Advantage (DA) to agree to abide by our policy and procedures for the duration of their involvement with our organisation.

It should also be noted that it is desirable that there is a process to ensure affiliated organisations have a reciprocal policy and procedures, either by adopting the umbrella policy and procedures or by developing a policy and procedures to the same standard.

Monitoring and evaluation are critical components of this Policy because of the possible amendments required as a result of changes in legislation, case reports, changes in the environment, research findings, to name a few. Initially it will be important to determine how this template can be used.

Support for the implementation of an appropriate ethics strategy and supporting plans that include clear objectives and targets can be sought from DA directly. If help is required with constitutions and/or related issues DA can provide options for assistance.

#### 2 Responsibilities

The Organisation will

- Respect and promote the rights, wishes and feelings of children and vulnerable adults, and assist voluntary organisations comply with their responsibilities.
- Promote and implement appropriate procedures to safeguard the well-being of children and vulnerable adults and seek to protect them from abuse.
- Recruit, train, support and supervise its members to adopt best practice to safeguard and protect children and vulnerable adults from abuse and to minimise risk to themselves.
- Require members of staff and volunteers to adopt and abide by this Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy and these Procedures.
- Respond to any allegations of misconduct or abuse of children or vulnerable adults in line with this Policy and these Procedures as well as implementing, where appropriate, the relevant disciplinary and appeals procedures.
- Review and evaluate this Policy and these Procedures annually.
- appoint a vulnerable adults and child protection officer.

### **3 Principles**

The welfare of children and vulnerable adults is everyone's responsibility, particularly when it comes to protecting them from abuse. This Policy and these Procedures are based on the following principles:

- The welfare of children and vulnerable adults is a primary concern.
- All children and vulnerable adults, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, socio-economic status, religious belief and/or sexual identity have the right to protection from abuse.
- It is everyone's responsibility to report to the vulnerable adults and child protection officer, any concerns about abuse and the responsibility of the Local Authority's Social Services Department and the Police to conduct, where appropriate, a joint investigation.
- All incidents of alleged poor practice, misconduct and abuse will be taken seriously, investigated and responded to swiftly and appropriately.
- All personal data will be processed in accordance with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998.

### **4 Review**

This Policy and these Procedures will be monitored and reviewed:

- In accordance with changes in legislation and guidance on the protection of children and vulnerable adults or any changes within the organisation.
- Following the raising of any issues or concerns about the protection of children or vulnerable adults within DA and in all other circumstances, at least annually.

### **5 Recruitment and Employment**

All reasonable steps must be taken to ensure unsuitable people are prevented from working with children and vulnerable adults.

For all positions that require regular contact with children or vulnerable adults the following recruitment procedures must be completed.

#### **5.1 Advertising**

All forms of advertising used to recruit members for positions involving regular contact with children or vulnerable adults shall include the following:

- The aims of DA and, where appropriate, details of the particular programme involved.
- The responsibilities of the role.
- The level of experience or qualifications required (e.g. experience of working with children is an advantage).

#### **5.2 Pre-application Information**

Pre-application information for positions involving regular contact with children or vulnerable adults sent to applicants and shall include:

- A job description including roles and responsibilities.
- A candidate specification (e.g. stating qualifications or experience of working with children or vulnerable adults required).
- An application form and self-declaration form.

### **5.3 Application and Self-Declaration Form**

All applicants shall be requested to complete an application and self-declaration form. The purpose of the application form is to obtain relevant details from the applicant for the position. The purpose of the self-declaration form is to collect information on criminal behaviour that is relevant to the position e.g. criminal records or investigations. The self-declaration form is requested in a separate sealed envelope and is not opened until the applicant is selected for an interview. If the applicant is not selected the form is returned unopened to the applicant.

### **5.4 References**

References will be sought as required. Where possible at least one of these references will be from an employer or a voluntary organisation where the position required working with children or vulnerable adults in any of the following capacities: employee; volunteer; or work experience. If the person has no experience of working with children or vulnerable adults, specific training requirements shall be agreed before appointment.

### **5.5 Checks**

DA is registered with the Wales Council for Voluntary Action for Criminal Records Bureau checking, and will comply with the Independent Safeguarding Authority regulations when they become law.

#### *Standard Disclosure*

Standard disclosures will be requested from those applying for positions listed in the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (ROA) (Exceptions) Order 1975. These categories include occupations with duties that involve regular contact with children and young people under the age of 18; and the elderly, sick and handicapped people.

#### *Enhanced Disclosure*

Enhanced Disclosures will be requested for positions that involve a greater degree of contact with children or vulnerable adults. For example positions that require regular contact with children, young people and vulnerable adults.

### **5.6 Interview**

For all positions within DA, interviews will be carried out. An interview may include requests for additional information with regard to vulnerable people to support the application.

### **5.7 Offer of Position**

Once a decision has been made to appoint an individual, an offer letter will be presented to the applicant. This shall include the details of the position, any special requirements and the obligations e.g. agreement to the policies and procedures of the organisation, the probation period and responsibilities of the role. Confirmation of the position being accepted will require the offer letter to be formally accepted and agreed to in writing e.g. by the individual signing and dating their agreement on the offer letter and returning it to the organisation.

### **5.8 Induction**

The induction process for the newly appointed member shall include the following:

- An assessment of training, individual aids and any other needs and aspirations.
- Clarification, agreement to acceptance and signing up to the Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy and Procedures.
- Clarification of the expectations, roles and responsibilities of the position.

### **5.9 Training**

Newly appointed members will complete the following training over an agreed period:

- Protecting children and vulnerable adults.
- Working effectively with children and vulnerable adults (including presentation skills, developing child and vulnerable adult friendly resources and activities).

- Any other identified training needs.

### **5.10 Probation**

Newly appointed members shall complete an agreed period of probation of 3-6 months on commencement of their role.

### **5.11 Monitoring and Performance Appraisal**

All members of staff will be monitored and their performance appraised annually. This will provide an opportunity to evaluate progress, set new goals, identify training needs and address any concerns of poor practice.

## **6 Good Practice Regarding Contact with Children and Vulnerable Adults**

DA supports and requires the following good practice by members of staff when in contact with children and vulnerable adults.

When working with children or vulnerable adults:

- Promote fairness.
- Always work in an open environment e.g. avoid private or unobserved situations and encourage an open environment for activities.
- Treat all children and vulnerable adults equally, with respect and dignity.
- Put the welfare of each child or vulnerable adult first before achieving performance goals.
- Be an excellent role model including not smoking or drinking alcohol in the company of children or vulnerable adults.
- Give enthusiastic and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism.
- Ensure that if any form of manual or physical support is required for a child or vulnerable adult, it is provided openly, the child or vulnerable adult is informed of what is being done and their consent is obtained.
- Deliver educational instruction first verbally; secondly role-modelled; and thirdly, and only if necessary, with hands on - which must be accompanied by telling the child or vulnerable adult where you are putting your hands and why it is necessary and obtaining their consent.
- Involve parents, guardians and carers wherever possible.
- Build balanced relationships based on mutual trust that empower children and vulnerable adults to share in the decision-making process.
- Recognise the developmental needs and capacity of children and vulnerable adults and avoid excessive training or competition and either pushing them against their will or putting undue pressure on them.

## **7 First Aid and Treatment of Injuries:**

If, in your capacity as a member of the organisation, a child or vulnerable adult requires first aid or any form of medical attention whilst in your care, then the following good practice must be followed:

- Be aware of any pre-existing medical conditions, medicines being taken by participants or existing injuries and treatment required.
- Keep a written record of any injury that occurs, along with the details of any treatment given.
- Where possible, ensure access to medical advice and/or assistance is available.
- Only those with a current, recognised First Aid qualification should respond to any injuries.
- Where possible any course of action should be discussed with the child/vulnerable adult, in language that they understand and their permission sought before any action is taken.
- In more serious cases, assistance must be obtained from a medically qualified professional as soon as possible.
- The child's or vulnerable adult's parents/guardians or carers must be informed, as soon as possible, of any injury and any action taken, unless it is in the child's or vulnerable adult's interests, and on professional advice not to do so.

- A Notification of Accident Form must be completed and signed and passed to the organisation as soon as possible.

### **8.1 Good practice regarding taking and transporting children or vulnerable adults away from home:**

If it is necessary to provide transport or take children or vulnerable adults away from home the following good practice must be followed:

- Where practicable request written parental/guardian consent if members are required to transport children or vulnerable adults.
- Always tell another member of staff that you are transporting a child/vulnerable adult, give details of the route and the anticipated length of the journey.
- All reasonable safety measures are taken, e.g. children/vulnerable adults in all seats, seatbelts are worn.
- Ensure, where possible, a male and female accompany mixed groups of children or vulnerable adults. These adults should be familiar with and agree to abide by the Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy and Procedures.
- Always plan and prepare a detailed programme of activities and ensure copies are available for other members and parents/guardians.
- Always check that everyone has alighted before locking and/or leaving the bus for any length of time.

### **8.2 Practice To Be Avoided**

In the context of your role within the organisation, the following practice should be avoided:

- Avoid having 'favourites' - this could lead to resentment and jealousy by other children or vulnerable adults and could lead to false allegations.
- Avoid spending excessive amounts of time alone with children or vulnerable adults away from others.
- Ensure that when children or vulnerable adults are taken away from home, other adults avoid entering their rooms unless in an emergency situation or in the interest of health and safety. If it is necessary to enter rooms, the door should remain open, if possible.
- Avoid taking children or vulnerable adults to your home.
- Avoid, where possible, doing things of a personal nature for children and vulnerable adults that they can do for themselves.

#### **Important Note:**

It may sometimes be necessary for members to do things of a personal nature for children or vulnerable adults, particularly if they are very young or vulnerable. These tasks should only be carried out with the full understanding and consent of the child or vulnerable adult and where possible their parents/guardians. It is important to respect their views. If a person is fully dependent on you, talk with him/her about what you are doing and give choices where possible, particularly so if you are involved in any dressing or undressing of outer clothing, or where there is physical contact, lifting or assisting a child or vulnerable adult to carry out particular activities. **Do not take on the responsibility for tasks for which you are not appropriately trained.**

### **8.3 Practice never to be sanctioned**

In the context of your role within DA, the following practices should never be sanctioned:

- Never engage in sexually provocative games, including horseplay.
- Never engage in rough or physical contact except as permitted within the rules of the game or competition.
- Never form intimate emotional or physical relationships with children or vulnerable adults.
- Never allow or engage in touching a child or vulnerable adult in a sexually suggestive manner.

- Never allow children or vulnerable adults to swear or use sexualised language unchallenged.
- Never make sexually suggestive comments to a child or vulnerable adult, even in fun.
- Never reduce a child or vulnerable adult to tears as a form of control.
- Never allow allegations made by a child or vulnerable adult to go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon.
- Never share a room with a child or vulnerable adult for sleeping accommodation.
- Never invite or allow children or vulnerable adults to stay with you at your home.

**Important Note:**

In special cases sharing may be required for health and safety reasons or if the child is very young or particularly vulnerable. If so, explain why this is necessary to the child/vulnerable adult and their parent or guardian and seek their consent. Where possible ensure that at least two adults, preferably male and female are in the room.

**9 Reporting**

If members have concerns about an incident involving a child or vulnerable adult that seems untoward or unusual they must report their concerns as soon as possible to the Child and Vulnerable Adult Officer. Parents should also be informed of the incident as soon as possible unless it is not in the child's or vulnerable adult's interests to tell them (refer to Section 8, Sharing Concerns with Parents, Guardians or Carers).

Report, record and inform if the following occur:

- If you accidentally hurt a child or vulnerable adult.
- If a child or vulnerable adult seems distressed in any manner.
- If a child or vulnerable adult misunderstands or misinterprets something you have said or done.
- If a child or vulnerable adult appears to be sexually aroused by your actions.
- If a child or vulnerable adult needs to be restrained.

DA's Disciplinary, Complaints and Appeals Procedures should be used to deal with any breaches of the Code of Conduct and misconduct by members. It is vital that these procedures are checked and to ensure that all persons to whom they should apply are aware of them and agree to abide by them. It is also important that parents and children or vulnerable adults, at the very least, are aware of the existence of these procedures.

**10.1 Photographing, Videoing and Filming of Children and Vulnerable Adults**

There is evidence that some people have used activities as an opportunity to take inappropriate photographs or film footage of children and vulnerable adults. The following procedures have been developed to protect children and vulnerable adults.

The following is required for the DA's activities or events where children or vulnerable adults are participating:

- Where appropriate, all materials promoting DA's events or activities shall state that accredited photographers will be present.
- Where possible, consent from the parent/guardian for photographing, videoing and/or filming of a child or vulnerable adult must be obtained prior to the event or activity.
- Where possible, anyone wishing to use photographic/film/video equipment at a venue must obtain the approval of your organisation.
- An activity or event specific identification badge/sticker must be provided to and clearly displayed at all times by accredited photographers, film and video operators on the day of the activity or event.
- No unsupervised access or one-to-one sessions are to be permitted unless this has been approved in advance by the child or vulnerable adult, parent/guardian and DA,

and appropriate vetting has occurred e.g. CRB check of individual wanting to photograph, film or video.

- DA reserve the right at all times to prohibit the use of photography, film or video at any event or activity with which it is associated.
- The requirements above are publicly promoted to ensure all people present at the event or activity understand the procedure and are aware of whom to contact if concerned.

## **10.2 Concerns about Photographers, Video or Film Operators**

Any concerns with photographers or video or film operators are to be reported to the Child and Vulnerable Adult Officer and where relevant, by the Chief Officer to the Police.

## **11 Children or Vulnerable Adults in Publications and on the Internet**

Websites and publications provide excellent opportunities to broadcast achievements of individuals to the world and to provide a showcase for the activities of young people or vulnerable adults. In some cases, however, displaying certain information about children and vulnerable adults could place them at risk. The following procedure must be followed to ensure that DA publications and DA information on the Internet do not place children and vulnerable adults at risk.

DA publications and DA information on the Internet must adhere to the following:

- Publications or information on an Internet site must never include personal information that could identify a child or vulnerable adult e.g. name, home address, e-mail address, telephone number of a child or vulnerable adult. Any contact information must be directed to either the DA or another relevant organisation's address.
- Before publishing any information about a child or vulnerable adult, written consent must be obtained from the child or vulnerable adult's parent/guardian. If the information is changed after consent is given, the parents/guardians must be informed and consent provided for the changes.

The content of photographs or videos must not depict a child or vulnerable adult in a provocative pose or in a state of partial undress other than when depicting a sporting activity. Children and vulnerable adults must never be portrayed in a demeaning or tasteless manner.

- For photographs or videos of groups or teams of children or vulnerable adults ensure that only the group or team is referred to, not individual members. Credit for achievements by a child or vulnerable adult are to be restricted to first names e.g. Tracey was Volunteer of the Year 2002.
- All published events involving children or vulnerable adults must be reviewed to ensure the information will not put children or vulnerable adults at risk. Any publications of specific meetings or child/vulnerable adult events, must not be distributed to any individuals other than to those directly concerned.
- Particular care must be taken in publishing photographs, film or videos of children or vulnerable adults who are considered particularly vulnerable e.g. the subject of a child or vulnerable adult protection issue or a custody dispute.
- Particular care is to be taken in publishing photographs, films or videos of children or vulnerable adults with physical, learning and/or communication or language disabilities, as they could be particularly vulnerable to abuse.

**Important Note:** Any concerns or enquiries about publications or Internet information should be reported to the organisation's Child and Vulnerable Adult Officer and Chief Officer.

## 12 Responding to a Suspicion or Allegation of Abuse

All allegations of abuse must be taken seriously. Although false allegations of abuse do occur, they are fewer than usual. If a child or vulnerable adult says or indicates that he/she is being abused or information is obtained which gives concern that a child or vulnerable adult is being abused, you must react as soon as possible the same day in line with the following procedures.

Where there is uncertainty about whether the concern relates to abuse or misconduct, the Child and Vulnerable Adult Officer must firstly be consulted for advice on the appropriate course of action. If the Child and Vulnerable Adult Officer is unavailable, refer to the Chief Officer, and it that person who should consult external agencies such as the Police and Social Work Services Department must be consulted for advice. This is important because they have an overview of child and adult protection issues and they may well have other information that together causes concern.

On receiving information about a non-member that leads to a suspicion or allegation of abuse:

- Listen to the child or vulnerable adult as detailed in section 7.1 How to Listen to Disclosures of DA's Draft Manual.
- Pass your concerns to the Social Services Department or the Police in the area where the abuse is alleged to have occurred immediately (these are available 24 hours a day). Act on any advice given. At the earliest opportunity tell the Child and Vulnerable Adult Officer about the action taken. (See page 10)
- Make a full written record of what has been seen, heard and/or told as soon as possible in the child/vulnerable adult's own words. The information must, where known, include the following:
  - Name of child/vulnerable adult.
  - Age, date of birth of child/vulnerable adult.
  - Home address and telephone number of the child/vulnerable adult.
  - The nature of the allegation in the child/vulnerable adult's own words.
  - Any times, dates or other relevant information.
  - Whether the person making the report is expressing their own concern or the concerns of another person.
  - The child/vulnerable adult's account, if it can be given, of what has happened and how any injuries occurred.
  - The nature of the allegation (include all of the information obtained during the initial account e.g. time, date, location of alleged incident).
  - A description of any visible (when normally dressed) injuries or bruising, behavioural signs, indirect signs (do not examine the child/vulnerable adult).
  - Details of any witnesses to the incident.
  - Whether the child/vulnerable adult's parents/guardians/carers have been contacted.
  - Details of anyone else who has been consulted and the information obtained from them.
- If it is not the child/vulnerable adult making the report, whether the child/vulnerable adult has been spoken to, if so what was said.
- Record, sign and date on the day what you have seen, heard or been told.
- If making an electronic copy do not save to the hard drive, floppy disk or memory stick. Print off the record, sign and date, then delete the electronic copy, that day.

- Through your Chief Officer, pass the record to the Social Services Department or the Police.

**Remember:** Listen; Respond; Report and Record

### Flowchart 1: Procedure for Responding to Suspicions and/or Allegations of Abuse of a Child or Vulnerable Adult against a Member

