

InterACT Safeguarding Policy Document for Children and Vulnerable Adults and Good Practice Guide for Group Leaders working with minors

Reviewed Feb 2022 Date of next review: Feb 2023

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1 Definitions

1.1 In accordance with the Children Act 1989 and 2004, a child is any person who has not yet reached their 18th birthday. For the purpose of these procedures, the reference to children, therefore, means ‘children and young people’ throughout.

1.2 We define a vulnerable adult as ‘A person (over 18) who is or may be in need of community care services by reason of mental or other disability*, age or illness, or *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.*’

* Disability includes sensory impairment, physical impairment, learning difficulties, etc.

1.3 InterACT is a partnership of local churches working together in and with the community of Meanwood and Chapel Allerton in Leeds and, although an entity in its own right, should be understood in this context.

2 Policy Statement

2.1 InterACT is committed to protecting the welfare of all children and vulnerable adults as they participate in InterACT’s services and/or activities. InterACT understands its responsibility to comply

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with legislation, particularly to ensure that the welfare of children and vulnerable adults is paramount, and will constantly monitor developments in this field. However, InterACT recognises that the best protection for children and vulnerable adults participating in our programmes is the vigilance and forethought of staff and volunteers in preventing circumstances where abuse of trust could occur. To that end, InterACT will strive to create a safe and secure environment where service users, volunteers and staff can work together confidently in mutual respect.

InterACT also recognises its responsibility to take appropriate action when a child or vulnerable adult discloses that they are experiencing abuse or neglect, or if staff / volunteers have a concern about the welfare of a child or vulnerable adult, and to ensure staff / volunteers have an understanding of what might indicate this and what action to take.

- 2.2 InterACT staff and volunteers are required to abide by the staff member/volunteer Code of Conduct and, as part of that Code of Conduct, are required to notify InterACT of any police record or other factor which may make that person unsuitable to work with children.
- 2.3 InterACT will ensure that the Code of Conduct, and the organisation's safeguarding children and vulnerable adult procedures are continually monitored, developed and maintained and are appropriately communicated throughout the staff and volunteer network. Volunteers and staff throughout the organisation are responsible for ensuring that they are familiar with the codes, guidelines and procedures of the organisation, and that new staff and volunteers are appropriately inducted.
- 2.4 InterACT have appointed a Designated Safeguarding Person who will be:
- responsible for the above;
 - the person to whom any safeguarding concerns will, in the first instance, be reported;
 - the person to discuss and agree the appropriate action to take.

The Senior Safeguarding Officer will act in the absence of the Designated Safeguarding Person, or if there should be any reason why the Designated Safeguarding Person is not the appropriate person to deal with a concern (for example in the case of an accusation made against them).

InterACT's Designated Safeguarding Person is: Vanessa Brown 07961 535 767
Senior Safeguarding Officer: Emmanuelle Wilson 07941 923 420; 0113 268 1807

- 2.5 InterACT will maintain policies and procedures geared towards abuse prevention that include, but are not limited to the following topics:
- selection and vetting of staff and volunteers, including DBS checks;
 - staff and volunteer induction and training;
 - staff member and volunteer Code of Conduct;
 - whistleblowing policy / confidential reporting procedure.

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- 2.6 All staff and volunteers will receive induction training, which will give an overview of the organisation and ensure they know its purpose, values, services and structure. Relevant training and support will be provided on an ongoing basis, and will cover information about their role, and opportunities for practising skills needed for the work.
- 2.7 Training on specific areas such as safeguarding children and vulnerable adults, identifying and reporting abuse, and confidentiality of personal information will be given as a priority to new staff and volunteers wherever this is relevant to the role they are involved with and will be regularly reviewed.
- 2.7b Training Expectations:
Coordinator: Externally delivered training + externally delivered refresher courses every three years
Team members: External training + internal refresher by team leader or coordinator every year and no longer than 18 months. Additional, externally delivered training to be offered, but not obligatory.
Designated Safeguarding Person to keep abreast of governmental and best practice developments and inform teams of significant changes for yearly internal training, or sooner if necessary.

3 Statement of Support

Notwithstanding our duty to report suspicions of abuse and protect vulnerable people in our care, InterACT will offer support to individuals in the event of a disclosure or report of abuse, whether victims, perpetrators of abuse or those otherwise affected, either directly through the management of InterACT or through its member congregations, as appropriate.

4 Procedure relating to abuse

Responsibilities of Staff and Volunteers

- 4.1 Paid staff and volunteers have a responsibility to be aware and alert to signs that all is not well with a vulnerable person. However, they are not responsible for diagnosing, investigating or providing a therapeutic response to abuse. In addition, not all concerns relate to abuse; there may well be other explanations. It is important to keep an open mind and consider what is known about the vulnerable person and their circumstances. **Other than in the case of an emergency, no action should be taken without discussion with a member of InterACT's management team.**

Disclosure of Abuse

If a vulnerable person discloses that they are being abused, or any service user discloses that they are involved in abuse of a vulnerable person, action should continue as in Section *Action on Disclosure of Abuse*. All action must proceed urgently and without delay.

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Suspicion of Abuse and Action

- 4.2 There may be circumstances when a volunteer or member of staff suspects that a child or vulnerable adult is being abused or neglected.
- 4.3 There should always be the opportunity to discuss welfare concerns with and seek advice from colleagues, managers and other agencies, but:
- Never delay emergency action to protect a child or vulnerable adult;
 - Always record in writing concerns about a child or vulnerable adult 's welfare, whether or not further action is taken;
 - Always record in writing discussions about a child or vulnerable adult's welfare;
 - At the close of discussion, always reach clear and explicit recorded agreement about who will be taking what action, or that no further action will be taken.
- 4.4 At all times action must proceed urgently.
- 4.5 A staff member or volunteer informed of abuse should remind the informer that the InterACT cannot guarantee confidentiality where a vulnerable person is at risk of abuse or further abuse.
- 4.6 Volunteers should consult with the staff member co-ordinating the activity before taking any action.
- 4.7 Additionally, all action taken following a disclosure of abuse should be discussed in advance with a member of the management team.
- 4.8 In circumstances where a someone declines to disclose, despite some work having been done towards disclosing, it may be necessary to report the alleged abuse without the their agreement. In these circumstances, they must be notified in advance of the decision to report to social services.
- 4.9 Any staff member may report a disclosure of abuse to social services irrespective of the opinion of other staff.
- 4.10 It is important for staff and volunteers to make written records of any incidents or concerns that they have as soon as possible and if appropriate to include sketches of sites and sizes of injuries. It is also important to make a record of conversations with the vulnerable person using the same language the vulnerable person used especially names used for body parts or sexual acts.
- 4.11 Full written records must be maintained of all disclosures and actions following disclosure.

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Making a Referral

- 4.12 Social services departments have been designated as the lead agencies with responsibility for co-ordinating a response to allegations or concerns of abuse.
- 4.13 InterACT Safeguarding Officers should inform Leeds Safeguarding Children Partnership or Leeds Safeguarding Adults Partnership Board of incidents of considerable concern, abuse or neglect.
- 4.14 Safeguarding concerns should be reported to the local authority on the same day they are identified; or immediately where urgent.
To report a crime:
- In an emergency: Telephone 999.
 - If it is not an emergency: Telephone 101 .

Support to Staff and Volunteers

- 4.15 We will support staff and volunteers in these circumstances. If social services need further involvement from staff or volunteers following a report of abuse, a member of the management team will discuss with the social services department the nature of their needs and how they might be met.

Allegation of Abuse Made Against a Staff Member or Volunteer

- 4.16 Staff and volunteers may be subject to abuse allegations. We will offer support in these circumstances, but social services will be assisted in their investigation and the disciplinary procedure may be implemented.

Confidentiality

- 4.17 Confidentiality is central to our work, and the attention of all staff and volunteers is drawn Principles section of the Data Protection Policy.

Preventing Abuse by Staff and Volunteers

- 4.18 It is important that any staff or volunteers who are likely to be working with vulnerable people are thoroughly vetted before being employed. This means as well as references being checked there will also be a requirement for offences to be declared and a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check undertaken.

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- 4.19 It should be noted that having a criminal record does not prevent someone from being recruited as a staff member or volunteer in all circumstances. Staff should seek the advice of their manager in cases of doubt.
- 4.21 It may be very hard for staff to report a concern about a colleague to a line manager but, as with all the other difficulties people will come across, the safety and protection of a vulnerable person must be the priority in any decision that is made.

5. Staff member/Volunteer Code of Conduct

This Code of Conduct is not only designed to protect children and vulnerable adults, but also to give guidance to adults about how they can guard against their behaviour being inappropriate or misinterpreted as such.

Staff and Volunteers should:

- Abide by the guiding principles and rules of InterACT in all activities as an InterACT staff member/volunteer.
- Inform InterACT of any relevant police record or other factor, or any change in their circumstances, which may make them unsuitable either as an InterACT volunteer or for any particular InterACT activity.
- Recognise that the role of an InterACT staff member/volunteer places them in a position of trust with regard to all children and vulnerable adults who are service users participating in InterACT programmes, the InterACT organisation, and to colleagues in the InterACT network, including the member congregations, and undertakes to uphold that trust at all times.
- Undertake to maintain, within the organisation's procedures, the confidentiality of any information relating to other staff member/volunteers, supporters, students or staff members made available to them in the course of the role as an InterACT staff member/volunteer.

As part of their role with InterACT, they should:

- Be familiar with, and always operate within, the Safeguarding policies and guidelines of InterACT.
- Treat others with respect.
- Avoid and discourage scapegoating, ridiculing, rejecting or stereotyping.
- Provide children with an example of good conduct.
- Respect everyone's right to privacy.

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- Encourage everyone to feel comfortable and caring enough to point out attitudes or behaviour that they do not like in a manner that is also fitting with this code of conduct.
- Avoid all sexually provocative games or comments.
- Discourage sexual comments or behaviour by young people towards adults (e.g. flirting) immediately
- Recognise that special caution is required when they are discussing sensitive issues with children or vulnerable adults.
- Challenge unacceptable behaviour and report all suspicions or allegations of abuse.
- Seek approval of the group leader before arranging to meet with a child or vulnerable adult outside of the normal activities or InterACT.
- Follow the guidelines of internet and mobile phone use when communicating with children.

They should not:

- Use physical chastisement. There may be occasions when it is necessary to restrain a child or vulnerable adult in order to protect themselves or others. Do this as a last resort, never alone and with sensitivity. Appropriate training must be given if it is likely such restraint should be needed.
- Self-disclose intimate details about themselves with the children or vulnerable adults.
- Respond to any sexualised behaviour from a child or vulnerable adult in a way which could be construed as welcoming or encouraging it. (InterACT recognises that it is a normal part of a child's development to explore their sexuality. Adults must maintain clear boundaries in their own response to this).
- Form an intimate or romantic relationship with any of the young people or vulnerable adults in their care.
- Be drawn into inappropriate attention-seeking behaviour.
- Make suggestive or derogatory remarks or gestures in front of children.
- Jump to conclusions about others without checking out the facts.
- Ignore, exaggerate or trivialise abuse or welfare issues.
- Allow children to use inappropriate language unchallenged.
- do things of a personal nature for children or vulnerable adults that they can do for themselves.
- Show favouritism to any individual.
- Be under the influence of alcohol or other substance whilst caring for other people's children.

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6. Good Practice Guidelines For Group Leaders Working With Minors

Recruitment of volunteers

Although finding new volunteers can be difficult, it is essential that in the quest for new workers, safety is never compromised. It is important that you recognise as early as possible if you require more assistance. This should be based on child to adult ratios, experience and availability of staff/ volunteers and nature of the group activities.

Wherever you recruit new workers, it is essential that they go through Safeguarding procedures. This should include the following:

- Meet with potential recruit, outlining work description and responsibilities, and explaining the Safeguarding Policy.
- Ask potential worker to fill out a Volunteer Recruitment Form and find out about their previous experience of working with young people or vulnerable adults, as appropriate.
- Carry out a Disclosure and Barring Service check on the new recruit .
- Follow up references immediately. It is essential to receive these before the worker begins because, in practice, it can take time for a DBS to come through. Subject to references and an interview process, the recruit may begin to work with the group. HOWEVER, it is ESSENTIAL that the worker is NOT left alone with young people or vulnerable adults (neither individuals nor a group), even for a short length of time before the DBS is received.
- There should be regular child protection training in place and the new recruit's attention should be drawn to the next available training date, which they must attend.

Ratios: adults to children

Ensure that you always have a suitable ratio of young people to adults as outlined below. Consider how this ratio might be affected if, for example, a child needs to receive immediate medical attention.

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Ratios vary according to the age of children/young people, where the activity is taking place and the nature of that activity. Alongside this, you should consider the gender balance of your workers in relation to the group.

Recommended ratios are as follows:

Indoor activities	
Age	Ratio adult: children
0-2	1:3
2-3	1:4
4-8	1:6
9-12	1:8
13-18	1:10

Outdoor activities	
Age	Ratio adult: children
0-2	1:3
2-3	1:4
4-8	1:6
9-12	2:15 (Male and female + one extra adult for every 8 children)
13-18	1:10 (male and female + one extra adult for every extra 10 children)

Guidance and advice – when arranging a one to one meeting in advance

It is InterACT's policy to avoid being alone with children and vulnerable adults as much as possible. However, InterACT recognises that one-to-one meetings can be valuable and flexibility should be shown. It is important to make such meetings as safe and appropriate as possible:

- Prepare for the meeting.
- Consider whether it really is necessary for you to be alone and consider the appropriateness of the timing of the meeting.
- Ensure that you know what you will be talking about during the meeting, or if the meeting has been requested by another party, do you know the reason they have asked for the meeting?
- Consider if there is information you need to obtain before the meeting.

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- Inform your Line Manager about critical meetings and invite an appropriate colleague if you see the potential for conflict.
- Consider how you will notify the individual about the meeting.
- Choose the location carefully – the environment should be appropriate, in that it shows acknowledgment to the other person and it shows that you value the meeting. The location also needs to be unlikely to be disturbed – this will signify to the person that you are meeting that you respect their presence and are able to listen to them.
- If you need a quiet word about conduct with a young person, consider what is the safest place to do this.
- Ensure that the space you are meeting in is visible to others.
- It is better to position a child or vulnerable adult closest to the door of the meeting room, so that they can leave at any opportunity they choose without feeling that they are being blocked.
- Plan a ‘get out clause’ or an exit strategy in the event that something happens which could put you/or the other person at a health and safety risk e.g. you can ask a colleague to call you to an ‘urgent’ meeting at a predetermined time.

One-to-one meetings can occur at unexpected times and may be impossible to avoid. This guidance recognises the need for flexibility, but leaders should avoid patterns of behaviour that encourage inappropriate relationships to develop.

Child Detail Forms

The parents and/or carers of young people attending the group should be informed of the Safeguarding Policy and given access to it. They must complete a registration and consent form for each child. Brothers and sisters should be given separate forms.

The forms should be filed and kept with this document, which must be present at all group sessions. Make yourself aware of any children with medical conditions, etc, or those who have constraints over parental contacts.

Registration

All young people, staff and visitors attending a group must be registered. Keeping the document up to date is essential for emergency evacuation and as a legal document of attendance. Attendees should be ticked out as they leave. For children - if their parents have signed for them to be in a session for a length of time, they are your responsibility during this time period. You must not allow them to leave early unless you have clear permission for them to do so.

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Session planning and reviewing

Things to consider when planning a session are:

- Numbers and ratios
- Duration of session and timing
- Equipment/ resources needed
- Health and Safety
- Content
- Age, ability and attention levels of the group

Planning a timetable well in advance as a team is also useful. Ideas can then be shared and tasks allocated. It also gives workers a better idea of what to expect and their responsibility at forthcoming sessions.

It is also important to review and assess your sessions as a team. Although this may not always be possible, even informal feedback is very useful. You need to identify what went well, what didn't and how future sessions might change in light of the feedback.

Transporting children

As far as practical, avoid giving lifts to children on their own. If this is completely unavoidable, they should ideally sit in the rear of the vehicle. Most importantly, patterns of behaviour, e.g. regular giving of lifts to the same people, must be avoided.

- Seatbelts must always be worn.
- Parents and carers of children should have signed the relevant section on the registration and consent form.
- Leaders using their own vehicle to transport others for InterACT activities must ensure they have the relevant insurance (social, domestic and pleasure is not normally sufficient).
- If you are travelling in several cars it is normally good practice for children to travel in the same vehicle on the outgoing and return journey, minimising the risk of losing children.

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Overnight stays and offsite trips

Whilst often very rewarding and fun, overnight stays and offsite trips are potentially fraught with difficulties. It is impossible to lay down hard and fast rules which would cover every situation. Trips MUST be planned well. Seek advice if necessary.

Public events

The InterACT Partnership is responsible for numerous public events throughout the year, which means children and adults are brought together in circumstances that are much more difficult to control.

Events must be well stewarded and all staff members/volunteers must follow the procedures contained in this document. Risk assessments should be written for each event and shared with the whole team. All staff, and particularly stewards, should remain vigilant to help ensure the safety of children and vulnerable adults on site.

Abuse of trust

It is wrong for a leader to enter into a sexual relationship with a child or vulnerable adult for whom they are responsible, even if that person is over the age of consent. It is also not acceptable for a leader to form a romantic relationship with a child or vulnerable adult, as exploitation is highly likely, even if unintentional.

This is more obvious when the leader is an adult, but less so when the leader is a young person themselves. However, in these circumstances, the leader should cease their role as a leader or cease the romantic relationship.

Incident Report Forms and Safeguarding procedures

All incidents, whether accidents or safeguarding issues should be recorded on an incident report form and kept in the lockable filing cabinet in the office. Serious injuries may need to be reported immediately to the Health and Safety executive. Consult your Health and Safety Officer for advice.

Ongoing safeguarding issues should be recorded on a separate Safeguarding Running Record Form (SRR). These should be reported to the line manager of the relevant group, who should then follow the Leeds Safeguarding Board procedures. Further information on these procedures must be covered in the yearly training programme for each member of staff/volunteer.

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Anti-Bullying Strategy

For children to thrive and develop, they need to feel safe and secure. InterACT acknowledges that any experience of bullying (either as a victim or a witness) threatens a child's sense of security and can give rise to fear and anxiety. Episodes of bullying can sometimes arise in groups of children, and this strategy is designed to help avoid this.

It is very important that children and are given a positive role model by the way adults in InterACT treat each other.

InterACT believes that prevention is better than cure, and this will be reflected in our care of children.

- The children will be well supervised.
- Children's workers (both volunteers and paid) will not only observe, but also participate in, the planned activities with children.
- Children will be provided with stimulating and interesting activities, as bullying sometimes arises out of boredom.
- Children will be encouraged to build trusting relationships with children's workers, so that they can share any anxieties they have.

If an incident of bullying has been observed or reported:

- Children's workers will be clear with the child alleged of displaying bullying behaviour that such behaviour is unacceptable.
- The child who has felt a victim of bullying will be given support.
- The child displaying bullying behaviour will not be labelled forever as a "bully" and will be given positive reinforcement and encouragement for acceptable, non-bullying behaviour.
- Children's workers will maintain very close observation of the activities of the children who were involved in the bullying incident.
- Children's workers will minimise opportunities when bullying could take place unobserved.
- Children's workers will liaise, in a confidential manner, with parents about any incidents of bullying which involve their child(ren).

InterACT acknowledges that an incident of bullying can be dealt with positively and confidently by children's workers, in close co-operation with children and their parents.

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Internet and mobile phone usage with children

- Electronic communication should never be a substitute for face-to-face contact with children and should be age appropriate
 - Direct electronic communication with primary school aged children should be avoided.
 - Age limits of social networking sites should be adhered to.
- When using electronic communication with older children, the following guidelines should inform our conduct:
 - Children and parents/carers have the right to decide if a worker is to have email address, mobile phone numbers. etc.
 - Communication should generally be for information-giving purposes only, within the hours of 8am-10pm and kept to a reasonable amount.
 - Where a young person is in need or at a point of crisis and contacts a worker, conversations should be saved or recorded and then reported to the group coordinator.
 - ‘Text Conversations’, ‘Email conversations’ (a series of text messages/emails being sent back and forth) and instant messenger systems are usually to be avoided.
 - Communication should be clear and unambiguous, so text language and abbreviations are discouraged.
- All communication, as with all our engagement with children, should be informed by the Code of Conduct.
- Social networking sites have become increasingly popular and useful for communicating. Consideration should be given to creating a separate profile for InterACT’s groups. When using personal sites, the following guidelines should followed:
 - All content should be appropriate for young people to see
 - Be aware that young people could view photos and communications of other people linked to personal social networking sites. Users should therefore arrange privacy settings so that they are responsible for what children see from their site
 - All communication should be kept within public domains

We want to make the best use of electronic communication, while continuing to ensure that we value, protect and safeguard our children and the adults who work alongside them.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Health and Safety is a key part of organising any group or activity and is especially important when working with children.

In any environment there are potential dangers, which can be minimised by taking basic steps, planning sessions and being aware.

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Risk Assessment:

- All activities need to be assessed for the risks that they pose. This involves not only assessing the area where the activity will take place but also the type of activity to be undertaken.
- Risk assessments need to be completed for each area used. It is not sufficient to use one risk assessment to cover an entire building.
- Risk assessments not only ensure that risks are minimised but also, in the event of an accident, demonstrate that efforts were made to minimise risk.
- Risk assessments should be renewed once a year or more frequently if:
 - An accident occurs;
 - The area changes in such a way that the risks alter;
 - The group/ activity changes;
 - When a concern is raised.

They should be kept in the same file with other safeguarding and health and safety documents.

Just because a risk assessment has been completed, it does not mean all potential hazards just disappear! Leaders should always be aware of risks and hazards in all areas and for all activities, and efforts made to minimise these risks.

Emergency Evacuation

It is essential that all workers and children are aware of the emergency evacuation procedures for the venue in which the group is conducted. If there is not already an emergency evacuation procedure in place, this should be discussed and written in coordination with the owners of the building.

This procedure should be written out and kept with this pack.

The evacuation procedure should be communicated to all people attending and leading the group.

Remember these basic rules for all **fire evacuations**:

- On discovering a fire, the fire alarm should be raised immediately;
- Stay calm;
- Do not try and tackle the fire on your own;
- Contact the fire service as soon as it is safely possible;
- Instruct leaders and young people to follow the fire evacuation procedure quietly and calmly;
- One leader should conduct a quick but thorough search of the building as no-one can re-enter the building once evacuated;
- If not all people are out of the building **DO NOT RE-ENTER THE BUILDING**. Be prepared to pass on information to the fire services.

Always be aware of possible fire hazards at any location you are using. Risk assessments should be carried out on all locations, taking into account fire hazards.