

Thanet u3a Safeguarding Policy and Procedure

Safeguarding Policy

Purpose

This Policy and Procedure is written to enable the Thanet u3a Committee to address issues where there are safeguarding concerns. Safeguarding includes incidents between members, concerns regarding abuse or neglect that a u3a member may be experiencing outside of the u3a, health related issues or previous or pending criminal convictions

The purpose is to demonstrate the commitment of Thanet u3a to safeguarding their members and to ensuring that everyone involved in Thanet u3a is aware of:

- the legislation, policy and procedures for safeguarding adults.
- their role and responsibility for safeguarding adults.
- what to do or who to speak to if they have a concern relating to the welfare or wellbeing of an adult within Thanet u3a.

Scope

This Safeguarding Policy and Procedure applies to all individuals involved in Thanet u3a, including the Committee, group leaders and members, and it addresses concerns about the safety and wellbeing of members taking part in u3a activities and in the wider community.

Safeguarding Commitments

In order to implement this policy, Thanet u3a recognises that it has a responsibility to ensure that its committee and group leaders understand this policy. It will ensure that all members will be aware of the safeguarding procedures and know whom to contact if they have a concern relating to the welfare or wellbeing of an adult.

Thanet u3a Committee has a duty of care to its members and is committed to upholding this safeguarding policy in order to protect its members.

Thanet u3a recognises that some people are potentially at risk of abuse and neglect. Where abuse or neglect is suspected, Thanet u3a aims to respond in a caring, prompt and efficient manner to any situation where there is a risk of or perceived risk of harm. Thanet u3a does not hold any statutory authority. Matters of concern will be reported to the relevant safeguarding authorities and charity regulatory authorities, as appropriate. This may include the local authority, the local multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH), or the police in an emergency.

Where there are concerns for a member's wellbeing or safety, Thanet u3a Committee will complete a safeguarding risk assessment, seek advice and support from the Trust where necessary and contact the relevant statutory authorities as needed.

It is not appropriate for Thanet u3a to take the lead role in any Safeguarding Enquiry (under Section 42 of the Care Act 2014 (England and Wales), but should refer this to the Advice and Volunteer Manager in National Office who will contact the appropriate local authority.

Thanet u3a recognises that there are various forms of abuse which can be perpetrated by volunteers, members, relatives, friends and neighbours (see the Appendices for examples).

Thanet u3a will neither condone nor tolerate any form of abuse, neglect or intimidation and believes that all people should be able and, where necessary enabled, to live in an environment which is safe.

Thanet u3a will put the well-being of those at risk of harm first, and they will be actively supported to communicate their views and the outcomes they want to achieve. Those views and wishes will be respected and supported unless there are overriding reasons not to. Any actions taken will respect the rights and dignity of all those involved and be proportionate to the risk of harm.

A list of the types of safeguarding risks and harm can be found on the [England and Wales Charity Commission website, which is applicable generally.](#)

Thanet u3a will monitor the implementation of this policy and procedure **annually** through its Committee.

In all situations, Thanet u3a believes that everyone is entitled to:

- privacy;
- be treated with dignity and respect;
- lead an independent life and to be enabled to do so;
- choose how they live their lives;
- the protection of the law; and
- have their human and civil rights upheld regardless of ethnic origin, gender, sexuality, impairment or disability, age, religious or cultural background.

Thanet u3a will also follow the principles enshrined within the England and Wales Care Act 2014:

- **Principle 1 – Empowerment** – whereby the approach is focused on the individual making their own decision and gaining informed consent, where possible.
- **Principle 2 – Prevention** – seeking to take steps to prevent issues from arising or escalating.
- **Principle 3 – Proportionality** – responding in a proportionate way to the issue/s being presented.
- **Principle 4 – Protection** – seeking to keep the membership safe and seeking further protection for those deemed to be at risk.
- **Principle 5 – Partnership** – reporting incidents to the relevant statutory bodies and liaising with the Trust.

- **Principle 6 – Accountability** – accurate recording of incidents. Reporting incidents, as required, to the Trust and to relevant regulatory authorities.

Procedure

Introduction

Thanet u3a recognises that it has a responsibility to ensure that its committee members and group leaders understand their safeguarding responsibilities.

Depending on the nature of the allegation and the identified risk, Thanet u3a will support the alleged victims and the alleged perpetrators of any abuse as well as any volunteer who becomes aware of an allegation in so far as this does not compromise any safeguarding enquiry or investigation into the allegation or place other adults at risk.

While Thanet u3a will make every effort to respect the confidentiality of any information that is disclosed under this policy and procedure, this cannot be guaranteed due to the seriousness of allegations. Information will be recorded and stored securely in accordance with Data Protection Act 2018 but information may have to be shared with relevant authorities on a 'need-to-know' basis only, to prevent:

- danger to a person's life;
- danger to a person's health;
- danger to others;
- danger to the community; and also
- to facilitate the investigation of a serious crime

Courses of action

- Thanet u3a's approach to safeguarding will include members who exhibit health concerns that could put themselves or others at risk, convictions (previous or pending) that include offences of a sexual or violent nature, inappropriate behaviour exhibited by a member including sexual advances, bullying, aggression or violent behaviour, harassment and/or discrimination. This can include behaviour exhibited face to face as well as electronic communications or via social media platforms.
- Group leaders/any member must contact one of the Thanet u3a committee members if they become aware of any abuse or neglect.
- No committee member will act in isolation when dealing with a safeguarding concern.
- Where Thanet u3a Committee becomes aware of a safeguarding concern, the first step will be to ensure the safety of adult/s at risk. Thanet u3a Committee should satisfy themselves that the adult at risk is safe, and that the alleged perpetrator, if known, does not pose a threat to any other adult.
- Where it is deemed that the risk is high and **immediate** action needs to be taken, the Committee will contact the relevant authorities and the Trust for advice and support.

- As much information as possible must be gathered to assist with the decision as to the next steps. A risk assessment will be developed and recorded as soon as possible after the concern comes to the attention of the Committee. In developing the risk assessment, the committee will consider the level of risk and the action that needs to be taken accordingly. Assessment of risk will include:
 - risk to the individual member;
 - risk to other members within the u3a; and
 - reputational risk for the individual u3a and the u3a movement as a whole.
- Thanet u3a Committee will contact the Advice and Volunteer Manager at National Office and, working together, a decision will then be made as to whether or not to refer the possible or actual abuse to the relevant local authority and/or the police. When a crime may have been committed, the police must be informed as soon as possible. The latter will provide further guidance. If the decision is not to refer, the reasons for this must be recorded by Thanet u3a Committee.
- Once the risk assessment is completed, the committee will decide as to the most appropriate course of action. This could include excluding members from certain groups, i.e., groups held in people's homes, requesting that a member attends the u3a with a carer or excluding a member from a group run by a particular group leader.
- Where the risk is not deemed to be high but support is needed, Thanet u3a will contact the Trust to discuss the concerns and seek additional assistance in developing the risk assessment. Assistance will always be sought before moving to exclude any member from the u3a on the basis of a safeguarding risk assessment.
- As far as possible, the adult at risk's wishes will be respected as to whether or not to refer any concerns to the local authority as a Safeguarding Enquiry under Section 42 of the Care Act 2014, section 4 of the Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Act 2007), and according to the Northern Ireland Charity Commission guidelines. However, it may be necessary to override their wishes in the best interests of other adults at risk.
- Depending on the nature of the allegation it may be necessary to pursue the incident following Thanet u3a's complaints or disciplinary procedure. Where it is decided that this is the best course of action the matter will not be investigated by any party that was privy to the initial reporting of the incident.

All actions taken will be recorded. Any records will remain confidential to the Committee unless a prior decision has been taken to share the record with the relevant statutory bodies.

BE AWARE that your report may be required later as part of a legal action or disciplinary procedure.

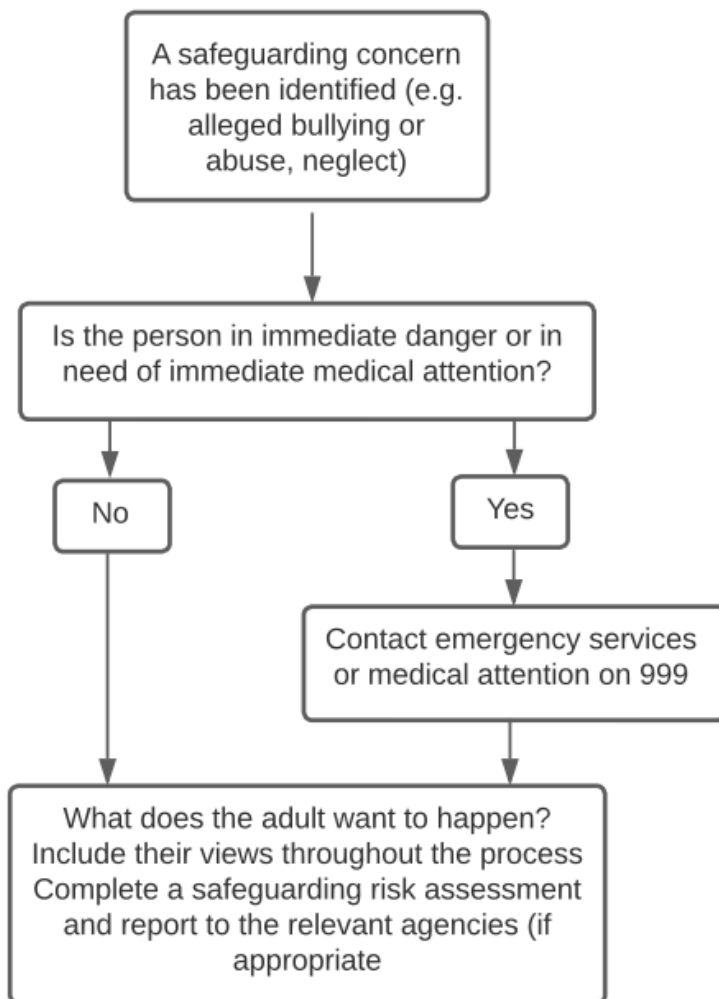
Review date: 22 July 2026

Reviewed by: Tina Hubbard, Mike Trevethick, Nickie Holding, Ross Holding

Approved by: Thanet u3a committee

Date of next review – no later than August 1, 2027

Appendices:



Signs and indicators of abuse and neglect

Abuse may be inflicted by anyone with whom the member comes into contact. There are many signs and indicators that may suggest abuse or neglect including:

- unexplained bruises or injuries – or lack of medical attention for an injury.
- non-attendance at interest groups without reason and where there is no response to reminders from group leaders or other members.
- significant loss or gain of weight and/or an unkempt appearance.
- a change in the behaviour or confidence of a member, where they become e.g. quiet and withdrawn or they lash out in anger.
- a member showing fear of a particular group or individual.
- a member who sends unwanted sexually explicit text messages to a vulnerable member.
- threats of physical harm and bullying, or intentional striking of another member.

Additionally, a member may report they are being abused – i.e., a disclosure.

If someone discloses a safeguarding concern (abuse) to you:

Do:

- stay calm and try not to show shock or disbelief.
- listen carefully to what they are saying.
- be sympathetic. ('I'm sorry that this has happened to you'.)
- be aware of the possibility that medical evidence might be needed.
- tell the person that:
 - they did the right thing to tell you.
 - you are treating the information seriously. It was not their fault.
 - you are going to inform the appropriate person.
 - you/ will take steps to protect and support them.
- record and report the disclosure in line with Thanet u3a's Safeguarding Policy and Procedure.

Do not:

- press the person for more details if they are not comfortable sharing.
- stop someone who is freely recalling significant events. (Don't say 'hold on, we'll come back to that later' as they may not tell you or anybody else again.)
- promise to keep secrets - you cannot keep this information to yourself.
- make promises you cannot keep such as 'This will never happen to you again.'
- contact the alleged abuser.
- be judgemental.
- pass on the information other than to those with a legitimate 'need-to-know' in line with Thanet u3a's safeguarding policy and procedure.

In your record of the disclosure

You should aim to:

- note what people actually said, using their own words and phrases.
- describe the circumstances in which the disclosure came about.
- note the setting and anyone else who was there at the time of the abuse or disclosure.
- separate factual information from your own and others' opinions.
- use pen or biro with black ink so that the report can be photocopied if needed.

Safeguarding information and overview

What is safeguarding?

'Safeguarding' refers to measures designed to protect the health, wellbeing and human rights of individuals.

Examples of where safeguarding procedures may be activated

- A member controlling the finances of a visually impaired member.

- A member arriving at an outdoor-based group without appropriate clothing and seemingly confused.
- A member making advances towards another member with dementia.

Responsibility of members in safeguarding

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and all Thanet u3a members or volunteers must bring any safeguarding concerns they have to the Thanet u3a Committee. Members should follow their code of conduct and **not** keep any concerns they have to themselves.

Responsibility of the Committee in safeguarding

All Thanet u3a trustees must take reasonable steps to protect anyone who comes in contact with Thanet u3a from harm. Every trustee should have clear oversight of how safeguarding and protecting people from harm are managed within the u3a. Trustees must report all safeguarding concerns to the relevant safeguarding authorities promptly.

Trustees should support those involved in safeguarding incidents (alleged victim, the alleged perpetrators of any abuse and/or any volunteer) but should **not** lead safeguarding investigations. This must be left to the authority it is referred to (e.g., social services).

Once a safeguarding concern has been raised, it should be referred onto the appropriate authority. Usually, this would be the local authority or social services in England. In cases where the individuals involved are in immediate danger you should call 999. Additionally, **Hourglass (previously Action on Elder Abuse)** <https://www.wearehourglass.org> is a confidential support and advice for older people who have been abused or people who know an older person who may be suffering abuse. Available weekdays 9am - 5pm on freephone 0808 808 8141.

Key Definitions

Adult at risk

Any person aged 18+ who has need for care and support, is experiencing, or is at risk of abuse or neglect, and as a result of those needs is unable to protect themselves against the abuse or neglect, or risk of it.

Abuse

is the 'violation of a person's human and civil rights by any other person(s). It may be a single or repeated act(s), physical verbal, psychological, sexual, institutional, discriminatory or financial, an act of neglect or failure to act'.

Types of abuse

- **Physical abuse** including assault, hitting, slapping, pushing, misuse of medication restraint or inappropriate physical sanctions.
- **Domestic violence** including psychological, physical, sexual, financial, emotional, so called 'honour' based violence.
- **Sexual abuse** including rape, indecent exposure, sexual harassment, inappropriate looking or touching, sexual teasing or innuendo, sexual photography, subjection to

pornography or witnessing sexual acts, indecent exposure and sexual assault or sexual acts to which the adult has not consented or was pressured into consenting.

- **Psychological abuse** including emotional abuse, threats of harm or abandonment, deprivation of contact, humiliation, blaming, controlling, intimidation, coercion, harassment, verbal abuse or bullying. (This can include behaviour exhibited face to face as well as via electronic communications or social media platforms.)
- **Isolation** or unreasonable and unjustified withdrawal of services or supportive networks.
- **Financial or material abuse** – including theft, fraud, internet scamming, coercion in relation to an adult's financial affairs or arrangements, including in connection with wills, property, inheritance or financial transactions, or the misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits.
- **Modern slavery** encompasses slavery, human trafficking, forced labour and domestic servitude. Traffickers and slave masters use whatever means they have at their disposal to coerce, deceive and force individuals into a life of abuse, servitude and inhumane treatment.
- **Discriminatory abuse** including harassment, slurs or similar treatment because of race, gender and gender identity, age, disability, sexual orientation or religion.
- **Organisational abuse** including neglect and poor care practice within an institution or specific care setting such as a hospital or care home, for example, or in relation to care provided in one's own home. This may range from one off incidents to on-going ill-treatment. It can be through neglect or poor professional practice as a result of the structure, policies, processes and practices within an organisation
- **Neglect and acts of omission** including ignoring medical, emotional or physical care needs, failure to provide access to appropriate health, care and support or educational services, the withholding of the necessities of life, such as medication, adequate nutrition and heating
- **Self-neglect** – this covers a wide range of behaviour neglecting to care for one's personal hygiene, health or surroundings and includes behaviour such as hoarding.